Situating #hautalk. A polyphonic intervention

Allegra
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As an established blog with personal and institutional contacts to many of those involved in the recent upheaval at HAU and the Society of Ethnographic Theory, we do not have the choice of simply not participating in the debate at this point, even if this might appear as a wiser path to some. Having let some time pass, we decided to offer Allegra as a platform to a number of voices for discussing bigger issues at the intersection of anthropology, open access, power, institutions, and information/transparency.

Over the last days, we have discussed these recent events via email and skype. This has been far from ideal – but some of us are in the field, others on the road, and yet others to be interviewed for jobs in order to leave behind the very precariousness that is at the heart of #hautalk.

In the course of our discussions, we have focused on particular aspects of the debate while side-lining others. We have also had profound disagreements at times on what we might want to do about it all.

What we agree on, and want to put at the centre of this introduction, is that we need to listen to the people who have come forward. The people who have been hurt, harassed and victimized. Even as we lack detail, even as the people stay anonymous, what we hear is coherent and plausible enough for us to believe in: something went very wrong here, and not just once, but systematically. We want to help to create an anthropology where such abuse will neither be tolerated nor possible in the future.

Understanding the structural causes and the dynamics of exploitation, marginalization and power in the academia – see for example Bourgeois knowledge, the #university crisis, the MPI chiefdom, and the politics of silencing – is central to our mission. We intend to continue these reflections with the upcoming posts of this week.

In addition to such more systemic thinking, however, we want to acknowledge the current concrete allegations of abuse that cannot be tolerated.

To address our own 'complicity' here: As a platform and as individuals, we have been entangled with HAU. At conferences, we have shared booths and organized joint parties; we have boosted each other's social media; we have seen both Allegra and HAU as important vectors that supported open access scholarship and European voices (among others) in a largely US-centered discipline.

Why did we not disassociate ourselves more strongly – even though one of our editors had first-hand experience of what it is like to work with HAU? Where to

draw the line in the face of wide-reaching precarity? What happens if you opt out of the academic ‘prestige economy’? The problem of complicity with power seems hard to escape.

Focauldians might invoke the paradox of subjectification: “The moment at which we attain status as subjects (the subjects of our thoughts, words, and deeds, and subjects in our relations with ourselves and others) is also the moment of subjection in which we become subjects to a set of rules, norms of behaviour, and to definitions, boundaries and exclusions already imposed on the discourse in which we assume a subject position” (Hafstein 2014: 49).

Yet this suggests that we had little choice in the matter, and this does not sit comfortably with us either. We tolerated this ambiguous situation and ignored what we did not like instead of actively cutting all ties. Of course, we also stood impressed by the sheer output of HAU – and by their very prominent backers, who we wished not to antagonise openly. This ambivalence regarding our own position contributes to our motivation to currently engage with the topic.

We have noted that discussions – i.e., #hautalk – have predominantly taken place on Twitter and Facebook, where people are outspoken and emotions run high.

To complement these voices and the (fewer) blog posts that have been appearing over the last few days (e.g. here , here, and here), we have approached colleagues who have engaged constructively in this debate or who we thought might be able to contribute something significant to the underlying, systemic issues that have brought us to this point. We believe this debate is complementary, and definitely not alternative, to more contingent calls for action and change.

> *Each of us will take sides in this story as it unfolds. What we want to make explicit again here is that Allegra will always stand on the side of those who have been hurt and exploited.*

And while the events currently unfolding around HAU have given us reason to

take a look in the mirror and acknowledge our tacit complicity in the conspiracy of silence that enabled abusive behaviour to go on unchecked, we feel privileged to be trusted as a platform to host a part of the discussion.

This in a way validates our approach: we remain independent, characterised by a collaborative, collective (and sometimes chaotic) editorial and management process which prevents the kind of centralisation of control and potential misuse of funds that seems to have been so detrimental to the project of HAU.

We have lined up a series of posts from both junior and senior colleagues from Europe as well as the US. We have tried to be inclusive, casting the net widely and approaching more people than eventually agreed to contribute. Not everyone was willing to write at this point, and some who wrote decided to withdraw their pieces again – which is fine. Should you be inspired to contribute to the debate we hope to open up, please approach us (submissions@allegralaboratory.net).

Literature cited:

Hafstein, V. 2014. Protection as dispossession. Government in the vernacular. In: *Cultural heritage in transit. Intangible rights as human rights*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 25-57.

Ethical dilemmas, anthropological practice, and principles #HauTalk

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Hautalk is an opportunity to reinvigorate and remake our disciplinary identities. But how can we move this discussion beyond disciplinary boundaries—into spaces where we practice our craft? This essay makes the case for refashioning anthropology to re-imagine our labour practices outside academia as a form of principled engagement.

I do not think it would be erroneous to say that there has been a *proliferation* of discussions around #hautalk over the last several weeks. This hashtag—now a shorthand, really—has come to refer to the specific allegations of physical and emotional abuse, misappropriation, and misconduct made by former *Hau* staffers against the journal's now-suspended editor-in-chief, Giovanni Da Col; the attempts to cover up the controversy, which *Hau's* editorial board referred to as

“destabilizing efforts” early on; and, the discussions around precarity, workspace abuse, and the persistent problem of coloniality, sexism, and other forms of disempowerments within the discipline.

This discussion has included some brilliant, incisive, and thoughtful responses: Anand Pandian’s mediations on openness, LaFlamme and others’ on open access, and Jason Jackson on scale; Zoe Todd’s call for decolonizing and radically reimagining the discipline, and Mahi Tahi’s incisive critique of colonial appropriation; Ilana Gershon on the structures of exploitation like pyramid schemes, which enable such abuse to take place, by rewarding “assholes,” as Elizabeth Dunn writes; or how, Nayanika Mathur reminds us, we are complicit in such silences; and efforts to redirect energies towards engendering relations of respect and care in collaborative work.

As an early career anthropologist and independent researcher,[1] I find myself in emphatic and absolute agreement with such interventions. These signal the possibilities of anthropological engagement in rich, nuanced, and meaningful ways—ways that we often take for granted, or which may be considered expendable in the political economy of academia and professional work.

I write this essay with a view to expand the conversation about abuse, precarity, and ethics *outside* of our disciplinary boundaries; to ground this discussion in a field where its consequences can be discerned, contemplated, and acted upon. So, while there are potentials that our insights from the *Hau* debacle inform how we practice our discipline in spaces of disciplinary reproduction (e.g. through journals, classroom teaching, or the blogosphere), I want to ask: How can we take these very insights to the spaces where we practice our craft to make a living? How do we transform them into a genuine “never again!” commitment?

> *How do we use the Hau controversy, and our collective learnings from it, to further pedagogic and professional conversations about sexual harassment, workspace abuse, and the ethics and politics of producing knowledge?*

Towards a triad of ethical principles

Ethical dilemmas about the nature and methods of knowledge production—and of "putting it to use"—are seemingly woven into the very fabric of anthropological endeavours. Our discipline's complicity in colonialism, the persistent coloniality of knowledge, the silencing of anthropologists who are black, indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC), aren't simply issues in the discipline, but have a deep bearing on our collective professional identities. Added to this, of course, are the continuing efforts to make our discipline accountable to the people we work with and study.

> *The ethical debates of the 1970s and 1980s are a good point to start, since they put to the fore the very political nature of anthropological knowledge and practice.*

In a significant way, these debates were about the changing nature of anthropological practice as it was moving outside the academe into the "professional" world of government and corporate services. This, Gerald Berreman (2007: 308) warned, could be a "license for unfettered free-enterprise research." As a staunch opponent to the use of social sciences in US military interventions, Berreman argued that anthropology and anthropologists, whether in academia or professional settings, should adhere to a unified set of ethical principles: responsibility to those being studied; avoiding clandestine or secret research; accountability towards the scholarly community; and, bearing positive responsibilities to society at large.[2]

Berreman's concerns about unethical anthropological work are well-founded, since ethics derived from scholarly practice can be at odds with professional practice, the latter being often driven by profit motives which reduce liabilities for employers. He believed that it was possible—if not desirable—for anthropologists to be "humane students and advocates of humankind," because there was "no place anywhere for unprincipled anthropology or anthropologists" (314).

Peter Pels (2000: 140, 145), on the other hand, is much less polemical than Berreman and more attentive to the ambivalence and relative weakness in anthropological ethics which, he points, is paradoxically accountable to the interests of sponsors as well as research subjects. A part of this weakness is that the code of ethics essentially depoliticizes anthropological practice, since the bearer of ethical responsibility is an isolated individual practitioner. To counter this, Pels argues, we need more "emergent ethics" which places politics back inside, historicizes methodology, and takes the anthropologist as a "relational subject," whose practice is located in the negotiation of individual and communal interests (162-163).

> *It is no coincidence that feminist ethnography and practice have offered more cogent and relevant responses to this dilemma.*

As Elizabeth Enslin (1994: 539) argues, feminist ethnography and research draw from a rich genealogy of political struggles grounded in the material conditions of women, and has continually aspired to—and been successful in—disrupting the dichotomy between "theory and practice," "academia and activism." Enslin attempts to move beyond conventions of "writing" or textual strategies as outcomes of engaged research by focusing on praxis. She argues that our mode of doing research and presenting our research findings in written forms may radically change if we are more attuned to dynamics of political accountability, and if this informs the choices we make about what we study, and where we study it (558).

In this way, writing can be a way of furthering our engagements—one option among many viable/visible forms of engagements—not all of which are valued in the political economy of academia, but become indispensable in our practice and conduct with our collaborators, participants, and subjects (559).[3]

From this very brief review I can offer the following triad which can chart out and explain how ethical principles can potentially be developed and practiced in a unified way. Such an ethical framework includes:

> *[a] Principled and humane commitments to do no harm and strive to do good, which are*
>
> *[b] Orientated towards politics and power relations, rather than neutrality, and are the basis of*
>
> *[c] Developing and refining methods of research, communication, and multimodal engagements with different stakeholders, which are based on care, reciprocity, and critique, and applied within and beyond disciplinary boundaries.*

Now, let us try to sketch what this triad would look like in different fields of engagement outside disciplinary practice.

Partial notes, provisional practices: Two dilemmas

My interventions certainly do not encompass a wide range of professional anthropological practice; instead, I limit it to contexts that I know best, such as public health, development, and non-profit work. These sectors also involve working with vulnerable and marginalised communities, thus making the need for ethical discussions quite relevant. The first dilemma, then, is about negotiating professional engagements *as a part of engendering ethical responsibility*; and the second, deriving from the *Hau* issue and the Me Too movement, is how we may ethically intervene in instances of sexual harassment and abuse in workspaces.

With regard to the first, as many other practicing anthropologists know well, employers, administrators or colleagues are often unaware of the background and history of anthropological epistemology and methods, and look to us as generic “qualitative” researchers. This constrains the depth and open-ended nature of our professional engagements through pre-defined mandates, shorter timelines, and the demand for (quantitative) evidence.

This characterises much interdisciplinary work in the outcome-oriented political economy. Ethics, insofar as they are required, are quite formalised, usually obtained through bureaucratic structures like government or medical communities. They function more to reduce liabilities for organisations and their clients, rather than being directly accountable to the communities or people they might engage with.

Berreman's concerns are thus quite valid here, since such imperatives may indeed fuel laissez-faire research, which abandon principles for certainty and speed. But, if our work must be informed by the principles outlined in the triad above—and, like Berreman, I insist that they must—then what we need is a way to combine *legitimacy* and *legibility*.[4]

So, how can the triad be of use here? Both [a] and [b] are, for practical reasons, difficult to achieve—and even if they are, they are rendered invisible in the final outcomes of our work. But [c], on the other hand, is inherently attuned to "what we do" and "how we do it"—and actually informed by [a] and [b].

> *One way, then, would be to explicitly draw attention to how inequalities and marginalisation are also ethical problems that researchers must deal with, which have direct bearings on the nature and utility of the knowledge produced.*

During my fieldwork, for instance, one of my colleagues/collaborators said that many NGOs increasingly employ the "*bhasha*" (language) of "projects," rather than that of "*andolan*" (social movements) (Chakraborty 2016). While his statement is certainly a critique of depoliticization of NGO work under neoliberal regimes (Bernal & Grewal 2014), I believe that it also points to a novel way of "using" such a "language of projects," utilising ethnographic methods to translate critical insights into hitherto apolitical actionable agenda items that adhere to the values of social movements.

Here, we must seek to become very different sorts of "insiders" in institutional

and organisational networks (Riles 2002), working ethnographically, bureaucratically, as well as in activist modes—producing fieldnotes, ethnographies, as well as manuals, protocols, drafts, and other materials within a unified ethically-informed framework. As both Pels and Enslin rightly point out, much of this remains either invisible or unwritten; thus, it is in our best interests to centre such efforts in new, innovative ways (see, Hale 2006; Osterweil 2013).

Now, let us discuss the second dilemma: the issue of harassment and abuse in workspaces. Admittedly, much of this conversation is inspired by the Me Too movement; but neither does that alone mean it is easier to have the conversation, nor is it enough.

> *Feminist anthropologists, gender-based violence (GBV) scholars, and activists have long been aware of the rampant, structural nature of sexual abuse and violence.*

It thus was necessary for scholarship and activism to be unified from the beginning to attend to survivors' needs and welfare and reflect realities of power. This is true for domestic violence and abuse, as well as workspace abuse and sexual harassment, where the latter are also experienced more acutely by black, indigenous and women of colour, and gender non-conforming and trans individuals. Both forms of abuse are about the concentration and exercise of (male, white, patriarchal) power, and are directly linked with the political economy of work and labour—informalisation, precariousness, wage gap, and so forth.

This makes it quite difficult to apply any form of ethics, where the need for, and function of, them are quite different. Many formal ethical guidelines certainly are needed, and many exist in the form of human resource guidelines, fieldwork guidelines, or laws as a result of sustained feminist activism (e.g., the Vishaka Guidelines against workplace sexual harassment in India, or Monash University's Guidelines for Responding to Allegations of Sexual Offence). But as decades of feminist practice has taught us, at times these are insufficient, are sources of

violence themselves, or fetishised as "due process" without any structural change.

We are confronted here with an issue that is admittedly vexing, and any interventions that anthropologically-informed principles or ethics can make are somewhat limited, since they might be complicit in such structures of violence.

> *But if the responses to the Hau controversy are any indication, the possibilities are there.*

For one, our sensitivities perhaps need to be modelled after the historical labour of front-line workers who have worked towards caring for and supporting survivors of violence and abuse (Wies & Haldane 2011). Echoing Mathur's critique of "our reluctance…to be ethnographic enough when it comes to our own quotidian and institutionalised practices," this means we extend our professional, scientific, and principled sensitivities to these "whisper networks" with the explicit aim of taking the "evidence" seriously—the [b] of the triad, i.e., "be political, not neutral." In many situations, there are also no other options than to insert ourselves into spaces where our presence and ethical principles—the [a] of the triad, i.e., "strive to do good"—can have positive outcomes for survivors, whether it be through women's or grievance redressal cells, or HR committees.

> *This means that our engagements with this dilemma must, essentially and necessarily, move beyond our academic or professional roles, but require the existence of anthropology's conceptual vocabulary of engaging with "others."[5]*

Following Haldane (2017: 6-7), the [c] of the triad requires the practice of "interpretive labour"—an imaginative identification with an "Other," that also sympathises with them (Graeber 2012).[6] In performing this interpretive labour, as principled anthropologists, we need "to understand [survivors], to feel compassion for their struggle, and to make sense of what their needs are." However, this *does not mean that we become caregivers ourselves*, which would be both naïve and dangerous.

Our training does attune us to empathy, but that is *not a substitute* for professional therapeutic or psycho-social care that survivors may require (indeed, doing so might cause harm to them; it is our responsibility that we strive to find out what structures of care exist, and ensure these are accessible to them).[7]

The triad of ethics sketched above isn't a terribly original idea, nor are the two dilemmas where I've applied them exhaustive of the ethical quandaries that confront us. But they are a step in the direction of articulating things that have been left unsaid in our discipline—Mathur's "shocked, not surprised"—when it comes to our ethical conduct beyond and within our disciplinary boundaries, or lack thereof.

Perhaps what we need in such times aren't revolutionary resuscitations of old, white and male anthropology, but the persisting labour of our peers, participants, and other activists who are attuned to, and practice their politics in radical but quotidian, principled ways.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank Ned Dostaler and Aakash Solanki for helping shape this conversation early on. I'm deeply thankful to Hillary Haldane for her encouraging comments on the earlier draft, and to Julie Billaud for her editorial guidance. I'd like to thank David Osrin, Nayreen Daruwalla, and my other colleagues, collaborators and research participants in Mumbai for their continued inspirational work in preventing violence, and their struggles to build better, more equitable worlds.

[1] Disclaimer: My recent and ongoing professional engagements are with an NGO that involves women front-line workers in their violence prevention intervention in various urban poor neighbourhoods in Mumbai, India. I am

currently associated with them as a research consultant, and my work profile includes using ethnographic methods to conduct formative and evaluative research, as well as producing deliverables, and providing training to field staff. I thus describe myself as both an applied and practicing anthropologist. All views expressed in this essay are my own, and do not represent the beliefs or values of my colleagues or collaborators.

[2] These were a part of the Principles of Professional Responsibility (1971) before they were deleted in the 1984 draft of the Code of Ethics.

[3] Intersectionality is an indispensable part of this configuration, and I regret not being able to make a more in-depth analysis of how feminism, critical race studies, indigenous activism, queer activism and theory, and other counter-hegemonic modes of knowledge production and social action can—and have—made rich, lasting contributions to sort of ethical praxis and principles I hope to elucidate in this essay. Further, as Hillary Haldane pointed to in a comment, Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon's *Women Writing Culture* was an explicit challenge to the male-centric *Writing Culture*.

[4] I would like to thank Aakash Solanki for a short, but insightful conversation we had on these issues. I'd also like to point that alternatives are both available and possible, as much of my experience with front-line workers has shown. Many organisations do find utility in ethnographic methods, and it is incumbent upon anthropologists, both of the academic and practicing varieties, to harness the potentials.

[5] While I write with the collective pronoun "we" or "us" referring to those in the anthropological community, a necessary caveat is in order: it is especially incumbent upon those of us who enjoy the relative privileges of being white, male, cisgendered, and/or upper class/caste that we pay special attention to such ethical conduct. Unless we check our privileges, our claims to principles are insufficient and worthless.

[6] Although Graeber has coined the concept in the context of structural violence

and bureaucratic work, it is quite ironical that he was unaware of its gendered connotations before writing the essay, and more so that his *Guardian* essay post-Me Too was focused solely on his mother's experience of abuse, rather than the historical and structural nature of violence against women, even within our discipline. Once again, I have Hillary Haldane to thank for our discussions on this issue.

[7] This is a lesson that I have learnt the hard way in my work with survivors of domestic violence. As a colleague of mine said, half measures are dangerous, and avoiding them is at times the most ethical thing to do to prevent harm.

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State of Rebellion

Rosalie Allain
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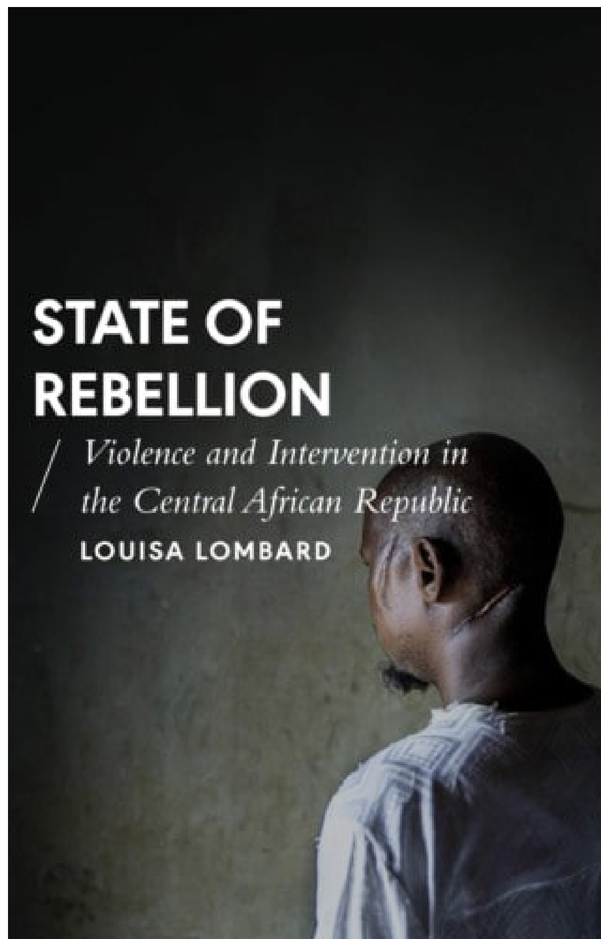
In *State of Rebellion: Violence and Intervention in the Central African Republic*, Louisa Lombard moves away from an anthropological tendency to study the margins and interstices of the state (Das and Poole, 2004) by analysing the core actors and processes that uphold and flow from the state form (as Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan (2014) called for in a volume discussed here), whilst doing so uniquely in a country widely considered as the "periphery of a periphery" (Cordell, 1985) (p.210). Despite the CAR's extreme marginality, Lombard moves beyond popular tropes depicting it as a quintessential failed or collapsed state, an aberration in the international world order. Instead, she presents it is a 'limiting case' (Rutherford, 2003: 229) (p.2), marking one extreme end of the state spectrum that reveals dynamics inherent to all states. This critical focus on the state is Lombard's analytical starting point in understanding the country's "recursive" conflict over the last two decades which she interrogates through the

question ‘what is “the state” in the CAR?’ (p.23).



Commonplace understandings of the state follow the Weberian ideal type model (a claim to the monopoly on violence, the control of borders and a distinction between the public and private sphere) which decades of intervention have tried to instil in the CAR, as explored in the first two chapters. Despite this, “’the state never emerges” (p.80), and the CAR remains a privatized, non-territorialized state with multiple nodes of authority and authors of violence. All nevertheless remain beholden to the ideal-type state form, Central Africans, humanitarians, politicians, diplomats and rebels alike, “united by the primacy they assign the state as a form” (p.31) and each projecting their own desires, claims and assumptions onto this “phantom state” (p.61). As the gap between the state form and the reality (or absence) of governance on the ground grows and solidifies, an ‘as if’ state emerges to conceal this disjuncture and the “fictive” (p.133) nature of its ability to govern. In public, CAR and international politicians, diplomats, aid donors, rebels and humanitarian actors act and interact “as if” the state fulfils its (ideal type) role or “as if” it will soon finally emerge, rendering it into a “theatre-set ideal-type” (p.69), a space of political performance and open secrets reminiscent of the ‘make-believe’ state (Navaro-Yashin, 2007). Lombard shows how “the state is the placeholder ‘form’ that all have agreed upon”, monopolizing the category and practice of legitimate political organisation and precluding any alternative, genuine “political ‘content’” (p.65), ultimately contributing to the continuation and exacerbation of conflict.

By exploring these dynamics, Lombard approaches conflict in the CAR as a Gluckman-esque 'social situation' writ-large (Gluckman, 1940), her aim is to understand conflict by examining the relationships between all the actors involved in the CAR and, crucially, "what gives form" to these relationships (p.40), the ideal state form.

The experiences of Central Africans are most keenly felt in chapters 2, 3 and 6 which explore the gulf between the ideal-type state form and the CAR state as it is by focusing on two of the former's primary functions, its control of territory (chapter 3) and violence (chapter 6), which are absent here. Lombard unveils the complex historical and affective entanglements between mobility, violence and power in the CAR wherein violence is not a marker of a temporary, contemporary crisis but a practice that patterns the country's last 150 years. Whilst ordinary Central Africans are subject to an "enclave politics" (p.89) of spatial policing and exclusion based on social status and religion, politicians, diplomats and humanitarians can move freely around and beyond the CAR. Its exclusionary and hierarchical deployment renders mobility into a visceral source of anger and desire. These anxieties are heightened by the extreme porousness of CAR, demonstrating a long-standing politics of elsewhere built through multiple iterations, starting with imperial relations with Muslim traders and the French and ending with the recent proliferation of humanitarian NGOs. By delving into this history, Lombard shows how the CAR is governed by an "outsourced sovereignty" and "pluralized authority" (p.110) where the most important decisions concerning its citizens, the choosing and deposing of presidents for instance, are taken abroad by non-Central Africans. This has culminated in a politics of "extraversion" (Bayart, 2000) though Lombard is careful to criticise the internal/external dichotomy underlying this concept, arguing that it makes little sense to define such actors as external given how central they are to the constitution of the CAR such that it cannot be spoken of "as a state except through reference" to those originally from elsewhere (p.110).

This political economy of extraversion is experienced as a source of danger,

> *insecurity (including spiritual insecurity) and anti-social forces, producing widespread feelings of anger, shame and dispossession.*

These fed a turn to autochtony and a vilification of a shifting "foreignness" (p.96)- currently ascribed to Muslim Central Africans – and were channelled into an explosion of violence in 2013 as the loosely organised Anti-Balaka movement mobilised in response to the destructive campaign of the Seleka rebel coalition that instigated a coup earlier that year. This violence emerged as a form of "threat management" which is embedded in the long-term social use and importance of violence in practices of "spectacular", "popular punishment" (p.192) (brutal, ceremonial-like killings of thieves, witches and adulterers), forms of justice that demonstrate power and deterrence. Lombard argues that these pre-existing practices facilitated and escalated into this decade's wartime violence, mediated by sentiments of dispossession and their effervescent potential, through which visceral, embodied dispossession is momentarily inflicted onto the body of the 'other'. Within this, the state looms large: when not absent, it is experienced as predatory. For most Central Africans however, the state remains the focus of their "utopian dreams" (p.108) and desires, seen as the solution to all of their country's problems and in particular their search for protection, security and distribution. Lombard astutely argues that these statist desires are "intensified rather than undermined by its continual failure to live up to them" (p.108) as people criticise the failure of "*their state*" (p.104) to live up to the idealised state form.

> *When this gap is lived and experienced, the state as fiction becomes state as fetish.*

Chapters 4 and 5 explore how these state aspirations actually underlie rebellion in the CAR. Central Africans' relationship to the ideal state and sense of personhood are deeply informed by a model of salaried-citizenship which is based on entitlements instead of rights. Concretely, all dream of one of the few state jobs and the status, dignity and salaried, "entitled personhood" these confer.

From the dispossession that people find instead, recent forms of armed rebellion have emerged in order to seek new ways to "participate in the state" (p.132) and achieve entitlements, through peace-building initiatives with international organisations. Like rebels, the latter are also pulled into this relationship by the state form: lured by the threat posed by rebellion to the state not because of its violence, but because of its very capacity to reveal the state's "fictive nature" (p.129) in the CAR. They are notably brought together in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes which manifest a "converyor belt" (p.142) model of peace-building that blindly follows the ideal-type state, moving forward along a teleological path according to which rebellion is a temporary crisis of state weakness that will reach the ideal stable state through pre-determined tools and steps. Because of these assumptions which Lombard dismantles, the reality is a sclerotic process of "waithood" (p.171) where the slow-moving peacebuilding process returns to its starting point, perpetuating the recursivity of rebellion.

It is in this study of rebellion that Lombard's argument about the state form and its centrality to conflict crystalises. Throughout *State of Rebellion*, the real 'form' of the CAR state emerges as an assemblage or network of relationships forming "multiple, overlapping", "cross-cutting ties" (p.29) between a mulitplicity of actors internal and external to the CAR. Much like rebels and peacekeepers are united in DDR by their state aspirations, these actors are brought together, constituted, and their relationships mediated, by the ideal state form. They become entangled, collaborating and adapting to each other, often with unintended consequences as shown through the "conventionalization" (p.134) of rebel groups who adapt to the state framework in order to be considered legitimate partners for international interveners. They become armed rebels by virtue of being defined as such by their partners, their rebel identity and grievances growing and reifying in the process. The state form is also divisional as the gap between the state and its ideal translates into disconnections and distinctions between actors in the form of hierarchies in status, namely who is internal/external, assigning them different roles, privileges and access to

knowledge. This produces a space of opacity, mistrust and suspicion which Lombard explores in the final chapter.

> *Within the gap of the state, action and imagination are severely constrained by their entanglement in these relationships and the state form, resulting in an empty "promisory politics" (p.97) devoid of all transformational capacity wherein rebellion persists as the only viable strategy Central Africans have to seek an entitled personhood and a politics of distribution.*

State of Rebellion is a lesson in public scholarship. It stands apart from too much of anthropology by its striking clarity and lack of intellectual posturing or unnecessary abstractions. It is clearly written with political scientists, policy-makers and non-academic audiences in mind, and not anthropologists, as it gently opens up the discipline's perspectives to outsiders and demonstrates what's at stake in doing so. The flip side of this is a lack of sustained engagement with anthropological theory and ethnography. In particular, it is surprising how little Lombard engages with anthropological debates and literature on the state, the social theory of forms and the creation of difference (e.g.: Barth (1969) and Brubaker (2002)) which could have deepened her analysis and been enriched by such a unique case study. Although Lombard cautions the reader against interpreting her ethnographic method and evidence as anecdotal, the sweeping breadth of her study sometimes has this very effect as she jumps from one interlocutor or vignette to another, drawing from a range of contexts, 'state actors', regions and years. Whilst demonstrating the impressive extent of her research, this creates an ethnographic fragmentation that sacrifices 'thickness' and never allows enough space for voices, lives and characters to fully emerge.

> *In the final chapter, Lombard warns against the limits of knowledge in fully overcoming the situation in CAR, stating that "context is not like a fruit, ready to be plucked" (p.240).*

This would have the effect of inverting context into a form, like that of the ideal

state, contained, coherent and standardized (see Guyer, 2015). It is not a neutral truth ready to be consumed and shared by all who are instead enmeshed in their own interpretive frameworks and "pattern-divining" (p.228), constructing their own context(s) under the shadow of the state. This is no doubt true of Lombard too, and it is telling (and surprising) that she concludes, somewhat conservatively and against the grain of her analysis, that it is not the state form that is the problem, but its rigidity. Elsewhere Lombard acknowledges her (researcher) role as another 'actor' embedded in the CAR, and yet she crafts a symmetrical analysis that insightfully cuts across distinctions between the state form, content and context so that the state form itself becomes the context of conflict, whilst placing Central Africans and external actors, the state and its ideal, on a level analytic footing. It weaves together an 'external' birds-eye view of the relational CAR state with the 'internal' embedded perspective of its constituents, their experiences, understandings, intentions and constraints. This skillful shifting of scales is most apparent in the book's ambitious premise: scaling up a 'social situation' like that of the Zulu bridge opening ceremony (Gluckman, 1940) onto the level of the state. The resulting insights make it of interest to scholars beyond anthropology and African studies, to those studying development, conflict and humanitarianism. In particular, it should be required reading for practitioners working in these sectors.

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In praise of the scaffolding

Ann-Christin Zuntz
July, 2018

In my experience, when the ethnographic mission collapsed, this scaffolding remained standing, rich and complex, in plain view. There, the net into which I fell. (Rosaldo 2014: 112)

In July 2016, I have been living in Mafraq, a Jordanian town fifteen miles south of the Syrian border, for more than half a year. While I am renting a little house of my own, I have also been adopted by a local family whom I visit every day. But many others, too, show me hospitality – some of them, like Esraa and Rana, are

Syrian teachers at the NGO I am volunteering with.

Sunday, 31st July 2016. I am having brunch with Esraa and Rana. Whereas most Syrians live with their families in overcrowded, damp accommodation, Esraa and her husband Maher have a flat in a brand-new building to themselves. As Maher works in a kebab restaurant all night, he often sleeps in, and Esraa takes the opportunity to invite her friends over – a rare occasion for some innocent fun in a conservative town with few opportunities for women to gather outside the family home.

When I arrive, the girls tease me for being late. “You are becoming more like a Syrian!”, they giggle. While Esraa affectionately cuts pieces of sandwiches and fruits for me, the conversation soon turns to the hospital in a nearby town where she is going to give birth that very week. Esraa is not one to be easily frightened. Still, she has a congenital heart defect, and she admits that she is afraid of the planned Caesarean section, not for herself, but for the baby. “When they cut open your stomach, you know…”

Her absent mother, whom she has not seen since she left Syria, looms in the background of today’s chat. I compliment Esraa on her beautifully embroidered white hijab, a piece of her mother’s “that you can’t find here”.

When we say goodbye, she tells me that she sent out her husband to buy me “a special gift”, and proudly hands over a coffee mug shaped like a camera lens. I’d like to think that her present hints at how she sees me: as a curious person, an investigator – someone not unlike herself, as she trained in journalism before the war. She also forces some of her hairbands, the sort that women wear under the hijab, on me. Only recently have I discovered that Esraa has long, unruly, beautiful curls.

Half-jokingly, she says: “So I will see you on Thursday [at the hospital], if I am still alive.” But I quickly dismiss her premonitions – “don’t you know that this is bad luck!” Outside, Rana and I excitedly make plans for a baby shower, “the way they

do it in American movies!”

Tuesday, 2nd August. I take the bus from Mafraq to Amman to meet with an American friend. At lunch time, I buy a pack of pink balloons in the old souq – “It’s a girl!” Later, my friend and I purchase overpriced baby onesies in an upper-class neighbourhood in West Amman. Mine has a dinosaur on it. After all, I decide that I will not give Esraa’s baby typical “girl’s stuff”, but something that reflects her mother’s personality: bold and independent – the survival skills a girl would need when born into a country that makes it clear in multiple ways that Syrian “guests” could never become “natives”.

2nd August, at night. I receive two agitated phone calls from my landlord, a distant cousin of Esraa’s, and my Jordanian host brother, who happens to be my landlord’s best friend. In conservative Mafraq, it is quite unusual for unrelated males to call a woman after sunset, so I am alarmed. But I understand very little and have to look up the words they keep repeating to me.

“Julta” means “blood clot”. “Ghairuba” means “coma”.

Wednesday, 3rd August. At 8am, my landlord calls again; now his voice is very calm. “I regret to inform you…” According to Islamic ritual, the funeral will take place the same day, and I frantically contact the other Syrian teachers, waking them up to a terrible surprise. I announce that I will fetch them before four, so we can all see Esraa again before the men take her to the cemetery, a place where women do not go. The baby is alive.

On the bus ride home, I rest my forehead against the window, staring out into the barren steppe. The balloons and baby clothes are still in my backpack; by now, they feel very heavy.

In the afternoon, I put on a long black abbaya and a black headscarf, before heading to a Syrian friend’s flat. Fortunately, my friend, a headstrong woman, takes over; she organizes a taxi and forces the grudging driver to do rounds until

we have picked up all of the teachers. In the street before the house where the wake is taking place, I run into Maher as he is carrying plastic chairs for the newly arrived guests. We both advert our eyes, his face frozen in shock.

Inside, we are greeted by various aunts. Maher and other men lay out the body on the floor and fold back the shroud; Esraa wears a white headscarf, maybe her mother's. I cry. The older women bring the baby, a gorgeous little girl. I cry. My friends make me sit on the couch and sip coffee from tiny mugs, because this is what you do at a funeral. I cry. After half an hour, I leave, slowly dragging my feet to my host family's house. The town seems deserted. In their living room, my Jordanian brothers quickly go into hiding, scared by the look in my eyes. I bid them farewell, but my host mother, always ingenious, does not allow me to leave. "We bought 15 kg of molokhiya [an Egyptian plant], and I need your help with it." This is women's work, but her husband joins us in the courtyard. For the next two hours, we will pick leaves in the soft summer breeze of an early evening. For the next seven days, I will barely leave bed.

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It took me almost two years to put Esraa's death on paper. My field notes break off with the entry about that cheerful Sunday brunch, and resume a fortnight later, with no further mention of Esraa's passing, or my role in organising her funeral. I thus had to reconstruct the events from memory, although writing about it did not come to me easily. Not that I did not remember; on the contrary, concrete scenes, snippets of conversations, are buried in my mind. Even two years later, my recollections show a heightened awareness of my surroundings at the time: of temperature; of surfaces; of touch; of my own body. But writing about it was painful and tiring, and I was often tempted to give up. Drawing on my experience of a close informant's death during my doctoral research with Syrian refugees in Jordan, this post discusses one path towards overcoming *resistance to ethnographic writing* that emotionally difficult topics might produce. It suggests shifting the focus from the anthropologist's feelings towards the *social relations* that framed and made possible my "doing grief" in the field. The title of this post is borrowed from Renato Rosaldo (2014); when writing about the "scaffolding", he refers to the "human infrastructure" of fieldwork, the numerous helpers who facilitate everyday life, accommodation, transport, food and access to potential informants, but are often written out of the final ethnographic product. Only when "the ethnographic mission collapses" (Rosaldo 2014) – as it does in times of intense grief – do they become visible again. I thus turn the spotlight on the informal practices that brought together my "fieldwork family" at a moment of loss.[1]

This approach responds to two recent debates about the role of emotions in anthropological study. It takes as its starting point the recognition that, besides the "academic" and logistical aspects of research, ethnographic fieldwork also

involves managing interpersonal relationships and multiple roles in the field, as well as dealing with one's *own* feelings. Having emotions in the field is not a mere side-effect of doing ethnography. To borrow from Hochschild (1983), it is actual emotional *labour*, and thus a central part of the job description (cf. Blix & Wettergreen 2015).

> *But the ethnographer's emotions are not only part of the effort she makes – they are also potential "data".*

Following anthropology's "reflexive turn" in the 1980s and 90s, much attention has been paid to issues of positionality, i.e. the impact of the researcher's gender, class, race etc. on the field, but less so to the epistemological value of her *emotions*. Recently, Davies and others have called for a more systematic approach to analysing the researcher's "states of being *during* fieldwork" (Davies 2010:1; cf. Kleinman & Copp 1994; Flam & Kleres 2015, and many others).

One of the first to pursue this line of enquiry, Rosaldo (1989) famously used his grief over the death of his wife Michelle, herself a respected anthropologist, as an entry point into the study of headhunting in the Philippines. He had long been trying to make sense of his informants', the Ilongot's, reaction to bereavement, as the death of a loved one would propel men to behead members from other tribes. Only when faced with the devastating loss of his wife, Rosaldo writes, he understood the visceral force of rage in grief, and the role of cultural practices in working through it during the process of mourning.

Rosaldo's seminal article deeply resonated with me. By the time I returned to the UK in early 2017, my apathy over Esraa's death had long been replaced by *anger*: anger at the doctors for not saving her; anger at the murderous Syrian regime that had forced her to live abroad and separated her from her family; anger at myself for not taking her fears seriously. Anger at the entire world for allowing this death to happen. This wild fury has spurred me to give passionate presentations at conferences, and to run many miles a night; but I did not know how to address it in writing, nor the event that had triggered it.

But Rosaldo's work also spoke to me in another way. Much of the incommensurate nature of his wife's death comes from its being *accidental*: she slipped and fell off a cliff on their first day in a new field site. "Stupid, stupid, stupid", as her bereaved husband later writes in a poem (2014: 92). This takes me to the core of my hesitancy about writing of Esraa's death. When I first met her at an NGO meeting in the second month of my fieldwork, she was four months pregnant, and her belly continued to grow while I got my bearings in Mafraq. Over time, her pregnancy came to signify the progress I made in my ethnographic investigation. (It also accompanied the growth of the home-schooling project that the NGO, the Syrian teachers and I myself were involved in.)

But her untimely death stopped the clock. On a personal level, her sudden demise took me – and all those who loved her – by surprise. But I found it incommensurate, too, because it seemed to resist my every attempt at including it into a coherent narrative of my fieldwork.

At the time, I felt reluctant about including into a doctoral thesis something as private and painful as a friend's passing. I also worried about reducing her in my writing to a "dead refugee", to cut down the complexity of her life and ties with others to legal and humanitarian labels.

But that was not all. I had come to Mafraq to study displacement, but Esraa's being a refugee did not explain *anything* about her death. After all, she had not died from bullet wounds or barrel bombs in the Syrian civil war. Nor had she fallen victim to the refugee-reception system in the host country that restricts access to public healthcare for non-citizens. A subsequent investigation at the hospital did not reveal medical errors either. Nor was Esraa's fate representative of the particular refugee demographic that I had found in Mafraq. While most of her compatriots were barely literate peasants from remote rural areas in central and northern Syria, here was a university-educated woman who had come to Jordan on her own before the war to take up a teaching position, and eventually to Mafraq, because a Syrian aunt of hers had married a local there some forty years earlier.

> *Being a refugee did not kill Esraa. A blood clot did. As simple as that. As stupid as that. Then what was there to write about?*

Finally putting my memories of these days on paper, I am struck by how, in my own grief, I was sheltered by *others*: the Syrian and Jordanian friends, aunts, mothers and siblings by my side. When Esraa was still alive, we joked about how her unborn daughter would marry my first son, “so we can become one family.” However, it was her death that made visible the workings of the “fieldwork family” that I had established since my arrival to Mafraq.

It is a common practice for ethnographers to negotiate their entry into the field by becoming “family” to their hosts. In Mafraq, calling somebody “a daughter” or “an aunt” is a widely used idiom for framing friendly relationships with non-kin. (“Treat her like your sister”, my Jordanian host brothers were told by their father, to dissipate potential rumours about the presence of an unrelated female in their house.) But only when Esraa fell sick, did I begin to understand what being a sister *meant* in practical terms: getting late-night phone calls; being allocated a minor role at the funeral; staying in her daughter’s life. Reversely, faced with my enormous grief, my Jordanian host family had to devise new forms of care for their inconsolable *daughter*.

In his study on headhunting, Rosaldo argues that “rather than speaking of death in general, one must consider the subject’s position *within a field of social relations* in order to grasp one’s emotional experience” (1989: 167; highlights by the author). Thirty years later, he revisits his wife’s death in a collection of poems, many of which give voice to those incidentally present at the scene of Michelle’s accident and over the following days: taxi drivers, soldiers, anonymous bystanders. Rosaldo refers to these people as the “scaffolding”, those who create the silent infrastructure of fieldwork, but seldom get a mention in articles, monographs and conference presentations. Only when “the ethnographic mission collapses”, as he says, do they become visible again. Because that is when we rely on them most.

> *Hence, if my field notes and memories tell me one thing, it is that the presence and care of others made it possible for me to grieve for Esraa. In turn, her death was a crucial moment for negotiating my belonging to the field; my intense emotions gave me a sense of where I stood, what I meant to these people, what they expected from me and were willing to do in return.*

Since we lacked shared religious frames of reference, “doing grief” together often

translated into material *practices*. On the day of the funeral, my Jordanian host mother, a devout Muslim, explained to me that according to the Quran, those who die in exile, and those who die in childbirth, will directly go to paradise. “She has it covered twice”, she smiled sadly, although she knew that this came as little consolation to me as I was not a strong believer, let alone a Muslim. On future occasions, I would often repeat her words to my Syrian friends, with whom their Islamic content clearly resonated. But this did not help me. What did, though, was picking vegetables with her for hours, a practical, if not silent, attempt at drawing me back into the family circle and engaging my restless body – it allowed me to physically work through the early stages of my grief, and it calmed me down.

Another aspect that strikes me about Esraa’s death is that it seemed to invite a series of unprecedented transgressions. Her cousin’s late-night phone call showed blatant disregard for established gendered rules of communication – but also for conventional understandings of who belongs to the immediate family, and who does not. In passing on information about Esraa’s critical state, he treated me like a close relative. This role was further emphasized when I was allowed to bring the group of Syrian teachers to the funeral, and on subsequent visits. Over the last years, her husband Maher has cut contact with most of the Syrian community, the NGO and the Jordanian side of Esraa’s family. When I visit him these days, he asks me to come alone. On the other hand, my Jordanian host family has recently befriended him and his elderly mother, although they rarely, if ever, socialize with Syrian refugees in town.

I have no doubt that these transgressions were made possible by my liminal position in the field, my multiple roles as an adopted sister and daughter to Syrian and Jordanian families, as an NGO worker, and a student. Nor do I romanticize these elective kinship ties – many have been of short duration or have turned out problematic. Since I have returned to the field in 2017 and 2018, I have awkwardly dodged Maher’s repeated marriage proposals. But I honestly believe that what motivates him is more than my German passport’s promise of an easy way out. Grief has forged a bond between us, but one that has a backstory: the carefree mornings at their old flat when, waking up at noon, he would find me in

his living room, joking and discussing with Esraa.

What I wish I could bring to Maher: travel documents. An exit strategy. A place to call home. What I bring instead: toys and hair clips for the little girl, who looks more like her mother with each passing year. I am still trying to figure out my new obligations as an elective sister, and how they stretch across borders and continents.

This leads me to my final point. Grieving Esraa has not gone according to an established "script", and has involved many uncertainties. In fact, my observations tell us little about how Syrians or Jordanians "usually" mourn. By way of contrast, some months later, my Jordanian host family lost a young man of Esraa's age. His death, while equally unexpected, triggered a standardized course of action. For three subsequent days, relatives, neighbours and even a local politician paid their respects to the bereaved parents, where they were served coffee and traditional food. It was unthinkable that I would take over any role in this.

But for Esraa's friends and relatives, death hit at a moment when the social fabric was already stretched almost beyond limit by displacement, and relationships in exile were still being negotiated anew: within the refugee community, with the Jordanian hosts, and even with an unlikely stranger like myself. Hence, this joint Syrian-Jordanian-German funeral relied on elements that were familiar to me from previous, and more conventional, events: an intricate choreography; the hosting of guests; the men's procession to the graveyard. However, it reassembled these standard practices in novel ways, involving outsiders like myself who had only recently entered Esraa's life.

Looking at the hands-on forms of care, the minor and major transgressions that I have described above, brings to our attention not the ready-made scripts of grief, but rather the informal practices that people come up with in response to disorientation and shock; how they creatively reappropriate the left-overs of their previous lives. As Rosaldo, again, famously puts it "life is what happens […] while

[anthropologists are] making other plans" (1985: 19).

I started drafting this post wishing that writing about Esraa's death would make me understand *something* about the peculiar relationships I have built and maintained in the field. I am also hoping that by discussing my emotions during fieldwork, I might encourage other young anthropologists to be attentive to what their feelings can reveal about their field of study. As long as a cult of emotional and physical hardship during one's first fieldwork prevails in anthropological training and the community, doctoral students are encouraged to conduct research in "difficult" and "remote" places, with little regard to the mental health risks this might entail (Widdowfield 2000; Irwin 2007; Bracke 2015). In the UK, engagement with PhD students' emotional labour during and after fieldwork seems mostly absent from methods classes, ethics and risks assessments, and supervisorial relationships (Pollard 2009). Hence, what we desperately need is a culture of openness, where honesty about the manifold challenges of fieldwork – physical, intellectual, emotional – is not trumped by academic bravado and competitiveness.

> *What we, new to anthropology, need, is an academic community that does not put us up against each other, but supports and shelters us.*

For now, I have a suspicion that this is only the first time of many that I write about Esraa. Maybe, like Rosaldo, the enormity of her loss will push me to return to her again and again, and in different forms. Ultimately, the writing keeps alive not only my grief, but also the innocent pleasures, and the gratefulness to all of those who were the "scaffolding" in my field.

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[1] I first felt encouraged to start writing this blog post when I got involved with a cross-departmental working group at my home university, the University of Edinburgh, on mental health risks for postgraduate students conducting ethnographic fieldwork.

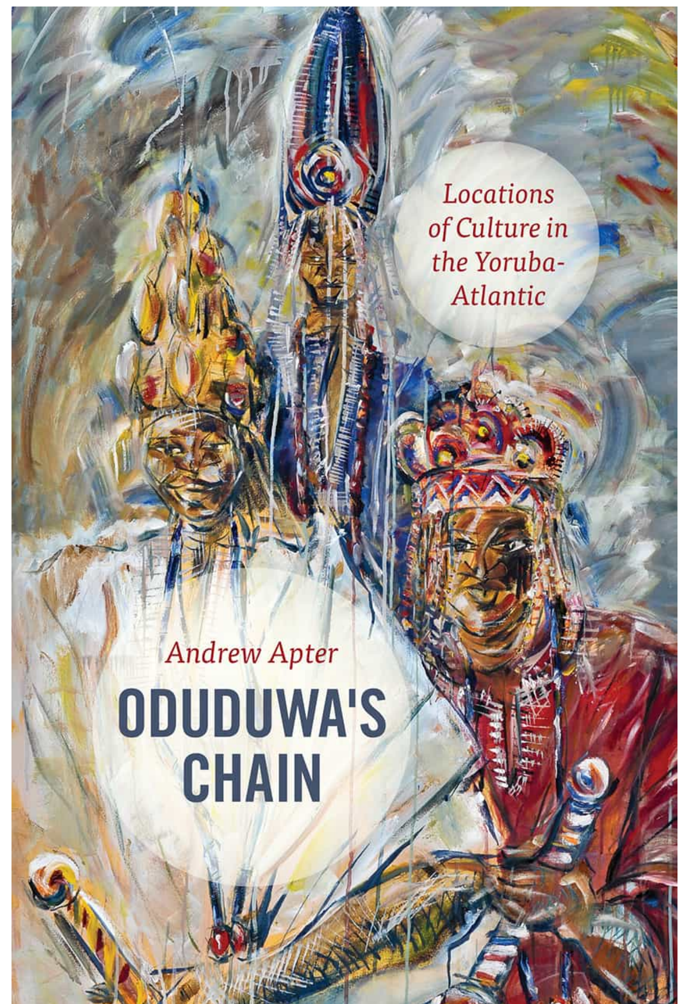
Odudwa's Chain

Kartikeya Saboo
July, 2018

This seamless compilation of essays has the feel of a life's work. Through the lens of his scholarship on the Yoruba, Andrew Apter tackles debates in anthropology of Africa, on culture – as concept, possibility, and conceptual possibility, on colonialism and postcolonialism, ethnogenesis, and "metadiscursive construction[s]" (8) about something one might dare try and call Yoruba object-culture-tradition.

Immersed in deconstruction at the start of his academic pursuits as a student of philosophy, Apter has experienced the politics of knowledge production in the postmodern moment, and gently pokes at the complete decentering of the subject (and everything else, of course) by looking towards Kant, and "winking" at Ryle in the Introduction.

Beginning with perhaps the largest shadow still cast over the institutionalization of Africanist scholarship in the United States, Apter recovers and reformulates core elements of the syncretism framework through a sympathetic critical evaluation of the work of Melville Herskovits on acculturation and continuities from Africa (especially West Africa), in the African Americas. The general thrust is that the dynamics of creolization and hybridization—attributed variously to, for e.g., retentions of cultural practices from the homeland or creative formulations produced on slave ships and plantations—are *internal to the dynamic deep knowledge paradigm* of Yoruba religion and politics itself.



Apter achieves this through historical reevaluations of New World syncretism (via Herskovits, Ch. 1), the "notion of origins" (40) in African diaspora research (via the "Petwo Paradox," Ch. 2), creolization (via the construction of gender, Ch. 4), documentation (of orisha cults and Epa masquerades from Ekiti Yoruba highlands, Ch. 3), and the immanence of hybridity within Yoruba religion (Ch. 5).

For instance, in Chapter 2, Apter delves into the Petwo Paradox: how gods that are high and cool in one context, also become low and hot in another; how the sacred and pure on the one hand, and money and sorcery on the other, can be associated with the same gods; how Vodou in Haiti can be considered creolized, and re-considered creolized from a perspective that takes as its point of departure

a “West African hermeneutics of power” (65). Continuing with the dynamics of creolization in the realm of constructions of gender, motherhood and womanhood, Apter identifies demographic, cross-ethnic communicative, and European factors in the emergence of an Afro-Atlantic African American set of constructions (Ch. 4: The Blood of Mothers).

Nevertheless, it is not a very heady mix; Apter is not inclined towards grand theoretical forays. Odudwa’s Chain is focused instead on methodological correctives to the scholarly framework of African Studies.

> *Empirical questions and the scholarly terrain relating to them are explained with simplicity and clarity borne of scholarly labor.*

No Africanist myself, I was able to comprehend the trajectory of his argument and consider how it might relate to areas of my own interest: race, the Black Experience in the United States and studies thereof.

If there is a line to the African American experience that runs to and through Odudwa’s Chain, what does this imply for action and scholarship about African American identity, experience, and cultural forms? Does this, at the very least, recover historically a strand that allows a conversation about “African American culture,” without being accused of bringing in essentialized stereotypes about black folk in through the back door? I will not have a personal answer for a few years yet, but there is an opening here for the discussion to be renewed.

> *Beyond anthropology, the book will be of interest to scholars in African Studies, Black Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Gender Studies.*

Advanced classes in African Studies might benefit from specific chapters as well. Starting with an essay originally published in 1991 speaks to a continuity in the author’s predilections, but also to the continued relevance of this debate about origins, about Africa as source vs. Africa as mythical reservoir. The issue remains unsettled, and since the controversy over Daniel Patrick Moynahan’s “The Negro

Family: The Case for National Action," largely dormant through a studied silence (in my view). Africanists will decide whether this call is heeded, and thus also on the substantive import and impact of Odudwa's Chain as a whole.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1, "Herskovits's Heritage," contextualizes and evaluates Melville Herskovits's study of the African origins of New World religious and cultural practices among the Black diaspora. Taking him to task for a static concept of culture and a lack of attention to the dynamics of class and power, Apter nonetheless finds that it is possible to recover a useful framework of study and analysis for the Black Atlantic today.

In Chapter 2, "Creolization and Connaisance," Apter delves into the Petwo Paradox: how gods that are high and cool in one context, also become low and hot in another; how the sacred and pure on one hand, and money and sorcery on the other, can be associated with the same gods; how Vodou in Haiti can be considered creolized, and re-considered creolized from a perspective that takes as its point of departure a "West African hermeneutics of power" (65).

Chapter 3, "Notes from Ekitiland," serves a documentary function for the religious practices in Ekiti Highlands, and continues the methodological reformulation which is the larger intent of the book. Apter finds that there are greater similarities in Yoruba orisha worship and related religious practices in the New World than previously considered. This perspectival realignment should also inform studies of Yoruba religion as a global phenomenon.

Chapter 4, "The Blood of Mothers," examines the constructions of gender and how menstrual blood and motherhood are inscribed in the dialectics of "social relations of production and reproduction" (98) in plantation societies built on multiple forms of forced labor.

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Bringing anthropologies of the state to Mainz: A workshop report

Konstanze N'Guessan
July, 2018

With [#anthrostate,](#) allegralab seems to suggest that there is a distinct subdiscipline of anthropology that studies the contemporary state. However, following Bourdieu (1994), Navaro-Yashin (2002) or more recently Wacqant (2009), even a particular state and a particular bureaucratic institution may appear as multi-faceted, as possessing a left (caring) and right (violent/ regulating) hand. In January 2018, allegralab proposed a thematic week centered around “the state of the state in Africa” in order to explore the productive tensions in anthropology “between those seeking to grasp the state by examining it ‘at work’(Bierschenk and de Sardan 2014), and those who argue that the state is perhaps better captured in its margins rather than its supposedly transparent and rational bureaucratic forms (Das and Poole 2004)”. On what grounds can we thus compare anthropologies of the state or of stateness? What if anthropologies of the state in part come to differ based on the political, disciplinary or regional

background of researchers? In his Allegra blog post revisiting *States at Work* (16.1.2018), Thomas Bierschenk claimed that one of the book's objectives was to "develop a more intensive dialogue with the sociology of organization and bureaucracy in the North, while the latter would profit from taking the results of the ethnographies of states in the Global South into account."

In order to take these ideas seriously and make such exchanges possible, Thomas Bierschenk (Mainz); Heath Cabot (Pittsburgh) and Heike Drotbohm (Mainz) convened the workshop "The State, Anthropology, and the South", which aimed at bringing different networks and research traditions into dialogue.[1] The objective of the workshop was to explore in detail the different analytical and methodological approaches with which different research groups have respectively approached the study of the state and notions of "the South" by bringing together scholars working in sites of the Global South with those working in the European South.[2] A key goal of this exploratory workshop was to initiate a dialogue across research and linguistic traditions, disciplinary approaches, and areas of expertise, among a small but diverse group of participants: Thomas Bierschenk, Heath Cabot, Heike Drotbohm, Tom de Herdt, Barak Kalir, Timothy Raeymaekers, Eva Riedke, Annalena Kolloch and myself. Apart from bringing researchers together and discussing each other's work, the workshop meant to encourage a self-reflexive look at one's own disciplinary, methodological and political-moral presuppositions. How had the researchers' (and their research networks') respective regional orientations, analytical terms, theoretical inspirations, thematic choices, methods of research, comparative approaches and political or moral standpoints influenced their experiences with and assumptions about the state and how had these subsequently came to be reflected in their writings? What moral judgments and which political orientations lie behind our studying the state? What is the "South" said to mean in anthropologies of the state and how does it become manifest, and how does the idea of "the South" figure in the reflections of research interlocutors? To what extent is the framing mechanism of the "South" (whether implicit or explicit) a product of researchers' own assumptions?

> *In other words, the workshop's main goal was to sow a seed of wonder about how we actually look at "the state". Let me turn to my own research in order to explain this.*

A few weeks before the workshop, I had accompanied two social welfare officers of the Family Crisis Intervention Team in Bongouanou in Southeastern Côte d'Ivoire. The team is part of the local state structures to promote good childhood and social cohesion. As part of the Social Welfare Centre it is administered by the Ministry of Women, Child Protection and Solidarity. Here is an excerpt of my field notes of that encounter:

Today Monsieur Konan[3] and his two younger colleagues deal with a family dispute of two brothers that had unfolded over the heritage of a piece of land of their deceased father. Attempts to settle the problem within the larger family and with the village chief had failed and eventually the younger brother presented the problem to the Family Crisis Intervention Team. In several meetings they had listened to the younger brother's version of the problem, his elder brother's version, before today bringing them together to the social welfare center in Bongouanou. Monsieur Konan patiently allowed both sides to elaborate lengthily about what they felt was right and apt and the complex social entanglements and family relationships of each brother with the deceased father and the extended family. While he listening, he would suggest several solutions which were all for one reason or another dismissed by one or both complainants. In his suggestions, the social welfare officer adopted a moralizing tone and urged the brothers to accept his help in finding a solution that would not "break the family – because after all you are brothers, same blood, this affaire ought not to be taken to court". As the discussion between the two brothers gets more and more violent, Monsieur Konan and his colleague position themselves as the "advocates" of the disputing parties, translating their respective worries and hopes and propose solutions that seemed to have evolved in dialogue and thus would allow both sides to feel as "winner". Finally, Monsieur Konan and his colleague suggested that they would have to come and see the disputed field with their own eyes; the clients agreed to

stay off the disputed field and work on their other plantations until the date of that field visit. Both brothers seemed to respect the authority of the social welfare officer as neutral intermediary and placed much hope in his capability to settle their dispute, even though the younger one only grudgingly accepted to pay the carburant for Konan's field trip (as is usual practice).

In this ethnographic vignette the state appears and presents itself as a caring institution, whose aim is to help maintain and create social cohesion among a population, which is not capable of doing this on their own and gratefully and voluntarily uses the state services for their own purposes. The social welfare workers presented themselves as caring agents and juxtaposed their work with that of other state officials, such as police officers and judges, whose intervention, in contrast, would supposedly cause more harm and violate family bonds. In my research on parenting practices and experts in the field of becoming and being a good parent I had stumbled across Monsieur Konan and his colleagues because of the regular parenting skills teachings they offered at their center. To him, he said, people would really come only in case of severe problems. Without hesitation, I had happily agreed to learn more about his work and quickly found myself again – as in earlier research projects – associated with state officials and their point of view. This clearly was due to my socialization into the anthropology of the state from within the research project "States at Work", which had focused on the day-to-day functioning of the state in West Africa.

As I skim through my field notes preparing the next field trip, the questions discussed at the workshop raise a number of questions. To what degree was the situation described above influenced by the fact that the Family Crisis Intervention Unit in Bongouanou is a particular state agency situated in a particular place at a particular time and looked upon by a particular anthropologist? Would the story I told in my field notes and its interpretation have differed had it been observed in a German or Greek social welfare center? Would it have differed, had I approached the situation from and with the clients instead of the social welfare officers? Would it have been different if had it been told from the perspective of other quasi-state institutions and associated actors such as the village chief or one of the many civil society organizations concerned with reconciliation and social cohesion after war? Would it have differed if the research interests behind the narration had been land rights or state legitimacy instead of family norms? And finally, would it have differed if I had not grown up in a country where "the state" and its agents are usually presented as caring and where children are instructed to trust state institutions ("the police your friend and helper")? Would it have differed if I had experienced the state first and foremost as violent or repressive, as it might have been the case if I was a black

man and not a white woman?

> *Answers to questions like these, the conveners of the workshop believed, would help to tackle the tacit or explicit notions of studying the state with the aim to make comparison possible and fruitful.*

The only way to deal with that epistemological challenge is to bring together works dealing with different facets of the state, governmentality and bureaucracy. All based on ethnographic fieldwork in different regions of the Global South and its fuzzy and shifting frontiers (West and Central Africa, Cape Verde, Brazil, Italy, Spain, Greece, the Netherlands, Israel) the papers and discussions dealt with bureaucrats and their choices and rationalities of practice in a comparative and historically informed perspective – thus avoiding culturalist explanations about e.g. the nature of African (or Southern) states as compared with their Western model (see e.g. Titeca and de Herdt 2011). They traced the "state effects" in encounters between migrants, refugees and humanitarian organizations in borderlands or shifting frontiers between state or state-like actors and institutions which, in the co-delivery of public services, bring about the state as affect through performance and practices (see e.g. Kalir and Wissink 2016; see also Raeymaekers 2018). Another topic that was raised in this context was the distribution and redistribution of scarce resources and ideals and practices of governance in the context of crises (e.g. in refugee camps) and aspirational ideas of a properly functioning state of rights (Cabot 2014). Acknowledging that different actors are involved in the negotiation of stateness between norms and practices, which let bureaucracies appear as multi-normative spaces and sites of contention not only between different actors, but also between competing ideas and norms, papers also discussed the janus-faced character of discretionary power both on the side of state-agents and bureaucrats as well as regarding competing institutions and actors and the clients of state services (see e.g. Drotbohm 2018). Ethnographic research on the police and on the judiciary system have shown that actors also make use of different registers to present themselves as "friendly" and "caring;" as imperturbable and cold; or even as violent enforcers

of the law (see Beek 2016; Beek et al 2017; Bierschenk 2008; Göpfert 2016). However, discretionary powers are not only exercised by state officials, but also by the clients, who may choose to use state services or not, and who may choose to approach them in various ways? Bureaucratic practices are in many ways performative – whether employed by state officials, by their clients or by quasi-state agents. In some way or another they perform but also sometimes contest the legitimacy of the state and affirm its overall presence – notably in former colonies where "the state" and its agents have a colonial legacy still inscribed in the "civilizing" and humanitarian mission that characterizes the self-understanding of many bureaucrats.

> *One of the major aims of the workshop then was to de-essentialize not only "the state" but also "the South", treating both not as analytic constructs, but as analytic objects of anthropological inquiry.*

An "ethnography of statehood" rather than an anthropology of the state would, however, have to be interdisciplinary by nature. Interestingly enough, even though the themes, disciplinary and theoretical approaches, and also the (political and moral) closeness towards the state and state actors seemed to differ to a great extent, the conference participants found most of the empirical material presented convincing and could buy into the different forms of analyses: it seemed that, after all, "the state" may not be so different, whether studied among petty bureaucrats in Benin or among refugees in Greece. The tasks and challenges street level bureaucrats face may resemble each other as, after all, most modern states have been built upon and are imbued with colonial and imperial legacies. In fact, for a truly post-colonial anthropology of stateness it is "[not sufficient to

state that] the state in the South as **also** being sophisticated, original, effective, etc. in **spite** of it showing different characteristics than those of the state in the North" (quote form Barak Kalir's workshop paper). A way to deal with that was to search for ways of "thinking beyond the state", which again was linked to the question of the positionality of the observer, who – as Thomas Bierschenk has recently noted – if we like it or not, is not so different from the bureaucrat in what he actually does: writing, categorizing, listening to stories and trying to make sense of them, translating and summarizing local ideas (see also Göpfert 2014). If that is so, can the ethnography on the state offer ways of studying beyond the state, or is the stateness of non-state actors and their ideas and practices already inscribed in the anthropological approach? In the words of Monsier Konan, the social welfare officer in Bongouanou: "you and me, we [search for] explanations within our peoples' own words and ideas […] Sometimes you have to go there, go to the field, talk to them and see with your own eyes in order to *understand*." "Understanding," in the sense he used it, included some kind of meta-critique about what he as state actor could or could not see and do. Be it because of the lack of knowledge, time or resources, or because of the inherent limits that came along with him being a state representative and a stranger in that region. Challenging these limits, Barak Kalir urged us to thinks of ways of "epistemic disobedience" towards the state in decolonial thinking. Just like Monsieur Konan, anthropologists of "the state" should be equally aware of these blind spots and search for ways of studying "stateness" outside the vocabulary of the Western infused notion of the state.

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[1] There is, in fact, an allegra-documented genealogy of the workshop in Mainz. Half-a-year ago, Heath Cabot reflected in a conference report about her participation at the biannual meeting of the German Anthropological Association in Berlin. The panel on the “refugee crisis” organized by Olaf Zenker, was critiqued as “as being overly focused on ‘the underdogs’ […] and indulging in ‘moral high ground,’” through its focus on refugee and activist perspectives. In her 2014 book, *On the doorstep of Europe*, Cabot had analyzed the role of NGOs in the governance of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece and thus non-state-actors engaging in state-like services and governance practices and addressed the ambivalent position these actors had towards “the state”. In the discussion of her presentation in Berlin, it was suggested that it would be useful to “also study bureaucrats or decision-makers in their encounters with migrants”. Most of these comments came from the “angry-seeming folks from the University of Mainz”, where a research project on states at work had studied “the state” in ethnographies of bureaucrats and bureaucratic actors in order to de-essentialize the state. The exchange nonetheless led to a fruitful collaboration.

[2] The workshop was sponsored by several funding bodies at University of Mainz, particularly the Förderlinie 1 and the Zentrum für interkulturelle Studien (ZIS).

[3] All names used are pseudonyms.

Featured image by Anouk Delafortrie (flickr, CC BY-ND 2.0)

Living by the gun

Erin McFee
July, 2018

Outside observers have often interpreted Chad’s long history with rebellion as reflective of internal chaos and questionable moralities. Marielle Debos nuances

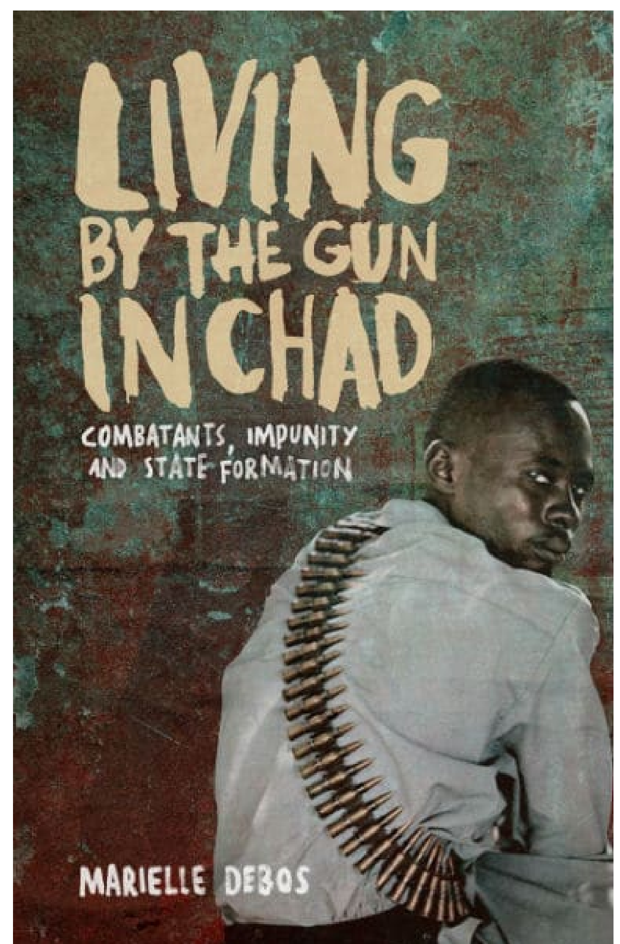
these superficial understandings with rich ethnographic and historical analysis in her newest volume, framing the threat and practice of armed violence in the Chadian context as a legitimate form of political struggle and an ordinary way of making a living, inscribed in both the mode of government and the political economy. By investigating the times and spaces outside of formal conflict – the "inter-war," as she terms it – along with the unofficial and illegal practices of governance connected to the country's history of war, Debos traces the relations of power in the political, economic, and social spheres to contribute to our understanding of the production of public authority within contexts of chronic violence. This work contains many valuable empirical and theoretical contributions to the field, not least of which is her argument that neither violence nor informalised governance mechanisms necessarily index a weak state: indeed, uncertainty, impunity, and organised disorder can serve as powerful tools for a "government by arms" (xii).

> *Overall, the book is ideal for Africanists and scholars of war and its aftermath. It will also appeal to anthropologists of policy and the state, conflict, and policy designers working in comparable contexts.*

The book comprises three sections: the first establishes the socio-historical context within which war, violence, and men in arms have systematically shaped, and been shaped by, Chadian economic, social, and political life. Debos traces the long-term professionalization of combatants: through infusions of materials and weapons from external actors, the use of rebellion as a political tool, and the blurring of distinctions between formal and informal armed actors, among other dynamics. She identifies how armed violence in Chad reflects the historical norm, rather than exception, for a country "in the grip of a political field that has never excluded war" (43).

The second section examines the armed and political actors participating in war, inter-war, and peace processes, who (re-)produce the country's political logics. Debos draws from three rebel and political leaders' biographies in order to

foreground how fluid alliances, loyalties, and social and kinship ties in the Chadian context reflect continuity, as opposed to the often presumed rupture, between relational practices in war, peace, and "ordinary" social life. Neither revolutions nor the actors producing them are stable, and these "unstable alliances need to be understood as the product of the way in which possibilities are managed by actors who interact in a difficult and ever-changing milieu. Those involved adapt, sometimes from day to day, to a set of constraints and resources that incite them to break and then renew their alliances on a regular basis" (91).



This ever-changing milieu includes the political marketplace. Here, Debos puts her work in direct conversation with that of Alex de Waal by drawing on his conceptualisation of a political marketplace as a system of exchange-based governance: loyalties for favor. Implicated actors leverage peace processes, using war or its threat as a commonplace negotiating tactic embedded in complex patterns of post-war clientelism, in which demobilizing combatants compete for government posts and rents according to the negotiated stats of their former group. Drawing from interview and ethnographic data, Debos emphasizes the heterogeneity in the extent to which rebels and their leaders were able to, in fact, *live by the gun*, and the deep knowledge of social, capital, kinship, and political networks required in order to do so.

The third section analyses the ambiguities and complexities of modes of government in Chad by following back channel approaches that are deployed consistently, even if not coherently, as an efficient mode of government. Setting

aside shallow generalisations for the persistence of violence in Chad (e.g., “violent culture”, and “warrior values”), Debos instead digs deeper, turning to the case of the governance of the armed forces in order to demarcate the politics of ethnicity, armed action, and impunity.

> *She challenges the simplistic idea that regular and irregular forces occupy distinct domains operating under different rule sets; instead, each bears traces of the other, again – like the politicians and rebel leaders discussed previously – are in dialogue with rapidly changing sociopolitical landscapes.*

The military’s “illegal practices and general blurring of status”, which have flourished under Chadian president Idriss Déby, “pervaded the whole social body…This mode of army management, which consisted in following other rules than those established by law and regulations, had many advantages” (137).

Among these “other rules” in Chadian society are those that govern the practices of impunity among a certain class of political actors. Impunity and social mobility, Debos argues, represent the primary means for the reproduction of the hierarchies produced by war and the governance of insecurity. “No legal or moral punishment is inflicted on those who circumvent the law,” she writes. “But you really need social capital if you are to rewrite it at will. Power relations mark the code of fraud…Each participant invents tactics to live and do business in this uncertain and risky world. But while such tactics belong to a repertoire of resistance, they do not allow people to overturn power relations” (152). In contrast to other works before this one, Debos argues that, in Chad, the state is neither weak nor absent. Rather, it has been informalised: a symbiosis exists between the official and the unofficial state – and its exercise reproduces a permanent inter-war in the country.

Though she does not compare or contrast this condition in other contexts – including those in the “first world” – the assertion is a useful one for the anthropology of statehood more generally, and certainly not limited to Chad.

Debos writes simply and directly, which lends to the clarity of her argumentation.

She leverages her ample historical and ethnographic data persuasively, and resists oversimplifying a seemingly chaotic context by showing how ethnographic methods contribute to locating the underlying logics at a variety of societal levels. This welcome approach has implications for questions well beyond those posed in conflict settings, such as those undertaken by anthropologists of development, policy, and interventions. Finally, her holistic assessment of the way in which the official and the legal co-constitute the unofficial and the illegal is a valuable and well-written contribution, even if not the first argument of its kind (cf., Tilly 1985, in which he posits state making as at least in part comprising practices akin to those of organized criminal enterprises, or Nordstrom 2004, in which she traces the informal networks, trade routes, and politics in order to throw into sharp relief the reach and limits of formal state channels). *Living by the Gun* provides excellent analysis and insights for political anthropologists working in a variety of domains.

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Featured image (cropped): Darfurians refugees in Eastern Chad by EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (flickr.com, *CC BY-SA 2.0*).

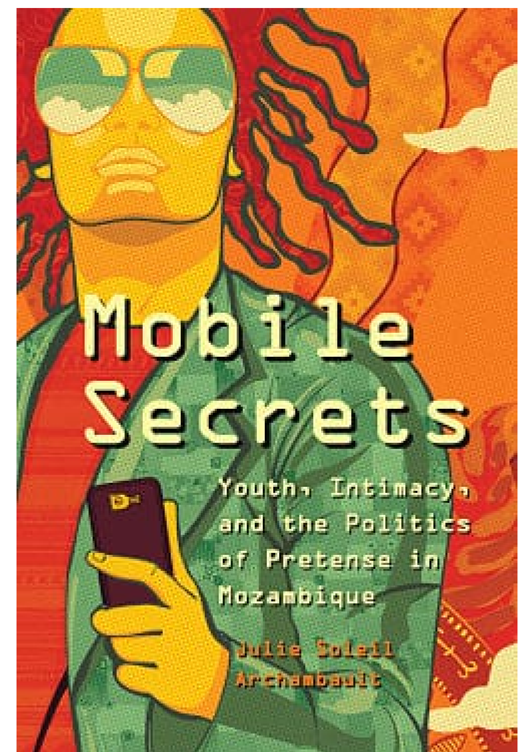
Mobile Secrets

Luisa Enria
July, 2018

Information and communications technology (ICT) has been hailed as the holy

grail of "transformational development", the source of growing innovations (such as the sending of remittances through mobile phones) and an expanding market for the Africa Rising narrative. Scholars and activists are also increasingly interested in how social media and platforms such as WhatsApp can be used as catalysts for social change, by social movements and in democratic processes. What is unique and refreshing about Julie Archambault's *Mobile Secrets: Youth, Intimacy and the Politics of Pretence in Mozambique* is its very different exploration of the role of mobile phones in processes of social transformation, looking at how new forms of communication become tools in young Mozambicans' efforts to make life meaningful, create relationships and forge a future in the midst of uncertainty. These questions strike to the core of debates about morality, sociality and the shape of the future for young people across the continent. This way, mobile phones offer an entry point into much more important questions, offering a novel insight into themes that have long been the concern of anthropologists.

Through a vibrant and engaging ethnography, Archambault lets us into the lives of her interlocutors in the Mozambican suburb of Liberdade, showing us how the mobile phone has opened up "virtual spaces of intimacy in which new, and not-so-new ways of being and relating can be tried out and negotiated" (p.22). Through confident and reflexive prose, she narrates at times humorous at times challenging stories about love, relationships and struggles for achieving social status. Pretence, facades and "wilful blindness" are central to these struggles as young men and women in Liberdade "cruise" through uncertainty.



> *The mobile phone, the book shows, is a fundamental tool in efforts to balance the need to display social status and to conceal other aspects of life, or the negotiation of multiple identities and relationships.*

These tensions are poignantly summarised by Ignacio, one of the young men from Liberdade who tells Archambault: "You know, many people who own fancy phones sleep on the floor, but if houses were made of glass, these people would have gotten beds long ago". Yet, *Mobile Secrets* does not allow us to see its protagonists as victims of a complex post-war political economy. Indeed, the book's most profound insights come from reflections on the mobile phone, in mediating the tensions between secrecy and display, serve a fundamental function in young people's projects of self-making.

The re-centring of agency in the study of youth has been a key component of scholarship on youth in recent years, most notably through Henrik Vigh's (2006) work on young men "navigating" complex terrains in Guinea Bissau or as exemplified in the collection *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood* (Christiansen, Utas and Vigh, 2006). Similarly, scholars are increasingly sensitive to the ways in which uncertainty and crisis can be productive and not simply constraining (e.g. Cooper and Pratten, 2015). *Mobile Secrets* adds an important dimension to these discussions by revealing the ways in which young people "cruise through uncertainty" by telling their own stories about their lives, by carefully, and selectively, curating their image and, consequently, their social position and relations to others. As Michael Jackson's work on existential anthropology and the politics of storytelling has taught us, telling stories about oneself and gaining a sense of self through our interaction with others is central to what it means to be human. Stories "enable us to regain some purchase over the events that confound us, humble us, and leave us helpless, salvaging a sense that we have some say in the way our lives unfold" (Jackson, 2002, p. 17).

These projects of self-making amongst Liberdade youth are well encapsulated by the concept of *visão* which is not simply the ability to "see and read the

landscape" but also knowing how to "project a certain image, how to play with the visions of others" (p.19). *Visão* is therefore the ability to keep an eye on the present while moving towards the future, but it is also the ability to decide what others see and what they don't see as well. Ironically, it is also about not seeing, in the sense of knowing when to feign ignorance so as to keep social relations intact. Mobile phones, both as status symbol and as mediums of discreet communication are instrumental in young people's efforts to shape their lives against the odds. Occasionally the reader is left wondering whether mobiles are granted too much importance in the description of practices that are not premised on the existence of this technology. Yet, mobiles do serve an important symbolic role as the way they are used by young Mozambicans express the productivity as well as the production of uncertainty.

This manifests itself in the ways that new technologies offer possibilities for surviving the present as well as for trying to reach higher levels in the future. Young people in Liberdade for example generate new economic opportunities (not all legal) through the creative use of the mobile phone. Mobile phones are also increasingly central in negotiations over redistribution and dependency, and, are therefore important in the making and mediating of social relations. This is most evident in the way mobile phones have entered the management of romantic and sexual relationships. Young people flirt through the mobile phone; illicit relationships are concealed (not always successfully) through secret messages, as the phone becomes a key source of jealousy. *Chular*—the "taking advantage of someone under sexual pretences"– is also facilitated by the phone, though Archambault avoids what are often facile analyses of such relationships as transactional, allowing for a complex combination of affect and opportunism. Whilst in the West we are increasingly concerned about the role of technology in process of atomisation and alienation, Archambault shows that the practices of concealment and "wilful blindness" that mobiles facilitate in Liberdade in fact are what make intimacy and trust possible.

In all these domains, *Mobile Secrets* shows how young people use mobiles to gain a "degree of authorship and control over their lives". Whilst the book's stories

make clear that this is a project that requires concealment, curated display and a careful management of personal relations, conceiving of this only as a form of "pretence" risks foreclosing the possibility that such projects of self-making are oriented towards imagining a future, aspirational self rather than simply covering up less flattering realities. As the book reminds us, certainty can be a "hope killer" (152). The point then, is not about dishonesty but imagination, and the ability to imagine is a central part of living, rather than simply surviving, to put it in the terms of the protagonists of *Mobile Secrets*. This raises, as Archambault acknowledges, also a challenging question for research as an enterprise of discovery aimed at analytical clarity. "What happens to the anthropological project of disclosure in a social world embroiled in the politics of pretence?"—she asks in *Chapter 6* on "Truth and Wilful Blindness". I would also add: what is our responsibility as ethnographers in terms of taking seriously the stories our interlocutors want to tell about themselves and to embrace the contradictions that this entails? As new technologies open avenues for young people to imagine themselves and their future, they also create new opportunities to interrogate our ethnographic gaze.

Photo (cropped) by ethekwinigirl (flickr.com, CC BY-NC 2.0)

Personalizing Access, Personalizing Praxis

Emma Louise Backe
July, 2018

Anthropology trained us to identify systems of oppression, those “invisibilized” dimensions of culture that reek of prejudice, privilege, and disproportionate power dynamics. These are the very theoretical and methodological orientations we bring to bear now in this public reckoning.

Participant-observation—to sit ‘outside of’ and ‘within’ at the same time, is the central paradox and promise of ethnographic fieldwork. Paired with self-reflexivity, this praxis has been an acknowledgement, if not absolution, of bias, an excuse to avoid the personal dimensions of anthropological work. We carry the privilege of embeddedness and separation, the “unbearable lightness” (Redfield 2012) of ethnographic mobility, which allows practitioners to move between fieldsites. This moment is rent by the perceived tension between the personal and the political—that idiom of feminist advocacy blending ethnographies of the

particular, as it were, with institutional, structural analysis. Far too often, an individual's scholarship and contributions to the discipline have been used as a defense against their misconduct. A professor's prominent reputation in one field of study can be used as a protective shield against critiques of the dubious behaviors they personally adopt, while simultaneously condemning the very same power structures in the classroom or in a journal article. The professors who attend sexual harassment trainings or unconscious bias workshops and debate the facilitator on the politics of consent and difference, use their academic training as a shield, to avoid considering how they have themselves exploited their positions of power.

> *What worth is your mastery of Foucault, that Panoptic gaze wandering everywhere but inward?*

The injustice of such an inflection point is not the stripping away of 'Ivory Tower' honors from those accused of misconduct. Our attention should instead be focused on the scholars who never got to join the conversation because of harassment and abuse, such as latent racism, misgendering, benevolent sexism, ableism. Those who weren't able to access research because of paywalls; anachronistic conceptions of ethnography in the exotic and the elsewhere; the belief that anthropology could neither be for or by them. Not to mention the way that power metastasizes between professors and their students, or the forms of judgment that percolate between intellectuals fortunate enough to secure positions in academe and those who work outside of academia because of their personal politics or professional precarity. For indeed, a scholar's investments in particular kinds of ethnographic inquiry because of their identity is often seen as invalidating or undermining the veracity and rigor of their approach.

> *We are too close to the subject—because we never allow the subject to be ourselves, despite all the exhortations of emic and etic.*

But the anthropologists-in-training were always watching. We saw how

anthropology was good to think with, just as we learned which modes of being with the theory were considered legitimate. Our bodies, as delicate instruments of ethnography, needed to be perfectly calibrated to the intellectual and cultural expectations of the classroom and the conference hall, learning how to code our difference through the texts we'd been assigned to read. At the same time, we versed ourselves in the politics of passing—encrypting our critiques of disciplinary culture, collecting fieldnotes of all the ways our unruly bodies, our unruly thinking-bodies, were regarded as disruptive. I say 'unruly' because it bespeaks a restlessness, a disquiet, an unwillingness to bow easily to discipline or order. Unruly also hints at the ways that scholars with more personal or radical politics, as students, are often treated as wayward, failing to abide by the strict rules of the classroom.

Requests for pedagogical interventions like trigger warnings are not excesses of affect or sensitivity—they represent calls to recognize that there are personal stakes in our scholarship, as well as consequences. These consequences might manifest as the physical and epistemic risks of fieldwork, or considerations of intellectual and bodily safety, hazards often borne by the most vulnerable or the least secure in the discipline.

Anthropology essentially issues a challenge. It asks us to sit with uncertainty, to listen attentively and with care, to make spaces for the worlds not yet privy or ready to be hailed. It is a quiet call to rethink and remake the conditions that surround us. This is how we were trained—to disrupt and make plain, through personal stories and discourses, the possibility of multiplicity through alternative moral registers and subjugated forms of knowledge. The disciplinary structure of academia has often protected those who exploit their positions, while failing to reward those junior scholars working to enact the engaged, barefoot anthropology central to reframing our ethical paradigm at the end of the 20th century.

We must continue to take up that challenge, studying up and down and within, recognizing that such multiplicity is also generative of opportunity and possibility.

In the act of destabilization, we discover a new center of gravity, a fresh physical and epistemic footing amidst familiar terrain. #Hautalk is emblematic of the slow-motion crisis at the heart of the discipline—old problems of marginality folded and repeated in the cadences and rhythms of our work, punctuated by moments of outcry

> *So let us begin with our own margin work.*

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Shocked, not Surprised

Nayanika Mathur
July, 2018

The surest signal that we are having something akin to a #metoo moment in academia is when my social media accounts, email inbox, and phone go into a simultaneous meltdown with private messages.

In October last year a crowdsourced list naming sexual harassers in Indian academia was publicly posted on Facebook by a graduate student. Now known in South Asianist circles as, simply, *The List*, it created something of an earthquake for it named some of the most powerful and famous Indian male academics ranging from established Professors to the 'rising stars'. In the immediate aftermath of The List's posting, several South Asianist colleagues and friends told me – through confessional conversations and private messages on Twitter, Facebook, Email, and Whatsapp as well as in person at a large South Asia conference in Madison, Wisconsin – that they already knew of so-and-so's

predatory behaviour; that most of the names were unsurprising to them.

There has been an uncanny mimicking of a similar series of discussions in the immediate aftermath of the HAU exposes, starting with David Graeber's apology of an apology but particularly after the two separate letters from former employees of HAU. Once again, my phone and computer went ablaze, this time from my Cambridge and anthropology worlds, with messages that said "but of course we knew it", "it is finally out in the open", "oh – I had the same terrible experience," and "how very unsurprising", and so on.

What The List and #hautalk share, then, is this characteristic of being simultaneously unsurprising ("we always already knew this") and yet shocking ("OMG – can you believe this shit?!").

Ethnographically, this quality of revelations that do not surprise yet do shock, is worth exploring further. In the first, if we all already knew of these murky goings-on then why are we shocked? My proposition is that this doublethink emerges from, firstly, deeper questions of how we piece together legitimised evidence of malpractice within the academy and, secondly, from how networks of powerful individuals and elite universities collude to sustain disciplinary notions of prestige and success.

What counts as evidence?

How do we build up evidence of abuse and misconduct – be it financial, emotional, or sexual in nature – within the academy? The List was swiftly denounced by leading feminists from India, based largely in Delhi, on account of its anonymous nature and "lack of answerability." Instead, they claimed, "due process" should be followed which is "fair and just." The List and this knee-jerk critique led to a whole series of discussions on how one proves sexual harassment and the institutionalised structures that need to be strengthened, if not devised in the original, in order to deal with it.

With HAU, the allegations and defences are still unfolding – again with a

swiftness and largely through blog posts and tweets. The damning anonymised letters by employees of HAU as well as further testimonies by journal authors, and others on social media, have been countered by a "leaked" email that hints at a conspiracy against the journal, what the first letter from the HAU Board of Trustees somewhat grandiloquently described as "recent destabilizing efforts."

The Cambridge anthropology whisper networks had for long discussed and wondered about HAU and its editor-in-chief. We heard occasional rumours of misconduct including one incident of physical assault, though never with the graphic details and depth that the letters by HAU staff and other testimonies have outlined. And, yet, all of us – myself included – remained silent. For a discipline that has built up substantive bodies of knowledge by trading on gossip, rumour, hearsay, and whispers in the dark and has drawn deeply on the concept of the public/open secret, this silence is deafening.

Our collective complicit silence can be analysed through many means, as the introduction to this forum on Allegra Lab makes clear. I am personally intrigued by how this silence shows a reluctance on the part of "us" anthropologists to be ethnographic enough when it comes to our own quotidian and institutionalised practices. What is thick description if not the recurring narratives we hear from several people over a long period of deep hanging out? Ethnographic truths, though always partial, emerge from a practice of listening to our interlocutors and observing-absorbing words, actions, affective dispositions over time. As anthropology and other disciplines begin to take social media more seriously, surely we can study all that is currently unfolding under the hashtag of hautalk on AnthroTwitter as ethnographic matter. If nothing else, the quest for full evidence that has ensued on allegations made via The List or equally anonymous letters from former/present employees of HAU shows that we are willing – in our roles as ethnographers – to build up serious texts on the backs of rumour, gossip, chitchat, urban legends, accusations, and reputations out "there" in "our field-sites". However, once "back home" to the academy then we demand a more bureaucratically rationalised, legally proscribed, technocratically transparent process with the soothing paraphernalia of independent inquiries, scrutiny of

documents, investigative committees and reports, and ritualised auditory performances.

As the most recent letter signed by 82 anthropologists who are past and present members of the editorial board of HAU notes, “These are serious accusations, which must be thoroughly investigated. *To the extent that they are verified*, those responsible must be called to account” (emphasis mine).

> *But what rituals of verification is the editorial board seeking that can produce further evidence of misconduct and financial malpractice than what is already in the public domain?*

The question to pose here is the one that Marilyn Strathern – ironically, a signatory of this statement – had so sharply noted with regard to audit cultures: “Only certain social practices take a form which will convince, one which will persuade those to whom accountability is to be rendered – whether it is ‘the government’ or the taxpayer/public – that accountability has indeed been rendered. Only certain operations will count (2000: 1-2).” The question with accusations of malpractice within the academy – be they through The List or the HAU letters – is what operations can be made to count as convincing enough when the nature of evidence is testimonial in nature and narrative-driven, rather than one that can be bureaucratically and technocratically accounted for?

The comparative method

Might comparisons help us with this thorny question of finding fully-verifiable evidence of misconduct? Let me offer two brief thoughts on this. The first is drawn from my own ethnographic work on transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption practices in India and the second is more specific to the very culture of anthropology as institutionalised practice as evidenced in the functioning of high-prestige, metric-busting journals like HAU.

> *What we are seeing in several calls for HAU to make its functioning transparent*

> *and accountable to the wider anthropological community is similar, in many ways, to the demands being put on the Indian state to make its quotidian bureaucratic labour visible for all to behold and to judge.*

As with the case of HAU, this increasingly angry demand, stems from allegations of fraud, corruption, and general abuse of power. My work makes me deeply sceptical of the impact of Indian reforms to make-transparent and render-accountable for the ethnographic research shows clearly that they have *ended up obscuring much more than they are revealing*. In lieu of opening-up the state's inner recesses for all to behold and, thus, check malpractices or inefficiencies, these supposed reforms have merely created an additional material, papery official reality that falsely attests to the expending of state labour. In the process, substantive welfare work has been effectively stymied with bureaucrats spending all their time and energy on the production of material testaments of transparent governance.

All this is not to say that we don't demand to know how HAU was being governed and (mis)managed for all these years. As Ilana Gershon's perceptive opening post shows, there is a lot we can understand by looking at both the bureaucracy and technology at play within the journal. Rather, it is to caution against the generic demand for "verification", "transparency and accountability", and "audit" that are being made by several forums that are not merely discounting the hard evidence that is already in the public domain, but also can end up undermining the radical potentiality of the current #hautalk moment that is – at long last – allowing us to speak certain truths freely.

A comparison with The List is, again, instructive here. The List was illuminating not for the names it put out, but due to the new and genuinely surprising conversations it led to; conversations that have hitherto only taken place in hushed tones, if even that. Women I have known for years opened-up for the very first time with accounts of sexual harassment that they have experienced; others of the ways in which turning down advances has affected their careers and lives.

Ever since it was first posted in October 2017, discussions on The List has dominated all my meetings with South Asianists. Unfortunately, though, this long overdue conversation seems to have stalled beyond cocktail party conversations due to an impasse it ultimately arrived upon. Crudely speaking, an unbridgeable division was set up between those who stressed and advocated for "due process" in terms of institutionalised committees and guidelines to be followed, and those who wished to privilege and place belief in the testimonies of the victims of sexual assault and harassment.

Papering over Haugate

There is a danger that the HAU implosion – or explosion, depending on how you see it – can meet a similar fate as The List. I can see hints of it descending merely into a story of a bromance gone spectacularly sour: the ushering in of an era of "Graeber Vs. da Col" as opposed to the "da Col hearts Graeber" dynamic that underlay the first issue of HAU with their macho manifesto of "ethnographic theory". When not centred on the personalities of the two squabbling boys, there is a discussion of structural imbalance. A rockstar anarchist and LSE Professor with a twitter following of 72K in a spat with a perennial grad student albeit the most famous one Cambridge anthropology has ever produced. Some are also defending da Col saying he might be difficult at times, but is being unfairly targeted. Most of these defences of the person at the centre of the storm reference their own relationships with him to claim them to be overall warm and positive. Once again, this is a question of the evidence one choses to believe in – one's own very personal relationship with someone who stands accused of serious misdemeanours, or the varying forms of testimonies of others. Anthropologically, this is also a question we have long studied under structure and agency debates: is there something structurally wrong with the journal or publishing/anthropology world OR is this about individualised problem agent/s.

> *To my mind, it is never just about either structure or agency but, as in this case, a torrid combination of both.*

The difficult personality or alpha males locking horns narratives are perhaps not as problematic as the liberal tokens of outrage that are now beginning to be churned out. The letter signed by past and present editorial board members is an excellent example of such a posture. It makes bland condemnatory noises and expresses a suitable level of moral outrage and implies innocent astonishment at the situation, but then immediately follows it up with demands for evidence and rituals of verification. Such a statement does the labour of exculpating the editorial members, but not the more vital work of pushing for radical reforms and a more critical apprehension of how this situation was allowed to develop in the first place.

> *Furthermore, we need to be aware – as anthropologists if nothing else – that there is a danger that supposedly official investigations might open-up the space to obfuscate the facts through a clever technocratic performance of depoliticised auditory expertise.*

The most recent statement by the board of trustees claiming it will "review all the documentation" that was provided by the "previous Interim Board" and with its un-anthropological snipe at social media, is an excellent example of how bureaucratic audits can take the sting out of the most serious of charges and neutralise the momentum for reform.

Just as the task of the HAU trustees is to protect the journal, the task before the rest of the anthropological world is to dig deeper as Zoe Todd and Elizabeth C Dunn have so brilliantly done. As Todd notes, what is encouraging about this moment is that people are finally speaking up. As such, #hautalk has inaugurated a series of much-needed conversations on open access (see also Jason Baird Jackson's post) decolonisation of anthropology, citational practices, the ethics and politics of voluntary labour by precarious grad students and early career researchers, the forms of labour that are required to maintain a journal, and cultural appropriation. The razor-sharp schooling of HAU on decolonisation by the Mahi Tahi steering committee is another brilliant instance of the political

potentiality of #hautalk.

Inadvertently, the anodyne letter by the editorial board has ended up revealing a core reason for why and how HAU became so successful – in terms of prestige and impact indices – so quickly. The names of the signatories and their institutional affiliations demonstrate in glorious technicolour what the former Treasurer of HAU describes as "power resulting from the perception of public support." The journal and its entrepreneurial Editor-in-Chief had marshalled together a large number of anthropologists from an astonishingly small number of elite Euro-American institutions who became invested in the project of keeping it alive. The politics of inclusion and exclusion, elitism, mate-ism, whiteness, and academic hierarchy that the institutional affiliations of past and present editorial board members signals requires another blog post – if not full-fledged conference – altogether. I should, once again, state upfront my own complicity in this. I have published one article in HAU in 2015 and was due to have another essay published in the next issue of HAU (I have since withdrawn that piece). Having spent the last decade studying and working at Cambridge – former and present members of which preponderate the editorial board membership – such forms of collaboration with HAU had become an aspirational norm. This attraction to the journal grew not out of any inherent value in its content but, rather due to the fact that everyone else from the same narrow club of elite Euro-American anthropology departments that you belong to or, perhaps more accurately, *desired to belong to*, were doing the very same.

My submission, in brief, is that the recent revelations from The List and #hautalk have been largely unsurprising because we always-already-sort-of knew about widespread sexual harassment, misconduct, and corruption. Yet, these revelations shock. The shock comes from the fact that they have revealed that which we would rather remain unsaid; the revelations give disturbing – and probably not publicly available – details and via a medium – Facebook/Twitter/Blogs – that spreads like wildfire and open up further conversations and comments that, at least in the moment, disallow the issue from being brushed under the carpet. In other words, what is shocking about accusations of malpractices in academia is

not that they take place ("we all know that") but that we all know that and continue to act as if we don't know that till the point – such as with #hautalk – when we can no longer pretend we do not *really* know; that we don't have the evidence to support these allegations; and when we can no longer deny our own complicity in shoring up the invisibilised networks of power and academic prestige that allow for such abuse to be tolerated in the first place.

#PrecAnthro. Let's talk about unionisation.

PrecAnthro
July, 2018

The HAU controversy is both a disappointment and an opportunity.

It is a disappointment because it reflects the troubled condition in which academic anthropology finds itself at present. While we are taught that our discipline's mission is to understand how power, hierarchy, economic, gender, and social inequality work, much of the discussions among those centrally involved in the controversy have been framed as mutual recriminations or apologies, while more critical voices have emerged on social media. We feel this development misses the larger point: that the abuses at HAU rely on structural inequalities that have worsened under the introduction of new managerialism and commodification of academia in the past decades (see posts by Ilana Gershon and Jason Baird Jackson).

The issues that have recently emerged are open secrets, the kind of experiences

> *that junior and/or un-tenured scholars routinely recount from their everyday struggles to remain in academia and make their professional lives tolerable.*

The issues that have recently emerged are open secrets, the kind of experiences that junior and/or un-tenured scholars routinely recount from their everyday struggles to remain in academia and make their professional lives tolerable. While we acknowledge that every case requires careful unpacking and critical analysis, we underline that these issues extend well beyond the HAU case. The larger and more pressing question to address is how deepening structural inequalities have become the breeding ground for toxic power relations, opening the door to abuse, silencing its victims, and dimming the critical and reflexive abilities of tenured scholars towards their own responsibilities in ensuring a just working environment for untenured staff.

The fact that abuses can go unaddressed for so long, and that when they come to light, their victims feel they need to turn to the protective promise of anonymity is only the immediate symptom of the more general malady of our discipline's failed decolonisation as other colleagues have argued e.g. here and here.

This, together with the increased precariousness of employment conditions, gives license to the predatory structures of new divisions of labour within the discipline.

We are concerned, most of all, with the kind of hierarchies through which those in secure positions have been allowing academia, without much resistance or signs of reflection, to become a place of increasing inequality. Under this newer two-tiered system, benefits of patronisation accrue to tenured scholars who are entitled to apply for, receive, and manage research funding, while others are relegated to the precarious conditions that the teaching and research buy-out system affords to them. Under this system, those few who have obtained 'super-star' status by bringing money and prestige to their institutions, and have thus profited most from the status quo, are responsible for employing large swathes of precarious academics. It is a situation in which the latter, precarious students and early career researchers and teaching-only staff, are utilised and exploited as

cheap labour, but without any real guarantee of permanent employment.

As long as precarious or unpaid ‘career development’ work is misleadingly framed as a pathway to permanency, these kinds of abuses are unlikely to disappear. The hope and encouragement of future permanency through demeaning work relationships leaves ‘junior’ scholars’ voiceless and vulnerable, as they are justifiably fearful of exclusion or punishment if they speak up. This neo-feudalisation of academia, where student numbers are growing steadily and the projectification of academic life is leading to an exponential increase in fixed-term and underpaid employment, creates a culture of subservience. At the heart of these systemic inequalities rolls a machinery of cut-throat competition that institutionalises gratis work, in which we are all caught up.

> *At the heart of these systemic inequalities rolls a machinery of cut-throat competition that institutionalises gratis work, in which we are all caught up.*

Moreover, in anthropology, as we are all aware, issues of fieldwork autonomy and authorship are truly contentious. These can too easily become spaces of exploitation, all the more so under the neoliberal academic imperative to ‘publish or perish’, the commercialisation of publishing, and the tyranny of rankings.

Rather than dwelling on the particulars of the HAU case, however revealing they might be, we would like to take this as an opportunity to start a discussion of broader issues in academia in general, and in anthropology in particular.

We therefore call for a collective rethinking of our responsibilities to foster ethical relationships among ourselves.

We believe it is now necessary to turn our attention to beginning a collective struggle against labour exploitation by creating a strong and vocal transnational union of anthropologists.

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transnational union of anthropologists.

Such a collective effort should take into consideration the hybrid and internationally diverse working environments we face, of which a journal such as HAU is just one instance.

It is imperative not to allow an armchair, machistic, ego-driven, one-wo/man show anthropology to continue to extract surplus from precarious academics and reign over our discipline, in blatant disregard of the values we are taught are central to our work. This will be the topic of the #PrecAnthro2 workshop at the upcoming European Association of Social Anthropology conference that we invite you all to attend. In continuation of our PrecAnthro initiative from 2016, we will explore the promises and openings of unionising. We will further pursue our goal of making anthropology a more equal and open discipline and seek out the best ways to do this collectively and collaboratively. The event will provide a space to propose some concrete steps addressing these issues, including, for instance, writing a code of conduct in academic employment.

Unionising today means fighting against conditions that allow precarious workers to be exploited and abused. It means opening up a space in which precarious academics can speak up against the various forms exploitation and abuse can take, without fearing for their future career prospects or reputations. It means speaking up, and fighting against, the predatory practices that affect so many of us, yet remain unchallenged because of deeply entrenched power relations sustained by the neoliberal system in which academia is embedded. It means properly acknowledging the work of junior and precarious academics labouring under senior scholars, and reminding the latter of their responsibility to ensure dignity in their working environments. It also means using the analytical tools at our disposal to critically engage with the exploitative practices of neoliberal academia in general, while following an ethical imperative of challenging injustice where we see it. It means confronting the still very present colonialist tendencies in the way our discipline is practiced, and engaging frontally with injustice, abuse,

racism, misogyny, and exploitation. It means doing this not only in our fieldwork, but also in our departments, institutions, and journals 'at home'.

Join us in this collective struggle for a more just anthropological future!

On behalf of the PrecAnthro Collective

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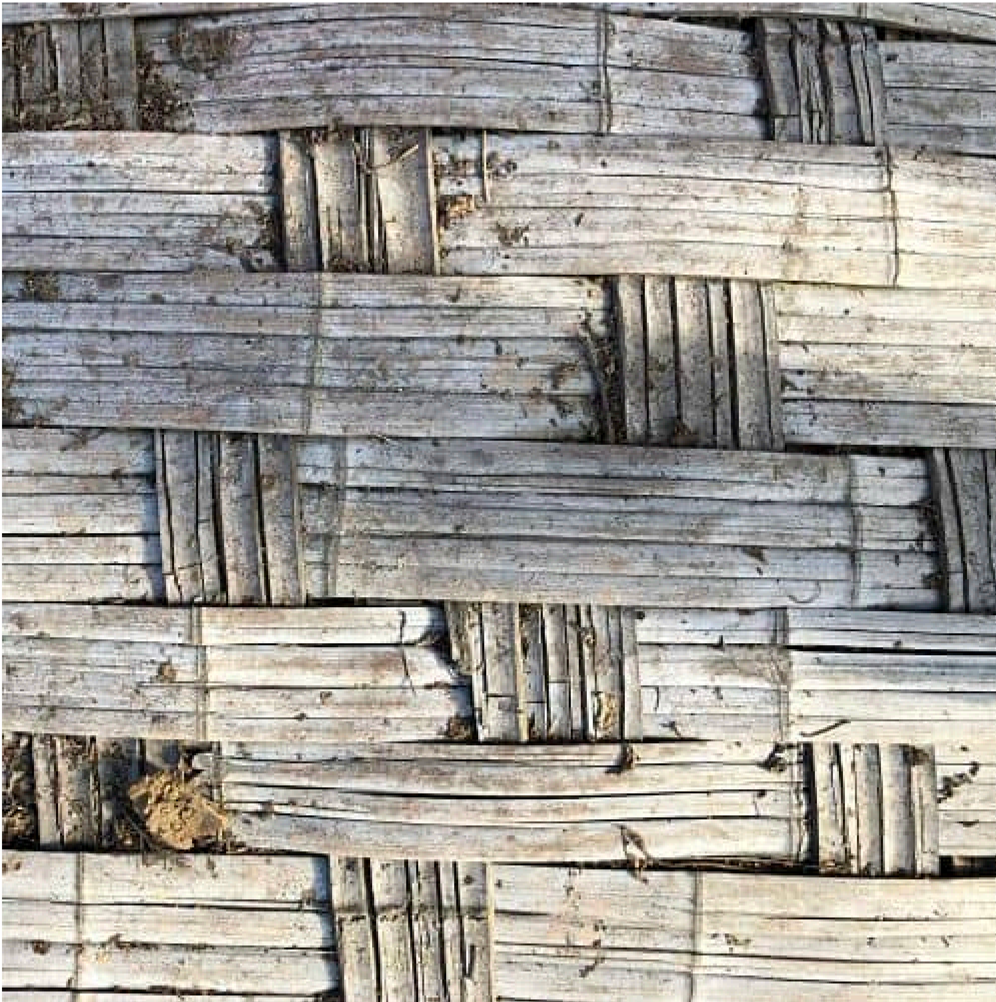
Community-Based Open Access, Fast and Slow

Jason Baird Jackson
July, 2018



I would like to make the case that open access remains relevant to the mix of painful problems and worthy opportunities still before the ethnographic disciplines in the #hautalk moment.

The promise of doing good in the world is what attracted so many of our colleagues to support HAU as a means of transitioning to greater open access (OA) in our publishing work. This is clear from the two anonymous insider letters (link *here* and *here*). I honor the commitment of these student and early-career scholar-activists and I worried throughout, in a vague way, about their fate even as I also worried over what HAU would do for, and to, our fields and to the cause of a more accessible and ethical publishing ecosystem. I support the work that they (as HAU's non-leaders) did and the difference that they were trying to—and did—make. The monumental fruits of their labor are worth celebrating, engaging,

and honoring. I thank them.

(With others) I have tried to make the ethical case for OA on too many other occasions already. I feel like a broken record (what we owe the communities we engage and study; global and intra-societal inequality; corporate enclosures; tuition-driven student debt; textbook costs; the degradation of scholarly libraries; regulatory capture; tragedies of the anti-commons; intellectual propertization; self-piracy, other issues…) The OA world is already too baroque, with too many confusing distinctions (corporate, predatory, green, gold, author-pays, etc.) and legal/technical systems. I am sorry that it has been so hard for us to collectively make sense of it and to act on what we have learned. I have tried to help. As with HAU, it sometimes seems a lot easier to just do OA than to explain and weigh OA. Our projects thrive (or, as with HAU, for a time appear to thrive) even as our discussions fail over and over again.

In this context, I worry about drawing out a new set of distinctions, but I think that they relate to the work of making sense of HAU.

> *My understanding is that Allegra Lab has been an advocate for slowness and here I can try to speak of a slow OA.*

Whatever else HAU has been, it has not been slow in the slow movement sense. The whole ethos was one of more, bigger, better, faster (see Ilana Gershon's analysis). An ethos in this sense is not primordial. An ethos is made by some people interacting with some other people in interaction with various objects and knowledges and values (etc.) in networks, face-to-face contexts, performances (etc.). I am not close enough to the details to know how HAU became so fast and big not just in product but in ethos, but I hope that I am not alone in seeing this dynamic. Giant issues, a giant, star-studded masthead, a book series, another book series, still another book series, conferences, networks, sophisticated social media campaigns, skyrocketing metrics and prestige. It was hard (before #hautalk) not to be impressed by the sheer amount of activity and scholarship published and performed under HAU's flag. It might not be everyone's cup of

ethnographic tea, but it was a lot of scholarly stuff getting made. For those who were doing similar work before HAU was born and while it was growing so rapidly, it was a bit of a shocker to see it unfolding. I think those, like me, who were watching from the outside found it astounding. The case made by the anonymous letter writers is that it was also shocking on the inside, but for (unhealthy) reasons that help explain the shock of those watching on the outside. It doesn't look good.

The case for the move of HAU into partnership with the (well-regarded, highly-skilled, non-profit) University of Chicago Press has been described by HAU insiders as essential in order to stabilize the organization's many efforts. In explaining the HAU position, a HAU Facebook post spoke of requiring "an infrastructure commensurate with its newly-found scope. We believe that the success of its various endeavors has necessitated a rearranging of its financial footing and editorial organization."

> *On the ethical plane, I have to ask why again did HAU have to do so much so fast?*

I am sure that for HAU leaders, it was rather exciting in the same way that being in a successful startup tech firm might be exciting for those who want to be in a successful startup tech firm. But did anthropology need it to be so big so fast? Who among us is short on scholarly reading material? Who among us is able to keep up with the core literatures in our subfields? I started a new journal in a strange institutional and organizational context so I can hardly question the founding of new journals to do new things, but the story of HAU includes a rare story of scale and speed.

When *Cultural Anthropology* moved to a gold open access framework, it made an existing journal better (in my book at least) through transformation. HAU was instead additive. I get how that can be good, compelling. *Cultural Anthropology* was once the exciting new journal breaking with established conventions in U.S. anthropology. But survey the output of HAU and HAU Books and then re-read the

anonymous letters from the HAU participants. The drive to do fast and big open access haunts those accounts. Some of that drive was surely entrepreneurial and centers on the Editor-in-Chief, but HAU published a lot of authors and a lot of scholars said yes when asked to join the masthead, do peer-reviews, copyedit, social mediatize, build technical infrastructures, and lobby their librarians for money (as I did). A sizable group of our colleagues joined in an effort to quickly build a giant OA machine. For myself, I wish that it had not gone down the way it did.

Why? First look at where we are now. Those letters paint an awful picture of suffering and, if we take them seriously (which I do), they reveal many laminated layers of collective failure, including failure to protect and support and foster the well-being and careers of vulnerable colleagues. The HAU effort has clearly done harm (even as it has done real scholarly work). Even if one somehow refused to accept the hurt and frustration conveyed by the authors of those letters, look what big, fast HAU has done by way of anger, distrust, hostility, frustration, etc. in the larger community that it aspired, as a collective project, to serve.

I accept that "save OA" is not the main point right now, but I feared this day in which HAU's failure (big, fast, start-up company-like things do often fail or flounder, after all) would cast further doubt on all efforts at scholarly communication reform. Speaking of the kinds of grassroots publishing efforts that HAU began as, leaders in the corporate scholarly publishing world describe them as foolish, utopian, amateur boondoggles. Scholars, they argue, should get back to scholarship and let publishers do the work of publishing. Setting out to prove such voices wrong, HAU has now provided a lot of evidence to support just this contention. That really bums me out, because in the shadow of fast and giant HAU are many smaller, slower, more patient, experimental, and humanely-scaled DIY publishing efforts. Those efforts aspire to do, and clearly do do, ethical work in ethical ways and at a scale that enhances the life of those who participate in them.

What has happened with HAU makes the work of those slower, more local or

> *more topically focused or more experimental or more diverse (or just less characterized by ambition or hubris) projects harder.*

It will now be still more difficult to seek funding from potential patrons. It will be harder to recruit volunteers to labor in the "everyone give a little labor sitting around the table eating pizza tonight because we are all in this together" way that has been common to such projects. It will be still harder to secure graduate editorial assistantships, for instance, from Deans or Provosts, thereby depriving students of unique opportunities for training and supportive mentorship and networking and also experiences that can lead to jobs in academic publishing. I spend enough time with Deans to not have trouble anticipating replies like: "Money is tight and the last thing we want is to be at the center of some debacle. Didn't anthropology already have some big fiasco with some open access journal recently?"

Support for publishing projects and editorial offices has been in decline for two decades already. In the United States, budget contraction and risk avoidance (after monumental disasters at Penn State University and Michigan State University) are generally stifling innovation and fostering the very corporate enclosure of our publishing projects that community-based, open access publishing projects are trying to respond to.

In the HAU case, I sense (without proof) that the decision to partner with the University of Chicago Press was not only about money but about the organizational problems that are now being weighed publicly. That would be logical on some level, but the "save OA" crowd would be right, I think, in feeling that OA was thrown under the bus, with "firmer financial footing" being the manifest function but dealing with the mess behind the scenes as the latent one. For me, the firmer financial footing argument is based on a commitment to sustaining the big, fast HAU that I do not share. Why couldn't some of the energy that went into HAU have gone into transitioning some existing journals to not-author pays gold OA? Why couldn't some of it have been distributed more widely

around a range of projects or, if it had to be under one roof, couldn't there have been, as with the *Environmental Planning* family of journals HAU A, HAU B, HAU C and HAU D, each with different (and more diverse) editorial teams?

> *Why did the spirit of the gift have, in this instance, to be a giant pile of trade blankets set on fire in a masculine display of prowess and scale when it could have been sharing banana bread and fruit salad within a small group of colleagues and students working on a small book together?*

The could have been (and might still become) scenarios are many. The bottom line for me is that the HAU we got produced the mess that we are now trying to sort out. First, fellow colleagues seemed to have been hurt by it. Second, the discussion now makes clear that a sizable number of our colleagues took offense at the HAU ethos (for different and understandable reasons that I acknowledge but have only evoked on the edges). Third, what has happened with HAU is bad for the people involved but also bad for our fields as a whole, even as many understandably want to use it as an instructive case for addressing bigger structural problems, Fourth, what has happened with HAU has harmed the broader publishing reform effort that it endeavored to be at the vanguard of. It has given it a black eye within anthropology and it has created the appearance that community-driven open access cannot work when in actuality, HAU's problems are longstanding problems—social and cultural and interpersonal—remaining to be addressed in collective scholarly life.

Because community-based (rather than corporate) open access aims to address the greatest number of ethical or moral goals, it in the end is part and parcel of the larger project of making anthropology and the other ethnographic fields better—better for those who live and work and study within them and better for all those living and working in the social worlds that these fields seek to engage and understand. Those at the heart of HAU clearly believed themselves to be advancing this work but I feel like I spent seven years watching a fast-moving train speeding towards a wreck. I feared it, but I did not imagine it would be

nearly as big as it has turned out to be. If HAU survives, I hope that its next incarnation will have a different—slower and less self-confident—ethos.