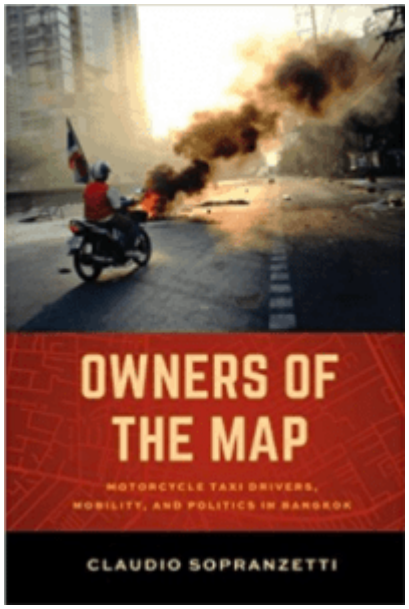
#Podcast Interview Round Up: The Best of March

Allegra
April, 2018

This month’s round up of the best anthropology podcasts brought to you in collaboration with the ever amazing New Books in Anthropology features motorcycles, Catalonians, sex work and the truth.



Owners of the Map: Motorcycle Taxi Drivers, Mobility and Politics in Bangkok

by Claudio Sopranzetti

(University of California Press 2017)

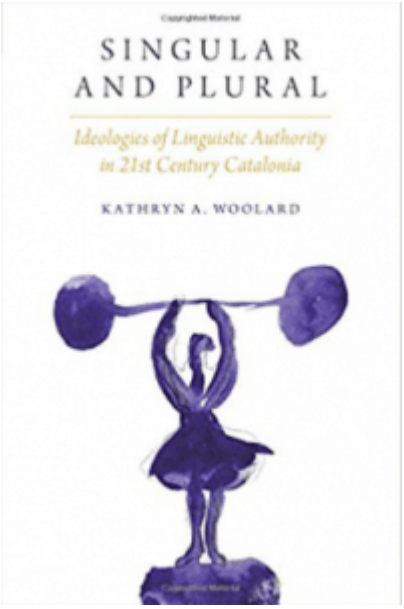
When the army brutally dispersed Red Shirts protestors in Bangkok's busy commercial district in May 2010, motorcycle taxi drivers emerged as a key force, capable of playing cat-and-mouse with security forces, evading military checkpoints, and rescuing protestors and their leaders once the army attacked them. Motorcycle taxis are ubiquitous across the developing world. Dexterously weaving in and out of dense urban conurbations, they transport people, commodities and news through peak traffic with an unparalleled knowledge of the city. They are owners of the map.

In his vividly etched monograph, *Owners of the Map: Motorcycle Taxi Drivers, Mobility and Politics in Bangkok* (University of California Press, 2017), Claudio Sopranzetti moves across the city and between city and country to examine how migrant laborers driven off the factory floor following structural adjustment reforms in the late-1990s turned to motorcycle taxi driving as a form of flexible and yet unfree means of livelihood. *Owners of the Map* not only confronts the specific realities of ordinary Thais resisting military authoritarianism over a decade-long period, but also the question of how modes of circulation can become sites of collective action, particularly for precarious workers, in the neoliberal moment.

Interview by Madhuri Karak

Listen **here**!

http://files.newbooksnetwork.com/southeastasia/040southeastasiasopranzetti.mp3



Singular and Plural: Ideologies of Linguistic Authority in Twenty-First Century Catalonia

by Kathryn Woolard

(Oxford University Press 2016)

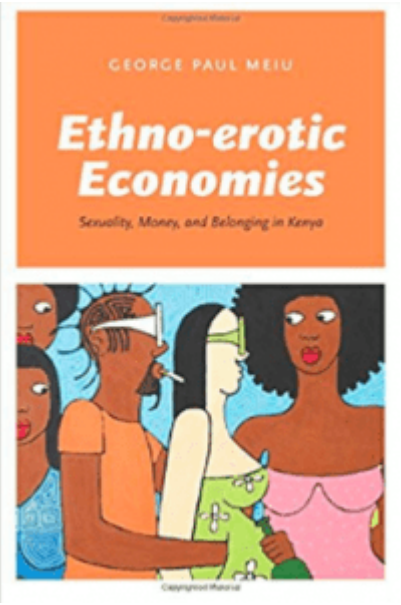
Kathryn Woolard is Professor Emerita and Research Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, San Diego. She has authored seminal works on language ideology and the sociolinguistic situation in Catalonia, including the present book *Singular and Plural: Ideologies of Linguistic Authority in Twenty-First Century Catalonia* (Oxford University Press, 2016) which won the 2017 Society for Linguistic Anthropology Edward Sapir Book Prize. Bringing together two of her longstanding areas of research interest in this book, Woolard develops a framework for analyzing ideologies of linguistic authority and applies it to the evolving political situation in Catalonia.

In this interview, Woolard discusses the key theoretical and contextual elements of the book, broadly following its three-part structure. First, the concepts of linguistic authenticity, anonymity, sociolinguistic naturalism are introduced, and Woolard sets out the changing ideological grounding of linguistic authority there over the course of twenty years of fieldwork in Catalonia. Next, Woolard's theoretical framework is applied to the case of a popular satirical television program which catalyzed the sociolinguistic rehabilitation of a Catalonian president whose Castilian Spanish was better than his Catalan. Finally, Woolard discusses her early and recent fieldwork in a Catalan-medium high school, and her experiences of following up on research informants first interviewed twenty years ago.

Interview by John Weston

Listen **here**!

https://files.newbooksnetwork.com/language/056languagewoolard.mp3



Ethno-erotic Economies: Sexuality, Money and Belonging in Kenya

by George Paul Meiu

(University of Chicago Press 2017)

Professor George Paul Meiu's debut anthropological book, *Ethno-erotic Economies: Sexuality, Money, and Belonging in Kenya* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), dives into the commodification of culture and sex on the beachfronts of coastal Kenya, as well as the ramifications and shifting economic power dynamics in rural Samburu villages that result from this new economy. Utilizing over a decade of community engagement and research, Meiu expertly engages in intense anthropological study without exploitation and judgment. Rather he succeeds in humanizing his subjects as he explores the creation and development of a new economy, that of engaging with white, largely Western European women, in romantic relationships in exchange for money, goods and, eventually, higher economic and social status in their home rural communities. But with this new economy comes challenges to traditional social structures, as sexuality and wealth intersect with traditional land tenure and power. Meiu, with his deep understanding of the Samburu people, rituals and culture, explores how power dynamics change, and how new money is challenged and reconciled. This book is highly readable, without skimping on academic literature and theoretical context, resulting in a book that will engage everyone from first year anthropology students through seasoned academics.

Interview by Erin Freas-Smith

Listen **here**!

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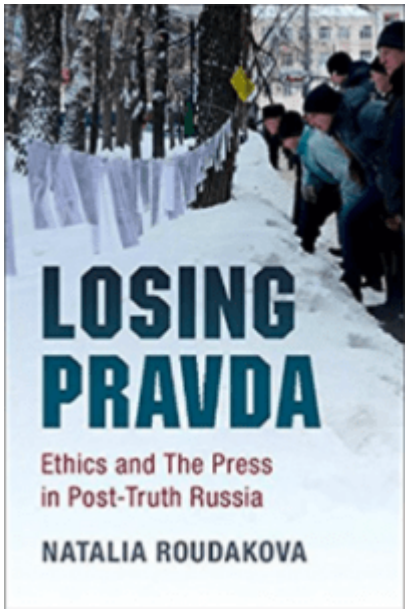

Losing Pravda: Ethics and the Press in Post-Truth Russia

by Natalia Roudakova

(Cambridge University Press 2017)

Natalia Roudakova's book *Losing Pravda: Ethics and the Press in Post-Truth Russia* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) explores changes in the world of journalism in Russia in the last fifty years. Drawing from more than a decade of research of various ethnographic and historical sources, Roudakova approaches truth as a social category. She demonstrates that the status of truth was relatively secure and stable under the Soviet state socialism. It was the transformation from communism to capitalism that led to a drastic dissolution of a sense of responsibility towards the public and, consequently, into the very possibility to produce truth in the post-socialist era. Looking into everyday practices of Soviet journalists and the post-socialist transformation of the media, *Losing Pravda* provides a glimpse into one possible future of the US and other post-truth settings in the West. Exploring how truth-seeking and truth-telling work under different socio-political conditions, it offers a new, ethics-based vocabulary for thinking about production of facts and meaning in contemporary world.

Interview by Carna Brkovic

Listen **here**!

https://files.newbooksnetwork.com/anthropology/018anthropologyroudakova.mp3

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Current Trends in the Anthropology of Bureaucracy – A Report

Chihab El Khachab
April, 2018

The study of bureaucracy has become a standard prerogative of English-language anthropology in recent years. Long gone are the days when bureaucracy was

considered the exclusive realm of political scientists and sociologists, in an intellectual division of labour where anthropology was assumed to be the study of "non-bureaucratic societies". In addition to the anthropologists who have become centrally concerned with public bureaucracies (Matthew Hull, Laura Bear, Nayanika Mathur, Akhil Gupta, Colin Hoag, David Graeber to name a few), others have encountered the subject through a separate route, often in the form of paperwork circulating among their interlocutors or discourses reproduced about "the state" and its nebulous operations. The growing anthropological interest in bureaucracy might be a sign of our own times as Graeber argues, yet it is also a knowledge-making project with implications beyond the bounds of social anthropology, whether in other disciplines or in the wider public.

With this context in mind, I have convened a seminar series at Oxford this winter term to gather ethnographers who have conducted fieldwork on different bureaucratic sites, in areas ranging from Jordan to France to Cameroon to the United States. There was no common thread in the selection of presentations other than this interest in the ethnography of bureaucracy, and contributions were elicited with the intention of diversifying case studies and approaches to the subject – including perspectives from gender and sexuality studies, linguistic anthropology, political theory, and science and technology studies.

> *Despite the range of presentations, the seminars addressed common themes concerning the gap between bureaucratic ideals and practices, the ethical dimensions of bureaucratic work, and the materiality and affectivity of paperwork (including in its digitized guise).*

This report is an attempt to gather these common threads together while highlighting the individual contributions made by each paper, most of which await publication. The seminar series was held in Christ Church and supported by the Christ Church Research Centre.

Eda Pepi started off the series with a paper on family registers in Jordan. A seemingly innocuous document where citizens record their family ties, the

register has become a contested site for the redefinition of what constitutes Jordanian citizenship. With historical and ethnographic erudition, Pepi explained how Jordan's gendered and racist citizenship laws, where male Jordanians with a "non-Jordanian" father and especially those of Palestinian descent are always liable to be denationalized, are negotiated by Jordanian women who seek to register their male kin to ensure that they will not arbitrarily lose their rights. Without being able to pass on citizenship on their own, Jordanian women navigate the constraints imposed by state institutions on their kin's ability to access state services and own property via unexpected uses of a personal registration document comparable to a state-sanctioned family tree, which has become in effect a more potent proof of identity than national passports.

Michael Prentice gave a paper attempting to answer a simple question: what is a corporation? Based on fieldwork in a South Korean firm, Prentice complicated the idea that the corporation is a single agency acting with a common and united will, because it is in fact a set of cooperating groups with legal and hierarchical ties that are not necessarily unified in everyday operations. With attention to the daily work conducted by the Human Resources and Public Relations division within his firm, Prentice showed how the corporation's power to act is not always unilaterally exercised from the top, but can also be constrained by the different types of expertise handled by various divisions within the corporation. This expertise shapes different expectations about the nature of the corporation itself and thereby allows expert actors to reframe and redefine what can be decided on behalf of "the corporation" by higher-level decision-makers. The broader issue raised by Prentice was the extent to which corporations and state bureaucracies, two social forms that are traditionally deemed distinct, can be compared based on this kind of relationship between expert knowledge and hierarchical authority.

José-María Muñoz gave a detailed account of the regulation of terrestrial freight transportation between Cameroon and Chad, specifically in the Douala-N'djamena corridor. Based on extensive fieldwork within the Cameroonian National Freight Bureau (BGFT) as well as among truckers manning the freight trade, Muñoz described the successive changes to the bureau's administration and regulations,

including material changes in paperwork going up to recent attempts at digitization. The presentation neatly illustrated how paperwork never really disappears or "dematerializes" in the bureau's work, as according to the dominant ideology circulated by modernizing elites nationally and internationally, but is rather rematerialized by accommodating existing paper-based arrangements with new practices of digital control over them. Muñoz's intervention is an excellent illustration of relative successes and failures in a transition to digital administration where the "heaviness" (*pesanteur*) of paper-based practices is what allows bureaucratic regulation to remain effective under conditions where it is deemed to be hindered by these very practices.

Seamus Montgomery presented on his fieldwork among European Union bureaucrats under the Juncker commission. Montgomery became interested in Juncker's announced project to create "a more political administration" in Brussels, which brought his interlocutors to reflect on the central tension between their professional image as neutral "technocrats" and what some of them perceived as an undue simplification of their bureaucratic work in an era marked by populist politics, from the Greek crisis to Brexit. Montgomery's broader project is to understand how bureaucrats attempt to craft a pan-European identity and how they deal with the inherent difficulties in pinning down what this "Europeanness" means in practice – especially under circumstances where each bureaucrat was socialized by national-level institutions. His paper highlighted the importance of taking seriously what bureaucrats think and say about themselves, and what we can learn about their process of identity formation in so doing.

Bernardo Zacka gave a paper about informal taxonomies on the front lines of welfare service provision in a large city in the Northeast United States. A political theorist by training, Zacka became interested in what the bureaucrat's ways of classifying different clients and their problems can tell us about democratic accountability and justice in the provision of services to the citizenry. Zacka concluded that while the discretion allowed to bureaucrats in the exercise of their profession is difficult to monitor according to a stringent abstract standard of democracy, their moral labour is still imperative to the everyday functioning of

state institutions. This labour allows them, among other things, to develop self-justifications about the conduct of their work under conditions where the needs of all clients cannot possibly be satisfied, given an underfinanced and understaffed administration. Zacka's argument is detailed in more depth in his recent book, *When the State Meets the Street*.

Julie Billaud presented on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva, an official monitoring process within the United Nations human rights system instituted to give all UN member states some feedbacks on their human rights record by fellow nations. With great attention to the work of interns within the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – including the anthropologist herself – in compiling comprehensive "country reports" about each participating delegation, Billaud highlighted the opportunities and constraints afforded to civil society organizations by a formulaic reporting process in order to ascertain human rights violations. The voices of all stakeholders are mediated by rigid linguistic rules, endless streams of paper, rigorous administrative procedures, and international civil servants working within the United Nations. With echoes from Zacka's paper, Billaud highlighted the importance of the bureaucrat's ethical labour, with an added attention to the material mediations in the bureaucratic process itself, emphasizing the invisible technical skills and affective labour behind the crafting of depersonalized documents.

Marie Alauzen gave a final talk on recent efforts to modernize online state administration in France, based on a case study dealing with the design and implementation of a platform called "FranceConnect". Inspired by Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) allowing users on any third-party website to verify their identity by logging via Facebook or Google for example, FranceConnect allows clients to access all administrative websites at once without logging in with separate credentials registered with different institutions each time. With a strong grounding in recent works on the state in French science and technology studies (e.g. Muniesa & Linhardt 2009, Linhardt 2012), Alauzen explained how FranceConnect's emergence can be understood as a "trial for the state", a moment where the state's very existence – in this case, its online control over

user identities – is put in question until it reacts through certain socio-technical arrangements and becomes describable in the process. In addition to its theoretical depth, Alauzen's presentation was a sobering reminder of the importance of engaging with scholarship beyond the English-speaking world, not least because it enriches existing conversations about the anthropology of bureaucracy in Anglo-American circles with novel case studies and theoretical insights (see, e.g., Muzzopappa & Villalta 2011, Ferreira & Nadai 2015).

Nayanika Mathur was scheduled to give a talk developing some key points in her recent prize-winning monograph, *Paper Tiger*, but it was cancelled due to the ongoing University and College Union (UCU) strike over announced pension cuts to the University Superannuation Scheme (USS) in the United Kingdom. This unexpected ending to the seminar series is a fitting reminder that the bureaucratic structures of governance examined by anthropologists all over the world bear similarities to the ones managing the anthropologist's own workplaces. The muddle generated by the cuts and ensuing strike acts as an invitation to clarify the ways in which university bureaucracies impact scholarly work and constrain knowledge production. An anthropology of bureaucracy that does not engage in this work of clarification and comparison will risk establishing exceptions where there might be, in effect, common mechanisms of authority and control.

Featured image (cropped) by Samuel Zeller (unsplash.com)

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"Living Art" and aesthetic learning – An interview with filmmaker Tina Krüger

Sarita Fae Jarmack
April, 2018

Living Art is a sensory oriented film that uses audiovisual methodologies to study the aesthetics and embodiment of contemporary art. I became interested, as a researcher on the South African art world, in how filmmaker Tina Krüger featured art practice and art works in her film to further her research questions about the aesthetic tendencies of contemporary Mozambican art. Released to the public in June 2017, her film has gained international recognition and won several awards, such as Best Feature Film at Women's Only Entertainment Film Festival 2017, Award of Merit at IndieFEST Film Awards 2017, Best Feature Documentary (Bronze) & Audience Award (Silver) at 12 Months Film Festival 2017. So far the film counts 19 official selections, the most recent being at The Fine Arts Film Festival in Venice California.

Having met up with Tina during her visit to Johannesburg we continued our

conversation on collaboration with artists and research on art worlds thinking more on ways to explore and share our lived experiences. Now back to our 'chat box' where so many of our exchanges take place as mobile researchers, I have invited Tina to share with Allegra Allies about the process of creating her film Living Art as it works to extend her ethnography and offer possibilities of working interdisciplinary.

FEB 6TH, 6:04PM

Sarita: Since your film follows young contemporary artists in Maputo, Mozambique, I was excited to see how it explores the art scene there. I watched it for a second or maybe third time when I returned from fieldwork in late 2017 and I was wondering if you could tell me more about how this project came into being and how you aim to use film in relation to your ethnographic work. I know it is late now, so I look forward to hearing from you whenever you have a moment to reflect.

FEB 8TH, 1:42PM

Tina: Thanks again for reaching out and for the opportunity to talk about my work and my film Living Art.

The short version of how the project came into being is basically that I wanted to make a film for my MA graduation project at the University Leiden in The Netherlands. I had a bunch of different ideas of course and it took a lot of reflection, conversations with my peers and supervisor to come to terms with it. What I struggled most with in the beginning was that for some reason I thought making a research and film about art wasn't anthropological or ethnographic enough. I am very glad that I met the right people in Leiden to open up my mind about this and push me to go through with combining my passion for art and visual anthropology.

With Living Art I wanted to approach it a bit differently from my earlier film

projects. The sensory ethnography genre inspired me a lot and I decided to try something in this direction. The process of making a film in this manner was eye opening and made me realize the real impact of how my relationship with the camera actually helps learn about the art I was filming in a more embodied and sensory way.

Since starting on the film I've been doing a lot of research and readings about more creative anthropology projects and approaches. For example I just began reading 'A different kind of ethnography' I heard about through you (Thanks for that!). It's been great to see how others explore similar questions to what I am interested in, and the insights they give in how to take creative ethnography to another level.

As for your question how I want to use film in relation to my ethnographic work, I am actually working on an exciting new project right now. I want to take it a step further away from classic visual anthropology, and this time actually make an art project based on my research. I've been planning and researching for roughly 18 months already and I hope I'll be able to bring it to life this year.

FEB 13TH, 4:07PM

Sarita: Oh, new projects! But before I get ahead of myself, I am wondering if you could share any key moments from your time at Leiden that provided insights or convinced you that your work on art through visual anthropology was 'ethnographic enough'. And of course I am also thinking, why art and Mozambique for this project?

FEB 16TH, 2:55PM

Tina: Well… it's hard for me to think about any particular key moment. It's more like the ongoing conversations with my peers and encouragement from my tutor made me gradually feel like I can actually go ahead with what I wanted to do.

The choice of this topic is very much personally motivated by my long relationship

with Mozambique and with the Mozambican art scene. I have been in Maputo for 10 years now and always had a strong connection with many artists and arts & culture institutions. In part because of my work as a filmmaker, which had me work with and for many of them, but also because I am an artist myself. I often feel like my time here in Maputo strongly influenced and shaped the way I grew into being an artist in the first place and into how I experience art and also strive to express myself through art.

Seeing that very little has been published about the fast growing and evolving contemporary art scene in Maputo it just made sense to do my research and the film about this topic.

FEB 26TH, 8:30PM

Sarita: Oooo… I have been away for a few days, but it was nice to get back and read a bit about your experience with Mozambique. I didn't know you had such a long relationship with the area.

You must have been able to see the space and art scene evolve over time while learning extensively about it. I was wondering what you learned through the process of your research? But also, you mentioned that the use of the camera helped you learn about the art, but I wonder if it is possible to explain a bit more about the 'embodied experience' in your process?

Hope all is well!

MAR 5TH, 3:34PM

Tina: I have been away on a documentary shoot in northern Mozambique.

The funny thing with this embodied approach I used to do my research, is that I learned a lot, but also very little at the same time. Let me explain.

Given my past history with Maputo and its art world I already had a sense of the

artistic tendencies happening here, right now. Based on that, I approached the artists that we can now see in the final film because I felt that they represented a variety of aspects that I see in the contemporary art scene. My close work with them, combined with a lot of background research, led me to the conclusion that it really isn't possible to make any defining statement about Maputo's contemporary art scene. All we can really talk about are tendencies, and by their nature those are extremely dynamic and changing rapidly.

The approach I used, tries to understand the artistic production from an angle that doesn't seek to define or categorize. I call it 'aesthetic learning'. Throughout my research I sought to get up close to the artists with my camera and really be present in the moment. We often didn't talk much and I hardly asked questions during these sessions. They were focused on their work, and I on trying to feel in on their work. I would pay close attention to colours, movement patterns, surrounding sounds and atmospheres, really everything that speaks to the senses. It is a bit abstract to explain, but these filming moments had an almost meditative character to them. Later I would write down what I thought and felt during these sessions, and also reflect on them again during the editing-analysis phase.

Let me give one example. When we think about art in most contexts, what comes to mind is the artist in a studio (or other detached space) working in a calm, silent environment. What I found characteristic for Maputo's contemporary artists is quite the opposite. Many of them work in public or semi-public spaces. There is a lot of noise and disturbance around them. Sometimes they are even subject to extreme weather conditions. I believe that these circumstances shape their practice and the art they produce. These qualities and influences cannot be derived from simply analyzing, or cataloguing the final products. That's what makes the embodied approach so interesting.

I will be working in my studio Wednesday – Sunday this week and it would be great to have a chat with shorter questions (and hopefully shorter answers too)

MAR 14TH, 10:07AM

Sarita: You know, I thought that using Facebook chat would break down some sort of formality in interviewing and allow for a different type of conversational flow. But I find myself still thinking a long time about what I type out here and revising all of my answers, so thanks for your patience.

Maybe I can offer a few reflections based on experiencing the piece:

The piece seems to work as a creative endeavour that, for me, is left more open in ways of affecting rather than the control of argument that an academic piece usually tries to evoke. However, as I am introduced to the medium I experience a few strategies that direct my experience, such as using sound prior to the clip change, which creates anticipation and curiosity for what is to come, and also the frame spilt guides my attention. Nevertheless, I look forward to continuing to experience pieces that make me think about different ways to engage argument, if that is the goal, my goal in academia. The up-close view on materials and bodies reminds me of when I shove my face into flowers to see what I can experience up close or run my fingers along places in my own ethnography, such as the gallery walls in Jozi. As I engage with it imaginatively (I am not sure if I really know what that means yet), the experience of this genre of film sort of works to wake up my other senses. Of course, I think about how the imagery for me is attractive and beautiful and I am thinking about how this relates to my own ideas of beauty and in comparison the unpleasant or unattractive or 'the ugly'. I wonder about what other work can be done (in our ethnography and creative endeavours) through playing with or evoking and exploring e.g. the unpleasant aesthetics (...probably will go back and read Sarah Nuttall's Beautiful/Ugly more). And I wonder, more generally, what work the film is doing for others and for whom and in what way. How did the art community that it was created with receive the film and what is one of the most interesting interactions with the content that you encountered?

MAR 15TH, 11:29PM

Tina: I know it is not as immediate as we thought it would be, but I still think this interview format has an advantage to it. There is more connection between what each of us is saying/asking than if you had sent me a list of questions. And I too am thinking quite a lot about how to answer, which is a good thing. I'm glad we tried this!

Thank you for your take and interpretation on the film. It was really rewarding reading how it spoke to you on an experiential level, and that in some ways it was also able to evoke your other senses. This is exactly what I was going for with this piece. And just as you said, my intention was to give up control to a point and leave the final argument of the film rather open so that each person who watched it could see, hear and feel it in their own unique way.

So far, the film had its premiere here in Maputo last year and I am happy to say that it was extremely well received. We even had a full house on premiere night.

Overall I got a lot of positive feedback from the artists I worked with, and also from many other artists and creative industry professionals in Maputo.

I would have to say the most interesting interaction with the content of my research and the film was my collaboration with the 7 protagonists for an interdisciplinary performance we presented prior to the screening at the premiere event. The idea for this came from one of my research findings, that there are underlying aesthetics that cross the boundaries of the different art practices. If this is the case, shouldn't it be possible to actually combine them? Instead of just using one as a supporting element for the other (like for example often music during dance performances). Our joint creative process had me reflect further on my findings and how we could conceive a performance that was in tone with my film, but still true to each artist's own creative language. The end result was something entirely new. For example we used the sound of cutting metal as music for the dancer. We combined dance and painting, blurring the lines between dancer, painter and canvas.

To give you an idea here is a short video of the live performance by the

protagonists of Living Art during the Mozambique premiere of the film:

Sarita: It can be rewarding to watch how others interact with a piece as a sort of shared negotiation of ideas, and I appreciated the inclusion of these interactions in the 3rd act of the film. With the performance you describe above, I am reminded of the possibility to push questions into new areas through collaboration is an important practice in ethnography and look forward to our future conversations about what this might mean or look like in sensory ethnography.

#EVENTS: GETTING READY FOR THE SUMMER!

Allegra
April, 2018

As the weather is getting warm and sunny (for some of us at least) and the spring semester is winding down, it definitely feels like summer is on its way. Which is why we're dedicating this month's list of events to summer schools, summer programmes, and summer workshops. And there definitely is a lot of fun stuff happening all over the world!

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

Workshop: Envy and Greed: A Political Economy of Accusation and Critique

4-5 June 2018, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK

The organizers are looking for grounded ethnographic work that explores how accusations of envy and greed are deployed in projects of moral policing that are shaped by inter and intra-community power relations. We believe that a deeper understanding of the economic and political realities of those being accused and those doing the accusing allows us to go beyond ethics as merely a cognitive set of rules to instead throw light on everyday hierarchies, inequalities, and differential relations of power. We hope that this workshop can be a step towards an intervention into debates within the anthropology of ethics and the anthropology of emotions and affect, bringing together scholars who emphasise not just social actors' thought-worlds, but also their material conditions and lived realities.

Our focus will be on how moral judgments about emotions are politicized in the course of broader collective struggles. The shift from a focus on emotional states themselves to a focus on accusations and judgements about those emotional states helps forge new connections between a range of vibrant debates within anthropology. We hope to invite contributions that are situated at the intersections between ethics and emotions, but those that simultaneously pay attention to the political and economic factors that shape people's ethical worldviews, their defences, judgements, accusations and anxieties. Potential topics might include but are not limited to the themes of witchcraft, speculative bubbles, commodity booms and busts, inter-ethnic violence, racism, right-wing populism, moral policing, and modes of ethical self-fashioning. [more]

Deadline for submission of proposals: 27 April 2018

Workshop: [(Mis)trust, money and debt in interdisciplinary perspective]

15 June 2018, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK

Trust and faith are basic attributes of modern monetary systems. Trust is also recognized as a public good, the maximization of which yields growth and harmony. But if we know what 'trust' is – or ought to be – do we therefore understand its opposite? Is 'mistrust' always the inverse of 'trust'? Does mistrust lead to strictly vicious circles of societal destruction? Similarly, are narratives of bursting bubbles, economic decline and corrosive structural violence the only kinds of stories that can be told when considering money and mistrust? This workshop aims to explore the roles, qualities and affordances of (mis)trust within socioeconomic life, as well as create a space for dialogues across disciplinary boundaries and methodologies. We begin from the general situation of human beings often having to cooperate with untrustworthy others, of mutual obligations and expectations bridging subjectivities shot through with mistrust and perhaps especially so when money and debt is involved. Thus, we welcome contributions that (1) suspend assumptions about the concepts of trust and mistrust, and (2) explore the expression and importance of (mis)trust in diverse political economies and sociocultural settings. [more]

EXTENDED DEADLINE for submission of abstracts: 30 April 2018

Telciu Summer School: [Labor dystopias and redundant humans: slaveries, serfdoms, precariousness]

11-18 August 2018, Telciu, Romania

The 2018 edition of the Telciu Summer School is dedicated to forms of unfree, precarious, or unremunerated labor across the global capitalist system, the structural changes they have historically undergone, and the continuities that characterize them in the present.

Slavery, serfdom, subsistence work, sharecropping, indentureship, debt peonage and other forms of non-wage labor have usually been considered lower, backward forms of labor, incompatible with the free labor characterizing the capitalist labor market of core areas and meant to eventually disappear. The colonized and peripheral locations in which such labor forms predominated were in turn seen as merely on their way to capitalism, yet never quite there.

The Telciu Summer School is interested instead in highlighting the historical connections between and the continuities among labor regimes usually constructed as polar opposites. [more]

Deadline for application: 1 August 2018

CENTER FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH
University of California, Berkeley

Summer Workshop: [Qualitative Research Methods]

22 May-21 June 2018, Center for Ethnographic Research, UC Berkeley, California

The Center for Ethnographic Research (CER) Summer Workshop provides mentorship, hands-on research experience, and advanced training in designing

and executing a project using qualitative methods for motivated undergraduates and beginning graduate students. The CER Summer Workshop will provide students with six weeks of intensive accelerated methodological training in the design and practice of qualitative methods in weekly seminars taught by advanced graduate students. The topics in the seminars include the following:

- The Logic and Practice of Qualitative Research Design
- Participant Observation
- In-Depth Interviewing
- Qualitative Data Analysis

In addition to these weekly seminars, each participant will meet individually with the instructors and receive feedback on research project development and design.

During the CER workshop, students develop an empirical research project proposal for an honors thesis, masters thesis, advanced methods class, scholarly article, or conference presentation. In this process, students develop hands-on research and logistical experience and receive structure and guidance in the development of an independent and original project. Students will walk away with a refined 6-page research proposal for an honors thesis, masters thesis, graduate school, or fellowship application. They will also gain first-hand experience in qualitative research data collection and analysis methods through a collective research project conducted during the six weeks of the workshop.

In addition to in-person group seminars on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1-4:30, participants are expected to meet weekly with the graduate mentors on their individual projects. Participants should expect to spend about 20 hours per week in seminars, meetings, and completing assignments. [more]

Urban Summer School: Open form

26 August-8 September 2018, Lublin, Warsaw, Szumin, Poland

Completed works by one of the most discussed architectural tandems in post-war Poland, Oskar (1922-2005) and Zofia (1924-2013) Hansen, will become a testing ground for the duration of the Urban Summer School, that is, for two weeks. This international and interdisciplinary project is yet another instalment of the "Visions and Experiences" summer school, initiated by the Centre for Urban History of East Central Europe in Lviv, and devoted to urban issues. We welcome undergraduate and postgraduate students, researchers and young professionals operating in the field of architecture, urban planning, art and design, as well as representatives of other areas of humanities (history, sociology, fine arts, anthropology, and more). We extend invitation to all those interested in the present functioning, and the future of modernist housing estates. [more]

Deadline for application: 7 May 2018

Summer Institute Programme 2018: The knowledge society and the challenges of doing research in Africa: theoretical perspectives and methodical approaches

23 July-3 August 2018, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

The Ife Institute of Advanced Studies hereby announces its call for applications for its second doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships taking place at one of Africa's most beautiful and serene university campuses, the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The goal of the summer residential programme is to facilitate and foster innovative research of young scholars in the academy, particularly those in

the humanities and social sciences, by exposing them to relevant theoretical and methodical tools in their respective disciplines. The institute's summer programme will be anchored by an impressive number of senior scholars from Nigeria and abroad engaging a wide range of themes and issues that are designed to deepen the understanding of research and teaching mission in the academy. [more]

Deadline for application: 11 May 2018

Summer Doctoral School 2019: Religion and atheism in pluralist societies

17-19 June 2019, Université de Nantes, France

The Institut du pluralisme religieux et de l'athéisme (IPRA ; www.ipra.eu) is organizing a summer school on religion and atheism in pluralist societies. We seek to bring together doctoral students in different disciplines (history, religious studies, sociology, law, art history, anthropology, etc.). Presentations may be given in English or in French. Participants should be able to understand both languages. We seek in particular to bring together doctoral students from Iran, France, other European countries and the USA. [more]

Deadline for application: 15 September 2018

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Notes from a blurry border (Part 1): Can that mountain stop me?

Mateusz Laszczkowski
April, 2018

While media attention is focused elsewhere, a new phase of the "European border crisis" is unfolding around the snow-covered mountain passes between Italy and France. What might the experience of the African migrants there, and of the activists trying to help them, tell us about the social life of intra-European borders

today? This post explores this question, moving in two instalments. Part 1 draws on an encounter with migrants in an Italian border town. Part 2 examines the politics of local pro-migrant activism.

It's a frosty February night in Bardonecchia, a skiing resort in Val Susa, some ninety kilometres west of Turin. The doors to the waiting hall at the train station are locked. 'The management kindly informs that only holders of a valid railway ticket are permitted to stay on these premises', reads a note. The room where the migrants are, in another wing of the building, is small and undecorated, with yellowish-painted walls and ochre floor-tiles. It is fluorescent-lit and stuffy, but stuffy is good, stuffy is warm, with radiators working full steam. In one corner, orange camp-beds on aluminium frames are stacked. In another, there's a heap of blankets, and two pairs of boots are drying under the radiator. The third corner is occupied by a thick mattress on which three men are sitting, doing nothing much: glancing at their phones, talking intermittently. Others are squatting by the walls, next to the power sockets, waiting for their phones to charge. Sitting on chairs. Listening to music on their headphones. Walking out and back in. Waiting. On the whole, there's ten of them here tonight, all men, young, between their late teens and perhaps early thirties, all from sub-Saharan Africa. Phones are ringing all the time. The migrants talk in a mixture of tongues I don't understand, among which I only recognize French, spoken with an accent I'm unable to tune in to. Two men are squatting around a phone watching a football game. It's Paris Saint Germain against Real Madrid. A goal is scored. A half of the room cheers, the rest seems indifferent.

Since the border crossing between Italy and France at Ventimiglia, on the Azure Coast, was shut down in 2017, Val Susa has emerged as the main route for African migrants trying to cross from Italy into France. Throughout this winter, between five and fifty migrants have attempted the snow-covered mountain passes every day. According to Rainbow4Africa, a humanitarian organization helping the migrants, one thousand people were rescued in Val Susa between December 2017 and March 2018. As local activists stress, however, a full-blown 'emergency' is likely to erupt in spring, when the snow melts. So far, there hasn't

been any consistent response by the Italian state, but diverse networks of activists are trying to confront this unfolding conjuncture, while a cottage industry of illegal parasitic *passeurs* has been quick to develop. The irony of this situation lies in the fact that Val Susa is Italy's perennial gate to the Transalpinum: it was through here that Hannibal entered Italy with his elephants in 218 BC, and Julius Caesar crossed in the opposite direction a century and a half later. As an anthropologist, I have never studied borders or migration, and I 'stumbled' upon this topic while doing research in Val Susa on something else, so my knowledge is very limited and my claims must be modest. However, glimpses from this emerging next episode in the ongoing 'European border crisis' (for a critique of this notion, see Cabot 2015) suggest insights on the social life of borders and their violence.

I've come to Bardonecchia with three members of a local youth activist group who come here every Wednesday night to bring food and drink, and see if anyone might need more help. They coordinate with other groups who cover other days of the week. After a while, a Rainbow4Africa team arrives, headed by Pietro and Leo.[1] Pietro is a short middle-aged man, wearing a yellow high-visibility vest that reads 'DOCTOR' across the back. Leo comes from West Africa, but has lived in Italy for a long time. He's a 'cultural mediator': he talks to African migrants, trying to understand what they're up to and persuade them to accept help. The two greet us and shake hands with several of the African men. Pietro taps one young man on the shoulder and, turning towards us, says: 'He wants to go to France to join a football school. He wants to be a star player.' A broad bright smile flickers across the young man's face. Leo describes the situation tonight as 'calm'. Just ten men and no emergencies. But then one of the young activists receives a text message: there are twenty more people, including women with small babies, at Claviere. They're determined to cross over to France and refuse even to consider any other option.

Bardonecchia is the last station before the border on the railway line from Turin to the French town of Modane. From here, migrants hope to cross to France, but it takes a long mountain hike through deep snow and a climb to the Colle della

Scala pass. It's avalanche season now and the trails are impassable. So, many migrants hitchhike or take the bus to Claviere, a tiny mountain town located right on the border, sixteen kilometres off the railway track. They are often intercepted by *passeurs*—usually Moroccans, Albanians or sometimes Black Africans, more rarely Italians—who charge several hundred Euros per person for information about the trail and possibly phone numbers of their counterparts on the French side. The passeurs operate in a grey zone they share with human-traffickers and slave-trade intermediaries. Apparently, at refugee centres in central and southern Italy, as well as the country's railway hubs, it is possible to purchase a smartphone app, at one hundred Euros per download, containing a detailed map of the route from Turin, via Bardonecchia and Claviere, into France. The map includes information about the points where migrants can find food and shelter provided by activists. Thus, inadvertently, the activists become a part of the package the passeurs sell. Locally, a transportation company owned by an individual known to activists as a right-winger and opportunistic money-monger runs a shuttle van to Claviere. Activists are uncertain whether the guy is a freelancer or part of the passeur-coordinated package.

From Claviere, it's three kilometres along a cross-country skiing track to Montgenèvre, already in France. As Leo points out, the migrants have crossed the Sahara; escaped war or famine, or both; many have been through the prisons and slave camps in Libya; and finally they crossed the sea to reach Italian shores. 'Do you think that mountain there, that snow, can stop me?' they ask with irreverence. But the mountain is unrelenting. The image of a white sneaker lost by a migrant in the snow on the Claviere route has been circulating in activist social media. The sneakers are becoming a symbol akin to the orange life-vests floating in the Mediterranean. And the mountain is not alone in stopping the migrants. The French Gendarmerie routinely intercepts them and returns them to Italy. It seems that the French and Italian 'forces of order' prefer to avoid more conspicuous presence and mass confrontation, as earlier in Ventimiglia and Calais, while the skiing season is on. However, less spectacular push-back violence is routine. Sometimes, activists say, even migrants captured many miles

inside France are brought by the gendarmerie to Bardonecchia, as the gendarmes know about the volunteer-run room there and they seek to easily get rid of the burdensome workload the migrants are to them. In late March, a Nigerian woman died following childbirth, after being captured by the French gendarmes and dumped at the Bardonecchia station. In Claviere, there is no shelter at all, so migrants returned from the skiing trail must spend the night outside.

A Spanish TV journalist materializes in the meantime. He tries to talk to some of the migrants. He picks out a young boy who understands some Italian and English. The boy answers the journalist's questions with half-sentences and an expression of utter boredom on his face. He says he's nineteen and comes from The Gambia. He wants to go to England where he says he has 'family'. What family, he's unable to say. 'How do you want to cross to England?' the journalist asks. The boy shrugs. 'Do you want to pass through Calais?' Another shrug. 'But Calais is very dangerous, do you know that?' The boy looks up, points his finger at the ceiling and mutters, 'He will help me.' Who will help you? 'What's the word? In Italian…?' the lad asks. '*Dio*', I offer, 'God'. 'Yes, *zio*', the boy nods—'uncle'.

Another of the African men shows me his phone with a car-sharing app running: 'Can you help me find a ride from here to Paris?' Paris is eight hundred kilometres away, but step by step I begin to understand that it's not necessarily Paris that he wants—it's just the only place in France he knows. I realize he speaks almost perfect Italian. 'Have you been here for long?' I ask. Seven years, he says. I'm surprised, but Pietro and Leo tell me that's not unusual. 'That other guy there', they say, 'has been here for five years.' Actually, none of the men who are here tonight has lived in Italy for less than a year and a half, in and out of various forms of detention, employment, shelter. The migrants' fates after arrival in Italy vary. Some end up de facto enslaved in mafia-run labour camps (Giordano 2016). Many are taken care of by private-run co-operatives paid by the government to provide shelter and food. Many of these co-operatives are honest, but there are also frequent complaints about places allegedly controlled by the mafia where the conditions are dismal while the management siphons off the government-allocated funds. Other migrants are placed in housing managed by

municipalities across Italy. Still others make it into NGO-run ‘hospitality centres’ where they receive food and lodging, some pocket money and help finding jobs. According to the activists I talked to, conditions in these centres are generally good, but many migrants leave to try their luck passing over to France. The gamble is that once you’ve been out of a hospitality centre for seventy-two hours, you won’t be admitted back.

‘Why do you want to go to France?’ I ask. The man says, ‘Because I have an appointment in Berlin.’ This doesn’t make sense to me, but he asks me if I speak German. I nod for yes, uncertainly, and he shows me a document from the German office for aliens’ affairs in Berlin, inviting him, Abdou K., a national of Mali, to an interview in exactly one week’s time, at 9 am. I don’t quite understand the German legal jargon of the document, but from what Abdou carefully explains to me, I begin to gather a story. Having arrived in Italy in 2011, Abdou obtained a residence permit. In 2013, for reasons I don’t quite understand, he went to Berlin. There, in collaboration with a local church he launched an association to help other migrants. He stayed in Berlin for almost four years. But in December 2016, his residence permit was running out. Abdou travelled back to Italy to have it extended and filed a request with the relevant office in Turin. Since then, the only response he’s had has been that he should wait. Without a valid permit, Abdou is unable to cross intra-European borders legally. I don’t quite understand what his interview in Berlin is about, but he shows me messages from his association that urge him to come back. Somehow, the future of the association depends on his presence. *Ich muss es schaffen!* Abdou insists, suddenly switching into an almost accent-less German.

This vignette sheds light on the migrants’ experience of the European border regime.

> *While the focus of critical literature (e.g., Cabot 2014; Vaughan-Williams 2015; Fernando and Giordano 2016) has often been on borders implicitly as lines, such as the coastline, or peripheral zones of the EU, it seems that for migrants ‘the border’ is a socio-political and existential condition that extends across vast*

geographical spaces.

All of Italy, with its detention centres, farms, shelters and train stations, becomes a border. Borders in that sense are not simply crossed, but rather dwelt in like a limbo, sometimes for years. My account of the young Gambian migrant above is by no means intended to invite ridicule, but rather to convey the cruelty, and the human tragedy, of a situation where people like him risk their lives pursuing a vague vision of a place finally beyond the 'border' where one can live better—in this case, an imagined 'England'. But Abdou's story indicates that under the Dublin Regulation, the border cannot ever be crossed once and for all. Abdou did everything he was supposed to in order to be 'legal' in Europe, and then more. But he's trapped in this transnational bureaucratic quagmire, dropped into 'undocumentedness', deportability and hence also clandestinity. The crossing of no particular line frees one from the border. Moreover, the vignette above evokes a multiplicity of actors who generate and inhabit 'the border'. The next instalment of my notes focuses on their relations.

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[1] All individuals’ names have been changed.

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Notes from a Blurry Border (part 2): Shatter the border!

Mateusz Laszczkowski
April, 2018

While media attention is focused elsewhere, a new phase of the "European border crisis" is unfolding around the snow-covered mountain passes between Italy and France. What might the experience of the African migrants there, and of the activists trying to help them, tell us about the social life of intra-European borders today? This post explores this question, moving in two instalments. Part 1 draws on an encounter with migrants in an Italian border town. Part 2 examines the politics of local pro-migrant activism.

Simona arrives from Claviere. She's a middle-aged local woman who had never been a political activist, but decided to help the migrants this winter. She's bringing in her car a married couple from Mali. The woman is clutching a baby girl in her arms. Simona says they are the only ones she managed to persuade not to attempt crossing. The others, eighteen people, left. The Malian couple refuse to

leave Simona's car. Simona explains they are very afraid of being turned in to the police. Franco—the father of one of the young activists I introduced in the last part of these notes—who has temporarily hosted migrants on several previous occasions, tries to persuade them to go sleep at his place. But the couple are extremely mistrustful. Finally, the husband decides to try to see if Franco can be trusted. 'Are you a Muslim or a Christian?' he asks him. Franco says Christian, hoping to make it simple. In fact, he's been an anticlerical communist all his life. 'Tell me a prayer', demands the Malian man.

The next day I learn how the story ends. At dawn, the Malian couple demands to be brought back to Claviere like Franco promised. When they arrive, a blizzard is in progress. Franco dials several activists on the French side to come out to the trail at the other end to collect migrants and bring them to safety. The French activists run a shelter in Grenoble that has room for fifteen people but at present is hosting sixty. Nobody answers the phone now, but the Malians are determined to go anyway. Franco, desperate, brings them to the head of the skiing trail, gets back in his car and drives across the border to wait for the couple at the other end. He's exhilarated when he sees their blurry silhouettes emerge from the falling snow. Just then, though, he also spots the gendarme on patrol up the slope. The gendarme has clearly seen the migrants and he is now rushing to call reinforcements. Franco yells and waves to the Malian couple to speed up. Before the gendarmes arrive, he gets the couple back in the car and rushes to the bus station. Before going to get them tickets, he tells them, in case the gendarmes arrived, to say that he picked them up already in France. The gendarmes must not think Franco has actually carried the migrants across the border. Luckily, the gendarmes never materialize.

The French activists Franco hoped to contact were part of *Briser les Frontières* (Shatter the Borders), a loose informal network connecting French and Italian activists. The network arose spontaneously, in the final months of 2017, building on previous personal contacts between concerned individuals on either side of the border. Very diverse groups and individuals are involved in the network on the Italian side: from professional Alpine rescuers, to the Waldensians (traditionally

present in this part of the Alps), to various (generally left-wing) groups of political activists, to many individual residents with no particular group affinity, like Simona. Val Susa is quite a special place. For over twenty-five years, it has been the site of a struggle against the planned construction of a new transborder high-speed railway (*treno alta velocità*, TAV). The No TAV movement, having begun from opposing that project, has developed a distinct, place-based multi-faceted critique of neoliberal governance and transnational political economy (in English, see, e.g., Della Porta and Piazza 2008; Armano, Sciortino and Pittavino 2013). Its long history has led to an unusual degree of politicization among the valley's residents. Many of those now active in *Briser* are longstanding No TAV activists—such as Franco and the youths with whom I went to Bardonecchia—though the network also thrives on the dedication of many individuals who were never actively involved with the movement.

The diversity of backgrounds and outlooks among those making up the network translates into tensions over the network's goals, modalities of action, and relations with other actors. It is remarkable how the activists are able to work together, negotiating their differences while sharing a fundamental ethical commitment. It is worthwhile, however, to highlight that the network is a difficult process that takes a continuous effort from all those involved. An early controversy concerned collaboration with humanitarian NGOs. For some, the matter was uncontroversial. For others, however, NGOs are essentially ambiguous, seen as complicit with the neoliberal order. For those more politically motivated participants of *Briser*, it was important to make clear from the start that, as one person put it, they were 'not volunteers but political activists'. That is to say, their role would not be limited to providing charity aid to the migrants, but it would also centrally involve denouncing the responsibility of the state and the EU for producing the extreme conditions the migrants face. These activists also explicitly question the very legitimacy of national borders as such. In particular, they are critical of the Dublin accords that not only restrict migrants' mobility and right to asylum but also allow for the violence of arbitrary push-backs. There have also been controversies inside *Briser* over the forms of assistance to migrants.

Some, especially locally based activists familiar with the mountain trails, argue that the only responsible choice is to discourage migrants from attempting to pass the mountains in winter and to try to persuade them to wait until the spring makes the passage safer. Others object to that, arguing that activists must not 'do the cops' job'.

Another subject of contention at one point were the relations with local authorities and residents of Bardonecchia. Traditionally, the communes of upper Val Susa, whose affluence derives from the hotel and skiing business, tend to elect right-wing administrations. The mayors of Bardonecchia and Claviere, as well as a majority of local residents, are seen by activists as lukewarm at best, and sometimes openly hostile, to the idea of helping undocumented or 'irregular' African migrants. When during a meeting somebody suggested setting up a large tent at Claviere where migrants could at least stay relatively warm, several other activists replied that in their opinion Claviere's mayor was more likely to set fire to the tent than permit that. This was of course an exaggeration, but it gives an idea of the mutual relations between activists and the local administration. At a time when Rainbow4Africa was negotiating access to a room where the migrants could stay in Bardonecchia, radicals within *Briser* prepared a flyer they distributed in the town. In no uncertain terms, the flyer denounced the complicity of local authorities, as well as all those enjoying their skiing holidays or profiting from the skiing business, in the violence of the border regime. Some of the locally based activists were concerned that this might jeopardize the tense, fragile, but necessary collaboration with local residents and authorities. 'Not that they weren't right', one of these considerate local activists pointed out to me, speaking of the more radical ones' action. 'Much of what they said was very true. But you see how this was just not the smartest move, tactically, at that point.' This person also drew a delicate distinction between those activists who were firmly rooted in local social relations in Val Susa, and those who had only settled there recently or perhaps retained their base in the radical milieus of Turin or elsewhere. For the latter group, my interlocutor suggested, it might be difficult to appreciate the complexity of local connections, on which the fate of the present and many future

struggles would depend. For instance, if you offend a ski-lift operator, you need to take into account, that his wife might be the sister or niece of an Alpine rescuer whose help might prove vital in an emergency. Or, quite mundanely, they might be related one way or another to someone with whom you need to maintain a working relationship possibly for the rest of your life. And, some activists added, even the mayors' position seems to be changing: not that they have switched to the activists' (and migrants') side, but at least they seem to be opening up for dialogue. Indeed, by late March, after activists had occupied a room at the church in Claviere, despite the initial protests by the local parish priest, the bishop conceded that the room be used to offer shelter to migrants and the mayor agreed to pay the utilities—while also making clear that the municipality should not be held accountable for the management of the room.

Given these different positions within the network and challenging external circumstances, the work of *Briser* les Frontières is an extraordinary feat of activism. Through focus on this work, it is possible to gain insights on the social constitution of the border in contemporary Europe. Recent work in anthropology (e.g., Reeves 2014) has shown how the border is not simply a line on a map or on the ground, but rather a social and material enactment, contingent on the actions of multiple situated actors. Internal borders of the EU have the distinct capacity to fade into insignificance or violently materialize depending on the specific political moment and the identity of the persons attempting a crossing. They're there and they're not—hence my designation of the Alpine Italo-French frontier as a blurry border. A focus on the ongoing developments described in these notes additionally allows observing the border as a politically generative terrain of socionatural relations. In addition to spatial depth, as highlighted in the first part of this double post, this terrain also possesses its own distinctive temporal rhythms. These rhythms are dictated not only by bureaucratic procedures, but also by climatic and ecological cycles.

> *The material and climatic features of the mountains—as well as those of the sea—are fundamental to the life and the experience of the border.*

Scholarly critiques of the 'border regime' presume a degree of institutional coherence, and examine what is seen as paradoxes of policy from that starting point: how is it that European borderwork is apparently simultaneously driven by a humanitarian ethic of care and a violent, racist imperative of 'Fortress Europe' (Vaughan-Williams 2015; Fernando and Giordano 2016)? There is definitely tremendous value in these critical approaches. But

> *it also seems that the border is essentially a heterogeneous, conflictual, messy space produced by an unruly multiplicity of actors: state and international agencies, gendarmes, passeurs, human traffickers, various profiteers, entrepreneurs, co-operatives, as well as volunteers, humanitarian and political activists, and fundamentally migrants themselves.*

It is a space of experiments in sovereign power. According to activists, the Gendarmerie's operations this winter in the zone between Bardonecchia and Grenoble have been arbitrary and unsystematic, trying diverse tactics. Just as I was finishing typing these notes, on 30 March, in what appears an illegal operation a French customs squad invaded the room run by Rainbow4Africa at the Bardonecchia train station. They searched the possessions of the migrants staying there and forced at least one to undergo a urine test. The officers thus breached the very border-as-line in whose name the violence of push-back operations is routinely perpetrated, and challenged the border's legal construction.

Moreover, the border itself is politically generative. As the experience of *Briser les Frontières* shows, the border generates unprefigured political relations, novel axes of contention, and unlikely alliances. It becomes a catalyst of political identities and innovative forms of mobilization. At a meeting in mid-February, *Briser* activists called for the 'migrant crisis' to be approached politically in a broader perspective, addressing its politico-economic and ecological root causes, beyond the usual 'emergency' frame. They questioned the European border regime as a key factor producing violence, migrant vulnerability and death. Will

there be a genuine response on the part of state and European institutions? Or, when the snow melts away and the number of migrants at the Alpine passes grows, will we watch once more the familiar spectacle of militarization?

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SCA2018: An experiment in carbon conscious conferencing and radical access

Liina Mustonen
April, 2018

The [Society for Cultural Anthropology](#) is experimenting with a new exciting initiative this year. Next week (19-21 April 2018) the Biennial Meeting will take place online, as a virtual conference. We are excited to offer you a sneak preview of what is to come. Allegra spoke to one of the conference organizers, [Anand Pandian](#).

Liina Mustonen (LM): This year's SCA Biennale meeting under the title "Displacements" will take place as a virtual conference – meaning no air travel, no hotel costs and hence no carbon pollution. Would you like to tell our readers how you came up with such a fantastic experimentation? What made you decide to organize a virtual conference?

Anand Pandian (AP): There are three reasons we had in mind. First, indeed, conference travel is one of the most significant carbon footprints for scholars and academics, sometimes involving millions of collective miles of carbon-fueled travel for everyone to reach one place. Second, we are thinking about equitable access: the fact that many people can't afford such travel, and that many others can't do it in a time of greater travel bans and restrictions, especially here in the United States. And third, we've been thinking about the odd experience that one often has as an anthropologist, trying to give some immersive and evocative sense of a distant place while standing and talking in the midst of an ornate hotel ballroom or bland corporate conference center**.** If we gave presenters the chance to craft their presentations as audiovisual artifacts, could this mode of presentation actually be *more* immersive and engaging than a conference talk, rather than less so? We were very gratified to see the rich visual and multimedia experience conjured by the presenters in this conference, work so interesting that we knew we needed a conference trailer!

#displace18 Conference Trailer from Cultural Anthropology on Vimeo.

LM: There is a good amount of information about the technical side of the conference on the conference webpage, but for those of our readers who didn't have time to look at it yet, would you like to give us a briefing? How does it work? How can I participate?

AP: The conference will be hosted, located, if you will, at displacements.jhu.edu between April 19-21, 2018. If you land on the page, you will find a video welcome and introduction, and an invitation to register for the event for a nominal fee of just $10 USD. When you register and log in, you will find yourself, for those three

days, immediately faced with a conference livestream, which will be playing pre-recorded conference panels and presentations continuously over nearly 60 hours, as if this were a television channel for conference participants alone. You can watch what is "on" at a given time, in the company of everyone else who is watching what is happening at that time. Or, if you choose, you can go instead to an individual panel page to watch whatever presentation you might like to see at that time. Each of these panel pages will go "live" only after they have been "released" on the conference livestream. The idea here is to give some sense of liveness and excitement at the appearance of something new. Once a panel page goes live, it will remain available throughout the conference, as will the stream. One of the most exciting sessions will be the David Schneider Memorial Plenary, featuring powerful new work in ethnographic film and photography by the anthropologists Eduardo Kohn & Lisa Stevenson, Jason De Leon, and Stephanie Spray.

LM: In particular, I am interested how you facilitate discussions and exchanges between speakers and the audience? For example the roundtable consists of a number of speakers – how do you facilitate the conversation?

AP: We recognize that people attend conferences not just to hear presentations but also to interact and discuss and socialize. We have been working very hard at building multiple channels for such dialogue and interaction into the conference experience. The livestream will be accompanied by a chat box in which participants can react and discuss in real time as the presentations follow one on another. The panel pages will allow for threaded conversations in response to the presentations on each specific panel, and presenters have been asked to attend to these threads and respond in as timely a manner as possible to the questions and ideas raised. We are encouraging people to use social media like Twitter and Instagram (#displace18) to share their thoughts and reactions not only with each other but also with broader and more dispersed publics. We will also have a separate user experience page on the website to allow people to respond to the experience in a more open-ended and freeform style, as this is an experimental

and evolving form and we are also trying to figure out, as we go along, what is working well, and what isn't.

LM: SCA and its publication Cultural Anthropology has been very innovative in the field of academic publishing, making anthropology accessible to broader audiences. I see that the "Displacement" conference is a continuum of that spirit. Do you see this as a model for future conferences?

AP: SCA and Cultural Anthropology have been spaces for experimentation in anthropology, both with regard to argument and form as well as with regard to access and distribution. I see this endeavor as an extension of that spirit of open-access publishing into another realm of scholarly production and dissemination. We are also very excited to partner in this venture with the equally innovative Society for Visual Anthropology, who have curated for the conference a fantastic festival of contemporary ethnographic films. We have not been able to sponsor the conference for free, most essentially because there are many very talented and committed people devoted to this endeavor and their labor must be compensated. But, in setting the registration fee at this low rate, we are hoping to broaden the audience. If there is scope for such ventures in the future (we are inspired by previous efforts of this kind, and I hope personally that there will be many more), I think that there are more things that can be done. We have built disability access into the design of the conference, for example, but it takes place only in English, and a future attempt could work to bring other languages into the framework. We have an amazing team of 25 people who have been working very hard on this conference, improvising so many strategies and ideas day by day, and we hope that many more such experiments will come, as they must.

LM: Based in North America, the SCA biennale meetings logically tend to attract scholars who are based in North America. Did the fact that the conference is organized virtually attract more participants from other world regions?

AP: You're absolutely right. The Biennial has tended to be a smaller, and more regional event. This one is much more international in scope. We are proud to say that we have presentations from scholars based in 21 countries, based on research undertaken in 46 different countries around the world. People have registered to attend from many more countries. And many have said that they appreciate the possibility of attending the conference from their homes in other countries far from North America, because of the online format. Here's a tweet that attests to that.

LM: I would like to talk a little bit about the theme of the conference. The theme "Displacements" is a reflection of our time and perhaps our positionality as anthropologists. When you began designing the conference, did you see a connection between the two – the conference

title and the format?

AP: Yes, certainly. Displacements of many kinds – social, political, transnational, environmental – are an essential feature of the present moment, and the subject of much concern in public discourse and for anthropologists more specifically; the presenters have very powerful and important things to say about this topic. It is also the case that anthropology itself is founded on the creative and imaginative promise of displacements, as a matter of method: going elsewhere, effecting transformations in the experiential texture of the here-and-now through the introduction of ethnographic distance and perspective. When it came time to think of a theme appropriate for this first attempt at a virtual conference, this made sense in both thematic and methodological terms. We are asking you to "displace yourself" into another mode of engagement.

LM: Besides being a fantastic environmental conscious initiative that forces us scholars to think about our own ecological footprints, I wonder whether the conference format and the conference theme also speak to the contemporary precarity in the disciplines of humanities in general and anthropology in particular?

AP:This is an essential topic that all of us must acknowledge and grapple with. And it was very much on our minds with this conference design. Are academic disciplines asking too much of graduate students, new PhDs, adjunct instructors and others, to spend thousands of dollars to fly somewhere for a conference, stay for a few days, pay expensive registration fees and wait and hope for the chance that someone influential will have a sympathetic ear or a job to offer? Is this the only way to proceed? And then think of that sense of disappointment when you put all this time and money into a conference presentation only to find it scheduled at 8am on a Sunday morning and hardly anyone in the room aside from the panelists themselves. A platform like ours, if enough people commit to the idea, could be effective at building audiences for the hard work that anthropologists do in the face of precarity. Face-to-face relationships and conversations will remain essential to employment prospects, but we are hoping

to show that one can build other channels for the sharing of new research and the building of intellectual communities. Online blogs and networks like Allegra and many others have shown us this, and we are following your lead into the digital realm.

LM: Addis Ababa, Ankara, Bangalore, Irvine, New York, Tangier – an impressive list of local "nodes" are mentioned on the conference website. Would you like to explain us how "nodes" are utilized in the conference? How do the "nodes" facilitate participation? Is it still possible to create one's own "node"?

AP: We hope that this conference experience will amount to something more than each individual spending several days on their own, staring into one digital screen or another. We are hoping that the material that we broadcast online can feed into existing networks of relationship and conversation, or serve as an impetus to encourage the formation of other such collective relations. The "nodes," therefore, are an essential aspect of the conference vision: we are encouraging people to get together to watch some of the presentations, and to take a break now and then to chat, converse, argue, and discuss. It has been amazing to see the proliferation of local sites on our node map, to try to imagine the idea that this conference will "happen" in all these scattered places at once.

We conceive the nodes as two-way channels. They are occasions for collective uptake of what is being broadcast through the conference website, but they are also sites for their own independent conversations, discussions, workshops, and so on, which can be brought into the space of the conference via the node map if local organizers wish to do so. Here, for example, is a poster we received from the Addis Ababa node:

We are grateful to the Wenner-Gren Foundation for sponsoring the organization of a number of such nodes in the global South, and this, I think, is one of the most interesting and important developments to come from this process. Could this kind of conferencing be a way to lessen the gap between those out-of-the-way

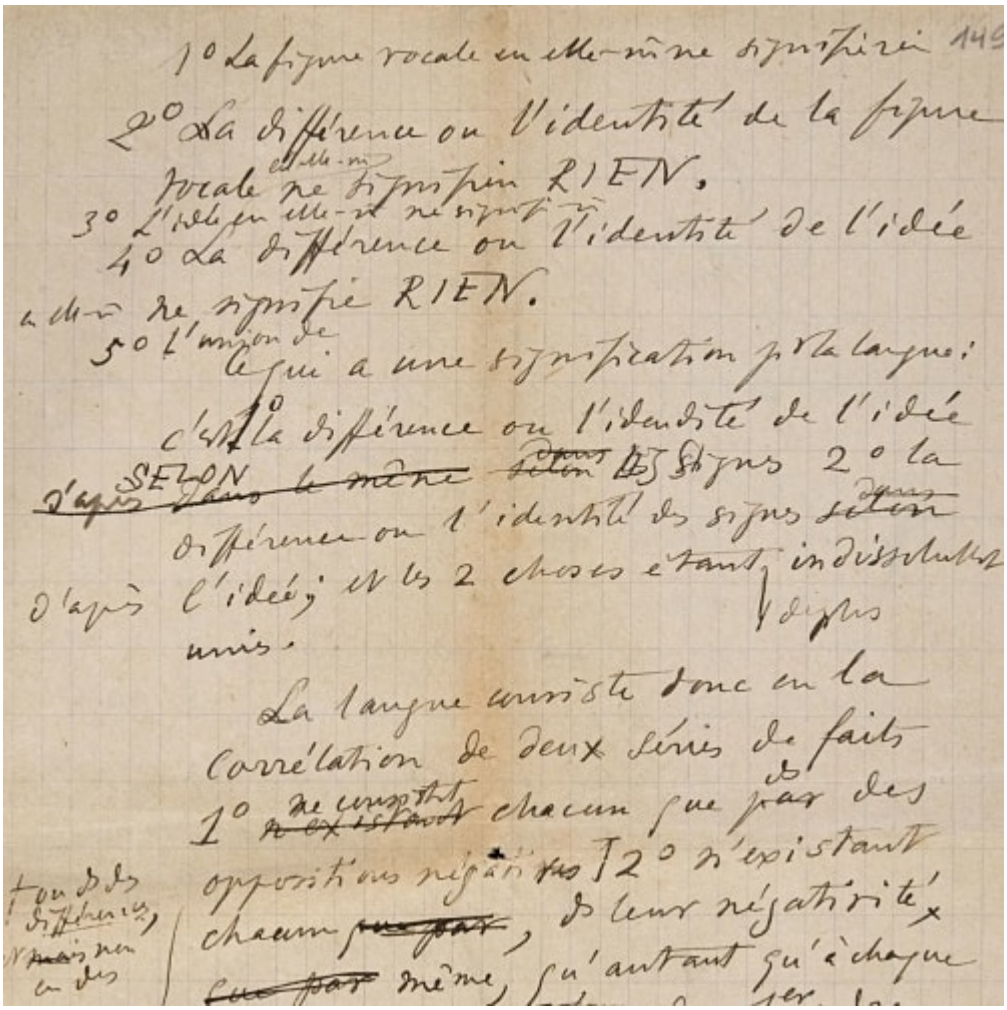
places in which anthropologists often work and the powerful metropolitan centers where they share that work? Where all of this goes, we will have to see. In fact, if anyone reading this would like to organize a local conference node, get in touch with us via displacements@culanth.org and let's try to make it happen.

Please register and tune in next week, as we find out how this goes!

Featured image (cropped) by Carla Antonini (Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Reading Not to Perish

Alessandro Chidichimo
April, 2018



The “publish or perish” imperative in academia is periodically debated in the newspapers. I think some distance should be taken from the arguments developed in such articles. Even though they provide an entry point into a complex issue, my impression is that we have to go even further back since these discourses are in fact embedded within an ideology of production. Discourses around the academic system of publications and their use to determine a researcher’s value and her capacity to obtain research grants continue to be inscribed in this same productive paradigm. I may be naive, but I feel that this discourse must be totally rejected.

My view is that we should take a step back and distance ourselves from such ideas, both because they do not take into account certain aspects of the writing process, and because they contradict an attitude inherent in the ‘movements of

the mind' and certain practices which seem to me fundamental and which determine the very possibility of producing a scientific text (and a text in general). To begin with, we can take as an example the link between reading and writing, as well as the nature of the writing process itself.

> *In my opinion – informed by my own academic experience – institutions funded by citizens' taxes should pay researchers to read, not to write.*

Writing is an auxiliary and should be used in connection with the activity of reading. Writing is actually a means to read: it is a reading instrument, as evidenced for example by references, annotations, reading sheets, comments and glosses.

The other reason to pay researchers to read is to enable them to conduct research, that is to say that their research should be carried out for the sake of research. In this case too, the link with writing persists. Writing is a research instrument: research writing is the semiological movement (making sense through signs) that produces discovery, that inscribes ideas on paper, it is an effort to fix ideas and to find coherence; it is that kind of writing that serves to communicate with the results and points of views of others. As in scientific correspondence, writing is a means to share and to value the role of the addressee (the scientific community for example, or the correspondent, the poet's friend one might say, the fundamentally epistolary nature of writing).

Producing articles for publication, therefore, is not the purpose of writing. The only thing that matters is the act of writing in itself and in connection with reading and research. The act of publishing is accessory and temporary and it is for this reason that editors (once again the poet's friends) exist: to tear off a piece of writing and inscribe it in a specific moment, in the momentary course of time, when writing has no constraints in itself, the constraints being external and contextual. And even if these constraints contribute to give form to a text – to constantly exceed its limits – and to stop the flow of semiological production, they must always follow the parameters of research (validity, verifiability of data).

> *It's not really about finding something. Finding is a consequence of reading and research.*

Writing to find something already limits the possibilities of discovery, because discovery is already present in the assumptions used for research purposes. In this sense, I have always found it very strange in research grants applications to be asked to anticipate the results of a research before it has even been carried out.

So I share the idea that you don't have to write to publish. I publish first to forget and second to look at what I have done during my reading, research and writing work, to look at its harmony, to see if I have come closer to this hoped-for harmony in research through writing. What I have published without keeping this spirit, I consider as a necessary price to pay to know what not to do. And in what I have published and loved, I am also wary of what I have written and what it seems to have accomplished, since my texts often appear as if they have been written by another person who is no longer me, who didn't know what I know now, and I try to check if, with the passage of time and readings, I still agree with what I wrote, if I still like what I wrote, what that other me thought about writing.

I also pay attention to the life that has elapsed during the writing process and to aspects of these writings that I find difficult to reread. I only want to look at them and try to make them resonate. So if I look at my publications again, the 'thing' I cherish is an adverb I used in an article. I do not value the number of published texts and discoveries that, of course, gave me some pleasure, some joy for discovery and that made sense at the time. I look at them as old passions linked to the naiveté of not knowing which ideas will persist in time, of having no idea of their duration.

The best thing to look at in these texts is this adverb, this word that pushed me to think, that I had to look for at length to make me understand today that the whole life of research is in this adverb, in the movement that it indicates, in the passage of a threshold and in the abandonment of rules, in the change introduced in a

language normally used in texts of this kind and in overcoming the obstacles posed by history, tradition, prejudice and discipline. It is a signal for me that I have not only changed with the hours spent in the libraries – and changed forever -, not only because of some specific details related to my research work or because of difficult moments I had to face (arrogance, life, you know what I'm talking about), but also because of the search for this meaningful writing.

This adverb here, in this text, reminds me of the transformation I underwent thanks to this research and writing work and why it made sense to do it. The rest is useless, temporary. My intervention is an attempt to disappear. By abandoning the priority of my presence, the text becomes part of a collective of people who are searching, this collective with which I say I am writing. I do not need to go into the details of what it means to write. If I say I am writing a thesis, one immediately understands my state of mind. A collective that cuts across countries and disciplines, that lives at the heart of society and not in its margins. This collective which knows the responsibility and the weight of writing, and which does not live for itself, but also for others who did not have this opportunity, this responsibility to know, to read, this opportunity to have time to do research.

It is therefore necessary to abandon this injunction to production; to say clearly that one is not interested in publication, that it is not necessary to publish to remain in the academic world or to be accepted in it, to have a position, to be funded for a project (even if the idea of submitting project proposals to funding bodies is something we should also refuse as researchers). It is enough to be interested in research itself, in searching for something, in discovery, in the links and interactions between researchers, in the production of a research community, in the independence of thought. It is not the list of publications that counts, I think we need to go deeper and think over long periods of time, and think in terms of a collective, in terms of what makes sense on a scale of shared values. To be part of this research collective within society, one must have demonstrated the courage and the aspiration to be free. To be free requires abandonment and courage.

Courage, freedom and independence must be put back at the centre of discourses about research and at the centre of research itself.

The Magnetic Fields: The Death of Ferdinand de Saussure

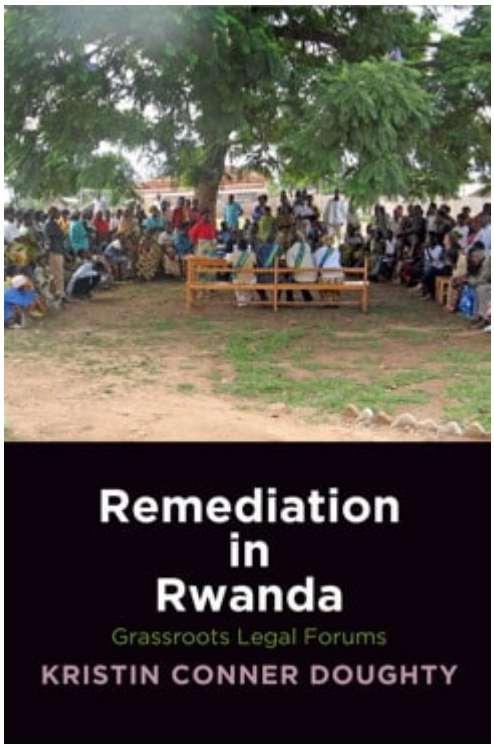
Translated from the French by Julie Billaud (Original text in French).

Remediation in Rwanda

Afonso Bento
April, 2018

In her new book, Kirsten Doughty provides us with an ethnographic account of the paradoxes, contradictions and omissions of remediation processes in post-genocide Rwanda. More precisely, by analyzing three grassroots legal forums grounded on mediation processes (gacaca, comite y'abunzi and legal aid clinics), the author take us through what is at stake for various sides in justice disputes following the conflict. Doughty argues that by establishing harmony-based legal forums – predicated on promoting unity and compromise and avoiding conflict – the government of Rwanda, besides aiming at restoring Rwanda's "social fabric" (pp. 1), intended to further its reach and establish control over its population. Conjuring Foucault and Nader, the author proposes that these forums are, in effect, "…ways of governing through community", that is, ways of managing people through the promotion and construction of specific social relationships between them.

Nevertheless, and although she ultimately sees these legal forums as coercion tactics deployed by the central government, the author rejects the notion that power can be exerted regardless of its objects, protagonists and circumstances.



Indeed, all throughout the book she describes how people use these forums has opportunities to negotiate and transform their identities, allegiances and futures. The book can be divided in two parts. In the first part, composed by chapters one and two, the author unravels the broader contexts in which what she calls a "legal architecture of social repair" was created and operates. In the second part, she presents a detailed ethnographic account of the interactions which occur in the three different legal forums, where Doughty claims a "micropolitics of reconciliation" (Theidon *in* Doughty) is played out.

In the first chapter – "Silencing the Past: Producing History and the Politics of Memory", the author focuses on the "master narrative" (pp. 64) created by the Rwandese government to legitimate itself and its political project. By drawing upon rich historiographic debates concerning Rwanda's history, Doughty is able to reveal the strategic absences and presences of the government's narrative and to show how it serves its own political agenda. Namely, how it emphasizes the responsibility of the international community for the Hutu genocide because of the role it played since colonial times in fueling ethnic divisions, and, in the process, shifts the attention away from the RPF's (Rwandan Patriotic Front) past and current responsibilities in contributing to power relationships which favor an urban, Tutsi elite.

In "Escaping Dichotomies: Grassroots Law in Historical and Global Context", the

author relates the emergence of grassroots legal forums in Rwanda with broader trends concerning decentralization and “transitional justice”. She argues that by analyzing the three different legal forums under the same scope, as sharing a focus on mediation, we are able to push further the discussions concerning transitional justice by eliding distinctions between “genocide” and “nongenocide justice” (pp.93), between “cultural” and “universal justice principles” and between “restorative” and “retributive approaches” (pp. 94).

The third chapter – “Gacaca Days and Genocide Citizenship” – consists in an ethnographic account of the sessions of gacaca – a customary legal forum dedicated to Genocide related crimes. The author argues that the forum combined harmony and punishment in serving the purpose of controlling populations as communities. Nevertheless, Doughty explores how the forum was deeply embedded in daily life and solicited popular participation, allowing people to debate and negotiate what it means to be a victim or a perpetrator of the genocide, and also to use disputes concerning material goods to create new alliances or reproduce old inequalities.

The fourth chapter – Comite y’Abunzi: Politics and Poetics of the Ordinary – presents an ethnographic account of the sessions of Comite y’Abunzi – a customary legal forum tasked with mediating low-level criminal and civil disputes. As in the case of gacaca, comite y’abunzi combined harmony and punishment in delivering a form of control predicated upon the construction of community. Furthermore, because it also operated in a deeply contextualized fashion and had an open and flexible structure, comite y’abunzi enabled people to debate the terms of their reconciliation, in this case mainly around the notions of family and community.

The fifth chapter – “The Legal Aid Clinic: Mediation as Thick Description” – contains an ethnographic account of the counseling and mediation provided by law students and faculty members in legal aid clinics. The author shows how efforts to enact mediation principles and to govern through community are not restricted to customary style courts such as gacaca or comite y’abunzi. These

sessions elicited what Doughty considers “thick descriptions” from participants, allowing them to debate and negotiate cultural and legal framings of issues such as land ownership, divorce or employment.

The final chapter – “Improvising Authority – Lay judges as Intermediaries” – focuses on the formal protagonists of the different legal forums, what Doughty calls “lay judges” (pp. 191), and how they brought to life the principles underpinning the different legal forums.

> *She contends that the practice of these figures – which were community “insiders”, were not professionalized but where representing the state – was mainly “improvisational” and “ambiguous”, preventing state action from being homogenous and having predictable effects.*

In the introduction of her book, Doughty notes that her “… attention to coercion and negotiation may seem part of a theoretically dated discussion of structure and agency, yet these themes remain a central conundrum in contemporary scholarship on Rwanda” (pp. 27). Although it has become commonplace for anthropologists to state that they will not rob their collaborators of any of their agency or free-will, the fact is that many of them will often not accept the stakes of doing so. Many arguments about uneven power relationships forget that power itself is exerted in ambiguous circumstances by individuals who have their own specific inclinations. As such, power often emerges uncomplicated by the details of ethnographic research. On the contrary, in her book, Kirsten Doughty produces a nuanced account of justice in post-genocide Rwanda as an epicenter of conflicting agendas, power relationships and ideas about community, family, gender or culpability. This is substantiated by the way the author focuses on what she calls “lay judges”, in an attempt to come to grips with how the harmony-legal models are brought to life by concrete people. In doing so, she delivers what is a valuable book for legal anthropologists, and also for researchers interested in how justice plays out in post-conflict contexts.

Doughty, Kristin Conner. 2016. *Remediation in Rwanda: Grassroots Legal Forums*. 296 pp. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. ISBN: 9780812247831

Featured image by Trocaire (flickr, CC BY 2.0).

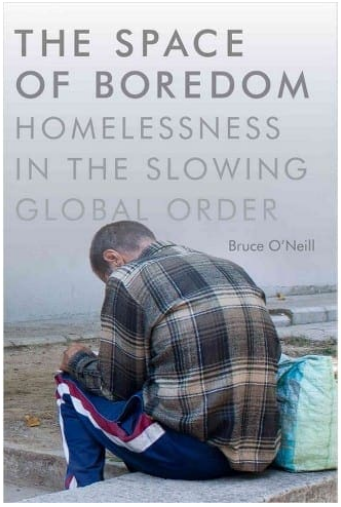
The Space of Boredom – A conversation with Bruce O'Neill

Ann Marie Thornburg
April, 2018

The Space of Boredom takes us to spaces on the edge of new global orders, focusing on the lives and practices of homeless men and women left behind by globalization's promises of accelerating connection and swelling opportunity. Anthropologist Bruce O'Neill focuses on the worlds of homeless Romanians who sense there is no place for them at these frontiers. Their experiences of boredom, by contrast, settle into the contours of days spent waiting in shelters or moving through the city on foot. O'Neill's monograph unfolds in the drag of these boring durations and long walks.

> *The result is a conceptually rich ethnography that presents new and noteworthy ways of understanding globalization.*

The Space of Boredom does this by attending to the experiences of those who are not able to transit freely within the worlds globalization conjures. Ann Marie Thornburg talked with Bruce O'Neill about his monograph via email.



AMT: What initially drew you to working in Romania (Bucharest)? How, specifically, did your focus on boredom come into view?

I came to anthropology as a doctoral student. My background was in urban geography (for my masters) and in sociology (for my bachelors), and I turned toward anthropology with thematic interests in cities and in inequality. It was while completing applications for anthropology programs that I found myself asked for the first time where in the world I wanted to ground my thought about urban inequality. I instantly gravitated towards Eastern Europe for a number of reasons, both biographical and historical: A child during the 1980s, the region held a certain Cold War mystique; its socialist past assured me that I would get to read a good amount of Marx; and a provisional glance at the literature on post-socialism resonated with my interests in political economy but also with bourgeoning interests about materiality and consumerism. I read a number of histories and was quickly taken with Romania. The capital seemed like the intuitive city to be in.

As for boredom, I never intended to write a book about it. The theme of boredom emerged as a key problem for understanding homelessness out of the fieldwork. It was unavoidable. My conversations with homeless men and women regularly circled around the topic of boredom and the problem of unstructured days and empty time.

> *Boredom, I quickly came to realize, was an integral feature of the day-to-day environment of homelessness.*

I also realized during preliminary fieldwork that homeless men and women spent a great deal of effort managing boredom. Boredom compelled the homeless to move around the city in certain ways in search of stimulation and relief. Boredom, I discovered, opened up this interesting window onto the margins of contemporary urbanism.

AMT: For Allegra Lab readers who have not yet read your wonderful book, could you provide a brief overview of its central arguments and sites?

Sure thing — *The Space of Boredom* is an ethnography about displacement from a global economy that promises an ever-expanding, ever-accelerating array of market-driven possibilities. Set in post-socialist Romania, the ethnography centers upon the capital city's most economically vulnerable: its new homeless population. Moving between government shelters and NGO day centers, squatter camps and black labor markets, the book captures how the newly homeless' diminished capacity to work and to consume cuts in ever-cruel ways against their expectations of growing prosperity. Once pressed to the margins, the book argues, Bucharest's homeless do not experience the global as a process of acceleration but of slowed time, stalled movement, and dulled senses, and so a persistent and difficult to shake sense of boredom takes hold.

> *The book explores this boredom as an enduring experience of globalization, ultimately, to rethink the politics of alienation and displacement.*

AMT: How did you toggle between the "three types of space" (material; individual/collective evaluation; inner) in which boredom emerges both while doing fieldwork and while writing the book?

I probably first need to give a sense of why and how I think about boredom spatially since boredom is more commonly understood as an experience of time.

Much of boredom's association with time has to do with the class-based assumptions about who is bored and why, namely that it's an experience of the privileged who are struggling with the question of what to do because they have been relieved of the need to work. Boredom, in this case, is a problem that passes with time as something worthwhile eventually comes to pass. When thinking about boredom from the perspective of poverty, however, boredom takes on different attributes. It becomes chronic rather than passing, and it becomes located in certain spaces as opposed to others. To use a common example from the fieldwork, homeless shelter beneficiaries would regularly tell me that the shelter is a boring place to be. They would also assure me that no matter how long one sits in a homeless shelter, relief from boredom will not come. Rather than wait, the antidote to this kind of boredom was egress – to move beyond the shelter and in to the possibilities of the city.

To make sense of boredom's spatial dimensions, I approached boredom in three ways. First as a material space, like a homeless shelter or a squatter camp, where boredom is regularly found. I also took boredom to be a mental space – an individually held and often collectively shared evaluation that particular places in the city are marginal in that the people, things, and practices located there are lacking in meaning. Finally, I approached boredom as a lived space of social practices, where material conditions and mental worlds came into contact through acts of pacing, smoking, and fidgeting, for example.

To fully appreciate how these different dimensions came together in the field, I spent a long time doing fieldwork (nearly three years). I also worked long blocs of time each day. The work began in formal institutions and then extended out into informal squatter camps and incorporated the public spaces (transit hubs, parks, boulevards) in between. Throughout the time, I was careful to note when and where people became observably and self-consciously bored, how they talked about their boredom, and where they went (physically and mentally) and what they did in an effort to find relief.

What came into view were the mundane dispositions, tensions, and efforts that

animate life at the margins of the urban, but also of the national and of the global, economy.

As for writing, I made a conscious effort to keep the ethnographic narrative close to the feeling of the fieldwork. Description is a mode of theorizing, so the narrative is integral to the argument.

AMT: Did your interlocutors describe experiencing sensory constellations, horizons of limited possibility, or affects that seem related to, but not quite the same as, boredom?

Horizons of limited possibility certainly gets at the heart of the matter. Much of the book is about grappling with a diminished quality of life at a moment where possibilities are suppose to be expanding into new possibilities. To a certain extent, the people I interviewed speculated about the possibilities enjoyed by Romania's upwardly mobile, but even more so, homeless pensioners and low-skilled laborers vividly imagined how their own quality of life compared unfavorably with their counterparts elsewhere in the EU. A sense of boredom and inactivity hung against a horizon always imagined as more vibrant, dynamic, and expanding.

Certainly a wide spectrum of affects was observable in homeless shelters and squatter camps, but a persistent feeling of boredom predominated with the homeless men and women I encountered. This boredom opened up rich dialogues into the themes of exclusion, marginality, and inactivity that the homeless wrestled with each day, which is why boredom organizes the book's narrative and argument.

AMT: I'd be curious to hear more about how you worked with the language for, and concept(s) of, boredom in your interactions with people in Bucharest. Did people tend to assert their boredom in similar ways? Was there any variation in the ways it was described?

Boredom is a difficult thing to describe. A popular scholarly description of boredom is as an "experience without qualities." And so getting people to talk about and describe their engagement with boredom is quite difficult. Homeless men and women used the Romanian word for boredom (*plictisit)*, and they regularly tethered their sense of boredom to having nothing to do (as in: *stau degeaba*). Trying to get people to describe what it's like to be bored more often than not resulted in frustration (on the part of the interviewed) rather than insight. How, after all, does one describe "doing nothing" or the absence of activity or stimulation? Getting to the bottom of boredom thus posed a certain methodological challenge.

My interest, as the fieldwork advanced, became understanding the absences and gaps that led certain places, times, and activities to be coded as inactive and boring and what places, people, and activities would, had they been present, recast a given moment as meaningful or stimulating. This allowed me to explore boredom as a troubling absence or alienation from expected stimulations. As different people sought relief for their boredom by moving towards, whether physically or mentally, different pleasures and possibilities, boredom became an incredibly nuanced category that offers insights into the workings of class, gender, and ethnicity, but also into tensions between city and country and the position of Romania within the EU.

AMT: Near the end of the book, you narrate a memorable scene at Hypermarket that involved both you and some of your interlocutors. Would you mind describing this scene for our readers, and reflecting on how you characterize the activity/affects/movements/senses of time (whatever seems most relevant) that unfolded at the Hypermarket in relation to boredom?

The initial chapters of the book explore the sense of boredom brought about by being cut off from work and home life and then pushed to the margins of the city. Boredom, here, is about not having anything (meaningful) to do, but also about invisibility. There is a dimension of not being seen as social services shepherd the

homeless beyond the city limits or security guards move them off the main boulevard and into back alleys. Beyond these external forces, the homeless themselves often move in ways that minimize attention since so much of what they receive is negative.

The book's final chapters explore those moments when the homeless move beyond boredom by publicly foregrounding their homelessness rather than trying to hide it. In one particular chapter, I describe one of many trips where I tagged along with homeless men and women as they shopped at large grocery stores (something like a Carrefour). Drawn to them by low prices, the homeless generally described and expressed unease about shopping in them because these grocery stores are often located in the basement floor of upscale malls. Most of the time, these efforts at provisioning are done briskly and self-consciously in the hopes of going unnoticed. But in other instances, men drew attention to their low social status in spectacular ways that shifted class anxiety off of them and onto the middle class. The chapter shows how conscious acts of rule breaking provided relief, albeit momentary, from the day-to-day grind of being overlooked and disrespected.

AMT: What's next for you? How, if at all, do you see your future ethnographic work relating to this work on boredom (or senses, movement, and time)?

I'm now working on a project on the literal urban underground in Bucharest. I'm interested in the ways that urban life extends beneath the surface of the city into Metro stations and subterranean parking garages, basements and cellars, and sewer canals, for example. While these places are often out of sight, they remain troublingly out of mind when it comes to urban theory. This is particularly troubling since, I'm finding, the underground is foundational to the ordering of the city and to the development of contemporary capitalism. Questions of rhythm, mobility, class, and belonging certainly extend into this work, and I look forward to sharing it in the near future!

Featured image by J Stimp (flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Rise against – call for reviews on precarious work and protest music

Allegra
April, 2018

From patronising hierarchical superiors to casual, zero-hour contracts, to pension cuts, we are witnessing in many countries the entrenchment of a two-tier system

of academia, with increasingly few tenured positions standing 'above' a growing host of temporary, uncertain teaching and research gigs.

The more optimistic take is that the #USSStrike — which has been carried out by colleagues in the UK with bravery and humour, despite rain, freezing temperatures, and insulting offers of compromise — will provide the impetus to reclaim our universities, and rethink and revolutionise higher education entirely.

However, Salvatore Poier's moving call for solidarity with unemployed and precarious researchers reminds us that oppression and inequality are cross-cutting issues, and can fundamentally only be addressed as intersectional problems.

> *We thus close off this week with a **call for reviewers** for a handful of new enthographies both on new precarious worlds of work, and music's transformative potential.*

here are our review guidelines:

As we receive many requests for reviews, please write 2-3 sentences why you should be reviewing this book, indicating how it relates to your own research or interests.

Spelling: British English. Please use –ise and not –ize word endings.

Word limit: 750-1500 words.

Font: Times New Roman.

Size: 12.

Line Spacing: 1,5

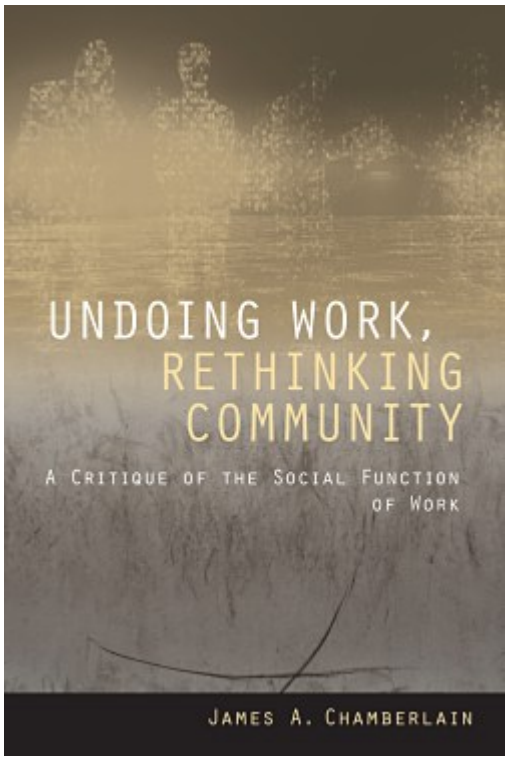
No footnotes.

If you cite other authors, please reference their publication in the end.

The review is to be written within three months from the dispatch of the book.

When submitting the review, do not forget to include your name, (academic) affiliation, a photograph of yourself and a short bio of 2-3 sentences.

Please send your expression of interest to: reviews@allegralaboratory.net

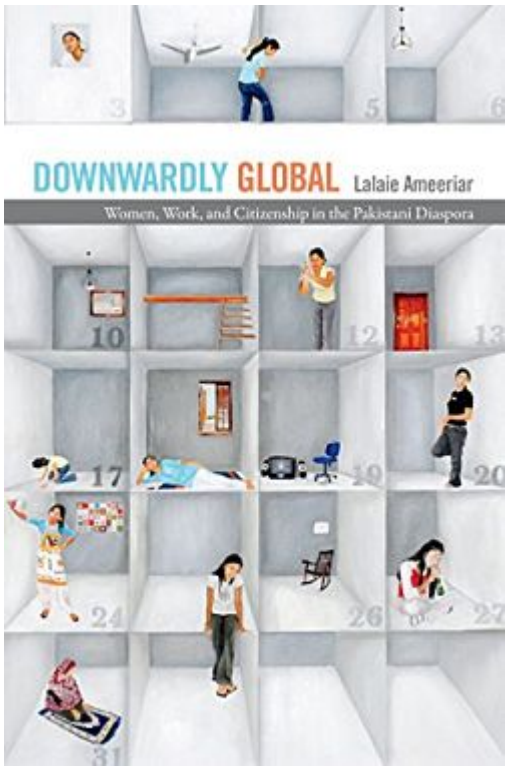


Chamberlain, James. 2018. *Undoing Work, Rethinking Community: A Critique of the Social Function of Work*. Cornell University Press. ISBN-13: 9781501714887

This revolutionary book presents a new conception of community and the struggle against capitalism. In *Undoing Work, Rethinking Community*, James A. Chamberlain argues that paid work and the civic duty to perform it substantially undermines freedom and justice. Chamberlain believes that to seize back our time and transform our society, we must abandon the deep-seated view that community is constructed by work, whether paid or not.

Chamberlain focuses on the regimes of flexibility and the unconditional basic income, arguing that while both offer prospects for greater freedom and justice, they also incur the risk of shoring up the work society rather than challenging it.

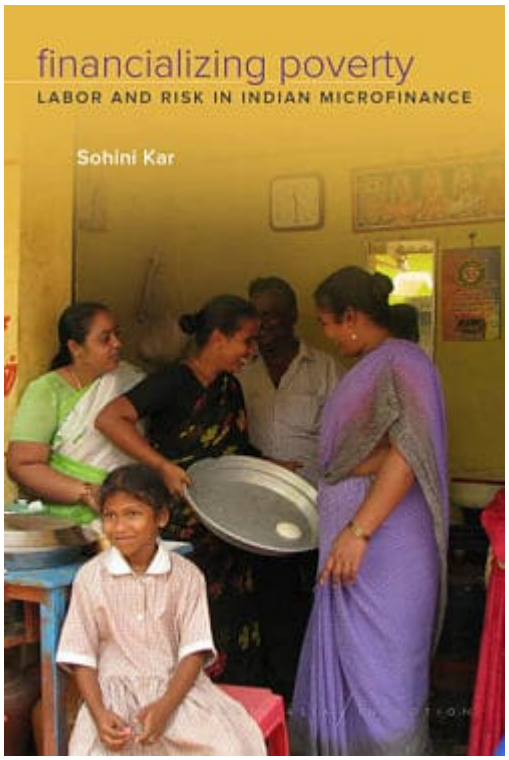
To transform the work society, he shows that we must also reconfigure the place of paid work in our lives and rethink the meaning of community at a deeper level. Throughout, he speaks to a broad readership, and his focus on freedom and social justice will interest scholars and activists alike. Chamberlain offers a range of strategies that will allow us to uncouple our deepest human values from the notion that worth is generated only through labor.



Ameeriar, Lalaie. 2017. *Downwardly Global: Women, Work, and Citizenship in the Pakistani Diaspora*. Duke University Press. ISBN: 978-0-8223-6316-3

In *Downwardly Global* Lalaie Ameeriar examines the transnational labor migration of Pakistani women to Toronto. Despite being trained professionals in fields including engineering, law, medicine, and education, they experience high levels of unemployment and poverty. Rather than addressing this downward mobility as the result of bureaucratic failures, in practice their unemployment is treated as a problem of culture and racialized bodily difference. In Toronto, a city that prides itself on multicultural inclusion, women are subjected to two distinct cultural contexts revealing that integration in Canada represents not the erasure of all differences, but the celebration of some differences and the eradication of

others. *Downwardly Global* juxtaposes the experiences of these women in state-funded unemployment workshops, where they are instructed not to smell like Indian food or wear ethnic clothing, with their experiences at cultural festivals in which they are encouraged to promote these same differences. This form of multiculturalism, Ameeriar reveals, privileges whiteness while using race, gender, and cultural difference as a scapegoat for the failures of Canadian neoliberal policies.



Kar, Sohini, 2018. *Financializing Poverty. Labor and Risk in Indian Microfinance*. Stanford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-8223-6316-3

Microfinance is the business of giving small, collateral-free loans to poor borrowers that are paid back in frequent intervals with interest. While these for-profit microfinance institutions (MFIs) promise social and economic empowerment, they have mainly succeeded at enfolding the poor—especially women—into the vast circuits of global finance. *Financializing Poverty* ethnographically examines how the emergence of MFIs has allowed financial institutions in the city of Kolkata, India, to capitalize on the poverty of its residents.

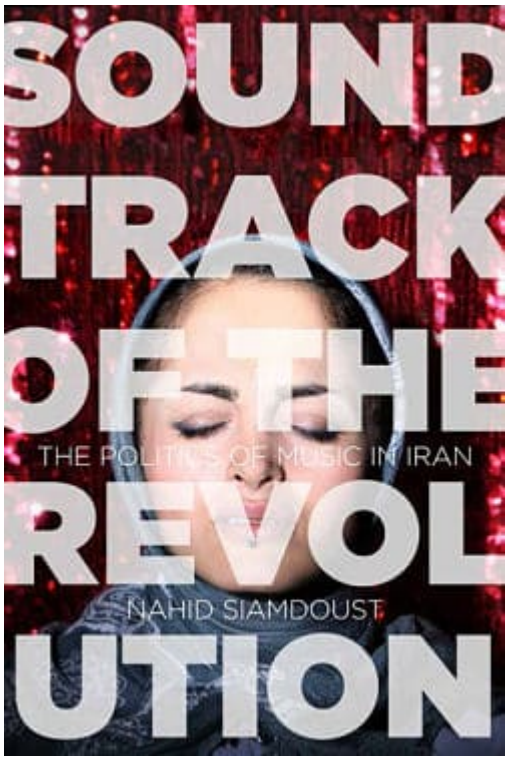
This book reveals how MFIs have restructured debt relationships in new ways. On the one hand, they have opened access to new streams of credit. However, as the network of finance increasingly incorporates the poor, the "inclusive" dimensions of microfinance are continuously met with rigid forms of credit risk management that reproduce the very inequality the loans are meant to alleviate. Moreover, despite being collateral-free loans, the use of life insurance to manage the high mortality rates of poor borrowers has led to the collateralization of life itself. Thus the newfound ability of the poor to use MFI loans has entrapped them in a system dependent not only on their circulation of capital, but on the poverty that threatens their lives.

Krause, Elizabeth L. 2018. *Tight Knit. Global Families and the Social Life of Fast Fashion*. University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 9780226557915

The coveted "Made in Italy" label calls to mind visions of nimble-fingered Italian tailors lovingly sewing elegant, high-end clothing. The phrase evokes a sense of authenticity, heritage, and rustic charm. Yet, as Elizabeth L. Krause uncovers in *Tight Knit*, Chinese migrants are the ones sewing "Made in Italy" labels into low-

cost items for a thriving fast-fashion industry—all the while adding new patterns to the social fabric of Italy's iconic fashion industry.

Krause offers a revelatory look into how families involved in the fashion industry are coping with globalization based on longterm research in Prato, the historic hub of textile production in the heart of metropolitan Tuscany. She brings to the fore the tensions—over value, money, beauty, family, care, and belonging—that are reaching a boiling point as the country struggles to deal with the same migration pressures that are triggering backlash all over Europe and North America. *Tight Knit* tells a fascinating story about the heterogeneity of contemporary capitalism that will interest social scientists, immigration experts, and anyone curious about how globalization is changing the most basic of human conditions—making a living and making a life.

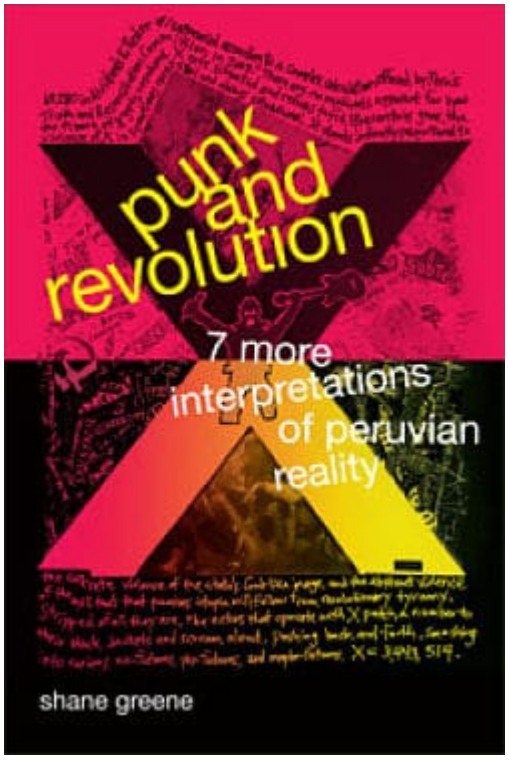


Nahid Siamdoust 2017. *Soundtrack of the Revolution. The Politics of Music in Iran*. Stanford University Press. ISBN: 9781503600324

Music was one of the first casualties of the Iranian Revolution. It was banned in 1979, but it quickly crept back into Iranian culture and politics. The state made

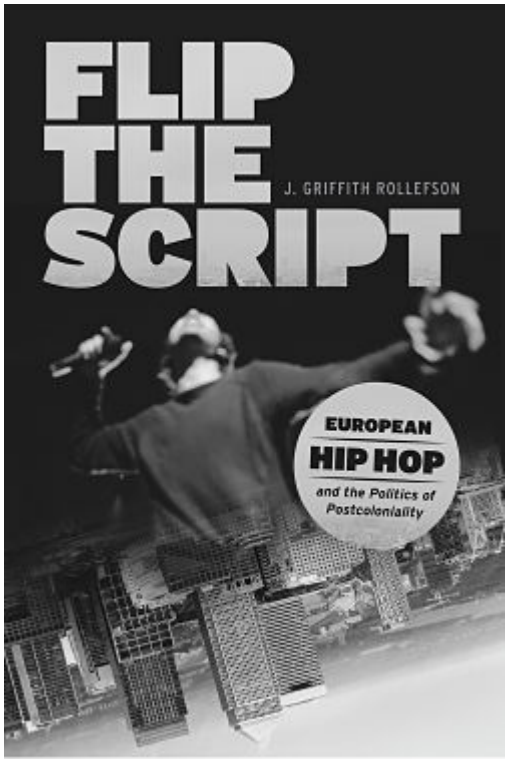
use of music for its propaganda during the Iran–Iraq war. Over time music provided an important political space where artists and audiences could engage in social and political debate. Now, more than thirty-five years on, both the children of the revolution and their music have come of age. *Soundtrack of the Revolution* offers a striking account of Iranian culture, politics, and social change to provide an alternative history of the Islamic Republic.

Drawing on over five years of research in Iran, including during the 2009 protests, Nahid Siamdoust introduces a full cast of characters, from musicians and audience members to state officials, and takes readers into concert halls and underground performances, as well as the state licensing and censorship offices. She closely follows the work of four musicians—a giant of Persian classical music, a government-supported pop star, a rebel rock-and-roller, and an underground rapper—each with markedly different political views and relations with the Iranian government. Taken together, these examinations of musicians and their music shed light on issues at the heart of debates in Iran—about its future and identity, changing notions of religious belief, and the quest for political freedom.



Green, Shane 2016. *Punk and Revolution: Seven More Interpretations of Peruvian Reality*. Duke University Press. ISBN: 978-0-8223-6274-6

In *Punk and Revolution* Shane Greene radically uproots punk from its iconic place in First World urban culture, Anglo popular music, and the Euro-American avant-garde, situating it instead as a crucial element in Peru's culture of subversive militancy and political violence. Inspired by José Carlos Mariátegui's *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*, Greene explores punk's political aspirations and subcultural possibilities while complicating the dominant narratives of the war between the Shining Path and the Peruvian state. In these seven essays, Greene experiments with style and content, bends the ethnographic genre, and juxtaposes the textual and visual. He theorizes punk in Lima as a mode of aesthetic and material underproduction, rants at canonical cultural studies for its failure to acknowledge punk's potential for generating revolutionary politics, and uncovers the intersections of gender, ethnicity, class, and authenticity in the Lima punk scene. Following the theoretical interventions of Debord, Benjamin, and Bakhtin, Greene fundamentally redefines how we might think about the creative contours of punk subculture and the politics of anarchist praxis.



Griffith Rollefson, J. 2017. *Flip the Script. European Hip Hop and the Politics of Postcoloniality*. University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 9780226496184

Hip hop has long been a vehicle for protest in the United States, used by its primarily African American creators to address issues of prejudice, repression, and exclusion. But the music is now a worldwide phenomenon, and outside the United States it has been taken up by those facing similar struggles. *Flip the Script* offers a close look at the role of hip hop in Europe, where it has become a politically powerful and commercially successful form of expression for the children and grandchildren of immigrants from former colonies.

Through analysis of recorded music and other media, as well as interviews and fieldwork with hip hop communities, J. Griffith Rollefson shows how this music created by black Americans is deployed by Senegalese Parisians, Turkish Berliners, and South Asian Londoners to both differentiate themselves from and relate themselves to the dominant culture. By listening closely to the ways these postcolonial citizens in Europe express their solidarity with African Americans through music, Rollefson shows, we can literally hear the hybrid realities of a global double consciousness.

Mensitieri, Giulia. 2018. *“Le plus beau metier du monde”: Dans les coulisses de l’industrie de la mode*. La Découverte. ISBN : 9782707195401

La mode est l’une des plus puissantes industries du monde : elle représente 6 % de la consommation mondiale et est en croissance constante. Depuis les années 1980 et l’entrée dans l’économie néolibérale, elle est devenue l’image étincelante du capitalisme, combinant prestige, pouvoir et beauté, et occupe une place centrale dans les médias et les imaginaires. Pourtant, cette industrie, qui apparaît comme un horizon professionnel hautement désirable, repose principalement sur du travail précaire, et ce aussi bien là où la production est externalisée qu’au coeur de la production créative du luxe, comme les prestigieux ateliers des maisons de couture.

À partir d’une enquête en immersion auprès des travailleurs créatifs de cette industrie (stylistes, mannequins, créateurs indépendants, coiffeurs, maquilleurs, vendeurs, journalistes, retoucheurs, stagiaires, agents commerciaux, etc.), ce livre dévoile la réalité du travail à l’oeuvre derrière la façade *glamour* de la mode. Il met notamment en lumière les dynamiques d’exploitation et d’autoexploitation

ainsi que le prestige social liés au fait de travailler dans un milieu désirable.

Des séances de « shooting » pour magazines spécialisés à la collaboration auprès d'un créateur de mode, en passant par des entretiens avec des stylistes travaillant pour de célèbres maisons de luxe et de couture, cette enquête dévoile une nouvelle forme de précarité caractéristique des industries culturelles du capitalisme contemporain, une précarité combinée au prestige, à la reconnaissance et à la visibilité. Il s'agit ainsi de décrypter les dynamiques invisibles sur lesquelles repose l'industrie de la mode pour mieux la «*déglamouriser* ».

Featured image by Oleg Laptev (www.unsplash.com)

ART, MONEY AND EMOTIONS

Allegra
April, 2018

And we’re back with some very exciting events! This month, we find art at the heart of many fascinating discussions, exploring topics such as spaces and spatialization, contemporary forms of violence and the transgressive potential of queerness. We also look at trust and faith when it comes to money and investigate the connection between emotions and history.

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

AAA Annual 2018 Conference: Artistic Locations

14-18 November 2018, San Jose Convention Center, San Jose, California

This panel looks at the ways that art practice defines and depends upon particular spaces, be these museums, galleries, neighborhoods, cities, cafes, or homes. Bringing together developing themes in the anthropology of art with spatial themes developed in urban and transnational anthropology, these papers explore the social relevance of "artistic space." How does artistic practice structure and produce space? What are the social and political consequences of this? Alternately, or in combination, some panelists may ask how existing spatial relations structure art practice, and how this impacts the way that art interacts with society.

While the particular points of theoretical engagement within this discussion are open, some potentially fruitful interventions could explore:

- How artistic practice interacts with the spatialization of social disparity (i.e. race, class, gender), and how artistic spatial production may impact social struggle along these lines.
- How artistic spaces imbricate within transnational flows of people, capital, and ideas.
- How does artistic practice mobilize spatial meaning in the production of urban imaginaries (c.f. Biron, Peterson) or in contest over national identity (c.f. Winegar, Canclini)?
- What does it mean for artists to produce "utopic" spaces within a broader urban context?

In addressing these questions, participants are encouraged to comment on what

is gained by bringing spatial analysis and artistic concepts together. In what ways does this combination speak to broader concerns of anthropology? Is there something specific about artistic space that is intellectually productive? [more]

Deadline for submission of proposals: 3 April 2018

Conference: Art & Violence Now

11 June 2018, University of Edinburgh, Scotland

How does contemporary art address issues of violence? What role does violence play in mass popular culture? What forms does violence take today, and do we have an adequate critical vocabulary for theorizing contemporary forms of violence? How does violence put pressure on models of visual experience, on forms of subjecthood, and collectivity? How do online and digital media frame violence, and are these media inherently more violent than other, older forms?

Whether engaging Slavoj Zizek's Lacanian reformulation of the principle of violence as the foundation of symbolization and language, or Adriana Cavarero's feminist phenomenology of violence in terms of 'horrorism', or directly reappraising earlier avant-garde theories, such as Georges Bataille's analysis of the sacred function of violence, or Simone Weil's theorization of 'force', we invite a wide range of theoretical perspectives, in exploring the above and other questions. Topics may include but are not limited to: temporalities of trauma and questions of immediacy and mediation; questions of scale, as described by the 'micro' and the 'macro' of violence and aesthetic form; how art responds, on the one hand, to the violence at arms-length of drone warfare, or refugee camps and

prisons located off the mainland, and on the other, to the intimate structures of systemic as well as interpersonal violence in everyday life. Hate-speech online, and the snowballing, autonomous character of social media mob violence, as highlighted for example by Angela Nagle in *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars From 4Chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right* (2017), foreground the ways in which our technologies shape new forms of violent collectivity, and call into question the continuing viability of violence, trauma and shock as part of our critical vocabularies; once used by the historic avant-gardes to signal theoretical transgression, challenge and subversion. In the end, perhaps the question this conference asks most deeply is, does violence itself have a history? And is the 'now' of art and violence today distinguishable from other moments through an examination of its representation in performance, traditional media, social media, digital etc.? [more]

Deadline for submission of proposals: 6 April 2018

Conference: Imagine Queer: Exploring the Radical Potential of Queerness Now

12 October 2018, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

The aim of the conference is to consider interdisciplinary approaches to the transgressive potential of queerness today. Considering grassroots LGBTQ+ activism, artistic practices, as well as academic discourse of queer theory, we seek to identify and address issues arising in the current transnational socio-political conditions. How can biopolitics be challenged by queer temporalities? How can radical activism of preceding decades be re-contextualised and employed now? Can queer social formations, based on friendship, kinship, and

affective communities, be used to reconsider the heteronormative structures aided by the legislation in the international context?

Looking forward, we are interested in restoring the potential of transgressive queer activism, much of which has been now directed into the struggle of LGBTQ+ communities to enter the realm of normative domesticity, compromising its ability to challenge the state apparatus. Based on interdiciplinary, cross-national, and transhistorical research practices, we seek to address these questions in relation to nationhood, citizenship, and human rights. We encourage academic and practical responses to the analysed problem from interdisciplinary, cross-generational, and multinational perspectives. [more]

Deadline for submission of proposals: 31 May 2018

Workshop: (Mis)trust, money and debt in interdisciplinary perspective

15 June 2018, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK

Trust and faith are basic attributes of modern monetary systems. Trust is also recognized as a public good, the maximization of which yields growth and harmony. But if we know what 'trust' is – or ought to be – do we therefore understand its opposite? Is 'mistrust' always the inverse of 'trust'? Does mistrust lead to strictly vicious circles of societal destruction? Similarly, are narratives of bursting bubbles, economic decline and corrosive structural violence the only kinds of stories that can be told when considering money and mistrust? This workshop aims to explore the roles, qualities and affordances of (mis)trust within socioeconomic life, as well as create a space for dialogues across disciplinary

boundaries and methodologies. We begin from the general situation of human beings often having to cooperate with untrustworthy others, of mutual obligations and expectations bridging subjectivities shot through with mistrust and perhaps especially so when money and debt is involved. Thus, we welcome contributions that (1) suspend assumptions about the concepts of trust and mistrust, and (2) explore the expression and importance of (mis)trust in diverse political economies and sociocultural settings. [more]

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 15 April 2018

Conference: Emotions: Engines of history

23-24 November 2018, University of Silesia in Katowice, Sosnowiec, Poland

The etymology of the word "emotion," whose first use dates back to the sixteenth century, betrays the multiplicity of its meanings. Derived from the Middle French *emouvoir* (to stir up), it traces its origins back to the Latin *emovēre* (to remove or displace), which in turn comes from the Latin *movēre* (to move). The notion of movement, then, or a change of state, has always accompanied the way people conceptualise emotions. History is, similarly, a record of movement, fluidity, and volatility, and this approach is increasingly being extended to the study of humanity's past, with emotion studies bringing increased sensitivity to historical, literary and cultural enquiries. Approaching emotions as "engines," that is catalysts of past events and processes is, however, fraught with challenges. It is largely due to the fact that the roles of irrationality and emotionality as motivating elements in history and its narratives are not easy to determine and often elude scientific study due to their intimate and highly personal nature. Likewise the very thought that historical decisions affecting the lives of many

might have been made under the capricious influence of somebody else's emotional state fills us with dread. And yet, we suspect or perhaps even know that many events of both distant and not so distant past have been dictated by emotional disposition and moods of those who made them. If fear, hatred, desire, disgust, pity, envy, love and shame affect our individual choices, they might as well influence the decisions whose consequences go beyond one's singular or communal experience. From the Ides of March, through the separation of the Church of England from Rome, to the role of the social media in the most recent presidential elections in the USA, emotions have shaped and influenced historic events giving rise to groundbreaking social and political changes.

Seeking to bridge the gap between various approaches to the study of motivations in the past, the conference *Emotions: the Engines of History* aims at a multidisciplinary examination of the connection between emotions and history as well as of the multiplicity of ways in which this connection has manifested itself across cultural and literary studies. Thus, we invite scholars working in various disciplines and fields of study to consider the points of intersection between the study of emotions and the study of history, and to engage in a discussion concerning the representations of these intersections in different media across cultures and centuries. [more]

Deadline for submission of proposals: 31 May 2018

Featured image (cropped) by giveawayboy (flickr, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)