Rachel Black – Porta Palazzo #2!

Marc Brightman
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Rachel E. Black 2012. Porta Palazzo: [The Anthropology of an Italian Market. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press](#), 2012. 232 pp. ISBN 978-0-8122-4406-9

This is the second installment of Allegra's Special Review section on Rachel Black's book. Read the first part [here](#).

If 'marketisation' is one of the key phenomena of our neoliberal times, the term thus suggests the generation of raw units of transaction, and belies its origin in that other kind of market – a physical place of face-to-face interaction. The anonymous purchases that feed corporate retail, so-called online 'marketplaces'

and the virtual relations that make up 'the market', the godlike agency that looms over our bulimic financial services sector, have their roots in another field of exchange: the traditional marketplaces that thrived as centres of social and commercial life for centuries, in all civilisations in which trade played an important part (which some might say means all civilisations *tout court*). Indeed, for most of mankind's history since the rise of agriculture and complex societies, this social and commercial life revolved primarily around transactions involving food and drink.

In this light it is appropriate that the study of traditional markets is a classic topic in anthropology, but, as Rachel Black points out, it needs to be revisited 'in the face of drastic changes in food provisioning and eating habits in Europe' (p.4). One might add that these changes threaten to become even more dramatic in the context of the current secretive negotiations between the USA and the European Union over TTIP, the US-EU Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which threatens to undermine Europe's unique regulatory framework protecting society and the environment from corporate interests (Bové and Luneau 2014). Traditional markets, though inefficient compared to other modes of commodity distribution, have other valuable characteristics, and it is precisely these that Black sets out to document through her detailed study of Porta Palazzo market in Turin, one of the largest and most thriving of Europe's surviving urban street markets.

While the book's division into chapters lays out its key themes (history, space, morality, migration, 'ethnogastronomic tourism' and 'local food'), it is really the

way in which these and other topics are interwoven throughout the text that is most compelling. By working on different stalls (a sweet stall, a Moroccan vegetable stall), and joining the regular hangers-on at an especially convivial cheese stall in the farmers' market, Black came to understand the different points of view of the actors whose lives revolve around this place, at once both a hub of social life and a centre of commerce. She succeeds in bringing them to life with disarming frankness and simplicity of expression.

One of the most powerful aspects of the book is the way it portrays the lives of migrants.

As the historical section shows, markets have traditionally been at the margins of cities, at crossroads, and have always been meeting places for people of different origins.

In this light it comes as less of a surprise that markets are often one of the first places to which migrants come to make acquaintances, find work, and indeed to buy and sell things themselves. We learn how the Moroccan vendors are a fully established part of the scene (as even the new arrivals, the informal, ambulant Moroccan mint sellers are in their own way); yet they experience tensions and conflicts with Italian vendors – and we see how these tensions seem above all to be revealed when architectural and organisational improvements are introduced by the municipal authorities.

We are treated to sensitive accounts of the ways in which criteria of taste and identity are articulated, as vendors attempt, with often provocative and 'carnivalesque' displays, to 'seduce' potential clients. We can literally taste the outcomes of discussions of recipes as these are provided at the end of chapters so that readers can cook them for themselves. We discover why the market is a haven for the elderly – not only because it is a stimulating place to go and buy fresh things at good prices in a convivial environment, but for the more unhappy reason that the scraps left over at the end of the day provide for those who have to scavenge for their supper. It is telling that the vendors are mindful of this when they dispose of their unsold wares.

Porta Palazzo is a powerful antidote to the assumption, held by many, that traditional style markets are nothing more than 'bijou' tourist attractions for Europeans, or indulgences for 'foodies'. Certainly such markets exist, and there is at least one in Turin itself.

But popular markets like Porta Palazzo are living traditions that also provide livelihoods and sources of good value, fresh produce to ordinary people.

This is even true of the farmers' market, which is a distinct space within Porta Palazzo. It is no mere haunt of middle class *buongustai*, but rather a place where all kinds of people come together to share, understand and even improve traditional ways of cooking, with an informed interest in the people and places that produce ingredients. The farmers themselves are not well-to-do hobby farmers but peasants (including some immigrants such as an African woman who specialises in live chickens), and it is the connections between regional cooking and living traditions of food production that bind clients to vendors here.

Piemonte, the region in which Turin is situated, was where the Slow Food movement was founded by Carlo Petrini, who contributes a preface to the book. I make these points because Slow Food has faced similar misunderstandings from members of a wider urban public less sensitive to the vibrancy of the embattled popular and peasant traditions of cooking and food production that the movement seeks to defend (not only in Europe but also in the global South).

As Porto Palazzo also makes clear, those who are part of these traditions do not seek merely to preserve them as they are, but to change and improve them with an often surprising openness to different influences

– always, however on a human level: 'improvement' here should not of course be taken in the Enlightenment sense (which was applied in particular to agriculture) of increasing efficiency, but instead as signifying 'making (taste) even better'.

This account of a very human economy has wide reaching implications, and it comes as a slight surprise that there is no reference to recent work on this subject (Hart, Laville and Cattani 2010), although other works in a similar spirit are cited. But this is a minor criticism: to write an ethnography of a market is an opportunity to do precisely what ethnography is so good for: to demonstrate through the detailed narrative of the mundane what is important about a set of facts and observations which, taken on their own, might seem of little consequence.

The best and most lasting ethnographies rest on their success in showing rather than telling, in bringing a place and a set of social relations to life in a way that enables the reader to understand at a profound and pre-theoretical level something more general. This is exactly what Porta Palazzo achieves.

The prose is unassuming, unpretentious – in the first pages, I occasionally thought it naïve in style. Some errors in Italian phrases must be blamed on the editors. But the cumulative effect is something else. Page by page, chapter by chapter, Rachel Black composes an at once deeply personal and yet thoroughly rounded portrait of one of the most important surviving street markets in the world.

References

Bové, J. and G. Luneau 2014. Hold Up à Bruxelles: Les Lobbies au Coeur de l'Europe. Paris: La Découverte.

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The photographs in this article are from Constanza Curro's personal photos.

On History and Anthropology – An interview with Claudio Lomnitz

Anastasia Martino
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Anastasia Martino interviews Claudio Lomnitz on the relationship between history and anthropology, the Mexican revolution and the role of the anthropologist as a public intellectual. The interview was conducted in Spanish.

La primera pregunta que me gustaría hacerle es muy directa, casi "banal". Por qué la antropología y por qué la historia?

Se ha siempre discutido mucho, sobretodo en ámbito académico, de la relación entre historia y antropología. Este debate me parece quedar todavía en posiciones quizás demasiado rígidas que, terminando en

categorías y ámbitos disciplinario estériles, reducen el enfoque de observación en lugar de ampliarlo.

¿Cuales son las razones que la han empujado a desarrollar un enfoque capaz de juntar y explorar creativamente y dialécticamente tanto la antropología que la historia, sin que este enfoque se agote en ninguna de estas dos perspectivas diferentes? Yo creo que este enfoque consigue restituir la fuerza dinámica de la procesualidad y al mismo tiempo de la inmovilidad y de la inercia que caracterizan la sociedad mexicana actual... y no solo esta...

La pregunta no tiene nada de banal – de hecho me cuesta un poco de trabajo contestarla coherentemente. Quizá el momento clave en que mi di cuenta de la importancia de juntar antropología e historia fue a la hora de redactar mi primer monografía, que se publicó bajo el título de "Evolución de una sociedad rural" (México, Sepochentas, 1982). El libro trataba de la relación entre cultura y política en Tepoztlán, Morelos, y el capítulo central del trabajo – el capítulo cuarto – ofrece una desconstrucción de una interpretación estructuralista (levistraussiana) del simbolismo espacial encarnado en el sistema de fiestas de barrios de ese pueblo. Uno de los ejes de la polémica entre Robert Redfield y Oscar Lewis en sus estudios de Tepoztlán había sido la interpretación del sistema de barrios, y de la distinción entre "los de arriba" y "los de abajo". Para Redfield, los barrios encarnaban la unidad social y cultural mínima de la cultura "folk", y los barrios de arriba eran más "tontos" – es decir, más folk – que los de abajo, que eran más urbanos, o "correctos". Lewis, en cambio, mostró que la diferenciación de clase al interior del pueblo no se correspondía con la división entre barrios de arriba y barrios de abajo, sino con la distinción entre los que vivían en el centro y los de los márgenes. Para Lewis el sistema de barrios y de fiestas de Tepoztlán era un remanente de la organización social colonial del pueblo, que estaba ya en franca decadencia en el siglo 20.

Luego, a fines de los años sesenta vino a Tepoztlan un estudiante de Redfield, Philip Bock, que escribió un articulo levi-straussiano acerca del sistema de fiestas,

donde mostraba como las relaciones entre los símbolos y fiestas de los barrios componían un sistema de distinciones que podía entenderse como una "cosmovisión" campesina.

Mi estudio del sistema de barrios usó la historia política de Tepoztlán para desmontar y politizar el estudio estructuralista de Bock. Pero al mismo tiempo, me di bien cuenta de que sin el momento de análisis estructural, no hubiera podido emprender el estudio histórico que hice. Me di cuenta de que el análisis estructural era un momento analítico indispensable, necesario para generar las preguntas históricas realmente más pertinentes.

En este sentido, para mi la antropología es previa a la historia: mis preguntas históricas manan de un análisis antropológico, pero al mismo tiempo el análisis estructural está siempre lleno de espejismos producidos por su propensidad al análisis sistémico. Esos espejismos no pueden despejarse sino a través del estudio histórico. La cronología, el orden en el tiempo, la metonomía, se convierte en ese momento en un eje absolutamente indispensable de análisis.

Por eso me dediqué luego seriamente a estudiar historia. Esto sucedió a principio de manera desordenada y sin conocimiento de la disciplina histórica, pero en los años noventa tuve la fortuna de ser contratado como profesor en un departamento de historia – en la Universidad de Chicago – y ahí mis estudiantes y colegas me enseñaron a hacer investigación histórica sistemática, con uso sofisticado de fuentes, etc.

En su texto mas reciente "The return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón" restituye un cuadro diferente de la Revolución Mexicana y elige hacerlo a través de la historia, de las experiencias de vida y de las ideologías de algunas figuras militantes. Usted explora las ideologías que han inspirado

la lucha y la resistencia y cuanto estas, juntas con las trayectorias biográficas de algunos personajes, hayan entrelazado mas allá de la frontera geográfica México – Estados Unidos, mas allá de las convicciones personales y de las acciones colectivas. La Revolución Mexicana llega a ser una historia de subversión hecha de experiencias de vida, de compañerismo, de ideales compartidos pero también de desencanto (desilusión) y de "ceguera".

Cuanto esta Revolución que parece estar tan lejos en el tiempo habla (por posibles afinidades y/o diferencias) acerca de los movimientos y de las formas de subversión y de lucha que hoy encontramos, en diferentes partes del mundo, y que cada vez mas son objeto de interés y de estudio por parte del antropología? Según usted cual podría ser el desafío de un antropología que se enfoque no solo hacia los ideales y las "bellas esperanzas" sino también hacia los "desencantos" y los "fracasos", hoy?
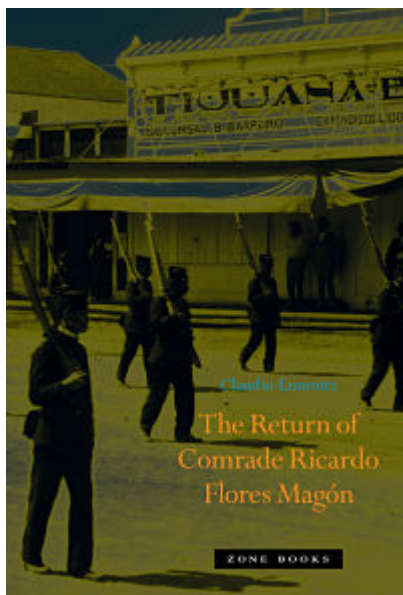
De nuevo, me hace usted preguntas que son a la vez muy buenas y difíciles de responder. "[The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón](#)" pretende ser una contribución antropológica a la "historia del presente." Digo esto en primer lugar porque es un estudio genealógico del transnacionalismo, hoy dominante. Se trata, al fin, del primer estudio antropológico en forma o cabal del primer movimiento social transnacional entre México y los Estados Unidos (disculpe la falta de modestia, pero es así). El efecto de la historia es, en esto, profundamente antropológico, porque la alteridad radical del pasado – el pasado nos es siempre irremediablemente extraño – nos ofrece la clase de distancia o ironía que busca siempre nuestra disciplina (me refiero a la antropología). Esa distancia hace un poco más fácil entender la relación, por ejemplo, entre sacrificio e ideología, o

entre amor y persecución, que si lo buscamos en nuestro entorno más inmediato. La historia de los radicales mexicanos y norteamericanos que crearon la ideología de la Revolución Mexicana es una historia contemporánea, porque es la historia que está realmente en los inicios del momento histórico presente. Este libro – que está escrito en un género que el escritor Truman Capote llamó "non-fiction novel" (una novela de no-ficción), aunque viene precedida esa novela de dos ensayos en el más puro estilo latinoamericano (el prólogo y la introducción al libro) – es la primera antropología de la revolución mexicana como proceso social transnacional.

Ve usted que carezco de modestia en lo que a este libro – y a mi libro acerca de la muerte- se refiere. La revolución mexicana se contó primero, y por largos años, como historia nacional; luego se contó como historia regional. El libro de Friedrich Katz, "La guerra secreta en México" (1981) fue el primero en ofrecer un maridaje entre historia internacional – diplomática – e historia social y regional, enfoque que el propio Katz profundizó en su biografía de Pancho Villa. Pues bien, "The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón" es la primera historia de la revolución como fenómeno fundamentalmente transnacional – y, de paso, restituye la centralidad del problema ideológico, y de la micropolítica (de la amistad, del amor, de la traición) al lugar central que le corresponde.

"There is a class of intellectuals who have the delightful privilege of constantly keeping their readers company-writers who take down their impressions of the significant events of a community and supply it with a steady stream of commentary. The role of these intellectuals is something like that of a village priest, consecrating significant events, offering advice and sympathy, proffering benedictions, and even threatening the unbelievers with excommunicatlon. Their lives are like a book that opens onto their community.

Perhaps because it is, at heart, a Catholic and provincial society, Mexico has always had a special preference for these chroniclers, and they have thrived even in today's mass society. Carlos María Bustamante, Guillermo

Prieto, and Ignacio Manuel Altamirano were figures of this sort in the nineteenth century, as was Salvador Novo in the decades following the Mexican Revolution. Currently, writers such as Carlos Monsiváis, Héctor Aguilar Camín, Enrique Krauze, and Elena Poniatowska fall into this category. Even intellectuals who have kept a greater distance from the bustle of the day to day, such as the late Octavio Paz, or Carlos Fuentes, descend from their lofty heights, like bishops going to a confirmation, when it comes to consecrating the truly important events: the 1968 student movement, the earthquake of 1985, or the Zapatista revolt of 1994. The cronista accompanies the community, guides it through its dilemmas, consoles it in its grief, and shares in its triumph. Mimesis with the people is such that this intellecttual is a natural representative of the nation."

En este pasaje inicial de su texto usted reflexiona acerca del papel que tienen hoy los intelectuales en la sociedad mexicana.

La "toma de conciencia" del antropólogo, como intelectual publico y como académico situado en sistemas burocráticos y de producción del saber que llegan a ser cada vez mas rígidos, suscita debates y dilemas teóricos y éticos... ¿usted qué opina sobre esta cuestión? ¿Que significado tiene para usted hablar de "papel político" y de papel del intelectual? (hablar del papel político" del intelectual?)

Aún cuando en la cita que usted toma es claro que siento a veces un dejo de hiel hacia el papel del intelectual como consagrador, como acompañante, o como cura de pueblo, la verdad es que de fondo me parece importante esta función de acompañante, de testigo, o a veces incluso de plañidera que existe en las sociedades latinoamericanas y en México particularmente. Me parece importante porque se trata, al fin, de obligarse a hablarle a gente que comparte preocupaciones con uno, aún cuando no comparta una formación intelectual o disciplinaria. Esta obligación – que es al final la razón por la cual el ensayo ha sido el género literario más fundamental de la América latina – le da sentido al

final a nuestras investigaciones. Me molesta frecuentemente la tendencia de los intelectuales mediáticos de hablar de lo que sea – de pontificar sobre lo que no saben. Me molesta a veces su soberbia, a veces su sentimentalismo, a veces su franca irresponsabilidad. Sin embargo, al final, creo que prefiero todo aquello, con todo y sus riesgos, a quedar totalmente enclaustrado. El enclaustramiento académico termina demasiado seguido en la aridez, en el polvo. Creo, desde luego, en la importancia de la academia – la universidad es un bien escaso, demasiado escaso, cuyos valores e instituciones merecen y deben ser defendidas. Son, de hecho, insustituibles. Pero esto no significa que deba uno de darle la espalda a formas de escritura, o de uso de la palabra, que se dirijan a otros públicos – y esto no sólo a manera de "difusión de la ciencia," sino de participación plena en el debate público.

Cada vez me intereso más por la participación directa en la cuestión pública. Y por eso, me intereso también en diferentes formas de escribir y de narrar. Una de las cosas que más me atrayeron a los radicales de la generación de Ricardo Flores Magón fue su escritura. Es una escritura muy precaria. Libre y urgente. Aprendí mucho de eso.

¿Qué opina usted de lo que está ocurriendo en México en los últimos años? ¿Hay una relación entre el Estado y el incremento generalizado del nivel cotidiano de violencia en todo el país? Pienso, por ejemplo, al fenómeno de "la guerra al narcotráfico" y también a los mas recientes acontecimientos de crónica, que se encuentran cada día en las paginas de todos los periódicos, como por ejemplo la "desaparición" de los 43 estudiantes normalistas después de una manifestación, muy probablemente por parte de las fuerzas del ejercito.

Lo que ocurre en México hoy es muchas cosas: un horror, en primer lugar; un escándalo, en segundo; y una calamidad social, de base muy amplia, en tercero. No abundo en lo primero – en el horror, aunque importaría hacer una antropología de ese horror. Hablo mejor, de momento, del escándalo, que es que, a fin de cuentas, la guerra del narco es un fenómeno que tiene raíces

estructurales en la historia justamente de la integración entre México y los Estados Unidos. Mientras haya en los Estados Unidos un mercado importante para narcóticos que está, al mismo tiempo, proscrito, habrá una tendencia a exportar la producción a México por la sencilla razón de que el estado mexicano es más débil que el norteamericano. Por otra parte, la venta legal de armas en los Estados Unidos permite que la actividad ilegal en México esté muy bien pertrechada. Y aquello tiende, entonces, a la escalada de violencia, así como a la corrupción constante de funcionarios, policías municipales, mandos del ejército, etc. Es decir que el escándalo de las decenas de miles de muertes violentas que se han sucedido en apenas 8 años es que se basa todo en una economía transnacional de sobra conocida, donde los costos más ásperos de la política norteamericana son absorbidos en México. Y, además, para colmo, México queda ante el mundo como el lugar y epicentro de todo el horror.

En cuanto a lo que llamé la "calamidad de base social amplia", hay que decir, me parece, que la guerra del narco ocurre en una sociedad que ya no se conoce bien a si misma. México se ha transformado muy profundamente desde que su viejo sistema económico y político entró en crisis (desde los años setenta). El campesinado mexicano ha decaído tanto, y su economía se ha transformado tan profundamente, que el mundo rural de México hoy no es reconocible con el que existía, digamos, cuando yo estudié antropología en los años setenta. La integración económica con los Estados Unidos y Canadá es hoy verdaderamente enorme – México y Estados Unidos están económicamente más integrados que ningún par de países de la Unión Europea, por ejemplo. México produce más manufacturas que el resto de América latina junta. Y desde el punto de vista demográfico, también, el país se ha transformado de manera fundamental – ya no crece a pasos agigantados, como antes. Ya pasó su "transición demográfica." O sea que la guerra del narco se da en una sociedad distinta, que no encuentra aún representación cabal en el gobierno, ni en los partidos políticos, ni en los medios,

ni entre los intelectuales.

> *México sufre, hoy, los efectos profundos de una "crisis de representación" que se ha venido fraguando desde los años ochenta. Por esto las muertes de Iguala y Ayotzinapa han sacudido tan profundamente a la sociedad mexicana – se trata de un episodio donde no existe ya un partido político que sea capaz de canalizar aquello que el prócer José María Morelos llamaba "los sentimientos de la nación."*

[Claudio Lomnitz](#) (Campbell Family Professor of Anthropology, Columbia University) received a PhD at Stanford University in 1987 after graduation at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City. He is one of the most distinguished anthropologists and historians of Mexico and Latin America.

Scholar of cultural change, Lomnitz has worked extensively on the issue of historical, political and cultural formation of the nation-state as a form of cultural region, focusing in particular on the formation of Mexican identity. He has developed these themes in different texts about the history of Mexico: [Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in Mexican National Space](#) (California, 1992), Modernidad Indiana (Mexico City, 1999) y [Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism](#) (Minnesota, 2001). In [Death and the Idea of Mexico](#) (Zone Books, 2005) he has developed a political and cultural history of death and its impact on everyday life in Mexico.

His most recent publication [The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón](#) (Zone Books, 2014) is a "different" history of the Mexican Revolution that explores the

experiences and the ideologies of revolutionary collaborators (American and Mexican) of the Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magon. Lomnitz is also a columnist of "La Jornada".

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Rachel Black – Porta Palazzo #1!

Costanza Curro
February, 2015

Rachel E. Black. Porta Palazzo: [The Anthropology of an Italian Market.](#)

The book under review, published in 2012, is an anthropological study of Porta Palazzo market in Turin. The Canadian anthropologist, [Rachel Black](#), drawing upon fascinating extensive fieldwork, stresses the role of the market as a social space beyond its economic meaning. What Black is most interested in is the social aspect of food provisioning, a practice which, in her opinion, has been overlooked in favour of a stronger focus on production, distribution, preparation, and consumption of food. In contrast with supermarkets, which depersonalise and standardise shopping experiences, the market is animportant "place of sociability in cities where public spaces are increasingly deserted and inhospitable" (p.4).

> *Black explores the dynamics that keep institutions such as Porta Palazzo running despite their apparent economic inefficiency. Referring to Polanyi's and Geertz's understandings of economic exchanges as socially and culturally embedded, she identifies a combination of social and economic transactions, in which "economic exchange facilitates social interaction and create a space of sociability" (p. 7).*

Black's analysis is based on long-term fieldwork at Porta Palazzo market, using participant observation – together with a small number of interviews – as the main research method. Experiencing the market from the shopper's perspective at the beginning of her fieldwork, the author subsequently managed to penetrate the vendors' field by working or helping in different stalls. Through a holistic approach, the book presents a series of narrative snapshots of people working and shopping at Porta Palazzo, framing the market as a place where "friendships are made, families are reunited, ethnic and cultural tensions are negotiated, and local identities are constructed" (p. 2). In this way, different types of sociability at the market and conditions for accessing this social world are explored.

In the first chapter, Black presents the market as a field of study. The author's personal experiences in accessing the field and interacting with its social actors are discussed along with techniques for ethnographic research.

Chapter two, drawing upon secondary sources and archival research, provides an historical overview of the city of Turin and changes in Porta Palazzo market as the urban space developed.
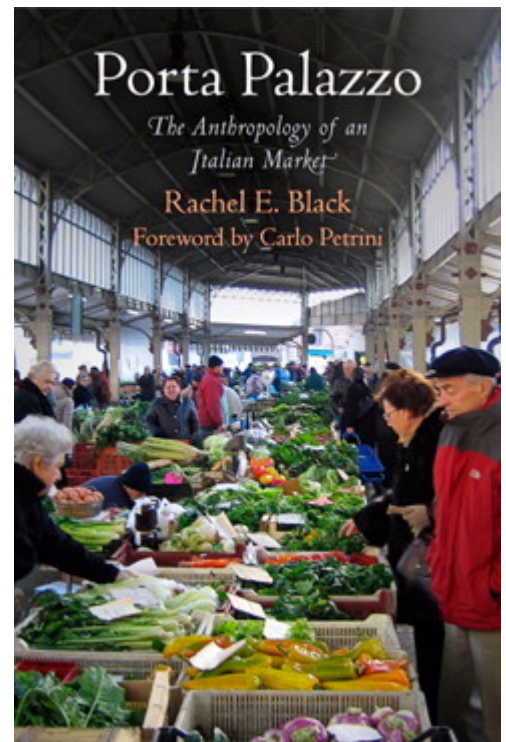
In the third chapter, the author sets a bigger picture of the market as it appears today, in order to contextualise subsequently presented snapshots. Developments that occurred in the market's makeup at the time of fieldwork – particularly a big renovation in 2004-2006 – are discussed.

The four following chapters provide the central themes of the investigation. In chapter four, consumption is analysed as a form of moral evaluation. The market is presented as a place where interactions can generate anxiety, especially with regards to normalised gender and social norms. The carnivalesque nature of the marketplace allows for a transgression of such norms, at the same time reproducing concerns related to socially accepted identities and roles.

The fifth chapter investigates the market as a point of references for migrants, who, in the last few decades, have arrived to Italy on an increasingly conspicuous basis. Large-scale immigration is associated with tensions within Italian society. The market is often the first place where "the Other" is approached and discovered. However, such encounters are not always happy multicultural events: interactions between Italians and migrants in the marketplace often reproduce

large-scale social conflicts and racial prejudices.

Chapter six approaches local administration's attempts to efface the image of the market as a degraded and potentially dangerous place by presenting Porta Palazzo as a multicultural centre where both local and foreign traditions can be experienced through the exchange and consumption of food. Ethnographic culinary tourism at the market is meant to build up bridges between different cultures by framing diversity as something that can be – both literally and symbolically – tasted and appreciated. However, this approach, which is supported by media and marketing operations, has also its downsides.

Finally, chapter seven focuses on Porta Palazzo farmers' market as a point of contact between city and countryside dwellers and one of the last connections between consumers and producers. An analysis of the notion of "eating local" and related knowledge concerning food, language, and practices, is brought about. The four main chapters end with a recipe that the author learnt in her interactions with market's shoppers and workers.

Black's book stimulates a discussion on models of provision and consumption that are alternatives to those envisaged by multinational companies and globalised brands. The author makes a great point by underlining that such models are to be understood not only in a purely economic, but also in a social – and, I would add, political – dimension. As Black rightly argues, economic exchanges do not necessarily deny or contradict the social: on the contrary, they might favour proximity and interaction between people. In this sense, shopping at the market can be associated to other practices entailing both material and non-material transactions and fostering mutual relationships between individuals and groups, such as gift giving and hospitality. As Black maintains in regards to the market, such practices and institutions are still meaningful in people's everyday lives, even though they are demanding in terms of time and energy and generally not driven by a "maximising profit" rational.

The representation of Porta Palazzo as a sort of Maussian "total social fact",

where different institutions – from social, to political, to economic – converge and interact, and various social actors (consumers and vendors, locals and foreigners, men and women) come in contact with each other, is insightful for understanding multifaceted dynamics underpinning the market's life. The author's extensive fieldwork, which brought her in close contact with the market's "population" and their professional and personal life stories, is an important example of the complex – and often insidious, yet exciting – interaction between everyday life, human relationships, and research work which ethnographers experience. Black's long-term personal involvement and intimacy with the market environment results in a fascinating picture of Porta Palazzo, also as a – sometimes repellent – sensorial experience made up of smells, sounds, colours, and, of course, tastes (ch. 3).

In my opinion, however, Black's focus on "social aspects" of the market has two

main – and related – flaws. First, while pointing out many anthropologists' – and journalists' – attitude of representing markets "either as picturesque elements of everyday life or as tourist attractions" (p. 6), the author partly shares this approach, sometimes providing a too uncritical and almost "exoticised" picture of certain features of the market. The introductory claim that, in North America and Western Europe, markets like Porta Palazzo fulfill the desire "to connect with our food, to know where it comes from and how it is grown, and to learn about different culinary cultures" (p. 3) addresses social and economic dynamics underpinning such institutions on a very partial basis. And the – in my view crucial and indisputable – criticism raised in chapter 6 with regard to ethnographic tourism and the "celebration of diversities" through a commodification of different traditions is just outlined and not problemtised further.

Throughout the book, concerns about local food, culinary traditions, and the encounter of different cultures – strong suits of the Slow Food movement, whose founder, Carlo Petrini, authored the foreword to Black's work – seem to have priority over other, more "economic" issues, in the analysis of the market's dynamics.

Although the author is right in attempting to look beyond the strict economic significance and functioning of Porta Palazzo, sometimes this obscures crucial features of the market institution. An analysis of the deep social conflicts and political and economic crisis specific to the Italian context is indeed provided (chs. 2, 5, and 6). However, fundamental points raised in this discussion, for example, the phenomenon of old people searching through the market waste (ch. 4), seem to be approached just superficially, in favour of a deeper attention to exchanges of national culinary traditions, or convivial interactions around the market stalls.

This is not to say that Black's ethnography of Porta Palazzo provides the image of an artificially "exoticised" space where (presumably) locally produced and organic

food is sold at high prices to satisfy local middle classes' desire for "craft" and "traditional" products – as it is the case for some farmers markets in the UK, for example. Porta Palazzo is nothing like that and Black proves to be well aware of the multiplicity of interactions and conflicts, predicated upon gender, race, age, and social status, which underpin the market's life. However, issues concerning social and economic insecurity, the reconfiguration of the public space, as well as limited and exclusive access to such spaces, would deserve a deeper analysis, especially in a context such as present day Italy, which is experiencing increasing social, political, and economic inequality and marginalisation.

In summary, with the hope that the criticisms offered in this review can serve as a constructive basis for further research, the book is, without doubt, an inspiring contribution to economic anthropological studies. Supported by a strong methodology, Black's ethnography provides important insights on how economic institutions are embedded in, and underpinned by, social relationships *vis à vis* depersonalised and alienated contemporary models of production, distribution and consumption.

The photographs in this article are from Constanza Curro's personal photos.

#Events in 2015 … Time to get started!

Allegra
February, 2015

Happy new year, Allies! As it is by now the tradition, you will find below a list of exciting upcoming events and calls, not to be missed this year. Of course, there is much more fun to come, including Allegra 2.0 re-launch (with a brand new website) together with a seminar on academic blogging at the Finnish Institute in Berlin next month. In any case, we once more encourage you to send us your memos, if you think an event you organise should feature on this list or if you want to write a short report on a conference or a seminar you attended. Write us at: stuff@allegralaboratory.net. A special thanks to our editorial assistant Andrea Klein for curating this list!

REMINDER: ASA15: Symbiotic anthropologies: theoretical commensalities and methodological mutualisms

13 – 16 April 2015, University of Exeter, UK

REGISTRATION IS OPEN NOW!! The early-bird discounted rate ends on 16

February 2015.

GAA Biannual Conference 2015

Crises: reconfigurations of life, power and worlds

30 September – 3 October 2015, Marburg University, Germany

The recent financial crisis, the Arab Spring, the upheavals in the Ukraine and the tragic fate of refugees on the shores of southern Europe are just a few of the crises that recently have demanded European media attention. In contrast the 2015 German Anthropological Association (GAA) conference will systematically explore and reflect the diversity of crises by asking such questions as: How are crises perceived in various regional and socio-cultural contexts? How are they linked to different ontological, cultural and historical conditions, interpretations and consequences? How do crises take on collective and individual meaning? Which conceptions and perceptions about the world and which practices are confirmed, questioned or considered to be obsolete in the face of crisis? How do new social orders and interpretations emerge? To what extent are current forms of modernity perceived as manifestations of crisis, as symptoms of loss, decay or neo-colonial domination? [more]

Deadline for submission of papers: 15 February 2015

IUAES Inter-Congress 2015: Re-imagining Anthropological and Sociological Boundaries

15 – 17 July 2015, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand

We live in an increasingly complex social world. The spread of what some scholars broadly refer to as 'globalization' has contributed to this complexity. Identities, networks, and communities have apparently become so fluid, interconnected, and yet diverse, that it is often difficult to negotiate the boundaries between them.

This complexity has arguably rendered conventional categories for the study of human societies inadequate. The usefulness of analytical categories like 'community, 'society', 'culture', and even 'globalization', is now very debatable. 'Traditional' methods of social inquiry themselves have at times revealed obsolete. An increasing number of anthropologists have for instance abandoned single-sited fieldwork for the investigation of certain social phenomena.

A more sensible approach to the study of these phenomena may require tools that belong to disciplines other than anthropology and sociology, like geography, political science, media studies, etc. The investigation of issues that are inevitably entangled in politics additionally requires scholars to take a firm political stance – one that our disciplines often leave us unprepared to take.

Whilst we recognize that anthropology and sociology have always engaged with highly complex – and intrinsically political – social realities, we therefore feel that numerous questions are left unaddressed. The International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) Inter-Congress 2015 proposes

precisely to look into these issues, by encouraging all participants to re-imagine the future of anthropology and sociology – theoretically, methodologically, and politically, within as well as beyond the conventional boundaries of these disciplines. [more]

Deadline for the submission of proposals: 15 February 2015


Conference: Upholding Gendered Peace at a Time of War: Academics and Activists Speak Out on the Shifting Places of Women in the Arab World

2 – 4 June 2015, Beirut, Lebanon

The wars and unrest in the Arab region, the ongoing wars raging presently in Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan, Libya, and on the borders of Lebanon, have proven lethal to women's rights. Not to mention that the Arab region is witnessing the largest refugee crisis that has affected Lebanon and Jordan to a great extent. Every aspect of this conflict has a fierce gender component built into it. The gender dimension is at the core of both the struggle during armed conflict and the social reconstruction that follows. For that purpose the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at the Lebanese American University Beirut is hosting this conference. [more]

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 20 February 2015
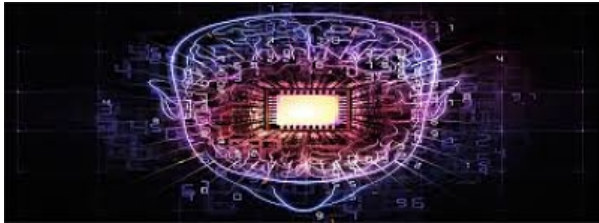
20 Years of ETHICOMP: A Celebration

7 – 9 September 2015, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK

In 1995 the first ETHICOMP conference was held in Leicester, England, organised by Terry Bynum and Simon Rogerson. Its purpose was to provide a forum to discuss ethical issues around computers. Twenty years later we are meeting again in Leicester to continue this conversation. The changes in information and communication technology (ICT) during these 20 years have been dramatic. While computers used to be bulky and easily identifiable machines, we now have small smart devices, the internet quickly developed and has changed significantly, and ICT now pervades all walks of life, from the way we work and communicate to study, undertake childcare and choose partners. As a consequence many of the concerns of 1995 have deepened and many new ones have arisen.

During ETHICOMP 2015, the organizers will review ethical and social issues raised by contemporary computing and look at ways of identifying and addressing them in the future. The conference aims to be practically relevant and bring together the various communities involved in the development, implementation, use of computing and reflection on it in its various guises. The conference is based on the belief that the ETHICOMP community, together with other associations and groups, need to work together to enable the benefits of computing to prevail, while rendering its downsides and ethical ambiguities visible and more subject to public debate than is the case today. [more]

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 23 February 2015

HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory

Call for Proposals for Special Issues – 2016 Competition

The editors of *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* are delighted to launch an international competition for special issues to be published in 2016. Selected special issues, after publication in the journal, will be made available in paperback by HAU Books, printed and distributed by the University of Chicago Press.

The editors wish to reach out and engage the widest community of scholars working in or from any part of the world to contribute, with groundbreaking work, to the emergence of new ethnographically-inspired theories. HAU welcomes proposals on all topics, especially those which consider: indigenous ontologies and systems of knowledge; forms of human engagement and relationality; cosmology and myth; magic, witchcraft, and sorcery; truth and falsehood; indigenous theories of kinship and relatedness with humans and non-humans; hierarchy; materiality; perception; environment and space; time and temporality; personhood and subjectivity; and alternative metaphysics of morality. [more]

Deadline for submission of proposals: 28 February 2015

[International Open Gathering](#)

[UNICONFLICTS in spaces of crisis: Critical approaches in, against and beyond the University](#)

11 – 14 June 2015, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Through this gathering, the organizers aim to create a public space of dialogue transcending divisions among academic and scientific disciplines and to critically approach the urban issues of the era of crisis, through a dialectic, intersectional and postcolonial approach.

The central questions that they wish to raise are two:

1. What is the role of knowledge, of the university and of researchers in the era of crisis?
2. What are the critical epistemological and methodological tools for studying the spatial expressions of the ongoing crisis at multiple scales?

Within this context, the organizers seek to examine the ongoing crisis not just as an over-accumulation crisis but also as a crisis of social disobedience and of the inability of the circulation of capital, patriarchy and nationalism. Moving against the mystification of the crisis, they are interested in critical approaches that focus on the spatialization of social relations and examine the spaces of dissent.

Particularly, they wish to examine the articulations, the limits, the contradictions and the dialectic relation of commons, enclosures, inclusion, exclusion, insurgency and counter-insurgency as well as their hybrid intermediate forms, which emerge in and through physical space, modes of communication and the constitution of communities. Overall, they aim to break the North/South or East/West dichotomies and to focus on the fields of gender, race, class and culture. [more]

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 1 March 2015

Biennial Conference of the Finnish Anthropological Society 2015

Landscapes, sociality and materiality

21 – 22 October 2015, Helsinki, Finland

Landscape has become a prevalent concept in anthropology in recent years, and it has acquired occasionally contested meanings in discussions across disciplines. Many anthropologists consider that landscape emerges and is perceived in different ways depending on time, place and space. According to this point of view, we can speak of landscape as a contextual social and cultural process defined by time, place and space rather than as an image and an object of the

visual gaze. Landscapes can thus be seen as socially constructed mainsprings and mediators of being and belonging, of memories, cosmologies and narratives. Can we then, through landscape, space or place, understand something new about social relations? In what ways are landscapes constructed as wide networks of relations, of various kinds of socialities? And further, how do people's practices, activities and meaning making processes affect and shape landscapes?

On the other hand, researchers focused on materiality have asked how social relations are enacted and communicated through material things and the use of space and how the chosen medium affects what is being communicated. Others have asked how the material properties of various resources, infrastructures and environments enable and restrict certain social forms. Can we say that certain materialities elicit certain kinds of political formations? Taking these viewpoints even further, can we assume that also objects and environments have something akin to agency? Do these notions further our understanding of social life and the politics associated with it, or – as others have noted – is ascribing agency to non-humans a form of fetishism that displaces politics from sight and curtails our understanding? In this conference the organizers wish to explore these questions and further consider whether these discussions about materiality downplay humanism in social sciences. What is the role of politics and power in studies on landscapes and sociality? [more]

Deadline for submission of papers: 15 March 2015

On Harm and History

Alejandro Castillejo
February, 2015

I want to begin with Julia´s history, an indigenous woman from the South of Colombia who currently lives in one of Bogotá's massive shantytowns. Her life speaks of a series of tragic events that address not only the immediate and devastating effects of war but also, more subtly, the ways in which certain forms of violence, what I call *historical injuries*, are *rendered unintelligible* by mainstream, official legal-technocratic discourses in post-war countries (Castillejo, 2013). These sketchy notes are part of a larger ethnographic project that seeks to unpack the connections between "violence", "temporality", and the "law" in different "transitional scenarios" and explore how laws of national unity and reconciliation "articulate" limited conceptions of "violence" as well as conceive the prospect of an *imagined new future*.[2] I take Julia´s history as a way to pose a more general question about the unintelligibility of collective suffering.

The following is an excerpt from my fieldnotes:

Julia is a married woman. She initially had two children: Paula is sixteen years

old. León, a bit older, suffers from leukemia. Several years ago (when she was 27) Julia and her daughter (then only five years old) were raped by paramilitaries. Of Julia´s rape, a third child was born. Clara is now 12 years old. Julia feels, as could be expected, all kinds of ambiguities regarding her little one, who reminds her of the abuse her body suffered. At one point, out of desperation, Julia thought of aborting Clara. For Julia, with Clara's birth, life and death existentially coexisted. The baby was, in more than one sense, an unwanted human being. In addition to this tragedy, her son suffers from an incurable disease. In a different manner, in his body, life and death also coexist. At one point, Julia finally runs away because the rapist threatened her after she took the case to the police. The police, illegally, warned the perpetrator on the situation. At that moment, she did not know she was pregnant. Julia then abandoned her husband and moved to the dusty southern outskirts of Bogotá's localidades that surround the hilly landscape. She lives, as a forcefully displaced woman, in a tiny, hidden space and feeds her children, like many other indigenous people on the streets of the city, by selling cigarettes on an urban bus at 10 cents each (dollar price). Eventually, her husband found her and discovered she had delivered a child, Clara. In time, he embraced the little one as one of his own. Julia lives today in abject, chronic poverty and historically conditioned hunger. During a subsequent conversation I had with a close friend, my interlocutor concluded laconically about Julia´s situation: "the problem in Colombia" [despite all the rhetoric of reparations of the Justice and Peace Law], paradoxically, "is that the State has no way "to repair" this indigenous woman's life, there is no mechanism to repair this person's life."

Last time I asked about Julia, I was told that her sick youngster was now into drugs and gangs. "It seems she decided to return to the South," her friend said. Yet "it looks like," due to lack of resources and fear, "she hasn't been able to do so," she conceded.[3]

I want to highlight two different registers in the presiding excerpt. I am interested in Julia´s personal history, on the one hand, and on her friend´s appreciation of Julia´s life, on the other. First of all, Julia´s experience is an example of the sexualized power exerted over an indigenous woman by men carrying guns, an example of her body taken quite literally as a territory of war, and of the person's subjectivity and dislocation as a battle trophy in the context of "armed conflict." A large body of academic work attests to this gendered violence and the difficulties in testifying to it. In this context, during times of "transitions" states do have legal and institutional mechanisms to deal with this kind of abuse.

However, and this is the second point I would like to raise, her situation is also the product of a larger cultural history, a wider *temporality* that exceeds current conceptualizations and legal-technocratic approaches in vogue in transitional scenarios. Hers is the history of exclusion and chronic, historical inequality of indigenous communities in Colombia. Her body is a repository of this palimpsest.

In this case, violence is the product of overlapping "inequality" and "difference."

In other words, Julia inhabits a form of victimization that, however immediate and concrete, falls also beyond the "legal epistemologies" that inform global debates on transitional justice, more concerned with recent histories of abuse. Her experience speaks more of forms of violence that are not conceived (within certain theoretical frames) as such, and therefore cannot be "repaired" — either because they are situated in a far-off, neutralized past (the formal colonial past or the slave past, for example) or because they are at one point subtly dressed with

the robes of "national unity and reconciliation" that compel a society to "look to the future", to "turn the page", to "leave the past behind," and to forgive and reconcile in a "post-violence," "post-conflict" society. However, bodies and subjectivities like the one of Julia, crushed by the daily carvings of permanent and systemic lack, remind us of an ever-present past as well as of the limitations of these discourses.

In short, her personal history is that of an indigenous woman living in a situation of chronic misery. In part, the tragedy was not only sexual abuse (with all the destruction this conveys), but also the historical, structural, and material conditions that allow (and have allowed) the abuse to happen in the first place, despite important legal developments since the 1991 Constitution in Colombia. In this sense, the kinds of violence she embodies are so multifarious, localized in both, a set of multiple "spaces" —geographical, bodily, subjective, and existential ones— and temporalities (simultaneously in the "historical past" and in "the present"). The reference to a potential impossibility of "repairing" Julia, as the interlocutor alluded to, bears the question as to the multiple registers of pain and injury that are entwined with the present. [4]

More precisely, how are historical injuries repaired? Do laws of national unity and reconciliation address such issues or are they structurally unable to

Furthermore, might it be possible to speak of harm as an accumulative phenomenon (even over centuries), a kind of existential palimpsest in which layers of collective suffering entwine? In other words, violence has been and continues to be part of the social experience. For indigenous organizations not only in Colombia but also in other "post-war" countries (Guatemala, Salvador or South Africa), if it has any meaning, the notion of "transition" is experienced as a kind of continuity rather than as break with the past.

As I argued elsewhere in more detail, the idea of "transitional justice" (and the complex network of legal and extralegal mechanisms in charge of "dealing with" the causes and effects of human rights violations) is based on at least two basic assumptions. On the one hand, it is grounded on the "promise" and the prospect of an *imagined new nation*. And secondly, it is also grounded on the very possibility of assigning violence (defined in very particular ways) a place "behind," in the aseptic isolation of "the past." In other words, as societies move "forward" (a "movement" reflected in the application of "constitutional reforms," "memory initiatives," "reparation programs," "development projects," "economic reforms," among other "social repair initiatives") violence is "left" and "locked" behind (Castillejo 2014)

In most cases, the notion of "transition," or "countries in transition," implies a teleological movement from "authoritarian rule" (or "internal armed conflict" and mass atrocities) towards a "liberal democracy" inserted in today's global Capitalism. In reality, however, the "transitionparadigm" is now applied to many other historical experiences that are not necessarily described as "post-authoritarian". The global gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation, and indeed its inherent technologies of transition, is part of a larger discursive framework through which this teleological movement takes place.

However, in countries where structural, long-standing political and economic inequalities have structured everyday life, is it possible to think of "transitions" as a kind of continuity with the past rather than as a rupture in which they are often presented? How could these continuities be identified and how do they determine the fate of politics in the present?

In the end, how is chronic hunger and historical injury "healed"? In places where profound social inequalities remain to be abysmal, how can a sustainable peace be accomplished if the historical and structural causes of internal conflict remain to be resolved? Forms of violence in which *difference* and *inequality* —despite the promise of the newness— are still woven together into a *longue durée*, that lay beyond, so to speak, the theoretical contours and the technical mandates (as well as the "trauma" and "human rights" tropes) defined by and inherent to laws of national unity. Could this fact be the seeds of future conflicts? It seems to me that it is in part up to anthropologists to unveil the colonial heritage of transitional mechanisms as they have been articulated with broader, global legal frameworks. Perhaps, the project of unpacking these continuities amounts to the need of decolonizing transitional justice theories and practices.

Footnotes

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[2] I use the term transitional scenario to refer to the assemblage of globally interrelated discourses, expert knowledges, and institutional practices put in place by what I generically call laws of national unity and reconciliation in order to face the effects of gross violations of human rights. I refer to these technologies of transitions as a global gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation (Castillejo, 2007).

[3] Quoted with Julia´s permission. I thank Natalia Camacho for her help and timely corrections. All names have been changed.

[4] I use the term "to repair" (verb), as translated literally from the Spanish word "reparar", which has a slightly mechanical connotation: to repair a car or a broken object. The other important term is "daño" ("injury", "harm", "damage" in their multi-layered existential, legal, and psychological registers).In Colombia much of the social debate around violence deals with "repairing" (or "reconstructing") the damage done to the "social fabric" (tejido social) by armed conflict or by "violence". This injury can be "individual" or "collective", although the collective nature of injury (strongly evoked by the term tejido social) is more evasive and difficult to grasp.

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My name is not 'NN': Field-Notes from An Exhumation Site in Guatemala City

Shakira Bedoya Sanchez
February, 2015

I arrived to *La Ciudad* Cemetery by the end of February 2014 as part of an introductory training on Forensic Anthropology. In the picture above, the remains in front of me are those of an unidentified sub-adult whose cause of death was categorized as 'undetermined'. The black and white posters that hang behind me correspond to the faces of numberless of individuals that seek to draw attention to the forty five thousand detained-disappeared in the aftermath of the [Guatemalan internal conflict](#) (1960-1996). While I am carefully cleaning the set of bones lying on my table, I remember the instructor explaining how to record and categorize physical trauma. The anthropological analysis would deal with the estimation of age, sex determination, statute, possible skeletal anomalies, pre mortem fractures and possible peri-mortem trauma. A finalized forensic report highlights patterns to allow inferences about the manner of death and the cause of death that aim to provide with "reasonable degree of certainty" the *likelihood of an event* – this is to say, what *really* happened. [i]

A 'body' is constructed as forensic evidence by a temporal and spatial process in which a sum of human materials that bear certain acts of injury and disease are sequentially decoded to infer an episode of killing [ii] – these 'objects of death' in themselves are not evidence – *they become evidence* in the context of an enquiry [iii]. The bones and other found objects are not regarded in isolation but transverse in fields of relations from which [assemblies of connections] are made [iv] where

> *"We, The (sic) forensics help out to rebuild a story but we do not tell it alone … We contribute to solve a part of a story and in great part to recover the memory."[v]*

Exhumations in la Ciudad resulted in more than sixteen thousand bodies and body parts exhumed from their ossuaries and stored in plastic bags. Each of these bags contains hundreds of skeletal remains and /or a complete skeleton. When the exhumations in Guatemala started in 1988 these were initially aiming at the identification of victims of massacres and circumscribed to rural areas, but pressure from relatives of the *disappeared ones* in the cities soon demanded a search extended to urban places. In Guatemala City, it was discovered that public cemeteries were used for the disposal of bodies that were dumped into deep ossuaries where their unidentified corpses were labelled in the public records as 'NN'. [vi]

In January 2010, a forensic anthropological team formed the non-identified persons investigation unit and began with landmark exhumations of the ossuaries in different public cemeteries. According to their leaflet and different media-reports advertising the exhumations, the objective of the recovery of the remains was the identification of persons through the correlation between the data of the unidentified 'NN' of the graveyards with the information of the reports of disappeared individuals. As such, the campaign in La Ciudad was widely framed and perceived as aiding justice through producing truth for the families of the victims. The inauguration ceremony took place one month afterwards and attracted wide media attention and the participation of victim's organizations, local politicians and diplomatic representatives of foreign delegations. The speeches of the ceremony situated the remains in a constant constitution and negotiation of their substance "as persons or things, subjects or objects, meanings or matter" [vii]– "In order to heal we need to know the truth! Because justice is based on the truth." [viii]

When the remains are recovered, every single piece of bone whether it belongs to

a complete or incomplete skeleton is labelled with a specific code number, compiled, tagged and stored for future analysis and cause of death. The correlation between human remains and that of forensic classification implies the removing of personhood and identity from remains to be classify leaving space only for the enumeration of the physical characteristics. [ix] This classification however, requires a process of reduction where questions of violence are translated and disguised into methodologies and techniques that validate the scientific process (as for example bone DNA) ultimately as the explanans. [x] To that extent, complex political and structural problems that resulted in a killing event are framed into a system of codification that would invariably dangle on the possibility of the scientific translation.

As an instructor explained to me,

when the remains show signals of peri-mortem trauma in the skull, these are labelled as "A" and sent directly to the DNA laboratory to processing and genetic profile determination. When the injuries are not consequential to gunshot but are still found in the skull – the remains would get priority "B" and DNA analysis is then optional. If the injuries are not in the skull or there are no peri-mortem injuries at all, there is a strong probability that the remains will never get a genetic profile and will be merely returned to the ossuaries.

In spite of the narrative surrounding the exhumations, five years after the starting of the project only seven forced disappeared victims have been positively identified. The forensic sensibility can pierce together a truth because

"the bones can speak and tell a story" [xi]

– but what is the faith of those 'bodies' who cannot "talk" with regard to the objectives aimed by transitional justice narratives? In the context of La Ciudad, the skeletal remains that do not fall within "A" or "B" categories would continue with the marker 'NN' and be left aside [together with thousands other bodies] from the promise of justice and reconciliation.

Perhaps these 'NN' are a source of resistance – so to say – to any imaginary of transition, since the allocation of violence that the transitional stage seeks to 'lock' in the past cannot be left behind [xii] but stands timeless and critical without a *voice* to be decoded, but with a voice nonetheless.

Foot notes

[i] Erin. H. Klimmerle, et al., (ed). Skeletal Trauma. Identification of Injuries Resulting from Human Rights Abuse and Armed Conflict. CRC Press, (2008), p. 11.

[ii] Layla Renshaw. Exhuming Loss: Memory, Materiality and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War. Left Coast Press (2011), pp. 121-151.

[iii] Matthew Engelke. The Objects of Evidence. Anthropological Approaches to the production of knowledge. Wiley-Blackwell (2009), pp. 1-7.

[iv] Eyal Weizman (ed). Forensis. The Architecture of public truth. Sternberg Press, (2014). Introduction.

[v] Statement by JP in a public interview, 2008.

[vi] NN stands for 'no name' or a body without identification.

[vii] Cara Krmpotich, et al., The Substance of Bones. The Emotive and Affective Presence of Human Remains 15 Journal of Material Culture (2010): 371- 384, p. 372.

[viii] Statement by victim's relative during the inauguration ceremony.

[ix] Layla Renshaw. Exhuming Loss: Memory, Materiality and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War. Left Coast Press (2011), p.p. 121-146.

[x] Yuri Pascacio Montijo. On the objective character ascribed to bones. Paper presented for the European Association for Social Anthropology Biennal Conference in Tallin, Estonia. 31 July- August 3, 2014.

[xi] Clyde Snow. Inaugural lecture at the Master of Forensics Sciences in San Carlos University, Guatemala City, February 2013.

[xii] Alejandro Castillejo-Cuellar. http://allegralaboratory.net/on-harm-and-history/

The Limits of Truth Telling: Victim-Centrism in Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools

Ronald Niezen
February, 2015

Truth commissions can be seen, not only as venues for addressing the worst abuses of states in a search for justice, but as institutions that produce knowledge, oriented toward shaping opinion on a wide scale. The public orientation of the commission is shaped in important, but largely unrecognized ways, by the laws that bring the commissions into being, the powers they possess, and the approach they take to the "victims" or "survivors" of the abuse of states. The influence of the law can be seen in the preferences and absences of Commission proceedings; this includes the templates that shape survivor testimony, and conditions of moral affirmation and insecurity that influence the presence or absence of those who give testimony and how their statements are received.

These basic observations on the connection between the mandates of truth commissions and their production of knowledge are particularly salient in Canada's ongoing [Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian residential schools](). The Commission began its work in 2009 with little public awareness or acknowledgment of the history of the human rights abuses in question: the institutional effort to assimilate "Indians" into mainstream Canadian society through a large scale effort of church-operated residential schools that removed children from their communities and families. Spanning a period of approximately one hundred years, from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, the federal government of Canada put into effect a policy of Indian education through residential schools, based largely on an already established U.S. model of Indian boarding schools. The main distinguishing quality of Canada's residential school program was that it involved collaboration between the federal government and a variety of churches: Anglican, Catholic (especially the Oblates of Mary Immaculate), Presbyterian, and United. By the time the last schools closed in the mid-1990s, approximately 140 Indian residential schools housing approximately 150,000 children had been in operation. There are some 86,000 people alive today who once spent time as a child in an Indian residential school. And it is their removal from their families and their frequent experience of abuse in the schools that was at the origin of the lawsuit in the early 2000s that resulted in a Settlement Agreement, a costly regime of compensation (costing the federal government more than three billion dollars CDN, and counting) and a truth and reconciliation commission, intended in part to uncover important "truths" about the schools and make them known to a largely uninformed Canadian public.

The work of the commission was therefore oriented toward the persuasion of others concerning its basic premises. To an unusual degree among truth commissions, it faced the challenge of persuasion, of convincing public audiences that the reality depicted in the trials and negotiations leading up to the Settlement Agreement has a historic dimension that calls for reform of the dominant narrative of the state.

Another important quality of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has to do with the extent to which its terms of reference separate it from judicial proceedings or powers. The [mandate of the TRC](#) was constructed through the negotiations of the Settlement Agreement, under the terms of which the TRC is prevented from holding formal hearings, acting as a public inquiry, or conducting any kind of legal process. It is, in other words, designed as an information-gathering rather than a judicial body. It does not have subpoena powers, and has no other mechanism to compel attendance or participation in any of its events or activities. It is even prevented from "naming names," from identifying any person in any of its activities or reports without the consent of that individual, unless the identity of that person has already been established through legal proceedings (i.e. convicted of the alleged wrongdoing).

There will be no dilemma at the conclusion of the Commission concerning what to do with the identities of possible perpetrators, because there never will be a list of names; the Commission has been prevented by its terms of reference from receiving them into the record in the first place.

Nor is it permitted to make reference in its reports or recommendations to any possible civil or criminal liability of any person or organization. In comparative terms, it can be situated squarely among "victim-centred" truth commissions, such as those in Rwanda and Nigeria, established in the aftermath of ethnically-based violence. It has been from the outset released into a limited enclosure, with no range of authority that might lead to some sort of reckoning-for-the-responsible or extend the information it receives beyond a focus on victim narratives.

Working within the limits of this mandate, the Commission has taken its work in a distinct direction: the emotionally laden, powerful testimony presented to the commission has, in a relatively short period of time, become not only "sayable" but has become dominant to the point of excluding or overshadowing other forms of testimony. What is the process by which the unspeakable became sayable, and the sayable a kind of protected and protective orthodoxy? How does something remain invisible, unthinkable, unspeakable, and then over a short space of time become publicly visible and subject to active representation, to narration by traumatized witnesses, even to the point of being a prevalent theme in their testimony?

One of the TRCs explicit objectives has been to honour and affirm the experience of survivors (often written with a capital "S').

This is a project that involves a certain cultivation of opinion. The "Survivors" and "inter-generational Survivors" who give testimony are often people who experienced not only the worst things that can be done to children, but later in their lives the worst abuse of opinion that can be perpetrated on a fellow human being: imposing the stigma of victimization. Those who experienced abuse in the schools and shame in their adult lives had need of the restoration of their dignity. So it was perfectly reasonable that the commission would also set itself the goal of making suffering acceptable or even noble, with a complementary emphasis on self-improvement through cultural rediscovery.

This goal of affirmation is accompanied by efforts to elicit the testimony of those who have been most traumatized and durably harmed by their school experience –

and persuasive in their narration of it. It is possible to see the commission's forms and strategies of encouragement of Survivors as processes by which disparate experiences are shaped into a common historical narrative and idiom of personal experience. Out of the mass of possible testimonies, those that were presented somehow corresponded with an essence of the school experience, visually, materially, and testimonially manifested at the sites (including Web sites) of the events. These controlled, often symbolic expressions of school experience, whether intentionally or not, act as templates that establish narrative themes and encourage witnesses to publicly present their painful memories; and in the process give shape to emotional expression, opinion, and understandings of the history of institutional practice, ultimately to be made manifest in new categories and criteria of distress and belonging.

How might the TRC channel narrated experience into basic, complementary essentialisms, while excluding the representation of unwelcome countervailing meaning? What are the processes that make it possible for some forms of experiences – and not others – to become, in a relatively short period of time, an essential, normal, natural, meaningful aspect of the self, in company with others – and in narrative performance before others?

In the work of the Commission, stigmatized experience is brought out of isolation, affirmed, given conceptual form, perceived, felt, and acted on, while suffering is affirmed as legitimate and expressed in distinct, iconic forms.

Affirmation occurs in part through what I refer to as "templates." The TRC's templates are clearly recognisable in the opening speeches and early stages of the Commissioner's Sharing Panel, in which the organizers are "setting the tone," or more instrumentally trying to establish thematic and behavioural patterns. In several of the Commission's major venues the preparation of audiences and

potential witnesses seemed more intentional. On each of the opening days of the National Events in Inuvik and Halifax, for example, the Commission screened a film in the main venue consisting of a sequence of fragments of testimony from the community meetings that had taken place during the preceding weeks. These films were similar in thematic content and structure to material later posted on the TRC Web site, the main difference being the wider scope of the online video, which was able to draw from several national events. In these films, the Commission was able to select out from the many hours of video from community hearings those moments that resonated, the "sound bites" that deftly captured not only what the speaker was trying to say, but more significantly, what the Commission was trying to convey. These selected narratives of the "highlight reel" emphasised the themes of loss and suffering, both within the schools and in adult lives broken by the experience, the heightened emotion of grief (but within certain bounds of self-control and composure), and in a closing narrative, a positive story of healing and rediscovery of that cultural heritage once slated for destruction through the schools.

In the Commissioner's Sharing Panels this kind of security and guidance for those on the list of speakers was also provided by preliminary, vetted, rehearsed testimony in which individuals with experience in witnessing presented their testimony. This first set of witnesses at several of the national events had been invited, it would appear, not only because they tended to be confident in front of large audiences, but also because they had previously touched on themes emphasized by the Commission.

Effective stories have the capacity to shape the narrations and audience responses that follow, acting "to set the tone, to set the context."

This affirmation of experience extends to what remains "unsayable," the topics and opinions that tend to be absent or approached with caution. When we look for these forbidden areas we have a tendency to concentrate our search on things that are too emotionally intense to be articulated, conforming to the idiomatic expression "too horrible for words." But what we find in the testimony presented to the commission is just the opposite: horrible, sorrowful, traumatizing experiences are the sorts of things that are being remembered and narrated. The things not being said also tend to be the stories that do not evoke strong emotion. Former students tend not to come forward to publicly narrate ordinary experience in residential schools, the more commonplace, quotidian indignities of excessive discipline and the shared, yet deeply individual, loneliness of removal from families. Those who think of themselves as having suffered only minimally or not at all also think of themselves as having nothing to say.

The category of the unsayable extends to the perspectives of those once involved in the day-to-day operation of the institutions: the nuns, priests, and other clergy who once ran the schools. These perspectives are not meaningfully represented in the TRC's witnessing activities, nor are those church members who remain disaffected with the accusations against them engaged in any form of encounter or exchange with those former students who are, in a sense, claimants and accusers in the process. In fact, the Oblate priests, brothers, and nuns with whom I conducted interviews often tell starkly different versions of suffering, particularly of the suffering they experienced personally through the structures and processes of accusation. This realm of experience rarely finds its way to the proceedings of the commission, and if it does, it is veiled, discreet, and indirect.

More significantly, the federal government's presence and participation at the TRC meetings has been, for the most part, formal and formulaic, this despite the fact that the government was primarily responsible for the residential school policy, their funding, and, ultimately, providing oversight of the operation of the schools themselves. The commissioners do not draw attention to this absence. And even when it is noted by survivors, as very occasionally happens, the focus of the hearings soon returns to the churches as the most immediate, remembered

source of their suffering. Those with experience administering and operating the schools, whether under the auspices of the federal government or the churches, rarely have any interest in sharing their stories, and the Commission has nothing to compel or induce them to do so.

The Commission is able to offer school survivors respect, reverence, affirmation, healing rituals, and gift bags, but it is not able to bring wrongdoing individuals into the picture, to hear their part of the story, possibly to hear their expressions of regret; it is unable to overcome obfuscation, non-cooperation, and denial from responsible institutions and individuals. And through this regime of "truth telling," the federal government remains largely an abstraction, a source of policy, funding, and administration, putting forth nothing that attracts censure or gains traction with audiences.

The school survivors can sometimes be seen to act in opposition to the Commission's templates and exclusions, using the permissiveness of the various statement-gathering venues to add complexity to the stereotypes of the victim/perpetrator dichotomy or to press beyond the commission's mandate by giving expression to other grievances, often more current, sometimes even expressed with more urgency and passion, than their traumatic memories of the abuse they experienced in school.

The subjects preferred by witnesses and their audiences extend beyond the mandate of the commission, to include a variety of ongoing forms of state-sponsored exclusion, dispossession, racism and assaults to the pride of (and sometimes originating from) the community to which one belongs. These "while I have the microphone" moments reveal that, for many of its participants, the Commission is a venue for the expression of current experience. They reject the boundary that separates their remembrances of the schools from other more

current, personally felt wrongs. Publicly remembering the abuses of childhood leads almost seamlessly into accounts of political usurpation, unresolved treaty claims, the indignities of criminal prosecution, the apprehension and fostering of their children by provincial child protection agencies, the experience of ostracism in reserve communities – any active, irritating, burning cause of indignation can find its way into witness's narrations.

The victim centrism of the Commission – a direct outcome of its limited powers – offers participants an opportunity that corresponds with the stock phrases "wanting their voices to be heard" and "being a part of history," with the purpose of sharing being, as one participant expressed it: "in order for … Canadian mainstream society to really understand … where we've been … what has happened to us," and "so that future generations will know exactly how we were treated, and why. So it doesn't happen anymore."

The Survivors who give testimony, however, often interpret this aspect of their narrative more broadly than does the Commission, which is able to patiently hear these narrations of the present, but not to take them further than their moment before the microphone. The views encouraged and cultivated in the course of the Commission's work are influenced by the most emotional and persuasive survivor testimony, which follows quite simply from the repulsion and indignation evoked by the idea of abuse. But there is a point at which such testimony fills the space needed to understand the actual dynamics of residential institutions. It takes a wider range of participation, accomplished by greater judicial powers, to fully understand the motives behind their establishment, the causes behind the corruption of their goals, and the qualities they might have in common with other, more contemporary forms of misguided power and opinion.

Judicial means and political ends: Transitional justice and political trials

Gerhard Anders
February, 2015

There are fascinating parallels and connections between political trials and transitional justice. Both are seen to serve other ends than merely punishing individuals who committed a crime. Often they serve to legitimize a new or existing regime. The authorities may employ trials to criminalize political opponents. Sometimes the accused attempts to use the trial as platform to challenge the status quo and send out a political message. Often criminal trials

and truth commissions seek to educate people by producing a historical narrative and ascribe responsibility for past violence.

Political trials have captured people's imagination since antiquity. The trials against Socrates, who was found guilty of corrupting Athens' youth in 399 BC, and Jesus of Nazareth are still used as examples of the use of judicial means to political ends. Other famous political trials are the trials against Joan of Arc in 1431, Charles I of England in 1649 and Louis XVI in 1792. More recent examples include the Dreyfus affair and the Moscow show trials during the 1930s.

The Moscow trials were a particularly blatant abuse of courts to eliminate political opponents. They exemplify both the criminalization of political rivals and criminal trials with a predetermined outcome – the conviction of the accused.

This elimination of uncertainty, which is a defining element of a trial, is an extreme case, in which the legal only thinly disguises the political.

Political justice is by no means limited to authoritarian regimes. In his seminal study, Otto Kirchheimer (1961) argues that political trials regularly occur in liberal democracies where courts are deemed independent from political influence and abiding by the rule of law. In contrast to show trials such as the ones conducted at Stalin's behest political trials in liberal democracies tend to have an element of uncertainty. Due process and fair trial rights give the accused a 'fighting chance' (Bilsky 2001: 11713) although the Guantanamo Military Commissions are a borderline case between show trial and a trial respecting the rights of the accused.

The trials against war criminals and perpetrators of the holocaust such as the

Nuremberg Trials and the Eichmann-trial have also been criticized as political trials. Their use as educational and legitimizing tools has been criticized by observers such as Arendt (1963) for drawing attention away from the question of individual guilt. This critique has also been levelled at the more recent international criminal tribunals such as the Yugoslavia-Tribunal in the Hague and the Rwanda-Tribunal in Arusha (Drumbl 2007, Osiel 1999, Koskenniemi 2002, Simpson 2007).

From the perspective of legal anthropology, law cannot be dissociated from its 'context'. Law is always an instantiation of social, cultural and political dynamics and studied as such.

It is not law and culture but law as culture (cf. Rosen 2008) or social phenomenon. From this angle all truth commissions, criminal tribunals and other transitional justice mechanism are political but there are also attempts to employ these institutions to serve political ends in a more specific sense: to neutralize political opponents, to legitimize a government or to deny its legitimacy, an instrument to gain or curtailing political power or influence (Kirchheimer 1961).

During my fieldwork in Sierra Leone I could observe both the politics of international criminal justice at the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the attempts to use criminal trials for political ends in Kirchheimer's sense (Anders 2014). The trials heard at the Special Court clearly served the goal of strengthening the legitimacy of the democratically elected government. The small number of individuals who were charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity underlined the symbolical nature of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.
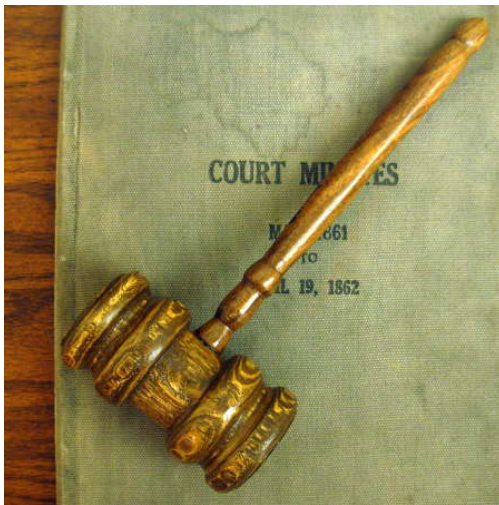
In spite of its political nature the representatives of the Special Court went to great lengths to ensure respect for fair trial rights of the accused and emphasizing the independence of the judges. This respect for the rule of law, however, did not extend to the national legal system.

Whilst the leaders of the various armed factions stood trial in the courtrooms of the Special Court for Sierra Leone hundreds of former members of the two main rebel groups were held in detention under a state of emergency at Pademba Road Maximum Security Prison, just a few hundred metres distance from the compound of the Special Court. After keeping many of them for years without charge the Sierra Leonean authorities eventually tried more than 80 of the former combatants for treason, murder and conspiracy. Most of these judgments were overturned on appeal for lack of evidence but by the time the men were released in 2006 they had fulfilled their purpose of neutralizing these former rebels during a volatile transitional period. It could be argued that the detention of hundreds of former rebels and the trials at the national courts also played an important role in the country's transition. Considering them in relation to the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the national truth commission reveals a much more ambiguous and complex picture.

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Leipzig 100: Super Model Epilogue with Savage

Immo Eulenberger
February, 2015

In his epilogue to the series of papers of the centenary symposium, Immo Eulenberger, a native of Leipzig who had his first encounter with the city's anthropology as a child and followed its developments over the last twenty years, takes up some of the metaphors used in the papers to reflect on how an interplay of personal inclinations of anthropologists with their environment informs choices regarding emerging anthropologies, as well as on questions posed by their evolving diversity. In "War in the Depths of Humanity: A set of micro-plays on Anthropologies born(e) by Tragedies" he discusses anthropologist dilemmas in relation to social dilemmas of a shared world of common problems and contrasting approaches. He uses different periods of the Institute's history to draw this connection as a blog play of ontological actors.

War in the Depths of Humanity – A set of micro-plays on Anthropologies born(e) by Tragedies 1

Part 1

Allegorical Intro & Setting of the Play: Is there something rotten in the state of Anthropology?

I just received a mail from a dear friend and colleague in which she stridently demands that her photo be removed from an online news article calling anthropology "the most pathetic college major that doesn't end in the words "studies"" and accusing 'their professors' of having "voted overwhelmingly against a resolution voicing opposition to a possible boycott of Israel" at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in December 2014. The full title is "Now America's Most Pointless, Useless Professors Threaten Academic Boycott Of Israel".

The photo shows her, a fair-haired young lady in some kind of 'safari attire', sitting in the midst of a bunch of 'half-naked', 'black' 'native' children with curious hairdos and 'abnormally' enlarged earlobes, which bear witness to their 'primitive customs'. This photo, originally published on the website of the South Omo Research Centre in Southern Ethiopia, where she has conducted fieldwork among the Mursi for over a decade, a group famous for their enormous lip plates and their 'enduring primitiveness', 'her tribe', about which she had just presented at the AAA conference, this photo was chosen, without her consent, to represent what anthropology is. And it was used as an accessory to unleashing a –maybe foreseeable but still astonishing– shitstorm.

I quote the voices of the thread of commentaries at some length for being such

a neat illustration of what kind of issues some people have with (what they imagine) anthropologists (are) and how they feel about them:

"#who's next in your war against literacy, knowledge and education, engineers? #Any tenured professor. #Tenure = a license to steal from schools, students and tax payers. #And sweet sabbaticals. Do you suppose the prof in the picutre [sic] was looking for a husband? #"Yes, grasshopper, libtards really are this stupid." #Sorry, but "anthropological studies" are not the most useless professors in college. That distinction goes to any professor teaching "gender studies". #One thing is absolutely certain: these "Anthropology professors(sic)" serve _very_ little purpose in America, except to undermine it. So name names, fire these mongrels and make them feel unwelcome where ever they wander in this country. Don't assist them, don't serve them, humiliate them at every opportunity. Drive them out of your neighborhoods. They are a cancer to academia and America and need to be destroyed.. #Antropolgy [sic], study of dead culture...Like Air America. #Useless AND brainless. A frequently seen combination in faculty lounges these days. It almost explains the Khmer Rouge practice of taking "academic parasites" out into the country side and working them to death to salvage some social utility from them."

"#Most intellectuals ABHOR free-market capitalism because they cannot always sell their own product of labor without the help of government coercion. Clearly, intellectuals bring less benefit to mankind than others. #all these clowns in one spot, and NOBODY sent a drone? … missed opportunities… #Just think of the eugenics that would have done! #Don't forget Dovid [sic] (Devoid) the Progressive child. # The British Society of Anthropologists several years ago passed a resolution that Anthropology is not a science. Look it up. #Anthropologists? Who listens to them anyway? All they do is train patty flippers for McDonalds. What else can an anthropologist do? #The Communists are no longer hiding in the shadows. They are boldly asserting themselves and their policies. #They're looking for their own relevance, which is simply hard to find. #These guys are Irrelevant unless they explode #The kind of behavior to be expected of leftist indoctrination camps, aka Universities."

… and so it goes on. Now, why might the author have chosen my friend's picture? Probably because it was fitting so well the cliché of the 'savage slot'. Why did the author not depict one of the promising young cutting-edge anthropologists studying research labs or legal organisations? What causes him to (dis)qualify anthropology as epitome of uselessness? Is there something wrong with us, or with what people think about us? If yes: why? And what is it? (Not to mention the question: Does it have anything to do with Israel?) Certainly, school book cases of othering.

There was one among the commenters who was clearly a misfit in this otherwise rather jolly casual crowd of right-leaning surfing savages bare of ingratiating 'civilised' restraint. He (or she?) expressed, as the only one, "hope we can have a

meaningful dialogue". His or her post is easy to find because s/he is also the only one who used "I am", easily put into the search function, followed by "an anthropologist", which s/he also chooses as alias. Not only Anthropologist's admission to have ended up on this site by coincidence, the whole style of his/her engagement, his/her concern that "There seems to be a very negative, and very misguided, understanding of what anthropology is and what academic social scientists do", his/her sincere consternation, explicit and conciliatory readiness to be seriously open, vulnerable and caring demonstrated Anthropologist didn't know the rules of the game, or was just too trapped in his/her internalised version of humanity to join the playfully raving maenad horde intoxicated by hallucinations of importance and power.

If this was an attempt at participant observation, it thoroughly failed. Nobody talked to Anthropologist in any way, let alone on his/her wavelength, in spite of his/her efforts to demonstrate relevance and belonging to the useful part of North America's human population. In this context, it was painful to read, even if –or maybe indeed because– it sounded so familiar, as if Anthropologist had written it, first in a somehow official, than in a tangibly apologetic tone, for another of his/her kind.

"My own research focus is in North American archaeology. I work to protect cultural resources in the United States, to involve the public directly in the conservation of the past, and to understand our history and the history of Native peoples on this continent. I study how past peoples interacted with and modified their natural environments, and I try to find ways to apply that knowledge of the past to contemporary environmental issues. Ultimately, I hope this sort of work can improve our environment, our country and our larger world. I realize, of course, that such is not always the case.

I work multiple jobs. Most of my research time is unpaid. In fact, I often pay out of pocket to travel, to engage in research, and to share that research with the public. Working for twelve plus hours a day is not uncommon for me. I get by, but I'm certainly not ever going to get rich at this. I live in an apartment. I don't own any property other than an eight year old car. I do this because I love it and because I think my work can help people. I think this includes people like those of you in the comments who take issue with my discipline, or who think that I should

be 'destroyed.'"

The only post of 'the opposing side' that could be read as something like an engagement says:
"# Both of my grandchildren went to a local community college. One is an RN(CICU) and the other has an AA in computer science and a string of computer certifications. Both are making 70+K per year. Screw four year universities, whose graduates can not find a job, and have a boat load of debt. OBTW, neither of the two had to listen to left wing indoctrination each day."

I think these are all issues we are familiar with. But apparently nobody in the crowd of non-anthropologist 'normal people' cared a fig about 'protecting cultural resources', the 'conservation of the past', 'understanding history', 'Native peoples', how they or anyone else 'modified their natural environments', or about 'contemporary environmental issues', or about the honest admission that intended improvements do not always work out. Anthropologist was clearly an outsider.

I remember that back in elementary, I was already entertaining interests similar to those of Anthropologist, and that this made me an outsider, too. That was hurting at times but ultimately not a stringent correlation and, for me, worth the price. Things got considerably better in high school and really great studying anthropology in college, i.e. at Leipzig University. Later on I switched to history and philosophy but although that was very exciting too, I never felt as much at home there and never developed that kind of community life I enjoyed with my anthropologist peers.

However, from a bird's eye view, the stages of increasing social and intellectual satisfaction were accompanied by something we could call 'socio-cultural seclusion'. Though fortunate enough to be part of a lively and professionally mixed mainly Latino+German circle of friends plus an exuberant social live along friendship networks, almost everyone was a college student, most of them from social sciences and humanities (plus a good number in medicine), and especially the times I was a student or junior scholar at the Institute saw anthropologists making up a huge faction. Almost everyone was basically 'leftist', although on different and normally rather 'moderate' levels.

Relevance of interests and activities was not much of an issue where the common ground was so solid and so widely shared, and independent of financial issues. Our 'objective' economic 'marginality' and relative income 'poverty' did not bother us very much as the wealth of the country and its remarkably reliable system of resource redistribution and social security gave us a feeling of safety and comfort, in spite of the fact that 10% of the German population own over 2/3 of all net capital but 60% own only 1%. We were content with the hope that our coming degrees would provide for a reasonable income later on.

However, I can relate very well to Anthropologist's somewhat 'romantic' and 'heroic' revelations; 'romantic' because they emphasise the importance of 'what is good and right' (and might, as Julia Eckert describes this academic species in this series, secretly want to "save the World" [at least a bit] and / or its proverbial Wretched [or at least some of them]), in an arguably somewhat naïve manner, and 'heroic' because they underline, very much in contrast to the obstreperously romping and impertinently griping lot of rightists around him and their 'savage' redneck demeanour, his/her readiness to sacrifice chances of personal material gain for these higher goods, a kind of rebel stand. That is basically how I myself survived over the last twenty years, i.e. half of my life, and enjoyed my freedom to

follow intellectual interests and do what I most ardently wanted to do.

I am well aware that this makes me part of an economically marginal cultural minority which others, including former class mates from elementary, are likely to see, at least at its present stage, as a kind of failure, and that what I am doing, as an anthropologist with special interests in some remote parts of Africa, patterns of collective violence and pagan religions, must look utterly exotic to most people.

Does that mean that I am "useless"? I don't think so. I know how much expertise and capacities I have accumulated over the years, and that they are quite specialised does, in my view, not diminish their value. On the contrary, one of the great things I enjoy most about the extremely complex global society in which we live is how you can go for a very individual path, be it through urban jungles or outback remoteness, and be very relevant not in spite but because of the extreme specialisation your self-determined choices have given you. And I care precious little about what malignities a random bunch of chauvinist jerks on desktop mad rush have in store about it.

Some people might say I am omitting a maybe important detail: that all the

ranting and sputter was about the threatened boycott 'on Israel' (whatever that might mean). Well, I don't think so. Very little of it referred actually to Israel or that part of the article, instead most of it was bulging and blazing with apparent hatred against everything 'leftist', 'intellectual', especially 'anthropologist', and to encore with: Afro-American (look it up). Apart from that, no-one ever cared that most anthropologists (some 90%) at the AAA conference, including ourselves, had not even attended (or been aware of) the meeting.

Personally, I only learned about the whole boycott drama in the taxi from the conference back to Washington airport, which I shared with the friend on the photo, another friend and colleague from home and an anthropologist from Israel who brought our attention to the matter. For most of the five days conference I had struggled with a long-term chronic lack of sleep, a consequently fierce and stubborn flu blocking my ears and concerns of our upcoming panel on the rapidly worsening plight of 'our people' in our (neighbouring) field(s). (We were a group of friends and colleagues all based at the Max-Planck Institute (MPI) for Social Anthropology in Halle / Saale, Germany, reporting, analysing and rebelling against the evolving fate of people we know and feel close to, and who for many others, including the website zealots and direct opponents in the part of Africa we all study, are 'primitive, savage, backward tribes in need of socio-cultural re-engineering to become useful inhabitants of the planet, or to at least get out of the way for more useful ones'. Thus, all thoroughly irrelevant.)

So, already handicapped by all these factors, I had lost hours skimming the 600+ pages of the printed program for personal highlights, sometimes missing the session because I had to examine the descriptions of too many parallel sessions, and I remember to have seen something with "Israel", "Palestine" and possible "boycott", three keywords which, especially in their combination, immediately triggered the automatic skip function that had evolved over the years in reaction to the experienced near-impossibility of participating in public discourses on that topic without being immediately dragged into a labyrinth of accusations and counter-accusations, suspicions and counter-suspicions where attempts at balanced, well-meaning discussion get irreparably poisoned with extremist

partisan stereotypes.

So there was no way I would lose precious time on a lost cause like that while there were so many much more appealing topics around and so much I could do furthering my personal research and 'activist' agenda, i.e. the cause we presently care for most. I know it was similar for my friend on the photo and very possibly for many of the over 6000 participants of that conference, of which a vast –and perhaps less biased– majority had not come to the voting session.

So when our Israeli friend alerted us on our way back home about the 'boycott meeting', we were so unaware that, although she was visibly irritated by the incident, I expected, coming from Germany where that was the by far most likely outcome, a clear vote against a boycott, and had not understood that it might have come the other way round. If the vote was however indeed as reported in the article (which I first seriously doubted), this vote in favor of anthropologists boycotting Israeli academia was, in my view, something extremely stupid to do if mounting pressure against unjust and unhelpful practices was the aim of it.

As our Israeli anthropologist friend reminded us, with that carrying coal to Newcastle, the immediate victims of the boycott would be Israeli anthropologists, who in their vast majority are critical of possible hard-line, populist or reckless Israeli government policies themselves and so certainly not among the darlings of ruling and system-sustaining hawks.

But not only is collectively boycotting Israeli academics of our discipline in the name of fighting injustice like shooting at friends, it remains absolutely unclear what good it could possibly do instead of being a silly invitation for all kinds of predictable stereotypic suspicions and accusations.

But this is not the kind of dilemma I want to address here. It would require a different article that I am not inclined to invest in, due to the mentioned conditions around the topic. The only connection I will draw is the fact that, on

both sides of the widely ideological discursive conflict around Israel and Palestine, as in the similarly constructed virtual conflict between of the supposed entities "Islam" and "The West", self-styled opponents denounce the respective Other as savage in a (although not the only) sense in which I want to use this metaphorical term here, too: as discontent of 'true humanity', something or someone outside (or rebelling against) the 'right', 'useful' and 'conducive' order of things, hard to control, dangerous, driven by passion, 'wild', the very epitome of The Other.

On that note, I want to return to topics closer to my main points in this paper and away from known swamps of unhealthy polemics, as this is –including in the case of the quoted right-winger shitstorm– not about Israel.

So now: Is there something rotten in the state of Anthropology?, as an anthropological Hamlet might ask... Two apologies: (1) I will have to come back to this question later. And (2): This is not only a blog but also a stub. I conceptualised and wrote it in 7 days and nights and had to leave many of the details, thoughts and figures I intended to use to 'make it round' for later redrafts. It is therefore more fragmentary and sketchy than it would have been with more time to perfect it. I decided to release it anyway to not miss out the chance of 'giving light' (dar luz), as devotees of Afro-Cuban religion say, to some thoughts I thought might be pertinent in the context of the centenary of Leipzig and German university anthropology to which this little series of papers is dedicated.

Read Immo Eulenberger's FULL article here

Leipzig 100 Years: Commentary on the "future of anthropology"

Katharina Schramm
February, 2015
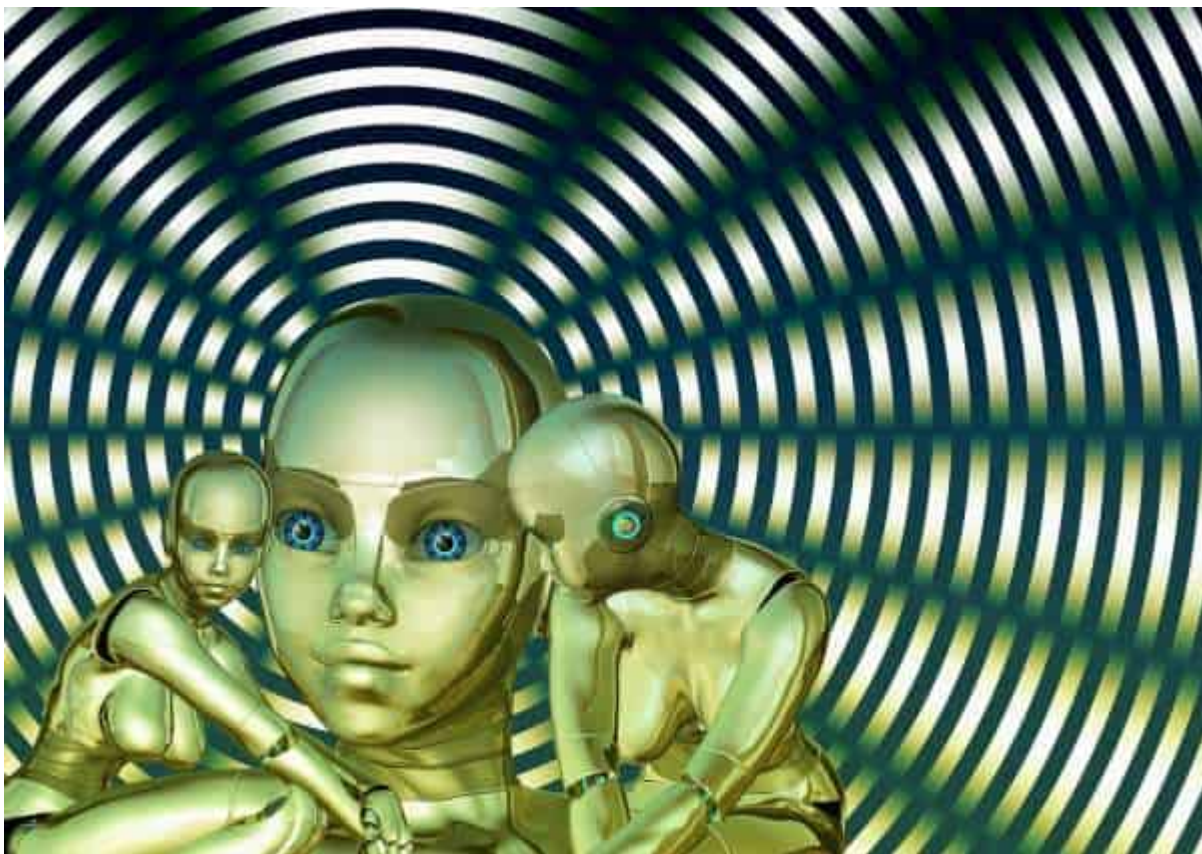
My commentary takes up the following questions: What are the theoretical, methodological and pragmatic challenges for an anthropology of the twenty-first century? How can anthropology gain (new) relevance in a globalized, post-colonial world of criss-crossing legal, techno-scientific, economic, representational and other models and their fluid assemblages? What kind of knowledge do anthropologists produce and under which circumstances? What are the expectations that anthropologists face from the outside (activists, politicians,

technocrats, colleagues from other disciplines, people "studied") and how can we face these, creatively? I argue that the future of anthropology is closely linked to its past. Destabilizing the "savage slot" (Michel-Rolph Trouillot) also implies that we ask about genealogies of power and knowledge in contemporary research practices. "Collaboration" might not be a solution in all circumstances. Instead, an emphasis on the relational quality of differences (termed diffraction by Karen Barad and Donna Haraway) leaves room for a plurality of perspectives and the analysis of contingencies and unintended consequences. Finally, I reflect on the potential of "translation" as a theoretical and methodological tool to emphasize practice and multiple adaptations (and not so much the relationship of sign and signified). An anthropology of the future is not merely characterized by a shift from the "savage slot" into the "belly of the beast", so to speak, but rather by a specific methodological strength that anthropologists can offer: not so much as experts for the "other" but rather as careful analysts of multilayered and complex social practices.

Die vorliegenden Beiträge regen an darüber nachzudenken, welche Rolle die Ethnologie im 21. Jahrhundert spielen kann und welche theoretischen, methodischen und forschungspragmatischen Erfordernisse damit einhergehen. Wie kann die Ethnologie ihre Daseinsberechtigung in einer globalisierten, post-kolonialen Welt behaupten? Welche Rolle spielt ethnologisches Wissen in der heutigen Zeit und vor allem, wie und unter welchen Prämissen wird es produziert? Welche Erwartungen werden von außen an die Ethnologie herangetragen und wie können EthnologInnen diesen kreativ begegnen?

Beginnen möchte ich meinen Kommentar mit einer weiteren Frage, die mir zentral für diese Diskussion scheint, nämlich der Frage danach, wie die mögliche Zukunft der Ethnologie (vielleicht auch als eine Ethnologie der Zukunft?) mit ihrer Vergangenheit zusammenhängt bzw. wie man diesen Zusammenhang analytisch fassen kann. Seit ihren Anfängen war die Ethnologie offenkundiger als andere Disziplinen von einer engen Verzahnung von globaler Politik, lokalem Handeln und wissenschaftlicher Interpretationsmacht geprägt, die freilich erst im Zuge postkolonialer Kritik deutlich thematisiert wurden. Mich interessiert welche

theoretischen Angebote das Fach heute daraus generieren kann. Angesichts des hundertjährigen Jubiläums der Institutionalisierung der Ethnologie in Leipzig und Deutschland ist dies eine Frage von besonderem Belang – auch wenn die Krise der Repräsentation, die mit der Destabilisierung des anthropologischen „savage slot" (Trouillot 1991) seit spätestens den 1990er Jahren einherging, von vielen heute als überwunden oder vielleicht auch nicht mehr konstruktiv erachtet wird. Dennoch stehen ja nicht nur die ethnologischen Museen und Sammlungen vor dem Problem, wie mit den Wissensbeständen und Objekten aus der Kolonialzeit heutzutage umzugehen ist oder welche Zukunftsvisionen auf dieser Basis entworfen werden können.

Sondern die materiellen Bedingungen und historischen Genealogien der ethnologischen Wissensproduktion selbst stehen ebenfalls immer wieder auf dem Prüfstand.

Andrea Behrends und Patrick Eisenlohr greifen beide diese Frage auf, wenn sie auf das nach wie vor vorhandene strukturelle Ungleichgewicht verweisen, das die akademische Wissensproduktion in vielfacher Hinsicht kennzeichnet. Für Patrick Eisenlohr sind es zunächst v.a. die sogenannten Leitwissenschaften, die den globalen Anschlusszug gewissermaßen verpasst haben – zumindest dann wenn sie an einem euro-amerikanischen Universalitätsanspruch festhalten, demgegenüber die sogenannten Regionalwissenschaften als exotisch und marginal erscheinen, obwohl sie doch riesige Teile der Menschheit repräsentieren. Zwar gewinnen die Regionalwissenschaften in einer global vernetzten Welt zunehmend an Bedeutung – wie es ja auch durch die jüngeren Förderinitiativen des BMBF dokumentiert wird. Dies impliziert in der Praxis jedoch häufig die Prämisse, hier könnte wichtiges kulturelles Kontextwissen akkumuliert werden. Insbesondere der Ethnologie wird, wie z.B. Julia Eckert es beschreibt, seitens der Politik und anderer Disziplinen immer wieder eine Erklärungsfunktion für „das Fremde" oder

auch eine Sensibilisierung für die kulturelle Differenz „der Anderen" – im Sinne einer einfachen Übersetzung – zugeschrieben. Dabei ist das Bewusstsein für globale historische und gegenwärtige Verflechtungen durchaus gegeben – deren Analyse bleibt jedoch in vielfacher Hinsicht westlichen ExpertInnen überlassen, deren institutionelle Hegemonie nicht zur Debatte steht. Eine „Provinzialisierung Europas" wie von Dipesh Chakrabarty (2002) so eindringlich und zitierfähig gefordert, ist im akademischen Mainstream nicht unbedingt angelegt.

Diesen Punkt führt Andrea Behrends aus einer anderen Richtung her aus, wenn sie nach den strukturellen und epistemologischen Bedingungen für ein gemeinsames Forschen fragt, das über den konkreten Feldforschungsprozess hinausweist und die akademische Wissensproduktion in allen Stadien umspannt. Ausgehend vom Begriff der Kollaboration, wie ihn Elisabeth Povinelli auf ihrem EASA-Eröffnungsvortrag 2014 entwickelte (Povinelli 2014), plädiert sie für die Forschung als „travelling model", das letztlich zu einer Transformation aller Beteiligten führen kann und muss. Voraussetzung dafür ist zunächst die persönliche Integrität aller Beteiligten – und die Kollaboration gerät an ihre Grenzen, wenn z.B. beobachtete Praxis, persönliche Überzeugung und universaler Menschenrechtsdiskurs aufeinanderprallen, wie im Beispiel der Polizeiforschung von Jan Beek, auf das sie Bezug nimmt. So eingängig die Forderung nach Kollaboration klingt, bleibt für mich dennoch die Frage offen, inwiefern der Kollaborationsgedanke selbst als eine Art Metacode (s. Rottenburg 2005), der alle Beteiligten zusammenführt, funktionieren kann bzw. ob er per se schon zur Legitimierung der ethnologischen Praxis beiträgt. Wie hängen Kollaboration und Macht in ihren vielschichtigen – auch historischen – Dimensionen zusammen?

Und inwiefern macht es Sinn, die Kollaboration selbst als ein Ideal zu proklamieren, ihre Grenzen oder ihr Scheitern hingegen zu problematisieren? Besteht hier eventuell die Gefahr, Kollaboration zu banalisieren, oder gar eine Art Erlösungsnarrativ zu konstruieren?

Dies führt mich zu einem weiteren Aspekt, den ich für besonders diskussionswürdig halte und der v.a. im Vortrag von Julia Eckert explizit gemacht wird. Sie betont die Relationalität von Differenz und das besondere Potential ethnologischer Theoriebildung, auf diese Kontingenz und Friktion hinzuweisen (vgl. auch Haraway 1997; Barad 2003). Die Perspektive der Tragödie „Wie konnte es dazu kommen" – auch wenn alle Beteiligten vielleicht etwas anderes wollten – entzieht einer teleologischen Gesellschaftskritik mit eindeutig zugewiesenen Positionen den Boden. Stattdessen richtet sie die Aufmerksamkeit auf konkrete Handlungszusammenhänge, Prozesse, Widersprüche und Pluralitäten sowie deren Zusammenwirken. Als kritische Empirie vermag die Ethnologie dann vielleicht am ehesten das umzusetzen, was Patrick Eisenlohr in seinem Beitrag fordert – nämlich eine direkte Intervention in zentrale Debatten der europazentrisch arbeitenden Disziplinen zu leisten und, ich zitiere, deren „universal zirkulierenden Kategorien unter Kritik ihres europäischen geschichtlichen Gepäcks neu zu denken".

Für dieses „Neu-Denken" halten alle drei Beiträge ein Übersetzungsmodell bereit, das nicht so sehr Zeichen und Bedeutung in den Vordergrund stellt, sondern Praxis und multiple Aneignung.

Andrea Behrends bezeichnet die Ethnologie selbst als ein „travelling model" und spricht damit auch auf das geschichtliche Gepäck an, das das Fach und seine Methodik geprägt hat. Der „Erfolg" des Modells hängt nun davon ab, ob und wie es transformierbar ist. D.h. einerseits, ein travelling model muss anschlussfähig an lokale Interpretationen sein – im Sinne der „radical translation" von Quine (1969) braucht es zunächst das Vertrauen in die Möglichkeit eines geteilten Interpretationsrahmens, auch wenn die spezifischen lokalen Referenzen zunächst nicht bekannt sind. Hier wird für mich auch klarer, warum Povinellis Ansatz attraktiv erscheint – denn bei ihr steht der Übersetzungsprozess selbst im Mittelpunkt, der den Kollaborierenden „ihre fundamentale Differenz bewusst macht, sie aber gleichzeitig zur Kollaboration verpflichtet" (Behrends). Diese

Kollaboration schließt die Verhandlung und wechselseitige Transformation unterschiedlicher Modelle und Wissensformationen ein.

Während bei Andrea Behrends ein gemeinsames Ziel schon am Horizont aufscheint, verweist Julia Eckert in ihrem Beitrag darauf, dass konkrete soziale Situationen, die wir als EthnologInnen untersuchen, oftmals durch die Polyvalenz und hohe Mobilität von konkurrierenden Modellen gekennzeichnet sind – in ihrem Beispiel über zirkulierende Rechtsnormen wurde uns dies besonders eindringlich vor Augen geführt. Das kritische Instrumentarium der Ethnologie – und damit ihre Relevanz in Gegenwart und Zukunft – liegt ihres Erachtens darin, durch mikrosoziologische Untersuchungen komplexe Verflechtungs- und Entkoppelungsprozesse in ihrer Entstehung und Auswirkung zu analysieren, unterschiedliche Handlungslogiken und deren Effekte sichtbar zu machen und damit, wenn man so will, potentiell bessere Kommunikation zu ermöglichen – ohne aber dabei den von Joel Robbins (2013) jüngst so bezeichneten „suffering slot" der Ethnologie einzunehmen, der auf die Identifikation mit den „Verdammten dieser Erde" auf der Basis geteilter Leidensfähigkeit abzielt. Identifikation ist möglich, ja, aber nur partiell (im Sinne von Stratherns Idee der „partial connections", 1991) und an konkrete Praxis geknüpft.

Bei Patrick Eisenlohr ist Übersetzung ebenfalls zentral, ja sogar am klarsten ins Zentrum der Aufmerksamkeit gerückt. Zum einen ist Übersetzung für ihn der Schlüsselbegriff, um die Dynamiken kultureller Aneignung, die grundlegendes Thema ethnologischer Forschung sind, zu fassen. Hier sehe ich deutliche Parallelen zum Ansatz der travelling models, auch wenn nicht direkt von einer zirkulierende Referenz oder einem Modell die Rede ist. Zum anderen erweitert Patrick Eisenlohr die Perspektive aus der Lokalität heraus hin auf das das klassische vergleichende Projekt der Ethnologie selbst. Anhand des Religions- und Öffentlichkeitsbegriffs zeigt er sehr deutlich, was ein Übersetzungsbegriff, der sich an pragmatistischen Modellen orientiert, leisten kann – nämlich Differenz deutlich zu machen, ohne sie zu essentialisieren. Denn es geht auch in der vergleichenden Perspektive nicht primär darum, Bedeutung von einem Kontext in einen anderen zu übersetzen, sondern vielmehr die Entstehung dieser Bedeutung

im Übersetzungsprozess selbst in den Blick zu nehmen. Damit rückt, wie auch in den anderen Vorträgen, das soziale Handeln in den Mittelpunkt – hier über die Performanz von Sprache und Religion, in anderen Feldern mit anderen Akzenten.

Eine Ethnologie der Zukunft, wenn wir davon sprechen wollen, ist also nicht nur dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass wir uns vom savage slot abwenden oder längst abgewendet haben und uns verstärkt globalen Zusammenhängen und Technologien zuwenden oder auch unser Untersuchungsfeld quasi in den „Bauch der Bestie" (seien es die Weltbank, genetische Labore, Pharmaunternehmen, die Ölindustrie u.ä.) verlagern. Wie die Vorträge, so finde ich, sehr deutlich gezeigt haben, hat die Ethnologie darüber hinaus eine methodologische und analytische Stärke zu bieten, die ihre PraktikerInnen dafür prädestiniert, Stellung zu zentralen Problemen unserer Zeit zu beziehen – nicht als ExpertInnen für das „Andere" sondern als genaue BeobachterInnen vielschichtiger sozialer Praxis.

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# In the name of 'rule of law'...

Katrin Seidel
February, 2015

After South Sudan declared its independence from the Republic of the Sudan in 2011, one could read in the international media scene: "South Sudan fights to implement Rule of Law [...] At the heart of this new battle are approximately 250 lawyers [which] have come back from abroad." (Voice of America 2013) However, at the heart of the 'rule of law' battle there are rather international actors with their virtual toolboxes, as will be shown.

All over the world one can observe – in the name of 'rule law' (RoL) – immense international interventions taking place, predominantly in so called 'war-torn' or 'post-conflict' countries such as South Sudan. Agreeing with Christopher May (2014), RoL seems to have become "the dominant paradigm for state governance in the international arena". The UN Declaration on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels adopted by the General Assembly (2012)

reaffirmed: "We are convinced that good governance at the international level is fundamental for strengthening the rule of law."

By claiming that RoL represents a global consensus towards 'problems' of governance, influential intergovernmental institutions have urged countries to undertake legal reforms in order to implement it. Moreover, increasingly private companies and law firms are sprouting up everywhere. Their 'experts' circulate around the world and carry with them manifold peace-making, constitutions-making and institution-making models and toolkits of how to implement RoL. Nowadays, almost all intergovernmental organisations have specialised branches for promoting it. Accordingly, on the website of the UNDP branch for South Sudan it reads, "rule of law is essential for security, economic growth and the provision of social services in South Sudan. It provides mechanisms for peaceful resolutions of conflicts, the certainty that allows the private sector to develop and flourish, and the access to justice that ensures respect for the human rights of every individual, including women and marginalized groups". (UNDP)
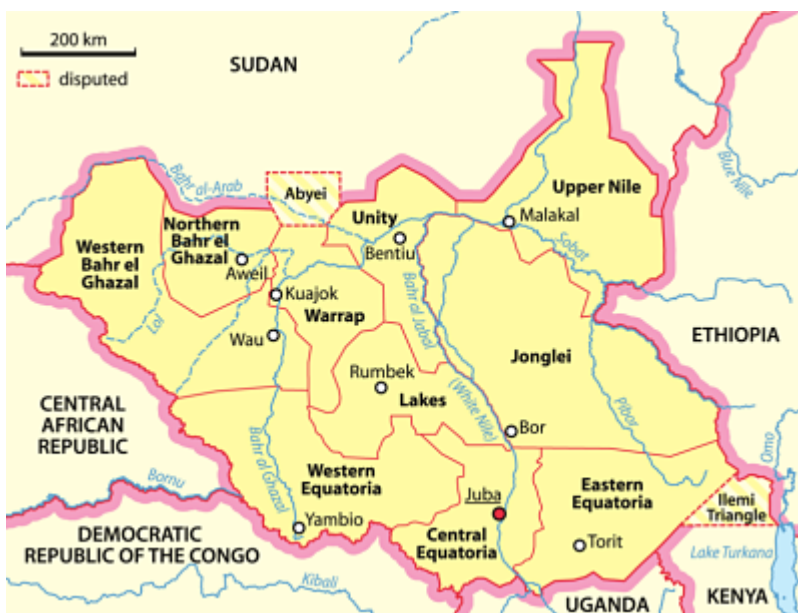
The very vague term 'rule of law' is actually a locus of diverse, and sometimes contradictory claims tackling ideas of 'universalism' and 'diversity' alike.

Nevertheless, 'rule of law programmes' have become a vehicle through which specific notions of law are promoted, partly imposed by dominant international actors. Particularly, in light of the often heavily relying of 'post-conflict' settings on international funding, RoL has become a layer of conditionality. Agreeing with [Migdal] and [Schlichte] (2005: 33):

> *There is always something for international actors to fix, always a plan that the international community should contribute something to, and always something that goes wrong and needs fixing through further intervention and programs. Global discourses on development, democratization, human rights, peace and more have become the code for institutionalized involvement of all kinds of externally-rooted agencies that shape states on all continents.*

The "establishment of RoL *qua grundnorm*" seems to be cultivated through a "professionalization of global politics, and the deployments of programmes of technical assistance that have sought to socialise elites and legislators into the RoL mind-set [and] the increasing pre-commitment to RoL seems to be sustained by political self-maintenance of the legal profession". (May 2014) Thus, multiple 'experts' promote their tool (law) as a solution to 'problems' of order. The experts' RoL promotion tends to focus on broad categories: legal and constitutional and on institutional reform.

Competing RoL actors in the international arena are eager to find their 'niche' for 'supporting' post-war countries such as South Sudan in its 'transition' to a 'modern' democratic state. RoL promotion still assumes the existence of the 'modern' (nation)state. The idea of the 'modern' or 'territorial state' belongs to "a fundamental ontology of political thought" (Schlichte 2004), which was characterized by the

legal philosopher [G. Jellinek](#)'s in 1900 by three elements of statehood: territoriality, sovereignty and 'nation'. It has become the only valid state order system (Eckert 2011). The idea of the state was attributed with different meanings, but the notions of territoriality (borders), internal and external sovereignty and the state as a body of administrative institutions seem to prevail (Schlichte 2004). For instance, the presumption of state's monopoly on the use of force does not take into account that in most states there are multiple structures of law and authority that (co-)exist interdependently with 'the state'.

The myth of the existence of a 'territorial state' becomes particularly obvious in post-conflict settings since its constitutive elements (at least partly) do not exist (Seidel 2015). Underlying state-centric assumptions often lead to top-down rule-of-law efforts on state institutions and state legal systems whose impacts appeared to be rather doubtful. This 'problem' of implementation or the gap between ideas and practice has led to a certain self-reflexivity within the 'international actors' scene. The 2004 [UN Report on the Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post Conflict states](#):

The international community has not always provided rule of law assistance that is appropriate to the country context. Too often, the emphasis has been on foreign experts, foreign models and foreign-conceived solutions to the detriment of durable improvements and sustainable capacity [...] We must learn better how to respect and support local ownership, local leadership and a local constituency for reform.

Accordingly, during the last few years a slight shift in the international conceptualisation of RoL can be observed: "some serious consideration [has been taken] to legal pluralism" (Grenfell 2013), taking into account that legal pluralism is a 'universal feature of social organisation. Many political and legal academics identify RoL as essential to justice-keeping polity. It is also believed to be a precondition for establishing principles such as human rights and democracy. (see Rajagopal 2008) Nevertheless, the idea of 'natural justice' seems to be still

inherent within most of RoL narratives.

One of the cornerstones of the 'rule of law' promotion is the diffusion of specific schemes of constitutionalism. It is expected to show long-term commitment to reform and non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms. Constitutions, when interlinked with International law, allows international (human rights) actors to become immediately part of domestic law. Thereby, "[t]he discourse of constitution-making now commonly employs terminology of 'stakeholders', 'clients', and 'best practices', suggesting that the relationship between citizens and states can benefit from a market of expert knowledge" (Kendall 2013). The extensive assistance of international actors in 'post-war' settings such as South Sudan has become part of peace-making efforts. Thereby, constitution-making has become a common normative tool within the context of the broader concept of rule of law framework.

On South Sudan's declaration of independence day, President Salva Kiir Mayardit presented to the crowd an oversized red 'book': the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan [i] (TCRSS). It was evident the text had been thrown together quickly without the participation of many local societal actors and authorities, and without addressing critiques such as the imbalance between members of political parties and civil society. The making of the TCRSS shows the

dominance of the some powerful actors of the ruling [People's Liberation Movement](#) (SPLM) party who sought to assure that their ideas and interests would find their way into the "supreme law of the land" (Art. 3(1) TCRSS). These ideas of a strong 'centre' are reflected, for instance, in the excessive powers of the South Sudanese president (e.g. Art. 101 r,s TCRSS).

South Sudan's current 'permanent' constitution making [ii] is supported as well by international actors with a virtual toolbox of models and templates. The support is provided primarily to governmental actors in the form of technical and legal 'expertise' of 'experts' ranging from individual activists and academics, individual and groupings of states, (supra-)regional institutions, non-local NGOs, commercial enterprises, research institutions and think tanks.

Nevertheless, national actors are caught between competing international actors and often find themselves in a dilemma of how to manage the 'well-meaning offers'.

Offered services come with legal 'benchmarks', international 'best practices' and conflict-resolution mechanisms and they are almost always interwoven with political and economic interests. One may ask whether these interventions threaten the idea that the constitution "derives its authority from the will of the people" as stipulated in the Transitional Constitution (Art. 3(1)) and as demanded by many local actors.
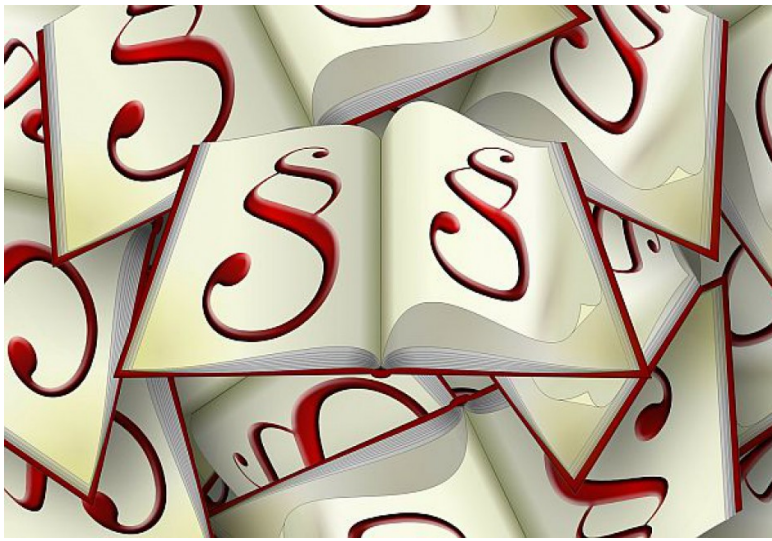
Even though there are no comprehensive blueprints, we have to bear in mind that constitution making in 'post-war' settings is usually made under huge political and time pressure and directly attached to 'state-building' efforts. Actors are therefore not only prone to apply model constitutional frameworks but also create "procedural objectivities" through supporting guidelines and templates; whereby "superficially neutral, elementary procedures are introduced, which are supposed to correspond to an unproblematic reality of facts and data". (Rottenburg 2009)

These guidelines reflect international policy discourses on 'ownership', expecting the common people to participate and to have their say on constitutional frameworks. The concept of 'ownership' has emerged as a lesson learned in the general debate on what is known as 'aid' or 'development' assistance. (Sannerholm 2012) A paternalistic attitude of international actors appears to be continued in a new guise. Now, international agencies 'consult', 'listen to', 'include', and 'provide for' ownership for local actors.

Based on guidelines and handbooks, action and activity plans are provided to governmental actors. Activities on how to produce a constitution are timely sequenced. Project management terminologies such as 'consult', 'create', 'produce' and 'organize' reflect a rather linear process. These kinds of plans have ingrained the international concepts of 'ownership'. 'Responsible actors' (locals) and 'implementing actors' (internationals) are defined. The practice shows that activities relating to 'expertise', 'research and 'know-how' are constructed conversely.

This raises the question of who actually 'owns' the process?

Regarding 'popular ownership' the pre-modelled activity plan for South Sudanese constitution-making is comprised of certain components such as 'civic education' and 'public consultation' for the South Sudanese people in all regions. Thus, does the 'public ownership' tools go beyond a simple awareness campaign on the constitution-making made by the national and international elites? Another dilemma becomes obvious: how to deal with ideas of 'popular ownership' while following the convincing logic of the objectived procedures? The timetable of constitution-making seems not to be very flexible for the embedding and re-evaluation of ideas, which might arise during the public consultation process.

Let me conclude by emphasising that the 'assisted' constitution-making process takes place in a highly segmented South Sudan where violent and non-violent negotiations on the mode of statehood are still on-going. Numerous issues written in a constitution are opposed by a multitude of actors with different claims. In light of the absence of a 'nation' a predetermination of national ideas in the 'supreme law of the land' seems to be questionable.

Even though the modes of statehood are still under negotiation, the 'rule of law' toolsets (provided by international actors) regulate the constitution-making process in a way that may reduce the chances of integrating ideas from

different parts of the segmented society while proclaiming the idea of 'popular ownership'.

The question arises whether those 'rule of law'- tools become rather an obstacle in the quest for 'legal certainty', 'stability' and 'peace'. (see Seidel/Sureau, forthcoming) Recognizing some of the claims while legally regulating disputes through legal provisions can impede ongoing negotiation processes and may rather intensify than solve conflict dynamics.

Footnotes

[i] The TCRSS is based on the Interim National Constitution, 2005 whose substance was mainly predetermined through the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. [see Dann, P. and Z. Al-Ali (2006)]
[ii] The ‚permanent' Constitution-making is intended to be completed by 2015. In light of the current political dynamics in South Sudan it seems to be rather unlikely that the deadline will be kept.

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Reimagining Transitional Justice in Bali

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"It's already the era of demokrasi, *you know,"* Pak Ketut says, nodding his head in *firm approval, stretching out each syllable of the Indonesianized English as if savoring a potent taste. As he speaks, he glances over his shoulder at the framed photograph that hangs on his living room wall, showing a much younger version of himself taking up a term as representative to Bali's provincial legislature. The grainy black-and-white image is stained and faded behind its polished glass, but*

as we follow Pak Ketut's gaze, we can see how a young man's bones, sharp and angular, still reflect their shadows in an old man's face. "You are both educated people," he continues, his eyes now focused on us with rigid intensity. "You know what that means. That means we have to forgive each other, to move on from the past to build the future. Maybe we cannot forget, but for our children's sake, we must have reconciliation. It's people like us, people who are educated, who must lead others toward reconciliation. Without reconciliation, our nation cannot survive."

*But education – at least the scholarly literature on violence, memory and post-conflict social life in which we have been immersed – has not been enough to prepare us for this conversation. For we are here in this living room, a mere 100-meter walk from Degung's ancestral home in Bali's capital city of Denpasar, talking to one of the last people to have seen Degung's father alive. Pak Ketut has spent the past hour reminiscing about Degung's father, describing him as an intense young man who brought his vocation as a teacher to the village, sharing his knowledge of Sanskrit philosophy, his modern views on labor and Hindu ritual, and his fascination with Marhaenism, the mystically-tinged populism Indonesia's first president, the charismatic Sukarno, devised as a syncretic blend of anti-colonial nationalism, religion and communism. And Pak Ketut has just told us how in December 1965, as the Indonesian military's drive to eliminate the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia *or PKI) and Sukarno's leftist supporters intensified, he was called, as a local leader of the anti-communist Indonesian Nationalist Party* (Partai Nasionalis Indonesia *or PNI), to deliver those named on a list of alleged communists to the district military command. He tells us he had no choice; not obeying orders would have endangered his own survival and that of his family. He tells us he was gentle in his unwanted duty, cradling Degung's father's head in his lap, and speaking to him softly in the respectful high Balinese owed to one of high caste, as he lay bleeding in the back of an army pickup truck. Pak Ketut tells us he did not yell as loudly as the others, nor feel the same brutal joy singing through his veins, when Degung's father was paraded through the streets of Denpasar, made a public spectacle of communist threat to*

the nation. He tells us he regrets all that happened, but that he, too, was a victim of the state, which used the PNI to carry out its dirty work, later banning the party to consolidate its control. As Pak Ketut tells us these things, his gnarled hands shake, knocking his coffee cup to the floor in a thick slosh of liquid. But as he glances again at his uniformed self on the wall – proof that he had once been someone important, in the days before "democracy" and "reconciliation" shook the certainty of long-honed hierarchies – he seems to regain his composure. "Besides," he tells us, his voice now confident, "If I had wanted to kill people, do you think I would have left any of your family alive?"

As we leave Pak Ketut's house, we are quiet, lost in our own thoughts. Leslie is turning the term "reconciliation" over in her mind, wondering how this word, so fraught with possibilities and pitfalls, might be made to resonate with what has just occurred. What could reconciliation be said to mean in such a context, between two people who have lived side by side for almost four decades, praying at the same village temple, shopping at the same market, passing each other on the streets without speaking but without enacting overt violence against each other? Is reconciliation this establishment of civil social intercourse between those who lived through terror and now call themselves, across divides of experience and power, "victims," this sharing of sweetened coffee over an all-too-bitterly-familiar story of violence and its rationalization? Or is it precisely this civility, this sharing of terms grown global in their reach, that smooths down the sharp edges of memory, emptying reconciliation of its potential to focus political will and ignite social change? Degung's thoughts are more painful, shuttling wrenchingly back and forth between past and present, between the allure of imagining a democratic future and the pull of memories of what even now cannot be imagined. How, he wonders, can victims of violence in the name of the nation reconcile not only with those who carried out atrocities but with the call to take up a citizenship so long denied and so long despised? Why does it seem so much easier for so-called perpetrators, many of whom held onto power in the aftermath of violence, to "speak and be healed," when so many others speak and still hurt, or stay silent in the labyrinths of memory? What kind of call to speech does

reconciliation encode, and what kind of subject does it demand? And what does it mean when perpetrators make claims to the status of "victims," when "victim" has a status, when suffering takes on a moral height from which "forgiveness" must be bestowed? But mostly he thinks about why this meeting, so long considered, has left him feeling so little, stilled by a drumming of ideas grown alien and inexact as they emerge from the mouth of a man who says he had spared him.

Working on issues of mass violence and transitional justice in Bali, Indonesia has been, more often than not, a dislocating endeavor. Sometimes this dislocation has been intentional, as when I and my research partner, Degung Santikarma, entered spaces, like the living room of our neighbor Pak Ketut, where the ordinary routines of life and learning cracked under the weight of terror's banality, ideologies of politeness and progress tainting "peace" with a bittersweet tang. Other times, dislocation seemed inevitable when, after days of interviewing Balinese survivors of the mass violence of 1965-66 – a state-sponsored purge of alleged communists that left some one million Indonesians dead and ushered in 32 years of authoritarian rule under former president Soeharto – we ventured out to the island's tourist oases. There the mass graves of 1965-66 rest under hotels, villas and minimarkets, and the subjectivities of Balinese themselves – branded as "peaceful, spiritual and harmonious" – are sold to the island's 9.5 million-plus yearly visitors. And every once in a while, dislocation took the form of an unexpected bridge compressing distance, as when 10,000 miles away from Bali at a conference in Washington, D.C., an acquaintance from a well-known think tank told me that "transitional justice is a dead issue." Courteously, I asked her to explain. "There's no empirical proof that it *works*," she said. "There's no real evidence as to its *outcomes*. I mean, transitional justice is expensive – truth commissions, tribunals, reparations, all those things are huge drains on post-conflict economies. There's a growing consensus that it just doesn't make sense to be looking backwards."

After years of domination by legally-trained scholars and practitioners, the field of transitional justice has recently opened more widely to anthropological insights and critiques. Anthropologies of transitional justice have been instrumental in calling attention to the slippages, contradictions and misfits between the lived experience of survivors of mass violence and the models for social repair that circulate globally, including transitional justice's toolkit of tribunals, truth commissions and reparations (Hinton, ed. 2010; Shaw, Waldorf and Hazan 2010).

Highlighting the complex and often contested contexts in which justice emerges as a practice and ideal, anthropologists have critiqued modular, one-size-fits-all post-conflict interventions, their analyses giving strength to new emphases within the transitional justice field itself on "local justice" and the support of grassroots mechanisms for effecting reconciliation (Baines 2010, Kent 2011). Critical ethnographic perspectives have succeeded in challenging the blunt binaries around which transitional justice debates have all-too-frequently stagnated, including those that set justice and peace, universality and locality, or memories of the past and orientations towards the future against each other (Castillejo-Cuellar 2013, Shaw 2013). Scholars committed to engaging the perspectives of survivors of conflict have also begun to challenge the "post-conflict optic" (Leve 2014) that organizes analysis and intervention in the aftermath of mass violence, bracketing complexities and taking for granted liberal peace-building models that pose democracy, free trade and securitized rule of law as panaceas for conflict (Autesserre 2010, Richmond 2011). Yet while there has been tremendous power in these critiques, there are still questions that deserve further exploration, questions that anthropology is perhaps especially well-positioned to address. These include the relationship of transitional justice mandates to neoliberal economic and governance regimes, as well as the narrative politics through which claims to transitional justice – or to its death – circulate, questions that highlight both the structural injustices enabled by particular visions of transition and the

narrative quality of transitional justice itself as a story told about suffering and temporality and a set of technologies for the production and marginalization of certain kinds of voice. And perhaps most importantly,

> *[A]nthropology has the potential to help answer the often-overlooked questions of whom transitional justice "works" for, and how its benefits are so often differentially distributed.*

In thinking about these questions, it is perhaps not really surprising that an aging Balinese perpetrator and an up-and-coming Washington expert would find common cause in a strategic disengagement with the violent past. In both contexts, similar visions of progress are privileged, one imagining an idealized national unity unmarred by the scars of suffering or the risks of accountability, the other suspicious that post-conflict justice, when all is said and done, might offer a negative return on investment. Both visions evoke a fantasy of pastlessness, a future of weightless flow in which memory is a drag on forward motion and barriers to (someone's) development dissolve. Indeed, these justifications for transitioning quickly past justice – indicators, efficiency, capital, progress, even democracy – resonate so closely that they seem almost to dissolve old binaries of global and local: our common cause demanding we all just get back to shopping, or in the Bali case, to being commodifiably photogenic, unforgettable while forgetting.

But Bali is also an instructive case for thinking about transitional justice for other reasons. Today, 17 years after the fall of Soeharto's 32-year-long New Order regime, Indonesia has earned the dubious distinction of becoming one of the only countries in the world to first, in 2004, authorize a truth commission and later, in 2006, see it scrapped by its Constitutional Court.

In 2012, a report by Indonesia's National Human Rights Commission concluding that state-sponsored gross human rights violations, including the killing of up to 1.5 million alleged communists, had occurred in 1965-66, was dismissed by the Attorney General's office as insufficient grounds for investigation (Jakarta Globe 2012).

And most recently, in January 2015, [The Look of Silence](entitled *Senyap* in Indonesia), a film about efforts to find justice in the aftermath of the 1965-66 massacres by award-winning documentarian Joshua Oppenheimer, was banned by Indonesia's Film Censorship Institute on a series of troubling grounds, including the claim that the film violates social norms of "politeness," "encourages viewers to be sympathetic….to the teachings of communism" and "creates social and political tensions which weaken national resilience" (Melvin 2015). Perhaps unsurprisingly, a number of commentators have concluded that transitional justice has "failed" or been "derailed" in Indonesia (see Kimura 2014, Aspinall and Zain 2013, ICTJ/KontraS 2011).

Yet in Bali, creative efforts to revive – and ultimately reimagine – transitional justice have much to teach us, shedding light not simply on "the local" as a site of difference from mainstream transitional justice presumptions but on the structural barriers that block transitions from becoming real transformations, as well as the politicized narratives through which both constraints and new futures emerge.

In 2005, forty years after the anti-communist massacres and seven years after Soeharto stepped down from power, a group of Balinese youth inaugurated the first built space commemorating the civilian casualties of 1965-66, Taman 65 – the "1965 Park" – a small square of stone and grass set in the courtyard of an extended family home (see Dwyer 2010). During the first years of the park, its youth, comprised of children and grandchildren of perpetrators and victims of violence, drew heavily upon familiar transitional justice tropes of truth-telling and witness. At a time when Indonesia's public culture still remained closed against calls to account for the casualties of state-sponsored violence, the park was to be a place for people to share their stories openly, a catalyst for the bridging of differences, and a site to make public the memories of harm and betrayal constrained over decades of censorship and fear. It was to be a new Indonesia writ small, one privileging democratic freedoms of speech and spanning the divisions created by violence, aimed at the creation of a shared narrative of new social forms. It was also to be a resolutely modern space, one that would, in the words of one of the members of the collective, challenge "the ritualization of worldly problems," posing a liberal valorization of voice and experience against the long-standing Balinese practice of diverting the resolution of conflict into ritual entreaties to the Hindu-Balinese deities or the realm of *karmapala*, where justice is assured in the fullness of time without risking potentially dangerous face-to-face confrontation (Putra 2012).

Through local dialogues on reconciliation, fact-finding projects documenting the testimonies of Balinese survivors, and an exhibition of photographs of the dead – a call to public memory that echoed global testimonial representations of the disappeared of mass violence – the park collective positioned itself firmly within transitional justice discourses of truth and dialogue as essential nation-building projects.

As part of their work to make suppressed stories of the past compelling to a younger generation, they also engaged in a creative project to recover old poems and prose written by former political prisoners, setting these lyrics to blues, rock and punk music.[i]

Yet as the years passed, the 1965 Park changed. Contestations erupted within the local community around different ways of remembering and engaging the past, with an older generation less fluent in the globalized language of transitional justice rejecting the designation of their ritual approaches to the past as pre-modern. The stories these elders told of the violence, and of life in its aftermath, rendered easy categorizations of perpetrators and victims and the need to bridge a binary divide between the two a far more complex project than first envisioned. Moreover, many of these survivors were deeply ambivalent about the nation-building pretensions of mainstream transitional justice projects; for those who had suffered assault or lost family members at the hands of neighbors and kin, or who had endured a state stigma of "communist" that continued to block them from full civic participation, the most meaningful sites of reconciliation were often to be found in intimate community relationships rather than with a valorized ideal of "horizontal citizenship" (Anderson 1983). The 1965 Park slowly transitioned away from ambitions of consensus towards a deep recognition of the multiple and fragmentary legacies of violence, the shards of conflict buried deep within Balinese selves and society.

For those involved in the park, it also became increasingly clear that the outpouring of witness to the past that the project first provoked had done little to change the fundamental inequalities that had originally driven violence into the fabric of Balinese society, giving force to a vibrant Indonesian leftist movement that by the mid-1960s was seen by Indonesia's conservative elite – as well as its Western supporters – as enough of a threat to warrant extermination.

In the aftermath of Soeharto's repressive regime, Bali's vast disparities of wealth were only intensifying, as Indonesia's new "political stability" allowed global capital to move ever more confidently across Bali's landscapes. While elites were profiting from unrestrained tourist development, a majority of Balinese were experiencing a rise in land prices faster than that in Dubai, chronic water shortages as supplies were diverted to serve the island's foreign tourist enclaves, the poisoning of groundwater and coral reefs from unmanaged waste, and job opportunities whose room for advancement rarely extended higher than housekeeper, waiter or tour guide. Widening its lens on transitional justice, members of the park collective began explicitly addressing ongoing inequalities, sponsoring dialogues, performances and art exhibitions on issues including HIV/AIDS and lesbian, gay and transgender rights, discrimination against religious minorities, the failures of public education, and the role of cooperatives in combatting poverty. And since 2013, members of the park collective have been at the forefront of the "Resist Reclamation" (Tolak Reklamasi) movement, vigorously protesting a state-sponsored plan to allow a developer to fill in 838 hectares of the Benoa Bay in South Bali to create a series of artificial islands that will host lavish tourism facilities, including a casino, a marine park, a theme park, a Formula One racetrack, a golf course and five-star hotels.[ii] Here the challenges have been not only identifying and resisting the continuities that have marked Bali's transition, but intervening in narrative domains that set limits on social change. Decried as "anti-development," "backward" and – in an expression of just how much the past still haunts Indonesia's present and future – "children of communism," the park collective's struggles demonstrate the centrality of narrative praxis – the shifting of what can and cannot be said about justice and the direction of transition.

For the youth of the 1965 Park, hegemonic frames of transitional justice were of immense value as a starting point for engagement with the violence of the past and its continuing effects on the present. Yet the critiques the park has evolved have been even more powerful. By reworking transitional justice's master

narratives of liberal peace, political stability and the production of nationalist, civil selves, the park collective challenges us to rethink our questions and answers about justice.

For whom should transitional justice work? For state-builders and investors? For foreign tourists, seeking to purchase Balinese narratives of peace and harmony? For those who still struggle to find ways to live side by side with violent memories and disparate ways of dealing with them, or those for whom peace is too fragile to accommodate a critical diversity of voices? And what are we transitioning to? To a democratic ideal of voice, or to an engagement with the structures of inequality that deflect critique in the name of progress? To a dream of unrestrained development, made possible by peace and stability? Or to a transformational justice, one that can accommodate divergent pasts and futures?

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[i] For an example of work from this project, see "The Prison Songs – Trailer" available [here](#) and "Si Buyung – The Prison Songs" available [here](#).

[ii] For more information, see articles in [The Jakarta Post](#) and in [ForBali](#).