



# Anthropological Knots - the What, the Where, the Who & the Why!

written by Allegra  
January, 2014



As observant Allegra readers are aware by now, January 15<sup>th</sup> marks one of the [most exciting anthropological events of 2014](#) so far - and as you have also noticed, Allegra is in on the fun!

And this being Allegra, involved of course translates to full coverage not only of the event to be, but also of all the going-ons in the background! To begin, let's tackle the 'WHAT' and the 'Why': Just what is/are '[Anthropological Knots](#)'? We'll let the lady of the hour clarify this for us - [Sarah Green](#): Could you please tell us what is going on & and why (and perhaps start by introducing yourself and your role in all this in a few words)?

**SARAH:** Hi Allegra - okay! Basically, "Anthropological Knots" aims to consider in



what ways anthropology becomes entangled in the world in which it is practiced currently. We will be looking at that both from the perspective of how anthropology can distinctively intervene in the world, and how the anthropology we do is affected by what is going on at the moment – politically, socially, economically, perhaps even morally. The event is an attempt to begin a conversation about anthropology’s intellectual and practical location in the world. The ‘knots’ part involves looking at the double-binds, ambivalences, and paradoxes that inevitably arise when different things come together – for example, academic and non-academic interests; and conversations across different ways of knowing about things.

The event is in the format of a symposium because we want to open a debate, and to involve everyone in it: each speaker will be speaking along with the voices of the other speakers, and along with the voices of the discussants, and the voices of the members of the audience. It is important for the audience to make a contribution, and we have left plenty of time for that. A symposium emphasizes that doing something – intervening, creating understanding, saying something – usually takes a collective effort. This is a joint project.

From my own perspective, I organized the event because I feel strongly that we need a space in which we can simultaneously speak with an uncompromising anthropological voice, while at the same time, and in our own way, intervene in the world. I do not think it is necessary to sacrifice the one in order to achieve the other. And as we will hear on Wednesday, intervention can mean many different things.”

**ALLEGRA:** Thank you for this! Now about the ‘Where’. The event will be organized in Helsinki, which is the capital of [Finland](#), which is a country in Europe, which in turn is the little ‘fly’s poop’ – to quote a popular Finnish proverb – just north of Africa in most standard world Atlases. Apparently some people are worried that it will be cold, but as we have reassured them, it is really not that bad – and even if the weather falls to just a tad below zero Celsius, the atmosphere will most certainly be warm!



What of the 'Who' then? 'Knots' features quite the speaker list which goes as follows:

Marilyn Strathern, with [Jeanette Edwards](#) as discussant

Chris Gregory, with Joel Robbins as discussant

[Michael Carrithers](#), with [Niko Besnier](#) as discussant

[David Graeber](#), with [Jane Cowan](#) as discussant

**SARAH:** These people have been asked to participate because they each, in their different ways, combine a rigorous and passionate Approach towards anthropology with an interest and/or engagement in how anthropology intervenes. This ranges from direct political intervention to an intellectual unpacking of what the idea of intervention might mean.



And essential for 'Who' are also the organizers. Anthropological Knots is organized by [Social and Cultural Anthropology Department at Helsinki](#), in association with HAU-N.E.T., a flagship open access anthropology journal and research network. HAU itself is a form of intervention by and for anthropologists, this time in terms of the open access debate. HAU is the result of a collective effort from anthropology departments around the world (including Helsinki) to offer a different way to solve the particularly entangled knot that is academic open access publishing today. After peer review, it is hoped that the papers, the discussants' comments and comments from the audience - will appear in the Journal as a special section.

What of Allegra's role in all this? Allegra will remain your 'eyes and ears', so to



speak, during the event, and offer you the best highlights both via our [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#) with the hashtag [#anthroknots](#). To add to excitement all of the event's participants are also encouraged to use this hashtag in their social media. Afterwords we'll do a summary of the event's 'vibe'. And best of all: very soon we will post best hits of the talks in video form on the Allegra website!

Thus stay tuned for much more - and if all this has left you, like us, feeling inspired enough for a serious 'boogy-down', why not take cue from these gentlemen, who simultaneously show masterful skills on how to beat the cold Finnish winter!

-----  
Venue: Main Building, Fabianinkatu 33, Pieni Juhlasali (Small Festival Hall), 4th Floor,  
00014 University of Helsinki

09:00 - 09:30: Sarah Green (Organizer) - Arrivals and introduction

09:30 - 10:45: Marilyn Strathern - "Anthropological reasoning: some thoughts"  
Discussant: Jeanette Edwards

10:45 - 11:00: 15-minute coffee break

11:00 - 12:15: Michael Carrithers - "The ironies of a simple ethnographic project, or what it is to stand at the edge of anthropology looking in"  
Discussant: Niko Besnier

12:15 - 13:15: Lunch break

13:15 - 14:30: Chris Gregory - "On the severance of the indissoluble bond between economy and religion and the dehumanisation of anthropology"  
Discussant: Joel Robbins



14:30 – 14:45: 15-minute coffee break

14:45 – 16:00: David Graeber – “On being relevant despite yourself – an anthropological conundrum.”

Discussant: Jane Cowan

16:00 – 17:00: Drinks reception