



#PublicationJihad!

Allegra

March, 2014



This week will be Allegra's first ever [#PublicationJihad!](#) What this means is a full week of *Spectacular Blogging Activity* devoted to one single cause alone: to celebrate the crown jewel of academic work - the monograph, the edited volume - the BOOK!

As we have stated repeatedly, our [Publications section](#) is continually our biggest headache as it is accompanied by numerous nagging questions, including: Just how does one navigate the continual avalanche of new publications with even the slightest sense of relevance? So far we have experimented with a [list of inspirational reading](#), as well as a thematic [bibliography of recent publications on human rights \(law\)](#). In addition we have touched upon the [ongoing changes within academic publishing, including the increasing emphasis on open access](#).

In sum our experiences suggest that it is not just us who are struggling as it has become very difficult to overlook a sense of general crises for book writing and publishing in the current situation. This was summarised as follows in one of our



discussions with an editor at a leading university press:

“There have been studies that show that people base their book purchases on a glance of a few seconds at online bookshops. A few seconds, that’s all the chance we get!”

How does one induce the kind of an impact on those precious seconds that translates into the decision not only to buy but also *read* the book in question? In the current situation more emphasis than ever rests on word of mouth – a task that blogs such as Allegra are in a rather unique position to deliver given the unparalleled possibilities for speed and rapid turnover of the online world. But is this enough, we ask ourselves, recalling the the most cardinal challenge of all, phrased succinctly by another editor upon commenting a forthcoming publication by her press:

“This is a great book – too bad that no one reads books any more!”

This sense of a crisis is certainly intensified by the ludicrous imposition of quantified measurements on academic productivity. Today, all too frequently full-fledged monographs are downgraded to single peer reviewed articles in their ‘impact’. Why even write books if – in addition to no one reading them – they at worst become career hindrances? We are increasingly seeing also younger generations of scholars being socialised into this mindset with the spread of the article based dissertation in the humanities (even if we remain unsure whether any anthropology faculties accept them).

Through our [#PublicationJihad](#) Allegra joins the voices questioning this multifaceted denigration, wishing to simultaneously highlight the nuanced contributions that only carefully crafted books are capable of making to both ongoing scholarly and societal discussions.



We also continue our search for alternatives: from what kind of avenues could renewed inspiration be found to move past this collective sense of crisis? What can we concretely do to reverse the increasing belittling of the BOOK? In this task cardinal remains exploring new ways to open anthropological and scholarly publications to new readerships - one of the purposes of [AVMoFA](#), for example.

All of these themes and many more will be mirrored on this week's [#PublicationJihad](#) - a week not consisting of warfare, but rather embodying a challenge to exert ourselves in the face of these self-imposed tasks. And finally, to shift once and for all from 'thinking to doing' also in regards to Allegra's Publications section!

So hold onto your hats - off we go!

(And just in case the nuanced conception of 'JIHAD' is unfamiliar, it literally means "to strive", "to struggle". In its spiritual significance and wide application it refers to the struggle of the self against evil, a struggle in which each Muslim believer engages in order to better himself/herself as a form of everyday discipline.)