

Editorial

A note from the new editorial team

When we considered applying for the co-editorship of this journal, we joked that we could at least add some colour to it, through our surnames. And now that we have begun the task of editing, we have been preoccupied by another name – the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) – and what both the phrase and each of those words might mean in the contemporary moment. We will explicitly provide space to explore this over the next four years in the journal's pages.

We begin with the idea of 'European', and the following is what we have had to say about that so far, as posted on the journal's website:

As the journal of EASA, *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* provides a key forum for debating and showcasing the anthropological research carried out by anthropologists trained in, or currently working in, European universities. During our term as editors of the journal, we want to address the question of what, if anything, might be 'European' about this anthropology – not so as to reinvent a region, or boundaries, that do not exist, but more as a means to explore the multiple intellectual, institutional, and historical threads that currently make up the practice of social anthropology by those trained in, or currently working in, European institutions of higher education.

Such anthropologists carry out fieldwork in every part of the world, and they pursue every possible conceptual approach. Moreover, the European region (however that may be defined) has a history of a diversity of anthropological traditions that often ran in parallel for decades, hardly even acknowledging one another across their epistemological and political divisions. A combination of the Cold War, multiple languages, and diverse institutional conditions, has meant that while European anthropology has been lively over the last decades, it has also been impossible to get a sense of anything distinctive about it, as it fundamentally lacks singularity. So our challenge will be to delve into this wealth of diversity and pull out some threads, exploring whether and how they might be tied to others, in any part of the world.

Part of this project will involve inviting colleagues in other parts of the world to comment on these threads, to generate a debate about the relations and separations between the locations in which anthropology is practised. Other parts of the project, which will expand the role of our reviews section, will draw together material generated by anthropologists – whether in conventional texts or in other media – to assess their collective contribution. Our aim is that by the end of our four years as editors, *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* will have become established as the forum in which the ongoing project that is European anthropology is debated.

In light of this aim, we welcome the submission of high quality article manuscripts from all fields of social anthropology, however defined. We also welcome review articles that address some aspect of our overall aims as outlined above.

This is a beginning. Yet as debates about the issues involved get underway in the pages of the journal, we may adjust our focus in line with contributions made. We want to strongly encourage an open forum for provocation and discourse, not only in the pages of this journal, but also online: on the journal's Facebook account and on Twitter.¹ The first, extended, Forum Debate is published in this issue. It is already raising a series of important discussion points. In addition, Carlo Cubero has opened out the debate on the place of audio-visual material in anthropology in his review article concerning a series of recent events involving experimental uses of alternative media in anthropology conferences. One of the important points that his contribution raises is a critical look at the epistemological role that the traditional paper presentation has within anthropological conferences. The presentation of a pre-written paper to an audience who will then briefly question the presenter was originally designed for the kind of knowledge the Enlightenment imagined that science should generate. Even though many of the presentations given by anthropologists are very distant from that ideal, Cubero's discussion of the possible alternatives does highlight something of a mismatch between the presentation format and the intellectual content.

The main articles in this issue also mark a beginning for us, selected to represent some of the diversity that is discussed in the Forum Debate. Čarna Brković takes a fresh look at a long-standing topic in European ethnography, patronage, through her ethnographic research in Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH). It might be more accurate to say that Brković's ethnography indicates that patronage has been refreshed, for Brković argues that earlier discussions that suggested an inadequate state gave rise to the existence of brokers who could patch up the gaps with personal favours needs to be updated to meet the contemporary conditions. The situation in BiH is an example of how the flexibility ideals of neoliberal political economy, introduced by internationally supervised welfare reforms to BiH, leaves spaces of ambiguity in which it is not clear exactly how things work. It is that lack of clarity, not a malfunctioning state, Brković argues, that provides both opportunities and lack of clarity about whether the person who helps others to get what they need is doing so out of altruism or out of a desire for power. Probably both.

It is especially gratifying to be publishing in our first issue an article by one of our Association's long-serving members, former secretary Thomas Fillitz. In his contribution, Fillitz sets out the differences between two significant schools of thought within a broadly defined anthropology of art. His is thus a useful heuristic paper that considers new developments in the anthropology of contemporary art, demonstrating that art is differently conceived in three sites (Abidjan, Cotonou-Porto Novo and Dakar), and is changing with time. He shows how it is a central aspect of global art discourses that they are not only dealing with homogenising processes, inclusion/exclusion, but they also consider developments that need to be investigated beyond these power relations. Accordingly, the study of art allows us to conceive a fundamental equality of these art creations, while hegemonic processes are external forces to it. In other words, it allows us to view art-world networks as constituted of many centres, enabling very different circulations and exchanges, not centred on Europe or North America.

1 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Social-AnthropologyAnthropologie-Sociale/593708593975398>; Twitter: @socialanthropo1

Additionally, since The University of Milano-Bicocca will be hosting EASA's 14th biennial conference in the summer of 2016, it is equally fitting to publish the work of two Italian medical anthropologists, Alessia Solerio and Stefania Consigliere. Their rich ethnographic text makes astute observations concerning the transformations in the treatment of drug addicts in Italy. In particular, the article's conclusion regarding the relationship between the transformations in the Therapeutic Community approaches and transformations in society more broadly are of importance. The reference to the concept of 'emotional ontologies' and the relevance of collective vs individual, as well as the role of ritual in these, will surely catch the interest of many readers. Overall, the paper has an ambitious conceptual goal to reveal a plurality of ontologies and point to a shift of paradigms in Italian drug addiction treatment. Moreover, the 'person-centred' model is not only a new paradigm, but covers a neo-liberal attack toward the right to healthcare, which could be conceived as a way of reducing or eliminating welfare in other European countries.

Lisa Krieg's contribution explores questions of heritage and social memory through the way young Germans deal with the question of what Sharon Macdonald has called 'difficult heritage'. Krieg suggests that discussions of the Holocaust carry such a powerful load that there is no way to answer back – to argue, to speak, after someone has raised the topic in conversation. This carries complex relations with the question of social forgetting: it cannot be forgotten, but it also cannot be spoken of. It hangs in the air, like a weight. Krieg argues that this effectively ascribes the topic of the Holocaust with agency in the minds of her interlocutors. The ethnographic material certainly demonstrates that Holocaust language carries a powerful valence, and that the emotional power of the topic can clearly be used as a weapon. It could be debated whether the weapon is the agent, or the person who wields the weapon.

Finally, it is not because of customary etiquette, but instead through genuine gratitude that we wish to acknowledge, on behalf of EASA's Executive Committee as well as ourselves, the outstanding work carried out by SA/AS's outgoing editorial team. David, Mark, Johanna and Vlad have done superbly over the past four years, leaving the journal in excellent shape. We sincerely hope to be able to maintain the rigorous standards they have set for the journal as well as to develop it in a way that makes best use of the legacy they leave behind.

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