

Sussex Anthropologist

Newsletter of the Department of Anthropology, University of Sussex

Professor Filippo Osella is our new Head of Department



In addition to stepping into this role **Filippo** continues to work on the ESRC/DfID funded project: **Charity, Philanthropy and Development**. Led by **Prof. R.L. (Jock) Stirrat**, and with **Dr. Tom Widger** and **Prof. Tudor Silva** (University of Peradeniya/CEPA) the project is

looking at the role of charity and philanthropy in economic, social and health development in Sri Lanka.

The project has just received further funding for impact maximisation and will be hosting a two-day conference on philanthropy and development at Sussex in May this year.

The project has just released three briefing papers:



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Our Students



Paul Robert Gilbert has been awarded a 3 month ESRC-POST Postgraduate Fellowship. Based in Westminster Paul has applied to research Bitcoins and other alternative currencies in order to produce a briefing report for MPs and Lords.



Jenny Diggins was runner up in the Society for Economic Anthropology's annual Harold K. Schneider Graduate Paper Competition.



Jenny's paper, **Economic Runaways on Sierra Leone's Maritime Frontier**, is based on her doctoral fieldwork in Sierra Leone. It tells the story of the waves of young male migrants who, for several decades, have been arriving on the coast from rural areas seeking an alternative to the indentured labour conditions of a

farming economy still shaped by the legacy of domestic slavery. Whilst the maritime world appears to offer a level of 'freedom' which would have been impossible in their home villages, these neophyte fishermen find themselves rapidly drawn back into relationships of patronage which offer the only hope of material security in a deeply unpredictable economy.



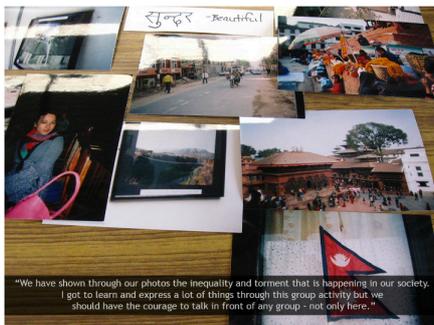
Amy Busby was recently awarded her PhD for research on the European Parliament. Working within the parliament as an MEP's stagiare for 7 months her work explores the organisational culture, backstage political processes and everyday life of the institution.



Global Sexualities

Sexual life-worlds are increasingly interpreted in relation to global flows and transitions. One way in which connections between global processes and sexualities are becoming ever-more visible is in relation to new imaginaries of sexual identity and subjectivity, as mediated through transnational media, new communication technologies, and the global momentum of neo-liberal capital. Against this background other analytical responses stress the endurance of 'sexual cultures', as sexual ways-of-being are appreciated as locally specific and (inter) subjectively intimate. These perspectives present complex methodological and epistemological challenges for anthropology, international development and other globally focused disciplines, for example raising questions concerning sexual rights praxis and the potential for creative ethnographic methods for exploring the intimate sexual life-worlds of others and ourselves. In the context of these concerns Anthropology at Sussex is involved in number of projects and initiatives.

Recent collaboration with IDS' international programme on sexuality, law and poverty is focusing on Nepal and India. Alongside a recent report of law and sexual and gender minorities in Nepal, for example, creative photographic work in Kathmandu is generating visual and narrative insights into the lives of sexual and gender minority peoples. Set against



the background of activism and progressive legal reform collaborative photographic work has sought to offer a creative context for other modes of representation and self-expression. An aim is to move beyond the iteration of deterministic categorizations used to designate sexual subjects and subjectivities in much research and legal discourse in this context. This on-going work is featured at www.creative-nepal.com and will soon include short story and digital video work.

The relationship between sexual rights praxis and the every-day life-worlds of sexual and gender minorities is complex. Recent events in India, where the Supreme Court has overturned the prior 'reading-down' of section 377 of the penal code has prompted international outrage, being widely interpreted as re-criminalizing homosexuality. And yet, whilst certainly an unwelcome turn of events, the focus on the Supreme Court decision may overlook other contexts of oppression and violence as suffered by the most marginal and economically disenfranchised sexual and gender minorities in India, for whom the law and policing has typically provided little or no protection. Responding to these concerns ethnographically and in terms of activism is especially challenging, as discussed recently by Paul Boyce and Aniruddha Dutta (University of Iowa) in 'The Conversation' - <http://theconversation.com/vulnerability-of-gay-and-transgender-indians-goes-way-beyond-section-377-21392>

Anthropology at Sussex has also been

Vulnerability of gay and transgender Indians goes way beyond Section 377



instrumental in establishing a new European Network for Queer Anthropology, in collaboration with Elisabeth Engebretsen from the International Institute of Asian Studies, Leiden <http://www.easaonline.org/networks/enqa/> In conjunction with this initiative a panel will be convened at the forthcoming European Association of Social Anthropology conference asking the question 'Whatever is happening to the critical study of sexual and gender diversity in anthropology?' The aim is to explore the role of anthropology in responding to contemporary global 'sexual crises', and to address the marginalization of work on and with sexual and gender minorities within much anthropological work in the European academy <http://www.nomadit.co.uk/easa/easa2014/panels.php5?PanelID=3028>



Paul Boyce



Creative Nepal
Expressions of Sexuality and Gender

Conferences and Panels

This year will be a busy one for Sussex anthropology staff and students as they help to organise a number of panels and conferences.



Sussex is hosting this year's **AFRICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION (UK)** conference. Bringing scholars from around the world for the **9th-11th September**.



Faculty involved include **Elizabeth Harrison** who will convene a panel on 'Moralties and politics in 'small scale irrigation' in Sub-Saharan Africa'. Small-scale irrigation (SSI) is frequently presented as both an important part of

the mix for achieving economic growth and improved agricultural productivity, and a persistent 'under achiever' in Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite its apparent potential, there is a common narrative that SSI has repeatedly failed owing to a combination of weaknesses in approaches taken by developers alongside

the role of supposed local norms and institutions. In contrast papers on this panel will suggest that in order to understand what is going on here we need to explore the intersection of more and less formal rules for water management from a perspective that takes into account the articulation of moralities for access to natural resources at diverse levels.



Mark Leopold is organising a panel on 'Life History and Biography in African Studies'. The panel focuses on the differences between the two approaches;

biography tends to be about 'famous men/women'; its subjects are usually eminent and powerful people. 'Life history' usually concerns unknown people, frequently considered 'typical' of some social group or another. It will bring together academics to reflect on current approaches to African life history writing and biography, as well as broader disciplinary, methodological and epistemic issues around the distinction between these approaches, in the African context.



Dinah Rajak will act as discussant for the panel 'Labour, Insecurity and Violence in South Africa'. This panel explores the issues of labour insecurity, economic disenfranchisement, and the everyday enforcement of working conditions

within the South African workforce. A striking feature of contemporary South African political economy is the extent to which precarity and vulnerability have become salient features of employment as well as joblessness. At the same time the divide between job and no job, between the formal workforce and those without formal

employment, often forestalls the possibilities for broader solidarities. The panel aims to address the violence of South Africa's labour systems at different scales – among workers, between workers and management, and at a wider, structural level.



Anneke Newman is organising two panels: 'Islamic education in Africa: Continuities, changes and contestations'.

Contemporary African societies are characterised by plural educational landscapes, with a variety of actors alongside the state providing schooling services and scholarships. Education has been the site of competing powers where players reflecting different world views have confronted each other. In countries with significant Muslim populations, this dynamic is reflected in a diverse landscape of educational institutions, spanning both formal and informal schools, private as well as public actors, and varying degrees of integration between religious and secular subjects. Yet, despite the importance of Islamic education in people's everyday lives, and its influence on the social, political and cultural landscape of contemporary Africa, it has suffered relative scholarly neglect. This panel seeks to address this deficit.



and with **Ross Wignall**: 'Sacred Spaces: Tracing the Interface between Religion and the Secular in Development', examining the power of faith and the sacred in development programmes traditionally linked to notions of teleological, rational

economic progress and a fervent commitment to processes of secularisation.



At this year's **ASA conference** held on the **19th-22nd June in Edinburgh**, Sussex will be represented by:

Raminder Kaur, co-organising a panel on 'Postcolonial perspectives on the Enlightenment and ethics': Much has been written about the spread of Enlightenment ideas across the world. This panel considers the legacies of Enlightenment ideas around the notion of ethics from the perspective of its former colonies. Whilst colonialism spread with a quest for 'civilising the native' in tandem with ideals of justice, equality, human rights and democracy, indigenous views were either derided or discouraged. Panelists will consider the contradictory tensions, effects and/or resolutions of the 'light' and 'dark' strands of 'Enlightenment

missions' from historical perspectives and/or with reference to contemporary case studies as they arise with reference to ethnographic praxis, development politics, international aid and/or transnational governance.

Magnus Marsden and Kostas Retsikas with the panel 'Invisible hands: alternate modes of prosperity, wealth and well-being'. Adam Smith's modest use of the concept of the 'invisible hand' has effectively been transformed into a powerful catchphrase; it is often evoked by liberals as the transcendental element of economics, acting to promote individual and collective prosperity, and ensure that justice is delivered to all. The panel aims to explore critically the 'imagination' that has given

rise to this understanding of affluence and well-being, building on the work of Sahlins (1972) to launch an inquiry into modes of conceiving, achieving, and demonstrating abundance and prosperity that do not fit within the narrow horizons of neo-liberalism.

Anne-Meike Fechter and Alan Lester



will convene a 'research hotel', bringing together academics and practitioners on the theme of 'History and Morality in Humanitarianism'.



It will take place on 6th June of this year, and is a NOAH - event (Network on Adaption in Humanitarianism), which was funded as part of the 'Higher Education Innovation Fund ("Kick Start Networks")'.

Dispatch from the Field: Afghan Traders, Magnus Marsden



The facade of the Panshanbe market in Khujand

Over the past several years I have been conducting research with commodity traders of Afghan background and thanks to a Leverhulme grant I was able to pursue this research for a year long-period of intensive ethnographic fieldwork in 2012/13. As the security situation in Afghanistan itself wasn't suited for long-term fieldwork, I decided to focus my attention on the activities of Afghan traders in the contexts of the former Soviet Union, most especially in Tajikistan and the Ukraine. I also spent three months in China, a country to which many Afghan diasporic traders travel to commission and purchase commodities, ranging from bags and leather goods, to children's toys and tourist souvenirs.

All of these countries have historically hosted communities of Afghan traders; during the period of the Soviet Union, they were also home to students and other technical specialists from Afghanistan who travelled to them for training and educating. Many of these students and professionals, however, were also active traders in the Soviet black-market economy, bartering South-Asian-made jeans for quality Soviet-made kitchenware, for example.. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Afghans who had worked and studied in the region during the preceding decades quickly spotted the

business opportunities made available to them by the collapse of the command economy. They established themselves as traders in a wide range of commodities, including, in Tajikistan, Iranian and Pakistani foodstuffs and Turkish cosmetics, and, in the Ukraine and Russia, low grade and cheap Chinese commodities. Today, these Afghan trading communities, are dotted across the whole region in capital cities such as Kiev, Moscow, and Dushanbe, as well as smaller commercial centres like the Black Sea port of Odessa. In addition, these communities of traders continued to be replenished by new migrants and merchants fleeing war in Afghanistan, and looking for locales in which to invest the capital they have earned over the past decade of foreign intervention.

It is tempting to think of such merchants as being war profiteers, or, alternatively, of trade as being a form of economic activity that acts as a survival strategy at times of instability. Yet I have been struck during my fieldwork by the extent to which my informants attach positive moral value to their way of earning a living. On the one hand, as is the case of traders in other settings in South and Central Asia, they do often complain that they find being 'traders in a foreign land' a source of shame and embarrassment, and that the only reason they make a living in such a way is because of the plight their families face in Afghanistan. On the other hand, however, I am often told that trading is a 'free' and therefore honourable way of earning money, and the settings of the former Soviet Union are a good place to live because their proffer the chance of 'free work': 'the best work an Afghan like me can do in London', said Seyyid, a trader in Pakistani tangerines in Khujand, Tajikistan, 'is to be a taxi driver: here in the former Soviet Union with \$20,000 a man can set up some trade in one thing or another and live a free life'.

Of course, these traders, like those across

space and time, live far more complex and precarious lives than such self-representations of their activities would suggest. For one thing, Afghans in Central Asia, as is the case with historic trading communities in Southeast Asia and Central Europe, are often vilified by local populations and political elites alike for being low status market workers who 'love money but have no idea how to live life': Afghans in Tajikistan, for instance, routinely complain that the country's police force target them for bribes, and even frame their compatriots on drug smuggling charges. Afghan traders across the settings to which I have travelled also say that their work is being harmed both by the growing influence of multi-national companies and of national monopolies, cartels and mafias. Afghans in Tajikistan, for instance, were once major actors in the export of asafoetida from the country – today this lucrative trade has been placed in the hands of a state monopoly. Such difficulties are leading many of my informants to question how far they will be able to continue to earn an independent living as commodity traders: some are moving their activities to settings they perceive as being 'good for trade', such as Odessa, or the city of Yiwu in eastern China; others are seeking to acquire refugee status in Europe. In 2014, the year the foreign military intervention in Afghanistan officials draws to an end, few, however, talk of a return to Afghanistan as being either a safe or economically viable option.



Hot Off the Press!

Food For Change

The Politics and Values of Social Movements

Jeff Pratt and Pete Luetchford

Paperback / 9780745334486 / £22.99 / December 2013 / 252 pp

Concern about our food system is growing, from the risks of industrial farming to the dominant role of supermarkets and rising concerns about the origins and content of what we eat.

Food for Change documents the way alternative food movements respond to these concerns by trying to create more ethical economic circuits which provide better value, more food, and a better life for producers.

Jeff Pratt, Peter Luetchford and other contributors explore the first political and economic operations of food through the everyday experience and social struggle of farmers and consumers, using fieldwork from case studies in four European locations (France, Spain, Italy and England).

Food for Change is an accessible introduction to connections between food and wider economic relations and draws on a rich vein of anthropological writing on the topic.



44 The rich success of the local food movement across Europe offers compelling case studies of consumer alternatives outside the capitalist system. The book also deep life the social and ecological values associated with food... (concerning, inspiring and enlightening to read)

44 This book is well written, easy to read, and packed with examples of contemporary alternatives to agro-industrial food... (concerning, inspiring and enlightening to read)

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Sussex Anthropology: Who We Are

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