

Sussex Anthropologist

Newsletter of the Department of Anthropology, University of Sussex

Volume 1, Issue 4

Latest news:

- New research grants for work on employment in South India and religious belief and practice in the UK.
- Congratulations to **Aleksandar Dimitrovski, Adom Philogene Heron, Ramy Aly, and Julie Billaud** for recent academic success (see page 2).
- Sussex Anthropology's MA Programmes are recruiting. For more information go to: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/anthropology/pgstudy/>

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Sussex Anthropology Society: Pictures for the People?

What might a 'shared anthropology' look like? Inspired by ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch's call for a 'shared anthropology', on 22nd November 2010 Dr Zemirah Moffat came to talk about her work using Participatory Audio-Visual Ethnography at a packed workshop for the Sussex Anthropology Society.

Film and photography is an exciting medium because everyone can engage with it, Zemirah reminded us. She explained how Jean Rouch wanted anthropologists to go further than just sharing their work with their informants, but also to share the power of the camera and the control of the footage it produces. With the proliferation of still and video cameras in mobile phones, webcams, and disposable cameras—as well as the increasing ability to share this work virtually through forums, Facebook, or Flickr—the possibility of a shared anthropology has hugely expanded.

Zemirah showed how, in her own film *Mirror Mirror* and the Aschs' film *Jero on Jero*, the process of watching footage with informants can offer valuable insights into what is being seen. Filming these interactions can elicit not just comments on the earlier recorded material, but also be a form of ethnography, as

people's interpretation of their own representations change over time.

Finally, we turned the cameras on ourselves, working with the question 'Can I take a photograph of you?' to focus on the relationships generated by passing the camera back and forth between us in small groups. The workshop ended with plans to use participatory visual research methods in our own work, and proposals for further workshops in the Spring Term.

by Cressida Jervis-Read

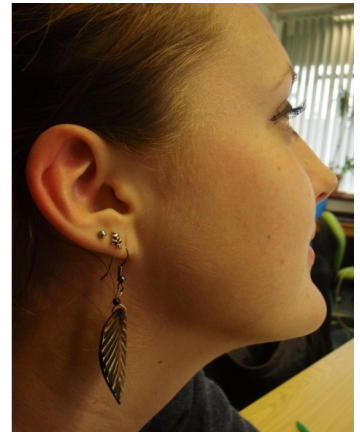
For more information:

Zemirah Moffat's homepage: <http://www.wmin.ac.uk/mad/page-1348>

Mirror, Mirror (2006). Dir. Zemirah Moffat. UK.

Jero on Jero: A Balinese Trance Séance Observed (1980). Dir. Timothy Asch, Linda Connor and Patsy Asch. Australia.

At right: 'Can I take a photograph of you?' Examples of photos generated in Zemirah Moffat's workshop.



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Congratulations to Sussex Anthropologists



Geert De Neve and Grace Carswell's new project builds on their prior research on labour, gender, and migration in Tamil Nadu.

Geert De Neve and **Grace Carswell** (Geography) have been awarded funding from the British Academy to study the changing relationships between livelihoods, gender, and migration in Tamil Nadu. This research will examine India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, and builds upon Geert and Grace's extensive research in this field.

Abby Day, a Research Fellow in Anthropology, has been awarded funding from the AHRC for her continuing research into the everyday practices that embody and inform faith and community in the UK. Her aim is to examine how these are connected across different geographic locations and across time to inform policy-makers about why people do unpaid work to support their

communities. **Ben Rogaly** (Geography) will serve as co-investigator on the project.

Congratulations to **Dinah Rajak** and her partner **Sam Knafo** (International Relations) on the birth of their son, Raphael, in December.



Acclaimed anthropologist Professor Scarlett Epstein presented the 2010 Bill and Scarlett Epstein Award for the best MA dissertation to Aleksandar Dimitrovski.

Student Awards, Honours, and Publications

At winter graduation **Aleksandar Dimitrovski** (MA Anthropology, 2011) won the Bill and Scarlett Epstein Prize for the best MA dissertation in Anthropology, 'Leaving the Ethno-National Ghetto: Macedonia Beyond Identity Politics.' The prize was awarded by **Professor Scarlett Epstein**, a dedicated anthropologist who is still active in international research and consultancy.

At the American Anthropological Association (AAA) annual meeting in New Orleans, **Adom Philogene Heron** (BA Anthro-

pology, 2010) was awarded *in absentia* the prestigious Undergraduate Student Paper Prize from the Society for Urban, National, and Transnational/Global Anthropology (SUNTA) for his essay, 'Taming the Spider Man: From Anticolonial Hero to Neoliberal Icon.' Adom will present the paper at the Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore conference in Lisbon in April.

Congratulations to our doctoral students: **Julie Billaud** passed her *viva voce* examination last May for her doctoral thesis,

'Malalay's Sisters: Women's Public Visibility in "Post-war/ Reconstruction" Afghanistan.'

Ramy Aly also passed his *viva* in February for his doctoral thesis titled, 'Be(com)ing Arab in London: Performativity between Structures of Subjection.'

Former DPhil student **Shalini Grover** has published a monograph based on her doctoral research at Sussex: *Marriage, Love, Caste and Kinship Support: Lived Experience of the Urban Poor in India* (Berghahn and Social Science Press, 2010).

Book Corner

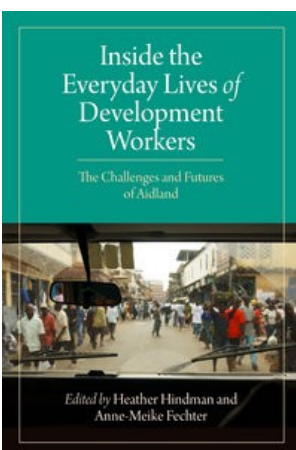
A new book edited by **Anne-Meike Fechter** (Sussex) and **Heather Hindman** (Texas) illuminates the social and cultural world of the international aid agency. In *Inside the Everyday Lives of Development Workers: The Challenges and Futures of Aidland* (Kumarian, 2011), the seemingly impersonal network of agencies and donors that formulate and implement policy are shown to be composed of real people with

complex motivations and experiences that might also provide important lessons about development's failures and successes.

The book examines how aid workers' moral beliefs interlink and conflict with their initial motivations, how they relate to aid beneficiaries, their local NGO counterparts, and other aid workers, their views on race and sexuality, the effect of transient lifestyles and insider language,

and the security and family issues that come with choosing such a career. Ultimately, they arrive at an understanding of development processes that acknowledges a rich web of relationships at all levels of the system.

Anne-Meike Fechter is Senior Lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Sussex.



Rehearsing Reality with the Anthropology Society

'Use your head to solve the heart's problems': so reflects one of the Brazilian commentators on Nina Simoes' fascinating interactive 'docufragmentary', *Rehearsing Reality*, which was shown in the Sussex Anthropology Society meeting of November 29th, 2010.

The film documents Brazil's Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST), their campaigns for land reform, their training and squatting of precarious roadside camps, and evictions and struggles with the police in a context where mainstream society has dubbed them as criminals or terrorists. The non-linear filmic fragments of Simoes' work were interspersed with scenes of MST theatre intended to raise awareness and empower participants. These theatrical interludes were inspired by Augusto Boal's methodologies for the 'Theatre of the Oppressed' which involved participants deploying dramatur-

gical techniques to question, challenge and undermine realist or classical representations in tandem with social structures of oppression.

In tune to this sentiment, Simoes'

with excerpts of the 56 minute film interspersed with audience questions.

This docufragmentary is the result of 91 hours of film footage that Simoes collected while living

with the squatters during her PhD. Although she has also produced two other documentaries on the movement, *Rehearsing*

Reality is the only one produced for the internet. The film has been shown to people in the MST movement, as well as in several film festivals and art-house cinemas across the world.

Simoes' current project, 'Fragments of Parenthood,' further develops her interest in transmedia storytelling, where stories are extended beyond film.

by Achim Roseman and Raminder Kaur

Rehearsing Reality



An Interactive Docufragmentary by Nina Simões

film had an interactive and interrogatory character: the internet-based film provides a navigation bar from which the viewer can select film clips, including commentaries on the MST movement and scenes of landless workers engaged in activist theatre.

About 25 students (some of whom are currently making their own documentaries) attended from Anthropology, Media Studies, and Development Studies. In the spirit of the film, the 2 hour meeting was itself interactive



Three first-year students (**Sasha Flatau**, **Judith 'Fizz' Swayne**, and **Ross Anderson**) in the autumn Anthropological Imagination course presented a visually stunning analysis of Emily Martin's classic anthropological text, *The Woman in the Body* (pictures above and below). Their Associate Tutor, **Laurén Greenwood**, credits Fizz as the group's artist.



Featured Anthropologist: Maya Unnithan

Maya Unnithan has been teaching Anthropology at the University of Sussex since 1991, the year she was also awarded her PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Cambridge. Maya's research spans a focus on caste, kinship and gender politics in NW India explored in her first book, *Identity, Gender and Poverty: New Perspectives on Caste and Tribe in Rajasthan* (1997) to her research in birth, infertility, reproductive technologies and body politics, as reflected in publications which

include edited volumes on *Reproductive Agency, Medicine and the State* (2004) and with Soraya Tremayne, *Fatness and the Maternal Body: Women's Experiences of Corporeality and the Shaping of Social Policy* (2011).

In 2009, Maya received ESRC funding to examine how state institutions and NGOs understand, use, shape and translate human rights discourse into their sexual, maternal and reproductive health programmes in India. Situated within an ethnography of institutions, this research high-

lights the contentious nature of global ideas of rights in countries such as India which have a long tradition of indigenous rights discourse.

Apart from her University commitments, Maya currently serves on the Medical Anthropology committee of the Royal Anthropological Institute, the ESRC peer review college and on the editorial boards of two journals, *Anthropology and Medicine* and *Health and Ethnicity*.



Maya Unnithan (third from left) is a Reader in Social Anthropology at the University of Sussex. She is pictured here with the ESRC project research team and IDS Jaipur faculty, India, June 2010.

Dispatch from the Field: Alice Street in Papua New Guinea

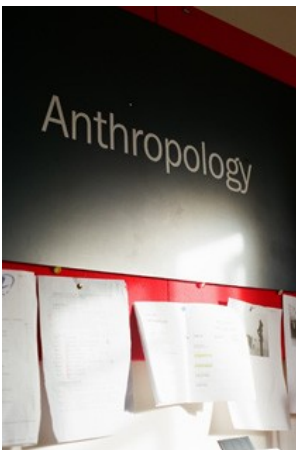


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'Grass Matters'

The grass went up to my knees. As I walked towards the health centre, little thorns that would irritate me for days attached themselves to my socks and trousers. When I reached the bleached brown verandah, the health worker who greeted me turned to sweep his hand across the flat green landscape. "You see, no one cuts the grass here. The government doesn't see us. People in the community don't help us. We just use our own strength to keep working."

Across the Middle Ramu district of Madang Province, with its rugged mountains that rise up into the New Guinea Highlands and the swampy hot Ramu river valley that winds its way to the coast, I encounter the same story. Grass matters.

The district has no roads in working order. The only way in or out is by boat or plane. Fuel prices for both are rising and all but one of the air strips along the river basin are closed, with small air companies cutting back their routes every year. The district station is marooned on a plane of mud midway between the mountains and the river.

Before independence in 1975, colonial officers patrolled the

area. New powers of 'law' and 'government' were backed up by the gun. People followed orders when told to cut the grass without payment. Monday was 'government day'. Everyone was expected to contribute to the maintenance of 'public' spaces like schools and health centres. Huge square patches of even pale green were cut out of dark rainforest and garden land.

"People aren't stupid anymore" Frank, the officer in charge of a facility positioned further on along the river explained. "Before the white people said 'Oy! You kanakas [black hillbillies] you clear the grass' and people did what they said. But now they have knowledge. Now they know the services have money. They won't clear the grass for nothing". Frank employed two people at 50 kina a fortnight (£12) to do the gardening for the health centre.

The beautiful lawns, bordered by bright rows of flowers sloped down the hill to the river. The Catholic mission that ran the station had told him to lay them off, but he refused. "I told them. If I lay them off, the bush will be up to the window, it will start coming in. When people come here they see the place, the grass, the buildings, and they know what kind of people we are."

But most facilities continue to rely on reluctant communities, resorting to shouting and chastisement when people refuse to help. One health centre refused to give people treatment until they cut the grass. People don't get sick on Mondays anymore.

Patients, community leaders and local councillors reminisce about the colonial era, when aluminium roofing was flown in on planes and water tanks didn't leak. They have forgotten that they also had to cut the grass. 'The government doesn't see us' I heard everywhere I went 'Look at the rusting aid post roof, the long grass, the bush material walls.'

Colonial attempts to manufacture publics reverberate in spatial relations in the present. Communities who watch government health workers in a facility with no medicines install solar panels on the roofs of their homes know that this 'place of government' does not belong to them. Health workers sit on hot verandahs waiting for government to arrive with a lawnmower or the 'ungrateful' community to bring their bush knives. 'Development' looks like a clean green square with shining aluminium roofs. But who is going to cut the grass?

Alice Street is a Research Fellow in Anthropology at the University of Sussex. Her current research on health, development, and the state in Papua New Guinea is funded by the Nuffield Foundation.