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NEWSLETTER 2023/3 OCTOBER

IN FOCUS

The EASA Anthropology of Economy community is continuously advancing in its work, following intriguing research trajectories, including those that emerge from new issues of our newsletter. We are certainly on the move, engaging with contemporary economic challenges, debating theoretical frameworks, and fostering a vibrant intellectual environment for scholars and practitioners alike.

This issue brings to the fore intriguing reflections concerning water management, as well as new opportunities coming from new publications and new book series. Announcements about several new publications and events complete the picture, marking a steady, insightful journey contributing significantly to the broader academic discourse and societal understanding of economics entangled with culture and society.

PERSPECTIVES, NOTES AND QUERIES

News from the Thames Basin

*'But how did they manage the river in the days that you –
They mismanaged it,'* *quoth I.*
(William Morris, News from Nowhere, Chapter 30)

Thames Water is in crisis during a balmy June and I am reminded of William Morris's novel of 1890, describing an idyllic journey in the middle of the 22nd century up a Thames that has been cleansed and freed from the barbarism of industrialisation. Communism has been institutionalised since the revolution of 1952. People are motivated not by greed but by the aesthetics of beauty, in the built environment as in nature.

Morris's utopia yielded to dystopia in 1989 when Margaret Thatcher's government privatised Britain's water industry. Thames Water, nowadays serving some 16 million customers, took on large debts and their performance was supposed to improve through the discipline of the market, but the damage has been immense. Owners have received their dividends and managers their bonuses, while infrastructure remains inadequate and debt has piled up. Companies across the country lose massive quantities of water through leaking pipes and pump untreated sewage into rivers and the sea, especially when it rains.

Climate change has accentuated the problem of transporting water from where it is relatively abundant to the densely populated areas where it is needed, especially in years of drought. I grew up in Wales, where water has long been an emotional, political issue (see The Last Days of Dolwyn, the first film of celebrated Welsh actor Richard Burton, made in 1949). Why should beautiful valleys and entire villages be flooded to serve the water needs of Birmingham and Liverpool?

Following a decade of free enterprise folly, Dŵr Cymru (Welsh Water), unlike the English companies, became non-profit. It transfers considerable quantities of water to English companies, and Thames Water would like to have more, but this is determined politically. Dŵr Cymru is not free to charge a market price. Although the market-driven extraction of coal was devastating in the past, some Welsh nationalists believe that applying the logic of the market to water can secure the long-term economic viability of an independent Wales.

But should water be treated as a commodity subject to private ownership and enclosure? For Karl Polanyi, it is a 'fictitious commodity' alongside land and labour. Should Wales sell its water to the old enemy? I live in Cambridge, where water is supplied by the Cambridge Water Company, a private company from its inception in the era of William Morris until 1996. Recently it was acquired by Chung Kong Infrastructure Holdings Limited, before being sold on to HSBBC and later absorbed by South Staffordshire Water. Can such property histories really be conducive to efficiency? Do they have any ethical justification?

These parochial examples from an old country point to what can happen when fictitious commodities meet financial capital intent on extracting wealth regardless of sustainability and beauty. Ecosystems around the world have been damaged by human interventions and entire nations are threatened by rising sea levels. Anthropologists such as Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Kirsten Hastrup and Veronica Strang have been addressing the issues for years. The task is not made any easier by academic fragmentation (environmental anthropology, political ecology, riverine geography, critical infrastructure studies, etc). Economic anthropology must transcend these boundaries, in the holistic spirit of Morris and Polanyi.

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If you want to reply to this column, or if you want to write a column or have an idea for one, please communicate with James G. Carrier: jgc.jgcarrier@gmail.com

EVENTS

Anthropological Dialogues on Capitalisms and Fascisms: updates

The Anthropological Dialogues on Capitalisms and Fascisms have started with three great sessions. This collaboration is organised by the Anthropology of Economy Network and the Anthropology of Fascisms Network, the European Network for Queer Anthropology and the Anthropology of Labour Network. We grouped together to investigate the current conjuncture of fascist tendencies and their relation to capitalist social reproduction.

The following sessions have taken place already:

Wed, May 24th 2023
Conjunctures of capitalisms and fascisms. A necessary series of debates for an anthropology of our political-economic times.
Organized by Sabine Teryngel and Ingo Schröder (ANTHROFA) and Andreas Streinzer (AOE); Hosted by the Anthropology of Fascisms (ANTHROFA) Network and the Anthropology of Economy Network (AoE) of EASA

Wed, May, 31st 2023
Queer lives in capitalist times.
Reading Rahul Rao's (2020) chapter "Queer in the Time or Homocapitalism" (p. 136-173)
Organized by the European Network for Queer Anthropology (ENQA), moderated by Jayaprakash Mishra (ENQA); Hosted by European Network for Queer Anthropology (ENQA)

Wed, June 28th 2023
Labour, class, fascisms: A roundtable
Participants: Douglas Holmes, Gillian Evans and Juraj Buzalka
Moderated by Irene Peano and Marketa Dolezalova (AOL); Organized by the Anthropology of Labour Network (AOL)

We are excited to announce the Dialogue Series will continue! Unfortunately, it will continue in early 2024, later than planned but with new formats and speakers. We will be in touch about the new dates which will be early next year and very much looking forward to seeing some of you there!

OPEN POSITIONS

Scientific Editor in the 'Anthropology of Economic Experimentation'

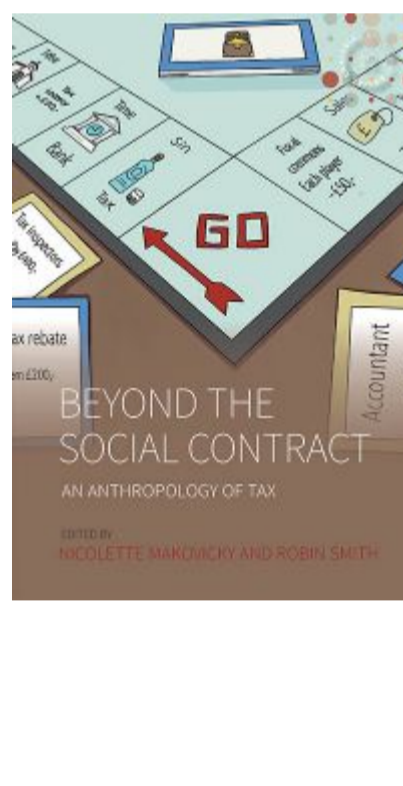
We would like to draw your attention to the [job posting](#) for a Scientific Editor in the 'Anthropology of Economic Experimentation' department at the MPI for Ethnological Research.

The application deadline is October 31, 2023.

For further details:
Nadine Wagenbrett
Human Resources Officer
Email: wagenbrett@eth.mpg.de

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS AND SPECIAL ISSUES



Beyond the Social Contract: An Anthropology of Tax, edited by N. Makovicky and N. Smith, New York: Berghahn (2023).

Tax and taxation are conventionally understood as the embodiment of the social contract. This groundbreaking collection of essays challenges this truism, examining what tax might tell us about the limits of social contract thinking. Our authors shed light on contemporary fiscal structures and public debates about the moralities, practices, and imaginaries of tax systems, using tax to explore the nature of citizenship, personal freedom, and moral and economic value. They show how taxation may be influenced by spaces of fiscal sovereignty that exist outside or alongside the state, taking various forms, from alternative religious communities to economic collectives. The volume is freely available from the publisher's website.

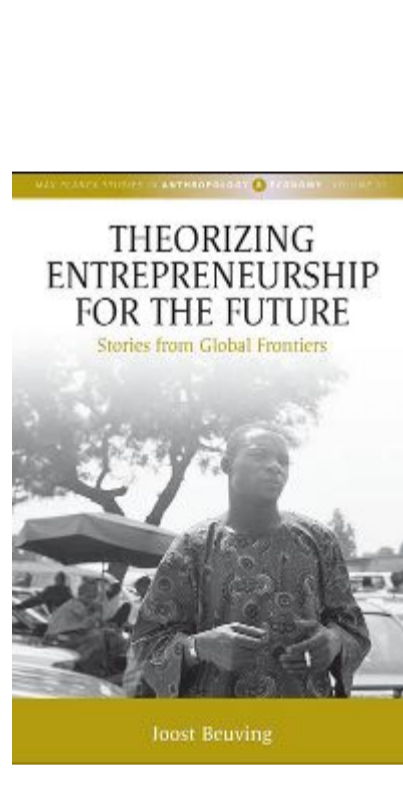
ISBN 978-1-80539-040-4
<https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/MakovickyBeyond>



David Verbuč. 2021. DIY House Shows and Music Venues in the US: Ethnographic Explorations of Place and Community. SOAS Studies in Music. New York, and London: Routledge.

DIY House Shows and Music Venues in the US is an interdisciplinary study of house concerts and other types of DIY ("do-it-yourself") music venues and events in the United States, such as warehouses, all-ages clubs, and guerrilla shows, with its primary focus on West Coast American DIY locales. It approaches the subject not only through a cultural analysis of sound and discourse, as it is common in popular music studies, but primarily through an ethnographic examination of place, space, and community. Focusing on DIY houses, music venues, social spaces, and local and translocal cultural geographies, the author examines how American DIY communities constitute themselves in relation to their social and spatial environment. The ethnographic approach shows the inner workings of American DIY culture, and how the particular people within particular places strive to achieve a social ideal of an "intimate" community. This research contributes to the sparse range of Western popular music studies (especially regarding rock, punk, and experimental music) that approach their subject matter through a participatory ethnographic research.

ISBN 9781032061832
<https://www.routledge.com/DIY-House-Shows-and-Music-Venues-in-the-US-Ethnographic-Explorations-of-Verbuc/nbook/9781032061832>



Beuving, Joost. 2023. Theorizing Entrepreneurship for the Future: Stories from Global Frontiers. New York: Berghahn.

Presenting a new interpretation of entrepreneurial behaviour, this book focuses on how entrepreneurs consider the future, looking at their social practices, language and rituals through which they neutralize or smoothen future unknowns. The study theorizes entrepreneurial behaviour as 'future-work': the social practices, language and rituals through which entrepreneurs neutralize or smoothen future unknowns. The study is grounded in ethnographic case material from global frontiers: second-hand car dealers in West Africa; exporters of fresh fish from Lake Victoria, East Africa; farmed fish entrepreneurs in Greece; and investment bankers in Financial America. It targets students and scholars from the social sciences and economics, and it has theoretical and practical implications.

ISBN 978-1-80539-004-6
<https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/BeuvingTheorizing>



Kofli, Dimitra. 2023. Broken Glass, Broken Class: Transformations of Work in Bulgaria. New York: Berghahn.

Based on a long-term study of the everyday postsocialist politics of labour in the wider context of intense socio-economic transformation in Bulgaria, this book tells the story of the flexibilization of production, the precarization of work, shifting managerial practices, and ways in which people with different employment statuses live and work together. The ethnography starts with the rapidly moving conveyor belt of a glass factory, where a variety of global and local forces and workers' divisions meet, and analyses how inequalities are reproduced both at the production site and back home.

ISBN 978-1-80539-036-7
<https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/KofliBroken>



Special issue "Urban commons and public goods under capitalist urbanization," edited by Anne-Christine Trémon, Focaal 94 (2022).

Public goods have been neglected, if not outright rejected, by the anti-capitalist literature, which favors "commons." The introductory article of this special issue argues that equal attention should be given to commons and to public goods—both are essential to social reproduction. Their difference is not one of nature, but of status; it results from the way they are managed and distributed. It offers some conceptual clarifications in the literature on commons, public goods, club goods and private goods, and argue for an approach that looks at the status of goods. This opens up room for examining two ways struggles for social goods are and may be waged: commoning and publicizing. While commoning practices require organization at the community level, publicizing practices make claims on the state as a provider of public goods.

https://www.berghahnjournals.com/view/journals/focaal/2022/94/focaal_2022_issue-94.xml

NEW BOOK SERIES

Anthropologies of Eurasia: Ethnographic Encounters of Social Change

Series Editor:
Deema Kaneff, University of Birmingham, UK

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Kirsten Endres – Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Germany
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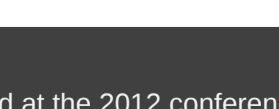
Anthropologies of Eurasia is a new scholarly book series showcasing work that has as its thematic interest social change. This reflects the everyday lives of peoples from the Eurasian landmass, many of whom have experienced postsocialist transformation over the last three decades. As an all-encompassing theme, 'social change' refers to a broad range of economic, political and social dynamics: the way communities are transformed by mobility and migration; the economic practices and political reforms that shape daily engagements; and the cultural (including religious) conflicts and collaborations that take place in everyday life. Alongside this thematic focus, the Series has a methodological commitment to prioritizing an in-depth knowledge of the region, work grounded in empirical research and detailed local knowledge. Such an ethnographic (participant observation) approach, traditionally and enduringly central to the domain of the anthropological discipline, has also been adopted - in modified form - by scholars from related disciplines including: human geography, history, sociology, politics amongst others. Anthropologies of Eurasia provides a platform for all scholars, from anthropology and related social science and humanities disciplines, whose studies are based on the intimate knowledge of the society about which they write.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Verbuč, David. 2023. "A Whole Society, With Its Own Economic System": The Reciprocal and Capitalist Configurations of American DIY Music Scenes." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 32, 1: 5–27. DOI: [10.1080/17411912.2023.2180050](https://doi.org/10.1080/17411912.2023.2180050)

The Anthropology of Economy network was launched at the 2012 conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists. The Network unites EASA members who share an interest in the anthropology of economy. Further information on the AoE Network: <https://www.easonline.org/networks/economy/>

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AoE Network Newsletter 2023/3 was set by Ognjen Kojanić.



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