EASA Newsletter No 75 Janaury 2020

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European Association of Social Anthropologis
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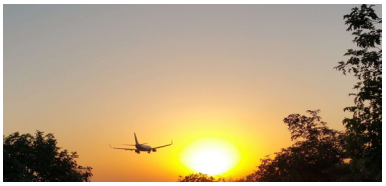

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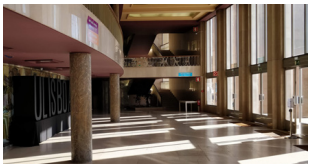

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Cover photo by Rohan Jackson

1. Letter from the President

CONFRONTING KNOWLEDGE POLITICS AND BUREAUCRACY IN EUROPE AND OTHER NEWS

"Europe, knowledge politics and bureaucracy: anthropological perspectives" was the title of the workshop EASA held in Brussels on October 28-29, 2019, kindly hosted by our colleagues at ULB Brussels, and we thank them warmly for their hospitality. This was a highly informative event. It was largely designed and organized by Mariya Ivancheva, our Executive Committee member with responsibility for lobbying and the precarious anthropology collective (PrecAnthro Collective) liaison, amongst other things. As reported in my first letter, we are living in difficult times, both politically and economically; within the regions that are influenced by the EU (which includes territories that are half way across the planet from Brussels, as well as many countries not directly members of the EU), the policies and decisions made in Brussels have enormously important implications. The workshop aimed to carry out two tasks: to reflect on how anthropology might provide a particular kind of voice and perhaps intervention on the issues, policies and bureaucratic practices that emanate from Brussels; and to engage directly, as anthropologists and on behalf of anthropology, with policy makers and lobbying groups in Brussels.

As can be seen in the programme that has been posted on our website, the event included presentations by key anthropologists on policy, bureaucracy and the EU, as well as presentations and discussion sessions with key Brussels-based lobbying groups and policy makers – amongst whom were Angela Liberatore, Head of the Social Sciences and Humanities Unit in the European Research Council (ERC) Executive; Gabi Lombardo (Director of the European Association of Social Sciences and Humanities, or EASSH) and Martin Andler (President of the Initiative for Science in Europe, ISE). The discussions between the gathered anthropologists and these people was both enlightening and robust. Amongst the issues that arose were: how to protect disciplines such as anthropology, given the current hostile environment for many social sciences and humanities in various parts of Europe; and how to lobby more effectively on behalf of anthropology,

particularly on issues related to academic precarity, academic freedom and the tendency for some institutions, both political and academic, to try to make disciplines such as anthropology disappear from view.

Martin Andler (ISE President) reported on the severe danger of financial cuts for research in the upcoming budget negotiations in the EU. He also reported on the progress of the effort to reverse the European Commission's decision to remove the word 'Research' from the title of any of the new Commissioners. EASA had actively campaigned on this issue along with most other learned societies in Europe. I am delighted to report that this effort was successful: the new European Commission now has a commissioner with responsibility for education and research in Europe. The importance of this cannot be underestimated: during the workshop, the progressive disappearance of names and words that relate to research in general and anthropology in particular in the titles and names of roles, departments, and institutions is a worrying trend. In that context, we were delighted to hear that Angela Liberatore of the ERC had a highly positive view of anthropology, as did Gabi Lombardo of EASSH, who recommended a strongly positive approach towards lobbying: rather than only criticizing what is wrong, encouraging policy makers to do what would be better.

The anthropologists at the event, who included both senior and early career scholars with an interest in the effects of EU funding on anthropology and the academic environment, provided a range of perspectives, both critical and positive, about the current conditions in which anthropology is practiced, and the implications of the way the structures and bureaucratic processes of the academy have been changing anthropological practice. An important element that came out of the discussion about research funding and ethics is that, while ethics towards the subjects of research has been developing strongly, ethical policies on those who are employed within EU-funded research projects is far less developed. Questions of intellectual property rights, employment conditions, management and leadership issues, mentoring, and many other issues related to current academic precarity conditions were raised. This was clearly the beginning of a conversation, not the end of one. With that in mind, we are reproducing some of the main issues and arguments on this debate in this newsletter, including a set of guidelines on the ethics of collaborative research written by Alice Tilche and Rita Astuti, to begin a discussion on how to address the difficulties identified during the workshop.

OTHER NEWS

I reported in our last newsletter that Prem Kumar Rajaram had been co-opted onto the Executive Committee as its eighth member. We agreed at the last Executive Committee meeting that Prem will take on responsibility for Publications Liaison together with our treasurer, David Mills. This will involve looking carefully into the emerging issues surrounding the politics of open access, which includes Plan S, and importantly, will probably include a discussion on monograph publication as well as journal articles. Prem will also join Mariya Ivancheva in dealing with Emerging Issues.

EASA2020 Lisboa. We experienced the largest submission of panel proposals (363) for the Lisboa 2020 conference in July 2020 that EASA has ever received. This was wonderful in one sense, as it shows that the conference, which is a cornerstone of our association's work, is continuing to be an effective forum for intellectual exchange. At the same time, it made the selection of panels very difficult, as the scientific committee had to decline so many proposals. Nevertheless, the call for papers is now open, and we warmly encourage all members to submit their paper proposals for the panels that have been selected.

New website design on the way: Miia Halme-Tuomisaari, our Executive Committee member with responsibility for social media, is overseeing a call for redesign of EASA's website. Do look out for developments in this area during the new year.

Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale. The new editors of the journal, Laia Soto Bermant and Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov, have published their first issue, and this year, for the first time, the journal will be publishing its two online-only special issues, with the second special issue due out during December. The journal has added these two online-only special issues because of the very high demand for special issues in the journal. We are delighted to have made this additional space available.

On behalf of the EASA Executive, I send all our members seasonal good wishes and a happy new year.

Sarah Green, EASA President, 12th December 2019.

2. EASA AGM “Europe, knowledge politics, and bureaucracy”, Brussels, October 28-29th 2019

TACKLING ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM: THE ETHICS AND INTELLECTUAL IMPLICATIONS OF SHORT-TERM FUNDING FOR BIG PROJECTS.

At our recent AGM the EASA exec committee and its guests addressed issues that present challenges to anthropology, humanities and social sciences, and academia as a whole. We used the opportunity to speak to representatives of the ERC and lobby groups dealing with higher education in general, and humanities and social sciences specifically, to lobby for a broadening of their focus from resourcing these disciplines to addressing other pressing concerns.

One issue that was debated during the day was a critique that the academic sector in Europe relies so strongly on competitive research funding for short-term research (it is different in other parts of the world). Some participants noted that the level of reliance on such funding is being carried out at the same time as block grants to universities are being radically reduced. Block grants allow the development of long-term research strategies, whereas competitive short-term research project funding makes strategic planning almost impossible.

This issue points to important potential intellectual, as well as structural and strategic, outcomes of different funding models, and it also points to a key element in the particular forms of academic precarity that are currently affecting academia in the European region. For that reason, there is a clear need for EASA to encourage debate on possible alternatives to the currently over-heavy reliance on short-term funded big projects within anthropology in the EU region. One participant commented, "if you inject huge amounts of cash into a system without resolving structural flaws you will just reproduce those flaws on larger scale".

Having identified this problem and the potential and actual harm that this funding structure does to anthropological research, the workshop also devoted time to discussing how to mitigate a range of difficulties that occur in practice with short-term funded large projects. In particular, Alice Tilche presented results of long-term discussions carried out by herself and Rita Astuti on ethics within large research projects (see next point). We are outlining some of the recommendations that came from this discussion below. The first section is a summary of Astuti and Tilche's findings, and the following, longer, section outlines guidelines that Astuti and Tilche developed as a result of their work.

Mariya Ivancheva, a member of the EASA Executive, one of the founders of the Precarious Anthropologists Collective (PrecAnthro Collective), and currently taking the lead in liaison with PrecAnthro in the EASA executive, has summarised the main points raised during the workshop in Brussels in October 2019. These also include key points made by some participants presenting findings and conclusions emerging from previously held workshops on related topics: the findings presented by Alice Tilche and Rita Astuti on ethics and authorship in anthropology from a workshop the two colleagues organised at LSE, findings on the marginalisation of programs for the most vulnerable presented by Prem Kumar Rajaram were informed also by discussions at the Open Learning Initiative (OLive) conference on refugee education in Budapest and findings on ethics, legality and GDPR in anthropology from a workshop at SOAS, presented by Cassandra Yuill. The key points from the AGM, presented below, combine political positions, recommendations and observations about the situation. They constitute the beginnings of a debate within EASA that could in the future lead to policy recommendations. All comments are welcome to ethics(at)easaonline.org.

ETHICS OF RESEARCH

- Research Ethics clearance procedures currently follow patterns that are made according to natural and life sciences which don't take into account the legal, economic and political vulnerabilities with which the humanities and social sciences work in an increasingly volatile world
- Definitions of 'vulnerability' need to be made more context-dependent, and in particular, more aware of the power dynamics in operation in any given situation in which vulnerability may be generated. Vulnerability is not only a physical, age-related or mental condition. Sometimes research participants are made vulnerable by the actions of states and businesses; at other times, research participants are themselves powerful entities who might use their power to carry out harm against others, yet current ethical research principles protect them under the same premise as those violated.
- GDPR and data protection requirements, which have been designed mostly to address the monetisation and marketing aspects of data collection and processing, are not appropriate for addressing anthropological data collection methods: "sufficient customer consent to process data" may make the allegedly protected more vulnerable.
- Increases in corporate funding for universities is likely to mean a decrease in funding for 'blue sky' research (i.e. research not intended to serve any particular interest, group or institution, but is driven simply by curiosity), and might even decrease protection of the principle of academic freedom as a fundamental premise of research. It may also affect free access to data as private companies may insist on control over the content and/or analysis of the content.
- Current competitive research funding strongly privileges academic institutions which already have high levels of funding, support and visibility, which means that the current funding models reproduce and reinforce current hierarchies within academia in the European region. It is possible to develop funding policies and strategies which would distribute funding rather differently, allowing less visible and well-resourced institutions to participate. This would inevitably be a positive development for the intellectual work of research, as it would diversify perspectives and thus extend both knowledge and opportunities.

ETHICS OF AUTHORSHIP

- While issues relating to the ethics of researching human participants has developed strongly, ethics for dealing with co-production of research results is currently poorly developed in the social sciences in general, and is particularly poorly developed within anthropology, which is a famously relatively solitary research activity.
- This has led to an absence of good practices, ethical principles or rules about authorship in large research projects. This lack of clear rules has meant that fixed-term contracted researchers could, and in practice actually have been, treated as 'data-gatherers'. The result is that researchers employed in large research projects could be denied any autonomy over their data after the projects are completed, even when projects build on researchers' long-term work. This particularly affects anthropology, which is a 'slow' discipline: fieldwork takes a long time, analysis takes a long time, and writing monographs takes a long time. The question of principles of intellectual property rights over data and publications is an urgent issue that requires immediate attention.
- Following on from the previous point, some understandings of what counts as 'data' run counter to basic anthropological principles on the matter: in a positivist interpretation, data can be treated as 'neutral' or simply as if it is material gathered. With that kind of interpretation, it is possible for PIs in research projects to insist that all data 'belongs' to them. In practice, most anthropologists know that the process of both gathering and coding data (usually done by employed researchers) involves a deep process of analysis and drawing upon expertise. For this reason, it cannot be the case that a PI can automatically 'own' the material gathered by employed researchers following the end of a project. Intellectual property rights will be operative here as well, and require close consideration.
- Despite insistence on interdisciplinarity in research project calls, there has been little work done to understand the cost in terms of long-term career prospects for researchers employed within interdisciplinary environments. To date, it still appears to be the case that full interdisciplinarity is a disadvantage over discipline-specific specialism in researchers' employability.

ETHICS OF EMPLOYMENT AND RECRUITMENT

- It is clear that within the European region, there has been a growing casualization of employment within the academic sector. To date, no serious policy work has been undertaken at the EU level to develop structures that could provide more stable employment across the sector. This is occurring at a time when there has been a significant increase of PhD graduates, student numbers overall and, in many countries, an increase in student fees. This needs addressing, not only because of the inequities it generates, but also because it is highly likely that stable employment will generate much better research from researchers.
- Many postdoctoral researchers have been offered contracts that increasingly de-professionalise their work and skills, requiring them to simply gather data rather than actually carry out research. This is of particular concern in anthropology, in which the difference between data gathering, analysis and research is virtually impossible to define.
- Short-term contracts in research projects often require geographic mobility across Europe at a particularly vulnerable time of postdoctoral researchers' lives, shortly after completion of their PhD, during a period when many people of their age and career stage wish to settle down in one place with partners and/or children. Given the increasing effectiveness of online communication, more work could be done to make working conditions more flexible for researchers, so that they are able to manage the multiple demands on where they should be located more effectively.
- Mobility issues particularly affect non-EU citizens, who are at a disadvantage across the EU; currently, many countries, and most notably the UK in terms of the high numbers of non-UK citizen academics who work there, have generated a hostile environment policy. Brexit will of course make this issue worse; but the general principle is the same: demand for geographical mobility creates a hierarchy amongst those who can, and those who cannot, participate in such mobility, either for personal or citizenship regulation reasons. The current trend in many countries to raise, rather than lower, barriers to entry to their territories makes this an urgent issue to address.

- The short-term research projects also generate a small army of marginalized staff who cover the teaching and other duties of bought-out staff. Many of these staff are offered short-year (typically 9-month) contracts, or part-time positions, or even zero hours teaching-only contracts, with little if any time for career development, research or mentoring. It seems clear that there is a clear gender-divide here, in that women appear to take these highly precarious positions disproportionately more than do men.
- The pressure on permanent staff to secure high value research funding and to buy themselves out of teaching in order to publish in high profile journals - pressures that come from the auditing systems and bibliometric databases introduced over the last 20 years across Europe - has resulted in academics with excellent research and teaching experience increasingly taking on the role of research project managers, usually without training or institutional support. This has a double disadvantage: first, it takes up a lot of time of senior academics that they could otherwise use to carry out research of their own; and it means that they may make a range of errors in managing their research staff without it being detected by anyone except the employees, who are in a vulnerable position and therefore unlikely to be able to act. This needs serious attention, as it negatively affects both the intellectual work and the working conditions of everyone involved.
- With the EU experiencing what is described as a 'migrant crisis' (but should be more properly cast as people escaping conflicts for which EU must take its share of responsibility), programs like Scholars at Risk or initiatives to assist migrants to enter into higher education should be prominent, but are often kept marginal within universities who see these as 'civic engagement' projects. These programs can reproduce conditions of precarity because of limited funding and their marginal position in universities. More work needs to be done to consider how to provide a more sustainable academic support structure for vulnerable scholars. It is possible that someone given temporary assistance and then abandoned will end up in a worse position than they were before being given that assistance.

GUIDELINES

On the basis of this analysis, the EASA executive committee in 2019-2019 is committed to look for avenues to address these serious concerns, raised during the AGM, on a European, national and institutional level. Our aim is to provide positive potential solutions to these difficulties and work towards recommending changes. We welcome all comments and suggestions from members by emailing ethics(at)easaonline.org.. The text in the next section provides one step in that direction: proposals for a set of guidelines on carrying out collaborative research, authored by Alice Tilche and Rita Astuti.

3. Draft of Good Practice guidelines in collaborative research: 'data' ownership, authorship and power, by Alice Tilche and Rita Astuti

EASA INVITES MEMBERS TO COMMENT PROPOSALS ON 'GOOD PRACTICE' GUIDELINES FOR COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH.

The following text, written by Alice Tilche and Rita Astuti, is a proposal for guidelines for those involved in research collaborations, which emerged from a series of workshops and discussions held by Tilche and Astuti over a period of time. We are publishing their text here to begin a conversation about this topic and to encourage further discussion and reflection amongst EASA membership. Feedback and suggestions are most welcome (by emailing ethics(at)easaonline.org), and will be fed into a final version of these guidelines for approval at the 2020 EASA AGM.

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines respond to the emergence of new forms of knowledge production, which privilege large, externally funded projects. In anthropology, the shift towards large projects is making new collaborations possible,

opening up new modalities of knowledge exchange. However, it is also creating new forms of exploitation, precarity and hierarchy, potentially calling into question the key principles of our discipline. Collaboration is often organised through vertical rather than horizontal structures, with an unequal distribution of rights and responsibilities – for example, between those who gather the data and those who analyse it – that has negative repercussions for those structurally most vulnerable, while adding pressures on those at the top. Furthermore, the transfer of an ill-fitting science model to anthropology and the commercial pressures on anthropology departments, are turning scholars into producers of outputs, a redefinition of their role which can be seized upon by line managers and auditors, but also by senior scholars. This is detrimental to the intellectual freedom and career development of young researchers, and threatens the ethical integrity and epistemological underpinnings of a discipline that claims a particular relation to its 'data' (see below).

Recent guidelines published by the journal *Ethnography* and endorsed by the European Association of Social Anthropology (EASA) and the Dutch Anthropological Association, highlight broad principles for anthropological research, data management and scientific integrity in anthropology. The key principle they establish is that anthropological knowledge is always co-produced, embedded in particular social contexts and, as such, cannot be transferred to third parties without consent or consultation (Koning et al. 2019; EASA 2018). These documents are mainly directed at the attempts by others (employers, the media and policy makers) to regulate anthropologists' work in ways that are epistemologically counterproductive and ethically problematic. Granted this, we must now extend such a line of reasoning to collaboration amongst anthropologists. With the nature of academic employment becoming increasingly precarious – for postdocs and temporary teaching-only staff, who must fight hard for permanent positions, but also for permanent members of staff, whose career progression is linked to the external auditing of an increasing number of metrics – it is not only 'others' but anthropologists themselves who are adopting questionable research strategies. These include treating fellow anthropologists as data collectors, using their research material without prior consultation or denying them access to it, as if anthropological data can be detached from the social relationships between researchers and research participants that have co-produced it.

While project-based research has become normalised, there are as yet no collegial, discipline-specific agreements on how this type of collaboration should be managed. These guidelines seek to clarify the relationship between data production, data ownership and authorship in anthropology and to suggest some ground rules for ensuring fair working relations within projects. We hope that they will inform revised ethics guidelines for the discipline and be used as a basis for negotiations within collaborative project teams and between project teams and funding bodies. The document is divided into two sections: the first is specific to anthropology; the second addresses broader issues of career development and project structure applicable across the social and natural sciences.

SECTION I

Key principles of research integrity

As already established by the EASA statement on data governance for ethnographic projects (EASA 2018), by Pels (2018), by Dilger et al. (2019) and Koning et al. (2019), anthropological research materials cannot be treated as disembodied and transferable data. They are always co-produced through relations of trust (between the researcher and her interlocutors) and through the interpretative work of the researcher (Koning et al. 2019: 2).

Consequently, in the context of collaborative research projects, every project participant ought to be considered as the guardian and guarantor of the integrity of the research material they produce and of its interpretation.

This has a number of implications:

- Members of a research team – including Principal Investigators (PIs) – cannot claim ownership of the research materials co-produced by others.
- Similarly, no member of a research team can use research materials without prior consent of, and consultation with, the research team members who produced them. This applies to qualitative, quantitative, experimental and visual data as well as interviews. Fieldnotes in particular should always remain under the guardianship of their authors and the sharing of field notes within a project should not be assumed.

- Every member of a research team must retain access to, and the right to publish as a single author from, the research materials they have co-produced (subject to collaborative arrangements they have established with their interlocutors), and they should continue to do so after the end of any given collaborative project.

Authorship/Co-authorship

Given the principles outlined above, researchers in anthropology are never to be treated as 'data collectors'. Instead, they should have an automatic claim to the authorship of any publication that utilises their research materials.

This principle, when applied to the publishing model currently prevalent in anthropology, has a number of implications:

Every member of a research team has the right to appear as the author of publications that draw on the research materials they have co-produced. This right to authorship is based not just on their contribution to the writing itself, but to the process of co-production and interpretation of the research materials. Such contribution gives the right of single authorship, whenever a member of the research team is entirely responsible for the writing of the piece, and to first-authorship when they are involved in co-writing it (when multiple project participants contribute their research materials and are involved in the writing, they should all appear as equal co-authors).

When publishing as single authors, members of a research team must acknowledge the contributions of other team members to the research design and implementation, besides acknowledging the research grant that made the research possible.

Giving assistance during research design and implementation or providing feedback on draft publications do not grant members of the research team, including the PIs, automatic right to appear as co-authors. For members of the research team to use and write up unpublished materials and analyses that emerge from fieldwork other than their own, they must work closely (in the conceptualisation and writing of the piece) with the member of the research team whose materials and analysis they are drawing upon. As stated above, the latter has the right to authorship.

Co-authored publications should only be based on genuine collaboration, i.e. collaboration that is mutual, ideally all the way from design to fieldwork and from analysis to writing. This means that all authors should make a substantial contribution, i.e. bring comparative research material, and/or core methodological and conceptual insights to the publication. The order of authors in publications must fairly represent the contribution to the production of the research materials (i.e. actual involvement in fieldwork) and their interpretation.

Research materials should be published whenever possible in ways that fall under the aims of the project, but no members of the research team (including the PIs) have the right to control the interpretative work of others. This is crucial to guarantee the intellectual freedom of all researchers.

As noted, these guidelines are intended to apply to the current dominant publishing culture in anthropology, which prizes single-authored publications. This publishing culture is out of sync with the current funding model, which prizes large team grants.

For genuine collaboration to be possible, such publishing culture needs revisiting;1 alternatively, the preference for large collaborative grants should be abandoned.

SECTION II

While the preceding section has covered issues specific to collaborative projects involving anthropologists, the next one covers issues also applicable to researchers in other disciplines.

Career Development

PIs should ensure that all members of the research team are given enough time and resources to pursue their career development. This is particularly crucial to early-career researchers who are typically in precarious employment.

[1] See for example Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRedIT) model: https://www.casrai.org/credit.htm

We therefore welcome the recent recommendation by the Vitae Concordat Strategy Group that researchers should be allocated 20% of their time for their personal and professional development, e.g. for attending conferences, training or publishing independently of the focus of the project.2

PIs and other senior members of the research team should prioritise giving support to early career researchers in producing publications, attending conferences, and engaging in other career-development activities, such as grant writing, that are appropriate to their career needs (this could mean single- or co-authored publications, depending on the discipline).

Institutional support for projects

Large, externally funded projects create new challenges for individual researchers and demand new institutional responses. In what follows we outline a few areas where intervention is needed.

Protocols for collaboration (e.g. co-authorship, data sharing, time management) should be put in place at the very beginning of any project, with the mediation of an external facilitator. Such a person should be familiar with and take into account the ethical principles and research protocols of each discipline. The presence of an external facilitator is crucial to ensure that the needs of all participants are taken into account. Should the ongoing nature of the project require a revision of such protocols, the external facilitator should be consulted again.

In order to prevent researchers' isolation, projects should remain closely embedded in the life of a relevant academic unit (e.g. a department). Host institutions should ensure that academic units which host externally funded projects include researchers in that unit's activities and offer them opportunities for intellectual exchange and development beyond the specific focus of the project.

[2] https://www.vitae.ac.uk/news/copy_of_concordat-strategy-group-report accessed 02/07/2019

Host institutions should provide PIs with initial and ongoing training on how to manage large projects (in the same way in which Heads of Departments are typically given training). This should include training on how to effectively mentor early career researchers and on how to create and maintain a healthy working environment in the face of the challenge of precarity. Host institutions should also facilitate dialogue among PIs from different projects (e.g. by holding regular meetings) to counteract PIs' possible feelings of isolation and intimidation in the face of top-down demands from grant agencies.

Host institutions should provide training to all members of a research team on the technicalities of the grant (e.g. reporting mechanisms) so that everyone is clear about their rights and obligations.

All parties involved in a project should have oversight of the reporting process to project funders (e.g. by signing off interim and final reports) and should have independent channels with funders to raise concerns about the project.

Although PIs should provide early career researchers with ongoing mentorship, an external source of advice and recourse should also be available to them. Researchers should thus have a designated person/mentor within a relevant academic unit but independent of the project, who will act as an impartial source of career development review and advice.

Funding agencies should require host institutions to provide the support, training and mentorship just outlined. All these initiatives should be fully costed within grant applications. They should not become an added burden to either academic units or individual members of staff.

Acknowledgements

This document draws on a series of consultations at national and European level. At EASA 2018, Alice Tilche and Giacomo Loperfido organised a panel discussion (https://www.easaonline.org/conferences/easa2018/events) on the ethics and politics of big projects with the support of the PrecAnthro collective (https://www.facebook.com/precanthro/). In May 2019, with the support of the LSE Anthropology Department and its RIIF Fund, Alice Tilche and Rita Astuti organised a follow up workshop at the London School of Economics aimed at drafting a set of guidelines. We would like to thank the PrecAnthro collective which made this discussion possible in the first place,

the Anthropology Department at the LSE and all those who participated in the workshops for their contributions. The guidelines are informed by the discussion that took place at the workshop, but do not reflect all the views expressed by the participants.

4. EASA's role in the world - the beginning of a conversation

HOW TO RESPOND TO THE MULTIPLE CHALLENGES FACED BY ANTHROPOLOGY IN EUROPE AND THE WORLD TODAY.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we are living in interesting times. In the past, learned societies such as EASA had two basic roles: to provide a conference in which colleagues could present their work and meet each other, and to provide a journal and a book series in which scholars could publish peer-reviewed work and circulate their ideas and knowledge.

Today, things are somewhat different. In addition to those highly important roles, EASA exists increasingly in a world that has, on the one hand, drawn academics more into political debate than ever before (in this era of the infamous 'knowledge economy') while, on the other hand, the institutions and structures that used to support our scholarship and discipline have been radically changing. Not only open access issues and research funding issues, but also administrative restructuring of universities so that disciplines are increasingly disappearing from view; funding regimes that have created chronic precarity and short-term perspectives (see above); a speeding up of the need to react to events due to social media; a deep scepticism of 'experts' in many parts of the world; threats to our members' freedom to speak and even threats to their liberty; questions about conferences, and how we should respond to the climate emergency at the same time as provide platforms for mutual conversation.

All of these issues and more are increasingly pointing to the need for EASA to take a step back and think about its role in the world, and how best to serve its members. It is not sufficient to just react whenever a department closes, a member is arrested, a government attacks academic freedom, or another government cancels the word 'anthropology' in its list of disciplines. We need to consider what learned societies such as ours are actually for, and work towards developing carefully considered strategies for responding to these kinds of challenges.

With that in mind, we are initiating a debate that we hope to develop further in Lisboa 2020, and in future AGMs. Below is one list of the topics we might consider in the process of developing a strategy. We will prepare discussion documents for these topics in time for Lisboa 2020.

Actions regarding the climate emergency. EASA should consider ways to promote practices within academic work that assists in reducing the carbon footprint, and consider all our practices and how they could be less energy-consuming (See below, Section 4A, for longer discussion.)

Political or economic threats to anthropology. EASA should think about some general principles for reacting to direct threats to anthropology as a discipline in different parts of the world, which would include structural changes that generate the kind of precarity discussed above, as well as threats of closure, threats of making the discipline's name disappear and other types of threat. As reported in the last newsletter, EASA is regularly called upon to react to such threats, and it would be useful to develop a general set of ways to respond to such threats.

Lobbying and support for anthropology. EASA should consider the best ways to proactively support and defend anthropology as a discipline and as a practice in wider policy-making contexts.

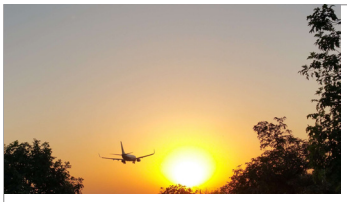
Collaboration with other learned societies. There have been several occasions over the last year when working with other learned societies has been an effective way to defend anthropology's interests. The most recent example was working with other societies to ensure that the word 'research' appears in the title of one of the EU's commissioners, to ensure that research is a visible and explicit responsibility of a named individual in the EU. EASA could develop general principles for such collaborations.

Public anthropology initiatives. Many funding bodies and academic institutions are increasingly demanding that academic research be made more accessible to the public, but the ways in which that has been done has not often been suitable for anthropology. EASA might consider providing initiatives and approaches designed by and for anthropologists in this field.

Ethics and Codes of conduct. Given the combination of increasing structural precarity of employment, the development of 'institution-free' anthropological entities (e.g. journals which exist solely on the internet), the increasing numbers of 'gig economy' forms of employment, and the continued existence of much older problems in the academy (e.g. harassment, bullying and other workplace and study-place problems), EASA could consider widening its codes of ethics beyond ones related to engagement with research participants.

Open Access initiatives. Given the rapidly changing publication and research materials environment in relation to open access, EASA should become actively involved in joining the debate on these issues, and consider the best options for EASA's own publications. Too often, these debates are being held by governments, university authorities and publishers, and the views of scholars themselves are surprisingly rarely solicited.

Online engagement. Some argue that no learned society can be effective if it does not have a significant and lively presence online. EASA recognises the importance of social media, though we are also aware that the issue is not entirely clearcut: on the one hand, social media is a crucial tool for communication with members and the wider world; on the other hand, it can also be a destructive and divisive force, and also overwhelm people with too much information. EASA should review its online presence. We are already planning to overhaul our website and have sent out a call for redesigning it, and will be working on an active model of communication with our members- social media, webpages, newsletters, debates during AGMs and conferences (see below, Section 5. Call for EASA website redesign). At the same time, we will look carefully at the potentially negative effects of social media engagement and ways to mitigate them.



4A. THE CHALLENGE OF REDUCING EASA'S CARBON FOOTPRINT

Academic conferences have a significant environmental impact. Air travel is by far the largest contributor to the carbon footprint of an individual academic (Achten et al 2013). Scholarly associations wishing to minimise their environmental impact need to challenge the normativity of 'academic aeromobility' and reduce conference-related air travel (Glover et al 2017). Academic conferences have a significant environmental impact. Air travel is by far the largest contributor to the carbon footprint of an individual academic (Achten et al 2013). Scholarly associations wishing to minimise their environmental impact need to challenge the normativity of 'academic aeromobility' and reduce conference-related air travel (Glover et al 2017). There are examples of innovative low-carbon conferencing practice that EASA can draw upon, including decentralised conferences (Casset et al 2018) and the 'Nearly Carbon-Neutral' vision. The EASA Exec is keen to explore ways to reduce the EASA conference carbon footprint. One way is to encourage more land-travel, and this is being factored into the travel funds available. Another is facilitating more online participation.

Active conference participation is now increasingly possible using web communication technologies (Skype, Zoom, Webex etc). The 2018 Society for Cultural Anthropology #Displacements conference involved a 'virtual and distributed' event linking participants at local conference nodes (Pandian 2018). Casset et al (2018, 66), discussing the success of such approaches within environmental sciences, praises this 'multiple site-paradigm'. The SCA model was partly inspired by the Nearly Carbon- Neutral (NCN) white paper by the Environmental Humanities Initiative at UCSB.

One option is to trial some of these innovations within EASA's successful existing biennial conference format. The EASA 2020 committee is exploring the possibility of increasing online participation and attendance. The Call for Panels offered the opportunity to propose virtual panels. This envisaged that convenors and presenters would not be in physical attendance, and instead log-in online for question and answer sessions, having prepared and uploaded their presentations in advance. However, this was only taken up by a very few proposers, and as a result, an alternative mixed model of mixed panels is being trialled, with one (or at the most two) remote/online presentations per panel.

Facilitating virtual participation into conventional events comes with additional hidden costs and resource implications that will need to be built into registration fees in order to ensure that these innovations remain broadly cost-neutral to EASA. Of course, current models of conferencing have significant environmental externalities.

Given the critical importance of transitioning to a carbon-neutral economy, the long-term future of academic conferencing may be one of asynchronous or distributed events. In future participants may view presentations remotely, initiate site-based events and discussions, and offer online feedback over an extended period (eg a few days or even longer). These models could open up conference participation to a global academic audience, and potentially remove some of the financial and logistical barriers that prevent conference attendance. The EASA Exec recognises the popularity and appeal of EASA's existing biennial conference format, and in the first instance the Exec is seeking to learn from these innovations, and to open up a conversation about future possibilities and opportunities.

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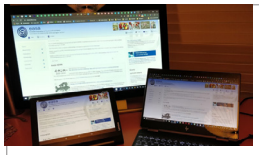

5. Call for EASA website redesign

EASA IS CALLING FOR BIDS FROM DESIGNERS TO OVERHAUL THEIR WEB PRESENCE.

EASA is looking to redesign its website, which has maintained the same basic format for over a decade. EASA invites bids from designers to be received by 30th January 2020, with a view to launching the new website in time for the biennial on 21st July. Full information can be found here.

6. Call for bids to host the EASA2022 biennial conference

EASA is seeking bids from departments/colleagues to host the biennial conference which will follow Lisbon.

Are you interested in hosting the EASA2022 conference? The criteria and application procedure for hosting the conference are fully explained on the website: https://easaonline.org/conferences/

The deadline to receive proposals is 20th March 2020.