

EASA Newsletter No 77 November 2020



European Association of Social Anthropologists
Association Européenne des Anthropologues



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Cover photo of the Georgia guidestones by Dina Eric



1. Letter from the President



THANK YOU FOR EASA'S VIRTUAL LISBON CONFERENCE

When we collectively stepped into the unknown in making EASA's 30th anniversary conference a virtual one, an event that had originally been meticulously planned over a period of two years for an in-person event in Lisbon, we had no way of knowing how it would go. It went remarkably well: over 1800 delegates participated, the largest EASA conference to date; all the plenaries and panels were well attended and audiences actively engaged in discussions; and even the final virtual party prompted some people to dress up and dance around their living rooms, as well as find friends, colleagues and speakers to chat with in the audience. It is still possible to catch up on many of the events that were held at the conference, including the plenary given by Marilyn Strathern, many of the films and even some of the sessions. You can also still browse the book exhibition. It is [worth a look here](#).

This outcome was a demonstration of what can happen when enough people come together and show enormous generosity of spirit and a willingness to work collectively. Everyone – the organizing committee in Lisbon, the administrative and technical staff led by NomadIT, the volunteers who helped throughout, the publishers, the presenters and – equally importantly – the participants, all stepped up to the plate and not only did what they could, but in fact actively worked to make it a unique and positively reaffirming experience. Thank you: to all our members, and to all those that made it work.

EASA2022: Belfast. At the end of the AGM of the conference, we announced that the host of the 2022 conference will be Belfast. Keep an eye on our website as that event is being planned.

POST-CONFERENCE EVENTS IN LISBON

As I mentioned in the previous newsletter, EASA had committed to hold a number of small in-person events in Lisbon during the course of 2021 as part of the 30-year celebrations of EASA. At the time we made those plans, we expected that



by the autumn of 2020, we would know what the Covid-19 situation would be in 2021. We now know that we are living in a condition of known unknowns, to paraphrase Donald Rumsfeld: we are certain that we cannot predict what the situation will be in early 2021 in relation to Covid-19. So, we will go ahead and make plans for these small events in Lisbon in 2021, and we will announce a call for proposals for them; but we cannot know whether they will, in fact, be held. It depends on the trajectories that the virus which causes the disease takes in its spread around the world, combined with responses from people, governments, international organizations and it even depends a little bit on the spread of disinformation on social media: what people believe determines how they respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.

WEBINARS ON CODE OF CONDUCT, OPEN ACCESS, ACADEMIC PRECARITY SURVEY AND AUTHORSHIP GUIDELINES

At the AGM at the conference, some discussions were begun, and votes held, about issues that are of considerable importance to the association, to anthropology and its future. The most important decision made in the AGM was that EASA should work towards making the association's journal, *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale*, fully open access. The AGM voted in favour of this move, while at the same time requesting that the most effective means to do it in practice, and thinking through the implications and consequences of each option, should be carried out before making a final decision on how to make that change. Such a change is not as obvious or straightforward as it appears – in particular, if the readers are not paying for the journal content, then who does pay for all the work that goes into producing the journal, and what would the consequences be for scholarship in making that change? – and so we have arranged a webinar for EASA members in order to discuss the options open to us. We very much look forward to the input and feedback from members that we will receive on this.

We have already held a well-attended webinar on the report of the Code of Conduct Working Group, which was mandated by an AGM vote in 2018 in Stockholm, with the aim of developing recommendations for whether a Code of Conduct Committee should be established by EASA. The working group's original task, which covered a general remit, was somewhat overshadowed by



the particular case of the *HAU* controversy, which the working group was also asked to consider after EASA received a letter requesting that a review of that controversy be carried out by any new Code of Conduct Committee. The webinar was a welcome opportunity for members to discuss the report of the working group with members of the group, and to discuss ways to move forward with the original idea of a Code of Conduct Committee, or Ombudsperson, as the working group recommended. That task is now ongoing and we will take it forward.

The third webinar we will be holding this year will be a discussion of a major piece of work carried out by the PrecAnthro (Precarious Anthropology) group in association with EASA, which was a survey of our membership on the working conditions in which they live, and how they are experiencing that work. The detailed report on the results of that work is now almost ready, and there will be a discussion of its contents held in a webinar on November 27th. This is a hugely important opportunity to discuss the challenges anthropologists are facing across Europe, in addition to considering the diversity of those challenges, and I would like to encourage as many members as possible to participate in that webinar.

We are also holding a webinar on December 11th, on the Draft of Good Practice guidelines in collaborative research prepared by Alice Tilche and Rita Astuti, which were presented at an EASA AGM held in Brussels in 2019, and then discussed, all too briefly due to lack of time, in the AGM at the Virtual Lisbon conference in July. Votes at the AGM showed a majority support for the principles of these guidelines, while some also expressed concern about some of the details of the guidelines. Given that one of the important elements of such guidelines is to make them widely known, we have arranged a webinar to go through them in detail. Again, this is an important issue, and one that most of us are affected by: how to work collaboratively in joint research projects, most especially regarding authorship and rights over research material.

NEW EASA BOOKS SERIES EDITORS

We were delighted to announce at the conference that, following the end of Alexandar Boskovic's term as the EASA Book Series Editor, a new team of editors for the series has been selected. They are Annika Lems, Sabine Strasser and Jelena Tošić. They have sent out a new call for monograph proposals (see item 7 below). You are warmly encouraged to apply if you have a manuscript brewing.



YOUR ASSOCIATION NEEDS YOU: STAND AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE EASA EXECUTIVE

There has never been a time when learned societies were more important than they are now. They provide an independent voice speaking on behalf of their membership, and that is important. This year, EASA is having elections to select five members of its Executive and I would like to strongly encourage members to consider putting themselves forward as candidates. The total Executive is eight members: in addition to the five elected members, there is the Treasurer and Secretary (both selected by interview by the Executive) and an additional member invited by the Executive to join once the newly elected executive is in place.

In the past, the main tasks of the EASA Executive were to arrange the organization of the biennial conference and to ensure that the journal and monograph series were produced regularly. These days, as has been seen, the tasks have grown along with changes in both academic structures and practices, and changes in the role of anthropologists in the world more widely. Learned societies such as EASA are increasingly being called upon to make comments about politically and socially urgent and sensitive issues; we are asked to provide a voice to members and others in our profession who find themselves experiencing injustice, whether in the course of their research or in their academic environments; and we are having to make decisions, such as the one concerning open access publication of our journal, which will have deep consequences for our scholarship in the future. We are also increasingly required to create an ongoing lively and visible presence within social media, and to be able to respond to issues as they emerge in real time. For this reason, Executive members have taken the lead on particular tasks in recent years, so that in addition to the President and Vice-President roles, we also have members who take the lead on liaison with our networks, on emerging issues, on social media, on publications, on ethical issues and on conferences.

The reason five members of the EASA Executive is elected is that the association draws on a model of representative governance: the members vote for candidates to represent them in managing the association and making the day to day decisions for the association. All elected members are expected to represent the entire membership equally and to work in the interests of the association and anthropology more widely. It has been an enormous privilege to have served on the Executive, even during the hard times, such as when we took the decision to have our conference online. Please consider standing for election: your association needs you.



THE JOURNAL SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY/ ANTHROPOLOGIE SOCIALE PUBLISHES MAJOR FORUM ON ANTHROPOLOGY RESPONSES TO COVID-19

A major contribution by anthropologists on the Covid-19 pandemic has been published in [Issue 28:2 of EASA's journal, Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale](#). The call for contributions generated over 200 responses worldwide, and the editors have done an excellent job on drawing these together. The contributions are currently available as open access material; we encourage all members to go and have a look.

OTHER NEWS

The EASA Executive was shocked and saddened to hear of the sudden death of Marcus Banks in October of this year. He was a member of the Executive between 2017 and 2019, and a member of EASA for almost twenty years. He will be sorely missed.

In another sad development, we were deeply concerned to hear that Fariba Adelhah has been sentenced to five years in prison in Iran. As members will know, EASA has been closely following this case with considerable concern for over a year now, and along with a number of other learned societies, have asked the French government to do everything in their power to secure her release (Dr Adelhah is a French citizen).

Also since the last newsletter, EASA expressed solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement in the USA, and encouraged members to draw on this moment to think through and consider actions on parallel issues occurring in Europe and other parts of the world. The full statement can be read [here](#).

On behalf of the EASA executive, I do hope you are all continuing to keep safe.

Sarah Green, EASA President, 30th October 2020.



2. EASA2020 online experience

Many thanks to all those who submitted feedback via the online survey. We had a 38% response rate. The quantitative data is summarised below. On the whole, under the circumstances, there was satisfaction that the event went ahead online, with the quality of support, preparation and choice of platform. Of course there were a diverse range of opinions shared in the qualitative responses. The responses can be [read in full here](#).



ATTENDANCE

The virtual log-in data suggests that attendance was pretty even through the event, with a peak on the second day. Panels/roundtables averaged 35 attendees (not including convenors), the film sessions averaged 25 and labs 17. 25% of panels had more than 40 attendees and the best attended had 140 - suggesting slightly higher attendance at panels than in face-to-face (F2F) events, particularly on the final day. On the contrary plenary events had lower attendance than at F2F events - but they had high appreciation scores. Nearly half attended the additional events (book launches, network meetings, social events, etc) with the majority feeling we had the right number of these in the programme.

15% of respondents attended just their own panel; 25% fewer than three panels/events; 40% attended more than three, and 15% said they attended most events, dropping in to lots of things, similar to an in-person event.



DELEGATES

Delegates came from 64 countries (14% Germany, 10% UK, 8% Portugal), 90% being institutionally affiliated, 42% in full-time employment, 26% student, and 48% with annual income below €25,000 (28% below €15,000). 79% expected to remain within academia in the foreseeable future, 81% unsurprisingly identified anthropology as their primary discipline, with about half seeing EASA as their main conference. Similar numbers had their fees covered by employer/grants as had to cover this themselves.

71% of respondents would have attended the conference if it was F2F; the 11% who said they would not mostly stated financial reasons for this, although time-saving and carbon footprint were also issues.

CONFERENCE

The conference received a rating of 3.9 out of 5, with 73% selecting 4 or 5. Nearly half felt that the virtual event managed to meet most of their requirements for an academic event. 16% felt that it fell short of their expectations, while for 20% it exceeded theirs.

40% of respondents felt 4-5 days of online conference was too long and there was little support for thinning an online event out over a longer period. As we would expect caring commitments coincided with the event (25% Childcare, 7% Home-schooling, 17% Care of other relatives) - but the main competing call on time was cited as other work (80%). No wonder that 63% said that ideally they'd take time off usual work to focus on a future conference.

The most selected advantages of the virtual format were the time, hassle and resources saved attending from home, the environmental benefits and the lower participation cost. The most missed features of F2F events were ease of networking, the atmosphere, local environment and conference buzz; and finding it hard to fully engage with online conference and get away from home/work life. Obviously online fatigue and technical glitches marred enjoyment.



PLATFORM

The vast majority felt that the training, preparation, volunteers/support and technology worked well. (This is not to ignore the 2% of convenors and 4% of presenters who felt unable to carry out their roles successfully.) Despite the increased demands of the Shindig platform over the use of Zoom, 70% supported the choice of platform. Needless to say there were plenty of negative comments about it in the qualitative responses.

NETWORKING

57% of respondents made no use of the virtual coffee/book exhibit/publishers room, primarily due to lack of time. 20% of those who did, used the coffee room for pre-agreed meetings, while a third left it to chance. 52% made no use of the private chat feature while in the audience, citing shyness or feeling it would be rude while others were presenting. The majority of those who did use it felt it worked well to network and meet others.

DESIRE FOR THE FUTURE

Respondents were asked to rank their preference for future EASA conference formats and there was a clear preference for F2F with increased possibilities of online involvement. Some felt there might be scope to alternate this with a fully online event.

3. Call for nominations for EASA Executive Election

The term of office of the elected members of the present Executive Committee of EASA is coming to an end. We invite applications/nominations from members to stand for election. Candidates must be nominated and supported by members. Members interested in submitting their candidature are invited to email their application to the Secretary by end of **30th November**.

[Read the full information here.](#)



4. EASA series of webinars

EASA is organising a series of webinars this autumn. Please note the dates and join us online to discuss matters emerging from the 2020 Member's Forum and needing further discussion:

- Friday, 9th of October 10-11:30 CEST- Webinar Code of conduct
- Friday, 6th of November 10-11:30 CET- Webinar Open Access
- Friday, 27th of November 10-11:30 CET- Webinar Precarity Report
- Friday, 11th of December 10-11:30 CET- Webinar Draft of Good Practice guidelines in collaborative research

5. Conclusions of the EASA's code of conduct webinar 9th of October 2020



The first members' webinar took was dedicated to the results of the code of conduct working group set up in 2018 following Stockholm Members' Forum to elaborate the principles of a code of conduct that will deal with abuses of power, lack of accountability, sexual harassment in European anthropology (prompted at the time but the "HAU affair"). It was convened by David Mills, EASA's Treasurer,



on behalf of the EASA Executive, with contributions from the members of the working group: Agathe Mora, Chandana Mathur, Cris Shore and Antonio Pusceddu, and it was attended by several dozen of members.

The working group recommended to create within EASA a code of conduct (or ombudsperson) committee that offers a place where members could look for guidance, be a repository of information about how such codes function and could be used in concrete case studies. Such a committee would neither be a moral or Truth and Reconciliation committee, nor a simple forum for discussion. The committee could co-author publications that describe, contextualise, make sense of the situation, enable local voices and alternative perspectives to be heard, i.e. provide an ethnography of the case of professional breach. It would be a bottom up ethnographic approach rather than a top down application of ethical frames. In addition, a searchable repository on EASA website would allow members to learn from past experiences thus ethnographically described. Another repository of anonymous testimonies of members could complete it.

The working group's recommendation was warmly welcomed by the members attending, although some debate followed concerning the name such a committee should have and the limits of its authority. Several members supported the need for a repository with rich arguments. The members of the working group received warm thanks from the members for all their work and efforts during the past two years.

6. Call for funding: for networks and for Lisbon follow-on events

This year there are two separate calls for funding: the regular call for EASA network activities for uneven years and a call for funding for Lisbon follow-on events (open for proposals not just from networks but also EASA members).

Network members should visit the updated page with details of the call for [network activities funding](#).

The EASA Lisbon follow-on (ELF) funding is [detailed here](#).

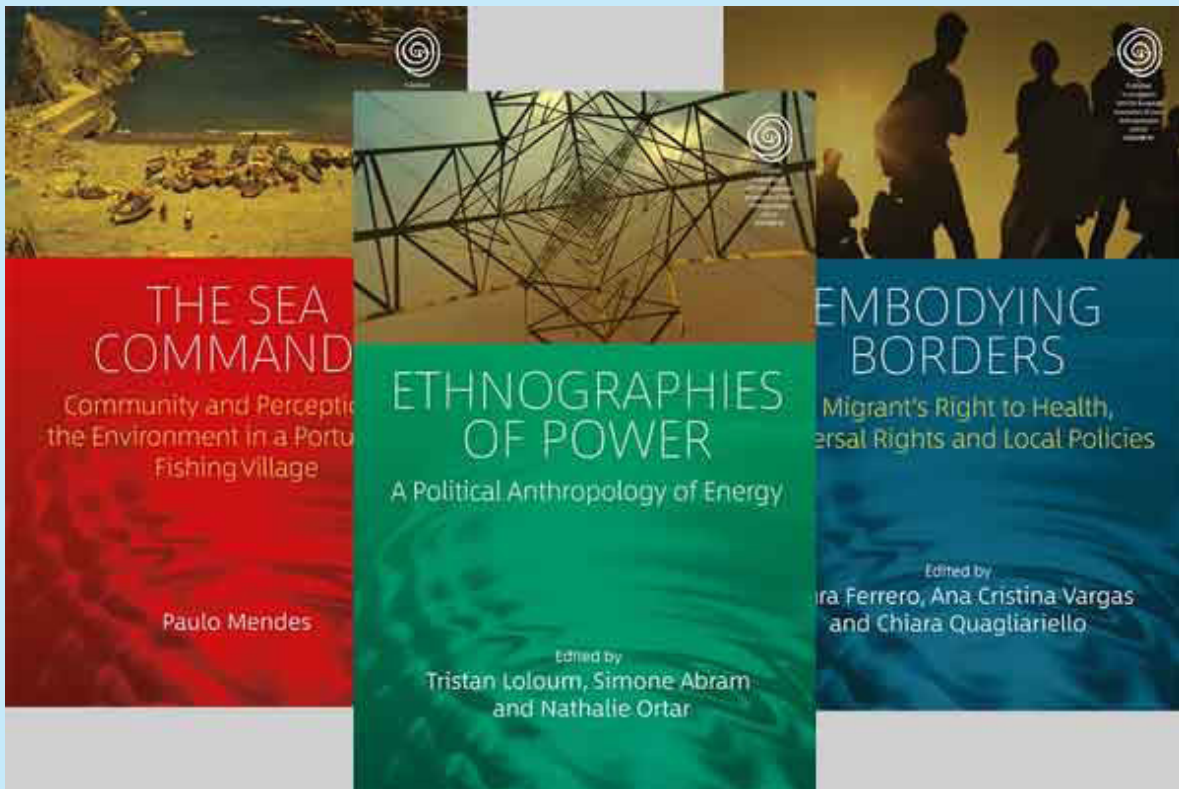
Both have deadlines at the end of November.



7. Book series

From October 2020, a new editorial collective took over the EASA book series from the previous editor Aleksandar Boskovic, who successfully curated the series for two terms. Since its establishment in 1992, the book series has been showcasing the work produced by members of the Association. The series has been published by Berghahn Books since 2003 and includes both edited collections and monographs. Annika Lems, Sabine Strasser and Jelena Tošić want to continue expanding the book series' key role in fostering and showcasing cutting-edge work. [Read more here.](#)

Discount for EASA members



EASA members are entitled to a 50% discount off any Berghahn title when ordering via the Berghahn website. Simply insert the code BBEASA at checkout. In fact EASA members can also avail of a 30% site-wide discount including Berghahn's growing list of eBooks, using discount code EASABooks.



8. Marcus Banks (July 1960 - October 2020): obituary

by David Mills

The tragic and untimely death of Marcus Banks, Professor of Visual Anthropology at the University of Oxford, is a deep loss for the many anthropological communities of which he was a valued and committed member. European anthropology, British anthropology, Visual anthropology, South Asian anthropology and Oxford anthropology: all are mourning.

Marcus studied social anthropology at Cambridge as an undergraduate and research postgraduate. His 1986 PhD was entitled “On the Srawacs or Jains: processes of division and cohesion among two Jain communities in India and England”. The following year he took up a temporary ‘demonstrator’ post at the Oxford Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology. He remained in Oxford for the rest of his academic career.



Many of us will remember being inspired by his undergraduate lectures – whether on ethnicity, visual anthropology or fieldwork. They were masterful and accessible reviews of each field. Marcus would take us far beyond the discipline, offering capacious insights on contemporary theoretical debates, full of insightful gems but wary of imposing his own perspectives.

Marcus saw the importance of all students gaining practical fieldwork experience, and during the 1990s he developed a range of pioneering courses in research methods. He was deeply committed to his supervisees, and heavily involved in supporting innovations in doctoral training across the UK. In Oxford he helped launch the Visual Anthropology Masters degree. Closely interested in the technologies of visibility, both old and new, Marcus was ever curious, always learning new skills and engaging new debates.



Marcus had a strong sense of the scholarly virtues that should inform university administration. He embodied and exemplified fairness, balance, and calm reflection. He was endlessly generous with his time, and took on a huge range of service commitments. Along with his long-standing work for the RAI Film Committee, he was an Oxford University Proctor, and held leadership roles at Wolfson College and as Head of Department. He also made many contributions to European anthropology and to visual anthropology. Marcus was a valued member of EASA's Executive Committee from 2017-19 and had been an EASA member since the early 2000s.

Marcus may have been a talented visual anthropologist with a rich diversity of research interests and administrative talents, but he will be most remembered for his generosity, kindness and compassion. He cared genuinely about the discipline, but much more about the wellbeing of his students, colleagues and everyone he worked with.

His scholarly modesty is captured in his 10 word facebook biography: "I teach and research in social anthropology and visual anthropology". There is so much more to say. We remember Marcus as a scholar, a colleague, and a humanist. RIP.