

ACTIVISM AND POSSIBILITIES OF JUSTICE: ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Call for Papers
Deadline: 30 August 2013

The workshop is organised by the "Anthropology and Social Movements" network of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA), in cooperation with *Associazione Nazionale Universitaria degli Antropologi Culturali* (ANUAC) and the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice (Queen's University Belfast).

The unprecedented spread of mass mobilizations throughout the world let many observers no doubts: something "new" and still "without a name" is happening, argue distinguished left-wing scholars like Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek. The unexpected "Arab Spring" changed regional and global Middle Eastern politics, considered as "static" and out of the way for activism beyond the Islamist movement; the world-spreading "Occupy" movements have set a new agenda highlighting the crisis of neoliberal austerity politics. The almost universal reach of recent popular uprisings has made studying social movements "hotter" topic than ever, movement scholar Mayer Zald relates. With this development, themes and visions related to justice and solidarity evolved rapidly, has been re-interpreted by a diverse set of forces and has moved back at the forefront of global visibility. In this workshop, we aim to explore these possibilities of justice. What contributions anthropologists do make to this effervescent scenario? With their interest in marginal settings and the world peripheries, which are the "out-of-sight" places and scenarios worth to have a closer look at? How can anthropologists relate activism to broader political forces? In this workshop, we aim to create both a comparative perspective and update and coordinate interpretative lenses.

The workshop will be articulated in two panels and will be concluded with a wrap-up round table. The first panel aims to critically map the scenario with a special focus on "peripheral" uprisings in the South. The second panel invites papers that offer fresh ethnographically and theoretically informed insights related to the recent wave of uprisings.

Logistics

Please submit an abstract (that includes also your academic affiliation and role) for a paper of about 20 minutes for one of the two proposed panels (max. 250 words) before August 30th 2013 to easasocialmovements2013@autistici.org. The name of the attached document with the abstract should include your last name.

The registration fee will be 60 Euro and will include accommodation. EASA-members will receive a reimbursement of their travel expenses up to 250 Euro (in exceptional cases more). The event will take place at University of Perugia on October 26th, 2013 (central Italy; e.g. airports "Perugia San Egidio", Florence, Pisa, or Rome) and lodging will be organised.

Panel One

UPRISINGS IN A RISING SOUTH: DISPOSSESSION, COLLECTIVE ACTION AND RESISTANCE IN EMERGING ECONOMIES

Conveners: Kenneth Bo Nielsen (Univ. of Oslo) and Alf Gunvald Nilsen (Univ. of Bergen)

The vectors of power in the world system are changing: at a time when the Anglo-American heartlands of capitalism are mired in persistent crisis, several countries in the South – chief among them Brazil, India, China and South Africa – currently find themselves at the crest of a wave of economic growth that, according to the UNDP's Human Development Report of 2013, is bringing about "a dramatic rebalancing of global economic power". Yet, there is ample reason to question the optimistic tenor of recent Southern growth stories: chronic poverty still blights the lives of large numbers of the population in these "emerging" countries; inequality is on the increase, despite the implementation of "inclusive" social policies; integration into transnational economic circuits has been accompanied by processes of dispossession and exploitation.



easa

European Association of Social Anthropologists
Association Européenne des Anthropologues Sociaux

While these are arguably good reasons for why these "emerging economies" are becoming epicentres of popular resistance in the global South – from the sweatshops of Chinese export-processing zones, via the fields and forests of the Indian and Brazilian countryside to the shantytowns of South Africa's urban centres – the set of factors that combine to shape the form and direction that social movements in these countries take is undoubtedly complex.

This panel sets out to conduct a comparative and critical mapping of this scenario, by inviting papers that present empirically grounded and theoretically informed analyses of popular resistance in emerging economies. The panel addresses such questions as: What are the fulcrums around which resistance ignites in different countries? What have been the key characteristics and dynamics of movement processes in the context of rapid growth and uneven development? How do activists and movement campaigns relate to regime types and organised politics in different states? How does the availability of material resources combine with symbolic and affective registers in concrete processes of collective mobilisation? And to what extent have social movements become forces that are capable of changing trajectories of development in the emerging economies of the global South?

Panel Two

STUDYING ACTIVISM AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF JUSTICE

Conveners: Alexander Koensler (Queen's Univ. Belfast) and Elena Apostoli Cappello (Univ. of Padova)

The current waves of uprisings change not only the political scenario, but urge to rethink as well many theoretical premises of understanding activism. The objective of the panel is to reflect on the implications of this dramatic change, for both academic research and political balances. In light of this, the panel gathers ethnographic, fine-grained analysis of shifting conditions in which movements are articulated and then to "update" theoretical approaches. One primary impact of this shift is the re-emergence of universalist, transversal themes of justice as contra-posed to the fragmentation and localisation of activism in terms of "identity"-claiming activism. In anthropological writing on social movements, a tendency to focus on "culture" and internal dynamics has been prevalent. Therefore, compared to other fields, such as the well-established paradigms of social movement analysis in sociology, anthropological research is characterised by a fragmentation of different approaches and theoretical lenses when it comes to a systematic understanding of the relation between activism and conflicts.

In this panel we invite both ethnographically informed and theoretical contributions that offer fresh interpretative and/or theoretical insights. This can be developed either related to often overseen or original aspects of movement analysis (knowledge and claim-making, travelling imaginaries) or the understanding of activism within its broader field of forces (conflicts, state power, global scales). The aim of this panel is to interpret changing interpretative paradigms. We thus ask the following questions: How can we understand collective action as related to dispossession, inequality, crisis and conflict? Which theoretical lenses can be proofed, updated or inverted? How can the intervention of social movements in relation to other political forces appropriately be assessed? What sort of political forces are social movements?

Final Round Table

ANTHROPOLOGY, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND JUSTICE: NEW INSIGHTS?

Coordinator: Stefano Boni and [TBD]; all participants

For questions:

Elena Apostoli Cappello (elena.apostolicappello@gmail.com) or Alex Koensler (a.koensler@qub.ac.uk)

+++++

EASA Network "Anthropology and Social Movements"

<http://www.easaonline.org/networks/movement>



easa

European Association of Social Anthropologists
Association Européenne des Anthropologues Sociaux