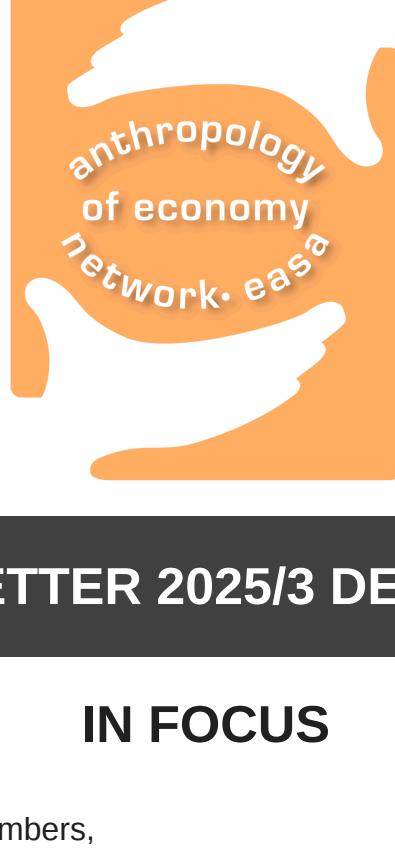


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NEWSLETTER 2025/3 DECEMBER

IN FOCUS

Dear Anthropology of Economy Network members,

We hope this message finds you well.

As many of you will know, we were saddened by the passing of Keith Hart in November. Keith's ideas - on the informal economy, money, and the human economy - have had a lasting impact on economic anthropology, and many of us have been influenced by his teaching, writing, and lively conversations over the years. To honour his memory and contribution to the field, we are grateful to share a thoughtful and generous obituary written by Chris Hann.

You will also find a brief report from our recent network workshop, co-organised with the Europeanist Anthropology Network, on "Economic Shifts and New Ideologies in Green Transitions in Europe and Beyond": Held at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (Saale), Germany from 17-19 September 2025, the workshop brought colleagues together to explore the economic and ideological tensions surrounding green transitions.

We round out this issue with network news, updates, and a rich list of recent publications from members and friends.

As another year comes to a close, we would like to thank you for your continued engagement with the network and wish you all a restful festive season and happy holidays.

PERSPECTIVES, NOTES AND QUERIES

Economic anthropology/sociology in India

As a whole, Indian sociology has not really taken on the economic dimension. We lack sociological theories of the firm, of wages, prices, industrial clusters, industrial relations, the structure and function of the informal economy, not to mention the vexed relationship between caste and class. That is to say, we do not have very many sociological accounts of economic phenomena.

This is not the place to explore the history of Indian sociology, something that I am singularly unqualified to do in any case. Yet one can help observe that while the discipline's anthropological heritage is frequently cited as a reason for this lack of attention to economy, this somewhat sells anthropology short. There is, needless to say, a rich heritage of studying economic life in anthropology, both Western and non-Western. There is also a significant set of pioneers in Indian sociology who studied the economic realm, only for the discipline to cede ground to economics after independence.

A current crop of scholars in India are, however, trying to change this situation. Two developments might be reported in this regard. The first is a recent workshop held at the Indian Institute of Technology campus in the Himalayan town of Mandi ("market"). Arranged by two young scholars, a sociologist and an economist, and funded by a New Political Economy initiative at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, this workshop brought together a set of mid-career sociologists looking at management of urban markets, rural water systems and village commerce. The political economy of commodity futures markets was discussed, as well as the role of dominant caste associations in local economies. Other topics covered included the sociology of the influencer economy, the care economy, conceptualising caste and classroom youth entrepreneurialism, and the social infrastructure of Middle East migration. All in all, the two-day event showed that there was substantial interest in economic enablement within Indian sociology that bodes well for the future, a set of papers from the workshop is being proposed for a journal special issue.

The second development is the recent publication of an important volume edited by Ajay Ghandi and his colleagues, entitled *Rethinking Markets in Modern India: Embedded Exchange and Contested Jurisdiction*. The editors are economic anthropologists for the most part, joined by a distinguished field-working economist. The opening essay notes that while there has been some work on commerce in India, given its recent, though qualified, economic boom, there has been relatively little attention paid to Indian markets. The collective brought together in this book, the fruit of some concerted institution-building efforts, is multidisciplinary and does not seek to establish a closed field. On the contrary, it seeks to enliven the comparative method by moving beyond broad abstractions of capitalism, modernity, neoliberalism and the like. A mark of the volume's importance is a recent, multi-essay review in the journal *Modern Asian Studies*.

While these are only small beginnings, there seems to be something of an emergent field here. As the prestige of economics has declined, and as the failure of structural transformation after a generation of liberalisation settles into a sense of institutional, political and scholarly disillusion among the mainstream, the conjuncture appears ripe for the further institutionalisation of these efforts.

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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.jcarrier@gmail.com

OBITUARY

John Keith Hart 1943-2025

by Chris Hann, Emeritus Director, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle (Saale), Germany

Keith Hart was a British social anthropologist who had a larger-than-life presence in this field for over half a century. He was born and raised in Manchester, educated in Cambridge, and had a nomadic academic career. Keith (he rarely used his first Christian name) died peacefully at his home in Paris on 6th November 2025.

Recalling Keith Hart in a network for economic anthropology feels inappropriate, because he did not appreciate being assigned to a subdiscipline. He frequently expressed his discomfort with anthropology itself and came to view the social sciences collectively as a regrettable episode in the intellectual history of humanity. Keith preferred to call himself a writer. Renewal of the discipline of anthropology in a postcolonial era would have to be a humanities project.

Keith's life and work are best navigated with the help of the volume he contributed in 2022, *Self in the World*, which is witty, uplifting – and also painfully frank about difficult moments. This is not a conventional autobiography or memoir but a carefully crafted (like all his publications) "auto-ethnography," understood as "a reflection on the human condition in our times by one person" (2022: 3). Keith's illuminates his trajectory of "lifelong learning" by making diverse connections to popular culture, interwoven with a galaxy of intellectual influences from Rousseau and Kant to Mauss, C.L.R. James and many more.

The legacy for economic anthropology *sensu strictu* is rich. First there was the concept of "informal economy," which derived from his doctoral fieldwork across in the mid-1960s (Hart 1973) is the seminal article; the 1993 Cambridge dissertation, supervised by Jack Goody and examined by Meyer Fortes, was never published). Keith was baffled by the popularity of this concept across many disciplines. It brought him a succession of academic posts and consultancies for a decade, but Keith grew tired of the conversations with economists and never felt comfortable in the emerging field of development studies. The immediate antidote was not more ethnography but political economy. His first book (adapted from a USAID report) explored the historical causes of underdevelopment in West Africa as a region and argued for the accumulation of capital to raise productivity in the countryside (Hart 1982).

After some turbulent years in the USA, Keith returned to Cambridge as an Assistant Lecturer in 1984. By this time, he had moved on from political economy (though he continued to admire Marx and never ceased to recommend the works of Friedrich Engels, both his 1845 ethnography of the working classes in Manchester (Engels 2009) and the evolutionist history he published almost four decades later (Engels 2010)). Instead, Keith began to flesh out his original perspective on money, which is probably the major work on which his reputation rests. His Malinowski lecture (Hart 1988) was the harbinger but the fullest account is to be found in the book he published in 2000, *The Memory Bank*. Alongside language, money and exchange are the very essence of our ability to communicate as humans. For much of recorded history money has been associated with exploitation and alienation but digital technologies, Keith argued, have given us the potential to emancipate ourselves, to make our own money. The challenge is to create a new world society by humanizing impersonal, commodity-dominated worlds.

This millennial optimism was frequently qualified but never completely abandoned. Keith's love of Cambridge never faded but he eventually resigned his lectureship and moved to Paris in order to devote himself to writing, while continuing to travel constantly. He held affiliations in Aberdeen (a cooperation with economist John Bryden that did not require residence), London (where he taught part-time at Goldsmiths and later the LSE) and Pretoria (where he and John Sharp directed the Human Economy programme). Keith's conceptualization of the "human economy" proceeded both in-person in Paris and – thanks to the new technologies – through participation in alter-globalization networks around the world (Hart, Laville and Cattani 2010). It was underpinned by his original understanding of our moment in history. The "machine revolution" joined with the forces of colonialism and nationalism to shape a deeply divided world in thrall to competitive markets. But by the twenty-first century our globalized world is dominated by bureaucracies, monopolistic corporations and finance. The progressive forces of social democracy and liberalism are losing out to institutions and inequalities reminiscent of the Old Regime ("agrarian civilization"). This analysis feels timely in the second presidency of Donald Trump.

One important encapsulation of Keith's historical vision was the concept of "national capitalism," elaborated schematically one last time shortly before his passing (Hart 2024). This took the form of a symposium which he closed with a concise summary of his views on a range of issues in economic anthropology and the opinion "that 'anthropology' in many shapes and sizes is indispensable to the search for a world society better suited for all humanity than the present version" (2024: 155).

As an economic anthropologist, in part due to the courses he taught in America, Keith's range was vast: from the domestication of animals and plants in prehistory to community currencies in the era of the internet. Within anthropology, his command of social theory was second to none – particularly thinkers who explored economy in one form or another, though religion was another abiding concern. We agreed that Marcel Mauss and Karl Polanyi were the key figures for modern economic anthropology; personal factors tipped the balance toward Mauss in his case and Polanyi in mine. In June 2006 we co-organized a conference focused on the latter at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle. This led not only to an eclectic conference volume (Hann and Hart 2009) but also to an introductory textbook that has sold well over the years and been translated into many languages (Hann and Hart 2011). For Keith, this was a "purple patch" (his phrase). It was quite exhilarating for me too. We were an "odd couple" (again his phrase) but I learned a great deal as we prepared these books, just as I had when we were colleagues in the 1990s.



Keith Hart (centre) at the 2006 conference which he co-convened at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle on Anthropological Approaches to 'the Economy'

Interaction with David Graeber in London provided huge stimulus for Keith, who was generous in his support for his younger colleague even when they disagreed on important points. See Hart 2012 for indications of how Graeber pushed him to clarify his own position). Both depicted the current state of the world. Graeber wanted to energize protest as an anarchist. By contrast, Keith could not disavow the democratic-liberal-cosmopolitan ideals he perceived in the European enlightenment (specifically in John Locke, the English liberal, in addition to Rousseau and Kant).

Keith embraced feminism and postcolonial theorizing – but he preferred literature and cinema to scouring the latest journal articles. This helped him to engage his readers and his "target audience" was invariably young. Keith could provide more food for thought in a few paragraphs than most academics manage in hefty tomes. For those who still like to read books, the volumes he published in 2000 and 2022 are complementary (partly overlapping) *corpusculae* (I use the Latin plural as a nod to Keith's early love of classics). They include fragments of poetry and non-academic prose. He was a pioneer of public anthropology in the media (Facebook and Twitter as well as his own Open Anthropology Cooperative) – not to mention the Prickly Pear pamphlets he edited and countless contributions to *Anthropology Today*. Numerous essays warrant the attention of future generations [1]. Despite medical setbacks, in the months before his passing he was still working on a biographical study of Mauss and a collection of his Africa-related papers.

Keith occasionally had fun constructing a pantheon of "anthropologists of unequal society" (Hart 2006, 2012). This runs from Rousseau through Morgan and Engels in the nineteenth century, Eric Wolf and Jack Goody in the twentieth, and on to David Graeber in the twenty-first. The name of Keith Hart should also be inscribed in this lineage.

Notes

[1] Diverse materials, including many of the academic texts cited in this obituary but also non-academic writings, can be found at his pioneering website: <https://thememorybank.co.uk/keithv>
See also: <https://keithhart.academic.edu/>

Additional recent materials can be found at: johnkeithhart.substack.com/jan-anthropologist-in-the-world-revolution
Keith Hart gave further insight into his family background and career in a rich interview with Alan Macfarlane in 2008: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zo_gyhKvZ-o
(all sites accessed on 21/12/2025)

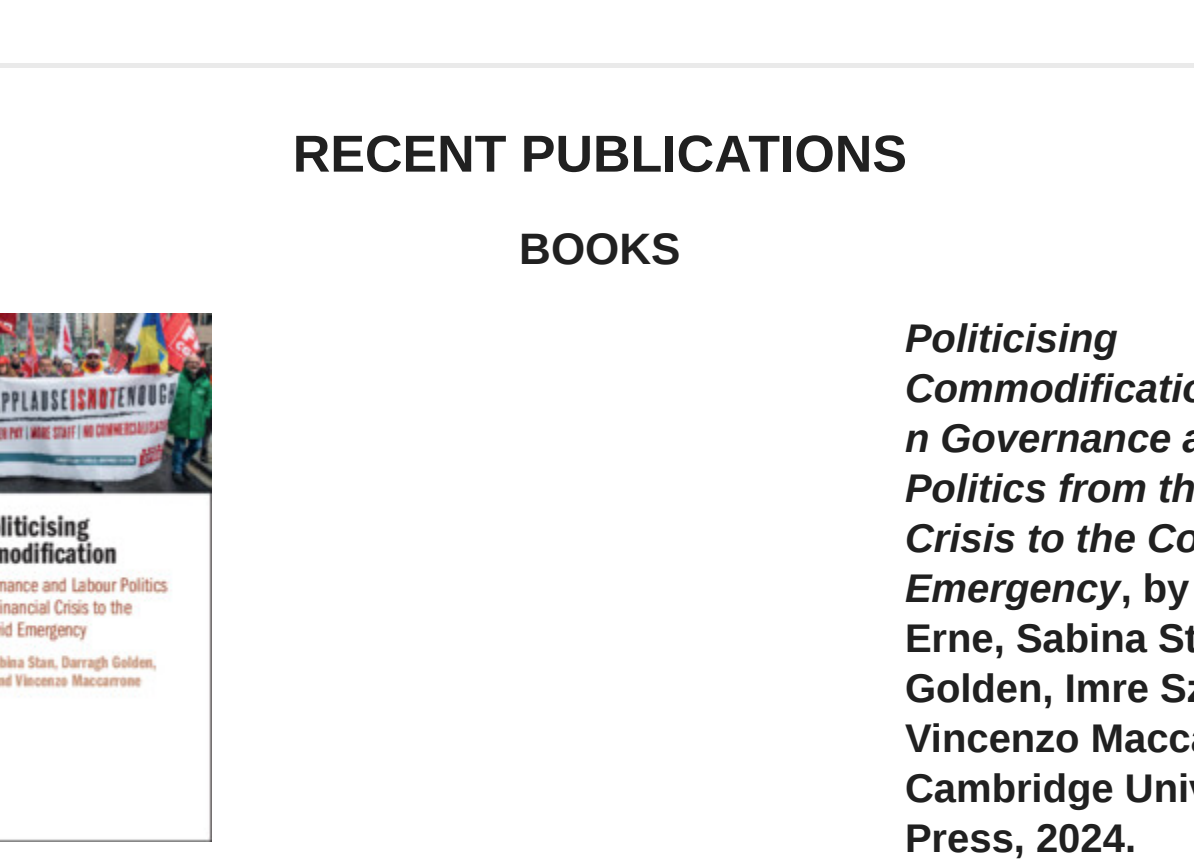
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UPDATES

Workshop Report: Economic Shifts and New Ideologies in Green Transitions in Europe and Beyond

Halle (Saale), 17-19 September 2025



This September, EASA's Anthropology of Economy (AOE) and Europeanist Anthropology (EuroNet) networks came together at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (Saale), Germany for a five three-day workshop exploring the fast-changing political and economic terrain of Europe's green transitions.

The event brought together anthropologists working everywhere from Europe's former coal regions to its emerging "green tech" frontiers - and even a few cases beyond Europe, reminding us that transitions are as global as they are uneven. Participants compared experiences of lithium mining, wind and solar expansion, new "green jobs," digital climate futures, and the everyday politics of just transition. A recurring theme was how promises of decarbonization collide with labour realities, regional inequalities, and the rise of new ideological formations, including far-right responses to environmental change.

Two stimulating keynotes set the tone. Jaume Fraquesua (University at Buffalo, SUNY) unpacked the contradictions embedded in green energy infrastructures, while Asia Vonderau (Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg) offered fresh insights into the reconfiguration of landscapes and livelihoods under ecological transformation. Across panels, discussions ranged from the frictions of green labour markets to the ways communities navigate extractive pressures old and new. Others examined the ideological battleground around climate policy, from nationalist narratives to unexpected alliances.

In addition to the academic programme, participants took part in a hands-on fanzine-making workshop, which constituted a welcome creative turn that allowed everyone to experiment with visual storytelling as a way of capturing the emotional and political textures of transition. You can find the fanzine [here](#).

Many thanks to all who joined and contributed to an engaging and inspiring gathering!

WiWEITER: Early Career Network in German, Austrian, and Swiss Economic Anthropology funded!

We are pleased to share the launch of "Evolving Economic Anthropological Perspectives on Dis/Integration, Crises, and Post/Growth (WiWEITER)", an early career researchers network funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). The network addresses the fragmentation within economic anthropology by fostering collaboration and creating a space to critically engage with pressing societal questions. Over the next three years, 20 early career scholars working across the DACH region (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) will convene to exchange ideas, build connections, and explore ways to engage with wider publics.

The network focuses on three key areas: 1. global economic dis/integration, 2. crises of social reproduction, and the 3. critiques of growth. Speakers of the network are Mechthild von Vacano (University of Freiburg), Verena Ia Meila (University Heidelberg), and international cooperation partner is Andreas Streinzer (University of Vienna).

EVENTS

Radical Spotlights: Personhood, the Economy, and Values

16 December 2025, 18.00-19.30 (CET) on Zoom

We are excited to announce the next Radical Spotlights seminar, a collaboration of the AAA's [Society for Economic Anthropology](#) (SEA) and EASA's [Anthropology of Economy Network](#). The series spotlights critical research in economic anthropology across the globe twice a year. Please feel free to share widely. Want to be involved in Radical Spotlights? Please contact the organizers.

Theme

Economic practices (exchanges, production, labour, consumption, etc.) shape personhood. One can think of neoliberal ideologies that go along with notions of the person as an individual entrepreneur in charge of her own destiny. But one can also think of government policies (taxation, development aid, etc) that establish a relationship between identity and resources.

A key strength of ethnography is to nuance deterministic ascriptions to personhood. The economy matters, but people also develop notions of personhood that oppose or reshape economic practices and discourses. People's aspirations for themselves and others are not only shaped by the economy as people reinterpret and challenge assigned identities. For instance, some notions of personhood challenge chrononormativity: the idea that there is a 'right' moment to have the 'right' romantic and sexual relations, to have children, to work, or how and when to retire.

How can we analyse personhood in a way that takes economic forces into account without the economy becoming overdeterministic? Where and how do humans show creativity and diversity in personhood, sometimes against the grain of economic logics and powers? With these questions in mind, this spotlights seminar encourages a conversation on incommensurabilities between the economy and personhood; when and how does personhood not (completely) align with economic forces; when and how do people nurture notions of self that do not match with economic or rational calculations.

Speakers

[Peter Geschiere](#)

Emeritus Professor for the Anthropology of Africa, University of Amsterdam and Leiden University

The Return of Amos Tutuola – Animism and Economic Logics

[Gabriel Feltran](#)

CNR Research Professor in Sociology, SciencesPo

Morality and Economic Interest in the Life of an 'Organized Thief'

[Rachel Smith](#)

Lecturer in Anthropology and Museum Studies, The University of Aberdeen

The Body of the Gift, and the Spirit of Capitalism: Grassroots Entrepreneurialism in Vanuatu

Organizers

[Andreas Streinzer](#), University of Vienna; [Erik Bahro](#), Leiden University; and [Elena Sischarenco](#), University of Bergamo

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS



Politicising Commodification: European Commodification and Labour Politics from the Financial Crisis to the Covid Emergency, by Roland Erne, Sabina Stan, Darragh Golden, Imre Szabó, and Vincenzo Maccarrone. Cambridge University Press, 2024.

This book examines the new economic governance (NEG) regime that the EU adopted after 2008. Drawing on anthropological semiotic analysis, the book examines the EU's policy prescriptions in employment relations and public services as components of wider technocratic taxonomies—which are as 'folk', as strange, and as exotic as the ethnoscience classifications documented by anthropologists in non-Western countries. The book's novel research design captures the supranational formulation of NEG prescriptions and their uneven deployment across countries (Germany, Italy, Ireland, Romania), policy areas (employment relations, public services), and sectors (transport, water, healthcare). NEG led to a much more vertical mode of EU integration, and its commodification agenda unleashed a plethora of union and social-movement protests, including transnationally. The book presents findings that are crucial for the prospects of European democracy, as labour politics is essential in framing the struggles about the direction of NEG along a commodification–decommodification axis rather than a national–EU axis. To shed light on corresponding processes at EU level, it upcales insights on the historical role that labour movements have played in the development of democracy and welfare states.

The book has been awarded the following book prizes:
- Honorable Mention for the 2025 UACES Best Book Award from University Association for Contemporary European Studies (please see confirmation of the award below, item 2 in the message from UACES). UACES description can be found here: <https://www.uaces.org/>
- Honorable Mention for the 2025 Brian Farrell Prize for the Best Book Published in Political Science 2024 from the Political Studies Association of Ireland (please see award attached), PSA! <https://www.psa.ie/>
- nomination for the 2025 Stein Rokkan Prize for Comparative Social Science Research from ECPR, ESC and U Bergen (please see here: <https://ecpr.eu/prizes/stein-rokkan/>) and still in the competition for an award!

The volume is available in hardcover, paperback, and e-book from [the publisher's website](#). ISBN 978109053433

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Baiocchi, Maria Lis. 2025. "Precarity as a Methodological Framework in the Study of Socially Reproductive Labor: Insights from an Ethnography with Migrant Women Household Workers and their Advocates in the Semi-Periphery of Global Capitalism." *Dialectical Anthropology* 49: 455-476. DOI: [10.1007/s10624-025-09776-w](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-025-09776-w)

Gambardella, Maria. 2025. "Our Fight is for Life! Encountering Arts and Rebellions in the Zapatista Struggle Against Capitalism." *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 0(0): 1-23. DOI: [10.1080/0455752.2025.2563741](https://doi.org/10.1080/0455752.2025.2563741)

Narotzky, Susana, Katharina Bodirsky, and Ognjen Kojanic. 2025. "Capitalism(s)". In *Re-Turns. Entanglements and Collaborations: Anthropological Experiments*, edited by Jelena Tošić, Sabine Strasser, and Annika Lens, 169-204. Oxford: Berghahn. DOI: [10.1515/9781636951117_009](https://doi.org/10.1515/9781636951117_009)

Sischarenco, Elena. 2025. "Recycling or Reusing: An Ethnographic Study of the Demolition Industry in Northern Italy." *Urban Research and Practice* 0(0): 1-17. DOI: [10.1080/17535069.2025.2494996](https://doi.org/10.1080/17535069.2025.2494996)

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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://easonline.org/network/economy/>

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AoE Network Newsletter 2025/3 was set by Nikolaos Oima.

