



Anthropology in a World of Exclusion: Commonalities, Disciplinary Perspectives, Openings

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If it is true that we live in a world that we ourselves create, then what kind of world are we creating? The answers to this question—for the answers must surely be in the plural—would seem to fall within the scope and ambitions of a refashioned anthropology of the twenty-first century. The 2016 meeting in Lausanne will place anthropology front and center in the face of emergent contemporary conflicts, dilemmas, and possibilities. What role do anthropologists have to play in elucidating these challenges as researchers, teachers, public intellectuals, and engaged scholars? What does anthropology have to offer the world as a scientific discipline that is unique and worth listening to? Is it the irreplaceable perspective offered by ethnography, a methodology that demands patience, empirical sensitivity, and the willingness to take seriously multiple and often contrasting perspectives? Or, by contrast, is contemporary anthropology producing theories of self and society that propose new ways of thinking about a range of key concepts and dynamics, from value to human rights, from religious belonging to the production and meaning of public goods? In responding to these fundamental questions, panels and participants will be encouraged to present case studies and results of research that move between the microlevel of anthropological research and these broader frames. The intention is to generate dialogue and collegial exchange over three days that cut across regional and theoretical specialties to engage with the discipline of anthropology itself, both in Switzerland and beyond.

Among the key dynamics that anthropologists confront today as researchers, teachers, and public intellectuals is the rise of politics and ideologies that appear to reject the legacy of “cosmopolitics.” This was the dominant leitmotif of the first two decades of the post-Cold War, in which thinking and feeling beyond the nation was embodied in, among many others, the transformation of international development in terms of human rights, the dramatic expansion of the European Union as a supranational cultural and economic zone, and the creation of a system of international criminal justice to prosecute for atrocities committed against humanity itself.

Yet from the perspective of 2016, this liminal period of cosmopolitan optimism seems to be ending, to be replaced by ever-expanding levels of global economic inequality; the strengthening of right-wing political movements committed to



nationalism and the protection of national security over humanitarian concerns; and a pervasive undermining of international law, from the revolt against the International Criminal Court by African leaders to the nationalist and identitarian backlash against human rights. Even the European Union is undergoing a process of transformation leading to an uncertain future, from the continuing economic instability between member states to basic challenges by key nations over the very terms of belonging.

At the same time, new forms of control and constraint are appearing on the global landscape, from the manipulation of migration laws in order to exclude and restrict the free movement of people, to the rise of new medical technologies that create the potential to problematically engineer the building blocks of life itself in the name of individual autonomy and freedom of choice.

Each of these contemporary dynamics would seem to call out for the expertise of anthropology, as a discipline committed to qualitative modes of understanding, a respect for pluralism, and a history of critique and reflexivity. What is the response of the discipline as we as scholars survey the uncertain present? Are our existing subdisciplines adequate to the task of taking up these questions as areas for research, or could we imagine new alignments, new forms of collaboration? Finally, what role does the community of Swiss anthropologists have to play that distinguishes it from, on the one hand, international associations like the EASA and the AAA, and, on the other, the many other national anthropologies?

In responding to these questions, participants are encouraged to also consider problems of inclusion and exclusion in the discipline of anthropology itself. To this extent, we envision the meeting of SEG/SSE 2016 Lausanne as an opportunity to continue the dynamic and diverse exchanges around “rethinking Euro-anthropology” that were published in the August and November 2015 numbers of *Social Anthropology*.

Deadlines for panel proposals as well as for paper proposals are closed. Please find the preliminary conference programme as well as abstracts on our website at <http://www.sagw.ch/en/seg/colloques.html>

As usual our members will profit from a reduced entrance fee to the conference. Link to the SEG-SSE website: <http://www.sagw.ch/seg/>