

CFP: Australian Anthropological Society Conference 2013

Date : June 11, 2013

[Australian Anthropological Society Annual Conference 2013](#)

Theme: The Human in the World, the World in the Human

Australian National University
6-8 November 2013

The theme of this conference embraces anthropology's enduring commitments to grappling with the human condition in the widest terms. Yet it also directs attention to the ways in which the interrelated concepts, 'human' and 'world', receive critical disciplinary attention in the present. While anthropologists have always been interested in how particular environmental, social or political worlds shape and are shaped by human existence, the theme attends to the urgency that such questions take at a time when the limits and potentialities of what 'human' and 'world' mean are subject to searching re-examination. Climate change, developments in bio-technology, securitization and supply-chain capitalism, and processes of forced and voluntary migration are among an array of issues that challenge and stimulate the conceptual and ethnographic work of anthropologists in the present.

The theme also draws attention to how particularly located humans engage in projects of "worlding", attempting to stake claims for the relevance of their own understandings, practices and commitments in contexts shaped by both human and non-human agents. How do humans get drawn into, adapt to and adopt in their own way worldly projects that originate from afar? What kinds of oppressions and freedoms are involved in these processes? Shifting global circumstances usher these questions into the anthropological domain, where they are dealt with from a multitude of perspectives, including anthropologies of globalization, media, religion and the environment, existential anthropology and economic anthropology, theories of network and meshwork and theories of political economy. We invite participation from any and all concerned with imagining the shape of the world and the place of the human in relation to it.

Instructions for the submission of individual paper abstracts: If you are interested in presenting a paper on any of the panel themes below, please contact the individual listed panel convenors directly. Send the panel convenor your paper title and abstract (maximum 250 words), along with your email address and institutional affiliation. Do NOT submit your paper abstracts to the conference organisers. The deadline for submission of paper proposals is 1 August 2013.

Conference panels of interest to readers of the Material World Blog may include the following:

Anthropology beyond the Visual

Panel Convenor: Melinda Hinkson and Paolo Favero

Anthropologists have always been interested in visual cultural forms, through their attention to art, ritual, material culture, media, space, as well as in using audio-visual technologies as research methods for exploring the human experience. In this panel we look beyond the specifics of any single visual form or media to ask how might the recognition of visual culture as a pervasive set of processes, practices, experiences stimulate new directions in anthropological research? In posing such a question we take up the challenges posed to anthropology by the newly emergent interdisciplinary field of visual culture studies, recognising that the emergence of digitisation and of the new practices associated with it, brings into being a complex constellation of ways in which images circulate and are taken up by persons.

The major provocations of visual culture studies to which we draw attention are:

1. That an image depends for its effects on a certain way of seeing and that such ways of seeing are always embedded in particular cultural practices (John Berger *Ways of Seeing*) and hence within particular cultural/political contexts.
2. That to understand images, in particular in the contemporary context, we have to go beyond the field of vision (Ranciere, *The Image*).
3. That images and texts are always interrelated (WJT Mitchell *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*)
4. That in the age of digital production and circulation images of many kinds are remediated and encountered and put to work in highly dynamic ways (Bolter and Grusin *Remediation*)

We invite paper proposals that engage with these issues ethnographically and/or with an interest in thinking critically about how the claims of visual culture studies might stimulate anthropological attention.

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The 'Back End' of Consumption: Anthropological Perspectives on Economies of Waste, Rubbish and Recycling

Panel Convenor: Assa Doron

The body of studies on consumption has yielded rich insights into the consumer process as integral to our understanding of the making of identity and notions of belonging, associated with lifestyle, status, gender and class considerations. Following a Marxist vein, others have examined consumption by stressing its 'darker side', as by-product of capitalism, driven by exploitation, alienation and false consciousness. Most recently studies employing a material culture perspective have taken a more 'positive' view of consumption – articulated through innovation, creativity and appropriation – a vital dimension of everyday forms of consumption. What has often been overlooked in such studies is the 'back-end' of consumption – that of waste, repair and recycling – itself inseparable from the consuming process as a whole. The panel seeks to address these topics, by looking at economies of waste and recycling as these manifest, resurface, reaffirm or disturb the consumption process, and social order more broadly.

We invite papers that address waste, recycling and its associated practices of scavenging, second-

hand, repair and reuse, and employ a range of conceptual angles, such as usefulness, value, exchange, pollution, capital, excess, ethics and governance.

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Circulation in Times of Crisis

Panel Convenors: Heather Horst and Marta Vilar Rosales

The circulation of people, things, images, money, media and information represents one of the most important areas of inquiry within anthropology. From global flows, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, mobility, open systems and ecologies, notions of circulation have reinvigorated debates in anthropology about movement of various forms (e.g. Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Meillassoux 1972). This panel will explore the diversity and visibility of circulation of people, money, goods, media and information through the lens of the contemporary crises. By examining circulation within the context of crises (e.g. the global financial crisis, health epidemics, humanitarian crises, natural disasters, food security and others), panellists will explore and develop alternative conceptual frameworks for capturing the intensities, directions, compositions and intersections of different forms of movement as well as the particular relationships between flows and blockages of people, things, information and media. Specific questions will include: How do flows of different people, objects and ideas intersect, complement and/or compete? To what extent are they mutually constitutive? When do processes of blockages (e.g. accumulation of money) enable flows? When do flows lead to obstructions or contagions? How have legal infrastructures and other factors such as political discourse shaped different kinds of movements (e.g. bank closures, “skilled migrants”, industrial workers or refugees)? How might media (e.g. television, wikis or social media) be contributing to or enabling the present circulations of people, things, images and information in times of crisis?

We welcome contributions on a diverse set of topics, including (but not exclusive to) the following: Southern European migration to Australia; Visas, biometrics and other forms of regulating movement; Spaces of quarantine for food security and/or biodiversity; Regulation of money, banking and financial institutions; Movement of money and commodities before, during and after disasters; Relocation of people due to natural disasters or climate change; Media portrayals of disasters or crises; the emergence of Wikileaks and other ‘open’ information systems; and bird flu and global pandemics. Contacts: m.rosales@fchsh.unl.pt heather.horst@rmit.edu.au Moralities of

Money – Rethinking the New Exotic of Economic Anthropology

Panel Convenor: Geir Henning Presterudstuen

Discourses about value and exchange have been at the centre of many anthropological analyses since Malinowski and Mauss. While the way value is constructed and distributed within the social body continues to differ significantly from one ethnographic context to another, all local experiences

are to a growing extent shaped and transformed by the workings of global capitalism.

In practical terms this has meant that cash, credit and capital increasingly permeate everyday practices in even the most remote field-sites. Social relationships within our field-sites as well as the relationships between anthropologists and their respondents are inevitably mediated by the market. Indeed, money has re-emerged at the centre of so many ethnographic studies that it has been described as anthropologists “new exotic” (Maurer 2006: 18).

In this environment the relationship between notions of tradition and modernity appears increasingly complex, and the salient points of study for contemporary economic anthropologists are perhaps local discourses about money and patterns of engagement with transnational market forces. Moreover, these changing political contexts open new possibilities for making money and reflecting on processes of exchange through competing moral discourses. Accumulating, spending or distributing money are practices that frequently are viewed through a moralizing lens or at least discursively constructed in terms of morality and ethics. As money is found or lost, used and abused, wasted or won, hailed or condemned, fetishized or feared it becomes inscribed with meaning in ways that can both strengthen and challenge social orders. This panel therefore seeks to focus on how money impacts social structures and local dynamics of power, and becomes intrinsically linked to cultural moralities and evaluations. We invite papers on competing moralities of money and exchange from a variety of perspectives, including thick ethnographic descriptions, comparative analyses, methodological discussions and ethical reflections from various field-sites. Reference: Maurer, B. 2006. ‘The Anthropology of Money’. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 35, 15-36. Contact: g.presterudstuen@uws.edu.au

Same but Different: Innovation and Experimentation in Desert Arts

Panel Convenors: Jennifer Biddle and Lisa Stefanof

The ‘Same but Different: Innovation and Experimentation in Desert Arts’ initiative commenced in 2012 as a collaboration between NIEA/COFA/UNSW researchers and Desert, the peak body for desert community art centres. Over the past two years ‘Same but Different’ has drawn together hundreds of desert Aboriginal artists, media-makers and scholars, art centre managers, creative producers, art collectors, art writers, and art researchers in forum and screening events in Alice Springs and Sydney to present and explore new artworks and artforms, major collaborative projects, and new media works.

As a unique example of collaborative practice-led anthropology ‘Same but Different’ has created a platform for amplifying the visibility of these works, their social and economic conditions of possibility, their production processes and the desert lifeworlds from which they are emerging. This panel explores the intercultural dynamics and politics of undertaking research and artworld advocacy in the space of ‘experimental’ desert arts and media.

- Where do ‘experimentation’ and ‘innovation’ sit in current artworld discourse and research

analysis of desert and other Indigenous arts?

- What are the risks and appeals of innovation at a time of Indigenous art market fragility?
- What new understandings of 'experimentation' and 'innovation' emerge through curated intercultural public events and discussion?

Panel is articulated to screenings of 'Desert Animations' as part of the AAS film program.
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What has the 'Inclusive' Museum Meant for Research in Museums?

Convener: Liz Bonshek

This panel takes up the projects of 'worlding' in the conference's theme "The Human in the World, the World in the Human". Since their beginnings museums have tried to encompass the world through their collections. However, contemporary museums no longer seek to contain the object alone: the "new museology" emphasizes human engagement and "inclusiveness" in the museums dealings with its audience, and especially with those communities whose material culture is housed in its collections. Increasingly museums have attempted to connect with such communities and to engage with them via the collections. This panel invites papers which discuss how involvement with museum projects affect a community's efficacy in dealing with the world. And what is the effect on research in the museum? The question might be rephrased as - how can anthropologists/researchers (located within museums or outside them) working on the nexus between communities and their responses to museum collections negotiate the museum's mandate for "inclusiveness" and maintain a research agenda. Is the latter desirable and do museum's as institutions emphasizing "inclusiveness" want to do research? Within the museum sphere has "consultation" become an adequate substitute for research? This panel invites papers that address the current state of play of research in museums and is welcoming of contributions from Australia and beyond. Contact: elizabeth.bonshek@canberra.edu.au