



## THE Q AUSTRALIAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## Greetings from The Q

Hi All,

We certainly have a jam packed first 2018 issue of The Q! This issue's focus is the highly successful AAS 2017 conference, *Shifting States*. This five day conference was hosted at the University of Adelaide, and brought together the Australian Anthropological Society (AAS), the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa New Zealand (ASAANZ) and the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth (ASA).

Alex was our man on the ground and as you will see in this issue, he caught up with Suzi Hutchings, one of the keynotes at this year's conference; chatted to the conference conveners about what went on "behind the scenes" and took a few cheeky snaps. We are incredibly grateful to Jonathan Fox and Greg Acciaioli who kindly shared with us the photos they took during the conference. Along with our conference content we also have news from ANSA, and of course other tidbits of interest!

We hope you enjoy the read!

- The Q Team

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# Looking from the inside out: A keynote retrospective with Dr. Suzi Hutchings

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By Dr. Alex Pavlotski (La Trobe University)

Dr. Suzi Hutchings' keynote at the 2017 AAS *Shifting States* conference spoke directly to ideas addressed during our conference last year - *Anthropocene Transitions*, hosted by The University of Sydney. The 2016 theme highlighted how humans impact our environment, cultural diversity, law, economies and the biosphere. There was almost universal agreement that our current trajectory was problematic. When it came to solutions, there was one point that kept coming up across panels, papers and discussions: our present direction was not our only option. Anthropological papers, films and discussions have repeatedly demonstrated a treasure trove of cultural alternatives to existing globally hegemonic (and destructive) understandings and practices. When it came to gems of wisdom about how we might co-exist within our physical and cultural biosphere many pointed to case studies of indigenous wisdom.

In this respect, Hutchings' keynote *Inside out: Indigeneity in the era of native title in Australia* continued the discussion we started 2016. The central idea of her paper was a call for the application of indigenous knowledge to the Australian native title sector. When it comes to political and legal implementation around the world, indigenous wisdom has often been forced to adhere to the global structures of legal and political process and administration. Hutchings suggests that this doesn't have to be the case. In her keynote and our subsequent conversations, Hutchings offers an optimistic argument for an indigenous framework for heritage and title work. During our conversation the day after her keynote Hutchings explained:

This is the moment for action!...There are so many examples from around the world for progressive indigenous methods and theoretical perspectives for dealing with these issues. It feels like Australia is lagging behind.

Not very many conversations about native title are filled with this kind of optimism and enthusiasm. Most who are forced to deal with the legal process around land issues ultimately develop a sceptical outlook. The debates are often intense, generally complex and overwhelmingly adversarial. The realities on both sides are filled with doubt and moral ambiguity. Viewed through the prism of experience, scepticism seems like a natural and healthy response, and optimism can be viewed as a symptom of naivety.

A lack of experience is certainly not the case with Hutchings, who has over two decades of experience in the field of native title. Her presentation critiqued a foundational assumption at the heart of the native title process:

Claimants are not adept at working within the confines of its adversarial nature, when in fact many package their lived experience as Indigenous knowledge(es) to address what they understand as the requirements of the title process. Unfortunately, in many cases, this kind of living knowledge is not accepted within the frameworks of 'traditional knowledge' as defined and required by the legal system.

This invites an interesting line of thinking: Australia's history of colonial interaction with indigenous populations is filled with antagonism and conflict. How well does it serve us to carry those adversarial presumptions into the legal processes around indigenous identity, rights and reconciliation?

The legal system in place today assumes antagonism on the way to justice. The proof is offered and disputed, and those who seek to speak through the mechanisms of justice are required to be versed in the etiquette and convention of legal process. Despite best efforts, this legal process is not equal and impartial. It is the product of a particular cultural worldview and set of expectations. It demands that all those who come before it follow its rules. For many of the indigenous people before Australian courts, the mechanics of the process speak: we want to hear your story, as long as you tell it in OUR language.

The impacts of this adversarial, and distinctly Anglo-western, process are far-reaching. For example, let's consider the double standard this creates for indigenous identity. Indigenous identity is connected to criteria of authenticity – these criteria are loaded with adversarial scepticism. Hutchings explains:

In addressing this scepticism many claimants in this position will seek out authentication of kinship and relations to land through archives. This is understood to be a legitimate process because these are the very same records the legal system, as presented by experts such as anthropologists, rely on as one means to authenticate a claim. In many cases, however, this very act of relying on, and providing interpretations of archival evidence from within Indigenous knowledge frameworks, rather than justifying their authenticity to native title professionals can increase the scepticism as to these people's authenticity as legitimate claimants.

The demonstration of this authenticity within the context of native title, ultimately demands a prolonged and complex engagement with the western legal and cultural understandings on behalf of the claimant and an intervention by others more versed in the nuances of the process. This engagement can and has been thrown around as evidence of inauthenticity and malevolent intent by politicians who frame indigenous culture and outlook as a petulant lifestyle choice. Indigenous people are given the responsibility of speaking a particular language of justice to be recognised, and the consequence of doing so successfully carries a suspicion of the inauthentic.

It is in the face of these kinds of legal binds that Hutchings offers an idea for a different approach:

To go back to the original intent of the native title act and reposition the burden of proof of native title to the State rather than claimants. In so doing, it would be incumbent on the agents of the State to accept Indigenous Australians on equal footing as sovereign people who come to the table to negotiate over issues of land and social rights in a modern Australia.

In the context of conversations the anthropological community has been having over the last several years, this feels like a genuine effort to apply an indigenous perspective to a long-running problem. Hutchings argues that there is already evidence that we can learn from, "We see it all the time in the courts. Judges learn from cases and make efforts to accommodate... they change expectations on the basis of experience. This is our chance to do something more."

Trust and a mutuality of participation is the take home message from Hutchings keynote. Currently, we see sharing of wisdom happening within the confines of our adversarial framework. If we remove these adversarial assumptions we open up greater opportunities for communication, innovative ideas and effective solutions to the problems of our Anthropocene.



LEFT Suzi Hutchings at her Keynote

Photo courtesy of Alex Pavlotski

# behind the scenes

## Reflections on *Shifting States*

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The 2017 AAS conference, *Shifting States*, is now behind us. This conference was a uniquely large undertaking. Hosted at the University of Adelaide, *Shifting States* offered five packed days filled with panels, speakers and events that brought together the Australian Anthropological Society (AAS), the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa New Zealand (ASAANZ) and the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth (ASA). The event was an unqualified success.

As with most big undertakings, a huge amount of work went into the smooth workings of this conference. The people featured here are a fraction of the team that made *Shifting States* happen. With the hope that the lessons in logistics and planning can be passed on to future organisers, we took the opportunity to ask a few of the people involved in the organisation of the event some questions. We hope that these responses help capture the event from a series of internal perspectives across a variety of positions.

The editors would like to thank everyone who was involved from the organising committee, all three participating organisations, the ANSA team, NormadIT, The University of Adelaide and volunteer and support staff. Due to limits on time, access and word limit, we weren't able to reach everyone, and we offer our apologies and sincerest thanks on behalf of the many attendees and speakers to those whose voices didn't make it into this piece. We hope to get you next time.

### Who are you? What was your role in relation to *Shifting States*?

**AD:** I am Alison Dundon, staff member at the University of Adelaide. I was the co-ordinator of the *Shifting States* conference with Richard Vokes.

**RV:** A/Prof Richard Vokes. I co-convened the *Shifting States* conference, with Alison Dundon.

**HH:** My name is Henrike Hoogenraad and I was last year's ANSA president. I was

responsible for the ANSA workshops on the Monday, and the ANSA panel that was held on the Tuesday and Wednesday.

**AG:** Dr Ashley Greenwood. I am a Lecturer at the University of Adelaide and I was on the conference organising committee alongside many of the staff in the Anthropology and Development Studies department.

**NO:** Dr Naomi Offler, I co-coordinated the Screen/Media/Art component of the Conference with Dr Lisa Stefanoff

**BS:** I'm Bill Skinner. I did my PhD at Adelaide Uni from 2011 to 2015 and since then I've been working as a casual lecturer and tutor. I was on the conference organising committee but I didn't do much of the actual organising - involved a bit with discussions about drinks catering in particular.

### **This years AAS conference was a particularly big one, held over five days midweek. What was it like to be co-ordinating such a large event?**

**AD:** It is very time-consuming and complicated as well as exciting to be at the centre of such a large and diverse event. I spent a great deal of time over the last two years working with Richard, the fantastic NomadIT team of Rohan, Triinu and James, and the conference committee on aspects of a conference that I had never even thought of before! I certainly learnt a great deal about organising large groups of people, events and organisations.

**RV:** It was certainly a long event. In addition to the five days of the conference 'proper', we started with pre-events the weekend beforehand, and we also had post-events that carried on until the following Saturday. I was on the go the whole time: from the texts that began at 5.45am, to the drive home after dinner, which on most evenings was after 11pm. The range of jobs to do was also extraordinary: from negotiating visas for our international delegates, to receiving deliveries of boxes (and boxes!) of books, to making sure that all of the delegates got home safely after the conference dinner. But it was all great fun.

**HH:** It was exciting! It was great to meet so many inspiring and friendly people from many different places. I felt it to be an honour to be part of such a great team of people and was particularly impressed with how Richard Vokes and Alison Dundon 'managed' everything so well.

**AG:** Alison and Richard did most of the heavy lifting. We had been meeting every six weeks or so for over a year in order to pull everything together. It's amazing how many little details needed to be attended to! Different committee members had to organise everything from the conference merchandise to special deals on accommodation and

room bookings. With so many panels we had to ensure that the program was both diverse and cohesive and we could get the amazing insights of anthropologists from all over the world. It was a real pleasure to see the inner workings of such an event but as I say, it was a lot of work for Richard and Alison. Liaising with three associations, ensuring the process was as smooth as possible was an impressive feat.

**NO:** It was challenging in the sense that a large group of people needed to be directed to a variety of venues across the campus. Particularly with the Screen/Media/Art labs, we had a variety of venues including an auditorium, a soundproof performance space, a small lecture theatre where we screened films, the Art Gallery and the Museum of SA. While all of this created an exciting diversity reflective of the variety of media we were showing and displaying, it added an extra dimension of negotiation and organisation.

**BS:** There was a pretty stressful atmosphere in the weeks leading up to the conference but I wasn't involved too closely in the coordination so I avoided most of it!

### What was your personal highpoint of the event?

**AD:** The actual conference itself was the highlight for me. There were moments of anxiety, of course, but mostly I just really enjoyed the ways in which the delegates, department, volunteers and co-ordinating team came together to make it all work, and to have fun as well. It was very rewarding to see it unfold in that way.

**RV:** In general, it was fantastic to have so many rich and varied papers, from both senior and junior colleagues, working all over the world. As a convenor, one doesn't get to sit through entire panels, but has to instead dip in and out. Nevertheless, I managed to cover quite a bit of ground, and found all of it very stimulating indeed. I do think that collectively, we significantly extended the ethnographic record on bureaucracy, governance and citizenship, and forwarded key theoretical agendas relevant to the anthropology of the state.

On a more personal note, it was wonderful to have people from all parts of my professional life gathered in one place, from my PhD supervisor Wendy James, to my college mentor Marcus Banks, to my former colleagues in New Zealand, Carolyn Morris and Piers Locke, to my colleagues on the AAS executive. Last, but by no means least, it was brilliant to spend the week with my long-term Ugandan collaborator Gertrude Atukunda.

**HH:** My personal highlight was that I managed to make all ANSA events run smoothly. ANSA secretary Sarah Cameron was a great help and I could not have done it without her. I was nervous at first that I would forget about something crucial, but everything turned out great. But in the end, that the ANSA workshops and panels were successful



mainly has to do with all the great presenters, discussants and audiences. I really enjoyed the workshops and students' presentations. Another highpoint was the panel I ran with Alison Dundon on intimacies. I enjoyed listening to all the interesting presentations on love and intimacy greatly.

**AG:** For me it was having so many of my colleagues together. The size of the event meant that there were so many panels of interest and so many people involved. Having worked at Universities in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia it meant I got to see what old and new colleagues were doing with their research and their thinking. That's quite a feast for an early career researcher.

**NO:** Listening to Steven Feld's digitised recording of 'Voices of the Rainforest'.

**BS:** The keynotes (especially James Scott & Ghassan Hage) and the ANSA panels. I love the postgrad panels because they are so varied in scope and it's good to hear from people that are right in the middle of the research.

### What was the personal low point of the event?

**AD:** I didn't really experience a low point but rather had some stressful moments throughout the process of working on the many levels of organisation required!

**RV:** No comment!

**HH:** That there were too many interesting panels I had to miss out on due to other obligations. I felt like I should have 'holidayed' at the conference in order to indulge in the many different panels.

**AG:** I would hardly say that there was a low point. Having largely completed my committee duties by the time of the actual conference I was able to sit back and enjoy the efforts of my colleagues. I suppose if anything the huge number of parallel panels meant that it was very difficult to get to hear all the papers of interest.

**NO:** I was completely exhausted at the end of Lab 3 on Thursday!

**BS:** Because the conference was so big the panel schedule was pretty complicated, and I am not sure that the conference booklet was as easy to navigate as it could have been. I don't know if this counts as a 'low point' but it's probably something we could have done better.

### What was the biggest lesson you learned?

**AD:** That conferences require a great deal of time and effort to bring about - I certainly



salute all of my colleagues over the years who have spent time and effort to make these conferences excellent places to exchange ideas and develop anthropological practice.

**RV:** The importance of teamwork. There is no way that an event of this size could have gone so well without the extraordinary efforts of so many people. To highlight just a few people, I would especially like to thank my co-convenor Alison Dundon, the University of Adelaide Staff Club's Catering Manager Brad Hicks, the University of Adelaide's Events Coordinator Toni Pihodnya, AAS Treasurer Patrick Guinness, and AAS Membership Officer Jo Thurman. However, a special note of gratitude goes to the team at NomadIT: James Howard, Rohan Jackson, and Triinu Mets. Without them...well, I don't know what would have happened!

I also learned that there is no such thing as too much alcohol for a drinks reception involving anthropologists! Hint: take the number of drinks per person that the venue suggests, double it, double it again...you get the idea.

**HH:** I think that every action undertaken was a lesson for me! I have never been involved with organising a conference, and so it was all one big lesson for me.

**AG:** Well I won't be putting my hand up to host the event again for a while. I suppose because I had not been involved in the organisation of a conference of this size before I really gained insight into the complexities of such an event. I was fortunate to be on the committee but this also meant I got to do the fun stuff like deciding on where to have the dinner and other social events to be offered and which keynotes might be great to have. The buck didn't stop with me on anything and so I'm impressed with how Alison and Richard managed all the pressure.

**NO:** Check and re-check the material to be entered into the program.

**BS:** Not to put the morning and afternoon teas in a hot, glassed atrium with limited space on a hot week in summer!

### Words of wisdom for future organisers?

**AD:** Make sure that you have a great organising team to work with - it is absolutely essential and makes it fun. And try to be as flexible (and patient) as you can regarding smaller issues or concerns, keeping the bigger picture in mind!

**RV:** Organising a conference of this size is a steep learning curve, and it is only once you have done it that you realise the vital dos and don'ts. It is for this reason that the AAS executive is trying to develop some institutional memory around its annual conferences, so that lessons learned from one conference can be feedback to

subsequent organising committees. At the AGM in December, the membership voted to set up a multi-year contract for our annual conferences, with precisely this goal in mind. We hope that this will help to reduce at least some of the stress involved in organising events of this size.

**HH:** I felt that the involvement of postgraduate students here in Adelaide was very impressive and generated a great energy. I think it would be good to involve PhD students in the organisation of the next conference.

**AG:** Start early. The devil is in the detail.

**NO:** Make sure you check all aspects of the technology required for multi-media presentations including being able to Skype presenters in. Brainstorm potential breakdowns with rooms, technology and relationship with the University and pre-empt and avert these!

Start as we did, two years out! The Screen/media/art component started in full swing at the beginning of 2017 and Lisa and I worked consistently on it throughout the months leading up to the conference.

**BS:** Don't overcomplicate things – getting the right rooms and spaces is important, as well as the food and drink.

### **Any final comments you'd like to make?**

**AD:** I would like to thank everyone involved, the amazing organising team as well as the delegates, associations, wonderful volunteers and the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies and Adelaide University for the opportunity to host the conference. I am looking forward very much to the next conference, during which I will be very relaxed!

**RV:** Never again! Until the next time, of course...

**HH:** I am already looking forward to this year's AAS conference in Cairns – where I will mainly be holidaying.

**AG:** I want to make it clear that Alison and Richard were the powerhouses in this effort but more than that, the participation of all the anthros from all three associations was what made it the awesome event that it was. Throughout the process we were extremely aware of the dwindling funding available to people to attend conferences like this. Everything needed to be organised with a very vague estimation of attendance numbers. Anywhere between 200 and 600 seemed possible. This meant all the details needed massive contingencies during the organisation. In the end we had

great numbers and the event was the rich exercise in anthro-nerding that it was because everyone made the effort to come together in collegiality. So thanks to everyone for their participation.

**NO:** It was worth the effort seeing the joy and quality of conversation that emanated from the Scree/Media/Art labs!

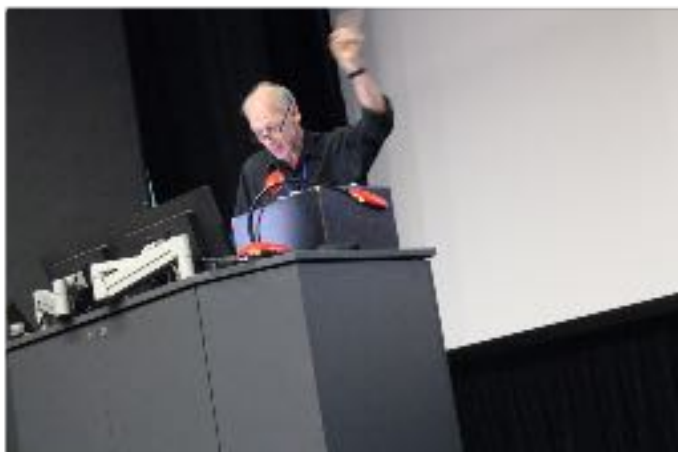
**BS:** It was great to have this conference as a combined event with NZ and UK associations. I think (I hope) the delegates had a good time in Adelaide and enjoyed the panels.



## Some great shots from the *Shifting States* Conference

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Photos below courtesy of Alex Pavlotski

















## Photos below courtesy of Jonathan Robert Fox



LEFT - Alison  
Dundon and Richard  
Vokes



RIGHT - Keynote –  
James Scott (Yale  
University)



LEFT - Questions from the  
audience

RIGHT - Keynote –  
Penny Harvey  
(University of  
Melbourne)



LEFT - Keynote – Ghassan  
Hage (University of  
Melbourne)

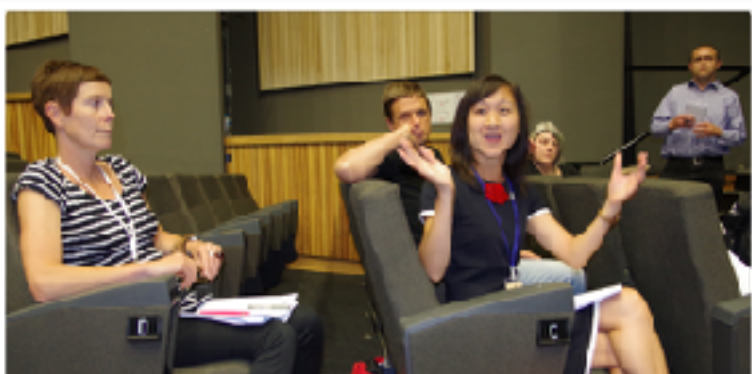
RIGHT - Book Launches at  
Ingkarni Wardli building



## Photos below courtesy of Greg Acciaioli



















# News From ANSA

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2017 saw the Australian Network of Student Anthropologists continue towards our goal of connecting and supporting students and early career anthropologists.

## Shifting States 2017

ANSA held four workshops prior to the AAS/ASA/ASAANZ conference on doing fieldwork, job applications, job and gender issues, and presenting and professionalism. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the facilitators for their time and expertise: James Scott, David Martin, Helen Lee, and Julie Finlayson. We would also like to thank 2017 ANSA University Representative Alana Brekelmans for her assistance in arranging the workshops.

ANSA also held our annual Postgraduate Showcase at Shifting States, with five sessions on health, religion, environment, politics, and moving/on. We are extremely grateful to the scholars who generously gave of their time and energy to serve as discussants in the sessions: Barbara Andersen, Anthony Redmond, Simon Correy, Graeme MacRae, Gerry Groot, and Jaap Timmer.

## ANSA AGM and Incoming Executive

Following the ANSA AGM on Wednesday, 13, December 2017, we are very excited to announce an entirely new ANSA executive team for 2018, with a slight restructuring of roles:

- **President/Chairperson:** Stephanie Betz, Australian National University
- **Secretary - Governance & Management:** Emily Graham, Swinburne University
- **Secretary - Community Engagement:** Alana Brekelmans, University of Queensland

We would like to extend a huge thank you to the 2017 ANSA executive team: Henrike Hoogenraad (President), Sarah Cameron (Secretary), and Ainslee Hooper (Online Coordinator), who continued to keep ANSA going strong even as they were busy finishing theses and starting families.

## Goals for 2018

Since our election at the AGM, the 2018 ANSA Executive has been reviewing the achievements of the past and laying out our goals for the year:

- Share: Promoting ANSA as a supportive environment for students of anthropology to discuss and explore the discipline.
- Expand: Encouraging active membership and participation in the ANSA community.
- Improve: Tailoring ANSA to the needs of our members and improving collaboration with the AAS.

To achieve these goals, we are planning to:

- Develop an online discussion forum;
- Run workshops and career development events as part of the annual AAS conference;
- Organise social events throughout the year; and
- Develop a survey of members to better understand who our members are and how ANSA can best support them.

The ANSA Members Survey will be coming at the end of February – keep an eye out!

## Get In Touch

ANSA is free to join. To become a member, visit: <http://ansa-aas.net/about/join/>

We are here to serve the community of student anthropologists. If you have any thoughts, feedback, or suggestions, please don't hesitate to get in contact with us. Our email is [ansa.exec@gmail.com](mailto:ansa.exec@gmail.com), you can follow us on Twitter [@ANSA\\_web](https://twitter.com/ANSA_web) or get in touch with us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/AuNetworkofStudentAnthropologists/>).

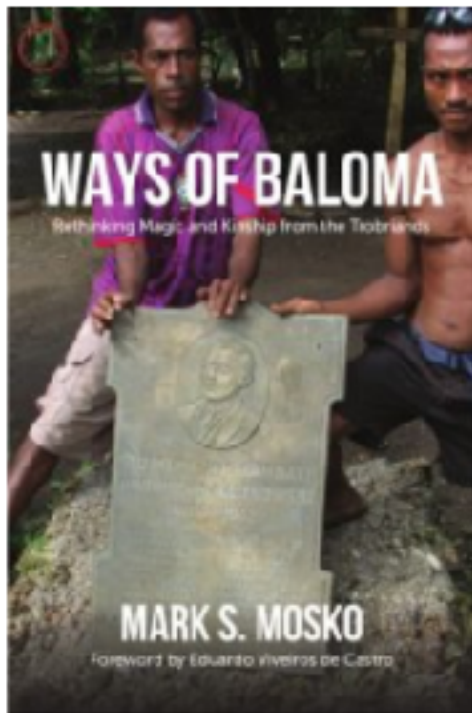


## Crosscurrents: Law and Society in a Native Title Claim to Land and Sea

Katie Glaskin

It is one thing to know what the law says, it is another to try to understand what it means and how it is applied. In native title, when Indigenous relationships with country are viewed through the lens of a Western property rights regime, this complexity is seriously magnified.

Crosscurrents traces the path of a native title claim in the Kimberley region of Western Australia – *Sampi v State of Western Australia* – from its inception to resolution, contextualising the claim in the web of historical events that shaped the claim's beginnings, its intersection with evolving case law, and the labyrinth of legal process, evidence and argument that ultimately shaped its end.

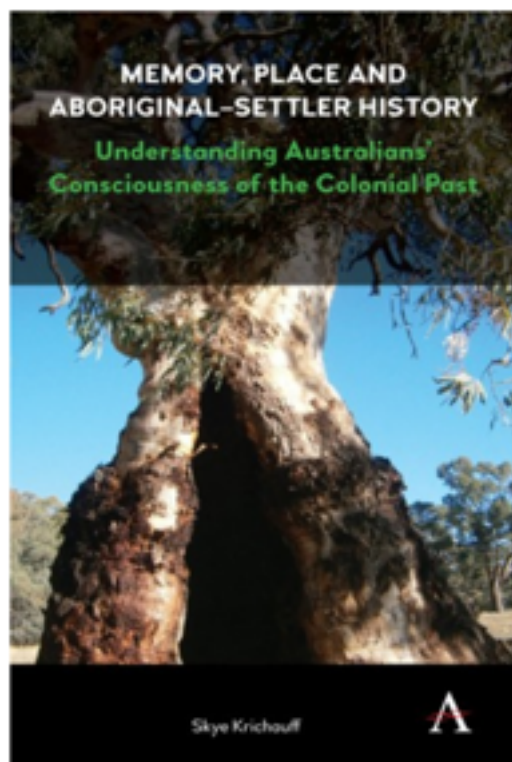


## Ways of Baloma: Rethinking Magic and Kinship from the Trobriands

Mark S. Mosko, with Foreword by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro.

Bronislaw Malinowski's path-breaking research in the Trobriand Islands shaped much of modern anthropology's disciplinary paradigm. Yet many conundrums remain. For example, Malinowski asserted that *baloma* spirits of the dead were responsible for procreation but had limited influence on their living descendants in magic and other matters, claims largely unchallenged by subsequent field investigators, until now. Based on extended fieldwork at Omarkana village—home of the Tabalu "Paramount Chief"—Mark S. Mosko argues instead that these and virtually all contexts of indigenous sociality are conceived as sacrificial reciprocities between the mirror worlds that *baloma* and humans inhabit.

Informed by a synthesis of Strathern's model of "dividual personhood" and Lévy-Bruhl's theory of "participation," Mosko upends a century of discussion and debate extending from Malinowski to anthropology's other leading thinkers. His account of the intimate interdependencies of humans and spirits in the cosmic generation and coordination of "life" (*momova*) and "death" (*kaliga*) strikes at the nexus of anthropology's received wisdom, and *Ways of Baloma* will inevitably lead practitioners and students to reflect anew on the discipline's multifold theories of personhood, ritual agency, and sociality.



# Memory, Place and Aboriginal-Settler History: Understanding Australians' Consciousness of the Colonial Past

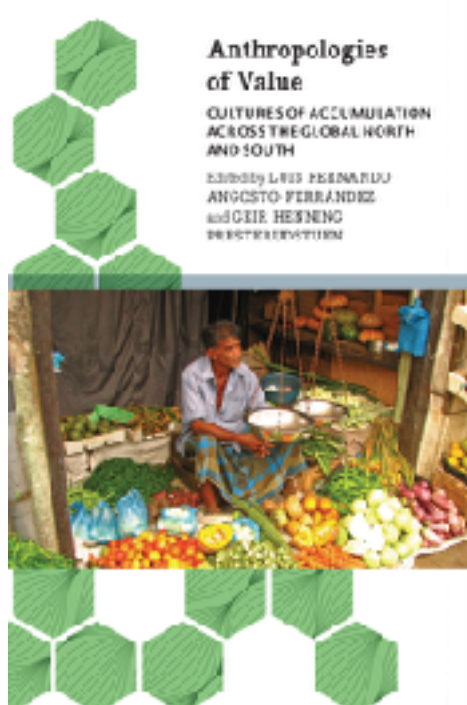
Skye Krichauff

Included in this monograph is an analysis of public histories (local written histories and plaques, monuments and information boards) which demonstrates a settler-colonial historical epistemology that frames the way mid-northern settler descendants make sense of the past. Memories of personal lived experiences are remembered, understood and articulated – are composed and constructed – using the public language and the meanings available in the wider culture in which individuals live. Krichauff provides concrete examples which demonstrate how, amongst many settler descendants, the memories, family stories and lived experiences of Aboriginal presence and positive settler-Aboriginal interaction (stories which fall outside the dominant epistemology) are ignored or neglected. While knowledge about the past learned through external sources (books, films, documentaries) can, to varying degrees, shape and inform settler descendants' consciousness of the colonial era, Krichauff argues that it is the degree of connection with experience that is crucial to understanding the extent to which external knowledge is absorbed and remembered. By connecting Aboriginal people (past and present) with people and places known through everyday life, settler descendants are more likely to intellectually and emotionally connect their own histories with those of the victims of colonialism. This book concludes by demonstrating how it is possible to unsettle settler descendants'

consciousness of the colonial past in ways that enable a tentative connection with Aboriginal people and their experiences.

<http://www.anthempress.com/memory-place-and-aboriginal-settler-history>

## Anthropologies of Value: Cultures of Accumulation Across the Global North and South



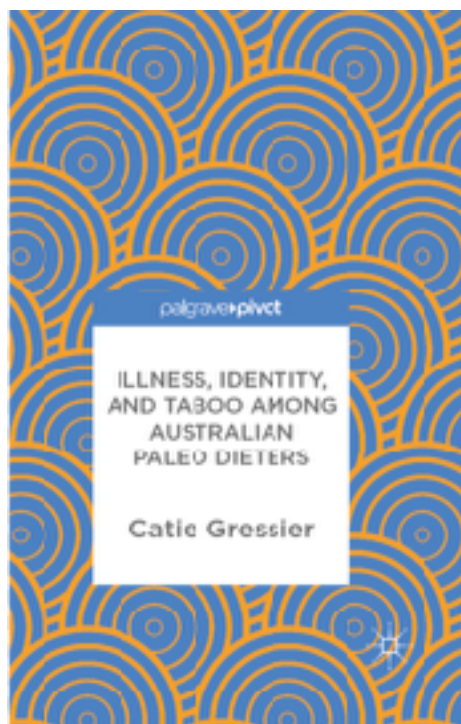
Edited by Luis Fernando Angosto-Ferrandez  
and Geir Henning Presterudstuen

*Anthropologies of Value* analyses the creation of value in a wide range of political and cultural contexts. This edited collection includes anthropological case studies from around the globe; from the commodification of a Venezuelan waterfall to the relative value of penguins in periods of imperialist expansion.

Questioning the validity of binary oppositions such as 'north/south', 'core/periphery' and 'west/the rest' as the basis of generalisations about culturally-mediated engagements with capitalism, this collection leaves no stone unturned in its search to understand and define anthropological value theory.

It provides much-needed, controversial new material for students of anthropology, and proposes an alternative, rarely discussed method of studying the world system which challenges mainstream existing work in the field.

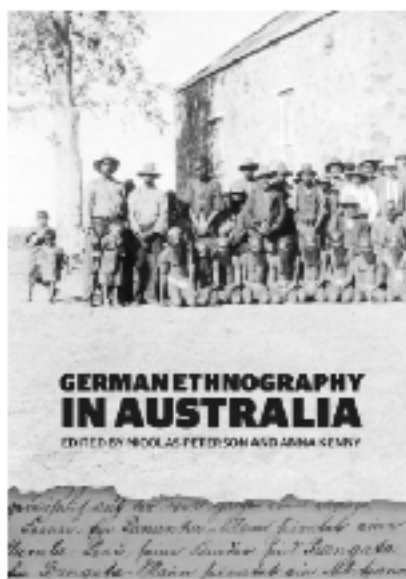




## Illness, Identity, and Taboo among Australian Paleo Dieters

Catie Gressier

The Paleo diet's vast popularity, replete with impassioned celebrity endorsements and deep commitment among adherents, has been matched by an equal measure of media mockery and condemnation from health authorities. But beyond the hype, who are the people taking up the diet, and why are they drawn to its restrictive regime? Based on ethnographic research in Melbourne and Sydney, Gressier recounts the compelling narratives of individuals struggling with illness and obesity in order to argue that going Paleo provides a sense of agency, and means of resistance, to the politico-economic structures fuelling the prevalence of lifestyle diseases. From its nostalgic appeal to an idyllic past, to the rise of health populism globally—where a sense of crisis, anti-elite sentiments, and new forms of media are fuelling a lucrative alternative health industry—this book explores the promise and pitfalls of the Paleo diet in Australia.



## German Ethnography in Australia

Edited by Nicolas Peterson and Anna Kenny

This title is available for free download, in whole or in part. The book's webpage is at: <http://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/monographs-anthropology/german-ethnography-australia>



The contribution of German ethnography to Australian anthropological scholarship on Aboriginal societies and cultures has been limited, primarily because few people working in the field read German. But it has also been neglected because its humanistic concerns with language, religion and mythology contrasted with the mainstream British social anthropological tradition that prevailed in Australia until the late 1960s. The advent of native title claims, which require drawing on the earliest ethnography for any area, together with an increase in research on rock art of the Kimberley region, has stimulated interest in this German ethnography, as have some recent book translations. Even so, several major bodies of ethnography, such as the 13 volumes on the cultures of northeastern South Australia and the seven volumes on the Aranda of the Alice Springs region, remain inaccessible, along with many ethnographically rich articles and reports in mission archives. In 18 chapters, this book introduces and reviews the significance of this neglected work, much of it by missionaries who first wrote on Australian Aboriginal cultures in the 1840s. Almost all of these German speakers, in particular the missionaries, learnt an Aboriginal language in order to be able to document religious beliefs, mythology and songs as a first step to conversion. As a result, they produced an enormously valuable body of work that will greatly enrich regional ethnographies.



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## The Australian Association for Pacific Studies (AAPS) Books Series

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The Australian Association for Pacific Studies (AAPS) is delighted to announce the establishment of the AAPS Book Series! As a sub-series of the Pacific Series at ANU Press, the AAPS book series seeks to expand and contribute to existing scholarship on Oceania, including

Australia, though publishing works that embody the AAPS' vision for a decolonial and interdisciplinary Pacific Studies. The books series also seeks to contribute to the AAPS' objectives of growing Pacific Studies throughout Australia, and of fostering and supporting a national community of scholars and students. Series Editors are Victoria Stead, Katerina Teaiwa, Mandy Treagus & Bianca Hennessy

Thematically, the AAPS book series provides a platform for scholarly works that reflexively engage with the parameters, positionings, and possibilities of an Australian-based Pacific Studies. What the series does not do is publish books about the Pacific, which is to say books that assume and reproduce the Pacific as simply an object of study. We are, rather, interested in what Terence Wesley-Smith calls scholarship 'of and for the region'[i], that addresses imbalances of power and that also, in our case, attends to the particular imbrications of Australia and the Pacific. Works published through the series need not take Australia-Pacific relationships as their explicit, empirical focus, although some may do so. They should be, however, methodologically and/or epistemologically sensitive to the relationships, place-making practices, histories, and

multi-valenced exchanges that inform the positioning of Australia in the Pacific, and conversely, the presence of the Pacific in Australia. Through this series, we seek to creatively interrogate what it means, and what it might mean, for Australian and Australian-based scholars to engage Oceania.

More information about the series' scope and theme, and details on the process for submitting an expression of interest, are available on the AAPS website: [http://pacificstudies.org.au/?page\\_id=916](http://pacificstudies.org.au/?page_id=916).

## Worlds in Crisis: Refugees, Asylum, and Forced Migration series

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The Indiana University Worlds in Crisis: Refugees, Asylum, and Forced Migration series will be a hub for groundbreaking work on the causes of, experiences within, and responses to forced migration. Focusing on refugees, internally displaced

people, asylum seekers and the aid system that surrounds them, the series will move beyond mere pathos to investigate the complexity of lived experiences of displacement. We are seeking proposals for books that address topics related to forced migration and displacement. Work in the series will be necessarily multi-scalar, showing how the international, national, and local interact when responding to problems caused when people fall out of the "national order of things" and lose their homes, their states, and their rights. The books that make up the Displacement and Forced Migration series will emerge as crucial resources for students, academics, policy-makers, and practitioners seeking to further their understanding of the complexity of contemporary experiences of forced migration. Many of the books in the series will be based on ethnographic work, but we will also welcome policy-related books and "think piece" books organised around a central concept. The series will prioritise vivid, lively writing that makes strong arguments and engenders widespread discussion.

Please contact Georgina Ramsay at [gramsay@udel.edu](mailto:gramsay@udel.edu) or Elizabeth Dunn at [elcdunn@indiana.edu](mailto:elcdunn@indiana.edu) for more information about the series or how to submit a book proposal.

## Culture, Humanity, and Urban Life

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Lexington Books announces its new series, Culture, Humanity, and Urban Life, and seeks book proposals based on the following description.

How are urban processes entangled with human experiences? In this series, scholarly monographs and edited volumes explore this question and illuminate diverse forms of such entanglement through empirically-based research. This series emphasises anthropological approaches to the study of human life in relation to the urban. It seeks to illuminate experiences and effects of urban cultures and situate specific cases in a comparative set. By exploring the intricacies of human-urban relations, this series contributes to better understanding of the ways that humans particularly conceive of and experience nature, personhood, ethics, culture, and social life.

Please direct any inquiries to Jessica Bodoh-Creed at [Jessanthro@gmail.com](mailto:Jessanthro@gmail.com) and Melissa King at [mking@sbccd.cc.ca.us](mailto:mking@sbccd.cc.ca.us)



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## Viscult 2018

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The annual Viscult Film Festival of anthropological and ethnographic documentaries will be held 24.-26.10.2018 in Joensuu, Finland. The theme of Viscult 2018 is GOOD LIFE.

What is good life and how do ethnographic films depict and discuss its forms and aspirations? How are desires for a good life socially structured and played out in different cultures and groups? Who has access to a good life?

Conceptions about the ingredients for a good life vary. Cultural models of a good life find their basis in social organisations and power structures, gender, economy, religion, and the environment. The foundation for a good life is often fragile. How are prerequisites for a good life protected and secured in different situations?

Does culture change due to aspirations for a good life or do changes in culture and ways of life condition such goals? How does modernisation or climate change, for example, affect the prerequisites for a good life? How do individually and collectively constructed conceptions of a good life match with each other, and what kind of tensions may emerge? What kind of moral and ethical questions link up with desires for a good life and with alienation thereof?

Viscult calls out for new and recent ethnographic films that deal with the prerequisites for a good life and their fulfilment in cultures around the world.

We are now inviting documentary filmmakers to send in preview versions of their recent films relevant to the theme of Good Life. A specialist jury will watch the received films for selection in the Viscult program.

The main program of Viscult 2018 will be streamed live as a real-time Internet broadcast, so the events can be followed from across the world. Therefore the selection process will prefer those films that can be streamed. The films should be submitted by March 15, 2018.

Please fill the film submission form at the Viscult website.

## Human Nature

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### The Humanities in a Time of Environmental Crisis

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#### Sydney Environmental Humanities Lecture Series, 2018. At the Australian Museum

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This lecture series will offer a series of talks by leading international scholars in the Environmental Humanities. This emerging, interdisciplinary, field of scholarship draws on the insights of history, literature, philosophy, anthropology, and related disciplines to explore the important roles that the humanities might play in addressing some of the most pressing challenges of our day.

The Lecture Series is jointly funded and coordinated by the Australian Museum, the University of New South Wales, Macquarie University, Western Sydney University, and the University of Sydney. The organising committee for the series is comprised of Thom van Dooren and Astrida Neimanis (Sydney), Emily O’Gorman (Macquarie), Judy Motion (UNSW), and Juan Francisco Salazar (Western Sydney).

<https://australianmuseum.net.au/landing/human-nature/>

## NEW BLOG!

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# The Anthropology of Silence

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Ana Dragojlovic (University of Melbourne) and Annemarie Samuels (Leiden University), have started a new blog addressing questions about the place of silences in our ethnographic research projects.

If you wish to contribute a blogpost in which you share an ethnographic story or anecdote, or a more reflective piece on silence contact Ana and Annemarie.

Ana Dragojlovic (University of Melbourne)

[ana.dragojlovic@unimelb.au](mailto:ana.dragojlovic@unimelb.au)

Annemarie Samuels (Leiden University)

[a.samuels@fsw.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:a.samuels@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)

See [www.anthropologyofsilence.com](http://www.anthropologyofsilence.com)



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## Anthropology



## Podcasts

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### Conversations in Anthropology@Deakin

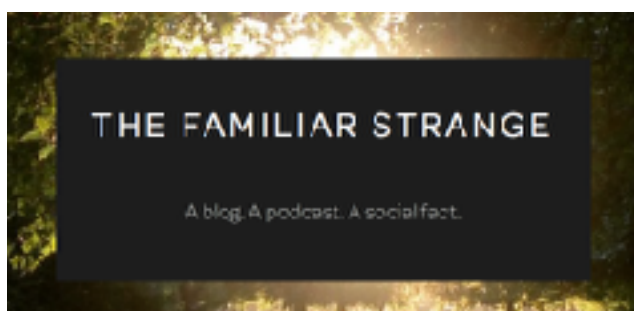
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A podcast about life, the universe and anthropology based at Deakin University in Victoria, Australia. Each episode several of the teaching and research staff from Deakin Anthropology sit down to chat with a visiting anthropologist. You can follow this podcast at Soundcloud or iTunes!

### The Familiar Strange

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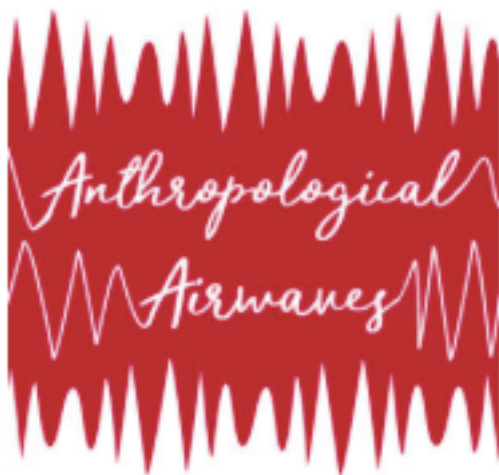


Check out [www.thefamiliarstrange.com](http://www.thefamiliarstrange.com), Twitter (@tfsTweets), and Facebook page (The Familiar Strange) and Instagram (@thefamiliarstrange). You can listen on Soundcloud, the website, or subscribe on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts.

Co-founded by anthropology PhD candidates from the Australian National University, The Familiar Strange uses anthropological thinking to explore this time of jarring social, cultural and political messiness.

# Anthropological Airwaves Podcast

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*Anthropological Airwaves* explores the craft of anthropology in all of its forms. Building on the journal's commitment to four-field, multimodal research, the podcast hosts conversations about anthropological projects –from fieldwork and publishing to the discipline's role in public debates. By demystifying the craft of anthropology, the podcast broaches a series of fundamental

questions about past, present, and future disciplinary practice, and charts new paths for anthropological engagement.

<http://www.americananthropologist.org/anthropological-airwaves-podcast/>



## Society for Social Studies of Science Annual Conference

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4S SYDNEY

TRANSnational STS

Sydney International Convention Centre

August 29 – September 1, 2018

The theme of the 2018 annual meeting of the Society for Social Studies of Science – TRANSnational STS – encourages presentations, panels, and other events that deepen and extend the transnational character of the Society itself, while engaging issues invoked by both the TRANS prefix (across, beyond, to change thoroughly), and by the problematic and evolving status of ‘nations’ in processes of global ordering. The plenary is on Indigenous science and technology studies which will be of interest to many of us interested in diverse knowledge systems, and many international scholars attending the conference including Kim TallBear, Ruha Benjamin, Karen Barad, Anne Pollock, Kim Fortun, Joe Dumit, Tom Boellstorff, Bill Maurer, Elizabeth Povinelli, Jessica Cattelino, Lochlann Jain and Joe Masco.

For more information see

<https://4s2018sydney.org>

# Annual Meeting of the Society for Social Studies of Science (4S)

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Sydney, Australia August 29 – September 1, 2018

Open Track TRANS-disciplinary research through STS practice: The co-creation of knowledge and collaboration

Organizers: Casimir MacGregor, BRANZ,

Ruth Berry, BRANZ, and Jessica Hutchings, BRANZ

STS has a key role in helping to create transdisciplinary research programmes that encourage collaboration and shared knowledge creation. Transdisciplinary research programmes are needed if we are to address the greatest challenges of our times, such as climate change. In attempting to understand the process of transdisciplinary research, we must first come to terms with different forms of knowledge. In the creation of transdisciplinary research programmes, such as the New Zealand Government's National Science Challenges, what makes these collaborations effective, productive and satisfying programmes for all participants? How do different experiences and understandings of the world, such as indigenous knowledge and neoliberal governmentalities interact and co-exist in transdisciplinary research? How can pre-existing ideas (disciplinary concepts or policy) that may underpin transdisciplinary research be re-configured to respond to current social, economic and environmental issues? This panel seeks to explore how knowledge is co-created within transdisciplinary research through STS practice, and it seeks to examine the opportunities, challenges and the reality of engaging in transdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration to create meaningful change in our world.

Conference Website: <https://convention2.allacademic.com/one/ssss/4s18/>

# From the Anti-Politics machine to the new politics of distribution.

A 2-day symposium with James Ferguson (Stanford University) 6-7 September 2018, University of Melbourne

For over twenty years James Ferguson has been at the forefront of some of the most critical interventions in anthropology and development studies – from his early explorations of the depoliticizing effects of development discourses in southern Africa to his more recent calls to consider the possibilities of new kinds of politics that are not anchored to formal sector wage-labour. This two-day symposium engages with this important oeuvre, examining what has changed in the field of development in the 20 years since the publication of *The Anti-Politics Machine*? The symposium is specifically concerned with the ways development discourses have responded to Ferguson's challenge, both reproducing the conditions of development and shifting in unanticipated directions.

The symposium also engages with questions in Ferguson's more contemporary work. What new kinds of political possibilities are emerging in places in which wage labour will never again be the norm (if ever it was)? How should we think about these possibilities – both the new meanings that people attach to non-wage labour and the implications of that labour for more egalitarian (distributive) politics? What theoretical resources become available to us when we follow Ferguson's call – albeit critically – to think beyond critiques of neoliberalism and to consider more carefully the specific kinds of welfare services currently being expanded across much of the Global South? Are there more progressive possibilities embedded in policies that may appear on the surface to be "neoliberal"?

For this 2-day symposium, we invite papers that consider the following themes:

- The labour of not working
- Rightful share and the politics of distribution
- The gendering of discourses of "dependency" and assistance
- The limitations of rights discourses in struggles for social and economic justice
- Moving beyond critiques of neoliberalism

- The anti-politics of development today
- The intersections between labour, class and indigeneity

The two days will comprise of 6 panels plus concluding reflections from Professor Ferguson. We are currently calling for 300-word abstracts for panel papers from participants. Please forward your abstracts to [ferguson-symposium@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:ferguson-symposium@unimelb.edu.au) by Friday, 30 March 2018. All participants will be notified by Friday, 27 April 2018.

In conjunction with the symposium, on the evening of Wednesday, 5th of September, Professor Ferguson will deliver a public lecture entitled, "Presence and Social Obligation: An Essay on the Share."

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## Islands of the World XVI

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Leeuwarden & Terschelling, The Netherlands

10 June to 14 June 2018

The Wadden Academy

Contact: [secretariaat@waddenacademie.nl](mailto:secretariaat@waddenacademie.nl)

Website: <https://www.waddenacademie.nl/nl/symposiumisisa2018/>

The Waddenacademie, University of Groningen, KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Leeuwarden Cultural Capital of Europe 2018, Oerol and Sense of Place are organising the 16th Islands of the World Conference 2018 (ISISA2018) *The changing futures of islands*, June 10 - 14 2018 in Leeuwarden and Terschelling (the Netherlands).

Themes of the conference are:

- Identity and people;
- Geography and nature;
- Economic development and
- Governance

Key note speakers:

\* Prof.dr. Beate Ratter (University of Hamburg)

Identity in "Liminality"; The Wadden Sea islands in a constant state of flux

\* Professor Harvey Armstrong (University of Sheffield)

The Economic performance of small Islands: challenges and opportunities

\*Prof. dr. Gert Oostindie (director KITLV)

Small-scale, insularity and (non-)sovereignty: postcolonial legacies and practices in governance

\* Dr. Pieter van Beukering (Deputy Director IVM / Director ERM MSc programme, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

The value of natural capital in small island societies: evolving perspectives"

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## Early Pacific Migration and Easter Island

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10th International Conference / Conferencia Internacional

Early Pacific Migration/MIGRACIÓN TEMPRANA EN EL PACIFICO

and Easter Island/y rapa nui

10 November to 16 November 2018

Website: [www.earlypacificmigration.org](http://www.earlypacificmigration.org)

The conference content is limited to theme topics with an 1850 CE cut off - this is the early contact/colonial period.



The themes for the conference include:

- Environmental issues,
- Migration of humans, animals or plant material,
- Navigation,
- Pacific archaeology.



## **23rd PHA Conference - "The Gift of the Pacific: Place & perspective in Pacific History"**

2 December to 5 December 2018

phacambridge2018@gmail.com

Website: [https://](https://www.pacifichistoryassociation.net/conferences)

[www.pacifichistoryassociation.net/conferences](https://www.pacifichistoryassociation.net/conferences)

The Pacific 'is a gift', said the late Teresia Teaiwa, in a Victoria University of Wellington podcast. If she was primarily evoking the gift and the fragile inheritance of an extraordinary Oceanic environment – a theatre of life, performance and struggle – the Pacific has figured as 'a gift' in manifold senses. Above all, for Islanders who have made their lives, and negotiated colonial modernity and globalization across the region. But also for the Europeans who have famously or notoriously 'imagined' the Pacific and sought to intervene in it. And for those scholars, and historians in particular, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, for whom the Pacific has offered a realm of comparative inquiry and storytelling.

Pacific history has assumed increasingly diverse identities, ranging from ethnographic, reflective, local and postcolonial styles through those adopting the frames of the *longue durée* and world history to those animated by art and material culture,

exemplified in the Royal Academy's 'Oceania' exhibition, with which this conference coincides. Pacific historians have engaged place and space on many scales, from the beaches and localities of encounter to the vast ocean and its 'rim'. The Pacific History Association's 2018 conference will offer a wealth of inquiry and debate, considering how these diverse narratives and perspectives respond to the gift of the Pacific.

The conference coincides with the 'Oceania' exhibition at the Royal Academy, the largest exhibition to date responding to art, history and contemporary identity across the region as a whole. The convenors invite artistic interventions that will contribute to a wider dialogue between academia and contemporary practice, and also cross-disciplinary contributions which may range across anthropology, archaeology, art history, development studies, political studies, geography, history, linguistics, and related fields.

Keynotes: Bronwen Douglas, Anne Perez Hattori, Maia Nuku, Damon Salesa

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## **"Dealing with Inequality: Pacific perspectives, Pacific futures"**

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12th ESFO Conference

7 December to 10 December 2018

Conference Convenor: Nicholas Thomas, U Cambridge, Cambridge

Website: [pacific-studies.net/conferences/public.php?confID=3](http://pacific-studies.net/conferences/public.php?confID=3)

Economists such as Thomas Piketty have influentially argued that inequality has been globally exacerbated in recent decades, and has broad and negative impacts on the environment, human society, governance and well-being. Inspired by Marilyn Strathern's 1987 edited collection, *Dealing with Inequality*, and the tradition of ethnographic conceptualisation, contextualisation and critique that that volume exemplified, this conference will address culture, society and history across Oceania, from the vantage point of anthropology's longstanding commitment to engaging local perspectives and sensitivity to Oceania's heterogeneity.

The theme of the 12th conference of the European Society for Oceanists encourages participants to discuss these questions by examining concrete empirical realities in the Pacific; by foregrounding local perspectives; and by foregrounding the sheer heterogeneity of culture and society in the Pacific, in diasporic milieux including those across island 'homes'. As at the 11th conference, the convenors encourage contributions ranging beyond Oceania's literal regional limits, to include Pacific presences and interventions in other contexts and regions through diplomacy, travel, migration, tourism, trade, art, museums and performance.

The conference coincides with the 'Oceania' exhibition at the Royal Academy, the largest exhibition to date responding to art, history and contemporary identity across the region as a whole. The convenors invite artistic interventions that will contribute to a wider dialogue between academia and contemporary practice, and also cross-disciplinary contributions which may range across anthropology, archaeology, art history, development studies, political studies, geography, history, linguistics, and related fields.



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## 2018 AAS Conference

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The 2018 Australian Anthropological Society annual conference will be held in Cairns at James Cook University, 4 -11 December. The theme will be Life in an Age of Death, a formulation that explicitly seeks to recognise the many ways in which, during the first decades of the twenty-first century, the proliferation of life as a generative possibility has become marked by the spectre of death, closure, denial and ends.

Our theme is, of course, partly inspired by Cairn's location on the edge of the Great Barrier Reef, a globally significant site of ecological precarity. But North Queensland is also a region in which the agri-industries of sugar and beef, together with the military, significantly shape social and economic agendas, so raising the spectre of death at many registers. This sense of emplacement compels us to ask more generally: What sorts of life—social, cultural, technological, creative—emerge in spaces pregnant with death and other life-ending spectres? What new horizons of fear, hope and possibility? What kinds of social formations, subjectivities and cultural imaginaries? What new strategies of affirmation, engagement, activism and refusal? What can anthropology specifically bring to these emergent and often-interdisciplinary zones of urgency? How might our methods, theories and orientations be re-tooled and re-energised for these shadowed times? How might we take up these themes while remaining alert and responsive to stubborn forms of life and liveliness?

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## Statement from the AAS Executive

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### Statement from the AAS Executive on the Government's Response to the Final Report of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the Uluru Statement from the Heart

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In November 2017, the AAS Executive Committee released a statement on the government's response to the final report of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Please see full statement in the link below.

<http://www.aas.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/AAS-statement-on-govt-response-FINAL-signed.pdf>

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## Congratulations!

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Professor Linda Connor was recently elected to the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia for her contribution to advancing research knowledge and developing new approaches in their fields.

Congratulations Linda!

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## Recent Graduations

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### **Between bushfire and climate change: Silence, uncertainty and anticipation following the October 2013 fires in the Blue Mountains, Australia**

Beth Emily Hill

PhD, Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney

Thesis Abstract: That Australia is facing a growing risk of bushfires has been predicted under climate change models for some time, particularly for South East Australia. Yet the connection between climate change and increasingly dangerous wildfires is only tentatively acknowledged. Based on 18 months of ethnographic research in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales, following the catastrophic October 2013 bushfires, this thesis investigates the local community response to this disaster as they rebuilt their destroyed homes and recovered. The ambiguity and disagreement surrounding the connection between climate change and the bushfires are analysed as a foundational aspect of how climate change was materialising for residents in daily life. I have found that ambivalence, uncertainty, silence, contradiction characterise the public and private discourse about a heating world in this suburb in the bush – a largely white middle-class community nestled along the clifftops against the vast eucalypt forests of the National Park. This thesis argues that people's engagement with climate change is an unstable and iterative process in which local culture and context, in this instance the context of disaster, are of central importance. According to Kay Milton, the concept of anthropogenic global warming changes 'the way local events are framed and understood' (Milton 2008: 57-58). In the Blue Mountains, the inverse of this statement was also true – local ecological events, such as the October 2013 fires, were changing the way that climate change was framed, understood and spoken about amongst the community. Local frontline workers avoided articulating the ontologically threatening prospect of climate change catastrophe by focusing on a more comprehensible narrative about the prevailing bushfire threat that could be addressed through existing

preparedness measures. Such a frame shielded the community, not just from difficult political debate, but from the existential worry and challenging emotions that arise when engaging with climate change. The lack of shared public narrative that connected local realities with global climate change meant that people continued to relate to it as an abstract and distant phenomenon, even as they confronted its effects in rising insurance premiums, changed building codes, and shifting bushfire seasons.

This research contributes to the understanding of contemporary Western cosmology, a particular self-world relationship that is implicated in the causes of climate change, and that continues to inform local responses to environmental change in Australia. Additionally, the Australian context of this inquiry elucidates the fraught relationship between vulnerability and responsibility for modern suburban residents in an era of climate change, showing how they responded to their own trauma and suffering by reinvesting in the worldviews and survival strategies that perpetuate environmental destruction and global warming.

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### **In the name of 'empowerment': women and development in urban Nepal**

Margaret Becker

Anthropology and Development Studies, University of Adelaide

Thesis Abstract: This thesis is concerned with women and development in Kathmandu, Nepal. Development and social change-oriented goals associated with it have been firmly enmeshed in Nepal since the 1950s. The philosophy and the terms of international development—both of which are based on 'modern', Western models of society—are highly influential in Nepal, intertwining with sets of social relations and local history to form a nationally shared vision known as *bikas* (development) (Pigg, 1992). Particularly since the 1990s, there has been a proliferation of international and local non-governmental organisations (INGOs and NGOs), including many focusing on issues related to women. The terminology of transnational discourses of development pervades the websites and literature of women's development organisations. In particular, the language of 'empowerment'—a term that is entrenched in the global development discourse on women—frames the stated objectives and interventions of



these organisations, suggesting that this term plays an important role in formulating projects and objectives in gender and development programs in Nepal.

In this thesis I interrogate what is being done in the name of women's empowerment (*mahila sashaktikaran*) through an ethnographic exploration of two women's NGOs operating in Kathmandu. Drawing on data collected during twelve months of anthropological fieldwork between October 2009 and October 2010 in Kathmandu, I examine women's goals, understandings, and experiences of specific development encounters to explore what this global development concept, empowerment, looks like in the social spaces where women work and live. Key questions, then, are what ideas of empowerment are generated in the practice of development programs for women and what are the effects on women's lives? My study suggests that understandings of the term empowerment are diverse, contingent and situational, depending on context and a woman's positioning in that context at any given time. I argue that notions of 'woman' are critical to what it means to be empowered in this context, in terms of the organisations' program objectives and strategies and for the women involved with these groups. I demonstrate the way in which different discourses—global discourses of women's empowerment, local discourses of gender and development, and notions of 'woman' in Nepal—intersect and are intertwined in the everyday encounters and experiences of development for women in specific contexts in Kathmandu.