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Debates in Anthropology: Introduction

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What are the tasks of anthropology? What drives the discipline? And what are the challenges for the future? We have asked these questions on the occasion of the 100 year anniversary celebration of the Institute of Anthropology in Leipzig. The founding of the Leipzig Institute on 1 November 1914 is also the beginning of anthropology as an academic discipline in Germany. During these hundred years Anthropology has undergone many transformations and there are many ways to tell the history of the discipline. Some trace the making, diffusion and unmaking of national schools (Barth et al. 2005). Others study anthropology's relation to and participation in projects of domination and violence, such as colonialism, racism or Nazism (Geisenhainer 2002; Penny and Bunzl 2003; Stocking 1991; Streck 2000). The history of the discipline is also a history of ideas, such as evolutionism, structuralism, structure-functionalism, cultural materialism and practice theory (Harris 2001; Salzman 2001). Methodologically anthropology has moved towards ever deeper engagement with local cultures. Armchair anthropology was discarded for participant observation, reflexive anthropology and multi-sited fieldwork (Atkinson 1998; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus 1995). All these approaches, theories and angles have also influenced and been influenced by German scholars, as recent German introductions to anthropology demonstrate (Bierschenk, Kings, Lentz 2013; Bohrmann, Geisenhainer, Streck 2014) and as evidenced impressively by Streck's (in this volume) recapitulation of key publications of the Leipzig Institute.

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The Multiple Worlds of Ethnographic Fieldwork: A Personal Account

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Abstract. In this autobiographical essay, I remember choosing to become an anthropologist because I wanted to explore “other worlds”. I discuss what the notion of “other worlds” means to various disciplines, and why I came to the conclusion that the best way to explore such worlds was through ethnographic fieldwork. I address some of the criticisms of fieldwork, recount my experiences of “other worlds” while conducting fieldwork in India over several decades, and conclude with a few reflections about how all of this might relate to current discussions about the “ontological turn” in anthropology.

[*Fieldwork, Participant Observation, India, Methods in Anthropology*]

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Fieldwork as Dialogue. Reflections on Alternative Forms of Engagement

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Abstract. This article examines the role of anthropological research in highly reflective development settings. What is the character of fieldwork among policy makers and entrepreneurs, who wish to improve the economic position of poor people through the implementation of welfare or empowerment programs? In this text we analyze research dialogues between anthropologists and development experts from India and Nepal and the paradoxes, moral predicaments, structural contradictions, and practical improvisations they articulate. Thereby, we unpack processes of shared sense-making between researchers and research subjects, and show how dialogue produces new insights about social practice and feeds back into the recursive remaking of social worlds. We conclude about those cultural practices through which development professionals navigate between constructing meaning and implementing policy as intersecting activities that shape emerging futures.

[*Dialogue, Research Method, Ethnography, Development, India, Nepal*]

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Explanatory Models in Anthropology: Methodological Refinements, Cross-Cultural Comparison and Theoretical Developments

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Abstract. This article sketches the contribution of an anthropology aiming at the development of explanatory models – an endeavour that has been dubbed analytical by some and scientific by others. In the first part we will trace the developments that the analytical endeavour has undergone since Thomas Schweizer's publication of *Muster sozialer Ordnung* (1993) in the German-speaking anthropology and beyond. More specifically, we want to investigate the degree to which his demands for a refinement of methodology, cross-cultural comparisons and explanatory theorizing have been adopted. Secondly, we question the much-dramatized distinction between analytical and hermeneutic strands of anthropology. Instead, we will advocate an anthropology that tries to further develop its methodological instruments, both qualitative and quantitative, and that maintains the aim of formulating generalizations and theorizing as a way of detecting causal linkages; one that at the same time gives attention to historical/regional particularities and processes, and also seriously addresses the epistemological challenges arising from the embeddedness of social science research in power relations, hegemonic ideologies and public discourses.

[*Analytical Anthropology, Cross-Cultural Comparison, Explanatory Models, Method in Anthropology*]

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Anthropology and Comparison: Methodological Challenges and Tentative Solutions

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Abstract. Comparison was once the corner stone of anthropology; ethnography later became a way to collect the necessary data and then became a rivaling paradigm. While the ways of doing ethnography have improved significantly over the last decades, comparison has been partly neglected and partly banned in the aftermath of postmodern criticism. At the same time, in casual talks, conference sessions, and edited volumes anthropologists have always sought common ground and differences among “their” cases. I argue that as anthropologists we should acknowledge the comparative nature of much of our thinking and strive more explicitly to improve its quality. To contribute to this effort I identify major methodological problems that arise when comparing ethnographic cases. Those include the definition of the case, their dimensions and the increasing connectedness of the world. To overcome these concerns I propose tentative formal solutions that combine into a new comparative agenda: multilevel comparison.

[Cross-Cultural Comparison, Research Methods in Anthropology]

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From the Anthropology of Development to the Anthropology of Global Social Engineering

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Abstract. With the transformation of development policy to global structural policy, the ‘old’ anthropology of development must become an anthropology of global social engineering. This involves the challenge of focusing on the entire policy chain – from the production of development policy models in the context of the development agencies, to the different points of translation (for example, state ministries in the recipient countries and large international NGOs) and local intervention. From this perspective, the new development policy emerges as one of the contemporary forms of producing the world. Interesting approaches exist in Germany for such an ethnography of global social engineering. They have considerable implications for the entire discipline and its knowledge production practices.

[Ethnography, Globalization, Epistemology, Development, Social Engineering]

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Getting Credit for What You Write? Conventions and Techniques of Citation in German Anthropology

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Abstract. Contemporary citing practices do something significant to developments in the sciences and the humanities: they create giants by attributing a scarce academic good – namely originality – to certain authors, while ignoring others. Originality is not a straightforward qualification of a contribution and its impact on academic disputes. Rather it is something that is made and stabilized through citation practices. We contend that the criteria by which authors select from an ocean of possible sources relate to structuring principles that organize the scientific field and various understandings of “what is” a proper publication and “what counts” in publishing scholarly work. The assertion is that these understandings can be identified as conventions of citation, which inform writing and citing practices. Thus far, this seems to be nothing particularly new. However, we bring existing arguments and approaches together to (1) make a first step towards a novel approach to citation analysis and (2) explore several conventions and techniques of citation in German-speaking anthropology after 1965. We show that some citing techniques have solidified more than others and contribute to aporetic debates about German anthropology’s parochialism.
[Citations, Originality, Conventions, Science and Technology Studies]

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Die Visionen der Vergangenheit. Das Leipziger Institut für Ethnologie im Spiegel seiner Veröffentlichungen

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Abstract. In 1916 the book “The Burundi” by Hans Meyer started off the newly founded series “Ethnographies and Ethnology” published by the then two year old Institute of Anthropology in Leipzig. Till 1940 the Institute published 12 books. After the Second World War it joined hands with the Museum of Anthropology and published with the Akademie-Verlag in Berlin. In 2000 the tradition of Institute publications was started again with three new series on the History of Anthropology, Ethnography, and Gypsy Studies. In 2004 an additional “small series” was started to publish excellent master theses. This article narrates the eventful history of the Institute of Anthropology by recapitulating theories, assumptions and notions of anthropology as they appear in key publications. For each of the four political phases of the Institute’s history two publications have been selected to provide insights about continuities and discontinuities in research history. The different publications provide an overview of the broad spectrum of anthropological work. A focus on ruptures, disruptions and reorientations provides a lens for understanding the extent of research creativity. Traditions were continuously reshuffled and provide a fertile ground for future research.

[Ethnology, History, Germany, Institute of Anthropology Leipzig]

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