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Article:

'Edgy' politics and European anthropology in 2016

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A review of the year in European anthropology in SA/AS is no simple task, and is made more onerous by the multiple ways in which 2016 has affected readers. The 366 days of the past year seemed at the edge of many things. Political shifts across the Anglo-European world, including Brexit, refugee 'crisis' debates and the electoral victory of Donald Trump, left many feeling as though they were standing at the precipice of an old era. At the same time, people at the purported edges of Europe suffered under political ruptures, for example in Turkey and Syria, and concerns about human mobility created an upsurge in conservative thinking. Many institutions and livelihoods that might have once provided solutions for these problems were themselves 'on a razor's edge': underfunded, downsized and increasingly dependent on precarious labour. Add to this our increasing awareness of impending ecological cataclysm, compound this with environmental change, and it appears that 2016 heralded the 'edgy' times we now face.

Euro-anthropology's interstitial position, coupled with the urgent issues that Europe has faced in recent years, has produced a kind of 'edgy' thinking; thinking from the edges while in circumstances 'on edge'. Key theoretical challenges over recent years, typically called 'turns', have been embedded in networks of European thinkers and their efforts to push anthropology to its 'edges'. These include: the 'Ontological turn', with links to Cambridge, London, Copenhagen and Paris (Kelly 2014; Holbraad and Pedersen 2017); the 'Ethical turn' with similarly Anglo-European spokespersons on both sides of the Atlantic (Keane 2015; Lambek et al. 2015; Laidlaw 2014); and the 'Mobility turn', which has become a keyword in EU policy and an influential interdisciplinary field across Europe (Salazar and Jayaram 2016). Euro-anthropology has become increasingly politicised, a process seen as a necessary response to pressing issues at both the centre and edges of the Anglo-European world. In 2016, these various 'turns' in Euro-anthropology have overlapped at the question of politics, suggesting the elaboration of a 'Political turn' (Candea 2014), which posits Europe as central to our reflections on anthropology's politics.

Taking inspiration from the concern with peripheries and precarities in Euro-anthropology, I have chosen 'edges' as a concept-metaphor (Moore 2004) in order to trace political concerns in European anthropological scholarship in 2016. I envision the multiple meanings of the term 'edge' as representing the interrelated but at times Janus-faced nature of current discussions about politics in anthropology. The etymology of edge in English shares meaning with most Indo-European languages.

A blade or needle, a position on the periphery, the quality of sharpness and a means to sharpen. The 'edge' acts as a 'zone of engagement' (Sennett 2001: 178) that hones our convictions and brings us into contact with the need for, and the possibility of, an 'alter-politics' (Hage 2015). Through encounter, we are exposed to the possibility of other ways of life, other worlds and other politics, which draws out the limits of our own thinking and worlds in deeply embodied ways. Many of this year's major themes engage with 'edges' in terms of borders and solidarities, as well as 'edges' as states of precarity. Others focus on the transgressive qualities of 'edgy' practices. Just as the discipline of anthropology may be turning towards politics and 'dark' themes (Ortner 2016), classic methods and obsessions still serve as continuous sites of innovation. However, Euro-anthropology may benefit from more comparisons outside of Anglo-European contexts.

I surveyed 91 articles from Social Anthropology (SA/AS), Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (JRAI), Ethnos, Focaal, Suomen Antropologi, Associazione Nazionale Universitaria degli Antropologi Culturali (ANUAC), Anthropological Notes, L'omme, Anthropos, Sociologus and Anthropology Matters. Gender distribution appeared to be relatively even, although single-authored papers and the editors of special issues were less balanced, which has unfortunately affected gender representation in this review.[1] Most papers came from authors with institutional affiliations in the UK, followed by Germany, the US, Australia and Norway. Names were mostly suggestive of a European heritage. A total of 28 papers focused on European contexts, followed by 12 on North and South Africa, 12 on South Asia, 10 on South America, 10 on North America, 6 on South East Asia, 4 on Australia, 4 on North East Asia, 3 on the Caribbean, 1 on Papua New Guinea, 1 on the Middle East and 1 on Central Asia. Overlap is due to papers that focus on transnational connections between South East Asia, North Africa and Europe, as well as to theoretical introductions without regional specifications. The vicissitudes of publishing mean that what we see today is the product of, and a commentary on, thinking and writing begun several years ago. In conducting this review, I have chosen papers officially published in 2016, including those with early online releases in 2015 and 2014. I have, unfortunately, had to leave out close analysis of the important work done by our colleagues in online blogs and forums, such as Allegra.com. My review is therefore a personal commentary on how various trends over the past few years have culminated in the publications of 2016. Specifically, I envision the year 2016 as a point to reflect upon increasing calls for a politically engaged anthropology, and an opportunity to think about how we will move on from debates about possibilities for anthropology in and/or on Europe, or Euro-anthropology.

The begrudging adoption of English as the lingua franca of anthropology has meant that many continental scholars feel peripheral, in terms both of the European topics they might research and of their institutional settings. This peripheral status was strongly voiced during the debate surrounding adjustments to EASA's mission statement held during the general meeting in Tallinn in 2014, reflecting the anxieties of many scholars, their sense of marginalisation and the simultaneous desire for an optimistic political assertion of the importance of Euro-anthropology. This political optimism continued into the 2015 forums in SA/AS, which focused on rethinking Euro-anthropology, as well as in the 2016 forum, where a group of early-career scholars (Martínez et al. 2016) offered 'critique inside the field of anthropology at, with and through Europe' (p. 353). The political purpose of these discussions heralded a potentially 'reflexive or critical eurocentrism' (Testa in Martínez et al. 2016: 372) which, through alliance with disciplines such as

history, art practice and literature, can bolster 'moral Cosmopolitanism' as a European political project (p. 372, with the capital 'C' in the original). An excellent example of this kind of scholarship was Jouhki and Pennanen's special section on Occidentalism in Suomen Antropologi (2016), where the geopolitics of imagining the 'West' were analysed in European contexts, as well as the testimonies of young people in Syria and Jordan (El-Dine 2016).

Despite excellent scholarship being conducted, calls for Eurocentrism, reflexive or not, are a cause for concern. How do we gauge reflexive practice? Or ensure that 'reflexive or critical eurocentrism', repeated over time, does not become simply eurocentrism? As Jouhki and Pennanen note, studies of Occidentalism in the humanities have tended to obsess over 'Western' scholars and their positionality as the major point of reference (2016). Claims that the ethnography of Europe is peripheral to the discipline have become an unreflexive trope in certain circles, producing problematic blind spots. For example, in his otherwise insightful article 'Groundwork for the anthropology of Belgium', Marc Blainey states that the region exists at the 'margins of the discipline' (2016: 478). Historically, it may appear to be true that ethnographies of Europe have inspired fewer theoretical developments in anthropology than have other parts of the world. However, these peripheries have always been discussed in relation to Anglo-European worlds as epistemically central. Although many discussions, such as Blainey's, are posited as an effort to convey Europe alongside its epistemic others as a dethroned equal, tropes claiming the ethnography of Europe as a fringe field do not stand up to analysis. Recent publications and theoretical 'turns' demonstrate that discussions of Europe are by no means marginalised. Furthermore, Europe is a popular area of analysis in North America. Examining the area coverage of 'Cultural Anthropology' over the past decade, for example, shows ethnographies of Europe rivalled only by those of North America, and roughly equal to scholarship on Latin America and Africa. There were fewer publications on the Pacific than on many other areas, complicating its historically dominant image in the discipline, and some of the world's most populous and diverse regions (such as East Asia) seemed disproportionately unexamined.

While quick summaries cannot reflect the centrality, or lack thereof, of certain worlds and regions within our discipline, the above does suggest that a truly reflexive Euro-anthropology may have to question the assumed marginalisation of the ethnography of Europe. Euro-anthropology does not, of course, simply represent ethnographies of Europe, but rather the scholarship that occurs within and through European institutions. When we reflect on the marginalisation of European institutions, slightly different dynamics emerge. Considering the popularity of scholars from European institutions in the recent spate of 'turns' in anthropology worldwide, it is clear that there are as many strata of distinction within Euro-anthropology as there are without. The increasing domination of English-language scholarship plays a significant role in defining these edges. It is worth remembering that many other parts of the world contend with these issues too, and that perhaps it is Euro-anthropology's unique status at the edges of the anglophone world that positions it as an important speaking point within a wider world anthropology.

Political scientist Harold Lasswell once defined politics as a question of 'who gets what, when, how' (1936). Anthropology is a method for cultivating the 'alter-politics' (Hage 2015) of comparison through 'continual encounter with radical alterity' (Hage

2014; Holbraad and Pedersen 2014). It asks who defines who is a 'who' (relatedness, sociality, personhood, ethics), what is a 'what' (cosmology, ontology, economies), when (history, divination, memory) and how (technologies, exchanges, economies). Through the method of differentiation and comparison, encompassing ethnography but also extending beyond it, anthropology's political contribution has come largely from its historical interest in tracing the edges of whatever may seem central to our conceptions of humanity. These differences have been traced at the geographic 'edges' of (post)colonies and borderlands, or mapped 'at home' in designations that position people 'on edge', such as race, class or gender. More recently, there has been interest in mapping difference in novel ways, such as temporalities, futures and ontologies. Publications in 2016 embody the 'edgy' politics of Euro-anthropology and its capacity to trace difference at a variety of conceptual and methodological edges. However Anglo-European interests dominated much of the literature. While the predominance of Euro-ethnography has provided fertile ground for urgent and necessary political critique, this imbalance is a reminder that seeking new spaces and socialities is an important project.

Edges of the state and states on edge

A significant portion of 2016 publications addressed the relationship between states and citizens, emphasising how everyday political circumstances challenge the way we think about assumed state-level politics. Neoliberalism loomed large, as did the relationship of state failure and everyday sociality. All special issues and sections in 2016 coupled an interest in alternative politics with questions of marginalisation, precarity and/or crisis. The special section 'After dispossession' in Focaal epitomised this trend, exploring where changes in neoliberal political economies have left 'surplus populations' dispossessed of their livelihoods (Salemink and Rasmussen 2016). Salemink and Rasmussen argue that the lingering question of 'what comes next' transforms subjectivities and solidarities (p. 7) in water crises in Peru (Andersen 2016), dispossession in the Republic of Georgia (Gotfredsen 2016) and medical research projects in Zambia (Bruun 2016). There is a resonance between the 'edgy' circumstances of Euro-anthropology and its recent empirical and conceptual focus. As Heatherington and Zerilli point out in their introduction to the ANUAC forum on 'anthropologists in/of the neoliberal academy', state-produced precarity is a problem anthropologists face as well as study (Heatherington and Zerilli 2016). Institutional transformations, the retraction of state responsibility for education in the face of private neoliberal restructuring, and the spread of state-based audit cultures over-emphasising individual responsibility, production outputs and state-led research agendas have left many 'on edge'. It has changed the face of what it means to be an anthropologist and an educator (Narotzky 2016; Welch-Devine 2016), and revealed the 'parallel structure' that anthropologists and other precarious workers occupy (Molé Liston 2016). The shared predicament of anthropologists and precarious others was perhaps most clearly mapped out in the SA/AS special issue on solidarities in Greece (cf. Rozakou 2016), whose analyses included many Greek anthropologists and whose circumstances served as 'a perfect mirror' (Herzfeld 2016) for neoliberal reforms and their effects on everyday political relations. The authors of the section show how people may be rehumanised through solidarities of 'friendship', 'humanitarian affect' and embodied engagements. As Theodoros Rakopoulos notes, these 'alter-political' ethnographies stand against a 'There Is No Alternative' (TINA) politics (2016: 147).

The politics of solidarity can operate at different scales and in response to different

pressures. Failures of neoliberal capitalism, united with the pressures of financial crisis, have broad consequences for how we imagine communities, from local solidarities to the national scale. For example, in Loftsdóttir's (2016) study of individual Icelandic imaginations of neoliberalism in relation to the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent Icesave netbank negotiations, reliance on interpersonal solidarities to make up for the failure of extant systems is not solely attributed to failures of neoliberal states, but also to their postsocialist manifestations. Čarna Brković similarly traces a family's efforts to raise funds to pay for medical expenses for their son through 'partial, not quite informal' (p. 101) networks of humanitarian aid (humanitarne akcije), which emerged to deal with the failings of redistributive politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Brković 2016). Bo Kyeong Seo shows how solidarity with the state is mediated in hospitals through affects of care, the gift and a sense of debt produced through caring relations between state institutions and people (Seo 2016). In Focaal, Jaoul and Shah's themed section on political possibilities for marginalised Adivasi and Dalit groups reveals similar concerns with the politics of solidarity, albeit within vastly different cosmological framings of personhood and sociality (Jaoul and Shah 2016). Unlike the agrarian nostalgia that feeds concepts of solidarity in the Greek context, Adivasi and Dalit groups perform breaks with the past, such as conversion to religions that challenge the cosmological structures that marginalise them. These disruptions and divisions act as a form of 'insurgent citizenship', providing alter-solidarities under the Indian state.

The special issue on festival ecologies in Ethnos (Frost 2016) shows how classic anthropological topics, such as festivals, ludic rituals and fairs, are politically relevant in relation to 'groupness' as a 'reiterative process' (Leal 2016: 597). As David Picard notes in his theoretical treatise, the 'festive' as frame (Goffman 1974) organises perceptions and helps mediate the politics of collective and personal crises (Picard 2016). Analyses of festivals define the conditions for the 'indigenous' to be integrated into a wider Argentinian narrative (Angé 2016); as a catalyst in the dialectic between class, local governance and national memorialisation in the Netherlands (Boissevain 2016); and, act as a mediator between Cornish and national identities, complicated by festival practices perceived as racist in the wider national context (Cornish 2016). Festive frames extend across nation-state borders, as Leal notes in his contribution on transnational Azore networks. They can be used to understand explicitly political events, for example, in the festival-like qualities of Mozambican strikes (Bertelsen 2016). Discussions of ritual and the ecstatic extended into studies of religious practice, as political technologies defining selves, groups and their relationship to politics. Ritual and religion can be vibrant platforms for political re-imaginings, whereas other ideologies may have the inverse effect. Julie Kleinman's analysis of secular universalism in French schools, for example, shows how secular ideals of inclusion often exacerbate categories of difference that exclude immigrant others, complicating a simplistic equation between secular states and cosmopolitan moral values (Kleinman 2016). In contrast, Liana Chua shows how playful combinations of developmental and Christian mythic-historical frameworks in Malaysia allowed for imagining alternative futures, and relationships with government (Chua 2016).

Just as festivals and ritual memorialisation may serve as a 'technology of imagination' (Sneath et al. 2009) in defining the edges of groups and political entities, other technologies define the relationships between peoples, states and uncertainty. The special section in Focaal on in/visibility and in/security, for example, traced how the two edges

of this co-constitutive dialectic define the power relations that we are subject to today (Jusionyte and Goldstein 2016). The desire for security creates concerns about invisibility, from unseeable persons to unforeseeable futures, while fear of insecurity creates the desire to render these phenomena visible. In the process, measures to combat uncertainty are made invisible, such as state surveillance technologies and agents (Grassiani and Volinz 2016), 'humanitarian militarism' (Savell 2016) and the impact of reporting on concerns about the spread of infectious disease (Mason 2016). Contestations over in/visibility and in/security thus appear to define who counts as persons, who count as citizens, who counts as social groups and who defines the reach of state-based institutions.

Edges of sociality and self

A broader interest in exploringthe means throughwhich sociality and self are co-produced was also apparent in 2016, with an emphasis on theoretical explorations of personal experience and agency. For example, Francesca Merlan traces the popularisation of the term 'agency' in anthropology as an emancipatory political trope. Using the case of women's involvement in two wars in Nebilyer, Papua New Guinea, Merlan suggests that agency is best defined as 'competently living the relation between conditioned potentials and self-projection into often complex and conflicting circumstances' (Merlan 2016: 408). The circular problem of discussing personal experiences, which both create and are dependent on sociocultural conditions, produced a wealth of studies that take us to the edges of how we might understand selves and sociality. Contemporary concerns about uncertainty and one's position in the world could be read as an extension of the discussions left by the 'politics of ontology' (Holbraad and Pedersen 2014). For example, Maguire and Murphy explore how African Pentecostalism in Ireland enacts and explores the 'contradictions, doubts, boundaries and limitations' of ontological (in)security in a neoliberal world (Maguire and Murphy 2016). Many studies drew connections between experiences, practices and techniques of the self (Foucault 1988) to produce emic theories of persons. For example, Benjamin Smith shows how sorcery in the Cape York Peninsula, Australia acts as a theory of persons (Smith 2016), and Shapiro looks at rites in Brazil as a local means to conceptualise personal diversity (Shapiro 2016).

In discussing the edges of sociality and self, a focus on shared human experiences and traits proved fruitful theoretical ground. Birgit Meyer's discussions of religion and transcendence argued that a focus on the surplus generated from the interplay of things and bodily sensations, producing a 'wow' and sense of 'beyond' or 'sublime', allows us to investigate religious phenomena and personal experience without having to discredit others' beliefs nor align ourselves with them. Building on Robert Marett's concept of 'awe', Meyer suggests that experiences and modes of thinking outside of the self may be an important shared human trait (Meyer 2016). Bialecki shows how nominally similar forms of prayer can have divergent ontological effects that shape how the 'possibilities for collective wilful action' are sensed, 'a sense of what can be desired' (Bialecki 2016: 729). Bialecki's insights suggest a connection between 'awe' and the capacity for desire as shared traits, particularly in their relation to modes of cultivating and transforming selves. And Hackman provides an account of homosexual men in South Africa entering the Pentecostal church to cultivate heterosexual desires and a normative life, reminding us that religiosity as a technology of self can include elements of the transcendental while also serving as a difficult response to fraught political circumstances (Hackman 2016).

The capacity to traverse temporal, social and embodied boundaries through experiential

techniques was also widely discussed in 2016. Pain and suffering, Stuart Earle Strange argues, signifies the way that persons are embodied at the interstices of human and spirit relations in Ndyuka Maroon sociality and selfhood, connecting histories of slavery to technologies of the self in the present (Strange 2016). Tom McDonald shows how 'medicinal hospitality' in beauty salons in China connects medicinal cosmologies and their associated techniques to the cultivation of sociality and gender (McDonald 2016). Keeler's discussion of trans mediums who work as beauticians in South East Asia suggests creative parallels between spirit mediumship and other self-forming practices (Keeler 2016). Much like pain or prayer, movement is also a means to transform the self and translate across worlds, as Jan Kapusta shows in his description of Mayan pilgrimage as a historical and phenomenological experience (Kapusta 2016), and Annika Lems demonstrates through a biography of a Somali womanwho moved toAustralia in the early 2000s (Lems 2016). Patrick Laviolette applies similar logics to anthropologists themselves, suggesting that hitchhiking as a 'stochastic method' directs anthropologists to 'experiential zones of near-infinite possibilities' (Laviolette 2016: 398), transforming selves and creating new convivialities. Humour and gossip were also seen as transforming relations and selves. For example, Krishnan shows how middle-class women in India privately joke about sexual violence to separate their personal lives from the pressures of public respectability (Krishnan 2016). Hanks looks at how paranormal investigators negotiate the edges of irrational and normative rationality through humour that allows investigators to preemptively align themselves and their groups with hegemonic forms of rationality (Hanks 2016). And Winkler-Reid (2016) looks at how 'bitching' practices among girls in a London school allows us to rethink many of the philosophical assumptions we have about friendship, showing how emic ideas of persons in this context play with agonistic tropes of the authentic individual as much as do intimacies and solidarities. All of these varying analyses suggest the capacity to transform selves and sociality through transgressing the edges of experience, cosmologies and socialities.

Futures and humanity on edge

Perhaps the biggest spectre of our 'edgy times' is the question of 'when'. When will our inabilities to understand and/or act result in the impossibility to be selves, to be collectives and to be human? These questions can be exceptionally personal, as Iza Kavedžija shows in her work on ageing in Japan, where concerns about the economic, social and cultural viability of the country's future connect with personal concerns about one's own future, viewed through the lens of ikigai, a term that connotes meaning and joy in life (Kavedžija 2016). Kavedžija's connection of personal projects to the questions of Japan's future reflects a wider concern with future-oriented politics in 2016 (Salazar et al. 2017). In the JRAI issue on environmental futures edited by Matthews and Barnes this year, and as Ferry notes in her concluding remarks to the issue, the environmental problems we face have created a 'prognostic politics' that looks beyond what might be classically thought of as the remit of anthropology (Ferry 2016; Mathews and Barnes 2016). Ethnographic attention can benefit our understanding of unexpected and novel topics, such as Antarctic glaciologists (O'Reilly 2016), risk assessment debates in Alaska (Hébert 2016) and the roles that oil and water play as causal agents in political debates (Limbert 2016), reminding us of the continued connection between resources and politics (Chowdhury 2016). Evidently, ontological and ecological ethnographies of an extended humanity allow for a 'prognostic politics' that has become increasingly influential today.

Nowhere is the potential of prognostic politics more embedded in the discipline

than in the recent popularisation of the term 'Anthropocene', as emphasised in the Ethnos forum 'Anthropologists are talking – about the Anthropocene' (Haraway et al. 2016). In addition to its geological and ecological connotations, the Anthropocene signals a shift within the human sciences, and represents a 'problem' space around which scientific and popular debates collide. Increasing recognition of the entanglement between human worlds and other worlds, and an ecological re-calibration of what 'anthropos' means, is one of our greatest political imperatives in the eyes of many scholars today. As the collapse between the human and non-human occurs, however, it is important not to allow grand narratives to gloss over contingency, diversity and uncertainty. The anthropological engagement with thinking beyond people has allowed us to rest our human-oriented concepts precariously 'on edge' through kinship with the non-human, 'staying with the trouble' (Haraway 2016).

'Staying with the trouble' requires attention to detail, whether at microscopic, local or global scales, and anthropological methods may still be one of the best foundations to understand these interconnected changes. As Ursula Münster shows in her detailed ethnography of the dangerous work of relocating elephant bulls who raid local crops in South India, anthropologists are willing to deal with the hard work and potential aggression of multi-species research on the ground (Münster 2016). Moreover, anthropologists can fruitfully collaborate with scholars in other fields, such as in Moore's scholarship on the Bahamas as a 'vulnerable space' (A. Moore 2016), or Stensrud's work on the multiple political ontologies of water in Peru (Stensrud 2016). As Paul Basu and Ferdinand De Jong show in their special issue on the future-producing potential of colonial archives in postcolonial nations, 'prognostic politics' are not only about environmental and demographic issues, but also about 'utopian politics' (Basu and De Jong 2016: 6) made imaginable by other materialities. For example, Joshua Bell examines the use of objects, recordings and the anthropologist's own GPS mapping as testimony in battles over resource rights and compensation in Papua New Guinea. Reflecting on his own role in these archives, Bell notes how the multiple affordances of the archive have produced internal disputes and fissures that worked against his originally utopian goals (Bell 2016). Similarly, Christine Chivallon theorises the relation between history and memory through archives on slavery in the Caribbean (Chivallon 2016), and Elizabeth Edwards shows the utopian affordances of archives at 'home' through reflections on British photographic archives (Edwards 2016). Attention to the decolonial affordances of archives can challenge what we consider material culture and/or an archive, as Fouéré suggests in her account of the film Africa addio as archive (Fouéré 2016), and De Jong demonstrates in his account of the disciples of Bamba in Senegal, who circumvent official archival understandings of their faith's past through buildings and the cityscape (De Jong 2016).

Questions of the future appear to raise questions of the human, leading many to rethink a wide range of materialities and their recombinant meanings. Philippe Descola interrogates how we might define 'landscape' anthropologically, proposing that we see landscape as part of a wider process of 'transfiguration' (Descola 2016); Kristensen provides a detailed semiotic account of how la Santa Muerte has combined radically different symbolic forms in the Mexican Catholic faith (Kristensen 2016); and Stasik provides us with new approaches to sound in the context of Sierra Leone (Stasik 2016). Some have emphasised the capacity of things to effect social worlds, such as Schafer's study of material practices in New Zealand, which help mourners to explore notions of authenticity and biography in secularised funerary practices (Schafer 2016).

Others explore the social effects of recombinant practices and the power of graphical forms. Brady and Bradley, for instance, examine the agency of graphic forms in sorcery in relation to rock art in Kurrmurnnyini, North Australia (Brady and Bradley 2016); Cant discusses the role that 'indigenous art' aesthetics plays in changing power relations in wood-carving art markets in Mexico (Cant 2016); Vasantkumar conducts a close material and historic analysis of several collections of coins to reveal how abstract theorisation often conceals Eurocentric theorisations of currency (Vasantkumar 2016); and McGuire's paper on barter exchanges in Kazakhstan describes how money is imbued with obligations, leading many to prefer the exchange of livestock as a less obligating form of trade (McGuire 2016). Questions of materiality, ontology and futures coupled with detailed empirical attention help us to approach the edges of global political and economic thinking.

Disciplinary edges

As Joseph Hankins noted in his review of the year 2014 in American Ethnologist, moral optimism generated from alter-political thinking, and debates around the conditions that make alter-political thinking possible have shaped recent anglophone anthropology (Hankins 2015). Discussion surrounding Euro-anthropology and its scholarship in 2016 can be framed in a similar way. Europe, as a nexus of political concern among Euro-anthropologists, has become a site for alter-political optimism. Where we see problems, we also see solidarities, differing realities, opportunities and new political efforts. The challenges that European scholars and institutions face, and their position at the edges of the epistemic Anglo-American centre, allow them to think in innovative ways. Efforts to be optimistic in our alter-politics, as Hankins suggests, also necessitates scepticism and challenging methods. I have attempted to demonstrate how the 'political turn' of Euro-anthropology leading up to 2016 has afforded a range of insights, taking us to the edges of how we think about states, social life, humans and our shared future. Reading this year's diverse and perceptive work, my own research specialisation on Sino-Japanese mobilities prompted me to question how it might apply to the Japanese or Chinese context, numerically marginalised in this year's publications. The Eurocentric tendency of this year's Euro-anthropology, which focused mostly on Europe and its former colonial spaces, did not leave me feeling optimistic, even though I understood the reasons why it had occurred.

As someone born and trained in Australia, connected to European institutions and networks, but employed and researching in East Asia, my position as a Euro-anthropologist is dubious, causing me to confront 'edges' at multiple turns in my own life. Thus, the sense of urgency to bolster Europe's position in anthropology has seemed somewhat strange to me. Euro-anthropology, much like Australian anthropology, is positioned at the edges of the epistemic centre of anglophone anthropology, but it remains very much part of that world; unlike, say, Japanese- or Chinese-language scholarship. The dearth of publications on large parts of world in Euro-anthropology in 2016,[2] coupled with a similar trend at EASA 2016 in Milan, left me wondering whether all the talk about Europe is not having unfortunate effects.

Gordon Matthews, speaking as a North American who has lived, worked and researched in East Asia for over 20 years, argues that the globalisation of universities worldwide is bringing the tension between a world anthropology and world anthropologies into stark relief (G. Mathews 2015). This tension is apparent in the realm of language, where English-language scholarship dominates what counts as good or politically

relevant scholarship. The challenge of thinking across European languages has as many poetic effects as obstacles; for those who grew up in languages vastly different from English (such as Japanese), however, the divide between languages may prove too challenging. Embracing Euro-anthropology as a form of 'critical Eurocentrism' should not be a question of whether Europe is marginalised, but rather an embrace of a position 'off-centre', where assumptions about human worlds that are epistemically central to 'Europe' are brought into question. This may require looking past the boundaries of Europe, and welcoming more non-Europeans to conduct ethnographies of Europe. This is already happening among early-career scholars caught in the double bind of neoliberal research imperatives. As Lili di Puppo suggests in her comments in the SA/AS forum on early-career Euro-anthropologists, many people find it necessary to move far away from friends and family, working in institutions and projects at the perceived edges of their academic world (Martínez et al. 2016). I am such a person, and have found being cast to the periphery very fruitful, if not at times personally painful, disorienting and time-consuming.

The parochial nature of national research funding imperatives, with impact metrics and little space for long-term fieldwork, raises questions as to how we might resist Euro-anthropology feeding the 'just-in-time' research imperatives of neoliberal governance. By focusing on Europe too much as an object of research, do we make life more difficult for those who conduct research elsewhere? It is much easier to demonstrate the 'impact' of Europe-based projects to governmental funding bodies, after all. Furthermore, how do we prevent ourselves from reproducing parochial logics anathema to contemporary anthropology? To reiterate Nicholas De Genova's commentary on Dace Dzenovska's 'ethnography of Europe' in 2014, positing 'Europe as a problem' is an important step towards the possibility of a critical Euro-anthropology. We should not worry about Euro-anthropology's position at the 'edges', but rather revel in these uncertainties as a source of vitality and a means to queering the discipline.

As the published account of a roundtable on Queer Anthropology in Tallinn 2014 noted (Graham 2016), 'what anthropology can offer to queer epistemologies is first and foremost ethnographically grounded perspectives that are not necessarily Euro- or American-centric' (p. 365). Anthropology is 'already, to a certain extent, queer', constituted by 'multiple margins where queer perspectives can fall on very fertile ground' (p. 377). Conceptually and politically, the year 2016 in Euro-anthropology demonstrated that venturing to the edges of our political thinking, queering assumptions about 'who gets what, when, how', much like going to the geographic edges of 'the world' in historic anthropology, allowed for a distinct kind of alter-political thinking. In pursuing this course, let us not forget that 'going elsewhere' and the manifold defamiliarisations that accompany it, can also be a useful way of challenging our own ethnocentrism.

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246 JAMIE COATES

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