

OF COSMOPOLITANISM AND COSMOLOGIES

2nd Joint Biennial CASA – SASA Conference

September 2-3, 2011, Telč, Czech Republic

CALL FOR PAPERS

The subject of cosmopolitanism has lately received particular attention in the social sciences. A moral and political need to theorize the complex ways in which it is possible to tackle local and supra-local loyalties has inspired much of this scholarly debate. While we should not overlook the underlying political urgency – captured by Ulrich Beck’s question, “how ought societies to handle ‘otherness’ and ‘boundaries’ during the present crisis of global interdependency?” – the interest in the basic assumption of the possibility of “openness to the world and to the other” as an ethical stance or a way of life has a special anthropological bearing.

There are two grounds on which anthropology engages with the subject of cosmopolitanism. The first relates to anthropology *per se*, to its outlook and positioning as a way of knowing. It is believed that ethnographic practice presumes cosmopolitan perceptual abilities. However in the special issue of *SA* (2010/4) on “cosmopolitan anthropology” the editor points out that whereas anthropologists have traditionally valued their methods for receptiveness to various experiences and cultural pluralism, they have usually been less prepared to construe these qualities in their research subjects. It follows that to accomplish anthropology as a cosmopolitan practice, it is necessary to reconsider our methods of inquiry in a way that grants our research partners equal capacity of relating to differences not as definite but strategic, of being ethnographers in their way. The second ground concerns more directly social theory as it emerges from within anthropology. After substantial criticism was levelled against various analytic categories of commonality, which undermined their universal aspirations, the question of how to theorize ontologies of sociality as they materialize in various cosmologies still lingers. On the one hand we are proposed a plurality of cosmopolitanisms (rooted cosmopolitanism, vernacular cosmopolitanism, Asian and African cosmopolitanism), while on the other there are discussions of cosmopolitanism that reach beyond the normative definition and mark new directions of exploration. They range from questioning the adequacy of the cosmopolitan approach as an alternative to other ontologies of the social (Bruno Latour) to detecting a latent and implicit controversy over the meaning of subjectivity in the humanities (Huon Wardle).

For this conference we propose to start from the basic assumption that cosmopolitanism could be approached as an existing mode of existence shifting in nature and effect with the complex social, political and cultural relations in which it is embedded. As such it can be investigated independently though not necessarily regardless of reference to philosophical conceptions. If cosmopolitanism is

born of a negotiation with otherness, what are the templates around which ontologies of sociality arise? The question seems to us even more pertinent in view of the development of our discipline in Central and Eastern Europe. The anthropological production that issues from the region is marked by an attention to social cleavages and boundaries and theorization thereof. We believe it is time to start looking beyond this paradigm.

The organizers of the 2nd biennial conference of the Czech Association for Social Anthropology (CASA) and the Slovak Association of Social Anthropologists (SASA) invite scholars and students of social anthropology and related disciplines to address the following questions and to develop their own themes for panels focusing directly or indirectly on the anthropological investigation of cosmopolitanism, understood most broadly as an historically, socially or culturally situated phenomenon:

- The narrative of internationalism during socialism operated sometimes explicitly in opposition to cosmopolitanism. What is the plight of this narrative after 1990?
- Conceptions of self and “other” are often revealed in relation to cosmological settings. What are the current ontologies of self and other in post-socialist Europe?
- The ‘culturalization of poverty’ could be seen as a new millennial narrative. How can we read this global escape to culture against existing social inequalities?
- Kant linked cosmopolitanism to the principle of universal hospitality. What could be made of that link if we take into account the renewed interest of anthropology in hospitality?
- Do new religious movements influencing various marginal groups in CEE reveal any cosmopolitan ethos?
- In the increasingly interconnected and complex world new cosmo-political alliances and identities have been forming across social and environmental movements (around issues such as global poverty, climate justice, agriculture etc.). How are the local and trans-local loyalties and stakes played out in these movements?

Organisation:

This two-day conference will consist of one plenary session focused on the central theme followed by parallel panels on various themes. The keynote speakers will be: Huon Wardle (University of St. Andrews) and Jonathan Friedman (EHESS and University of California in San Diego). The language of the plenary session is English. The languages of the panel sessions are English, Slovak, and Czech. However, we will adopt the rule that if one paper accepted to a given panel is in English, all panel papers will have to be in English.

Important deadlines:

Paper proposals should be sent via email **by July 8, 2011.**

If you are interested in organizing **panel sessions dedicated to a particular topic**, you should send panel proposals, names of proposed participants and abstracts **by July 8, 2011.**

Abstracts should not exceed 300 words.

Individual applicants will be informed about the outcome of their paper proposal by July 22, 2011. All proposals as well as organizational inquiries shall be sent to SASA.CASA.11@gmail.com

The final conference program with titles and abstracts of panel sessions will be announced via email during August 2011.

Venue:

The conference will take place in the south Bohemian town of Telč at the Masaryk University learning centre situated in the former Jesuit's college (<http://www.muni.cz/uct/general/about>). The premises offer conference rooms (a lecture hall for the plenary session and graduate student conference and seminar rooms for panel sessions, all equipped with conference technology and access to internet) as well as reasonably priced accommodation for participants (300CZK/person/night) in 3-5 bed rooms. Please visit <http://www.muni.cz/uct/services/accomm> for more details. We have booked enough rooms (70 places) for all participants.

The conference fee of 600 CZK (25 Euros) covers the costs of the two-day conference and a dinner on the second day of conference for each participant. It is payable upon registration at the conference venue.

The conference preparation committee:

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David Kocman, University of Kent, UK and CASA

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