

Czech Association for Social Anthropology
is pleased to Invite you to

209th GELLNER SEMINAR

Thursday 6th June 2024 4 p.m.
5th floor Seminar room, Institute of Ethnology Czech
Academy of Science, Na Florenci 3 Prague 1

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Doing Public Anthropology in Turbulent Times

In this lecture, which is adapted from my most recent book, *Wisdom from the Edge*, I attempt to show how anthropological insights about the human condition are important elements in any future blueprint for social and cultural change. It is no exaggeration to state that the world is in trouble. Our routine social, cultural, and political and ecological expectations have been undermined. As David Vine recently wrote: “The Covid-19 pandemic, the global economic crisis, the unprecedented uprisings for justice have demonstrated the urgency of dedicating our skills, anthropological or otherwise, to healing the world.” In this presentation, I suggest that anthropologists can produce rigorously researched narrative works that are attuned to an age of crises. Those works, in turn, can convey to the world profoundly important anthropological insights that embody much-needed indigenous knowledge--in my case West African knowledge-- to a world in dire need of indigenous wisdom. In the end, a more intense focus on writing-as-art can ensure that our slowly developed insights can become fundamental elements in the public sphere, elements that contribute directly to healing a world confronting a set of life-threatening social, cultural, ecological, and political crises.

Paul Stoller is a Permanent Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study at Friedrich Alexander University in Erlangen-Nuremberg. He has been conducting anthropological research for more than 30 years. In his early work, he wrote about the religion of the Songhay people living in the Republics of Niger and Mali in West Africa. His studies primarily focused on magic, sorcery, and spirit possession. Since 1992, Stoller has conducted ethnographic research among West African immigrants in New York City, which has resulted in the publication of numerous essays, 16 books, including scholarly monographs, biographies, memoirs and novels. In 2002, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) awarded him the Textor Prize for Excellence in Anthropology. In 2013, King Carl XVI Gustav of Sweden awarded him the Retzius Gold Medal for his scientific contributions to anthropology. In 2015, AAA awarded him The Anthropology in Media Award for his ongoing anthropology blogs for the Huffington Post and Psychology Today.