

SESSION 7

GLOBAL INSECURITIES, LOCAL CONCERNS:
THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE PUBLIC

PAPER ABSTRACTS

Gender, Kinship, and the Ecology of HIV/AIDS in Africa: Local Dynamics of a Global Disease

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In the 30 years since HIV/AIDS surfaced in the world, it has been dealt with broadly as a health problem and a crucial economic, social and security issue. The disease is also seen as a challenge to social behaviour and institutional or systemic inequalities. In Africa, issues of prevention and care are looked at in the context of economic and social impacts of AIDS on individuals and governments. Consequently, prevention strategies are usually directed at individual behaviour change, with calls on governments and international health institutions for more support financially. Various structural factors, from the level of the global economy to education, marriage choices, authority, and birth order in the family converge to influence women's choices, for example, which, in turn, make them more vulnerable to HIV infection. But the moral practices surrounding HIV/AIDS affliction and death give expression to families and households, and individuals' continuity within kinship and other social units where gender, hierarchical and authority roles are prominent in the communities (Dilger 2008). I call for more attention on local level dynamics in the context of political ecology, which encompasses the relationship between political, economic, and social factors with environmental issues and changes. This paper is based on my long ethnographic research on HIV/AIDS among the Akan ethnic group in Ghana.

Keywords: HIV/AIDS, kinship, Akan matrilineage, gender, political ecology, Ghana, Africa

Sources of security and order in the aftermath of ethnic violence: the case of Maluku (Eastern Indonesia)

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At the turn of the 21st century, nation-states ceased to be the only agents in charge of maintaining civil order, peace and security. Even as the failure to maintain them has become an increasing global concern, there has also been a widespread interest to promote peaceful social life by intervening in community life and identifying mechanisms of conflict resolution in local institutions. The question addressed in this paper arises from the diversifying scale of society and agency invoked in conflict situations and narratives. I discuss a history of ethnic conflict in the Eastern Indonesian islands of Maluku where the collapse of the national government was followed by a collapse of law and order at more local levels. In the first phase of this process, a network of local relations and social affinities was turned into a generalized opposition between Christians and Muslims. Efforts to resolve the conflict and violence which took place between 1999-2001 focused on defusing this global interpretation by affirming the

narratives of responsibility and authority among local actors. A few years later the state government reaffirmed itself as the source of civil order and security, reaffirming a political economy centered around natural resource extraction by foreign companies and fishing fleets.

The Ambon conflict suggests that social and political relations are routinized at several scales. State, society and the global human rights discourse alternate as the sites of routinizing representation and agency. The issue for anthropology is how to handle the ideological sense of order which results from their entanglements in a particular historical situation. How is it possible to remain sensitive to local accounts of responsibility and authority and yet contribute to an understanding of political processes of global importance? We cannot ignore the local effects of state power, foreign corporations and global institutions. At the same time, these effects are far from predictable and uniform. We can understand them better by paying attention to the symbolic categories and practices which produce new, routinized order after national and global crises.

Tradition as a Modern Strategy: Indigenous Knowledge as Local Response to Globalization in Nigeria/Africa

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Globalization is now widely perceived in Africa as a new version of earlier forms of external domination and exploitation. Its economic and welfare benefits are unevenly shared, and appear to bypass or to retard progress in many countries of the developing world. But Marshall Sahlins has rightly emphasized the need for all peoples “to indigenize the forces of global modernity, and turn them to their own ends”, as the real impact of globalization depends largely on the responses developed at the local level. The challenge for Africa is, therefore, how to engage and cope with globalization and other external influences in a way that is compatible with local values and priorities; how to strike the right balance between global and local cultures in national governance and development.

For a long time African customs and traditions were misperceived as irrational and incompatible with the conventional strategies of development. But the economic crisis and policy failures of the 1980s and ‘90s, and the current threat of global recession have exposed flaws in the Western, neo-liberal, ‘external agency’ model of development and human rights imposed from the top by national governments and international development agencies. Because of growing concern about widespread poverty, widening inequalities and environmental deterioration, there is renewed interest in an alternative approach to development which emphasizes the cultural dimension of development, and the overlooked potential of indigenous knowledge as “the single largest knowledge resource not yet mobilized in the development enterprise”. This paper considers how indigenous knowledge and practice can be put to good use in support of local governance and human welfare and sustainable development in Nigeria; how development policies and programmes can be made to reflect local priorities, and build upon and strengthen local knowledge, capacity and organization, especially in such vital areas as agriculture and natural resource management, law review and conflict resolution, education, health care and poverty alleviation. Indigenous knowledge is here used as a model for rethinking and redirecting the development process, and as a way to involve, enable and empower local actors to take part in their own development.

The paper concludes with some general reflections on the indigenous knowledge movement as an appropriate local response to globalization and Western knowledge dominance, and as a way to promote cultural identity and inter-cultural dialogue on African development. A fair and more inclusive globalization should be based on respect for cultural diversity, and should provide a new context and opportunity to overcome inequality between and within nations, and to strengthen global solidarity.

International/global social work discussion versus ethnographically grounded local perspectives to social work locally and globally

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In academic and professional social work discussions, international, increasingly termed global social work makes a distinct layer of its own. As a prefix to social work, the terms international/global emphasize broader than national interest in social problems, their causes, and possibilities to alleviate them through social work knowhow and interventions. Earlier, international social work was mostly identified as practice adhered to the international organizations, such as the Red Cross or the United Nations, cooperation and exchange between social workers practicing in different countries, an umbrella term for anything that concerns social work in more than one country, or as comparative research on social work in different countries. Lately, 'global' has been increasingly seen as the overall context of different local practices. Several authors are concerned of interdependence of people, and people and the nature, and claim that social workers should have capacity to be aware of global issues and to conceive their own role globally. At the same time, however, social work, as well as who is identified as a social worker, have remained highly context-dependent and often contested matters.

Therefore, different local perspectives and practice positions shed differing light also on the idea and phenomenon of international social work. In this paper, I utilize my own location as a Finnish social work researcher and teacher (with the educational qualification of a social worker) as well as my learning gained in ethnographic work with the Indian (Orissan) theatre group Natya Chetana (whose theatre work is locally seen as a form of voluntary, political social work), as vantage points to reflect upon the discussion on international/ global social work as it appears in academic journals and textbooks.

State, politics and “global interventions” in Madagascar

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According to the World Bank (2010) policy distortions are limiting Africa's agricultural potential and have reduced investment initiatives and this applies also to Madagascar. In Madagascar the rearrangement of use and ownership of the land lead to violent coup d'état in 2009. As former president of Madagascar leased “waste land” to South Korean company for 99 years, people in the capital rose against him and NGOs were concerned of securing small scale farmers right to land and livelihood as well as Madagascar's “precious flora & fauna” in multiple national parks and reserves in the island. After the coup d'état illegal loggings in the national parks as well as tavy, slash-and-burn farming

increased making conservationists worried about the situation and calling for action from Malagasy government.

The main idea of this paper is to explore the state and politics in Madagascar that is characterized by the presence of multiple NGOs and multilateral organisations that are “developing” people and political institutions in order they could better participate in global economy. One may ask whether these outside actors recognize Madagascar's centuries-long trade across the Indian Ocean. But as James Ferguson (2007: 76) has pointed out, the problem of African nation-building is not simply underdevelopment caused by outside exploitation. The issue for him is whether political and economic regimes are justified in a language which makes moral sense to Africans, who still assert themselves as citizens of independent countries. In the same way, we can ask what people of Madagascar make of the contractual, legal authority under which foreign corporations are presently expanding their agricultural and mining operations in their island. Extractive industries and internationally funded environmental protection programs exemplify "global intervention" which is turning national territory into a selectively disordered and divided landscape. To understand this landscape, I argue that anthropologists should understand social relations with their specific history.