



Eduardo P. Archetti. (Photo courtesy of the University of Oslo)

Eduardo P. Archetti (1943–2005)

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Eduardo “Lali” Archetti—an Argentine anthropologist who settled in Oslo; taught in Norway, Ecuador, Argentina, and Guatemala; and did research in Argentina, Ecuador, France, Norway, Burkina Faso, Zambia, and Mali—died in Oslo on June 6, 2005. His contributions are located at the crossroads of Latin American and European anthropology and articulate the debates of the late 1960s with those of the 1990s.

He combined research, teaching and institution building, political engagement and academia, and the use of anthropology to imagine new research objects and theoretical categories to look at old topics anew and to account for his own life experience as a wanderer through centers and peripheries.

Born on April 12, 1943, in one of the economically poorest and culturally richest provinces in Northern Argentina, he and his three sisters grew up in Santiago del Estero city. Their father, a doctor, was of Italian descent; his mother’s ancestry was French. Archetti went to boarding school at the military Liceo General Paz in Córdoba but had to move back to Santiago after his father’s death (Lobato 2004). He finished secondary school in 1960, but instead of following his family’s mandate to study medicine and eventually run his father’s clinic, he went to Buenos Aires and chose to study law.

At that time the University of Buenos Aires was both a main destination for the sons and daughters of the provincial elites and a school of political activism. However, the historical tensions between Buenos Aires and the districts that preceded the Argentine nation, the provinces, were hard to erase. National inequalities surfaced in a native racism against the dark-skinned “people from the interior,” as opposed to white, modern, and European *porteño* (from the port of Buenos Aires) cosmopolitanism. Archetti shared with other *provincianos* the feeling of coming from the Argentine periphery.

After spending three years in law school, too short a time to earn a degree but long enough to become involved in student politics, Archetti transferred to the sociology program, then one of the most innovative schools in the social sciences. Its head, Gino Germani, who is considered the founding father of the so-called “modern and scientific sociology” in Argentina, encouraged empirical research and theoretical reflection. Archetti read the classics of social theory in sociology and social anthropology, met visiting professors such as Ralph Beals and Aaron Cicourel, and mingled with the emerging intellectual elite of the Latin American social sciences of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Archetti earned his undergraduate degree in 1967, then left with his partner Mónica Peralta Ramos for Bariloche, in Northern Patagonia, where he became a junior researcher

in the Sociology Department at the *Fundación Bariloche*, a think tank founded in 1963. Under the supervision of Peter Heintz, and surrounded by researchers in the social sciences, ecology, biology, and physics, Archetti analyzed “anti-status quo movements” and the development of the education system in relation to social structure and economics in Latin America, from a hard statistical macrosociological approach (Archetti 1968; Archetti and Heintz 1969). Although he would gradually depart from that perspective, his data confirmed Argentina’s singularity: Political discontinuity could persist even with the highest levels of literacy, formal education, industrialization, and urbanization in Latin America.

In 1969, Archetti went to Paris with a scholarship to the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. He earned his Doctorat de Troisième Cycle in 1976, under the supervision of Alain Touraine and Maurice Godelier. In addition to studying with faculty members such as Claude Meillassoux, Georges Balandier, and Dan Sperber, Archetti met visiting professor Sidney Mintz. In the latter’s seminar on Caribbean anthropology, he rediscovered social anthropology. Mintz’s approach emphasized history as central and alive in social structure, values, and norms (and at Mintz’s urging, Archetti attended courses by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Jacques Le Goff). Moreover, in this view, material conditions entered the social process, along the lines of the cultural ecology launched by Julian Steward. Mintz’s experience on Steward’s project in Puerto Rico also testified to the benefits of community studies situated in broader settings and conditions far beyond local reach. Understanding that the plantation system had shaped Puerto Rican society through the global-imperial requirements of the world market of goods and labor, Archetti tried to apply that perspective to sugar in a revolutionary context. He wrote a proposal for fieldwork in Cuba but could not obtain Cuban permission to carry out the project.

Before returning to Argentina for his doctoral fieldwork, Archetti accepted a scholarship from the Norwegian Research Council to spend some time at the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo. There he met anthropology student Kristi-Anne Stølen, who would be his research and life partner for 34 years.

In the early 1970s, rural studies in Argentina were focused on the Pampa region dominated by large capitalist enterprises, while Argentine anthropologists, calling themselves “ethnologists,” were concerned mainly with the Indian populations of Patagonia and Chaco, which they conceived of as isolated communities. A few social anthropologists, however, were carving out other areas of the Argentine agrarian landscape for their research. On the advice of these colleagues, Archetti and Stølen settled on a rural area in the northeastern portion of Santa Fe province, which they called “Santa Cecilia.” They did fieldwork there in 1973–74 on a grant from the Ford Foundation.

Santa Cecilia, whose economy was based on cattle raising and growing sunflower, peanut, and, above all, cotton crops, was inhabited by *colonos* (settlers) of Friulian descent

who had arrived in 1870. This area was neither the wild Chaco nor the backward *campesino* North (as it was often depicted); instead it offered myriad ways of life and forms of economic and social organization. In addition, it was the site of heretofore unknown unionism and political movements launched under Roman Catholic auspices in 1971 to oppose low market prices for their commodities. The *Ligas Agrarias*, a middle- and small-producers’ movement, became the focus of Archetti and Stølen’s project, “The Social Organization of Peasant Leagues in Santa Fe, Argentina.”

In one of the most influential books of the time in Latin American rural studies, Archetti and Stølen (1975; see also 1977) showed that the colonos of Santa Cecilia were neither typical Latin American campesinos nor plain capitalists; they relied on family labor while hiring temporary *criollo* workers and, above all, accumulating capital. The colono economy, they argued, had to be considered not as a stage on the road to full capitalism but rather as a social organization of production in itself. Taking a critical Marxist standpoint, Archetti and Stølen strove to connect abstract sociological theories with classic anthropological work in tribal groups and late anthropological developments in peasant studies in Latin America. Alexander Chayanov and Eric Wolf were their main interlocutors (Archetti 1975, 1977).

Archetti and Stølen were not alone in this approach. A cohort of social anthropologists (including Esther Hermitte, Santiago Bilbao, Hebe Vessuri, Carlos Herrán, Leopoldo Bartolomé, and Norwegian anthropologist Marit Melhuus) was putting together social anthropology, Marxism, and rural studies, combined with intensive long-term fieldwork. *Desarrollo Económico*, the journal of the Institute of Economic and Social Development (IDES), was a forum for their work. Archetti published six articles in this journal between 1968 and 1975.

In 1974, this scholarly movement formed a discussion group on “social articulation.” Sponsored by CLACSO (Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, or Social Sciences Latin American Council), it was based in Buenos Aires and chaired by Hermitte. It aimed at the study of social and cultural relations among groups and individuals without resorting to the loaded categories of “acculturation” or “syncretism.” Besides a book on processes of social articulation (Hermitte and Bartolomé 1977), its most important contribution was the weaving of a broad network of Latin American anthropologists devoted to the study of complex societies.

The group met for the first time on July 1, 1974, the day of Juan Perón’s death. The executive power led by Perón’s widow, Isabel Martínez de Perón, then resorted to death squads known as “Triple A” (the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance) to put out any sign of guerrilla or union activities. With the military coup of March 1976, the armed forces seized the government and carried out clandestine repression. As political conditions worsened, scholars doing fieldwork in Argentina were necessarily involved with the fate of the people they were studying. Archetti became the *antropólogo liguero* (the league’s anthropologist), the editor

of the *Ligas* bulletin, and the organizer of the League's presentations to the Santa Fe government. Between 1974 and 1978, young *Liga* leaders were shot or disappeared; two leaders from Santa Cecilia are still missing. Archetti's account of the leagues came out as the final chapter of his doctoral thesis (1976) but had to wait 12 years to be published in Argentina (Archetti 1988).

With the field closed to them, Archetti and Stølen left for Oslo, where Archetti (now a new father) wrote up his doctoral thesis. He then joined the department of anthropology at the University of Oslo as a research fellow. He was appointed as associate professor in 1980 and as full professor in 1986.

With Oslo as his academic base, in 1976–77 Archetti went to Ecuador to launch a two-year Master's program in rural sociology at the Catholic University of Quito. This program was groundbreaking, turning rural studies into one of the most important areas of the Ecuadorian social sciences. As in all of his stays in Latin America, Archetti combined teaching and research, starting in 1977 with some fieldwork in El Chaupi (Pichincha) on the effects of agrarian reform (Archetti 1981a, 1981b).

In 1981, Stølen became the coordinator of the Agricultural University of Norway's research program in Zambia, beginning the couple's involvement in Africa. From 1987 to 1993, Archetti served as a consultant for the World Bank, the Ministry of Development Cooperation of Norway, and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The latter ministry funded several programs on rural development for the International Labor Organization (ILO): the Village Land Management Project in Burkina Faso; the Cooperatives Program in the semidesert sub-Saharan Sahel in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Ivory Coast; and the Natural Resource Management Program in Mali. None of these projects resulted in a book, but Archetti wrote an article on the contributions of social anthropology to development agencies (1991b). Other conclusions came out in coauthored policy papers (Archetti and Dubois 1996a, 1996b; Archetti et al. 1997).

Archetti had already used his anthropological expertise to advise on development. In 1983, at the request of the Ecuador Ministry of Agriculture, he evaluated the national program to increase guinea-pig production, doing six months of fieldwork with a research team. Archetti summarized a 424-page report on the evaluation (1984) in a small book, published in Spanish (1991a) and then in English as *Guinea Pigs: Food, Symbol and Conflict of Knowledge in Ecuador* (1997). In plain language, Archetti applied a sophisticated theoretical argument and ethnographic support to demonstrate why programs to industrialize the meat of the *cuy* were doomed to failure. The *cuy* is a singular pet raised by women in the female domain of the kitchen, to be eaten on special occasions, exchanged, and occasionally sold; they take part in family and community life in celebrations, divinatory practices, and healing. Archetti's book includes a debate on the *crue* and the *cuiif* (lit., the uncooked and the cooked) applied to the northern Andes, a discussion of the categories of wild and domestic animals, a comparison of eight com-

munities studied by his research team, and five recipes of cooked, broiled, roasted, and fried *cuy*. The text, as small and meaningful as is the *cuy* to the rural dwellers, proved to be useful to development agents, government officials, and scholars alike. But *Guinea Pigs* was also a turning point in Archetti's work: Beginning with issues he had tackled in Santa Cecilia, he moved to other dimensions, such as food, gender, and hybridization.

In December 1983, as Archetti finished his Andean fieldwork, democracy returned to Argentina. After an absence of seven years, he returned to the country and was appointed as director of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) in Buenos Aires. His institutional work occupied half the year, allowing him to pursue exploratory field and archival work. Archetti's research interests were changing, as was the field of anthropology, the world, and the Argentine political climate. The revolution was out of reach and Marxism was no longer hegemonic—or at least it required complementary theoretical frameworks to answer new questions in topics such as gender, writing, hybridization, nationalism, and globalization. Archetti dealt with all these topics through three emblematic areas of Argentine public culture: football (soccer), polo, and tango. His return to Argentina in 1984 was the starting point of this new intellectual venture.

The selection of these three male areas was inspired by Brazilian anthropologist Roberto Da Matta (1978), who studied popular heroes and carnival as means of access into Brazilians' reflections on their national community. For Archetti, polo and football, as well as tango dance and lyrics, were constitutive models and mirrors of Argentinianess, concrete social ways through which Argentinians imagine their national community and create their domestic and foreign moral Others. Through sports and dance, Argentinians construct the moralities of the nation (Archetti et al. 1995; Archetti and Dyck 2003). Furthermore, because football, polo, and tango have become national badges worldwide, Argentinians also use them to find a place in the world.

In numerous presentations over the past 15 years, Archetti explored these theoretical ideas, with anecdotes and stories that he delivered with highly performative power. *Masculinities: Football, Polo and the Tango in Argentina* (1999b) brings together over 40 articles originally published in Norwegian, French, English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese. The fact that his own background instructed him in the Argentine passion for football, provided him with some basic knowledge of horses and equestrian sports, and gave him an affinity with the tango lyrics of bygone days made Archetti an active interlocutor who could argue and exchange information with his informants. However, such closeness was balanced by his life in northern Europe, which distanced him from the quintessential Argentinian and helped him put "Argentinianess" in line with history, politics, and society.

This last research phase bequeathed an important contribution to anthropology in several respects. First, he

provided a new understanding of Argentine nationalism and of processes of nation-building. He discovered a world of social practice through which Argentinean men “imagined” and re-created their national political community as a moral one. Second, he observed that such re-creations were embodied in hybrid models of masculinity through which new traditions were constantly produced, as he also showed with *asado* (barbeque; see 1999a) and planned to do with red Malbec wine. This point belied the current Argentine (actually *porteño*) assumption that this country of immigrants could generate no tradition at all. Third, he called attention to the internal alterity of masculine formations, in which gender met with the rural and the urban, the port and the interior, the white and the creole. Fourth, he engaged the extensive discussions of hybridity in the literature of the 1990s, maintaining that people coined their own theories and practical models of hybridization, turning such “male hybrids” into entities with transgressive power that helped envisage alternative moralities of the social order. And last, he situated sports and leisure as serious matters involving the social formation and reproduction of modernity and change.

Archetti tenaciously resisted being labeled a “sportologist,” even though he added car racing and boxing—represented by men from the interior with different skills and class and ethnic background—to his repertoire (2001). He conceived of his work as located at the intersection of Argentine nationalism, politics, and culture, as means of exploring Argentine theories of hybridization and hybrid traditions in a “melting-pot” country imagined by creolized immigrants. All these activities, which had made Argentina famous worldwide, portrayed images of men and male-female relationships that dwelt on the margins of bourgeois values of man, family, space, and time.

In his research, Archetti had to take account of the vast quantity of written material read and reflected on in a largely literate country. In the midst of anthropological debates on ethnographic writing and authority, he decided to tackle writing from a different disciplinary perspective. After a conference on the Multiplicity of Writing in Anthropological Analysis held in Oslo in 1992, he edited *Exploring the Written* (1994), a plural debate that adds complexity to the idea that “anthropologists (just) write.” The volume explores all the ways that anthropologists read and write, and portrays such activities as historical practices that must therefore be historicized.

Archetti influenced social anthropology in Ecuador, Norway, and Guatemala (where he chaired an M.A. program in social anthropology at the University of San Carlos in 2000–01) by building programs and introducing innovative research directions. But in Argentina, where he taught courses at several universities—Litoral (Santa Fe), Misiones (in Posadas), Buenos Aires, and San Martín (Buenos Aires)—his impact on students and scholars was more informal and more passionate, based on personal ties, charming presentations, and long discussions about Argentine politics, anthropology, and football.

Although he decided to stay abroad, Archetti maintained his commitment to his mother country, which he renewed continually, while crossing all the disciplinary, cultural, political, and territorial boundaries of his multisited life. With an Argentine Italian passion and a *santiagueño* accent to his English, he became one of the founding members of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA), its general secretary in 1993–94, and the editor of *Social Anthropology/Antropologie Sociale*, the EASA journal, between 1999 and 2002.

Anthropology was, to Archetti, a deeply human social science of public import, with enough room for body practices, emotions and belief, and the taste and joy of life. He was a field site himself: a place of alterity; a sociologist turned anthropologist; an Argie in Oslo; an analyst of tango who danced the *santiagueño chacarera* (a folklore dance of the Argentine Northwest). At his request, the music at his funeral in Norway included *chacarera*, Astor Piazzola’s tango, and a saxophone playing “What a Wonderful World.” Alexandra, his tango-dancer daughter, thanked him for giving her both roots and wings. Kristopher, his filmmaker son, chose to spend his first fatherless Christmas in Santa Cecilia.

NOTE

Acknowledgments. I thank Maria Laura Lagos for her editing suggestions and Sydel Silverman for her final editing work. I thank Beatriz Fant from Fundación Bariloche, Argentina; Getulio Steinbach, Irene Ororbia, and Miguel Ballario from IDES; Thomas H. Ericksen and Marit Melhuus from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Oslo; and Fernando García and Simón Pachano from FLACSO-Quito, for helping me reconstruct Archetti’s whereabouts. Above all, I thank Kristi-Anne Stølen for sharing the bits and pieces of Archetti’s ways into our anthropological and human lives.

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