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Ten years of *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale*. Ambiguities and contradictions

Historical context

On 14 January 1989, twenty-two anthropologists from twelve western European countries assembled in Castelgandolfo, outside Rome.[1] The Wenner-Gren Foundation provided the necessary funding and Professor Bernardo Bernardi from the University of Rome found the ideal setting: the think-tank of the ENI, the Italian state petroleum company. We were supposed to discuss the possibility of creating an European association of anthropologists. We represented ourselves, not universities, departments or professional associations, and we were not committed to anything in advance. The original plan was to have a preliminary discussion, exploring possibilities and trying to find a common scholarly ground in a new and renovated political climate in Europe. During the meeting we realised that the development of the discipline in countries like Spain, Italy and Portugal, the consolidation in the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria and Germany, and the vitality of the old centres, Great Britain and France, constituted a base for a closer cooperation in teaching and research. Moreover, the lack of viable and strong national institutions in many countries was seen as an incentive for launching the association. After two days of meeting the European Association of Social Anthropologists was established. Adam Kuper was elected as the chairperson and Raymond Firth and Claude Lévi-Strauss, symbolically representing the two 'great traditions', were nominated as honorary members. We decided to set up a register of anthropologists, publish a newsletter, organise postgraduate courses and start the recruitment of members.

Regarding membership, the discussions were frank and aimed to reach a consensus on clear criteria. We decided that membership would be open to qualified social anthropologists, but graduate students could become associate members. The first and long debate was related to the 'borders' of the discipline in a European context where folklore or/and ethnology were important overlapping disciplines, especially in the socialist and post-socialists countries. Folklorists and ethnologists were eventually

excluded. The second long debate was related to 'nationality' and residence. It was decided that neither nationality nor residence were crucial criteria. The eligibility for ordinary membership should be based on one of the following criteria: possession of a doctoral degree (or equivalent) in social anthropology from a European university, or possession of a teaching or research post in social anthropology in a European university or institution of equal standing. Thus, I who was an Argentine-educated in Paris and holding a position in a European university, could become a member, while an American or a Brazilian anthropologist, educated in their respective countries and not working in Europe, could not.

Adam Kuper recently commented on the EASA constitution:

> The membership criteria is that you have either to have a PhD from a European university or a job in a European university or museum or NGO or some comparable institution. So it's not a national criterion but rather a question of where your intellectual formation is, or where you're intellectually active. *Some* of the American anthropologists see it as an anti-American kind of organization. I think this is not true, although certainly part of what it does is establish a kind of counter-balance.
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> (Gibb and Mills 2001: 215).

I can say that the idea of creating a counter-balance was explicitly presented in the meetings. Many participants were unhappy with the 'expansion' and 'power' of American contemporary anthropology and the 'danger' represented by post-modernism, the attacks on anthropological writing, on conventional grand theories and on fieldwork. The word 'resistance' was used. To 'resist' implied the creation of a large European intellectual space (see Kuper 1989: 2). Ideologically charged anthropological discourses rooted in subjectivism, moral correctness, and political concerns were perceived as too strong and unappealing American influences in the discipline. EASA was then provided with a political and intellectual mandate.

The first inaugural conference was held in Coimbra from 30 August to 2 September 1990. The topics chosen for the four main panels were a clear demonstration of the determination of the association to fight a battle for theory: 'Conceptualising societies', 'Constructing gender', 'Making history' and 'Understanding rituals'. The panels became the first four titles of the EASA's series published by Routledge (de Coppet 1992; Hastrup 1992; Kuper 1992 and del Valle 1993). The series was dedicated to the renewal of the 'distinctive European tradition in social anthropology'. At the time of the conference in Coimbra EASA had 550 members. The expansion continued over the years and today more than 1,200 anthropologists and graduate students are members.

The need of a journal was felt in Coimbra. The new executive committee, elected during the conference, considered whether to launch a journal. Publishers were interested in the proposal, and the committee decided to go ahead. It was concluded that a first number should be circulated at the next conference in Prague, in the summer of 1992. Later an agreement of publication was signed with Cambridge University Press. *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* was to be bi-lingual accepting contributions in either English and French and to appear three times a year: it would also feature abstracts in English, French, German and Spanish. Jean-Claude Galey, a French anthropologist working at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales and a close collaborator of Louis Dumont, was appointed general editor. The Executive Committee was to serve as editorial board, Andre Gingrich (University of

Vienna) was put in charge of the book review section and Michael Herzfeld (Harvard University) made the US correspondent.[2]

The objectives and philosophy of the journal

Jean-Claude Galey was clear in his first statement on the general orientation of the journal: *Social Anthropology* should represent and include the different anthropological traditions existing in Europe (Galey 1991:i). However, he did not attempt to define 'traditions'.[3] Coming back to this issue in the Editorial of the first issue of the journal, Galey elaborated on the fragmentation of the discipline and admitted that social anthropology is 'shot through with contradictions' (Galey 1992:i). He recognised that it would be extremely difficult to transcend 'national contexts' and 'traditions' that were not part of mainstream anthropology. What did he refer to?

First, the 'ethnology of Europe', what he called the 'Europeanist enterprise', because it was born of a 'conjunction between folklore studies and nationalism, influenced by particular historical experiences, directed mainly to the study of its country of origin' (Galey 1992: i). In this perspective, cultural differences were interpreted in terms of inequalities, 'and its evolution has been determined by a reflection on its social and political functions rather than its scientific. Second, the ethnology of "culture areas" falling into the 'misguided paths of false hermeneutic' vocation' (Galey 1992:i).

Galey accepted that the 'production of anthropology' in Europe was unequal and maintained that this was due to the inertia of history. Trying to integrate diversity in a unified frame of reference he listed the 'traditions' and influences guiding his enterprise. In Holland the school of anthropology devoted to the study of general exchange and alliance theory was closely related to Indonesia, Lévi-Strauss's structuralism to the role of mythologies in the 'americanist' tradition and Dumont's approaches to the caste society of India. He added, moreover, that some 'reified societies' were the property of great anthropologists: the Tallensi of Fortes, the Dogon of Griaule, the Nuer of Evans-Pritchard, and the Tikopia of Firth. Theories were also closely associated with names: Van Gennep with rites of passage, Mauss with the gift and Nadel with social organisation. Finally, places like Oxford, Cambridge, Manchester, London and Paris were, and still are, 'strong centres' in the consolidation of anthropology as a discipline.

Galey, obviously, identified a core of anthropology and placed other intellectual influences in a much more general context: the German school of history and the expansion of *Volkskunde* and *Volkswissenschaft*, the sociological thinking of Weber and Tönnies, and the role of Durkheim in the consolidation of modern social theory and sociology in France. His conclusion was that there are two movements of the discipline in Europe: one locally and nationally oriented, and the other open to the world. The creation of the European Association of Social Anthropologists and *Social*

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2 Galey was editor for the first six years. I replaced him in 1999. I never produced a 'vision' for the journal, defining my editorship as a mere continuation of his work.

3 To define traditions or schools of thought is, of course, very difficult. Galey used 'tradition' as an almost commonsensical word in which theoretical frameworks, individuals, places and institutions were connected through power mechanisms to universities and research councils. In this sense traditions are not necessarily national.

Anthropology was an attempt to recuperate, integrate and develop these trends. In a personal communication, many years later, Galey told me that his main objective was to recuperate the 'local' traditions in anthropology and not 're-integrate' them in the mainstream British and French schools. In my own words, he defined 'diversity' and 'liminality' as spaces for creativity. Intellectual innovation in anthropology was, in the past, related to interaction with related disciplines, like history, linguistics or ecology, or to important authors, like Foucault, Bakhtin or Bourdieu, and now some expectations were put again, 'on the margins'. *Social Anthropology* was supposed to serve the European intellectual community, but by recognising differences and not by imposing a premature identity. In this sense, 'change' or 'new identities' implied traditions. Different traditions were not supposed to disappear.

Ernest Gellner delivered the first plenary lecture at the conference in Coimbra. His title was 'Anthropology and Europe' and the lecture was published in the first issue of *Social Anthropology*. He argued that the anthropological tradition dominant in Britain was related to an earlier division of Europe: a large empiricist Britain and a romantic, populist, nationalist Central and Eastern Europe where ethnography served political, usually nationalist, ends. Malinowski combined the two traditions: he took from the romantic East the sense of the unity of cultures, and for a change justified it by an empiricist and anti-historical rationale. Since his days, however, Europe had become divided once again, this time by the Iron Curtain and ideologies. Gellner wrote:

> If I read the situation correctly, East European love of ethnic culture and the desire to record and save it as an integral whole, blended with western European empiricism as a method, and with the ideas borrowed from biology, to engender, in the first instance, the functionalist school, and then the whole tradition which followed on it. What will be the eastern and western elements this time round, assuming that a fertilisation will indeed occur?
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> (1992: 7).

In fact, Gellner imagined a confluence, a process of hybridisation, a cross-fertilisation, between the forgotten and marginal traditions and the dominant ones.

As I have pointed out above, the idea of fertilisation was also important in the way Galey perceived the role of the journal. He considered the book review section as an ideal place for 'cross-fertilisation'. He wrote:

> Cross-fertilisation is our aim, and so, for instance, a book published by a Spanish anthropologist could be reviewed by a British scholar, or the intellectual analysis of a Dutch school could be undertaken by a Greek author, the presentation of a Norwegian collection by a French scholar, and so on. Perhaps we may demonstrate our capacity to act as ethnographers when dealing with ourselves
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> (1991: 4).

Galey designed an 'ideal' Journal with four main parts: original research papers, articles or short notices concerning archival data, museums and ethnographic collections, along with reports on recent and significant events, a large section of book reviews and review articles, and a special section designed to treat a particular school of thought or national tradition, or a leading author, or a research centre (1991: 1). He expanded these aims in the editor's article of the first issue, adding that:

In the same spirit of cross-fertilisation, one section of the Journal will foster discussion of a particular notion, concept, author, current, tendency, research centre or teaching department, giving priority to scientific and comparative information … and we aim to become a focus for debate for the presentation of current projects, and will encourage the analysis of material published earlier

(1992: iii).

He accepted that his programme was perhaps over-ambitious, but why not? This should be accepted as a challenge for the journal because 'the overriding goal is to realise, in a spirit of renewal, the cumulative value of our intellectual history' (Galey 1992: iii).

The first issue of *Social Anthropology* was indeed an attempt – an achieved attempt – to realise some of the main goals of Jean-Claude Galey. In addition of Gellner's paper, devoted to a chapter in the history of anthropology in Europe, Adam Kuper published with the title 'Post-modernism, Cambridge and the Great Kalahari debate' an article 'defending' the importance of comparative and cumulative research in the creation of a public space of knowledge usually associated with science. He insisted that anthropology was not a work of fiction like post-modernism pretends. The article by Jack Goody 'Culture and its boundaries. A European view', can be also seen as an attack against the Parsonian–American tradition in the way culture is perceived as a system distinct from social and psychological ones. The three papers in English were clearly programmatic: the affirmation and defence of a European complex and multiple tradition of practising anthropology based on fieldwork, theory and comparison. The two papers in French were an illustration of the vitality of this tradition. Pierre Lemmonier produced a theoretical elegant piece on 'the pig as substitute for life in New Guinea' and Alain Testart a short, technical note on kinship.

The book review section was also planned by Gingrich in relation to the goal of achieving cross-fertilisation. A book by a Russian scholar was commented by an Austrian anthropologist working in Alaska, three books on the history of anthropology, one in French, the second in Italian and the third in English, were reviewed by a French professor working in England, a French dictionary in anthropology was discussed in English by a Latin American anthropologist based in Norway, a monograph written in German was largely presented by an Austrian scholar, and books in English were reviewed by German anthropologists.

As we have seen above, Galey outlined four main parts in the Journal: original research papers, treatment of a particular school of thought, leading centre or research centre, a large section of book reviews, and a special section dealing with archives, museums and ethnographic collections. The first issue was the realisation of the first three main goals, and in this sense, was a paradigmatic model. In the next section of my paper I will make a general presentation of the 'results' of ten years of publication giving special attention to these aims and looking into ambiguities and contradictions.

Results of ten years of *Social Anthropology*

What are the achievements of *Social Anthropology*? We can say that a balance of articles written by 'great' names (Wolf, Goody, Godelier, de Huesch, Douglas, Barth, Gellner), representatives of the well-established intermediate generation (such as, for example Strathern, Herzfeld, Bloch, Hann or Hastrup) and young scholars, many of

them in tenure-track positions or with post-doctoral fellowships, was indeed accomplished. Galey was a very active editor, taking initiatives, asking for papers in some cases, and, above all, promoting young scholars. To increase the 'visibility' of doctoral fellows, the Young Scholars' Forum was organised for the first time in the conference of Frankfurt in 1998. It resulted in the publication of a dossier, 'The futures of ethnography. Visions from the field' (Hüwelmeier, Turner and Ventura i Oller 2000). This experience was repeated in Cracow two years later.

The EASA executive Committee knew that the consolidation of a bi-lingual journal was not an easy task. Moreover, it was not obvious that *Social Anthropology* would attract non-French anthropologists making an additional effort to use French or French scholars using English. Lets us look at the figures. Out of the 122 articles published, 91 were in English and 31 in French.[4] Only one non-francophone scholar published in French. When non-French anthropologists wrote, English was the chosen language and even this was the case with some francophone authors: seven preferred to publish in English rather than in French. Among the articles in English, as expected, the majority (53) were written by British anthropologists. Scandinavian with eighteen and Dutch with seven were the best represented among the English-writing scholars. German and Austrian with four and Spanish with three were clearly underrepresented. The fact that only five Americans, and among them the majority educated in Europe, published can be seen as a clear indication that *Social Anthropology* was defined across the Atlantic Ocean as a 'closed' European journal. Regarding bilingualism we can conclude by pointing out that the proportion of articles in French and English was as expected. However, the image of cross-fertilisation in the use of either language was not achieved and English confirmed its place as the dominant 'international' scientific language among non-British social anthropologists. Portuguese, Italian, Swiss, Polish or Hungarian anthropologists always published in English. French was thus kept as a 'national' language, almost as a French property.

Social Anthropology developed as a general journal, with articles dealing with 'normal' and 'traditional' topics of research, some of them more hot than others: kinship and family; ethnicity and nationalism; gift, exchange and power; the concept of the person; the meaning of time; the sociological and cultural conditions of modernity; gender; religion and ritual life; the meaning of bodily performances; reflections on questions of method and research strategies; and politics and power. The titles of the papers were straightforward, without the post-modernist flavour of some Americans journals. The absence of papers dealing with conventional economic anthropology or ecology and environmental problems was compensated for by a series of articles tackling the dilemmas of the practice of development or reassessing the importance of local knowledge in processes of social change and implementation of programmes of development. An important article on colonial policies in Africa was also published (Fry 2000).

Some important themes of research with economic and political implications were presented in the journal and gained continuity over time. One of them was related to the question of knowledge and intellectual property. This relates to the complex nexus between economy and culture and the global importance of the emphasis on exclusive individual property rights in Euro-American societies. The debate was initiated with a paper written in 1996 by Strathern on potential property, intellectual rights and

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4 39 per cent (47) of the articles published were written by female authors.

property in persons and published in 1996 (Vol. 4:1). It was followed by a debate during the 1996 EASA Conference in Barcelona. The roundtable in which M. Strathern, Carneiro da Cunha, Descola, Afonso and Harvey took part was published in 1998 (Vol. 6:1). M. Strathern's preoccupations and intellectual interests crystallised in a research project called 'Property, transactions and creations: new economic relations in the Pacific' and papers emerging of this have been also published (Leach 2000; Hirsch 2001; and Kirsch 2001). In the forthcoming EASA conference in Copenhagen, Strathern and Hirsch will organise a workshop taking up this problematic and extending it beyond the Pacific (EASA Newsletter 31, 2001: 229).

The construction of the new Europe in and from Brussels, and the transformation of socialist societies were also important concerns. Some results of an ambitious and joint research project on European institutions carried out by English and French anthropologists were published (Abélès 1996 and McDonald 1996). Abélès discussed the difficult emergence and consciousness of a common membership or identity without which the European community would be condemned to remain a purely economic and juridical entity. McDonald shown that to realise in practice 'unity in diversity', a dominant value and slogan in the construction of the European Community, was very problematic. The complex effects of transition of socialist societies were also examined. Buchowski (1994) demonstrated that key features of Polish culture, remodelled through the years of communist rule, have influenced the events after the 'revolution years in 1989', and how they have fostered or hindered the projected changes. Hann (1996) reminded us not to forget the significant improvements in living standards to rural populations brought by Communist regimes in most parts of Eastern Europe. Kürti (1999) advocated for a critical view of the practice of fieldwork during the years of Communist power and for a new departure for studying East and Central Europe.

Galey accepted long, and sometimes very long, articles trying to escape from the necessary tyranny and the established rule of not accepting papers with more than 7000 words. He was then obliged to publish them in two or three issues. It is possible that Galey thought that 'theoretical' developments in anthropology needed a new form of expression not reflected in the straightjacket imposed by a book of 300 pages or an extremely short paper. He also believed that the Maussian field of gift and exchange, as a central contribution of the French tradition in anthropology, needed an special treatment. Godelier's long essay (54 pages) on the enigmas of *The Gift* appeared in two issues of 1995 (1 and 2). Godelier explained that Mauss left to others the empirical analysis and thus missed two fundamental features: the gift engenders indebtedness and hierarchy the counter-gift does not suppress, while the obligation to give back never implies the restitution of a thing identical to that initially given. A year later Godelier published his important book on the meaning of the gift (1996). The article by Héran on the influence of Granet's analysis of alliance kinship systems in China in the development of Lévi-Straussian French structural anthropology was even longer: three issues and 116 pages – almost a book (1998). Looking back, Galey's strategy was original and appropriated. Godelier's and Héran's contributions are, without any doubt, influential, dealing with key themes in the history of anthropological theory.[5]

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5 During Galey's editorship special theme issues were not published. The idea that *Social Anthropology* was a 'general journal' was and is still dominant. The only exception is the special issue on 'Religious reflexivity' published in 2002 (Vol. 10, part 1).

If a part of the French theoretical tradition was explored and debated with some detail, the same did not happen with other European traditions. Galey promised the readers a special section treating a particular school of thought or national tradition or even a research centre. This promise was difficult to realise. An exception was the article by Dostal (1994) on German ethnology during the National Socialist period. The article focused on the social responsibility that German-speaking anthropologists took, adopting the revitalising approach as part of the racist ideology of National Socialism. He also intended to give some attention to museums and ethnographic collections in Europe and its relation with the rise of the discipline. The results were meagre. A paper by Penny (1998) discussed the rise of an international culture of collecting in which civic self-promotion, prestige and materialist discourses played fundamental roles in the development of German ethnographic museum from 1870 to 1914.

Conclusions. Ambiguities and contradictions

From the beginning *Social Anthropology* was perceived by non-European anthropologists as the exclusive journal of EASA. The pages of the journal were open, in principle, to 'all' anthropologists but this was not reflected in the submission and publication of papers. As I have shown above, only five American anthropologists saw their articles published. Even Europeans who were not members of the association did not send their contributions or hesitated to do so. Moreover, EASA 'created' an internal competition with the publication of the series by Routledge. In the same period of time, 24 edited volumes were issued, containing 232 articles. It is worth to mention that some of them became classic textbooks widely used in teaching and research in European universities. Many colleagues adopted the strategy of 'saving' the articles presented in the thematic workshops of EASA conferences for the series. In addition, the series became very competitive, and very few projects were accepted by the evaluation system of EASA and Routledge. My impression is that authors with refused articles in refused volumes did not send them to the journal. However, the editors of *Social Anthropology* (Galey and myself), without breaking the rules of external and critical review, were sometimes obliged to be active and to ask for (and in some cases demand) papers. In spite of this fact, the number of papers of good quality coming forward was high and the rate of publication varied, according to the year, from 20 to 25 per cent.

The 'transnational' arena of the journal with English and French as dominant languages reproduced, as an unintended consequence, diffuse ideas of centres and peripheries in academic production. Even more, all German journals accept articles in English (mostly) and French. We must also admit that *Social Anthropology* appeared in a epoch of rapid expansion of journals and, therefore, did not represent the first alternative for many scholars. This should be also said in connection with Great Britain and France. In the case of Spain, leaving aside the problem of proper control of another language, the lack of good national journals has favoured, over time, the publication of books as the most important means for university advancement. Consequently, the 'paper culture' is not so developed and to publish in international journals is not an important priority. The idea of cross-fertilisation, proclaimed by Galey and Gellner, did not materialised as expected. The 'old' ethnological schools of Germany and Russia were not present in the expected intellectual dialogue. During the

ten years of existence *Social Anthropology* became, more and more, the journal of an association. It also became a channel for young scholars, one of the most important achievements of the journal.

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