

PROGRAMME

Egalitarianism project: Barony of Rosendal seminar, Hardanger 21.-24. August 2017

Monday 21. August

Ferry "The Hardangerfjord Express" leaves Bergen pier – at 8.50 am – we meet at Strandkai terminalen at 8.30 am.

10.45 We arrive in Rosendal, Hardanger

12.00 Lunch at Avlsgården

Part I **EXPERIMENTS IN EGALITARIANISM**

We dedicate this first session to accounts of egalitarian experiments. We document various ways that social movements have tried to organize social relations through the ideal of equality – and the wider social ramifications of such experiments. This discussion will be extending from our previous workshop.

14.00 Bruce Kapferer: Welcome and start of programme

14.30 - 15.30 Axel Rudi – key chapters

15.30 – 16.30 Mari Korsbrekke – key chapters

17.00 – 18.00 Mohammad Tareq Hasan – key chapters

19.00 Dinner at Avlsgården

Tuesday 22. august

09.15 – 10.15 Maria Dyveke Styve – key chapters

10.15 – 11.15 Jacob Hjortsberg – key chapters

11.30 – 12.30 Alessandro Zagato: *Postcoloniality, autonomy, and religious syncretism in the struggle of the the 'Abejas of Acteal', an indigenous organization of the Highlands of Chiapas.*"

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch

13.30 – 14.15 Jayaseelan Raj: *Egalitarian State, Inegalitarian Society? Dalits and the Struggle for Land in Contemporary India*

14.15 – 15.00 Marina Gold: *Human Rights - the modern egalitarian paradox*

15.00 – 15.45 Matan Shapiro: *Cryptogenesis: Anonymity, Trustlessness and Pragmatic Egalitarianism in Digital Currency Use*

16.00 - 18.00 Discussion

19.00 Dinner at Avlsgården

PART II

THE AGE OF REACTION

In this section we move on to specifically address revolutionary ideas and social movements growing out of the 60ies and 70ies, with particular attention to the way different parts of the world picked up different parts of a global discourse of rupture and emancipation. Attention might be given to notions of a new man, creation of alternative worlds, breaking out of society and renunciation etc. and the way such notions are re-enacted and re-interpreted and criticized today

Wednesday 23. August

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| 09.15 – 10.00 | Knut Rio: <i>Introductory discussion</i> |
| 10.00 – 10.45 | Annelin Eriksen: <i>The NaGriamel movement and visions of radical independence in the 1970'ies in Vanuatu</i> |
| 11.00 – 11.45 | Bjørn Enge Bertelsen: <i>The New Man: The lasting importance of a figure of revolutionary thought -in Mozambique and beyond</i> |
| 11. 45 – 12.30 | Marina Gold: <i>Hombre nuevo, hombre novísimo, hombre cooperativo: shifting egalitarian practices of the Cuban Revolution</i> |
| 12.30 – 13.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30 – 15.00 | Film: <i>The mad masters</i> by Jean Rouch 1955 (30 mins). |
| 15.15 – 16.00 | Hanna Skartveit: <i>In pursuit of perfection: The techno-prophets and the dawn of their new era</i> |
| 16.00 – 16.45 | Anna Szolucha: <i>Peripheral histories, environmentalism and anti-fracking</i> |
| 17.00 – 17.45 | Bruce Kapferer: <i>Comparisons, Criticisms and Points for discussion</i> |
| 19.00 | Dinner at Avlsgården |

Thursday 24. August

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| 10.15 | Bruce Kapferer: General points to do with the two edited books and comparisons/synthesis |
| | General Discussion |
| 12.00 | Lunch |

Ferry leaves Rosendal at 14.25 and arrives in Bergen at 15.55

Abstracts:

Anna Szolucha: The decade between 1968 and 1978 was the high point of the environmental movement that effected deep and lasting changes in the ideals and tactics of many Western ecological and conservationist groups and campaigns as well as influencing non-Western struggles in various and sometimes problematic ways. In some countries, the period marked a radicalisation of mobilisations by linking them to the civil rights movement as well as anti-war and anti-regime protests. The publication of the hallmark environmental texts such as Carson's *Silent Spring*, *A Blueprint for survival* in the British *Ecologist* and The Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* accompanied this renewed interest. Over time, the environmental movement and its message ebbed and flowed but the varieties of environmentalism shaped in the 1960s and 70s have reverberated in the subsequent struggles and left an indelible (even if still a depoliticised and limited) mark on the ecological debates and policy-making. The current wave of protests against the extraction of unconventional resources such as shale gas in Europe and North America is just the most recent example of the return of the radicalisation of environmental struggles in the last 15 years. The main danger facing the movement and environmental history today is that we may (again) profoundly misunderstand the character of the current moment and misrepresent it as an environmental awakening, a (r)evolution of awareness (the goal that *The Limits to Growth* claimed to accomplish in the 1970s and the discourse of the Anthropocene is trying to do now).

An acknowledged but still largely peripheral history of hundreds of small and bigger struggles surrounding the various health and environmental problems of industrialisation, resource extraction and other developments put into question the myth of sudden environmental awakenings and the scientific illusions of control that they often give rise to. In fact, there are many historical precedents and continuities to the anti-fracking protests in Eastern Poland and North West England. The long history of grassroots environmental reflexivity, in the countryside as well as the city, urges us to ask the question of not why certain periods see intensified environmental mobilisation but rather – how is the environmental awareness underlying it being constantly and repeatedly kept to the margins of social and political power?

In this paper, I will analyse this question in relation to my research about shale gas developments in Poland and England between 2015 and 2017. The aim is not only to reclaim an important part of local history and point to the (perhaps more than local) dynamics that marginalise the grassroots environmental reflexivity. Rather, what emerges from this analysis is also a different kind of environmentalism which is unlike many of its variants that the climate of the 1960s helped to generate. It is an environmentalism of people “living in and with nature” as opposed to the visions of pristine wilderness and benevolent Nature on the one hand and the corrupt civilisation and technology on the other. This idea of environmentalism draws on the notions of social justice and extends a cognate concept of the environmentalism of the poor beyond its socio-economic and cultural characteristics by seeing it more broadly as a power relation. Like many of its historical precedents at the grassroots level, anti-fracking resistance is not against technology per se but this particular technology and its ability to crash other people and climate.

Matan Shapiro: This paper offers initial thoughts on the social practice of blockchain technology. I analyse heuristic debates among digital currency users on anonymity as latter-day endeavours to establish egalitarian sociality on a global scale. On the basis of what cryptocurrency traders call 'trustless' transactions of value I distinguish this form of 'pragmatic' egalitarian reciprocity from 'ideational' egalitarianism. I use the neologism *cryptogenesis* to refer to this emerging social phenomenon and elaborate on its potential cosmological horizons.

Hanna Skartveit : In a number of publications, and especially his book *In pursuit of the millennium* from 1957, historian Norman Cohn has traced the conceptual and mythological foundations for the Western Enlightenment perception of history as social progress, the conviction that the nature of human life can be radically altered, and the dream of a perfected universal civilization. The mere notion that suffering can be eliminated, that good will eventually triumph over evil, is, Cohn argues, a fantasy original to early Christianity and inherited from Persian Zoroastrianism. Ever since, times of rapid change, uncertainty and social revolution have repeatedly served as vehicles for millenarian and apocalyptic myths in a variety of religious and secular expressions. Some of our most fantastic contemporary utopian imaginations flow out of the techno-capitalist milieu around Silicon Valley, and gurus/prophetic entrepreneur/inventor-leaders such as Elon Musk of Tesla, Jeff Bezos of Amazon, and Google's Ray Kurzweil, as well as related philosophers like Nick Bostrom. Their visions of what is referred to as *transhumanism*, the idea that the human condition can be radically improved through advanced technology that will enhance human physiology and intelligence, is presented as the apex of atheism; science's final victory over religion and human beings becoming creator-gods. The ambitions reflected in their utopian prophecies however, are abounding with religious and spiritual references and parallels. Unsurprisingly then, the field has inspired the formation of groups such as the Christian Transhumanist Association and the Mormon Transhumanist Association, who see the technological dreams as providing new tools for the human completion of the Christian mission to perfect the world. In my presentation I will focus comparatively on the utopian visions of some of the techno-prophets who currently shape our cultural imaginations of the future and challenge the limits for our perception of what is possible. Using them as a point of entrance, my recently initiated project aims at locating the mythological and ideological roots of their ideas, their current cultural impact, the investments in creating a future in their image, and the social composition of their followers.

Jayaseelan Raj: This paper will become a chapter in a book on Dalits tentatively titled as "Dalits: Avenues of Escape, Spaces of Conflict and the Tenacity of Caste". This paper discusses the relationship between agitation for economic autonomy/ land ownership by Dalits in Kerala state, South India and the reaction of Kerala state to the land agitation in what I call as 'spaces of conflict' between the state and Dalits. It is argued in the paper that the egalitarian policies of Kerala state in principle is in conflict with the struggle of Dalits for egalitarian social relation. Two case studies are discussed in the paper:

1) Chalo Movements organised by Dalits demanding land for them and the response of Kerala state by designing a multi-storied housing scheme for providing tiny houses of 327 sq.feet to Dalits and other marginalised communities, as an attempt to evade the demand for land for Dalits. In fact, Dalit-Adivasi land struggles becomes critical events that '*express incommensurabilities that are integral to social relations... they were moments in which the intransigencies and irresolvable tensions ingrained in social and personal life (the two being inseparable) boiled to the surface and became, if only momentarily, part of public awareness*' (Kapferer 2010, p. 3). In such a perspective, land struggles as critical events elucidate the underlying tensions within the categorical relations and the class order in Kerala and beyond. The struggle exposes hidden elitist tendencies of the dominant caste controlled State, against the egalitarian aspirations of Dalit-Adivasi communities. **2)** An ethnographic description of caste atrocities against Dalits in Ambedkar Colony, Govindapuram in northern Kerala, and the use of local self governance institutions of the state by the upper caste in perpetuating such caste atrocities. The Dalits who belong to Arunthathiyar caste later joined with the Chalo Movement and demanded cultivable land.

I consider Dalit-Adivasi' struggle for land and demand for what they call as 'right to resources' as an attempt to overturn caste hierarchy and class order in the Indian society. And, the response of the State is in fact paradoxically reproduces both the caste hierarchy and class order, as will be argued in the paper. The analytical scope of the paper is that the studies on the relationship between State and

Dalits are often concerned with affirmative action policies and the funding allocation for Dalit welfare. This paper rather ethnographically examines the relationship between state and Dalits beyond the affirmative action policies in understanding the limits of State's egalitarian aspiration in comparison to that of Dalits.
