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HUNTERS AND GATHERERS IN THE INDUSTRIALISED WORLD

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Khaled Hakami

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Contents

- 4 GREGOR SEIDL, GERTRUDE SAXINGER
Hunters and Gatherers in the Industrialised World
- 17 ALBERTO BUELA
Hunter-Gatherer Transformations and Mixed Economies: A Case
Study from Alaska
- 41 SARAH-JANE DRESSCHER
Food Security in the High Arctic While Balancing the Demands of
Commercial and Subsistence Hunting
- 67 MAYO BUENAFE-ZE, TESSA MINTER, WILMA G. TELAN
Against Mining and the Need for Mining: Conundrums of the Agta
from the Northeastern Philippines
- 92 JOSE MIGUEL RONCERO MARTIN
Security in the Arctic: High Politics in the High North
- Essay*
- 124 NICK KELESAU
STOP BARAM DAM
- 127 Book Reviews
- 138 Editors and Authors of the Special Issue
- 143 Publication Details

GREGOR SEIDL, GERTRUDE SAXINGER

Hunters and Gatherers in the Industrialised World

The idea of this edition basically stemmed out of the Eleventh Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies (CHAGS), organised at the University of Vienna in Autumn 2015. It was part of a loose series of conferences on this topic staged in various cities and continents (Lee/Daly 1999: 10; Hitchcock/Biesele 2000: 1f.), inspired by the ground breaking and highly influential academic conference called “Man the Hunter” in Chicago in 1966, which was proclaimed as a “watershed of knowledge about foragers” (Kelly 1995: 9). All these events had a fairly common point of departure: the – mainly but not exclusively – anthropological investigation of people, many of whom – though not all – researchers assume to live a clearly identifiable way of life, which is based more or less on subsistence-related hunting, gathering and fishing without efforts at domestication. The obvious ambivalences inherent in this preliminary attempt to pin down the scientific knowledge production in the form of a “minimal definition” (Lee/Daly 1999: 3), as well as the different concepts used to describe such societies (among others, “foragers”, “hunters”, and “gatherers”), already hint at the fierce controversies which shake this field and debate. With this edition, we want to highlight the fact that many of the hunting and gathering societies live in mixed economic ways and under a broad range of political regimes. Furthermore, we state that “sole” hunters and gatherers live in a (post-)industrial world, the rationales of which impact on micro- and macro-scales of indigenous livelihoods as well as on their everyday lives. This brings about to greater or lesser degree intense instances of contact between neighbouring groups, as well as with stakeholders from state and industry. In the following, we explain why a static approach to hunters and gatherers societies (and sometimes their comparison with stone-age societies) is rejected by the authors of this volume.

Why do we draw attention to this apparently very specific academic field? What is it about these societies that could be of interest in a journal dedicated to questions of North-South relations and the deeply problematic notion of ‘Development’? The task of this introduction will partly consist in the cautious effort to sketch some fundamental points of connection between the academic reflection on hunters and gatherers on one hand, and the appraisal of the notion of ‘Development’, as well as of the ideological foundations of so-called ‘advanced’ modern capitalism and its contradictions – including the historically produced North-South divide – on the other. We try to show that both currents – anthropology and the idea of ‘Development’ – share a dark and often ignored core, which is rooted in the basic material and epistemological power relations of the contemporary dominant form of social becoming. Moreover, the perspectives drawn from the study of hunters and gatherers enable us to shed a significant light on this *problematique*. In order to do that, we touch upon several important questions: what do we understand by the concept of hunters and gatherers? Is it an appropriate terminology? What are the arguments for a critically substantiated account of the ways of life and forms of social organisation of these groups? How can we put these arguments together to create a meaningful understanding of what is going on in the complex relationship between apparently very different co-existing social formations articulated with each other – including the aspect of the validity and scope of this alleged difference? The contributions to this volume show in particular how hunting and gathering people do a balancing act of practising indigenous identities, coping with (forced) assimilation, interacting with (colonial) state bodies and industrial actors and living as distinct and socially healthy groups in a complex world of diverging economic and cultural ideas, particularly in the context of global capitalism.

For a brief attempt to clarify these above-mentioned interwoven questions, let us start by travelling back to 1966, the year of the “Man the Hunter” conference. This event became so prominent, because critical authors like Richard Lee and Marshall Sahlins introduced not only an explanatory “generalized foraging model” (Kelly 1995: 9ff.) on a structural analytical level, focussing on questions of relations of production and reproduction, but also fiercely attacked the prevailing pejorative image of hunters and gatherers in the neo-classical economics of their time; these depicted them

as living a hard, stressful and short life (Lee/DeVore 1968; Sahlins 1968). Sahlins, in particular, turned in his contribution to the conference and in a later published seminal monography (Sahlins 1972) against the application of the ideological notion of scarcity. This notion ruled the models of bourgeois economics and their abstract concepts of markets and prices, as an adequate measure for a – false – description of the hunter and gatherer’s real conditions of living. Instead, what this new paradigm proposed, following Sahlins’ provocative concept of an “original affluent society” (Sahlins 1968: 85), was a different perspective on affluence to that in bourgeois economics, and an explanatory model of the general hunter and gatherer’s characteristics. These departed from the basic assumption of nomadic and highly mobile societies. Since “they live in small groups and (...) move around a lot” (Lee/DeVore 1968: 11), thus constituting a “nomadic style” (ibid) or a “domestic mode of production” (Sahlins 1972: 41ff.), it is claimed that hunters and gatherers differ organisationally from other forms of societies: a minimal amount of private property (e.g. tools), collective rights to underused (which means not completely exploited) resources, a relatively low amount of working hours per day (underuse of labour power), and levelling practices of reciprocal sharing and pooling as well as production and exchange among group members for livelihood, that is for use value, not for exchange value in Marxist terms. According to Sahlins, they follow a different mode of “affluence without abundance” (ibid: 11), since there are two ways to satisfy people’s wants: either to produce a lot or to desire little. Hunters and gatherers societies (HGS) are said to stick to the second “Zen solution” (Sahlins 1968: 85), enabling them to lead a life of material plenty, though at a relatively low standard of living. Lee continued to develop this concept in his later publications, moving constantly from notions of subsistence to notions like the “foraging mode of production”, “communal mode” and “primitive communism” (Lee 1980; Lee 1988; Lee 1990). These concepts – by adapting Marxist terminology developed to analyse class societies – served to stress the character of classless and stateless societies based on equal, although not perfectly equal, property relations and corresponding cultural forms of reproduction. Implied in this radically changed interpretation of HGS was always a certain critique of dominant, class-based social relations. While acknowledging the difference between “primitive communism”, state communism and utopian communism (Lee

1988: 243), “primitive communism” basically served as an example of alternatives to capitalism. Primitive communism indicates the persistence of communal and egalitarian desires (ibid: 245), rebuts the ideological matrix of capitalism as regards HGS (ibid: 253), and proves that “there is something out there beyond the reach of the World system (capitalist or otherwise)” (Lee 1992b: 483), built on autonomous social arrangements (Lee 1993: 2).

This critique of dominant economic paradigms by parts of the field of Hunter and Gatherer Studies had an astonishingly similar thrust as a growing critique on ideas of ‘Development’ in modernisation theories. Obviously, ‘Development’ had the same ideological foundations as neo-classical economic thought, crystallised in the words of the Truman Doctrine, as spelled out in Harry Truman’s inaugural speech: “More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery (...). Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas” (quoted in Escobar 1995: 3). For the idea of ‘Development’, the perspective on “primitive” economy was essential, since it marked the condition which had to be overcome and developed (Dalton 1971: 64). This sort of doctrine was sustained with scientific means, emblematically in the work of Rostow, separating modern from traditional societies in a stage model of growth and declaring the latter to be violent, hierarchical, and limited in technology and production, thus incapable to of manipulating the environment and of ensuring the conditions for steady growth (Rostow 1959; Rostow 1960). Although these ideas were rapidly countered by historical analyses of dependency theorists, epitomised in the catchy phrase of “development of underdevelopment” (Frank 1966), it was Post-Development Theory, unfolding during the 1980s and the 1990s, which – although turning to a different analytical level of discourse – took a quite similar line as that of critical scholars of HGS. Development was deconstructed as a metaphor lying in the centre of a Western construction of the so called ‘Third World’, drawing on the same sort of critique directed against the ideology of scarcity as a gap between finite means and infinite desires, repudiating in the same way the separation of the economic and the social. Moreover, ‘development’ converts history into a programme of a teleological and inevitable course of change, which naturally must culminate in the industrial mode of production and mass consumption (Esteva 1991).

However, it would be too easy to stop at this conclusion of homologous thrusts. Just as Post-Development Theory was criticised for its dichotomous homogenisations, opening up the danger of essentialising and romanticising indigenous populations in a reactionary way (Ziai 2006: 98ff.; Ziai 2007), the structural concepts of a “foraging mode of production” and “primitive communism” faced various criticisms, too. The concept of foraging as the measure to identify HGS was dismissed for its exclusive focus on the technical patterns of hunting and collecting. This focus was reproached for dangerously blurring the line between human and animal spheres and obliterating the true distinctive features of HGS, namely their social forms of organisation and reproduction (Ingold 1988). Some rejected the attempt to forge a generalised model of HGS, instead resuming the line of cultural particularism in anthropology by shifting the focus onto cultural aspects of variation (Kelly 1995: 21ff.), which had been previously heavily undermined – with good arguments – by Marxist anthropologists. The perspective of historical materialism acts as a line of defence against totalising ahistorical accounts and essentialist, racist, or teleological explanations of social differences and change (Leacock 1982; Lee 1990: 226). However, the principal dimension of debate evolved in the so-called “revisionist” (Lee 1988: 258ff.; Lee 1992b: 475ff.) challenge to Lee and his camp. At the heart of this ‘revisionist’ challenge was the argument that an anthropology which was still leaning towards basic evolutionist concepts, treating HGS virtually as fossils and representatives of an unchanged past at the incipient stage of universal human evolution – imagining them as living encapsulated and isolated in a frozen time and space – not only puts itself into continuity with exoticising perceptions of the ‘Noble Savage’ or ‘people without history’, but above all obliterates the constant historical interconnections and contacts between different societies within the capitalist world system and even before (cf. Wolf 1982; Schrire 1984; Feit 1994; Restrepo 2007: 298ff.). This objection clearly strikes a nerve, since Lee and DeVore positioned their “Man the Hunter” conference in the light of debates around “the Origin of Man” (Lee/DeVore 1968: vii) and Lee openly addresses this connection, too: “Le mode de production fourrageur représente la condition originale et universelle de l’humanité” (translation by the authors: the foraging mode of production represents the original and universal condition of humanity; Lee 1980: 71).

However, he never really viewed HGS as “pristine” societies (Lee 1992a: 38f.), and of course recognised the political and economic pressures they were confronted with (Lee 1986).

The point at stake lies elsewhere, anyway. Here we are approaching the ideological dark core mentioned above. It is the problem of the so called ‘primitive’ or ‘savage’, which is the foundational element not only for the constitution of a distinct scientific discipline of anthropology in general (Asad 1973: 11; Lee: 1988: 254; Lee 1992b: 473; Restrepo 2007: 289), but also for developmental thinking and the role which “applied anthropology” – concerned with the “changing Native” (Escobar 1991) – plays in it. In the face of theoretical concepts which interpret the figure of the ‘primitive’ or ‘savage’ as the colonially embedded construction of the ‘other’, serving as a mirror to generate occidental self-awareness and identity (Coronil 1996), the notion of a constructed ‘other’ met the scepticism of Lee, who identified it as the post-structural component of the ‘revisionist’ thrust. Although he acknowledged the necessity of a reflexive anthropology as part of an integrative “middle path” (Lee 1992b: 481), he struggled against a perspective which – in his eyes – tended to explain away the idiosyncrasies of HGS, reducing them to a projection from outside or, even worse, as a means of abusing the tools of deconstruction in order to direct them against the powerless (Lee 1982: 261). He still saw in the “primitive a historically valid and workable social system” (ibid: 254). However, he misunderstands, as so many do, the real target of this critique. Its aim is not to disclaim actual differences in social, economic and cultural organisation between different societies, but rather the disclosure of a specific representational and universalising mode of occidental knowledge and epistemic power directed at non-Western societies and inserted into colonial conditions. As Asad very convincingly makes clear, anthropology as a discipline took shape within the power structure of an unequal colonial encounter which also affected the mode of objectifying and rationalising non-European ‘others’ within a dominant production of knowledge. This power structure formed the basis for a one-sided intimacy which constituted the practice of scientific fieldwork as well as the limits and constraints of theoretical assumptions ready to be adapted to colonial ideologies (Asad 1973: 16ff.). What is more, the scope and scale of Asad’s conclusions must be extended. These practices of knowledge did not vanish with the formal independence of colonies,

but persisted on an epistemic level by means of the separation between a scientific subject, capturing a superior position of understanding, and their objects (of investigation), which were rendered representatives of an essential and exteriorised alterity, thus covering the context and situated site of scientific subjectivity itself (Restrepo 2007). Moreover, this separation is not just fixed on the establishment of anthropology as a discipline; it is part of a power structure that does not solely operate within the field of anthropology, but regulates the epistemological preconditions that made the constitution of the field possible (Trouillot 1991: 20ff.). What is at stake here, from a de-colonial perspective, is the separation between Eurocentric *humanitas* and non-European *anthropoi* in the process of colonisation, which constitutes a structural division between hegemonic and subaltern knowledge, between privileged and suppressed bodies, between assumed historic agency and assumed timelessness (Mignolo 2011; Luisetti 2012). Fabian calls this form of temporal distancing between occidental anthropologic contemporaneity (or rather: allochronism; Fabian 2002: 32) and non-occidental anachronism the “denial of coevalness” (ibid: 25ff.). However, this operation does not simply rely on temporalities between the past and the present, but also on those concerning the future. Trouillot (1991: 28ff.) points this out by introducing the concept of the “savage slot”: the “savage other” – no matter in what form of interpellation, as the noble, barbarian, wise or evil – was the indispensable component of a symbolic field premising anthropology, where it was tied together with the notions of universal order (colonial and scientific in the form of universal truths) and universal future utopias, serving as a flexible backdrop against which utopian and dystopian trajectories, and dreams of perfect order or nightmares of disorder and decline could be painted (Trouillot 1991: 28ff.). A manifestation of this slot is the dream of universal ‘Development’, closely connected to colonial settings: institutionally, discursively and in personal biographies (Kothari 2005). Utopia was the non-space of imagination, in which ‘savagery’ – as a positive or negative reference – was transformed into sameness, and anthropology was the science which filled this savage slot with its production of knowledge. This is no otherness constructed within anthropology, but one upon which the latter rests. In the words of Trouillot (1991: 40): “Anthropology did not create the savage. Rather, the savage was the *raison d’être* of anthropology”. Where does this take us?

How can the savage slot be broken up? Here the post-colonial, “revisionist” anthropology and Lee’s realist anthropology finally meet again. Trouillot as well as Lee come to the conclusion, that it is the agency of HGS as subjects of their own history, the concreteness of their struggles, resistances and arrangements in order to pursue their way of life, in full awareness of expanding capitalist pressures and offers of incorporation (Lee 1992a: 43) and in the face of expanding and incorporating capitalist relations, which constitutes a “strategic point of re-entry” (Trouillot 2002: 39) for a different sort of anthropology breaking up with its colonial premises.

The contributions in this edition follow this perspective of HGS as subjects navigating their own histories, living their own present and striving for their own futures, without ignoring their complicated and ambivalent interrelations with industrialised societies. While HGS live under a lot of pressure by state- and economy-driven notions of ‘Development’ and by expanding patterns of extractive industries, they engage with these challenges in very different ways, sometimes resisting social immiserisation and ecological degradation, sometimes participating in the distribution of revenues, sometimes even controlling these structures and processes. Questions of different notions concerning labour and well-being, nutritional precarity and security, and different attitudes and responses to very asymmetrical power relations coin the ordinary life of these communities.

Alberto Buena focusses in his article on the expansion of mixed economy structures in the indigenous community of the Kijikmiut people in Northwest Alaska. Drawing on a theoretical framework of material culture, he is able to show that processes transforming hunting and gathering practices take shape on different, analytically separable levels, which are related to each other in a non-deterministic form. Thus, the contemporary transformation of indigenous communities in Alaska’s Northwest is not only driven by the way the labour force is used in different settings, gradually drifting towards wage labour, but also by changing relations to nature and a growing interconnection with the state in terms of legal, political and social aspects.

Sarah-Jane Dresscher reminds us, with her transdisciplinary historical investigation into the emergence of the Pomors’ hunting and fishing practices in the Russian High Arctic during the 18th and early 19th century, that hunting and gathering does not simply occur at a certain stage on an evolu-

tionist timeline, but can also assume transitory historical forms within a balance of intertwined commercial and subsistence purposes. Collecting and putting together archeological and historical empirical data, the author is able to explain the technical, social, economic, and cultural shaping of subsistence hunting on the island of Svalbard as a necessary component of survival strategies linked to the commercial hunting of marine mammals in an extreme environment.

Mayo Buenafe, Tessa Minter and Wilma G. Telan raise the theme of negotiations and agreements between extraction companies and local communities that seek, on the one hand, compensation for damages and negative impacts from mining, and on the other hand for benefit sharing of the revenues from the operations. This article explores the really very tricky and highly complex situation of indigenous people living near mining operations – in this example the Agra people in the Philippines. The mining company which started the extraction many years ago has had negotiated agreements with this indigenous group over monetary compensation, access to the land and employment opportunities. Later on, after a new company took over, the expectations contained in the contracts were not realised, since the new corporation did not stick to the agreements; neither did the subcontracting companies that were not included in the negotiation process with the initial owner. This example shows how contemporary equity building systems, like Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC), or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and subsequent contracts between the locals and the corporation, in the end actually fail because of a variety of reasons: these could be due to the heterogeneity in the community of attitudes and opinions towards resource extraction, the conflicting interaction between the government representatives of the indigenous groups and the groups themselves, or the lack of clarity in the contracts over compensation and the use of the land by the company.

In terms of international politics and its relations to indigenous people in the industrialised world, Jose Miguel Roncero introduces us to non-traditional notions of security theory. This approach to human and societal security is an alternative to classic realist forms of state-driven geopolitical security. He shows us the case of the Arctic states where issues such as climate change, legacies of colonialism, or resource extraction are pressing issues today. Such societal and economic changes that interlink the remote

Arctic directly with global dynamics significantly impact on the wellbeing and security of the local population – indigenous and non-indigenous alike. He analyses numerous security policies throughout the Arctic globe and comes to the conclusion that, in recent years, more and more non-traditional security issues have been introduced into most of the countries' policies. Nevertheless, the classic geopolitical security notion still over-arches the security policies, even though this region is not subject to 'hot' conflicts and it is projected that this will not be the case in near future. The inclusion of 'soft' security issues related to local populations is thus ever more important.

Finally, we are very happy that Nick Kelesau from the Penan people in Sarawak/Borneo contributes a very personal note to this special issue of hunters and gatherers in the industrialised world. In a very important sentence, he highlights the very nature of HGS' relation to the environment. This involves, unlike in the Enlightenment-driven European idea of the division of nature and culture, an absolute union between environment and humans. It is, instead, 'dwelling' in the environment and being part of it, not distinct from it. As he puts it: "If you ask 'Do Penan people love the forest?' I would say that we think of the forest like it is our body." These ways of thinking, symbolism and life are, however, increasingly contested by timber harvesting and, moreover, by the construction of dams for hydroelectric power. Kelesau speaks in his contribution about his culture, people and, about the plan to relocate 50,000 people in the region to camps and villages remote from their ancestral homes. He also recalls the killing of his father who was involved in protests and explains how he himself today continues political activism.

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Gregor Seidl
gregor.seidl@chello.at

Gertrude Saxinger
Department for Social and Cultural Anthropology,
University of Vienna
gertrude.saxinger@univie.ac.at

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ALBERTO BUELA
**Hunter-Gatherer Transformations and Mixed Economies:
A Case Study from Alaska**

ABSTRACT This paper presents a materialist research strategy for the study of historical processes of change among hunter-gatherers, as they become incorporated into industrial society. Two aspects are discussed: 1) a theoretical model of sociocultural systems for categorising phenomena, and 2) a theoretical principle for identifying causal relationships. The approach is illustrated with a case study on the transformations of an Alaskan Inupiat community, touching on several aspects of sociocultural life, including population, subsistence, technology, social organisation, economy, and politics. The focus lies on the changing role of the hunting economy and its related institutions.

KEYWORDS hunter-gatherers, mixed economies, materialism, Alaska, Inupiat

I. Introduction

In most parts of the world, hunter-gatherers have been experiencing profound transformations due to their incorporation into expanding industrial nation-states. In the Arctic context, in particular in North America and Greenland, a substantial body of research has arisen focussing on the emergence of mixed economies, in which communities integrate subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering with market economies. These transformations encompass changes in almost all spheres of sociocultural life, including population, subsistence, technology, social organisation, politics, and economy.

The main purpose of this paper is to propose a materialist research strategy for the study of these transformations, and the diverse phenomena they involve. A theoretical framework will be presented in order to cate-