



## Swedish PhD Dissertations in Anthropology and related disciplines 2018-2020

Four Swedish universities have PhD-programmes in Social or Cultural Anthropology: Gothenburg, Lund, Stockholm, and Uppsala. In addition, anthropologically oriented dissertations are produced within inter-disciplinary PhD-programmes at Linköping, Uppsala, Malmö, as well as Swedish University for Agricultural Sciences (SLU).

In the following list, we have included PhD Dissertations in Social and Cultural Anthropology defended in Sweden during the academic years of 2018-19 and 2019-20. To some extent, we have added anthropological theses defended at other Swedish universities. The list is established in chronological order.

For a complete list of PhD Dissertations in Anthropology at Swedish universities the last 20 years, we also refer to Sveriges Antropologförbund (SANT) – the Swedish Anthropological Association – that compiles all PhD dissertations at its website.

### 2018

**Engström, Linda** 2018. [Development delayed: Exploring the failure of a large-scale agricultural investment in Tanzania to deliver promised outcomes](#). Acta Universitatis Agriculturae Sueciae 2018:40. Dept. of Rural and Urban Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

Since the early 2000s, large-scale agricultural investment has experienced a revival on the agenda for rural development in Africa, purported to bring, for instance, efficient agricultural production, reduced import expenditures and poverty alleviation. This new wave of large-scale agricultural investment has been described as more extensive in scale than previous attempts to promote such large farms. However, closer scrutiny reveals that in many countries, the expected flood of investments has so far been only a trickle. So far, few studies have been conducted to investigate this trend of failure.

The overarching aim of this thesis is to contribute to the knowledge about how and why this new wave of large-scale agricultural investment failed to deliver proposed outcomes. This is done by exploring the empirical trajectories of, and the reasons behind, the failure of a planned public private partnership, a large scale sugar-cane investment in Tanzania, to deliver promised outcomes.

In interviews with project proponents and rural residents targeted by investment, the thesis shows how project proponents simplified complex contexts in order to 'sell' narratives of imminent success. Such simplifications interacted with context to produce delays in project implementation and subsequent failure of the project to materialise. Importantly, these delays had severe negative impacts on local communities. Despite delay being a common feature in development projects, it has been little discussed. Combined, these

findings suggest that delay is an important, but overlooked, factor when understanding development failure, and that delay should not be conceived as inevitable and innocent.

Through discourse analysis and drawing on the concept ‘resilient narratives’, I analyse discursive practices used by proponents to sustain the image of success, in the face of contradicting narratives and materialities.

Mainly drawing on post-development and post-colonial theory, I then position my findings in debates on development narratives and development failure, and advance some reflections on the influence of close collaboration with a private actor in development assistance in relation to these findings.

While the context of the case study is highly complex and to a certain extent unpredictable, I argue that proponents have a responsibility to understand this context, and address it in their policies and projects. Finally, I argue that more attention must be paid to the impacts of delayed or non-materialised projects in both academia and policy debates.

**Jennische, Ulrik** 2018. *Small-Small: Moral Economy and the Marketspace in Northern Ghana*. Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology NS. 20. Dept. of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University.

Over the past decade, the Ghanaian government has tried to include and accommodate the many people working in the so-called informal economy. This formalization process is in line with a global market-driven development discourse. The small-scale traders selling their goods from marketplaces and along the streets in major cities have been of particular interest.

While the Ghanaian government defines these actors as working in an “informal sector” and thus beyond the formal political and economic system, it simultaneously targets them with welfare services and various policies with the purpose of including them in the creation of a modern welfare state and shaping them into moral and entrepreneurial citizens.

In Tamale in northern Ghana, years of political neglect, violence, and structural adjustment have led to small-scale traders taking over streets, sidewalks, and infrastructure, which has created a boundless and dynamic marketspace that far exceeds the delimited and politically defined marketplaces. For the state, therefore, much of the formalization process is about restoring the control and power of public space through evictions and relocations of traders. In conjunction with the inclusive welfare services, this demonstrates the contradictions entailed in the politics of informality.

The study is based on an ethnographic fieldwork among small-scale traders in northern Ghana with a specific interest in the events that occur at the intersection where state, market, and citizenship meet. By asking what it means to be a trader in this contradictory process of formalization, the dissertation aims to understand this transformative moment in Ghana’s political and economic history.

In this study the emic notion of *small-small* is used to frame the norms of gradual progress and letting others in that define the moral economy of small-scale trade. Norms, values, and obligations generate trust and solidarity within the marketspace. But more than that, small-small produces a form of politics against an obstructive and unreliable state and it guides traders into the future by shaping dreams, aspirations, and possibilities. Situated in traders’ daily lives, work, and relationships, and through the small-small lens, this thesis investigates the underlying moralities of formalization. It describes the politics of the

Ghanaian state, which in its attempt to create an inclusive welfare society, struggles to both protect the moral dynamics of small-scale trade while adhering to the norms and standards of an open liberalized economy.

**Sarri Krantz**, Anna 2018. *Tredje generationens överlevande: En socialantropologisk studie om minne, antisemitism och identitet i spåret av Förintelsen*. Section of Social Anthropology, Dept. of Sociology, Lund University.

The Holocaust is an event that lives on in societies' consciousness in the form of memorial monuments and museums, and is processed by research institutions and authorities. My own journey began when meeting upper secondary students who denied the Holocaust, and I soon came in contact with a group who identify themselves as Third Generation Survivors; grandchildren of those who survived the Holocaust. The purpose of this study is to investigate the third generation's identity and how it is shaped by the memory of the Holocaust, by contemporary antisemitism and by the influence of Jewish institutions.

The ethnographic survey, focusing on interviews and observations, revealed that there is a pronounced will to remember the Holocaust. For some, it is important to remember in a private context while others consider that the more public commemoration ceremonies meet the need. At the same time, the grandchildren live in a time of both manifest and latent antisemitism, which influences the formation of their identity and their autobiography. However, their identity is not only shaped by past and present antisemitism but also by the Jewish institutions, the Jewish calendar as well as cultural and social guidelines. In the conclusions of the study, it can be seen that the Third Generation's remembrance of the Holocaust is largely based on a generational transfer of memory that has taken place during the participants' lives through interaction with the survival generation. The results also show that they have strategies to deal with contemporary alongside historical antisemitism experienced by the survivors. This together constitutes one of the fundamentals of both their individual and their collective identity. The results also show that the third generation chooses to live a Jewish life, within the framework of the Jewish congregation in Stockholm, based on individual choices and decisions.

## 2019

**Abelin, Matthias** 2019. *A Swedish Dilemma: Culture and Rule of Law in Swedish Sickness Insurance*. Section of Social Anthropology, Dept. of Sociology, Lund University.

Swedish society has been described as both modern, liberal democratic and deeply humanitarian; and as more or less premodern, semi-authoritarian and potentially abusive of groups with weak political representation. In this dissertation, this Swedish dilemma is explored in an anthropology of law tradition, with disputing practices as an inroad to an understanding of law as culture.

Detailed data on twenty appeals of denials of sickness cash benefits between 2005 to 2008 and 2015 to 2018 are contextualised with 20th century history, previous research, government oversight reports, media coverage, and interviews with jurists across the field. The theoretical framing is Geertz's semiotic concept of law as culture, Charles Taylor's social imaginaries of modernity and premodernity, the theoretical content of previous research about Sweden with a similar framing and objective, and John Borneman's anthropological

concept of rule of law. Based on Anglo-Saxon scholarship about administrative law and social insurance adjudication, I also develop a practice-based and more anthropological theory of modern Western rule of law in relation to sickness benefits.

This study identifies recurrent constructions of meaning, animating ideals, legal sensibilities and models of society. They are: the prerogatives of the state, corporatism, consensus lost, far-reaching administrative discretion, priority given to low costs, and conflictful paternalism. It also suggests that these aspects of Swedish administrative legal culture are made possible by weak elite accountability, weak legalistic awareness in the press, a priori trust in the state, and various forms of political and bureaucratic foul play, such as extra-legal regulations, arbitrary formalism, and government agencies and tribunals which respond to political demands.

Taken as a whole, the findings of this study suggest a form of unstable pseudo-rule by law, and even a fundamentally different basis for the Swedish political order. State prerogatives and conflictful paternalism seem to be more important than modern Western rule of law. Causal explanations in the social sciences are difficult, but the results nonetheless suggest that Sweden has had less influence from modern Western notions of natural law and individual rights because of a greater continuity from some version of a Lutheran-Orthodox Prussian *Machtstaate* and other premodern social imaginaries.

**Aguirre Vidal**, Gladis 2019. *Mobilising care: Ecuadorian families and transnational lives between Ecuador and Spain*. Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology 22. Dept. of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University.

This thesis focuses on the dynamics of care in the transnational lives of Ecuadorian migrant women in Spain. It is concerned with the various forms of care that take shape and are sustained in the workplace, between friends, and among family members in Ecuador and Spain. Ultimately, it sheds light on how care is mobilised to sustain ideals of solidarity at work as well as togetherness in transnational life. The thesis is set against the background of the economic and political crisis in Ecuador of the late 1990s and early 2000s, which resulted not only in the dollarization of the economy and the removal of the country's president, but in a dramatic shift of traditional male migration from the southern highlands to the United States, to a new wave of largely middle class female migration to Western Europe, especially Spain. Women from across the country left their children, spouses and elderly parents behind to work in domestic and care jobs abroad. In Ecuador, this disturbed the dominant cultural imaginary of the co-habiting and united family, centred on the presence of the woman as mother and wife. In light of this, the thesis engages with women's dilemmas in giving and receiving care during years of absence, the role of family members, friends and domestic workers in this process, and the development of long-term goals focused on remittances, reunification, return, and the ultimate goal of creating a better future. Most generally, while challenging a series of dichotomies between love and money, home and work, gift and commodity—which have structured academic discussions concerning the feminization of international migration—the thesis describes the intimate relationship between women's participation in the gift economy and a global labour market through the lens of care relationships.

**Amurwon, Jovita** 2019. *Responding to chronic illness: A case study from rural Uganda*. Diss. Acta Universitatis Agriculturae Sueciae 2019:64. Dept. of Rural and Urban Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

This thesis explores the individual and household-level factors that determine households' responses to and ability to cope with chronic illness of adults, as well as with the stresses from the wider environment, in a rural Ugandan context. Over a period of one year, in 2009/2010, monthly visits were made to 22 households that were part of a cohort that accessed free healthcare from the Medical Research Council of Uganda. Data was collected through in-depth interviews including life histories and observations. The material was continuously analysed and data collection refined over the course of the year, and later the three most important themes arising from the material were developed into papers.

The three major findings were; 1) the lifecycle-stage of a household influenced response strategies and outcomes during chronic illness, and households headed by the elderly (those with household heads over the age of 60) were an especially vulnerable group, 2) Social relations and broader social protection is key for minimising financial hardships in households with chronically ill individuals, even with free healthcare, as locally prevailing factors such as poor transportation services, food shortages and droughts still cause economic loss during ill health, and 3) the elderly are in an especially vulnerable situation due to their shrinking asset base as well as due to trends in the wider environment, such as increased schooling of children and out-migration of young people, which means they risk being left in rural areas with inadequate access to care and support.

Addressing the needs of individuals and households with chronic conditions requires health systems to focus on both medical factors and the broader context-specific social determinants of health. The unique case of a population accessing free healthcare made it possible to observe the factors that could still hinder access to the available care, and the needs, aside from purely medical concerns, that had to be met in order to cope with illness. The highlights from the thesis help to fill gaps in knowledge on how health systems could improve and maintain health outcomes during chronic illness in similar low-income settings. It must also be acknowledged that households are all different, and that solutions that are successful at one point might prove less suitable in a changing context that demands continuous attention and flexible policies.

**Berglund, Anna** 2019. *Ambiguous Hopes: An Ethnographic Study of Agricultural Modernisation in a Rwandan village*. Section of Social Anthropology, Dept. of Sociology, Lund University.

Since 2006, Rwanda has been implementing policies to modernize the agricultural sector, with the aim of moving from small-scale subsistence farming to modern, market-oriented farming. Under these policies, small-scale farmers have been compelled to abandon their traditional farming practices and adapt to monocropping of state-approved crops on consolidated land.

This dissertation, based on 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork in a Rwandan village, describes how agricultural modernization policies have been implemented and the farmers' reactions to it. Although policies are implemented in a top-down manner, and although the the state-imposed monocropping has resulted in poor yields and increased hunger,

my informants did not show any overt, or even covert resistance to these policies. This dissertation aims at understanding why.

Looking beyond James Scott's theory of 'hidden resistance' and 'hidden transcripts', I have found that rather than evading or resisting state policies, villagers endeavoured to be included in the modernization plans. My argument is that the societal hierarchy, in combination with the prevailing norms to aspire not to be poor and to strive to develop, can help us to understand this ambition to be part of a project that made their lives miserable and even precarious.

**Tsoukalas, Ioannis** 2019. *Apprentice Cosmopolitans: Social identity, community, and learning among ERASMUS exchange students*. Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology NS 21. Dept. of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University

The present dissertation is an ethnographic study of the Erasmus Programme, the European Union's student exchange programme. This programme has, for the last three decades, resulted in an unprecedented exchange of ideas and people within the European Union, and it has quite radically changed the conditions for, and the appearance of, student life in many European universities. Over the years the community has developed a distinctive lifestyle, replete with partying and travel, and is characterized by a strong social cohesion and exclusive ethos. Empirically the study is a multi-local field study involving participant observation and interviews in two European capitals, namely Stockholm and Athens. Both present and former Erasmus students have been included in the study and were followed for an extended period of time. The study takes a close look at some of the experiential and social processes of the 'Erasmus lifestyle' and tries to understand them in the light of wider cultural and political processes such as the European unification process, cosmopolitanism, youth culture, and tourism. In the process it surveys part of the programme's political history, local configuration, social dynamics, communication practices and global interfaces. According to the present thesis, the Erasmus Programme can be seen as a learning apprenticeship through which the young students gain entrance to and get valuable training in the reality of living in an increasingly interconnected world. The strong experiences engendered by the programme, both emotionally and cognitively, lead to a transformation in the student's self-perception, social representations and social identity. For some students the programme leads to a drastic reconfiguring of their social networks and extant allegiances (e.g., towards their nation, culture), prompting them, after the end of their sojourn, to explore new venues in terms of career development, family life, and place of residence. Although the students do not seem to integrate with the host country to any significant degree, their extended experience of transnational mobility and their first-hand acquaintance with cultural diversity within the group encourages them to develop a more cosmopolitan outlook on the world and their place within it.

**Valente Cardoso, Carolina** 2019. *The new Portuguese presence in Angola: Traces, emplacements and interactions of a postcolonial encounter*. School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg.

Propelled by the impact of the Euro-crisis in the Portuguese economy and job market and the booming economy in Angola, during the last decade, a great number of Portuguese workers migrated to the former colony. At the same time, Angolan investors made important acquisitions in key sectors of the Portuguese economy. Together, these inverse flows of

people and capital marked a revivification of the economic, political and socio-cultural ties connecting ex-colony and ex-metropole, forty years after independence.

Framed as an “ethnography of post-colonial encounter” (Faier & Rofel 2015) and based on fieldwork carried out among the Portuguese living in the city of Benguela (central region of Angola), between August 2015 and February 2016, the aim of this thesis is to explore and reflect on these migrants’ experiences and subjectivities.

Addressing classical anthropological concerns with issues such as postcolonial reconfiguration of power relations, perceptions of continuity and change, constellations of (un)belonging and contested and competing past presenting discourses, the analysis deployed follows three interconnected threads: it identifies and explores *traces* of the past which shape the contemporary Portuguese presence; it points to the symbolic and material connections of the mobile subjects to the Angolan space/place, and the different types of *emplacement* enacted by them; and finally, through a set of critical *figures* of power embodied by the subjects, it investigates Portuguese-Angolan power relations as they are played out in everyday life *interactions*.

Proposing a situated postcolonial perspective on these topics, the thesis locates itself in the interception of three fields of scholarship: Lusophone postcolonial studies; North-South migration studies and research on whiteness and white subjectivities in Africa. With regard to the first one, its main contribution lies in following key themes such as ‘Lusophone post-colonial identities’ and ‘semi peripheral condition’ as they travel outside of Portugal. To the latter fields it contributes with empirical enrichment brought about by the distinctive features of a case that, at different levels, challenges that what has come to be seen as the ‘normalized’ structure of transnational distribution of power.

## 2020

**Brandshaug, Malene K.** 2020. *Liquid Landscapes: Human-water interactions and water scarcity in Yanque, Peru*. School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg.

In the farming district of Yanque in the Southern Peruvian Andes, everyday life revolves around acquiring enough water for irrigation. This thesis concerns water scarcity and focuses on a range of water management practices. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted among small-scale farmers from January to December 2016, the core chapters of this thesis scrutinise how water is searched for in physical and bureaucratic landscapes; how it is captured in canals, reservoirs and fields; and how it is paid *to and for* through offerings to earth-beings and through money transfers to the state and water organisation. By paying attention to human-water interactions, the thesis not only explores what people do with water, but also the variations in what water is, becomes and does in Yanque. Hence, this study is situated within an anthropology concerned with more-than-human relations. In an Anthropocene world marked by increased water scarcity, *Liquid landscapes* also addresses the relation between national and regional politics of water governance and local water management. It argues that a historical continuity of water scarcity in Yanque is exacerbated by environmental changes concerning disappearing glaciers and irregular rains, as well as by a continued coloniality. The thesis shows how indeterminacy is created in political spaces, in the mountain and valley landscape, and through emotion and affect. Furthermore, by describing and analysing heterogeneous practices that Yanqueños prove to be remarkably skilled in navigating and evoking, the thesis seeks to move beyond what can appear to be

opposing water realities. *Liquid landscapes* concludes that by enacting water as a sentient person *and* as a passive substance, Yanqueños do not simply adopt the dominant way of valuing water as an object to be used efficiently. Rather, they creatively combine divergent water management practices, use distinct yet entangled irrigation infrastructures, and make relevant multiple versions of water to deal with water scarcity. Moreover, the thesis ends by holding that although Yanque farmers are especially vulnerable to environmental and ecological changes, which are intensified by inequalities and marginalisation, the indeterminacy of their water situation is not only characterised by vulnerability and uncertainty, but also by strength, creativity and possibility.

**Granlund, Stefan** 2020. *The promise of payday: exploring the role of state cash transfers in post-apartheid rural South Africa*. Acta Universitatis Agriculturae Sueciae 2020:10. Dept. of Rural and Urban Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

During the last two decades, cash transfer programs have become a significant tool across low and middle-income countries in efforts to reduce poverty. However, there is a paucity of studies on beneficiaries' own perspectives and lived experiences of cash transfers as well as potential long-term productive effects on livelihoods.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the material and socio-relational implications of state cash transfers for impoverished populations in rural South Africa in a changing livelihood context, using the Child Support Grant (CSG) as case. The CSG is an unconditional cash transfer to improve child wellbeing for households living in poverty. Material and socialrelational implications of the grant are explored through combining household surveys with all (273) households in two rural villages in the Eastern Cape Province with interviews and observations. The surveys, conducted in 2016, followed up a previous similar survey from 2002, which was before the CSG reached these villages. Drawing on literature on cash transfers, livelihoods, and social justice theory, including the two interlinked concepts of redistribution and recognition, the study points to the importance of both material and symbolic redistribution in strengthening livelihoods and social justice.

The thesis reveals that in a context of rising unemployment and declining cultivation in the two villages, social grants have both protective and productive effects on livelihoods. The results show how the recipients used the CSG strategically for making small improvements to their livelihoods over time. The study also shows that the CSG has strengthened women's autonomy and dignity and has reduced gender inequalities at household level. However, the CSG did not lead to significant improvements that could eradicate poverty in the long term.

This thesis further studies state-citizen relations and the contentious character of social grants in rural South Africa. There is a growing sense of entitlement to the CSG among recipients, while sentiments of grants being a form of charity exists simultaneously. The thesis concludes that the encounters with state bureaucracy primarily are avenues where CSG recipients see the state, enact a form of agency and gain recognition, which contributes to a sense of citizenship. In conclusion, the CSG is not simply an economic transfer of cash, which keeps individuals in households and communities afloat, it also becomes part of, and reshapes, social relations. The potential for recipients to gain recognition of their status as citizens is an important symbolic implication of social grants.



**Helmfrid, Sigrun** 2020. *Cotton and Cabaret: Domestic Economy and Female Agency in Burkina Faso*. Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology NS 23. Dept. of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University.

This study investigates the functioning of the domestic economy of smallholder cotton farmers with the overall aim of interrogating female agency, based on ethnographic fieldwork in Burkina Faso in the mid-1990s. The thesis addresses the following interrelated research questions: How were the smallholder domestic economies organized and how did they function? What were the mechanisms for economic inequality and social stratification? To what extent did women benefit from cotton farming? What economic strategies were available to women? And finally, how could female agency be conceptualized in relation to the domestic unit under male headship? Permeating the analysis is the insight that domestic economies of many West African farming societies consist of separate but interconnected economic domains, the “common” economy of the farming unit and the “individual” economies of its male and female members. It demonstrates that women have vested interests in both the common economy and their individual ones, since women’s individual undertakings, to a large extent, are motivated by their gendered responsibilities towards the domestic group. The study argues for an agency concept that captures the different modes in which women exercise agency, both as individuals and as members of social bodies.