

Introduction: the promise of political anthropology

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This handbook introduces readers to the field of political anthropology. It engages major debates and the shifting borders of a moving field of enquiry at the intersection of anthropology, politics, philosophy and international relations. The aim is not only to provide an overview of the current debates around political anthropology today, but also to flesh out the potential and the limits of the approaches, methodologies and explanatory frames developed by scholars working within political anthropology. Political anthropology is not an easily definable subject area or sub-discipline. The variety of approaches one can connect to the term makes it virtually impossible to interrogate the what, how, why and where of current political anthropology: one is immediately thrown into the daunting task of reviewing not only the entire discipline of anthropology but also the many interfaces between anthropology and the social and political sciences in a world of blurry boundaries. In a sense, it may appear futile writing a handbook on a field whose contours seem difficult, if not impossible, to delineate. And yet it is worth a try.

It is worth a try exactly because we find ourselves in a moment where there is a growing awareness of the need to retrieve older insights and combine them with newer developments. Social science, after all, should be cumulative. Contemporary challenges in an ever-shifting world should not necessarily result in a giving up on disciplinary traditions. Indeed, to speak with Marcel Mauss, the “political” cannot be so neatly separated, as the political sphere intersects with social, economic, legal, and cultural patterns and practices, forming a “total social fact”. This might be a compelling reason for a return to classical insights, exactly due to problems of the contemporary political scene, whose underlying challenges and dangers may not always be so radically new after all. Surely, the idea of politics as a total social fact would seem to fit better in societies with low degrees of institutional differentiation. However, anthropologists have successfully argued that also in modern states a great deal of politics takes place via informal networks and informal political action, underpinning or overlapping with the more objectifiable institutional level that political scientists tend to concentrate on. Here, anthropology still offers a supplement to, and an enriching of, the wider social and political sciences.

Political anthropology has been a powerful challenge to conventional wisdom in political science. It has called into question the validity of rationalist, structuralist or normative explanations of states and relations between states. Political anthropology has framed new visions of contemporary interpretive political analysis. This occurred, on the one hand, by adopting analytical tools from germane disciplines and, on the other hand, by providing analytical tools to germane disciplines as well. The move from structuralism and functionalism to process approaches, for instance, would be met by new theoretical frameworks inspired by post-structuralism and post-modernism. Post-structuralism has facilitated a decisive turn towards acknowledging the agency of

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the “other”. Later on, post-modern approaches claimed to ground structures of power in discourse and knowledge. Driven not only by an emancipatory thrust of post-structuralism and post-colonialism but also by variants of post-Marxism, the “old” was quickly becoming synonymous with dispensable. Writing about culture was in itself permeated by power inherent in knowledge production.

The renaissance of process approaches, the increasing focus on identity-politics, or the theorization of models of development in a post-colonial world all suggest that political anthropology has come to acknowledge multiple forms of modernity. In a similar vein, a joint concern for an inquiry at the frontiers of anthropology and political theory has emerged. This tradition of scholarship draws connections between politics as conventionally understood (practices that engage with the distributive functions of the state) and the subjective and affective dimensions of political struggle and commitments. Scholars increasingly recognize that any engagement with contemporary politics requires a simultaneous analysis of modes of action and reflection that cannot be easily understood within a language of “rationality” and its alleged opposite.

By insisting on the term “political anthropology”, therefore, we do not propose a call to arms around either new or old paradigms. Political anthropology deals with central themes of institutionalized domination, political hierarchies, and distributional conflicts within and amongst states by focusing on informal networks, interpretations of meaning, and non-rational forms of action, and by emphasizing self-critical and reflexive approaches. We certainly do not wish to suggest that any attempt to identify territorially or demarcate substantively what the political is or should be about is either possible or desirable. Ever since its beginnings as a sub-discipline of anthropology, political anthropology has been through several paradigm shifts. In 2003, Ted C. Lewellen could claim that “political anthropology is already a different discipline than it was only a decade ago and continues to change rapidly” (Lewellen, 2003: 201). The sources of such rapid changes are, partly at least, linked to the changing life-worlds produced by economic, social, and political transformations. Such transformations reshaped not only classical boundaries of the state, conceptions of sovereignty, or political hierarchies, but also disciplinary boundaries of political anthropology. Globalization, writ large, has been a powerful force that would open established boundaries, break up hierarchies, and produce new centres of political action. The relational fields that link global discourses and mobile logics of rule to local knowledge have had, for instance, consequences for the agency of the weak and disempowered as well as the politics of movement, be it as flows of capital, information, or population.

In this world of rapid change it is important to remind ourselves that political anthropology is not a new term. The history and meanings the term carries require consideration. Rather than replacing earlier overviews of political anthropology (see for example Balandier, 1967; Jörke, 2005; Lewellen, 2003; Kurtz, 2001; Nugent and Vincent, 2004; Swartz et al., 1966) this handbook builds on the scholarship traditions these works have outlined and also served to shape. To a certain extent anthropology was of course always about politics. The very first anthropologists – from Henry Maine, Lewis Henry Morgan, and Edward Tylor – had a direct or indirect relationship to law (and many, like Morgan and John McLennan, were lawyers). In this sense, anthropology was critically rooted in legal discourse to much the same extent as sociology, whose founding fathers also held law degrees. The 19th-century discussion

over the “original society” being male or female was couched in legal terms, as clearly reflected in Johann Jakob Bachofen’s *Das Mutterrecht* (1861).

The interest of early political anthropology was inclined towards establishing a typology of political forms, ranging from their simplest to their most complex forms. Early evolutionism sought to establish the evolutionary ladder by which societies had developed, from bands to tribes toward more complex political arrangements in chiefdoms and finally states. Although these attempts often failed, and although the underlying epistemology of early evolutionism has rightly been deconstructed as flawed, the question concerning succession and change of political forms has never been entirely abandoned; nor should it (see Fried, 1967; Kurtz, 2001). The links between cultural/social anthropology and archaeology or paleoanthropology and a continued interest in bio-cultural evolution have been more salient in American compared to European anthropology; but there are signs that such concerns are on their way back.

Bronisław Malinowski and Franz Boas, who established the fieldwork tradition, are not always considered founding figures in our standard genealogies of political anthropology. Yet both of them paid great attention to political organization in their ethnographies, as did practically all their students. In *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*, Malinowski (1970 [1926]) continued the legal approach, analysing law, order, crime, and punishment with the help of more solid ethnographic data. Both Boas and Malinowski engaged in political themes and discussions outside their primary ethnographic areas of research. Boas used very consciously a comparative anthropological perspective to reflect on political questions like race, nationalism, eugenics and criminology in the West, as in his *Anthropology and Modern Life* (1962 [1928]). Paul Radin, one of Boas’s “difficult” students, also ventured into the political domain via his interest in religion and mythology, and developed path-breaking insights into the ways of the “trickster” figure that have helped political scientists like Agnes Horvath capture aspects of power and communication in the 20th century. In many ways, scholars like Radin were already engaged in a reflexive political anthropology, solidly anchored in ethnography. In 1927 Robert Lowie had published *The Origin of the State* (1962 [1927]), trying to liberate the “anthropology of the state” from unilineal, speculative evolutionism. These are some reasons why Georges Balandier (in his much-quoted 1967 book on political anthropology) claimed that the foundations of political anthropology were laid in the 1920s. This claim can be further substantiated by referring to the work of Marcel Mauss, who in the interwar period did in fact seek to establish new foundations for anthropology and sociology.

In Britain, Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown also developed an approach to structural functionalism in the pre-war period. His analysis was clearly directed towards political organization, as single institutions were always analysed against the larger social order that they were seen to uphold. This was to become the theoretical background to British political anthropology as it developed in the post-war period. Political anthropology indeed became a more recognizable and well-defined branch of anthropology in the 1940s and 1950s, as it became a main focus of the British functionalist schools, heavily inspired by Radcliffe-Brown, and openly reacting against evolutionism and historicism. The approach was empirical, with the main bulk of work carried out in colonial Africa. The British structural-functionalist school was institutionalized with *African Political*

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Systems, edited by Meyer Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1940). A similar degree of institutionalization of a distinctive political anthropology never took place in post-war America, partly due to the Parsonian (di)vision of the sciences, which – somewhat artificially we would argue – relegated anthropology to the sphere of culture and symbolism. The very strong stress on social equilibrium, which was so evident in Evans-Pritchard's approach, was quickly questioned in a series of works that focused more on conflict and change (Leach, 1954). These works attempted to show how individuals acted within political structures, and that changes took place due to both internal and external pressures. Contradictions and conflict came to the fore. A special version of conflict-oriented political anthropology was developed in the so-called Manchester School, started by Max Gluckman (1963). Gluckman focused on social process and an analysis of structures and systems based on their relative stability. In his view, conflict maintained the stability of political systems through the establishment and re-establishment of crosscutting ties among social actors. Gluckman even suggested that a certain degree of conflict was necessary to uphold society, and that conflict was constitutive of social and political order.

From the 1960s a “process approach” developed, stressing the role of agents in situations where the colonial system was being dismantled (Barth, 1959; Bailey, 1969; Vincent, 1978). The focus on conflict and social reproduction was carried over into Marxist approaches that became particularly dominant in the 1960s and 1970s (Asad, 1973; Friedman, 1975; Schneider and Schneider, 1976; Bourdieu, 1977). It is important to stress that this was far from a result of any sudden discovery. From the 1940s and 1950s onwards anthropologists studying peasant societies in Latin America and Asia had increasingly started to incorporate their local setting (the village) into its larger context, as in Robert Redfield's famous distinction between “small” and “big” traditions, developed in the 1930s (Redfield, 1941). Already in the 1930s however, scholars such as Arthur Hocart had used fieldwork in Fiji and in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to propose a novel theory of the origin of government (Hocart 1970 [1936]). For specific reasons of institutional affiliation and scholarly fashion – with the dominant functionalism of his times – his major work, *Kings and Councillors*, has remained little known; but it uses ethnographic material from unfamiliar places to argue that government, with its authority and hierarchy, had ritual origins, as the predominant impulse to secure life would lead to a systematic evolution of society from segmentary to centralized, from precedence to authority, from complementarity to hierarchy.

It would take some decades before in the 1960s and 1970s one could witness the emergence of Europe as a region of anthropological investigation. This turn toward the study of complex modern societies made anthropology inherently more political. It was no longer possible to carry out fieldwork in, say, Spain, Greece, Italy, Mexico, Algeria, or India without taking into account the ways in which all aspects of local society were tied to states and markets. Early ethnographies in Europe had sometimes done just that; they had carried out fieldwork in villages of Southern Europe as if they were isolated “islands”. However, from the 1970s onwards such approaches were openly criticized: anthropologists had “tribalized Europe” and if they wanted to produce relevant ethnography they could no longer afford to do so (Boissevain and Friedl, 1975).

Contrary to what is often heard from colleagues in the political and social sciences, anthropologists have for more than half a century been careful to link their extremely

local micro-settings to wider social, economic, and political structures. Meanings of concepts such as state, representation, or democracy are very different according to the place they originate in and where they are practised (Chabal and Daloz, 2006). In a broader vein this relates to the symbolic and ritualistic dimension of politics, for long a core theme in political anthropology (Cohen, 1969; Kertzer, 1988; Rivière, 1988; Bodnar, 1994). This, of course, has never meant to abandon an ethnographic focus on very local phenomena, the care for ethnographic detail. From the 1980s an increasing focus on ethnicity and nationalism and ethnic–national conflict developed (Eriksen, 2002; Heidemann, 2002; Bowman, 2003). “Identity” and “identity politics” became defining themes of the discipline, partly (and perhaps problematically) replacing earlier the focus on kinship and social organization.

Initially, therefore, the term “political anthropology” was one of those sub-disciplinary categories produced by post-war anthropology, and accordingly inspired by the major post-war “isms”: functionalism, structuralism and Marxism. The demise of these narratives led to the momentary retreat of “political anthropology” in the early 1980s. And yet, from exactly the same moment, anthropology experienced a return to politics via post-structuralism. The shift in the social and political sciences toward an understanding of power outside and beyond state and sovereignty, replaced by a focus on representation and symbolic power, prepared the way for what may even be recognized as an “anthropological turn” in politics. Explanatory frameworks for phenomena of institutionalized domination have increasingly moved beyond state and sovereignty. This “turn” has emphasized representations, imaginaries, and symbolic power. Developments such as post-colonialism, post-communism, multiculturalism, or migration, and new forms of mobility affected political arrangements practically everywhere.

Post-war political anthropologists had converged around a series of key questions that guided empirical analysis and gave orientation to theoretical debates. Very broadly, these debates were oriented towards comparative studies of forms of political organization, types of political leadership, and ways of dealing with conflict and cooperation in the absence of formal institutions. Such convergence is harder to spot today. Not so many people today use the category “political anthropology” to define one’s main area of interest, while practically everyone would claim, and perhaps rightly so, to be engaged in the anthropology of the “political”. This trend has arguably only been reinforced with the so-called “ontological turn” in anthropology (see for example Holbraad and Pedersen, 2017) or the focus on ethnographies of “forms of life” in states of emergency (Fassin et al., 2013, 2017).

Many of the themes mentioned above figure prominently in this volume. In order not only to reflect the historical depth of classical ideas and traditions but also to do justice to the different perspectives by which scholars aim to understand the political world, this handbook is thematically organized in four sections. Whilst the first section reconsiders the use of alternative paradigms regarding the human condition in understanding politics, the second presents anthropological concepts and approaches that appear to be particularly adequate to understand the analysis of political processes today. The third section deals with ethnographies of the political, and the fourth engages with political anthropology in global processes.

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Part I aims to express not only the malleability and diversity of the field but also its ever-growing potential to explain and understand people's relations with power in a changing world. Old and new paradigms are understood here not as well-established bodies of knowledge. Rather, the purpose is to trace back some of the most important conceptual transitions and changing relationships between human practices and their collective arrangements. Political anthropology rests on the continued (or renewed) application of classical concepts, precisely because of their long-standing nature and "untimeliness" (Rabinow and Marcus 2009). An approach that is "untimely" – and outside mainstream political anthropology – gives the possibility of detachment and space for critical reflection, which are fundamental to diagnosing political predicaments. In our judgement a series of classical anthropological concepts – precisely because of their untimeliness – are particularly adequate to grasp the critical conditions of the contemporary. Political anthropology developed paradigms in relation to the background conditions of authors and their problems. Social and political life in primitive communities would be explained with a view to expectations in aggregated systems in modern states. Yet, if contemporary processes are studied, the analytical aim has to preserve a certain critical distance. This critical distance is provided by concepts that hark back to the origins of the discipline. In this sense, continuities appear within contemporary process, which apparently are all about the present. Traditional concepts have gained enormous power in grasping central logics and conundrums in current globalizing politics. Given that they express ideas of continuity or "permanence" in understanding human conditions of collective self-organization and collective identity, it is these anthropological tools that can provide powerful explanations of contemporary puzzles.

Arpad Szokolczai's opening chapter, "Recovering the Classical Foundations of Political Anthropology", assigns a foundational role to political anthropology for understanding our contemporary predicament. The chapter delivers two key messages. First, it argues that political anthropology must identify the problems of the specifically "humanist" vision of the modern world, including the all-encompassing emancipation and empowerment that entailed profound uprootedness and disempowerment of many living beings on the planet. Second, by drawing on a contemporary reading of the work of Plato and some of its most recent interpreters such as Voegelin, Jan Patočka and Michel Foucault who took up the concern or care for the meaningful order of the soul or the self, Szokolczai claims that power ultimately lies with the concrete human person, and not outside of it.

Roberto Farneti enquires whether there is a "mimetic turn in the social sciences". Working on the basis of the mimetic hypothesis as developed by cultural anthropologist René Girard, this chapter identifies human beings as imitative and conflictual. Political anthropology based on a mimetic perspective suggests that human sociability is based on social bonds that are not hypothetical but real, although such reality is often unconscious, affective and not rational. This chapter reframes four types of canonical problems in the social sciences. First, it argues for a shift in ontological assumptions from individuals and groups towards mimetic doubles. Second, the rationale of politics is not so much based on struggle for power but on sacrifice as a means of protection. Third, mimetic theory undermines the canon of the repertory of politics, which is based on the bedrock of the individuationist model. Fourth, in terms of interdisciplinarity,

mimetic theory proposes an inclusive perspective relating to anthropologically grounded origins of social bonds and political order.

Agnes Horvath's chapter, "Charisma/Trickster: On the Twofold Nature of Power", distinguishes two forms of power. Taking a critical look at Weberian or Foucauldian conceptions of power – which either describe institutionalized domination or omnipresent and all-pervasive metapower – Horvath distinguishes "first" from "second" power. Whilst second power has become dominant in modernity, first power is about the centrality of power inside every human being. This chapter therefore shifts attention from the focus on external outside forces of power, which are a product of necessity or automatic diffusion, towards a focus on power as relying on inner, personal coherence, rooted in a rich and full personality. The chapter's ultimate claim is that power is a result of the perfect freedom of will, which is capable of giving without the need for receiving back. The possession of power centres on not only keeping its borders intact but also resisting every external intrusion and maintaining its own form.

In their chapter "Contemporary Political Stakes: After-Lives of the Modern", Paul Rabinow and Anthony Stavrianakis claim the need for a contemporary ethos, which helps us respond to a confusing and inchoate present. With the decline of meta-narratives and post-modernism, the authors identify the contemporary ethos in a new, "third" movement of Kant's original question "What is Enlightenment?" We must still "dare to think", but need to go beyond Kant's pact with the reigning powers, with its separation of spheres of the public and the private, or Foucault's *History of the Present*, designed to undermine the seeming solidity of prior formations. In the current political conjuncture, "to dare to know" can be identified in the need for different publics to emerge. Such publics can only emerge in relation to specific problems, which in turn require inquiry and concept work. Political anthropology must therefore proceed by inquiry and concept work in order to conceive of the relation between anthropology and the political stakes of practices.

In their chapter – "Political Anthropology: Biology, Culture, and Ethics" – Gabriele de Anna and Christian Illies distinguish two anthropological sources of human action and normativity: whilst the "classical" paradigm claimed teleological, value-centred visions of the human, the "modern" anthropological paradigm finds support in evolutionary theory and the reductionist naturalism of Scientific Darwinism. The authors argue that evolutionary theory is not bound to an evolutionary outlook, but can actually integrate elements of normativity typical of the classical paradigm. Although evolutionary theory lacks sources of normativity, it is nevertheless compatible with a teleological interpretation of the biosphere and humans. If our evolved cognitive abilities – as claimed by the modern paradigm – allow us freedom to choose, one potentiality is to choose the classical paradigm as a normative ideal. Our evolved nature can help us see that our potentialities can be realized in a good way, and that the classical paradigm is a suitable alternative to deal with the problems of the modern world that we face as individuals and as societies.

Michael Herzfeld concludes Part I with "Cultural Intimacy and the Politics of Civility", which reflects on performative and affective intricacies of political style in states and societies that cannot really conform to the formal standards required by their institutions, norms, and laws. This chapter covers one of the least obvious but also most promising areas of political anthropology, which is the informal ways by which social

actors defend the inner spaces of institutional life. An anthropology of politics must therefore recognize that collusion depends heavily on the intimate winks and nods that signal shared recognition of long familiar but well-concealed possibilities for what may ultimately prove to be transformative action. Using concepts such as “phatic communion” or cultural intimacy in a fruitful dialogue with several different cultural spheres – such as Thailand, Italy, Greece, and the US – it teases out different implications of politics of civility and its variants.

Part II is organized around the idea that political anthropology must play a prominent part in understanding contemporary political processes precisely because the changing conditions of the human potential to create have made many of the long-standing explanatory patterns of political science inadequate or obsolete. Whilst for long periods political anthropology was concerned primarily with politics in stateless societies, ever since the 1960s anthropologists increasingly started to study more “complex” social settings in which the presence of states, bureaucracies and markets became more visible in ethnographic accounts. As indicated above, the turn towards complex or more stratified societies also signified that political themes were increasingly taken up as the main focus of study, and at two main levels. First of all, anthropologists continued to study political organization and political phenomena that lay outside the state-regulated sphere (as in patron–client relations or tribal political organization). Second, they started to develop a more explicit disciplinary concern with states and their institutions and, in particular, with the relationship between formal and informal political institutions. An anthropology of the state unfolded, and it is a most thriving field today. Whilst Clifford Geertz’s 1980 work on the Bali state was an early, famous example, there is today a rich canon of anthropological studies of the state (see for example Abélès, 1990; Trouillot, 2001; Hansen and Stepputat, 2001; Sharma and Gupta, 2006) and of the frontiers and borders that surround them (see Donnan and Wilson, 1994, an early contribution to the wider anthropology of borderlands and state territoriality). These are themes that figure prominently also in this section.

Paul Dumouchel’s chapter, “Politics and the Permanence of the Sacred”, argues that the crucial distinction between “good” and “bad” violence in legitimate states is not based on meaning or fear, but on the role of the sacred in the management of violence. The irruption of religious violence in politics is not so much a return to a form of pre-secular forms of the sacred, but rather indicates that the self-organizing mechanism of violence that gave rise to the sacred has become ineffective. In the individualist modern world violence has increasingly lost its capacity to give rise to new institutions, to new religions or new forms of social organization. The progressive disappearance of the sacred in its protective function is not only an institutional challenge but also requires re-thinking the relations between citizens, states and ethics in an increasingly borderless world.

In their chapter, “Anthropology and the Enigma of the State”, Finn Stepputat and Monique Nuijten provide an inventory of “the anthropology of the state”, starting from the insight that the anthropology of the state drew considerably more on scholars of political science, political philosophy and sociology than on political anthropology. The “theoretical genealogies” of the field challenged the taken-for-grantedness of the state as a “distinct, fixed and unitary entity” operating outside and above society. The chapter concludes that the state as an idea of transcendental political authority and a

centralizing organizational practice is not withering away, as observers in the 1990s suggested, but rather is transforming. The strongest contribution of political anthropology in grasping the manifold transformative processes is to combine rich ethnographic studies of this blurriness and the fragmentation of states with analyses of underlying rationales.

In her chapter, “Liminality and the Politics of the Transitional”, Maria Mälksoo addresses political transitions in a global world through the lens of the concept of liminality. Liminality refers to the middle stage and consequent positioning of subjects in transition between socially established categories. Comparative Politics and International Relations (IR) tend to focus on political transformations through an institutionalist lens. They thus lack the depth of the internal meanings of transition as experienced by the communities and people in question. Taking a critical stance on the narrow transition paradigm in the study of international politics, the optic of liminality helps reorient the thinking of politics in the moment of transition via two examples, that is, transitional justice and the transformation of contemporary warfare. Russia’s idiosyncratic policies of reckoning with the violent legacies of its predecessor, the USSR, and its ongoing engagement in the war in Ukraine serve as illustrations of both lines of inquiry pursued here.

In his chapter, “The anthropology of Political Revolutions”, Bjørn Thomassen outlines a series of anthropologically inspired contributions to the study of revolutions. Most scholarship on political revolutions has come from sociology, political science and history. However, in recent years, and closely related to the Arab Spring and the worldwide political upheavals after 2011, a growing number of scholars have provided ethnographic accounts of revolutionary settings. At the level of theory, the chapter indicates some possible anthropological contributions towards the study of revolutions and revolutionary action. It invites an understanding of revolutions as ritual processes, highlighting transformative characteristics that closely resemble liminal in-between periods and spaces known from rites of passage. The overall point stressed in the chapter is that anthropologists have contributed not only with ethnographic accounts of revolutions as lived through by social actors, but also with analytical approaches that can inspire and supplement existing theoretical approaches to political revolutions.

In “Comparative Political Analysis and the Interpretation of Meaning”, Jean-Pascal Daloz engages the cultural realm of meaning with the study of comparative politics. Taking the departure from a criticism of several schools of thought in comparative politics within both the universalist and relativist paradigms, the chapter introduces an inductive methodology based on the thick description of locally meaningful codes within their historical and socio-cultural context. It argues that the interpretation of meaning constitutes a new form of scientific reasoning likely to offer comparative insights and not, as is frequently believed, simply add contextual knowledge. Drawing on different interpretations of meanings of political representation in Scandinavia, Nigeria and France, this chapter shows how representation is lived, performed, and understood within culturally rich local contexts.

Sune Haugbølle’s chapter on anthropology and political ideology advocates the recognition by political anthropology of the need to match analytically and conceptually the recent renaissance of ideology in the political world. The “webs of significance” which connect human beings form political subjectivities in systemic ways.

Political anthropology should shed light on ideologies as cognitive structures with legitimizing functions. Using the uprisings in the Middle East as of 2011, this chapter suggests that ideologies are not fixed or cohesive, but rather can be retrieved from the fluidity of processes through ethnography and analysis of mass-mediated texts and images. Although there is no clear demarcation from other knowledge structures – including those normally related to “culture” – political anthropology has a distinct edge in the current push in ideology theory towards better understanding the “anatomy of thinking politically”, the complex ways in which political thought is shaped between subjective interpretation and social interaction.

Keir Martin’s chapter on post-neoliberalism turns to an enquiry into the validity of the paradigm of neoliberalism and the usefulness of political anthropology in studying it. In reality, “neoliberalism”, like “capitalism” or “the market”, is more of a perspective on social relations than an objective description of empirically observable objective phenomena. For political anthropology the issue to decide is perhaps not so much whether or not the world we inhabit today is objectively post-neoliberal (or indeed ever was definitely neoliberal at some point in the recent past), but whether or not we are “post” a time when the advantages inherent in the concept outweigh the risks. Either way, the lack of agreement as to whether we have gone past neoliberalism or not suggests how strongly the trends that that term described continue to shape our appreciation of the world we live in today.

Simon Coleman’s chapter, “The Political and the Religious: On the Making of Virtuous Politics”, examines anthropological debates over the relationship between religion and politics. Why are religion and politics sometimes considered to be distinct entities (morally as well as empirically), and how have such assumptions been challenged by recent events? Exploring the dilemmas and struggles caused by the very labelling of evangelical Christianity *as* political, this chapter argues that rather than dismissing such “political evangelicalism” as not being “real” or “authentic” religion we need to re-examine the historically and culturally loaded assumptions behind such a view, which does little justice to the complexity of evangelicalism or the different ways in which it can be articulated within different normative registers. Ultimately, participation in evangelicalism may involve dealing in politics as understood by secularist, liberal models; but it may also be about reconstituting it through “virtuous” practices that have not always been appreciated, but which anthropology is well placed to uncover.

Part III aims to portray not only the breadth of themes but also the methodological innovation that ethnographies of the political have developed in the past decades. In terms of terminology, the tendency since the late 1980s has been to put “politics of ...” in front of every single anthropological theme. It was no coincidence that a landmark survey of contemporary political anthropology published in 2004 and edited by David Nugent and Joan Vincent carried the title *Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*. There is today a “politics of” gender, race, identity, reproduction, citizenship, genes, space and place, state, storytelling, and globalization, to mention just the more conspicuous ones. This almost ubiquitous “politics of” indicates that the world as such has become politicized – including, of course, “culture” itself.

This so-called “politics of culture” was not invented by anthropologists, but evidently results from larger societal transformations, much beyond what can possibly be

discussed here. However, to invoke a “politics of” very often relates to an explicit or implicit use of discourse analysis, a thematic focus on discursive power and discursive practices by means of which concrete phenomena are unmasked and heavily criticized. This has often involved a critical stance towards centralized or institutionalized forms of power and modes of representation from the vantage point of peripheries. Edward Said’s or Michel Foucault’s writings from the 1970s are often referred to here, together with a range of post-structuralist social theorists from outside the discipline of anthropology. In so many ways, contemporary “politics of” anthropology is a marriage between critical theory approaches and post-modern emphases on power and representation, held together by the bottom-up approaches that have always defined anthropology. Much “politics of” anthropology simultaneously draws on older (leftist) vocabularies of repression as well as resistance, and on newer ones that stress strategies of representation, local agency and diversity. One of the visible effects of this development is that while everything has become political, some of the earlier, more definable political themes have been pushed into the background – and with them the anthropologists whose “classical” contributions established those themes as nodes of the debate.

By now, several ethnographies have been carried out in international organizations such as the European Union (EU), studying the *fonctionnaires* as a cultural group with special codes of conduct, dressing, interaction and so on (Abélès, 1992; Wright, 1994; Bellier, 1995; Zabusky, 1995; McDonald, 1996; Rhodes et al., 2007). Bureaucracy is in fact not only a perfectly functioning rational system (Herzfeld, 1992; Gellner and Hirsch, 2001). In a similar vein, electoral politics, policy studies, and comparative politics have seen ethnographic turns (Lenclud, 1988; Yanow, 2006; Schatz, 2009; Aronoff and Kubik, 2012). This was also promoted by a greater sensitivity to the life-worlds of people and the need to understand political structures from a position of local knowledge and the hermeneutics of meaning. Ethnographies of the political may be seen as a further version of “cultural relativism”. Yet, it has been recognized that modernities are multiple and that development can be a means of power rather than of social or economic improvement. The global world has made political scientists more sensitive to culture, and not only because of misgivings about strategies of development.

The concern with political institutions has also reinforced a focus on institutionally driven political agency and policy making (Yanow, 1996; Shore and Wright, 1997). This focus has been most evident in “development anthropology” or the anthropology of development, which over the last decades has established itself as one of the discipline’s largest subfields. Political actors like states, governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations or business corporations are the primary subjects of analysis here. Via their ethnographic work anthropologists have cast a critical eye on discourses and practices produced by institutional agents of development in their encounters with local culture (see for example Ferguson, 1994). Development anthropology obviously ties political anthropology to political economy as it concerns the management and redistribution of both ideational and real resources (see for example Hart, 1982). In this vein, Arturo Escobar (1995) famously argued that international development largely helped reproduce the former colonial power structures.

Taking up this perennial theme Jeremy Gould and Eija Ranta use their chapter, “The Politics of Development: Anthropological Perspectives”, to explore development in the light of the decolonization of anthropology. Anthropology has consistently struggled with its role as a trustee of a “global liberal project”. Against this backdrop, this chapter examines the relationship of political anthropology to the politics of development through the prism of a long-term process – incomplete and perhaps ultimately unsuccessful – of disassociating anthropology from the (post)colonial project of domination through improvement. This chapter scrutinizes the terms and frameworks through which political anthropology and development have been brought into contestation during the post-colonial era. A key premise of this study is that the imperial legacy – above all the epistemic habits established through colonial government – continues to shape the way political anthropology and anthropologists participate in the politics of development.

Aiming to build a dialogue between political science and anthropology, Jan Kubik’s chapter, “Ethnographies of Power”, considers the intellectual, philosophical and epistemological origins of the tangled traditions of ethnographic inquiry in order to appreciate ethnography’s potential value for the study of politics. The term “ethnography” refers to at least three overlapping yet sufficiently distinct types of intellectual activity and research practice. First, the essence of ethnography as a specific method of data collecting is, of course, *participant observation*. Second, ethnographic *models* are built around specific *theoretical assumptions* about “reality” – or its fragment – to be observed (for example, *holism* of the social system in early, functionalist, ethnographies). Finally, ethnography is a *genre of writing* (or, to be more precise, a set of genres) the author employs to narrate the reality in a manner that is different from presentations of formal or statistical models. Focusing mainly on ethnography as a method of research, this chapter explores five types of ethnography: traditional/positivistic, interpretive, postmodern, global (multisited) and paraethnography.

Nick Long’s “Postdemocracy and a Politics of Prefiguration” explores the recent phenomenon of multiple postdemocracies. Postdemocracy can be immensely harmful as it is frequently underpinned by dynamics quite different to the beneficent principles it purports to embody. This allows anthropologists to develop critical interventions that might help rein in postdemocracy’s worst excesses, if not transcend them altogether. Based on the ethnographic encounter with postdemocratic actors from Indonesia, the chapter probes practices of post-democracy beyond simplistic conceptions of “expertise” and “economic power”. It illuminates the complex processes that determine how and why different private (and public) interests gain leverage in policy-making processes. These insights do not just make for better causal explanations. They are also a vital resource for activism, enabling us to explore alternatives to postdemocracy that are responsive to the concerns of the people we work with, rather than – or perhaps as well as – our own.

In her chapter “Feminist Theory and Reproduction” Megan Moodie takes up feminist anthropology and the positioning of feminist theory in the greater problem area of reproduction. She makes two related arguments. One is about the intellectual history of US feminist anthropology and how it might re-engage with a terrain lost to our own detriment as scholars trying to critically engage the political formations in which we ourselves are situated. The second is a more ethnographic argument about the American

public sphere: specifically, a set of current discussions about social mobility crystallized in Robert Putnam's book *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* and media personage, and how it might be critically engaged with the tools described under the first argument. A key concern of this chapter is to emancipate reproduction studies from a feminized side-project and introduce it into contemporary studies of global capitalism and attendant national policies.

Morten Bøås's chapter on the "new war zones" argues that what may appear to us as new war zones are neither substantially new nor incomprehensible. It is only our approaches that all too often make us avoid seeing the obvious: people take up arms because they are angry, scared, poor, or short of other livelihood opportunities. On the one hand, regional "big men" operate in a downward direction to capitalize on local grievances, largely for their own benefit. On the other hand, one can witness the evolution of local defence forces/militias moving upwards and becoming intertwined in larger networks and markets (and, in the process, producing new regional big men). A political anthropology of new war zones is therefore confronted by a field of constant flux and fragmentation where the important dimension to keep track of is less the very agents of violence, but rather the nodal points in these networks of governance and violence, and their ability to maintain networks across space and time.

An intimately related theme is that of political borders, as discussed by Hastings Donnan, Bjørn Thomassen and Harald Wydra in "The Political Anthropology of Borders and Territory". The authors outline some main themes and perspectives that in recent decades have emerged from the anthropological scholarship on borders, boundaries, and territory. They argue that borders not only frame and contain the territorial integrity of states, but also that the cultural and historical formation of borders is essential to understand how states think, behave, and act. In line with the still growing ethnographic record of populations inhabiting border areas, they stress the agency of border dwellers in their negotiation of power and identity. The chapter is framed by a contextual discussion of the demise of political borders that seemingly followed the end of the cold war and the current trend in an opposite direction, where new walls, barriers, and fences are being built while old ones are being renovated and policed.

Parvathi Raman explores the politics of movement and migration. Her chapter analyses contemporary political struggles over mobility, and the production of racialized migration regimes. By discussing the story of Commonwealth migration to postwar Britain, the chapter focuses on the intersection between race and labour migration. It compares postwar migration to the role of the border in 'Brexit Britain'. It argues that mobility, fundamental to the human condition and central to the making of our modern world, has now become a deeply disputed political right. Ultimately, there is not a migration 'crisis' in the contemporary world, but rather a more general crisis of liberal democracy, a political ideology that has produced a highly discriminatory, profitable and inhuman 'migration industry'. In asking 'who has the right to cross the border', we also ask ourselves fundamental questions about political subjectivity and governance in the 21st century.

Part IV is concerned with some of the most pressing issues of globalization today. The legacies of totalitarianism, post-colonialism or genocide entailed a considerable shift towards cultural frames in which politics of conflict would become subordinate to practices of transitional justice, international law, or the recognition of victimhood and

human rights. Political frames increasingly require attention to space, time, and nature. The breaking of boundaries demands greater attention to the meanings and functions of borders; but it also requires thinking harder about the politics of securitization, which has become a dominant paradigm in the 21st century. These include the changing nature of warfare, the pressing agendas of environmental politics, and the politics of movement epitomized by refugees, migrants, and the actors in international development.

John Gledhill's chapter – "Security, Securitization, Desecuritization: How Security Produces Insecurity" – engages with a proliferating series of "risks" in the era of globalization, including international movement of migrants and refugees, climate change, and transnational criminal networks. Exploring the theme of securitization and the attendant risks of desecuritization in the specific context of Brazil, it argues that the emergence of new policing strategies and their relation to neoliberal urbanism failed to transform the repressive character of the policing of poor communities. Mass incarceration policies fuelled the emergence and expansion of networked criminal organizations. Combining ethnographic perspectives on what people living in poor communities think about crime and policing with research on police themselves, this analysis explores paradoxes that require us to understand how specific conditions in Brazil influence the impact of broader global trends. In conclusion, a political anthropology that combines perspectives on securitization from above and below can advance a realist, consequentialist critique of what securitization does.

Mette Fog Olwig's chapter, "Nature, Politics, and Climate Change", argues that relations of humans to nature are intrinsically political. By moving beyond simplistic dichotomies which separate nature from culture/society, political anthropology asks questions about how power relations influence which "facts", understandings, definitions, and narratives of nature prevail, and why. The chapter demonstrates how political anthropologists in studies of climate change continue the long legacy in anthropology of analysing the politics of language and deconstructing words, narratives, and conventional wisdom. First, conceptualizing climate change as a social versus natural problem has consequences for policy making and the perceived value and role of the social versus the natural sciences. Furthermore, the notion of the Anthropocene as our current epoch potentially destabilizes the dichotomy of nature versus culture/society, and the consequences thereof for democracy. Finally, the chapter provides examples of how political anthropologists have joined science and technology studies scholars in studying climate science and scientists.

In "The Fall and Rise of Class" Andrew Sanchez first explores the reasons for the decline of class in the age of neoliberalism before engaging with the arguments for the return of class. The chapter considers social anthropology's changing relationship to the class concept by asking what ethnographers have done with the idea, why it fell out of favour during the 1980s and 1990s, and how attention to the topic has been reinvigorated by analyses of precarity, economic crisis, and social capital. The chapter concludes by considering how and why contemporary political anthropology must continue to engage carefully with the types of power relations described by the term "class".

Madurika Rasaratnam's chapter, "The Politics of Ethno-Religious Violence", explores the interpenetration of religion and nationalism in contexts of empire and

post-colonial states. Comparing the violence associated with Hindu nationalism in India and the violence of the Sinhala Buddhist–Tamil nationalist conflict in Sri Lanka, it seeks to unsettle the binaries of secular/nation-state and religion as well as the contrast between west and non-west. Whilst secular forms of nationalism are generally understood as the solution to religious conflicts, this chapter suggests that religion is often central to the processes of national state formation in the colonies and the metropole. This process is not inevitable: not all religions become nationalized, and the scope and extent of nationalized religions varies. However, and despite these differences, this comparative analysis shows that religiously orientated violence is actually driven by nationalist logics and the nation-state rather than theology.

Henrik Vigh's and David Sausdal's chapter, "The Anthropology of Crime", tackles the contemporary potential of the anthropology of crime by tracing the origin of the discipline back to "criminal genetics" and the study of innate dispositions before engaging with the collective social conditions and logics that are the pillars of criminal formations, flows, and networks. It claims that political anthropology is needed to study more carefully the frames within which crime develops, is executed, and also is identified as being deviant. Beyond earlier evolutionistic, racialized, and functionalist approaches to crime, the chapter provides an investigation of criminal structures and groups as sub-societal or sub-cultural entities, leading us, in conclusion, to an examination of movements and assemblages along networks and trajectories that move across strata and space. In essence, anthropological knowledge is accumulative rather than linear as many of the insights gained and the knowledge learnt are complementary rather than contradictory.

Thomas Hylland Eriksen's chapter on globalization argues that a political anthropology of globalization can use the concept of scale to shed light on the global (or glocal) situation, in particular the responses to political challenges by either *scaling down* or *scaling up*. Scaling down refers to local communities that try to regain control over their livelihoods in the face of encroaching large-scale actors. Scaling up can take place through the formation of transnational coalitions of social movements, or through more formal channels such as intergovernmental cooperation and treaty negotiations. Several of the examples described in this chapter can fruitfully be analysed through the notion of the "clash of scales": anthropologists are, by virtue of their ethnographic methodology, in a privileged position to study significant clashes of scale as they are perceived locally. The local cannot be understood without recourse to higher scalar levels up to the global; but the global and higher-level processes, likewise, cannot be understood without proper knowledge about the local.

Taken together, all the chapters of this handbook convey the orientations and dynamics of a moving field to specialists, while also opening these discussions to outsiders. The nature of this field of knowledge, practice, and interpretation of the political has made it imperative to invite authors beyond the professional field of anthropology. Therefore, the authors not only come from different disciplinary backgrounds (including anthropology, political science, international relations, and political theory) but also belong to different generations of scholarship. We hope that the reader will appreciate the balance we have sought to strike between such generations, perspectives, and theoretical orientations.

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