

European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA)

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History

The idea of creating an association to bring European social anthropologists together arose out of a conversation between Sydel Silverman and Adam Kuper in 1988. At that time, Silverman was president of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and Kuper was the editor of *Current Anthropology*, the international journal sponsored by the foundation. Their exchange led to a meeting of an invited group of European social anthropologists. This gathering was held on January 14–15, 1989, in Villa Montecucco, Castel Gandolfo, Italy. It came at a moment in which there was increasing contact between anthropologists both within Europe and with colleagues abroad. The end of the Cold War was looming and the ongoing integration process of the European Union created a general atmosphere of optimism and the feeling of an emerging European identity. As regards anthropology, the lack of stable national associations in many countries (sometimes accompanied by serious internal divides) was seen as an additional incentive for launching a pan-European initiative.

The anthropologists at the meeting in Castel Gandolfo attended as individual scholars, not as representatives of national organizations. Twenty-two people participated: John Davis, Adam Kuper, and David Parkin (United Kingdom); Teresa del Valle, José Luis García, and Teresa San Román (Spain); Daniel de Coppet and Philippe Descola (France); Rolf Husman and Georg Pfeffer (Germany); Bernardo Bernardi and Pier Giorgio Solinas (Italy); Jeremy Boissevain and Jarich Oosten (the Netherlands); Andre Gingrich (Austria); Luc de Heusch (Belgium); Kirsten Hastrup (Denmark); Akis Papataxiarchis (Greece); Eduardo Archetti (Norway); João de Pina-Cabral (Portugal); and Gudrun Dahl (Sweden). Sydel Silverman (United States) from the Wenner-Gren Foundation, which supported the event financially, attended as an observer.

During the founding meeting, the participants divided into four working groups, respectively focusing on constitutional questions (the future association's structure, membership, governance, elections, etc.); conferences; educational initiatives (collaborative postgraduate courses, making use of the European Commission's Erasmus student exchange program); and publications (e.g., a newsletter). Out of the group attending, a provisional executive committee was elected, characterized by a geographical and gender equilibrium (and these balances have been taken into consideration throughout the history of the association). Raymond Firth and



Figure 1 The logo of the European Association of Social Anthropologists.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, symbolically representing respectively the British and the French traditions in anthropology, were nominated as the EASA's first honorary members.

The original idea of Adam Kuper was to create a “Western European Association of Social Anthropologists.” The inclusion of the descriptor “Western” was aimed at promoting social anthropology as a very specific discipline throughout Europe, keeping out Eastern European ethnologists, folklorists, and functionaries. While European ethnology—nationally and locally oriented, and focused on the study of material culture, music analysis, storytelling, and the observation of peasants and national minorities—had largely been discredited in Western Europe, it was still very much alive in Eastern Europe. However, the congregation at Castel Gandolfo wisely decided not to define “Europe” precisely. Thus, the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) was born as “European,” not “Western European” as it was first envisioned. This choice proved to be visionary because just a couple of months after the founding meeting Eastern Europe erupted, the Berlin Wall fell, and Europe was symbolically reunited.

The stress on “social anthropology” referred to the tradition within anthropology interested in the general human condition grounded in the study of societies abroad, often in former colonial territories. Social anthropologists see themselves foremost as social scientists and define anthropology as a comparative discipline. The EASA was founded to offer a counterweight to the expanding hegemony of US cultural anthropology. This American influence came to predominate after World War II. The disarray of European social anthropology in the 1970s and 1980s made “Americanization” even more attractive. European anthropologists readily absorbed the American discourse on culture. At the same time, the essentialist, idealistic, and relativistic approach common in the United States seemed largely foreign to European anthropologists.

The EASA was thus created partly to resist the “danger” represented by postmodernism and by the attacks on anthropological writing, on conventional grand theories, and on fieldwork (Archetti 2003). Ideologically charged anthropological discourses rooted in subjectivism, moral correctness, and political concerns were perceived by many Europeans as too strong and as unappealing US influences in the discipline. In addition, social anthropologists had to face up to the challenge of the more popular discipline of sociology in most European universities (Kuper 2005). In short, anthropology required a fresh theoretical project. Hence the EASA was provided with both a political and an intellectual mandate. The new association was to create a meeting

ground between representatives of various European traditions, where in principle all could meet on their own terms (Archetti 2003). In other words, rather than being a mere consequence of anti-Americanism, the birth of the EASA was also inspired by a deep commitment to pluralism within the discipline (de L'Estoile 2008).

Organizational structure

Governance

The EASA is a self-governing democratic body. Because Adam Kuper, who was professor at Brunel University in the United Kingdom, became the EASA's first chair (see Table 1), the association was officially registered as a charity in England and Wales. The EASA is governed by an executive committee, which is democratically elected by the association's ordinary members (see next section). Each new executive committee elects a president (until 2002 called "chair"), a vice president, and other executive functions and roles. People on the executive committee serve for a period of two years. No member may be elected to office more than twice in succession; the only exception is that up to two members may be co-opted by a newly elected executive committee so as to ensure the continuity of the EASA's administrative and publishing functions. The treasurer and secretary, who are appointed by the executive committee, may hold office for up to a maximum of six years. The composition of the successive executive committees and the list of presidents (see Table 1) show the association's pan-European character.

At each biennial conference, there is a members' forum to discuss the direction of activities of the association and to vote on important matters. In the years in between conferences, the EASA organizes a general meeting for the members. Since 2005,

Table 1 Presidents of the EASA.

| <i>Years</i> | <i>Name</i> | <i>Country</i> |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1989–90 | Adam Kuper | United Kingdom |
| 1991–92 | Kirsten Hastrup | Denmark |
| 1993–94 | John Davis | United Kingdom |
| 1995–96 | Ulf Hannerz | Sweden |
| 1997–98 | Marilyn Strathern | United Kingdom |
| 1999–2000 | Gerd Baumann | The Netherlands |
| 2001–02 | Jon P. Mitchell | United Kingdom |
| 2003–04 | João de Pina-Cabral | Portugal |
| 2005–06 | Dorle Dracklé | Germany |
| 2007–08 | Shalini Randeria | Switzerland |
| 2009–10 | Michal Buchowski | Poland |
| 2011–12 | Susana Narotzky | Spain |
| 2013–14 | Noel B. Salazar | Belgium |
| 2015–16 | Thomas H. Eriksen | Norway |
| 2017–18 | Valeria Siniscalchi | Italy |

the executive committee has been assisted in its membership administration, website design and maintenance, and conference organizing by NomadIT, a remote team of freelance administrators, event organizers, and IT specialists. On the association's twenty-fifth anniversary (2014), the EASA's governing document (commonly known as "the Constitution") was completely redrafted in order to reflect the changed legal context, the changed means of communication, and the changed reality of the association. On the same occasion, the idea was launched to create a proper EASA archive. This is currently held in the offices of the Royal Anthropological Institute in London and is freely accessible to the public.

Membership

The EASA has four membership categories. Founder members are those who attended, by invitation, the first meeting in Castel Gandolfo. Ordinary members either have a master's degree (or equivalent) in social anthropology from a European university or have a teaching or research post in social anthropology. Student membership is for those studying for a master's or doctorate in social anthropology. Honorary members are distinguished scholars who have been designated as such by decision of the executive committee. Past honorary members are Fredrik Barth (died 2016), Joxe Migel Barandiaran (died 1991), Louis Dumont (died 1998), Johannes Fabian, Raymond Firth (died 2002), Jean-Claude Galey, Ulf Hannerz, Kirsten Hastrup, Adam Kuper, Claude Lévi-Strauss (died 2009), Sydel Silverman, Verena Stolcke, Marilyn Strathern, and Eric Wolf (died 1999).

Members have the right to partake in all EASA activities, including presenting at the biennial conferences, setting up and participating in thematic networks, attending other EASA events, and publishing in the journal and the book series. They also receive the newsletter (quarterly), the *Social Anthropology* journal (quarterly), and a discount when purchasing volumes in the EASA book series. In addition, members can consult an online member directory. Ordinary members have the right to vote and to stand for election. Currently, the membership oscillates between 1,300 and 2,000 members (depending on whether it is a conference year or not). The largest groups of members come from the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Italy. Two-thirds are female and about one-third are students. The extent to which the membership should be exclusive or inclusive and the role of students in decision making are contested to this day.

Activities

Biennial conferences

The EASA's inaugural conference took place in 1990 in Coimbra, Portugal, as an official part of the celebrations of the 700th anniversary of the foundation of the University of Coimbra. It was strategically held just before an inter-congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) in Lisbon. The conference assembled some 450 social anthropologists from virtually every European country, in addition to a few invited guests from the Pan-African

Table 2 EASA conferences and themes.

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>Theme</i> |
|-------------|-------------------------|---|
| 1990 | Coimbra, Portugal | Anthropology and Europe |
| 1992 | Prague, Czech Republic | Social anthropology in a changing world |
| 1994 | Oslo, Norway | Perspectives on moralities, knowledge, and power |
| 1996 | Barcelona, Spain | Culture and economy: Conflicting interests, divided loyalties |
| 1998 | Frankfurt, Germany | The politics of anthropology: Conditions for thought and practice |
| 2000 | Kraków, Poland | Crossing categorical boundaries: Religion as politics/politics as religion |
| 2002 | Copenhagen, Denmark | Engaging the world: Theoretical, methodological, and political challenges for a twenty-first-century anthropology |
| 2004 | Vienna, Austria | Face to face: Connecting distance and proximity |
| 2006 | Bristol, United Kingdom | Europe and the world |
| 2008 | Ljubljana, Slovenia | Experiencing diversity and mutuality |
| 2010 | Maynooth, Ireland | Crisis and imagination |
| 2012 | Nanterre, France | Uncertainty and disquiet |
| 2014 | Tallinn, Estonia | Collaboration, intimacy, and revolution: Innovation and continuity in an interconnected world |
| 2016 | Milan, Italy | Anthropological legacies and human futures |
| 2018 | Stockholm, Sweden | Staying, moving, settling |

Association of Anthropologists (Eriksen 1991). The topics chosen for the four main panels were a clear demonstration of the determination of the association to fight a battle for theory: “Conceptualising Societies,” “Constructing Gender,” “Making History,” and “Understanding Rituals.” These panels resulted in the first four titles of the EASA book series. Since then, conferences have been organized on a biennial basis and always in a different European country (see Table 2).

An EASA biennial conference typically lasts four days, has a particular theme, and is hosted and coorganized by a local department of anthropology. As at most scholarly congresses, the bulk of the program at an EASA conference is taken up by panel presentations. Specific to the EASA is the rule that each panel must be coorganized by anthropologists from different institutions and countries (to increase border-crossing collaboration). Another hallmark of the EASA conferences are the long breaks, in order to facilitate informal networking and socializing (Eriksen 1991). Other traditional elements include a keynote speech, plenary sessions, the members’ forum, practical workshops, network meetings (see next section), an ethnographic film program, a book exhibit, a welcome reception, and a banquet. To increase the visibility of doctoral students, the 1998 conference in Frankfurt launched a Young Scholars’ Forum. This has been a much-appreciated plenary event ever since. Initiatives that are more recent include the lunch for representatives of other anthropological associations (from Europe and beyond) and “laboratories”—innovative sites for producing and presenting ethnographic work beyond text-based conventions.

Thematic networks

In 1996, the EASA began to establish networks of scholars to cooperate in fields of special interest. The number of networks has grown exponentially since then. EASA networks provide excellent opportunities for scholarly collaboration and exchange. Themes include applied anthropology, arts, biosocial becoming, children and youth, collaboration for ethnographic experimentation, confinement, disaster and crisis, the economy, energy, ethnographic theory, food, future anthropologies, gender and sexuality, history of anthropology, humans and other living beings, law, rights and governance, media, medicine, mining, mobility, peace and conflict studies, queer anthropology, race and ethnicity, religion, sacral healing and communication, security, social movements, teaching, and visual anthropology. Other networks focus on a particular geographical region: Africa, Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East and Central Eurasia.

Most networks organize panels at the biennial conferences, which are also the venues where they hold their business meetings and meet with the EASA executive committee during the network convenors' meeting. In the years in between conferences, networks organize smaller workshops or events. Since 2011, the executive committee has organized funding calls to financially support these initiatives. To facilitate communication with the growing number of networks, the executive committee also created a network liaison position in 2013. Some networks have their own journal or book series whereas others run active mailing lists (including e-seminars). Some networks are large enough to have special-interest groups. The Medical Anthropology Network, for example, has a special subsection for students and postdoctoral students (Medical Anthropology Young Scholars), an initiative for medical anthropologists to spend some time at another European university (Mobile Medical Anthropology), and a group for scholars interested in applied work (Applied Medical Anthropology).

Internet and social media

Since its foundation, the EASA has published a newsletter. This is complemented by an extensive website that is regularly updated (Easaonline.org). Following digital trends, the EASA has become a leading anthropological player on social media platforms, particularly on Facebook (EASAINFO) and Twitter (@EASAINFO). The 2014 biennial conference in Tallinn, Estonia, was one of the most-tweeted-about anthropological events in Europe ever. Apart from the EASA executive committee, networks such as Media Anthropology, Applied Anthropology, and Anthropology and Mobility also have vibrant communities on social media networks.

Publications

Journal

Social Anthropology/Anthropologie sociale is the peer-reviewed international journal of the EASA. French anthropologist Jean-Claude Galey was its first editor. The stress

of the journal was originally on recognizing differences, not on imposing a premature European identity. Galey's (1992) vision was that the journal should represent and include the various anthropological "traditions" existing in Europe. However, the original idea to have a special section designed to treat a particular school of thought or national tradition, or a leading author or research center, never materialized. The first book review editor, Andre Gingrich (from Austria), took special care to match books and reviewers in relation to the goal of achieving cross-fertilization (both thematically and in terms of national traditions). Over the years, *Social Anthropology* developed as a general anthropology journal, with articles dealing with "traditional" topics of research, some of them more in tune with the times than others (Archetti 2003). It also became a channel for young scholars, which is one of the most important achievements of the journal.

From 1992 until 2006, the journal was published by Cambridge University Press; since 2007 it has been published by Wiley Blackwell. It appears four times a year (before 2009 only three times), with four parts forming a volume. Members receive the journal in print or have free electronic access online as part of their subscription. *Social Anthropology* has achieved subscription status at all major university libraries in Europe and North America, and most of Australasia. It is the most widely circulated anthropological journal of European provenance. The journal is ranked category A in the European Reference Index for the Humanities. *Social Anthropology* publishes articles in English and, occasionally, French, selected by a process of peer review. While European in profile, the journal has a global scope. It publishes key contributions by both established and up-and-coming anthropologists. Apart from original research articles and book reviews, the journal also publishes debates and review essays (discussing outstanding books in adjoining disciplines or in public debate from an anthropological point of view) and, occasionally, special issues. Before the internet took over as the main means of communication, the journal also published reports on recent and significant anthropological events across Europe. Future developments will include a move toward an open-access model of publishing. To that end, the EASA is collaborating with other anthropology journals.

Book series

Together with its journal, the EASA launched a book series, intended to present the best of the work produced by members of the association, both in monographs and in edited collections. The research presented in the series describes societies, processes, and institutions around the world and is intended for both scholarly and student readerships. From 1992 until 2002, the EASA book series was published by Routledge. Since its inception, the series has been dedicated to the renewal of what it describes as the "distinctive European tradition in social anthropology." During the first decade, the book series became very competitive, and few projects were accepted by the evaluation system of the EASA and Routledge (Archetti 2003). Since 2003, the series has been published by Berghahn Books, the leading publisher of anthropology in Europe and a long-term supporter of the EASA (and other anthropology associations). Books are published in English, generally in both hardcover and paperback. Over fifty

volumes have been produced, some of which have become classics in anthropology. Members can purchase the books at a discount. In 2007, the EASA obtained a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation to translate manuscripts. French anthropologist Benoît de L'Estoile, then vice president of the association, was in charge of the translation series. Under this program, two monographs were translated from German into English. In 2010, an EASA book prize was launched to further promote the series.

Broader context

The European Union

Since the founding of the EASA, the European Union has enlarged dramatically (from twelve member states in 1989 to twenty-eight in 2014). This expansion has gone hand in hand with increased political and economic power. While perhaps not directly visibly, EU policies profoundly affect the EASA and the working practices of its members, in the fields of both teaching and research. The so-called Bologna Process, intended to make European university systems more comparable, more open to one another, and more supportive of student and teacher mobility, has had a huge impact on the exchange of students and scholars as well as on the number of joint educational initiatives. As far as research is concerned, the funding schemes of the European Union's Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development have supported and fostered anthropological and interdisciplinary research across Europe and beyond.

The EASA has played an instrumental role in discussing what anthropologists need to do and how they can go about preserving and enhancing the wellbeing of the discipline under the changes brought forth by EU policies and programs. In 2008, for example, the EASA participated in an important European seminar reflecting on the following three questions: What is the current state of anthropological research on Europe and Europeans? How can anthropology help us to understand how abstract notions such as "Europe," "European," and "European citizenship" are enacted and embodied by individuals in their everyday lives? And how can anthropology shed light on the way individuals in Europe experience and react to globalization? (See European Commission 2008.) This workshop and the resulting publication underlined the role of the EASA in the evolution of anthropology in Europe.

Unfortunately, economic crises and processes of marketization of research and education are putting universities in general and the social sciences and humanities in particular under pressure. To protect the interests of European anthropologists, the EASA has become an active member of the Initiative for Science in Europe. This is an independent platform of European learned societies and scientific organizations whose aim it is to promote mechanisms to support all fields of science at a European level, involve scientists in the design and implementation of European science policies, and advocate strong independent scientific advice in EU policy making. In addition, the EASA enthusiastically supported and facilitated the creation of the

European Alliance of Social Science and Humanities in 2015, in order to defend the importance of the social sciences and humanities in research and teaching across Europe.

Related associations and collaborations

The EASA is not the only European association of anthropologists (broadly defined). The European Anthropological Association, for instance, is a scientific organization aiming to promote research and teaching in anthropology across Europe and to promote exchanges of information, workshops, scientific congresses, and postgraduate-level education. Though it was founded earlier (in 1976), the European Anthropological Association is smaller than the EASA (counting around 600 members); it is also largely focused on physical anthropology. This explains why there has been little contact between the organizations. The relations between European ethnologists and social anthropologists, on the other hand, have intensified. Founded in 1964, the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore is an international organization that facilitates and stimulates cooperation between scholars working within European ethnology, folklore studies, cultural anthropology, and adjoining fields.

While for a long time the EASA and the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore stressed their different genealogies and geographical regions of interest, today there is growing communication and exchange, with scholars attending the activities of both associations or having a dual membership. Related to this rapprochement are the increasing contacts between the EASA (particularly the Europeanist network) and the Society for the Anthropology of Europe, a section of the American Anthropological Association that aims to promote the anthropological study of European societies and cultures and encourages connections between scholars working in Europe.

On the global level, the EASA is an active member of the World Council of Anthropological Associations, a network of national and international associations that aims to promote worldwide communication and cooperation in anthropology. Many EASA members have taken up leadership positions in the World Council of Anthropological Associations' organizing committee and in its advisory board. In addition, there are long-standing contacts with the IUAES, the oldest global organization of scientists and institutions working in the fields of anthropology and ethnology. Belgian anthropologist Noel Salazar, a former EASA president, was elected in 2013 as one of the IUAES's vice presidents.

The multiple contacts with other anthropological organizations occasionally lead to joint projects. In 2011, for example, three anthropological associations—the EASA, the American Anthropological Association, and the Associação Brasileira de Antropologia [Brazilian Association of Anthropology]—agreed to try out a variety of collaborative endeavors. These were pilot projects that were not meant to create their own hegemony but rather to open up and encourage the construction of a global anthropology in practice. They started with a series of panels at three scholarly meetings (Associação Brasileira de Antropologia 2012, American Anthropological Association 2012, and IUAES 2013) under the heading of “Desplazamientos y Desigualdades/Deslocamentos

e Desigualdades/Displacements and Inequalities/Déplacements et Inégalités.” In 2013, the Canadian Anthropology Society joined the group for the organization of a webinar that explored the centrality of language in the production of anthropological knowledge and its political aspects. This multiplatform, multilingual experiment, entitled “La Langue et le Savoir Anthropologique/Language and Anthropological Knowledge/Língua e Conhecimento Antropológico,” was followed up by a roundtable panel in 2015 during the Canadian Anthropology Society’s 2015 conference in Quebec City, Canada.

Future challenges and opportunities

The EASA was set up as a means to promote diversity and dialogue between non-hegemonic traditions (Galey 1992). Since the founding of the association, the use and position of various European languages has been an issue of concern. While many anthropologists in Europe do speak one or more languages in addition to their own and English, English has become the default academic language in transnational settings. There is a marked discrepancy in this respect between those countries, mostly in Northern Europe, where scholars already publish primarily in English and those where there are still strong incentives to publish in the national language (France, Italy, Spain, and, to some extent, Germany) (de L’Estoile 2008). The tendency to publish in one’s national language(s) is reinforced by the existence of international networks that exist on a linguistic basis (often European countries and their former colonies).

Despite the current hegemony of English in academia, Europe is clearly not a place in which different linguistic and academic traditions are about to merge in some sort of cultural melting pot. The EASA itself has deployed various strategies to increase multilingualism, including its bilingual journal *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* and its translation series. However, the journal editors have a hard time finding scholars (particularly younger ones) willing to publish in French. The translation series was deemed too expensive and too time consuming to be continued. Besides, translating scholarship into English only reinforces the latter’s role as the lingua franca of scholarly communication. The EASA has certainly facilitated the growing interconnectedness between various European anthropologies. However, László Kürti (2008), a former EASA president from Hungary, has strongly criticized the ways in which Western traditions of European anthropology have largely ignored the research produced by colleagues in Central and Eastern Europe.

Since the founding of the EASA in 1989, Europe has changed, and what then seemed a rosy future for a united, vigorous Europe has been supplanted by various threats and crises. This is clearly felt in the academic world, as it affects both teaching and research. Despite the adverse climate, both anthropology and the EASA are here to stay. The community of European social anthropologists is becoming more significant than the national traditions that it encompasses. A more cosmopolitan discipline is emerging that is multicentered and engaged in a range of current intellectual

debates. However, more time needs to be spent on following the big debates in the social sciences, and more serious research needs to be directed to the public issues that absorb European intellectuals (Kuper 2005). According to Portuguese anthropologist João de Pina-Cabral (2005), another former EASA president, European anthropologists have important lessons to learn from other world anthropologies. Some intellectual traditions, such as in Brazil or India, have been going on for over half a century and have generated important insights into ways of dealing with their own people as “same” and “other” that scholars could usefully learn from in Europe.

SEE ALSO: American Anthropological Association (AAA); Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth (ASA); Australian Anthropological Society (AAS); Austria, Anthropology in; Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA); Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA); Denmark, Anthropology in; France, Anthropology in; French Association of Anthropologists / Association Française des Anthropologues (AFA); French Association of Ethnology and Anthropology / Association Française d'Ethnologie et d'Anthropologie (AFEA); German Anthropological Association / Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie (DGSKA); Indian Anthropological Association (IAA); International Association for Southeast European Anthropology (InASEA); International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES); Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology (JASCA); Latin American Association of Anthropology / Asociación Latinoamericana de Antropología (ALA); Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1908–2009); Norway, Anthropology in; Pan-African Anthropological Association (PAAA); Policy, Anthropology and; Portugal, Anthropology in; Postsocialist Europe, Anthropology in; Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI); Spain, Anthropology in; Sweden, Anthropology in; Turkey, Anthropology in; United Kingdom, Anthropology in; Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research; Wolf, Eric (1923–99); World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA)

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