

WORKSHOP 6: CONCEPTS, METHODS, OBJECTS II

11.15-13.00

Jose Ossandon,

Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths, U of London, email: jose.ossandon@gmail.com

Property and the collective in Chile's private health insurance system.

Ever since Durkheim, social scientists have disputed the tension between private and common interests in economy. This tension is particularly relevant to my case study of private health insurance in Chile (created as part of reforms introduced by Pinochet's economics team in the early eighties). As Francois Ewald (1991) pointed out, insurance always involves a collective, a pool, but the way this pool is understood changes between public and private insurance. In this sense, privatization is rather a new way of assembling the collective. The tension between private and common property is not just an academic controversy. It has been widely discussed in Chile, especially in the context of the latest health reform. For some the insurance was understood as private property; for others it involved the whole population, so the public and private system should have a common basis in a shared pool. Finally, and controversially, a common pool was declared to be against the constitution, but a solidarity fund within the private sector (covering different firms) was created. This discussion will be the main empirical source here. Conceptually, the work will connect two traditions of thinking, both in some sense connected with Durkheim: (a) the core question posed by Mauss for economic anthropology about how exchange entangles and disentangles collectives (Thomas 1991); and (b) the discussion developed by French sociology (and also by Governmentality scholars) about how insurance systems and statistics produce contemporary solidarity (Castells 1991, 2004; Ewald 2002).

Horacio Ortiz

EHESS/LAIOS-IIAC, email: horacio.ortiz@free.fr

Everyday investment in Asset Backed Securities: an anthropology of contemporary global credit relations

I describe here the everyday practices of a team of managers investing in credit derivatives (Asset Backed Securities) within a multinational financial corporation based in Paris. The field work consisted of a four month internship as an assistant financial analyst in 2004 and about 70 interviews with professionals between 2002 and today. The description is concerned with the regularities of everyday life in the office and their different temporalities. These concern personal trajectories and imaginaries, within and outside the professional organization. They also involve organizational imperatives, possibilities, power relations and transformations. But description of the everyday must take into account the social organization in which these people interact. That means understanding the global strategies of the company in which they are employed and how the credit relations in which they take part by investing in Asset Backed Securities shape a particular distribution of monetary resources. The everyday practices of a team of investment managers offer one way of analyzing the concrete workings of a particular set of credit relations made possible by contemporary finance. The descriptive tools of field work research, taken with the conceptual tools of anthropology, reveal the social organization of credit relations as a particular form of unequal power distribution in the world economy. The paper thus explores the potential for an anthropology of contemporary finance in two ways: our capacity to render global financial processes as

situated social practice; and to analyze such practice as a fragment of highly organized global power relations. This places anthropology within the tradition of pragmatism from Kant to de Certeau: telling readers what concrete human persons can do and thereby allowing them to engage with these human possibilities as part of their own everyday practical perspectives.

Kate Meagher

St. Antony's College, Oxford, email: kate.meagher@africa.ox.ac.uk

Informality Matters: Popular Economic Governance and Institutional Exclusion in Nigeria

Questions have been raised about the relevance of the informal economy concept in the liberalizing and globalizing environment of the 21st century. In a number of African countries, formal economic structures have been overwhelmed by the informal economy, which has become the main source of employment generation and service provision. This paper will consider whether the concept of economic informality has become obsolete, or whether the problem lies in our methods of studying it. It will argue for a shift from dualist approaches, in which economic informality is conceptualized in opposition to the formal economy, to ethnographic approaches which examine the institutional organization of non-state forms of economic governance in their own right. This approach will be illustrated through an ethnography of informal economic governance in a dynamic Yoruba weaving cluster in Western Nigeria. The analysis will focus on how embedded institutions of ethnicity, religion, class, gender and generation have shaped the development and globalization of the weaving cluster outside the framework of state support and regulation, and also consider how formal institutional exclusion and the social powerlessness of informal actors have precipitated the decline of the cluster in the context of rapid economic change.

Koray Caliskan (Bogazici University, Istanbul, email: koray.caliskan@boun.edu.tr)

Michel Callon (CSI-Ecole des Mines de Paris)

Economization: new directions in social studies of the market.

The aim of this paper is to outline a theoretical framework for the analysis of markets and to present the main elements of a program of future research. The approach stresses the increasingly dominant role of materialities and economic knowledge in market making. The paper has two parts. The first introduces the notion of economization, referring to the actions, devices, analytical/practical descriptions assembled by social scientists and market actors. In this process of economization certain types of behaviors, preoccupations, logics of actions, spheres of activities, forms of calculation or institutional arrangements are defined and qualified as economic. The importance, meaning and framing of economization are discussed through an analysis of selected works in anthropology, economics and sociology. We argue that those works are now leading contemporary researchers of markets to construct a program of studying economization. The second part of the paper illustrates this point by focusing on the new directions in the social studies of the marketization as a case study of economization. In conclusion we underline the importance of experimentation as an opportunity to bridge market research and exchange processes on the ground