

# For Him Art, Research, Creation And Politics Were The Same Thing - In Memory Of Paul Boccara



Paul Boccara 1932 -2017

*Face à l'énorme complexité des ces questions, il es urgent d'y aller, au risque d'essuyer les plâtres, des se tromper ; car il y a une béance formidable, et un appel!*

Paul Boccara ended with these words the 'Nine Lessons of Systemic Anthroponomy'. They can be seen as legacy of a great thinker. He was born in Tunis in 1932 - he finally left us on November 26 th 2017. Although he became entirely French in his attitudes, this Mediterranean origin shaped his way of thinking in a peculiar way. I remember one of our meetings in Ivry, where he lived; we went for lunch and there was no hesitation in choosing a seat. "I'm from Tunisia - I need light," and so we settled right next to the window. This urge to light was guiding his life, in a metaphorical sense: it was the strive for enlightenment. This was about a very bright light, illuminating the entire socio-historical space and at the same time it was the spotlight, which made it possible to take a close look at details.

Paul Boccara was educated as economist and mastered the tiresome depths of the bourgeois profession as well as the peaks of political economics. The latter was never a flattened shortcut for complex socio-historical constellations. It was only through knowledge of complex relationalities possible to achieve a truly creative application - a Marxist approach in the best possible sense. His profound thinking was also characterised by the fact that he studied in addition to economics also

history and anthropology.

Three outstanding works have to be mentioned:

*The Études sur le capitalisme monopoliste d'État, sa crise et son issue* [Éditions sociales, 1973] were probably part of the compulsory reading of the left at that time. Boccara's work was ground-breaking, but at the same time it was part of a wider discourse concerned with the changing role of the state. This has to be understood against the historical background: on the one hand, at least throughout Europe, the 'special conditions' of the post WWII period came to an end and the West had to settle down with a consolidating East-West relationship. What existed as a socialist state and their coalition could not be met by capital alone - if the state would not have existed already, it would have been invented at that time to complement and consolidate the hegemonic claims of the monopoly capital. In fact, such a re-invention of the strong state took place in the sense of a close, organic interweaving of economy and state.

*The Théories sur les crises, la suraccumulation et la dévalorisation du capital* [Delga, 2013/2015] are nearly a late work. Hardly perceived, unfortunately not translated so far, the two volumes show the misery of the economy and of economics. It is noteworthy that the current crisis is analysed in a very fundamental way as a fundamentally structural crisis. Boccara's oeuvre goes beyond other works, because it makes use of the very basics of economic theory: accumulation, theory of value, production and consumption, the long waves and the differentiated consideration of predator, casino and profit of capitalist economy are analysed in principle and assessed in connection with the techno-economic processes ['information technologies of new type'].

*Neuf Leçons sur l'anthroponomie systématique* [Delga, 2017], the last book, which is the assets we inherit - and the appeal, an urgent call obliging us to concrete and detailed analysis. Importantly Boccara emphasises the role of anthroponomy - these questions occupied him intensively in recent years. This is refreshingly different from many 'identity and value discussions' also in the left.

Strengthening the left can barely rely on hoping for insight into the necessity of a different way of life - questions of faith and pure good will and related hopes should be left to religion. Boccara, on the other hand, puts forward a clear analysis of the interplay between politics and economy and society. And it is not an appeal for such a way of life, but rather an appeal to a culture of debate.

It is always interesting to familiarise oneself with the intermediate steps that had

been leading up to these works. In the most positive sense of the word, he always understood all his writing as 'work in progress'. Especially the readers of the journal *économie et politique*, the journal with which he was inseparably linked, benefited from this. A general remark should be added: Instead of chasing ranking points, many works are considered contributions to current debates and challenges, marking the real points of historical responsible academic performance.

A general note should be added: Instead of chasing ranking points, many papers have been published as contributions to current debates and challenges. And here, too, one book is outstanding - the advance that Boccara made with it was also an uproar of the French political scene: *Une sécurité d'emploi ou de formation. Pour une construction révolutionnaire de dépassement contre le chômage* (Le Temps des cerises, 2002). The aim was to make alternatives to the working society again comprehensible and to put them on the agenda as a well-elaborated concept. As such it entered French politics and policies; and as such it should surely employ us when we look at the new economic developments [digitisation, new technologies etc.].

This book is an expression of the fact that theoretical work must always be as well an experiment: experiment, not least in the sense of active participation in the political struggles of the time. This found its expression in being member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party for some time, and it also meant to be actively involved in a wide range of areas.

Finally, the theory work also meant listening - as part of a study trip I organised with students from Ireland [if I am not mistaken in 2013], a meeting with Paul was scheduled in the in the headquarter of the PCF. For the students, this was a unique experience - studies of social policy gained a completely new dimension: social policy outside the seminar rooms, and at the same time the experience that communists are open to discussion. It was also an unforgettable experience for me, seeing Paul in top form: in all his explanations, answers to questions, the students were hardly aware of the extent to which they were partners and teachers at the same time: because as much as they listened, as much they reported, elaborated together 'meaning' in the spirit of the experiment in the sense of an awakening active participation in the political battles of the time', in which now seminar work immediately gained a new relevance.

The left lost a great thinker and a great personality. Now we are facing the

challenge of lifting the great treasure that can be found scattered as working material. Working material means two things: it is Paul Boccara's notes and thoughts, and it is now the ideas that we don't have to arrange in the sense of a recipe book, but rather that we take as a challenge for leftist science – if we are open to it. This openness is precisely what leads back to the sentence quoted at the beginning which is also an invitation to allow and admit mistakes. The dossier in the January issue of the *Journal economie et politique* contains a list of obstacles to be overcome, one of which is directed against 'phraseology' and the repetition of empty phrases – they have always been a thorn in his eyes. Here too, he was committed to the principle that it is better to look for real innovation than to move on supposedly safe terrain. The biggest mistake is not to move.

And, as the *Nine Lessons* have shown, the movement must be a movement of interdependence between politics and economy and society. Just as this unity has shaped Paul's life. Frédéric Boccara summed it up at the funeral in Ivry: « *L'art, la recherche, la création, la politique, pour lui c'était tout un* » "For him, art, research, creation and politics were for him an entity."

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## **The Economist ~ Why “Affordable Housing” In Africa Is Rarely Affordable**

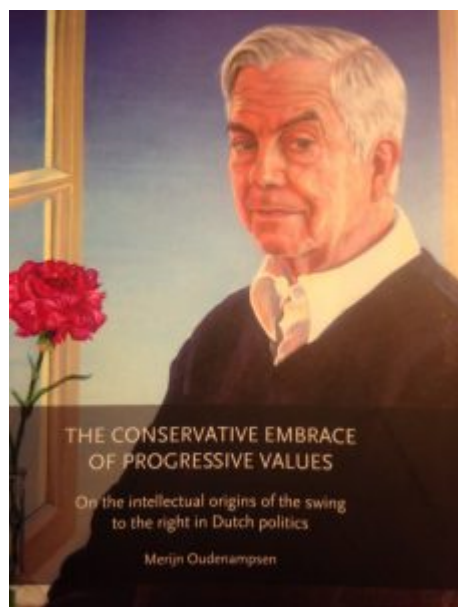
ETHIOPIA'S flagship social-housing programme is probably the most ambitious in Africa. But for most locals the houses are still barely affordable. The poor cannot afford the down payment for even the most subsidised units. And those who can often struggle to meet repayments, opting instead to rent out the houses and move elsewhere. In this respect, though, Ethiopia is hardly alone in Africa. Take Angola, where a recent \$3.5bn social-housing project on the outskirts of Luanda, the capital, offered apartments from \$84,000, in a country where incomes per person are just over \$4,000. Or Cameroon, where the government's social-housing scheme is out of reach to 80% of the population, according to the World Bank. In Ethiopia the state has spent over a decade building cheap homes on an

almost unprecedented scale, but supply still fails to match demand. Why?

Read more: <https://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/>

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# Merijn Oudenampsen ~ The Conservative Embrace Of Progressive Values. On The Intellectual Origins Of The Swing To The Right In Dutch Politics



To talk of ideology in the Netherlands is to court controversy. The Dutch are not exceptional in that sense. Ideology is known internationally to have a bad reputation. After all, the word first came into common use when it was employed by Napoleon as a swearword. But the Dutch distaste for ideology seems to have taken on particularly sharp features. The country lacks a prominent tradition of political theory and political ideology research and often perceives itself as having achieved the end of ideology. Taking recourse to Mannheim's sociology of ideas, I have attempted to contest that image and

fill a small part of the lacuna of Dutch ideology studies. The book started out with an attempt to formulate - in broad strokes - an explanation for the peculiarly apolitical atmosphere in Dutch intellectual life.

The relative absence of ideological thought in the Netherlands, I have argued, can be traced back to the historical dominance of one particular form of ideological thought: an organicist doctrine that considers Dutch society as a differentiated, historically grown, organic whole. It considers the state and the media as the

passive reflection of societal developments, with elites serving as conduits. Organicism is a sceptical, relativist ideology that stresses harmony and historical continuity. Shared by the twentieth-century elites of the different currents in the Netherlands, this ideology has been depicted as the metaphorical roof uniting the different pillars. It has filtered through Dutch intellectual history in complex forms, to emerge in more contemporary manifestations such as Lijphart's pluralist theory of accommodation.

The thesis of this book is that this has resulted in a lingering tendency in the literature to downplay conflict, rupture and ideology in Dutch history. And instead to favour more harmonious portrayals of Dutch society developing gradually and continuously as a unity, as an organic whole. When it comes to the Fortuyn revolt, a similar inclination has resulted in depoliticized interpretations of the revolt as the exclusive imprint of secular trends that Dutch politics and media simply needed to reflect. Hans Daalder, the doyen of Dutch political science, argued that there is a political incentive to depoliticize matters in the Dutch political system. In the context of the close relationship between politics and social science in the Netherlands, this has given rise to a paradoxical reality: the more politically involved social science becomes, the more depoliticized it needs to become. Ironically, this means that a more autonomous social science will need to repoliticize its account of Dutch political transformation to some degree. That is what this study has sought to do.

See: [https://pure.uvt.nl/Oudenampsen\\_Conservative.pdf](https://pure.uvt.nl/Oudenampsen_Conservative.pdf)

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**Joseph Sassoon Semah, Stedelijk  
Museum Amsterdam ~ Statement**

# 20 oktober 2017



Foto: Linda Bouws

Dames en heren, dank voor uw aandacht, ik ben een heel klein beetje medeplichtig aan het ontstaan van deze avond en Margriet Schavemaker was zo attent me te vragen die achtergrond toe te lichten. In 10 minuten ga ik dat doen (of 9 1/2 ).

Toen ik enkele jaren geleden mijn eerste werk van Joseph zag, was ik in het gezelschap van een vermaard kunstkenner met grote mond, een vriend die ik nu X ga noemen.

We stonden op een tentoonstelling en ik zag... wat was het?.. bladpapier met notenbalken... een omtrek van een liggende hond? De vorm van een hut? Wat, waarom en hoe: ik zag het niet precies, maar ik dacht: hé, dát vind ik mooi! Wat een eigenzinnige wereld.

Dat *mooi* slikte ik nét op tijd in. Kunstkenner X had me immers geleerd: échte kunst, vinden wij niet *mooi*, echte kunst, vinden wij *goed*. Dat je iets ook nog *mooi* kan vinden, is volkomen onbelangrijk, oftewel: oninteressant.

Dit fascineert me: het lukt me nooit om naar eigen tevredenheid uit te leggen waarom ik een kunstwerk mooi vind. Het werk van Joseph trok me aan, zonder dat ik kennis had van de achtergrond en referenties. Ik stamelde wat over scherp pikzwart op verkleurd papier, zo wonderlijk een huisje onder een tafel geplakt en ik probeerde mijn onkunde beschaafd te maskeren door wat te mompelen over hoe interessant het opduiken van het motief van de herhaling was, misschien zei

ik bij een installatie met hout en metaal zelfs wel iets als: zo sterk dat conflicterende materiaalgebruik.

Waarom is iets mooi? En waarom is iets *goed*? Tja, ik heb vele, véle gortdroge essays over oude en nieuwe kunst gelezen en in ieder geval wat *mooi* betreft besloten: hoe *mooier* het werk, hoe slechter erover wordt geschreven.

Gelukkig begon X me uit te leggen waarom het werk *goed was*. En zoals meestal in dat soort gevallen, vertelde hij niet zozeer over wat ik zag, maar vooral over waar het aan refereerde, over de ideeën waar het uit voortkwam: over de hoogstpersoonlijke zoektocht van de kunstenaar.

En even werd ik als de moderne museumbezoeker, een lid van de zwijgende massa die devoot luistert naar de audiotour op de koptelefoon en niet in een museum maar op een Open Universiteit lijkt rond te lopen.

Ik werd voorgesteld aan Joseph. Hij stak meteen van wal over wat ik had gezien en sprak van Bach, van Paul Celan's gedicht Fuga van de dood, we herhaalden die beroemde, wonderschone eerste zinnen over *zwarte melk: zwarte melk der vroegte we drinken haar* (maar die wil ik hier niet verder herhalen, want ze zijn zo mooi dat ik ze niet als onderdeelje in een column wil gebruiken.) Joseph sprak over de kampen, over een ontmoeting van uren tussen Celan en Heidegger in diens berghuis, waarover geen van beiden veel had gezegd, maar waarna Celan wel zijn gedicht Todtnauberg schreef.

Mijn hemel, dat had ik dus bijna *mooi* genoemd.

Ik hing aan de lippen van Joseph en deed mijn best hier en daar ook eens een gevatte opmerking te maken over Celan of over dat stuk chagrijn van een Heidegger. Joseph had een eigenaardige manier van reageren daarop. Hij stopte dan, kantelde abrupt zijn hoofd alsof hij de andere opmerkingen in ernst naar binnen wilde laten gieten, schudde dan kort en vervolgde vervolgens nog weer opgewondener zijn betoog, of: *exposé*, of: *college*.

Ik zorgde dat ik meer Semah zag: grote tafels met een gebouwtje erop, en eronder, bladzijden vol Hebreeuws met zwarte verf erover, touwtjes, stoelen, wandelstokken, liggende beelden van honden, hazen, muizen. Een universum met een eigen taal waar ik geen jota van begreep (waarbij het woord jota vast ongelukkig gekozen is, want ook weer zwanger van betekenis.)

En telkens weer gold: voor mijn hoofd iets begreep, hadden mijn ogen het al *mooi*



gevonden.

En dat *mooi* bleek ook te gelden voor hoe Joseph zijn theorieën op papier uitwerkt: in dikke stapels papier tekent en schrijft hij ze uit. Ooit moet een curator al die beschreven en betekende vellen papier inlijsten, honderden, en ze dan in volgorde door dit museum hangen, van linksboven in de bovenste zaal tot rechtsonder in de kelder. Alle muren helemaal vol.

Joseph trok me er steeds verder in. Met zijn theorieën over de ware aard van de kunstgeschiedenis, die wij Westerse kunstgeschiedenis noemen, of de kunstgeschiedenis van de, om met Sybrand Buma te spreken: Joods-Christelijke cultuur.

Joseph praatte me helemaal dol.

Hij is geboren in Bagdad, waar zijn grootvader van moederskant de laatste opperrabbin van de Babylonische joden was en hij noemt zijn hoogstpersoonlijke onderzoek een 'Hebreeuws lezen' van de moderne kunstgeschiedenis.

Hij vertelde me dat hij in 1948 werd geboren, tegelijk met de geboorte van de staat Israël.

Nou, dat was toevallig! Nee, dat was niet niet: niks is toeval, 'Toeval,' zei Joseph, 'is een codewoord voor processen.'

De pisbak van Duchamp tekende hij me voor. Daar zaten allemaal gaatjes in, had ik nog nooit echt opgemerkt, hij telde ze voor me, dat was een tetragrammaton. Een wát Joseph? Meewarig maar niet arrogant schudde hij dan zo even, misschien is dat om de onderbreking te verwerken, en hij zei: te-tra-gram-ma-ton: een piramidevorm, vier letters, dat staat voor de naam van God, na de middeleeuwen ook populair bij de vrijmetselarij. En van Duchamp: had ik al wel eens geteld hoeveel spaken het fietswiel van Duchamp telde? Nee hè, hij bladerde door zijn papieren: 36! Joseph tekende het me nog eens voor. Wist ik wel waar dat allemaal voor stond!? Het getal 36. En  $2 \times 36$ ... dat was 72! Een nóg veel crucialer getal.

Mensen hadden het er niet over. Zei Joseph. Ik kende toch ook wel het pentagrammaton: de Hebreeuwse naam voor Jezus? Mensen hadden niet eens opgemerkt dat Rudi Fuchs dat na zijn komst hier, in het Stedelijk, bovenaan de trap bij de oude entree had laten aanbrengen!

Had niemand het over.

(Dat was echt hè: ik heb een foto opgevraagd en inderdaad bracht vlak na Fuchs komst een kunstenaar het daar aan. Het is inmiddels overgeschilderd -door

onbekende krachten.)

En had ik wel eens goed gekeken op de zool van de schoenen die Van Gogh schilderde, zijn éigen schoenen, Die spijkertjes? Nee hè, Dat was ook een pentagrammaton!

Jeetje, dacht ik, inmiddels wel wat murw, Van Gogh: ook hij.

Ik protesteerde zwak.

Oh ja?, riposteerde Joseph: Van Gogh! Zijn vader was een dominee, hij wilde zélf dominee worden, al zijn werk is gebaseerd op het lijden van Jezus!’

Of Malewich: dat beroemde zwarte vierkant dat ik net hier in het Stedelijk had gezien, de Russische orthodoxe kerk werd wel eens in dat verband genoemd maar Joseph zag het toch echt teruggaan op de traditie waarin joods orthodoxen precies zo’n zwart vierkant in hun huis aanbrachten als herinnering aan de verwoesting van de tempel.

Joseph Beuys, die met een dode haas in de hand zei: *hoe kan ik via een dode haas iets verklaren over kunst?* Dat was de haas die te maken had met Pesach en het vervolgen van de joden, het opjagen van de haas, hij liet er middeleeuwse afbeeldingen van zien. Zo klaar als een klontje.

En ook zag Joseph de dode haas in werk van Barnett Newman. Ook Barnett Newman sprak in een soort van code en niemand schetste de joodse context van zijn werk.

Ongerust raakte ik ervan. Ja, je zal toch meemaken dat je antisemitisme niet herkent, en ik sprak enkele kenners die me ervan overtuigden dat er inderdaad veel te zeggen valt voor de bewering dat de joodse betekenislaag in de kunst veronachtzaamd is, en dat die waar zichtbaar vooral tot onderdeel van de christelijke context is gemaakt.

Bovendien herkende ik referenties niet die twee generaties geleden nog wel herkend.

De behoefte ontstond wat te dóen. Broeder in bewondering voor het werk van Joseph, was advocaat Bob Vink en hij legde me een plan voor waarin Josep Het Stedelijk Museum moest dagen en om een verklaring vragen.

Ik was niet meteen om en sputterde wat. Dat museum had net een nieuwe directeur die veelbelovend van start was gegaan en om dan meteen een rechtszaak... Nee, zei Vink, zie het als een speelse dagvaarding. We doen dat gewoon hier, op mijn kantoor.

Ik kreeg een lijst onder ogen met mensen die adhesie betuigden. Ik zag

hoogleraren, filosofen, intellectuelen, museumdirecteuren, een dominee en een rabbijn.

Zo gezegd, zo gedaan. Er ging een echte brief uit, een dagvaarding, Vink sommeerde het museum zich namens de kunstwereld te verantwoorden voor wat Joseph noemde: het structureel ontbreken van de joodse context in de moderne kunstgeschiedenis. Ik zette *een klein beetje* druk door naar de persvoorlichting te bellen en om een officieel reactie te vragen.

Nou, zoals u vandaag begrijpt, reageerde het Stedelijk op een geweldige wijze, en in de persoon van Margriet Schavemaker ook inhoudelijk. In een brief schreef het museum: 'De Joods-christelijke oorsprong van onze (westerse) cultuur, en, niet in de laatste plaats, de gruwelijke oorzaken van de diaspora van Joden ten tijde van en na de Tweede Wereldoorlog, biedt een relevant perspectief op de collectie.' Een prettige bijeenkomst op het kantoor van Vink volgde, en dan nu deze avond.

Ik vind het werk van Joseph nog steeds onuitlegbaar *mooi*. En ik concludeer dat Joseph om de erkenning vraagt van een betekenislaag die de kijker niet per se nodig heeft, maar die wel het hart vormt van de hoogstpersoonlijke zoektocht die maakte dat hij tot zijn eigen kunst kan komen. Maar ik moet óók concluderen dat ik door meer over die betekenislaag te leren, ik nog meer in Josephs werk begon te zien en het ja, nóg een beetje *mooier* vond. Ik probeer nu te werken aan een theorie van De Getrapte Schoonheidservaring: eerste deel: zonder kennis, tweede deel: met kennis.

Ik ben erg benieuwd naar welke hoogten ik vanavond nog wordt gestuwd.

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## Journal Of Anthropological Films



Film cameras, video and sound recorders have for decades been used by anthropologists as research tools, for collecting data, for documentation, for advocacy, for representing a case or a group of people, for disseminating empirical insights and for communicating research findings. For the first time in the history of Visual Anthropology

anthropological film can now be published on par with written articles, assessed by peers, and inscribed in international credential systems of academic publication as the Nordic Anthropological Film Association (NAFA) has launched this first edition of Journal of Anthropological Films (JAF)

Go to: <http://boap.uib.no/index.php/jaf/index>

### *Editorial*

*The Nordic Anthropological Film Association (NAFA) has launched the Journal of Anthropological Films (JAF)*

Film cameras, video and sound recorders have for decades been used by anthropologists as research tools, for collecting data, for documentation, for advocacy, for representing a case or a group of people, for disseminating empirical insights and for communicating research findings. For the first time in the history of Visual Anthropology anthropological film can now be published on par with written articles, assessed by peers, and inscribed in international credential systems of academic publication as the Nordic Anthropological Film Association (NAFA) has launched this first edition of Journal of Anthropological Films (JAF) published by Bergen Open Access Publishing (BOAP).

JAF publishes films that combine documentation with a narrative and aesthetic convention of cinema to communicate an anthropological understanding of a given cultural and social reality. JAF publishes films that stand alone as a complete scientific publication based on research that explore the relationship between “contemporary anthropological understandings of the world, visual and sensory perception, art and aesthetics, and the ways in which aural and visual media may be used to develop and represent those understandings” to borrow words from Paul Henley (in Flores, *American Anthropologist*, Vol 111, No.1, 2009:95). While most films will stand for themselves, only accompanied by an abstract, supplementary text will be accepted when it adds productively to the anthropological analysis and in case the peer-reviewers will ask for it.

Reviews of entries for JAF will assess the film’s ability to communicate social and cultural analysis and to explore and develop anthropological methodologies and film genres. The anthropological approach to fieldwork very much goes along with the ideas of observational cinema, and this genre still inspires much anthropological filmmaking today. However, theories and ideas generated within

the discipline influence on what modes of representation will be relevant and how written text and film interplay. Reflexivity was an issue within visual anthropology years before feminism and later postmodernism made it a concern for mainstream anthropology. Postmodernism, furthermore, focused on ethnography and the particular, more than on abstraction and generalisation, and these ideas work well with visual anthropology. The later so-called ontological turn within anthropology also opens for interesting contributions from visual anthropology as film can give voice to the protagonists, share their experiences, the activities, the rhythm and sound of their life, their ideas and understandings and how they interpret aspects of their culture. Today technologies develop at a rapid speed and offer still better technical solutions for using audio visual means to collect anthropological information, conduct anthropological analysis, and develop the field of Visual Anthropology.

The films published in this first edition of JAF, represent near all continents and deal with various anthropological themes, such as local politics, climate change, gentrification, cultural heritage, gender, castes, religion, as well as methods and theories on representation. Each film is a unique representation of a particular place and people combining documentation with an anthropological narrative.

*The Fish that Disappeared* by Bjørn Arntsen (Norway), based on research among fishermen on the Cameroon side of lake Chad, deals with issues on climate change, local politics and what Garrett Hardin (Science, Vol 162, 1968) once labeled Tragedy of the Commons. The film shows the dilemma of people finding ways around governmental regulations of the resources to make a living from the lake. Bente Sundsvold's (Norway) *To Think Like a Bird*, is a full-length feature film on cultural heritage. The film follows a woman activist and shows the reciprocal practices of people and birds using the tradition of manmade huts in eider conservation. *Grabbing Dignity* by Cristian Felipe Roa Pilar, (Chile, Denmark) is a film on moving people by force before destroying illegal settlements. This is a hot political issue, not at least in South America. The film focuses on women and their dignity in this relocation process. In Nepal the government abandoned the caste system by law already in 1963. Still the system is very much part of peoples everyday life. *Why Dalit*, by Berit Madsen, (Denmark) shows the situation from the point of view of the Dalit, the untouchables, as well as seen from the higher castes.

*The Possibility of Spirits*, by Mattijs Van de Port (The Netherlands) is not an

ethnographic film in a traditional way, but an explicit, self-reflexive exploration into the mystery of spirit possession. The kind of experimental film, based on material from Bahia, Brazil, is also a critic of the observational ethnographic film genre. JAF therefore publishes *Between Islam and the Sacred Forest* by Martin Gruber and Frank Seidel (Germany), which is an observational film exploring two ceremonies of different traditions. The film, shot in Guinea, West Africa, follows closely the ceremonies step by step in a chronological order. It is also a self-reflexive film involving the filmmakers as part of the narrative as they try to catch and understand what goes on. The two films approach related anthropological themes from using different theoretical perspectives and demonstrate how visual anthropology and filmmaking can contribute to debates within the discipline of anthropology.

JAF will first of all publish films that present new empirical and theoretical insights within the field of anthropology. Many of the films may inspire comments and debates on particular or general anthropological issues. JAF will open for such debates, where also edited versions of reviews and filmmakers' replies, may be included. We look forward to feedbacks and inputs, so please get in touch with the editorial staff if you have any suggestions for JAF. Enjoy the films.

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## Boxing Humans



Well, moving in the academic realm is too often about boxing humans - yes, both sides going together: putting people into boxes and brutally beating them up. The following a letter I sent to relevant newspapers as comment on what is going on, how students [and lecturers] are maltreated, disrespectful encounters when

students are following their curiosity. It makes me increasingly sad, and I feel deeply ashamed ...

Dear colleagues,

adding to the various discussions on ranking and formalistic approaches to studying, admission to universities and performance of third-level teaching and research, one point is easily overlooked - the following example is perhaps extreme, though not necessarily completely exceptional.

I worked for two years as professor of economics at Bangor College China, Changsha [BCC] before taking up my current position as research fellow at the Max-Planck Institute for Social Law and Social Policy in Munich, Germany. Still, one persisting bond to the previous job is concerned with writing references for some students. Some universities where students applied, accepted only references, requiring my mail-address from the previous job - but shouldn't universities at this time and age accept that scholars are moving, following ambitions and calls in other positions? This means: they should also accept that mail addresses change, and one may even prefer to use a non-institutional address. Anyway, I mentioned the BCC-mail address - however, sending a mail to that address is answered by an auto-reply referring the sender to another address. This is the first point where the institution that was seeking the reference - the Graduate School, The Chinese University of Hong Kong - failed. They ignored the auto-reply and I did not know about the request they sent. Finally I was made aware of it [by the bright applying student], checked the dormant mail box and continued to the website for the submission of the reference. A form opened [after going through a more or less cumbersome procedure], asking for replies to multiple choice questions. I still think students are not made up of multiple choice elements, instead: they are real beings, humans with a multifaceted personality that cannot be squeezed into such forms - even when considering data-processing as an at-times appropriate tool. So, instead of ticking the boxes I preferred skipping them, attaching a recommendation letter instead. However, the system did not allow me to submit the letter unless I would first answer the multiple-choice questions which would feed into a one-dimensional profile. I complained, sent the letter as a mail attachment - and did not receive a reply by the said office of the Hong Kong University. At some stage, I agreed - honestly disgusted by the lack of qualification and respect towards students - ticked the boxes and attached the letter [again cumbersome, as one had to enter a code which was not clearly legible, not allowing to distinguish 0 and O]. I sent another letter of complaint to

the Graduate School, The Chinese University of Hong Kong - which was again answered to the BCC address, and again they failed to resend the mail to the e-mail address mentioned in the auto-reply.

If these are the standards of entering higher education, one should not be surprised that at the other end, i.e. at the time of finishing studies, many people have difficulties. They feel their creativity being limited by the requirements of publishing, acquiring funding and the competition along lines of subordination under expectations instead of striving for innovation [see Maximilain Sippenauer: Doktor Bologna; Sueddeutsche Zeitung, 20.10.2017: 11]

Still, it is a bit surprising that all this is well known and still not much is changing. Surprising ... ? Perhaps it is not really surprising if we consider that the income of top-administration posts increase while the income of lecturers does not follow accordingly [see for instance the article titled: Times Higher Education pay survey 2016 in [The Times Higher Education](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/times-higher-education-pay-survey-2016%5D); <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/times-higher-education-pay-survey-2016%5D>].

It seems that there is a long way towards 'supporting the brightest by open systems', overcoming the dominant *administrative* policy of 'wedge the narrowest by furthering their smart submission'.

Sincerely

Peter Herrmann