



Rupture

13-15 February 2017

UCL, Department of Anthropology

Daryll Forde Seminar Room, 2nd Floor, 14 Taviton Street, London WC1H 0BW

How to think a world experienced as turmoil? And how far might that sense of turmoil -- of a world apparently running away with itself -- be conceived as an occasion for anthropological thinking to break with itself? We take the concept of rupture as the lens that brings into focus an urgent concern with radical change. Linking the possibility of a new departure with a deliberate break with existing orders, rupture thematises disavowal, negation and violence as constituents or moments that are immanent to the production of difference. It thus lends a harder edge to the talk of novelty, creativity and emergence with which anthropological and broader theoretical theorizing, reflecting global trends in social discourse, is currently awash. Counterpoising the dynamics of event, eruption, disruption, radical critique and brutal affirmation to the more organic language of potentiality, collaboration, resilience and transformation, our concern with rupture seeks to make a break for anthropology, and perhaps with it, too.

Rupture is jointly sponsored and hosted by the European Research Council research projects [*Comparative Anthropologies of Revolutionary Politics*](#), based at UCL, and [*Egalitarianism: Forms, Processes, Comparisons*](#), based at the University of Bergen. It is co-sponsored by the Danish Research Council research project [*Escalations: A Comparative Ethnographic Study of Accelerating Change*](#).

Organizers: Martin Holbraad (UCL), Bruce Kapferer (Bergen), Mike Rowlands (UCL)
Coordinator: Julia Sauma (UCL/ São Paulo).

Limited places are available -- contact Julia Sauma at rupture2017@gmail.com



Programme

13 February

- 9.00 – 09.30** Introductions: **MARTIN HOLBRAAD (UCL) & BRUCE KAPFERER (BERGEN)**
- 9.30 – 10.15** Keynote: **SASKIA SASSEN (COLUMBIA):**
De-theorizing in Order to Re-theorize
- 10.15 – 10.35** **ALICE ELLIOT (BRISTOL):** Permanent Rupture, Tunis Style
- 10.35 – 10.55** **NICO TASSI (UCL):** Continuous Ruptures:
An Aymara Cosmology of Revolution in Bolivia
- 10.55 – 11.15** **FRANCIS B. NYAMNJOH (CAPE TOWN):** Rupture or Conviviality?
#RhodesMustFall Student Protests in South Africa
- 11.15 – 11.35** Coffee break
- 11.35 – 12.20** Discussion: **LARS HØJER (COPENHAGEN)**
- 12.20 – 13.30** Break for Lunch
- 13.30 – 13.50** **ALLEN ABRAMSON (UCL):** Ethnography in Artifice, Anthropology
on its Head: Climbing Walls, the Non-Epic,
and the Local Proliferation of 'The Edge'
- 13.50 – 14.10** **STINE KRØIJER (COPENHAGEN):** Everyday Acts of Radical
Change: A Political Theory of the Butterfly Effect
- 14.10 – 14.30** **EDWARD SIMPSON (SOAS):** Comparing Earthquakes:
Fault Lines, Rupture and Euphoria
- 14.30 – 15.15** Discussion: **BJØRN BERTELSEN (BERGEN)**
- 15.15 – 15.30** Coffee Break
- 15.30 – 15.50** **THEODOROS RAKOPOULOS (BERGEN):** Conspiracy Theory in a
Political Cosmology of Crisis
- 15.50 – 16.10** **JANET ROITMAN (THE NEW SCHOOL):** Anti-Crisis
- 16.10 – 16.45** Discussion: **ANDREAS BANDAK (COPENHAGEN)**

14 February

- 9.30 – 10.15** Keynote: **CAROL GREENHOUSE (PRINCETON):** Unmaking Time
- 10.15 – 10.35** **CAROLINE HUMPHREY (CAMBRIDGE):** The Guillotine:
Reflections On Violent Revolutionary Rupture
- 10.35 – 10.55** **ANJA KUBLITZ (ALBORG):** Radical Ruptures and Slow Striving
among Danish Foreign Fighters
- 10.55 – 11.15** **ALESSANDRO ZAGATO (BERGEN):** After Ayotzinapa:
The State and Internal Warfare in Mexico
- 11.15 – 11.35** Coffee break
- 11.35 – 12.20** Discussion: **IGOR CHERSTICH (UCL)**
- 12.20 – 13.30** Break for lunch
- 13.30 – 13.50** **JOEL ROBBINS (CAMBRIDGE):** On Cultural Secondarity and the
Mechanisms of Rupture: Revisiting Christianity
and Discontinuity
- 13.50 – 14.10** **MORTEN AXEL PEDERSEN (COPENHAGEN):** Inner Rupture, Outer
Reaction: The Politics and the Ethics of Christian
“Leaping” in a Danish Protestant Movement
- 14.10 – 14.30** **RANE WILLERSLEV & MORTEN NIELSEN (ARHUS):** Comic
Comparisons: The Paradox of
Rupture as Cultural Critique
- 14.30 – 15.15** Discussion: **KNUT RIO (BERGEN)**
- 15.15 – 15.30** Coffee break
- 15.30 – 15.50** **RAMON SARRÓ (OXFORD):** Make a Clean Link with the Past:
Prophetic Ruptures and Historical Reconnections
in Africa
- 15.50 – 16.10** **MICHAEL ROWLANDS (UCL):** A Museum of the Red Age Confronts
Historical Nihilism: Repair or Rupture?
- 16.10 – 16.45** Discussion: **STINE PURI (COPENHAGEN)**
- 16.45 – 17.00** Conclusions: **MARTIN HOLBRAAD & BRUCE KAPFERER**

15 February

Rupture PhD Forum

This open PhD forum will be an opportunity for students working on themes related to Rupture to share their work and get comments on it from participants in the Rupture event that precedes it. The session will be open to PhD students at all stages of work (including those of have only recently completed). Participants will be expected to present the purchase of their research on the theme or rupture in a 10-minute presentation, leaving plenty of time for discussion throughout the day.

A Call for Abstracts is currently open. To apply, send a 250-word abstract to Dr Julia Sauma at rupture2017@gmail.com by the 10 January 2017. The abstract should outline the nature of your PhD research and make explicit its relevance to the theme of rupture.

Abstracts

ALLEN ABRAMSON – *Ethnography in Artifice, Anthropology on its Head: Climbing Walls, the Non-Epic, and the Local Proliferation of ‘The Edge’*

Playfully directed, politically insignificant, culturally unspectacular: climbing walls don't seem to qualify as truly valid objects of ethnographic inquiry. Indeed, artificially conceived (in concrete, plastic, wood and metal) to simulate natural landscape and the epic practices that appeared upon them in the late 18th century, ontologically speaking, climbing walls seem lacking in forceful content and depleted in 'real' reality. On the other hand, not only have climbing walls multiplied in number, attracted a mass of users and differentiated internally, they have also (a) spilled over, spawning outside of themselves an expanding number different kinds of micro-walls; and (b) also 'strangely attracted' corporate, green and other mainstream meta-practitioners who variously metaphorise the climbing-wall's regulated play in precariousness. The result is a visibly normative proliferation of vertical 'edges' (along with other recreational 'edges') in the urban environment to the extent that, what initially presents as a degenerate modality of latter-day epic, now manifests as potent and intense activity, developing radically different relations between modern actors, local spheres and the precarious world at large. What exactly is the nature of the rupture that surreptitiously fractures the climbing-wall as simulacrum, crystallising inside of old forms, newly normative orientations to the instability of the world? Strangely, contemporary socio-cultural anthropology has undergone a similar retreat from the edge of the world to study otherness ethnographically as an immanent property of familiar local spaces. Can the paradigmatic rupture of Anthropology learn anything further about itself through a recursive comparison with other epic practices turned artificially on their heads?

ALICE ELLIOT – *Permanent Rupture, Tunis Style*

How deep does a revolutionary rupture reside, both within and beyond the subject? In this paper, I trace the peculiar 'dual conception' of rupture constituting the Tunisian Revolution – rupture as fleeting, superficial, and reversible, and rupture as constitutive, irreversible, and permanent. I focus on a particular temporal, social, and personal rupture in Tunisia's recent history – the days between the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi, considered the beginning of the Tunisian Revolution, and the ousting of Tunisia's President on 14 January 2011 and immediate aftermath. I draw on the experience of these 'days of revolution' of young men from a working class suburb of Tunis who took to the streets during this period and participated – together with general contestations in the capital – in different acts of violent dissent in the suburbs, including riots against local police forces, resistance to counter-revolutionary currents, and collective neighbourhood vigilance. I focus, in particular, on two seemingly contradictory assertions often made by my interlocutors: that

nothing has changed with the Revolution, and that nothing will be the same, in their own lives, after it. Taking this 'dual conception' of rupture as a starting point, I reflect on the role of scale and depth in our anthropological imagination of 'rupture' and its im/permanence.

CAROL GREENHOUSE – *Unmaking Time*

I take "ruptures" as a provocation to reconsider questions of agency as they tend to arise in ethnography, as an interrelation of political action and moral judgment – i.e., as broad problems of knowledge that, for anthropologists, realize individuals by situating them in their times. Our conventional notion of agency, in fact, tracks the individual person, lending agency a unitary quality (in the dual sense of attributing agency to individuals, and in the conventional syntax of "having" or "having no" agency). The ruptures I have in mind (from ethnography, adjacent literatures and recent events) shatter this liberal fiction, making visible the disruption of the temporal field and, in that shattering, delivering a challenge to the unitary construction of agency. My current thinking is along the lines of refraction, reversal and revelation as relations of temporality and agency revealed in spaces of rupture: Refraction – referring to the simultaneity of radically different fates; reversal – for renewal borne of impossibility; and revelation – for conscious understandings that exceed experience. The paper will unfold across a series of examples, including but not limited to the current political crisis in the United States.

CAROLINE HUMPHREY – *The Guillotine: Reflections on Violent Revolutionary Rupture*

A political rupture can be imagined, both prospectively and retrospectively – but how are we to deal with its actual material moment(s)? In a sense 'the guillotine' can stand for any of the technologies of revolutionary violence up to those of the present day, but the advantage of the French Revolution case for a conference is that many great authors have already written about it!

The guillotine seems to present us with rupture - both conceptual and physical. In imagination the guillotine of the French Revolution came to represent several opposed political philosophies: on the one hand a just and efficient instrument that demonstrated *égalité* and the will of the people (kings and workmen, they all die in exactly the same way), on another the barbaric *Terreur* that destroyed the 'natural bonds' of society and religion, or alternatively a tyranny that threatened progressives' ideals of democracy and liberty. These were cosmological counter-visions arrayed against one another. Concomitantly, the guillotine represented a temporal concept of rupture, namely the replacement of one resonant element-standing-for-a-whole by another. Germaine de Staël reproached the regime, 'You govern by death; the strength that your government by its very nature lacks, you find in terror, and where a throne used to stand, you have erected a scaffold!' But in France use of the guillotine was in fact a continuous practice, existing both long

before and long after the revolution. And if it is considered not as a provocation to political theorising but as a material element in a quite different assemblage of processes, people's physical lives, emotions and deaths, the guillotine has been observed, as noted by e.g. by Albert Camus and Lyudmilla Jordanova to name but two very different thinkers, not to make an immediate end to consciousness, and to bring unforgettably into being in the observer a 'discovery of the reality behind the noble phrases' ... thereafter 'he could think of nothing but that quivering body' (Camus).

It is true that the existential experience of severance is then used by both authors to think about other issues, capital punishment by Camus and 'a fundamental anxiety about the process of death which gripped the entire nation' and brought about a new medicine by Jordanova. But perhaps it is worth pausing on the 'event' itself, even if we are incapable of grasping its totality. This paper will be an attempt to think about the relation between different – what can we call them: modalities? – that the guillotine lays before us. Specifically, are we faced with a paradox, in which decapitation might nevertheless undermine the ideas of rupture? Is a material-physical-emotional view, in which death would appear as an occasion of experience among an overlapping continuum of events, even compatible with political concepts of rupture?

STINE KRØIJER – *Everyday Acts of Radical Change: A Political Theory of the Butterfly Effect*

Four years ago radical environmental activists took up life in a little forest in the Ruhr district, Germany, to counter the expansion of the area's lignite mining, estimated to be Europe's single largest emitter of carbon dioxide. Like many other environmental and climate activists in Europe, the group has lost confidence in the ability and willingness of politicians to come up with solutions to climate change and environmental destruction. In response, they have taken up a life involving a mix of sabotage against the mining industry and experiments with forms of sustainable livelihood in the forest.

My paper describes these experiments and explores the small daily acts of seeking to live sustainably, avoid exploitation of other (living) beings, free oneself from market consumption, escape civilization and 'go wild'. I ask: what does this form of politics amount to in proportion to the idea of 'revolution'?

In previous writings, I have argued that anarchist and radical activists in Northern European do not consider sudden radical change produced via popular mobilization and uprising (that is, revolution) to be neither a viable nor a desirable political strategy. Instead, radical change is seen as immanent to all daily acts and undertakings (Krøijer 2015a, 2015b). Here, this idea is pushed further in order to consider the implications for our anthropological ideas about (political) systems and system change. Taking the small acts as my point of departure, I will argue these may amount to a political theory of 'the butterfly effect'.

The notion of the Butterfly Effect, invented by the American meteorologist Edward N Lorenz in an attempt to make long term weather predictions, describes the

possibility that perturbations of small amplitude create large scale or delayed effects. The political theory of the butterfly effect relies on the same idea; namely that small acts potentiality creates turbulence, but without depending on neither proportionality nor prediction.

ANJA KUBLITZ – *Radical Ruptures and Slow Striving among Danish Foreign Fighters*

The day after Hosni Mubarak was removed from power, Khalid decided to quit his criminal activities and move to Egypt. Since then, Khalid has not only stopped his criminal activities, changed his political convictions, lived in Egypt for half a year and been part of the revolution, but he has also travelled to Syria twice to fight against Bashar al-Assad. The radical rupture of heading off to war is, however, balanced by Khalid's calmer but equally revolutionary practices of change.

Based on fieldwork among Danish foreign fighters, this paper examines how the Arab Spring of 2011 and the declaration of an Islamic State in 2014 not only changed my interlocutors' scale of imagination, but also introduced what they describe as a new "reality" in which they could become somebody else. The young men's transformative practices are characterized by both accelerated action and a more leaned-back attitude in line with waiting for the inevitable. To understand not only *why* but also *how* Danish youngsters are moved by foreign wars, I suggest we study the youngsters' practices through two different but intersecting registers for struggling in the way of Allah (*jihad*), namely going to war and anticipating a future Islamic caliphate by working on one's faith through everyday Islamic practices of tending to others and God. Both registers pose their own mundane challenges. Although the world has changed radically, changing oneself is a constant struggle.

FRANCIS B. NYAMNJOH – *Rupture or Conviviality? #Rhodesmustfall Student Protests in South Africa*

Africa and Africans, the late Ali Mazrui once wrote, are a continent and people more sinned against than sinning. Even when there are violent outbursts à Frantz Fanon, the intention and result are far less about rupture or radical breaks, than about accommodation, interdependence and conviviality. Africa and Africans, it would appear, are more inclined to social repair than social rupture. This paper, excerpted from my recent book *#RhodesMustFall. Nibbling at Resilient Colonialism in South Africa*, seeks to make this argument by taking a closer look at student protests in the University of Cape Town for the statue of Cecil John Rhodes to be moved or removed from campus in 2015. Perceived as a symbol of the continuities of colonial and apartheid era violence, racialisation and inequalities 22 years into a purportedly democratic and non-racist South Africa post 1994, the Rhodes's statue was targeted by student protests spearheaded by black South African students in the main, as part of a resurgent nationwide student movement in the interest of decolonisation and transformation of university education. The paper provides the details and contours of the unfolding movement articulated around the rallying cry of 'black lives matter' –

a cry shared with blacks elsewhere in diasporic spaces across the West and in the rest of the world. On the surface, these often violent protests might appear to suggest nothing short of rupture, but on a closer look, there is far less about discontinuities than continuities in them. Colonialism and apartheid may have been violent, but the current nibbling at their resilience speak more of an invitation to explore conviviality than a violent severance of interconnections.

MORTEN AXEL PEDERSEN – *Inner Rupture, Outer Reaction: The Politics and the Ethics of Christian “Leaping” in a Danish Protestant Movement*

Based on fieldwork in the neo-orthodox Lutheran movement Tidehverv, which for several decades has exercised an extraordinary influence among not just Danish theologians but also on Danish national politics, this paper explores what it takes to try to live out Kierkegaard's existentialist theology as an abiding principle of ethical and political practice. Drawing on conversations with as well as texts by leading figures from Tidehverv's present and past, my analysis takes its departure in the core Kierkegaardian notion of "the leap of faith". I especially discuss how, according to my interlocutors, in order to be a faithful believer - or indeed a genuine, so-called "knight of faith" - one needs to cultivate a radical openness toward as well as a superior capacity for undergoing constant "leaps" in one's life. Crucially, however, such ruptures must be strictly interior or existential as opposed to exterior or social of nature. Indeed, it is considered to be not just immoral but downright sacrilegious to aspire towards let alone try to bring about any kind of forward-oriented change and progressive development in the world, especially political change couched in and executed in the name of revolution. As Søren Krarup, a former MP and national-conservative politician who for many years edited the Tidehverv journal, puts it in the book *Conservative Essays* (1987): "In the world of faith and the gospel, leaping has to be done! But in the world of earthly reality, that is for instance politics, leaping is an impossibility ... so when political system-creators or ideological politicians nevertheless seek to leap via revolutions, then they destroy the natural development and effectively molest and tyrannize the humans". But this not all, for there is also, for Krarup and other Tidehverv adherents, a direct relationship between existential leaping and political reaction: "[The conservative rejection of leaping within a temporal development is a consequence of the necessity of leaping in the religious or eternal world, where God cannot be known but only be an object of faith, and where no human has direct or natural access to the divine and truth. Since you must have faith in God you should not make politics into a matter of faith". My overarching ambition in this paper is to unpack the more or less tacit theological-cum-political logics undergirding this and other core Tidehverv values and moralities. Precisely how and why is it that inner leaping is not just anathema to outer revolution, but also a precondition for reaction as an ethical ideal and political practice? And what might be wider implications, intended or not, of this "existentialist fundamentalism"?

THEODOROS RAKOPOULOS – *Conspiracy Theory in a Political Cosmology of Crisis*

The proliferation of conspiracy theory, a strand of intellectual practice very popular in Greece that has been exacerbated by the recent crisis, calls for a prism through which to review the culture and history of such “theory.” This paper critically revisits the idea that conspiracism is rooted in “a culture of paranoia” and is thus a falling-out with epistemic thinking. It does so by reviewing ethnographic material related to different sources branded as conspiracist by their exponents and the press. My data include narratives on the exodus from crisis, alien agent formations, and even party politics or terrorist bombings. As a comparison between the epistemologies of scientism and conspiracism suggests, I take conspiracy theory on its own terms, steering clear from approaches in the relevant political science and political history scholarship. I compare different cases of “conspirational” thinking from Greece to show how they are rooted in hyperrationality and truth activism, a pursuit set on the investigation of revealing “the truth.” I argue that conspiracy theory is a method of “connecting dots” of disparate evidence that does not present real rupture with standard epistemologies. This approach allows leeway for a comparative exercise with the constitution of ethnographic knowledge. An ethnography of conspiracy theory does not scrutinize the validity of the empirical material claimed by truth activists, but focuses on their cognitive and political constructions. The paper therefore attempts an integrated comparison between conspiracy theory and anthropological caveats, as conspiracy narratives create a feeling of estrangement, de-familiarizing the known world as “anthropologists at home” do. Discussing diverse case studies, I trace their internal rationality, presenting conspiracy theory as a political cosmology of crisis.

JOEL ROBBINS – *On Cultural Secundarity and the Mechanisms of Rupture: Revisiting Christianity and Discontinuity*

Recent work on Christianity has pointed to its “part-culture,” “secondary” and essentially “critical” character. What all of these positions, developed largely in isolation from one another, share is an emphasis on the way Christianity is set up by design to require a prior culture with which it interacts – it makes no claim to be primordial or wholly sufficient in its own terms. In this paper, I consider how this commitment to its own partiality and belatedness in relation to other cultural forms shapes Christianity’s ability to act as a stimulus for rupture both in situations of conversion and long after conversion has taken place. Taking up a variety of ethnographic cases, this discussion of Christianity’s specificity as an imaginary and mechanism of rupture leads on to a reconsideration of the ways the study of this religious tradition might influence anthropological theorizations of radical cultural change.

JANET ROITMAN – *Anti-Crisis*

What are the stakes of crisis”? While abundant scholarship attempts to explain crises, there is a surprising lack of attention to the concept of crisis itself. I ask how the term crisis functions as a blind spot in the production of knowledge and the narration of history. Instead of starting with a particular crisis (e.g. subprime crisis, humanitarian crisis) and then proceeding to delineate causes, I ask questions of the concept of crisis itself. I do so with reference to the so-called “2007-09 financial crisis,” examining the practice of the term crisis, or the criteria assumed and mobilized in judgments of epistemological and ethical failure. Instead of arguing “against” crisis – imagining that one could move “beyond crisis” – I focus on the *effects* of the claim to crisis.

MICHAEL ROWLANDS – *A Museum of the Red Age Confronts Historical Nihilism: Repair or Rupture?*

"The vital part of historical nihilism is to radically deny the leading role of Marxism and the historical inevitability of China's socialist path, and to deny the leadership of the Communist Party of China. We should be on guard for the influence of historical nihilism, and ... declare war on it."

And in the last three years or so, war has been declared on academics and literary figures and artists who have called for greater objective truth of events in 20th century history of China. All very worrying particularly when their cause is taken up and defended by more right wing journalists and academics in the West. How do we understand the value of repression of the past? Oblivion would be Marc Auge's answer “in short, oblivion is the life force of memory and remembrance is its product. The nature and quality of remembrance thus produced remains to be pondered” (21). Exactly so. But demands for objective truth (or not) of the past is not inseparable from the nature of the trauma and willingness to repeat the experience. And it seems to become an issue immediately after such events (as ‘forcings’ in Badiou's sense). And for some, like George Orwell, writing in 1946 with a surprising Whig bias, “totalitarianism demands, in fact, the conscious alteration of the past and in the long run probably demands a disbelief in the very existence of objective truth (1946 *The Prevention of Literature*). But often it is not so crass as this. Probably the most famous, if not, unique, museum complex of 20th century history of China (in China) is the product of a private entrepreneur who personally experienced many of the horrors of the Cultural Revolution. The Oblivion, he produces (very strictly so), produces a remembrance that in fact confronts historical nihilism in order to promote a certain truth, not of rupture but of repair. How he does this will be the focus of my talk but it may have something to say about 20th century anthropology as well.

SASKIA SASSEN - *De-theorizing in Order to Re-theorize*

The current global age that took off in the 1980s has unsettled many of the major social, economic, and political meanings of the preceding Keynesian era in the West. My concern is particularly with the major categories we use in the social

sciences—economy, polity, society, justice, inequality, state, globalization, immigration, among others. These are all powerful categories that explain much about the realities they represent. However, those realities have mutated, and ‘non-western’ logics need to be recognized. A first move in my research is to posit that we need to discover what these major categories veil or obscure about our epoch precisely because they are powerful. In my own work I have sought to show that the national and the global are powerful categories that hide as much as they reveal about our current epoch, and so does the assumption of their mutual exclusivity. A second key move is to cut across the knowledge silos we have generated over fifty or more years of research in the social sciences.

EDWARD SIMPSON – *Comparing Earthquakes: Fault Lines, Rupture and Euphoria*

Earthquakes are dramatic moments of rupture that shake individual and collective certainty. The Lisbon earthquake of 1755 caused Voltaire, Rousseau and others to herald the death of God. The same event also provoked revolutionary thought on the nature of rationality and the sublime from Kant. Mill saw earthquakes as periods of ‘accelerated consumption’, a form of quantitative-easing given by nineteenth-century nature.

Recent literature turns back to the eventful nature of earthquakes (and disasters more generally). Some have seen parallels to the revolutionary crisis described by Lenin; others, such as Naomi Klein, have seen ‘the shock doctrine’ of opportunistic capital at work; Solnit sees the positive revolutionary potential of disasters. In all of these formulations, the earthquake is unquestioned rupture, a moment into which history and politics can be collapsed and something new produced as a form of aftermath.

In this paper, I examine the patterns of rupture provided by two earthquakes. The first, and one that I know best, took place in Gujarat, western India in 2001. The material presented is based on ethnographic research conducted over the following decade. The second earthquake occurred in Nepal in 2015. In both cases, initial moments of cooperation gave way, in the longer-term, to conflict, identity politics and radical conservatism. What kind of rupture produces such results?

NICO TASSI – *Continuous Ruptures: An Aymara Cosmology of Revolution in Bolivia*

In Badiou’s analysis of Saint Paul as a paradigmatic revolutionary thinker, the “event” is conceived as bringing about a radical incommensurability of time, space and subject in relation to a previous era. Such a rupture is an external and transcendent phenomenon, unintentional and unmanufactured, a “thunderbolt”, a “caesura”, aleatorily intervening but not negotiating with the existing and immanent order of things. In this paper, I attempt to explore what happens to this Christian idea of rupture when we place it in a time-space and cosmological order which is not necessarily monotheistic or defined by an ontological tension between the immanent and the transcendent. By examining the participation of indigenous Aymaras in Bolivia’s “process of change”, I analyse a series of political languages and

conceptions of radical transformation that instead of sudden and drastic ruptures with the existing order of things remain founded on the intensification of local cosmological rules and forms. Drawing on Aymara notions of “reproduction” and “articulation” as tools of political transformation, I describe a spatio-temporal readjustment which does not imply the arduous and creative construction of a new order in a faraway future.

RANE WILLERSLEV & MORTEN NIELSEN – *Comic Comparisons: The Paradox of Rupture as Cultural Critique*

This paper chronicles an academic project that cannot be taken seriously. Paradoxically, this is also what gives it its purchase as a heuristics of rupture. In 2016, we hosted a 10-episode science show on Danish National Radio entitled Operation Manhunt (Operation menneskejagt) aiming to uncover the ten basic truths about humanity, covering such themes as violence, sexuality and work. Our methodological starting point was to forge unlikely comparisons between seemingly disparate phenomena. Thus, we connected and compared statements by scientists with experiences from our personal lives and recurrent oracle statements. As such, our comparisons became a kind of perverted Frazerian model, in which phenomena are laterally compared out of context. What we have later realized is that whatever insights we got during the making of the show derived from the failure of our methodological approach. Essentially, the arbitrariness of the comparisons seemed to also undermine their scientific value: Truth be told, there was no systematic comparative methodology! And, still, we had to acknowledge that some kind of twisted anthropological insights were achieved. Why? As we came to realize, every insight emerged because the unlikely comparisons were processed through a comedic structure of set-up and punch-line: The set-up was the very nature of our randomly selected comparisons. They created, however, an awkward and often comedic paradox by juxtaposing phenomena, which, by their very nature, could not be meaningfully compared. While other anthropological approaches, most lately the so-called ontological turn, take such comparisons seriously, we came to appreciate that their capacity for generating anthropological insights derives from not taking them too seriously but to take their awkwardness and impossibility at face value - thereby exposing their latent comedic potentials. In other words, they were simply funny! This constituted the surprising punchline, which had considerable implications for the ontological status of such truths: They simply cannot endure over time but dissolve when the after-effect of the punchline withers away. By their very nature, they collapse under the weight of their own silly impossibility. Still, along the way, significant insights were gained: By making comic comparisons, we were rupturing the very foundations of anthropology as an enlightenment project, which has fundamentally ignored laughter as a supreme method of destabilizing and continuously remaking the foundation of reason.