

International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences

Manchester, 05.–10. August 2013

From August 5 to August 10, 2013, the University of Manchester with the support of Manchester City Council hosted the 17th World Congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES). This year's conference was put under the motto "Evolving Humanity, Emerging Worlds," assembling topics not only from the field of anthropology or ethnography, but rather from all social sciences including demography, sociology, and political science. In all, 1,480 papers were presented in 212 panels. 1,340 delegates came to Manchester representing 69 countries. The themes covered spread over virtually every region of the world and included for example forensic anthropology, migration, socio-economic marginalization, health, food, culture, folk dance, identity construction, or sport. Being one of the premier areas for anthropological research, Asia naturally played a substantial role in many papers. A list of selected Asia-related panels is provided in the appendix to this conference report.

The five yearly IUAES world congress was held in the United Kingdom for the first time since the inaugural conference in London in 1934. This hiatus of almost 80 years easily spans a lifetime, a fact that was emphasized in the opening ceremony at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall. It is also noteworthy that the IUAES chose Manchester and not London as the venue for its return to the UK, thereby preferring a smaller city and a compact conference environment to the swirling surroundings of the nation's capital. There is a lot Manchester has to offer, including a beautiful university campus, a fascinating history, and a heterogeneous population. No less than 153 languages are spoken in the city, as the Lord Mayor of Manchester, Councillor Naeem ul Hassan, who himself was born in Pakistan and came to Manchester in 1984, pointed out in his greeting remarks.

The opening keynote lecture was delivered by Leslie C. Aiello (University College London), President of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, on the topic "The Wenner-Gren Foundation and the Past, Present and Future of Anthropology." Two more distinguished lectures were given: The Association of Social Anthropologists' Firth Lecture was delivered by Lourdes Arizpe (National Autonomous University of Mexico) on "Arbitrating Collective Dreams: Anthropology and the New Worlding." Howard Morphy (Australian National University) gave the Royal Anthropological Institute's Huxley Lecture on the topic "Extended Lives in Global Spaces: The Anthropology of Yolngu Pre-burial Ceremonies."

New and innovative elements of the congress were three large plenary debates the dealt with a proposition to be voted on by the audience after the discussion. For each debate, the proposer and a main opposing discussant were paired, each assisted by a second spokesperson to the respective positions. The first plenary debate was held in the opening session. Tim Ingold (Aberdeen University) proposed the motion "Humans have no nature, what they have is history." He argued that there was no essence equal among all individuals and that the alleged "human nature" did not exist. He was supported by Veena Das (Johns Hopkins University). The main opponent was Ruth Mace (University College London) who reviewed the century-old "nature versus nurture" debate and stated the case for a "specific nature" of humans relative to other apes and to other people. She was assisted by Juichi Yamagiwa (Kyoto University). After the initial statements and a lively plenary discussion with many interesting and thought-provoking interventions, the final vote count was 134 for and 77 against the proposition. The motion "Humans have no nature, what they have is history" had thus prevailed.

The second plenary debate centered around the proposition “Justice for people must come before justice for the environment” which was brought forward by Amita Baviskar (Delhi University) und supported by Don Nonini (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). The opponents were Helen Koppina (The Hague University of Applied Science) and Veronica Strang (Durham University). After an energetic exchange of arguments and a sometimes heated open floor debate, the initial motion was rejected by the public vote. However, the overwhelming majority of the audience and the four discussants seemed to agree on the idea that the slightly changed proposition “Justice for people must come *with* justice for the environment” would have been a mutually acceptable compromise.

The third plenary debate dealt with the motion “The free movement of people around the world would be utopian.” The panelists were Bela Feldman-Bianco (State University of Campinas), Noel Salazar (University of Leuven), Shahram Khosravi (Stockholm University), and Nicholas de Genova (Goldsmiths’ College). Another panel debate was held in the concluding session of the congress, were six different presenters discussed several aspects of the topic “World Anthropologies Today: Experiences and Prospects.” The speakers were Susana Narotzky (University of Barcelona), Francine Saillant (Quebec University), Michal Buchowski (University of Poznan), Gordon Mathews (Chinese University of Hong Kong), Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (University of Brasilia), and Sanjay Seth (Goldsmiths’ College). The panel was chaired by Junji Koizumi (Osaka University), Secretary-General of the IUAES, and outlined some of the most pressing issues for the social sciences in general and provided much food for thought.

The monumental task of running a large conference such as the world congress of the IUAES hardly goes by without some challenges. There were some minor organizational difficulties that some panels and individual delegates encountered, but the staff was devotedly trying to solve all emerging problems. Overall, the University of Manchester has shown itself to be an excellent host and provided a great environment for a week full of rich papers and stimulating debates. Determined by a member vote in Manchester, the next IUAES world conference in 2018 will be organized by the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA) in the city of Florianópolis, Brazil.

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