

ISRF Final Report

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Overview:

My ISRF Early Career Fellowship was titled *“When economic expansion transgresses all limits: Indebtedness and extractivism as two major causes of social unrest in the coming decade”* and lasted from January 1 to September 30, 2018.

It took place within a Visiting Fellowship at the Department of Anthropology of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), sponsored by Prof. David Graeber (himself an ISRF Mid-Career Fellow, 2014-2014). I will continue to hold this position of Visiting Fellow at the LSE until February 23, 2019, regularly visiting London.

Overall, this ISRF fellowship enabled a rich, intense and productive period of personal research. I carried out two lines of research in parallel: firstly, the announced focus on anti-extractivist and anti-debt conflicts; and secondly a new focus on the links between psychoanalysis and the economy. I am personally extremely satisfied with the outcomes of both research lines. I can say with confidence that the fellowships crucially contributed to boost what I regard as a very creative period in my life as a researcher.

Detail of the research that has been performed:

During the fellowship, my time and energy were mostly devoted to the writing of original academic articles. They can briefly be described as follows: *(i)* one article presents and analyses my database of anti-debt movements; *(ii)* one investigates the nature of anti-extractive and anti-debt conflicts, including their similarities/differences with more classic forms of economic conflicts; *(iii)* one offers an overview of the relationships between psychoanalysis and the economy; *(iv)* one draft article explores the links between economic growth and psychoanalysis; and *(v)* one draft examines how Marx and Jung could be integrated for a deeper understanding/solving of real-world social problems.

Regarding article *(i)*: I compiled a database on anti-debt movements, with the help of two ISS-based postdoctoral researchers, Dr. Tsegaye Moreda and Dr. Christina Sathyamala. This database is the first of its kind and the results will hopefully soon be published in the journal *New Political Economy*. Contacts with anti-debt organizations were made via e-mail and visits (i.e. Strike Debt in London, the Movement of Mortgage Victims in Barcelona, and the Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt in Belgium). [N.B.: contrary to what was announced in my work plan, I finally decided not to go to Brussels, as I had gathered enough information, I felt, via internet and e-mails.]

In my article (ii), I developed an original theory of economic conflicts that includes a macro-historical periodization of dominant economic struggles and radical ideologies, and that differentiates between 'immediate', 'structural' and 'consciousness' causes/targets of economic conflicts. The article argues that anti-extractivist and anti-debt conflicts may become the strategic economic conflicts of the 21st century and that these struggles easily relate to a new blend of radical ideas drawing on 'anarchism' and 'degrowth'.

Regarding article (iii): I worked on an extensive literature review of the links between psychoanalysis and economic questions. Such a literature review is also the first of its kind, hopefully soon to be published in the journal *Ethos*. It is an ambitious piece insofar as it includes Freudian, Lacanian and Jungian contributions to the understanding of economic problems. It required weeks of intense reading, something I could only carry out thanks to a research sabbatical like this ISRF Fellowship!

Specific activities:

- January 1-September 30, 2018: **Research stay at the LSE**, working on the anthropology and politics of debt. I participated in the weekly LSE anthropological seminar as well as in the weekly Radical Anthropology Group at UCL. A lot of fruitful exchanges and new ideas emerged from all the related interactions.
- January 12-13, 2018: Attendance of the **ISRF workshop on Economics and Anthropology**, Goldsmiths, University of London.
- April 18-20, 2018: **ISRF preparatory visit** at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin.
- May 19, 2018: Keynote speaker at the **Rethinking Economics Festival 2018** at the University of Utrecht. Topic: an introduction to degrowth.
- June 24-30, 2018: **Research stay at the Autonomous University of Barcelona**, to the Environmental Justice Atlas (EJAtlas) group led by Prof. Joan Martinez-Alier. I also participated as a lecturer in their Summer School on Degrowth and Environmental Justice.
- September 2-7, 2018: Participation in the **1st North-South Conference on Degrowth-Descrecimiento in Mexico City** (see below). [N.B.: I attended this conference instead of the announced Conference of the International Society for Ecological Economics (ISEE), also taking place in Mexico a few days later, because the public of both conferences is similar and because I could not attend the ISS conference due to the wedding of my brother in Switzerland that well on those dates.]
- September 26-28, 2018: Participation in the **ISRF Annual Workshop** at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin.

Specific output:

- **1 academic article** titled "*The euthanasia of the rentier? A global overview of resistances against private debts, 1300–2018*" (second and third authors: Tsegaye Moreda and Christina Sathyamala) submitted to the journal *New Political Economy*.

- **1 academic article** titled *“Outline of a theory of economic conflicts – or, why debt and extractivism may generate major unrest in the coming decade and a new blend of radical ideas”* (second author: Andrej Grubačić) to be soon submitted to a major journal (possibly *Current Anthropology*).
- **1 academic article** titled *“The depth of economic questions: Fragments of a psychoanalytic-economic anthropology”* (second author: Shivani Kaul) to be soon submitted to *Ethos: The Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology*.
- **2 drafts** of academic articles (see above).
- **1 academic presentation** of my result at the 1st North-South Conference on Degrowth-Descrecimiento in Mexico City. My presentation’s title: *“Post-growth in the ‘global South’: A defense in seven points and a focus on anti-debt and anti-extractivist struggles as a social force towards it”*.
- 1 co-chaired session at the same conference. Session’s title: *“Five theses on the relationships between Degrowth and the Environmental Justice movement”*.
- 1 presentation of some of my results at the ISRF Annual Workshop in Berlin.
- 1 article in the ISRF Bulletin No. 16 on *“Law: Social Organisation and Social Control”*.
- Some time was also devoted to other on-going publication projects that had to be finished. One co-edited book titled *“Post-Growth Thinking in India”* (Orient BlackSwan) was for example finally published in September 2018.

What remain to be accomplished:

As explained above, two articles will be submitted very soon (i.e. articles (ii) and (iii) above). After this, my plan is to have my two draft papers (i.e. articles (iv) and (v) above) submitted within this academic year. The total of my ISRF-related articles will therefore be five.

With all these articles submitted, I will have everything at hand to terminate the important book project I am working on and that seeks to rethink aspects of economic anthropology and revitalize the field of critical development studies. This book will propose an integrated view of economic anthropology that goes from depth psychology to ecology, and that links economic anthropology to a ‘degrowth’ normative project.