

have seemed so stark. As it is, however, it would be difficult to teach this text without exercising a heavy pedagogical hand. In that regard, it will be of most interest to researchers with an interest in the way indigenous communities are creatively adapting media technologies for their own, heterogeneous purposes, especially as those communities are undergoing major social, cultural, political, and economic transformations.

Christopher M. Fraga

**Lashaw, Amanda, Christian Vannier, and Steven Sampson** (eds.): *Cultures of Doing Good. Anthropologists and NGOs*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2017. 272 pp. ISBN 978-0-8173-1968-7. Price: \$ 59.95

Not long ago the anthropological study of NGOs was a marginal field. Neither the anthropology of development nor political, economic, or organizational anthropology cover it completely. NGOs exist at the junction of state, civil society, religion, and moral economy and they have become part of institutional power relations on regional, national, and global scales. “Cultures of Doing Good” aims to find a place for the anthropology of NGOs and, thus, to do justice to transforming global situations. It declares the anthropology of NGOs to be an academic field of its own.

The central starting point for “Cultures of Doing Good” is that NGOs are “engaged and entangled” (17). These organizations are shaped by emotional activism and rational professionalism, as well as by elites and grassroots actors. NGOs speak for communities but also have to justify their actions before stakeholders and donors. They claim neutrality and are yet deeply intertwined in political-public interests. Anthropologists in turn hesitate whether they should “dive in” (188) the agenda of NGOs or keep their distance – a methodological debate that has been subject to earlier discussions between the currents of “action anthropology,” “development anthropology,” and the “anthropology of development.” The answer of Erica Bornstein is appeasing in the sense of a “the end justifies the means”-atmosphere: Both approaches have strengths and limitations; it is more a question of suitability in the particular field.

Another core issue tackles the heterogeneous and multifaceted frameworks surrounding NGOs in relation to political, social, and legal contexts. What is also being studied, is their historical and contemporary spaces of maneuver in the light of the NGO performances and symbolic representations. Another important aspect is the array of organizational structures that subsume under the category “NGO.” This takes up discourses on “NGO-ization,” “NGO-ing,” and most recently the “NGO-form,” concepts that vary ontologically but point to the same argument: NGOs today comprise a conglomerate of organizational anatomies reaching from social movements, associations, and activist networks to bureaucratized project managements under “neoliberal restructuring” (31).

Apart from this cross section the editors pursue a more basic intention. They treat NGOs as a doorway to the contemporary world. It is being entered by the proclaimed “second generation” (10) of anthropologists, who take the power formations, knowledge productions, and postcolonial dimensions pervading NGO fields into account. The new generation is interested in the dialectical nature of NGO contexts, their dilemmas and ambivalences, the conflicts of morality and management, autonomy and governments, practices of “doing good” and domination. Most striking in this context is the resurrection and involvement of an old, controversial anthropological term hiding right in the title of the book: “culture.” This could be the attempt to point out the heterogeneity of the presented field of research being at the same time the mating call for anthropologists to pay more attention to the everyday of the cultural, social, and political contexts of “NGO life” (3).

The edited volume is published within the book series “NGOographies: Ethnographic Reflections on NGOs.” The introduction by Steven Sampson, one of the three editors, shows the dynamics and developments of the research field. To describe the relationship between anthropologists and NGOs, Sampson chooses the pleasantly catchy term “messiness” (4). The goal of this book is set: to demonstrate and dismantle this at times confusing entanglement in a fruitful and productive way. Furthermore, the introduction also provides a viable working definition of “NGOs: as voluntary, not for profit, autonomous from government, and juridically corporate” (11).

The main body consists of three parts, each opening with a short introduction. These units, written by renowned scholars structure the entire work in a very reader-friendly way. Part 1 is entitled “Changing Landscapes of Power” and profits from an introduction by Mark Schuller. The author sketches a framework for the five contributions in this part. He raises the question of the balance of power that comes into play in the conflict between NGOs, the state, and donors. Donors have more power and are able to set priorities, which challenge their own credo of the bottom-up approach. Schuller also focuses on the NGO as a practice instead of a structure or organization. NGO-ing as a verb, therefore, engages with relationships that are set up, maintained, or broken off. The empirical examples gathered in this part address different contexts such as Tanzania, Serbia, and the Czech Republic. They examine both, the internal logics of NGOs in the light of their contradictions and the relations of NGOs to their social environment. At the same time, they scrutinize the particularity of professional encounters between academia, NGOs, and their staff.

In Part 2 – entitled “Doing Good Work” – Inderpal Grewal introduces the following three contributions by focusing on the moral legitimacy of NGOs. What does it mean “to do good” under changing circumstances? How does one prevail against other actors in the same field? In what respect and to which extent does this in-

fluence the identity of groups and individuals? Religion, ethics, and morality are the main aspects of this section. Islamic and Jewish NGOs are presented as spaces for negotiation on convictions and identity. The third case of volunteer tourism in Peru questions the commodification of “doing good” and poverty.

Part 3 bears the title “Methodological Challenges of NGO Anthropology.” Although the difficulties and peculiarities of NGO research are being voiced in various chapters, a whole part is explicitly dedicated to this topic. For Erica Bornstein, NGO researchers face the challenge to set the limits of and to position themselves within the empirical field. Her refreshing writing style, despite the sensitive subject matter, makes her contribution more of an invitation than a discouragement. To underpin her arguments, the following contributions present two contrasting attempts how to handle these challenges. Finally, Christian Vannier and Amanda Lashaw, the two other editors, provide a conclusion with once again an explicit focus on the second generation of NGO Anthropology. Today, NGOs are omnipresent and thus is their impact. This requires more reflection on methodology and ethical attitudes.

In some years, this edited volume may well be quoted as an important milestone for anthropologists who do not want to refuse the study of modernity and related controversies. Not only because it declares the world that circulate around the NGO-form as the new object of study, or because the book compiles a vast range of regional areas highlighting the challenges and chances of global, cross-regional phenomena. But also because the volume opens and answers important questions on contemporary society: The authors tackle the intersections of norms, practices, and power structures at play between international donors, state politics, and NGOs. Meanwhile they provide insights into relevant societal topics such as environment, gender equality, and religion considering discourses and practices to the same extent.

The regional heterogeneity is strikingly broad, but the authors manage to refer to each other frequently; maybe even a little unduly. Halfway through, the reader sometimes gains the impression that the book moves in a quite self-referential cosmos. Certainly, this is due to the fact, that we are dealing with a new subfield of which the most important representatives are themselves taking part in the edited volume. All the more, it is about time to have more anthropologists entering the field. It would also have been welcome if the contributors had supplied more recent data. While some of the articles do not disclose the year of data collection at all, one author reaches back to the year 2004 without further reflecting on the extended time difference. It is therefore conceivable that some of the authors draw on their past experiences with NGOs, which were gained without an aimed research purpose at that time. This impression is supported by the introduction of Steven Sampson who opens the book with his memories of being a consultant in 1992. Hence, some of the ethnographies have been

produced retrospectively with no further elaboration on the barriers this may cause.

Another point of contention relates to the problematic relationship between anthropology and development in general. For a long time, important representatives (Escobar, Ferguson, Herzfeld) of a critical anthropology of development problematized the production and reproduction of the rhetoric of development in academic writing. A new, second generation of NGO researchers thus should try to think beyond these prevailing meta-narratives. For example, it would be desirable to find other descriptive and heuristic frameworks to overcome dichotomies like “global North” and “global South” or to rethink the attribution “local” as a common counterpart of the “global.” Another approach could be to critically discuss key terms like “poverty” and, thus, to reflect on its historical and political implications. Similarly, second-generation studies could elaborate on the question of why the term “culture” is being applied to describe the spheres of “doing good.” The reader finds many cultures in the book: “NGO culture” (42), “bureaucratic culture” (47), “culture of poverty” (82), and “consumer cultures” (115). But what is missing are reflections on how fruitful this controversial concept is to frame these specific contexts.

In the end, these small remarks correspond with the overarching intention the authors have: To encourage anthropologists to consider NGO worlds as a field of its own with many entry points. With these multiple perspectives and insights the book is highly recommended for researchers of different regional focuses and disciplines, like political science or religious studies – but also for activists and practitioners.

Melina C. Kalfelis  
Kathrin Knodel

**Leivestad, Hege Høyer:** *Caravans. Lives on Wheels in Contemporary Europe*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. 178 pp. ISBN 978-1-3500-2992-7. Price: £ 76.50

During the last decades, the Social Sciences have made yet another “turn.” This time it is a mobility turn, putting mobility of capital, goods, ideas, and people at centre stage. It is in this context I see Hege Høyer Leivestad’s book, “*Caravans. Lives on Wheels in Contemporary Europe*.” It is a celebration of mobility and immobility, and how these two are interrelated. From a Social Anthropology perspective and an ethnographic portrayal of the mobile dwelling, the book is based on two case studies, one in Sweden (the fictional Lake Town, somewhere outside Stockholm) and one in Spain (Camping Mares, Benidorm). Leivestad unpacks the decisions, rationale, and justification behind the lives of the respondents in a camping ground, and relates this to larger societal changes in a thorough way.

The book is nicely structured, and deals with different questions and themes in the different chapters. The first chapter addresses the history and development of the