

Society for Urban National and Transnational/Global Anthropology

Susan Falls, Contributing Editor

2012 SUNTA Highlights and Developments

The Society of Urban National and Transnational/Global Anthropology (SUNTA) is an association of anthropologists engaged in research on the cultural formations of urban areas, nation-states, and transnational/global processes. With approximately 800 members, SUNTA is the seventh largest unit of the AAA. SUNTA received many proposals for invited and volunteered panels, and volunteered papers for review for the 2012 AAA meeting. Altogether 58 panels—including four invited status panels and an interlocutor panel (“A Conversation with Bay Area Housing Activist Jesse Troupier” organized by Nancy Abelmann and Liza Youngling) were sponsored by SUNTA in the 2012 program. Many themes reflected in AAA panels will appear in SUNTA’s journal *City & Society*.

Under the editorship of Petra Kuppinger, *City & Society* has grown from two to three issues per year. The journal is intended to foster debate and conceptual development in urban, national and transnational anthropology, particularly in their interrelationships. It seeks to foster communication with related disciplines of interest to members of SUNTA and to develop theory from a comparative perspective. With a competitive acceptance rate, *City and Society* publishes innovative articles in its subfield from scholars around the world. Petra Kuppinger, our outgoing *City & Society* editor (and now president-elect), continues to provide support for the transition to a new editor, Suzanne Scheld (previously associate editor). A growing publication, *City & Society* will be hiring a new associate and assistant editor.

SUNTA awards several competitive prizes each year, including best graduate paper and best undergraduate paper, as well as the Leeds book prize.

Andrea Chiriboga-Flor’s paper “The Whole World is Watching: An Ethnographic Study of Spatiality, Identity, and Marginalization within the Occupy Portland Movement” was declared winner for best undergraduate paper prize of 2012. Her paper was nominated by Deborah Heath, professor at Lewis and Clark College. Grounded in a good theoretical analysis, the paper demonstrated high-quality, original ethnographic research on the social characteristics of the Occupy Portland social movement.

The 2012 best graduate student paper prize was awarded to Claudio Sopranzetti (Harvard U) for, “The Owners of the Map: Mobility and Mobilization among Motorcycle Taxi Drivers in Bangkok.” Sopranzetti examines how motorcycle taxi drivers in Bangkok challenge the conventional spatio-temporal order. Their everyday practices—cutting through and around traffic, connecting urban and rural spaces—offer a privileged position from which to act as activists and political mobilizers. The paper illuminates questions about the use of urban space while speaking to current debates on mobilities.

Danny Hoffman’s *The War Machines: Young Men and Violence in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (Duke University Press 2011) was selected for the 2012 Anthony Leeds prize. Hoffman is an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Seattle–Washington. This gripping and upsetting, but beautifully produced, photo-ethnographic analysis of the young men fighting the Mano River War in Sierra Leone and Liberia forces us to confront an urgent chronic tragedy in a troubled moment of history. It renders more visible the vulnerability of violent, young fighters who need to be understood as fuller humans caught up in global logics of capital accumulation and unsuccessful local survival strategies. Conducted at the height of the on-again-off-again, all-too-bloody regional wars, it is a rare accomplishment of extraordinarily difficult and dangerous fieldwork. Originally trained as a documentary photographer, Hoffman weaves often beautiful even if sometimes disturbing photographs into his anthropological

analysis, a clearly explicated theoretical text and vividly written narrative. Of particular interest to the Leeds Award is his argument that these West African wars—often located in the rainforest—need to be understood as urban wars generated by predatory global regimes of extractive capital accumulation exacerbated by the intervention of international agencies and the devastating imaginaries of global media. We congratulate Danny for engaging in such challenging fieldwork and for bearing bad news with humane dignity and for courageously confronting a difficult, violent topic that implicates the globe.

The deadline for the next Leeds Prize submission is June 15, 2013. To be eligible, a book must be relevant to the field of urban, national or transnational anthropology and have a publication date of 2012. Textbooks and anthologies will not be considered. Books of original scholarship by more than one author may be submitted. Prizes are awarded at the SUNTA business meeting at the AAA meetings. Winners must be willing to have prize acceptance remarks published in *City and Society* and be willing to serve on the prize committee for three years. To apply, send four copies to: Robert Rotenberg; Department of Anthropology, DePaul University; 2343 N Racine Ave; Chicago, IL 60614-3107. Please mark the book “Leeds Prize Committee.” A letter of nomination (from an author, colleague, or publisher) is required *only* for authors whose discipline is not anthropology. The letter should specify the relevance of the book for SUNTA. Address all questions to Robert Rotenberg.

SUNTA communicates with members in several ways: via listserv, website and in *Anthropology News* (online and print). The SUNTA listserv, which publishes information about books, conferences, CFPs, syllabi and the like, has over 2,000 subscribers, and is the largest listserv in US anthropology. You may subscribe to URBANTH-L, change your current subscription, or view the listserv archives, at <https://my.binhost.com/lists/listinfo/urbanth-l>.

The SUNTA column in *Anthropology News* represents an attempt to provide vital communications to our members by informing them of programs, competitions, members’ specializations, as well as providing a fora for contributions in urban anthropology, including summaries of our best graduate and undergraduate paper awardees. We welcome ideas for columns. Please direct inquiries to Susan Falls.

Our website at www.sunta.org has been online for about a year and a half, providing members with up-to-date news about SUNTA activities, prize competitions, meetings and information about how to submit essays to *City & Society*. Bookmark us!

Changes in SUNTA: Thank you to Don Nonini for the incredible work he has done as SUNTA president, including ensuring a smooth transition for incoming president, Nancy Abelman.

Please send ideas for SUNTA column to Susan Falls at sfalls@scad.edu.