What is Radical Anthropology?

Feb 2, 2024

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjV9rNrz-Ws

Chris: OK, welcome to the Radical Anthropology Group.

I won't say too much about how long we've been running, but we should be in the Guinness Book of Records. We're London's longest running evening class, meeting regularly every Tuesday since 1978, and possibly the world's longest running evening class, I don't really know.

Anyway, Jerome, do you want to just say how this evening's going to be structured?

Jerome: So, the radical anthropology group has a number of different aspects to it. What we're going to try and do this evening is in well remind you of them.

I think that clearly radical needs a little bit of unpicking and it has two principal meanings in the context of this anthropology class.

One is the importance of the origins of humanity, and understanding the roots. And so this is radical in the sense of roots. How is it we came to be the way we are and there is a number of very interesting puzzles and conundrums around understanding how humanity managed to get beyond what's called the grey ceiling.

This 600 to 700 centilitres of brain that all the other primates never seem to get past. Or if they do, they enter into a moment of environmental hardship or environmental difficulty. Then they die out. They become extinct. And yet, somehow, humanity has not only gone past the six to 700 centilitre Gray ceiling. It's gone well beyond that and we now, or at least up until the advent of agriculture, we had brains at least 1400 cc's. almost three times that. So it's a very interesting question to to understand.

What's particularly important is the work of Chris and Camilla in particular, but others too, of course, in unpicking the process by which that happened. Which is particularly important in this moment because it's all about the role of women and their solidarity in being able to resist the advances of alpha males and not just resist those alpha males, but actually draw them into relationships where they continue to provide food and sustenance to those females bearing these large brained children.

Of course, Camilla and Chris can explain that much better but, the importance of that is that becoming human was a political act. It wasn't something which is about technologies or some sort of. Great wisdom or? It was fundamentally about the ability for women to come together and to as a way to get men to behave in ways that supported their children.

So that understanding leads to another element of what radical anthropology is about, which is a continuing engagement with that politics. With that early politics of humanity which resists the alpha male, which resists patriarchy and it is in fact through that resistance that we became human. All the things that we value and that people like Donald Trump seem to go on about as being so wonderful about humanity.

Have their origins not in some smart ass male, but in these groups of women really collaborating very consistently over many, many generations to recruit those men to their service.

So the other element of the radical in radical anthropology really is this political engagement and the continued political engagement, and I hope that Chris and perhaps Camilla can share not just some of the range of actions that radical anthropology has been supporting and some of you may know of Chris, was sacked from his job as Professor of anthropology, precisely for some of those actions. They were so well manipulated by neoliberal. Wicked. Actually, I sat in on. Chris, I was one of his expert witnesses. And I've sat in on a. Of trials in the Congo. One trial, which was particularly striking, was an owl that was being prosecuted for causing. Car crashes at a roundabout in Brazzaville and the owl was being kept locked up because they thought that he would eventually turn into the evil witch who he was, that would. It's causing me sleep, but I must say the trial against Chris was even more preposterous and outrageous than the trial of the owl that I saw in Congo Brazzaville. Just an extraordinary travesty of any sense of justice, logic and deduction.

But anyway, those things aside, what it shows really is that some of the actions that radical anthropology group has been orchestrating really do have an impact. And I know that Chris and Camilla have certainly had their moments of racing around London being chased by various forms. Police and counter insurgency, whatever they are, doubtful characters.

So the radical is about resisting patriarchy. About resisting this. We are currently living, in fact in in one. The most forms of. This evolutionary branch of human potential and the Trump's and the ojos and all scenarios of this world are the tragic evidence of the success that they're having in this particular neoliberal moment. But also of the significance and damage that that is doing to the planet that we depend on so crucially for our lives, and which is our true wealth. Money is just rubbish compared to the importance of our environments and the landscapes that sustain us and our multi species relations, which we depend on for our very existence.

So there's a radical in the sense of the origins, but that origins links up to a radical in the sense of contemporary politics. And the importance of resistance to this patriarchal order that is causing such mayhem on this planet. So I think Chris will will chair some of that. But then within radical anthropology, what we do is to also try and create a space where alternative voices that wouldn't normally be heard in academic contexts are able. To be heard and to express themselves.

It's really important to remember that in a sense academia is corrupted. We're not producing very many new. Actually, we're just rehashing the old stuff and it's not adequate. Not. It doesn't rise to the occasion, and actually the most interesting and radical. Political philosophies of our moment are to be found on the margins of this neoliberal world, and particularly among communities of resistance who find themselves facing up to the ugly side of this neoliberal process of extractive industries coming into pristine areas and just viewing the natural environment, not as intrinsically beautiful

and valuable for itself, but as a set of assets that are to be traded on international markets to the profit of a few and to the benefit of none. Clearly this system is is a suicidal. It's it's not something which is sustainable and it's not something which is desirable.

So one of the things that the radical anthropology group does is it gives a space for those alternative views to be presented to an academic audience and to the general public or interested members of the public and. And that is a very important space. That needs to be kept open and really is worth protecting and worth supporting. Because otherwise we aren't aware, we don't hear the significance of these different views and these different ways of understanding the world and clearly we are in desperate need of alternative narratives of different ideologies. We've seen the moribund nature of the sorts of ideologies we've been producing in Europe and America in these past decades, and it really does call for some quite radical rethinking. And and I'm a great believer in the importance of listening to those unheard voices on the. And trying to bring them into conversation with the over powerful vested interests that that currently dominate.

So I think Chris will be explaining and giving you some examples of some of that. And then finally in the last part of the talk, we'd just like to share what we are really promoting is the only way for, well, I think in general research, but in particular anthropology, because we are anthropologists. Needs to reorientate its approach to research so that rather than going in and extracting information from a group of people and then returning to your comfortable career and making your or if you're lucky, getting a job and making money selling the knowledge you've gained and gleaned from those people, but to actually build a partnership where the one very important element of the research process is to serve the communities that you're working with. Serve them in humility so that they direct the ways that you serve, that it's not up to you to direct and that then becomes a partnership. So while they share their knowledge with the researcher, the researcher is also able to share their knowledge with those groups of people and that creates a more equal relationship, and one which endures over time. And endures over many decades, as those researchers continue into their life.

So to complete the talk. I'll, I'll give a little bit of a background to some of the students who are doing that very important work and really molding new models for the type of research that needs to happen as we move into this very uncertain future.

Chris: Thanks, Jerome. And yes, I mean we are clearly in a very strange moment. Where really everything's on a knife edge. The lead given by, for example, Black Lives Matter, could transform the planet into something which is habitable and wonderful. In fact, for all of us. And on the other hand, of course, we have the opposite dynamic with extremely unpleasant racist and nationalist political movements which have been around in really rampant since the late 90s, of course.

I suppose we all in in this movement around our little group radical anthropology, we kind of hope, I think, It's a big hope, and perhaps a rather frail one, but we just hope to be able to insert some seeds which will tip the balance in the in the direction which is genuinely liberatory.

So, just to reiterate, the word radical, of course, is linked to radishes that the vegetable and which it's of course a root, and it and radical to be radicals to get to the root of things.

And justice really briefly summarize if anyone was to say, OK, what's the message at the end? The day. It's to answer the question. Well, what inventions have Africans brought to the world? And it's a very brief out to do this, which is well, it's true that white people have brought empire slavery, the Internet, very things. But what about language? Well, that's an African invention. What about group level morality? Well, that was invented by Africans. What about religion? I mean just about everything, which is really, really central to what it means to be human. Is the result of African genius.

The reason why that's actually kind of important is because that's a recent discovery. Or, as far as people in the West are concerned, it's a recent discovery because up until. Actually, until the 90s. It was pretty much everywhere, believed that yes, and this is what archaeologists would say. People who are studying human audiences say yes, yes, it's true. We evolved in Africa. But we didn't get smart till our ancestors hit Europe. And that strange view, which is kind of an echo of the Piltdown man idea, the idea that somewhere in this country, Britain. You had there was a kind of ape man with an enormous brain. This idea that intelligence. As opposed like mind as opposed to body immersed in Europe has been around and actually still is. It's known as the sapient paradox of the idea that the body of organ Africa, but intelligence, language, culture, all emerged in Europe. Lord Colin Renfrew is a strong has always been a strong proponent of that so-called. A paradox that we have a kind of primitive body with a modern mind, and that the mind actually was delayed until our ancestors got here. Got to Europe and it was only in the 19. Actually, thanks very largely to a radical anthropology group member Ian Watts, that that whole idea has been turned completely on its head. And we now know, and it's mainstream that absolutely everything that's defined us assuming including, of course, language, culture and reality, all these things. Emerge in Africa at the same time that our species emerge so. So that so that's if you like. The message. Embrace. That culture that was invented by Africans.

Then the next bit, actually by not just black people, but black African women. In crucial sense, the fact that we have these large brains was a result of brilliant communal childcare. Again invented, if you like in Africa, whereas even to this day you still get as and I've noticed more as one of our Members here on this webinar. And you still get. Astonishing degree of shared childcare in egalitarian societies of the kind that Mona and Jerome Ingrid and so on are familiar with.

So that's the short version. Slightly longer version. Anthropology, of course, is the study of what it means to be human, and we approach that question from different directions. We ask what it might mean to be something that creative that's almost human, like a gorilla, for example. Intelligent creature, but maybe not. You can ask what it might mean to be Homo habilis, Homo erectus or a Neanderthal. So creatures that are on the way to becoming modern humans, but maybe still slightly different in

intriguing ways. So we by studying those. Species, primate species and other times we get a edge. We can get some leverage on what it means to be what we call modern Homo Sapiens.

Then the crucial way in which we get a perspective on what it means to be human is to look at all the different ways that are of of being human across the entire planet. The different ways that are of respecting the sacred or organizing an economy, or organising childcare, sexual relationships and so on, in order to escape. The assumption that we all be all too often have in whatever culture we live in, that the way we happen to do things is kind of natural and inevitable.

So particularly I think it's true to say where we are, where most some of us are now based in the radical anthropology of UCL, we put all those different dimensions of of of the approach to what it means to be human together and we try to we try. Connect them and that again is. Is is different because you'll find when when you look at anthropology, as it is an archaeology and chromatology that it's. If if we're trying to look at ourselves and see who we are as a species, it's it's terrible, but it's a shattered mirror. It's in 1000 or more different pieces and they just don't connect up. There seems to be almost no effort made to reconstitute a mirror in which we can see ourselves as a as a whole, as to which we can get the big picture of what it means to be human, and when, when we started RAG all those years ago in the in the late 70s and early 8. In many ways. And of course I. I was one of the founders of this radical anthropology group in many ways. What we were interested in was the real problem, which is I say ourselves in the sense that those of us in the global N academics, scientists, intellectuals and political activists, of course. It seemed to me that we need to. Who we are. We in that rather narrow sense, and it's so clear that none of us can know who we are without some help from. It's other people that provide a mirror through which we can see who we really are. Without that social mirror, we just can't know. We're just going to. A concentric and just as that applies to the individual that we're doomed to be egocentric and unaware of who we are without friends who can help us.

In the West, we really need other voices to shine on us our own image so that we can see ourselves as others see us, and actually the more, the more different they are in so many ways. In some ways, like the better, I mean we are in the West, an extremely competitive, individualistic, aggressive. In many ways militaristic culture, and the the people who can most clearly see this. And of course. People in cultures that are completely radically different, which instead of being capitalist are, for example, communists in a deep sense, people who have a sharing ethos. And instead of being competitive and hierarchical or egalitarian, so we need need those different voices, those different perspectives, to know who we are. And I've always thought the main problem is to study us in a place like London. But we need help to see ourselves as others, as if we might, as others, see us.

So all along I had the idea that we need to do kind of reverse anthropology in reverse, in the sense that anthropology comes out of the West. Originally it was of

course Colonial. Functionalism was sponsored by colonial authorities in order to send people field workers to Africa and other places in order to work out how the tribe functioned, what to do, what not to do, how to minimise the number of bullets you need to to control people. By sensing which which buttons to press.

So what we call modern anthropology. It was absolutely a product of colonialism, of course, more recently since the colonial revolution, we've had a slightly different ethos. And and the claim made by anthropologists is that we are concerned to develop people we're interested in development. And again, as soon as I, whenever I hear that word development, I just, in a nutshell, I've always said yes, it's a very good idea. We do need development. Here in the West, we need to develop. Ways of looking after children. We need to be morally, socially, politically, much more developed, and the people who can help develop us are, above all egalitarian hunter gatherers in places like Africa, we do need development. In the West we have this deep arrogance which assumes that somehow the way we in the West do things is a better way and we need to somehow in inverted commas, develop these other people.

So, those of you who've been following these lectures and webinars will remember this time last year, Diata Kano.[1] Of all the lectures we've had in the whole 40 year history of the radical anthropology group. She just knocked the spots of us. This was the most astonishing, marvellous, passionate talk. And crucially. Diana was talking in chant, in songs, in feathers in costume. It's so true that form determines content. When you have a kind of uptight lecturer in a certain kind of format. As an Oxford University and Cambridge University or whatever. That form constrains the messages that can come across and what was so drilling. Really the Diara's talk was that she managed. Was. She managed to join the end. She managed to do that. She managed to give a lecture in a kind of, if you like, a lecture in. Conventional sense, but. Completely broke those boundaries with her, with the ending of her talk, which was an astonishing chant, which just it was more meaning than that long chant than all the encyclopedia britannicos you could pile up.

Camilla: Diana put it in terms of an epistemological insurrection, she called it. And because she had gone as an indigenous Chicano woman with the training as a shaman to study in Brazil to produce dissertations on indigenous rights and law. But she realized that the more she was being sucked into academic forms. The more she realized she was kind of being boxed and and squashed and and losing power. So she's responded to that by producing all kinds of artwork and dance and and and song and chant as her as part of her dissertation. So as to make sure that she maintained that that format. So I think it's. Quite important to to say with respect to Diana. She was a great example. When she came to University of East London. She got us chanting as well. She didn't just chant she chant at us. Made us chant too.

[1] Daiara Tukano speaks on Stirring the Pot of the Plundering Plot- A Tale on Indigenous Heritage and the Right to Memory and Truth. <https://vimeo.com/839005227>

Chris: Thank you very much, Kevin. And just obviously we haven't got time to go through everything, but I mean rather over the years rather kind of apologies has several occasions when we've had indigenous voices directly when they've been over here and one I particularly remember, we had two men from the Hadza in Tanzania, the heads are being egalitarian hunter gatherers among the very last hunter-gatherers, still living as bow and arrow hunters in an environment within Africa very like the environment in which our species evolved. And what I particularly remember about them was that. They just felt. In London, they were staying in my flat and what happened was that they wondered whether we got a move. Weren't sure they'd never seen the moon. We seem to have blotted it out with all our street lighting and stuff and they actually around when it in fact it was New Moon. They began to feel ill and they really were feeling ill because they weren't able to do epemy the great monthly Dark moon ritual which clarified everything which brought people together, which expelled all kind of conflicts and. Intentions over, for example, sex, which would actually disrupt the future hunger and they weren't able to do. And they I remember them saying, well, we've seen very they think, Chris, you put a project, you put a projection on the wall. Was a picture of the moon, but do you actually have a real moon? And I'm saying that because it's simply it's so important to realize. I said we've we've lost it so much that we hardly even recognise the moon as anything other than I mean our language. Course it's kind of moonshine. People can be a bit moonstruck. Mean. If you're. If you're feeling a bit. Somebody. A bit crazy, you might talk about lunacy, I mean. There's such deep rooted patriarchal put downs around the moon that we've forgotten how absolutely central that rhythm as long as well as of course, of the night day with them and the season rhythms that rhythm was to health sanity ritual. And again, everything which makes us human and we we strongly we really, of course Camilla talked. Last week, it's just so important to realise that if we're really serious about decolonising. Anthropology and science in general. Decolonising time is the root really. The control of time, as Camilla was explaining last week, is the root of the control by ultimately white supremacists. Those other cultures, those other voices need to seize back control of time by assigning that control to the moon.

Camilla: One of my most amazing pedagogical experiences was again at University of East London. Because those two Hadza guys came to teach my class, so we were doing a class around origins of culture. And what's the difference between hunter gatherers and monkeys and apes and so on? And so those two guys knew more about it than anybody else, obviously. And they could. They had to do Swahili, but I was able to send the Swahili to the English for the students and this was. Just fantastic. So is this reversal of all the expectations, the pedigree? Doggie that the voice is the voice that's put up on the stage and it's who should be teaching, who should be learning, who should be developing who this. This is absolutely what the Hudson, who is ultimately egalitarian group. Were so, so excellent at it because nobody was going to tell the Hadser that they didn't know what to say. They knew alright.

Chris: So, one other thing which is actually very important in the history of RAG. One of our students at University of London was Anna Lopez, and she did a degree and did very well of course. She'd learned in the course of the degree about the theory which I and Camilla and I and watts have been have been pressing is that if you're talking about sex, and the incest taboo and sexual morality, and where that came from. Unlike Claude Davies Strauss, who says it was invented by men who exchanged women, and these women lacked any agency. Were just pawns in men's games. It always seemed to me, I mean that that cannot make any sense whatever, and it much more likely that all these rules came from women. I won't go into it all, but it's just the idea that women needed to be able to say no and do so collectively to unwanted sex. And so a couple of years later, Anna was asking me, well, Chris, what do I do to build on this? The practical. What should I do? And she came up with in discussions with Camilla as well as me with the idea of actually. Like organising a sex strike and and the question was well, if you're going to organise an effective sex rite, who should you start with? And it was just fairly obvious you should. You should try to organise a trade union among sex workers and though and behold she she. A sex worker she linked up with other sex workers. She set up what was called the International Union of Sex Workers. Wish she was the general secretary. With a serious point about all this is that the one of Britain's largest unions, the general municipal employer makers union, was persuaded to incorporate the International Union of Sex Workers into its own structures. And we had in we had I became a member. And so the committ. Of the sex workers. Was the London entertainment branch of the of the General Municipal Boilermakers Union, and it meant that actually for the first time almost the first time in the world, it wasn't completely unprecedented, but nearly everywhere, wherever sex workers went. If there were pole dancers or whatever it was they were doing. They try to join a union and the Union would just say go where you're doing your moral work. You shouldn't be doing it. And at last, that ridiculous and horrendous taboo was was was pretty much smashed and and the and the idea that sex workers had as much right as anyone else to join a union. Spread across the world and it's now kind of taken for. I'm not saying sex workers are very well organised section of the of the working class, but in the late 90s and certainly in the early part of this Millennium, there was a definite strong push. And Camilla in particular with Anna, was was was responsible for a lot of that of that those achievement. And it was a real achievement. But we didn't formally claim it as an achievement by the radical anthropology group. But certainly members of the Radicalology group made that breakthrough.

Then just going to end up now very briefly, something which Jerome kind of mentioned, but I'll just put it in a slightly different way. Is the. What's the chief value of the study of human origins? Why do we make that? Emphasis in rag. And it's and it's for me, it's. Is that all of us know that when we try to argue that it's possible, theoretically, to abolish war, to abolish poverty, to abolish inequality, to get rid of these things, to establish a? World. What's the answer? We come up. What's the? We will come up against again and again and again and again. Is this you'll never change

human nature. Not even a revolution could change human nature. Nature is what it is. We got 4 fingers and a thumb on each hand and we got male dominance and and competition and conflict and inequality, and these are just part of what it means to be human. So the value of the study of human origins is that it actually teaches us that. I'm going to stress this word distinctively human about our. So some parts of our nature, there's no doubt about it, we inherit them, we inherit them from our primate ancestors. Aggression, lust, all sorts of things, you know. We inherit and other things of course, like maternal instincts we inherit from chimpanzees, for example, have got those instincts. But but language the ability to share our dreams. Self-awareness. The ability to see ourselves as others. See us the capacity in principle to establish rules of moral conduct and stick to them. Mean we find it difficult, but we do have that capacity, all those uniquely human features of our nature. Far from it being the case that no revolution could could have changed those features or established them, they're actually the products those features of human nature, those distinctive features. Or actually the product. Of the greatest revolution in history, that was the revolution which worked, and we know it worked because here we are with the kind of eyes we have, the kind of minds we have, the kind of capacities of self-awareness that we have that actually the products of the. Revolution in history, and this was the. That worked. And the lesson I draw from that is that we've done it once. We've changed the world in that way. Once established, an egalitarian social order. Once we can do it again. So that's my intro. Actually, Jerome hasn't given his. He gave a little intro to the way in which the the this evening's discussion will be will be kind of sequence. I think we need to go back to Jerome now for your substantive. Contribution, Jerome.

Jerome: OK. Well, thanks Chris. I guess I think some of I'm going over some ground, which I've spoken about previously, but I think it's worth just reiterating the significance of the indigenous critique of so-called Western civilization. Because it really is responsible for some of the things that I do think are significant about the way we live. And in particular, I'm talked in a number of occasions. The last time was with Kofi on the Decolonising agenda about Candy Oronk Northwest coast. Sorry. Eastern Woodlands indigenous man who was very articulate and when the Jesuits were trying to persuade the East Coast indigenous people to become Christians. His critics of their reasoning was so effective was so powerful that it spawned a whole series of volumes, which were the Jesuits recordings of their conversations with Candy O Ronken with other people like him. In the eastern Woodlands of North America, what's today, Canada and the New York State? And it was so profound, and it became so popular that right across the of Europe of of the 18th century, the volumes of these discussions was extremely popular. Were about 74 volumes of this. And if you're interested and you can read French David Graybar and David Wengrove have written an excellent article where they focused on what can do wrong, contributed to the political. Scene of that period, which was a period of the Renaissance and the Renaissance, is often couched in positive overtones by the West. Actually, what it was seeking to do was to re establish. A Christian order among people, the Renaissance of whatever was believed

to have been the case. In in the ideal Christian world and the the Great Flood and so on, destroyed. But it really was a moment of reappraisal of so many assumptions of. The inequality of hierarchy were just dominating the the the community, the people of of Europe and and it was so effective and particularly actually also women were very keen. So it was a period where women were starting to read and be educated. And these volumes, the Jesuits were producing were extremely effective in mobilising women and in fact creating what were the the beginnings of the left? The political left in Europe and with such great consequences right up until today? So it was really this the the role. This indigenous critique. Was to question and challenge the assumptions of the right of might. Which was the dominant force at that time. And and these the Pope and these various moral warrants that were constantly being produced, that would determine whether you could live or die if you were. Considered to be going against them or not, and what kind in particular because he was perhaps one of the most articulate of these indigenous discussions. Did was was really in a very clear sense, introduced the age of reason to the West, and thank goodness that he and those other indigenous voices were able to do that, to challenge this unreason of. The right of might and really start to create a sense of not just critiquing the. The power. Hierarchy and its domination of so many people. But but also the. Of reasoning of thinking about how. How the society was run and what was right and whether the inequalities were. And I mean the the the outrage that indigenous people felt towards Europe when they saw beggars because some of them traveled to Europe and and what is this society that can't even look after its people properly? Where people go hungry without food and so on and this critique. Was was was. Effective in challenging the assumptions of that Renaissance period. And heralded in the age of reason of which, of course, universities are one example. And and this really links to to things like the the idea that science was somehow originated in. And I'll return to this point in a minute because one of my students is is doing some very interesting work. To to challenge really some of. Sorry, I'm not sure if that was meant to. OK, someone's put it in their their candy or ank is is in the chat. If anyone wants to read it. Strongly recommended. A brilliant piece of art article, but anyway, today as we approach the winter of late neoliberal capital. These indigenous voices are again. Emerging and offering some of the most coherent critiques of this nasty, pernicious system that is currently destroying our planet. And so I'm sure some of you have heard of via Campesina, the pachamama movements. The Ubuntu movements among African and African Americans. Very important counterarguments and what is particularly. Be powerful about these counter ideologies is their emphasis on the relational nature of being human. And this is something that the individualism of the West, the ego massaging of acquisitive culture. Has really neglected the fact that we're not really in any meaningful sense, individuals. We are actually a conglomeration of multi organisms. Oh, sorry. We are individually each multi Organism composed of bacteria viruses in more numerous abundance than actually human cells inherited from our parents. And it's only because of, for instance, the bacteria living in my stomach that I have any energy to to to live at all. And of course, my body is embedded in a nested in a wider

environment that includes all the things around me that the other species around me that produce. The foods, the fuel and the other things that I need clean the water. That I drink and so on. And. And so when we really start to take seriously the nature of our relational being, suddenly it transforms some of the logics which have dominated. In this late period of neoliberal capitalism. And Arturo Escobar is one of the authors who I'd strongly recommend if you aren't already familiar with. Him dipping into and he talked about the importance of plural reversal struggles of creating a world in which many worlds can exist, because currently the movement of neoliberalism through organisations like the United Nations or UNICEF is to monoculture space to monoculture people, into consumers part. It and the monoculturing of space is to turn things into. Plantations. The forest you can see behind me is turned into a plantation for wood. Timber, African Mahoganies and other very important trees for the edifices of these big egos as they they build increasingly large buildings to represent their importance. And so on. And and and then once those trees are cut down, then of course it's called a degraded forest, and it can be now converted into a palm oil plantation, which offers even greater assets for trading on international markets and those people who used to live in that forest. As as politically free individuals able to determine their futures now become the slaves to the, to the, to the salaried system seeking employment in order to buy the food that they need to feed their families and clothe themselves, and so on. And and this process of monocropping the planet into or converting the planet into these assets for future trade and all human beings into consumers who join the market and and the way that education is organized. Is a principal mode for that ideology to spread. So as children go into schools wherever they are in the world? One of the things that they're taught to want is a career, a job, a salary, and and it's striking in the places I know well in Africa that once children go through school, they are very reluctant to return to. Their villages of origin to take up the jobs that their parents and grandparents have been doing because they've been tempted by this very hard selling machine that we've. Produced to to want those salary, salaried employments, and of course they're not. So what happens is people are attracted to towns, they seek employment, they don't get it, they end up living on the margins of these often shanty type areas. In big cities and just seeing what scraps they can collect in various ways and and it really is tragic that this diversity of ways of living on this planet. Have been neglected and and not encouraged and and one of the big points that Arturo Escobar and others are making is the importance of. Encouraging diversity, the forest that you can see behind me is used by farmers and hunter gatherers and the hunter gatherers as they roam the forest. They try and shoot. If they're hunting the large males because that repres. Ents. The most meat. And and when they collect wild yams, for instance, they always put back the lianas of those wild yams in the earth after they've collected the roots. The yam that they're seeking. And and. Causes those wild yarn patches to regenerate quickly and to expand. And enlarge and and those wild yams are very important for many other large mammals. And not just the people. So the actions of those hunter gatherers, while they selectively cull

the wild animal populations, they make more resources available for. Of those. Animal populations and the females, and they produce more food through this selective what's called paracultuation of wild species in the forest. So there on the one hand, enhancing that environment to make it richer. For other creatures that live there and at the same time, the farmers who are doing slash and burn agriculture, which has a very bad reputation in Western agronomy, but is actually very well adapted to these forest landscapes where you have low population density. Because it creates little clearings openings in the forest that allow other plants to to start shooting up. Because the shade of the big trees is gone and they farm them for three or four years, sometimes a bit. But rarely. And then they leave it. And those fallows are very important for lots of small ruminants and other creatures, monkeys. Where they get food and it's the different practices that those two human groups apply to the forest, which enhance the diversity of that forest. And so when if you were to change, as some people do. That forest into a palm oil. Suddenly that whole area of forest is just now one species, and that one species is very vulnerable, of course, because most of them are clones or very close to being. To all sorts of parasitic infections, and they become hot houses for the cultivation of very extreme pathogens. And we can see that in the swine flu. Avian flu and various other illnesses that develop in in the industrial agriculture of of meat. But but but it also happens with plants and we can see with bananas for instance, in Latin America there's a crisis at the moment with a particular. Infection that's destroying crops because everyone's been planting the same type of. Banana. So there is a real existential problem about the way that we are manipulating the environment as as in this neoliberal moment, and one which is very important to resist. And so the resistance is coming from these communities who find themselves at the cutting edge of. Extractive industries of those plantation. And listening and supporting to them is crucial if we are to to really achieve change. And so that's what that was. Rather long winded. Apologies for getting round to why research has to change for anthropology and many other disciplines. And so I'd like to just sort of, Chris mentioned Anna Lopez, and she did what's called Action Research, where the research that you do is not simply for. understanding things, but it's also to support the communities that you're working with. And. And I remember Anna telling me. How she was working with the the these various sex workers and they were saying to her, look, I just got raped and I went to the. And I just said. What do you mean? You're a sex worker? Course you. Raped and it's just unacceptable that because. Of the the the choices they had to make for their employment, but they're no longer protected from outrageous and abuses. And so she set up the sex Workers Union as a way to deal with that and. Make the rights of sex workers as ordinary workers as human beings respected, and that was her contribution in and she's spent many years actually working very hard in that process. And and so there are many ways that you can do this type of action research. And what we've been developing at UCL is what we call the Extreme Citizen Science Research group. And and that is an effort to try and and put to service of these communities of resistance some of the tools that we've developed in universities to to resist the ways that they're

being exploited. And so you may have if you have been attending a. Of the ragtag talks you may have. Heard a few weeks back. Simon Hoyt, who's been working in Cameroon with backer people, helping them to resist the invasion of their territory, is not just by poachers but also by conservationists and trying to show. Help them demonstrate to the conservationists that they are in charge of their. They do know what's going on there and if they were only listened to and supported in their efforts to manage their territories, they would do probably much better job than the Ministry of Forestry that currently has responsibilities. These areas, but but you also heard from Carolina Commandoly, who's been working in the Amazon with the. People and she has been at their ServiceNow for five or six years and continues to be very closely linked with the community. And and the action Inka are absolutely clear and they will tell Carolina what they need her to do and she will do that because that is part of the partnership which was established from the very beginning in return for her doing her research and what she's been stud. Is how they. Have mobilized themselves to resist. Extractive industries and extractive practices to regain their territory and have it recognised. Territory and then to regenerate the forest. And they've done an extraordinary job of regenerating that. It's a really beautiful forest and I've been there a couple of times and because they've done such a fine job they did, for instance, they created tree nurseries of indigenous tree species so that they could reintroduce the trees that. Plants and the animals and birds that they have very close relationships with could enjoy for food and and and other other services to them. They they created this beautiful forest and these techniques for regenerating forests, and so we recently had a project with them where we supported them through, well, money and and some limited expertise in agroforestry. To partner up with the Gwalani people who live in the Atlantic Forest, which is never really talked about. But it was at least as big as the Amazon previously. Because it's on the east side of the Latin American continent. Was one which was most rapaciously cut down by the conquistadors and their their descendants in the past few 100 years. And so it really is almost gone. I think 92% of it has disappeared and only 8% remains. And those communities that are still protecting that last 8% are the Goran. And so the Asian incar came to the Gorani and they exchanged knowledge about creat. These tree nurseries to reintroduce those indigenous species, to reintroduce the food crops that they had. Had in previous years and that Indigenous partnership was extremely effective in transforming some of those Gorani communities that they worked with, and it was so successful, actually, that. To our great surprise, we we were awarded the Newton Prize from the British Government. For the work we in competition with some very sciency projects, but it was it was very interesting that this these collaborations were what had really surprised and inspired those those people. At the British whatever ministry it was that gave it to us. But so. So the students that we have in the extreme Citizen Science group undertake their research with great commitments to the communities they work with as partners as. At their service. And very explicitly at their service and part of the negotiation before they go out to do their research is to establish the terms of that partnership. And so for

instance. I was just mentioning how Candy Ronk and his compatriots were really the the the the impetus that guided the rather dense Europeans of the time to understand the importance of reason. And in fact reason and deductive logic which is the basis of scientific rationality, which we all now appreciate, has great power as we sit through this COVID pandemic. They can try and work out what is the sensible way forward. We're always returning to the science, as they say in the news. Of course, that's politically interpreted. But the key thing is that we think of science as a Western creation, but it is not. And Josh Ulverich is one of my students. And he's going out to work with the San in Namibia and they have. They're the only group of Sam who actually have a piece of. Land the territory, which is recognised as their own, all the others have had their stolen from them. But the San are struggling to maintain that territory and to maintain control over. And so Josh is going out there to study the origins of deductive reasoning, which are very clearly in tracking and in the process of tracking. And and when you're tracking for those who have not done it, you have to really. Be very careful about the evidence you have to interpret that evidence with real caution, with real care and hypothesise from the basis of that evidence. What the animal has done or where it's going, or what animal it was and why it's behaving in the way it is. And as hunters walk through the the savanna, the desert see areas of the Kalahari where they are. They are constantly peer reviewing each other's hypotheses about what. That particular track or or sign means and in that process they are really reflecting very hard on each other critically on each other's interpretations. And if they do it well, they know they'll get their animal, they'll get. And this is far more likely to be the origins of science than any pretentious philosophers that we are so happy to to celebrate. And so that kind of work is really important to remind us. Just how dependent and how much we owe to those people who have remained very much connected with their environments, who live in much more egalitarian ways than we do here. And so other other students very briefly are for instance Alice Sutoria, who's working in Congo. She's supporting groups of Bambang Jelly who are having their forest opened up to loggers. And other outsiders to protect their resources. One thing we found in our experiments is that maps work much better than long reports. And when we create maps or we support people to create maps of what they value and why they value it. It tends to speak to power much more effectively and much more efficiently than long reports detailing this and detailing that or anthropological aspects. Articles and so mapping has become a very important tool in supporting these struggles by communities of resistance to the incursions of this neoliberal system. Another student worth mentioning is Rafaela, Freya Moriera, who's working with the Gurani and one of the worst affected places. And she's looking at their whole range of tools. They have. For resisting the encroachment of their land and under Bolsonaro, this is becoming ethno cidal in proportions and. Those lovely papayas you see on markets all over the UK since a few years are actually being grown on the land, the former forest, a sacred forest of the Guarani people. The Guarani have a lovely. philosophy of life, which is that you need to walk in the forest till you find the place which is the sacred forest and

and that sacred forest is sacred because it produces particular foods that. They bring you into this the frame of mind of a. You become a God like person, and that's not, of course, in the way that we interpret God as this all powerful bloke with white beards in the sky who? Can damn you or punish you or bless you, but much more in the sense of an expanded awareness, much more in the Buddhist enlightenment tradition of someone who really understands the nature of being. The nature of the world. And so you eat stainless. You eat particular fruits and forests and and these people are having their these sacrifices turned into. To plantations for papaya and other soya and crops that serve the market and assets for the future. And it really is a great tragedy. And so those kinds of research projects are the source of research projects. That are enabling us to decolonize anthropology to make anthropologists become the servants of the people they work with, to share knowledge on an equal basis and to create the sorts of relationships. That will endure over many decades and offer not just the anthropology student, but the people they're working with with mutual support. In in their lives, so I'll stop. Thank you.

Chris: Thanks. I've had an instruction to encourage Simon, Alicia, Felix and Mona. So Simon, do you want to say anything?

Simon: Great. Well, thank you for the discussion so far, of course, is inspiring and insightful as ever. Yeah. Nice to be with you. I would say that adding on to what Jerome says. I've been working with the backer in Cameroon who are one of the egalitarian Central African hunter gatherer groups. For the last few years I've been working there and there's been a really interesting process, not just for them, but also for me I remember. On my first trip there. NGO Workers, Ministry officials, fellow academics, friends. All these sorts of people would would tell me after I explained my project. Why are you doing? You know, the people are going to steal the phones, but they're taking the data with they're not going. Be interested in this project. They're going to use it to, to corrupt and to and to steal things and to and to poach and to use it for their own benefit. Would they be interested in doing this? And I tried to explain the methodology behind the project. it's about talking to people and gauging their concerns. In the first instance, which can take a long time, but you have to do that for sustainable project, which is equitable. And then over time, because you're basing it on their concerns, you actually get to a point where they're really benefiting from the project and it's really addressing what they're interested in. And so here we are about. Just over three years later, 3 1/2 years later, starting the project and we've got over 1000 reports which are coming from different backer communities around the forest reporting. Wildlife crime, showcasing different types of plants that they use different animal footprints, which they're trying to show off and show how good they are preserving their forest and not one phone has been stolen. Not one solar panel has been sold off. Nothing. And he's when I give up to these same people who criticize us in the 1st place they're shocked. Can't believe that it really worked and it's. Really, you can think about the success behind it and it's just through. We didn't come in with an idea and say this is what we think you should do. It was. I mean, it makes much more

sense than going in with a top down approach. The way we shouldn't make any sense because. Whose idea are you coming? Whose values are you based on this? It's relevant, but if you go and just sit down and listen, which of course was Jerome's destruction in my first in my first trip and I've now realised it's certainly true. Then it's it's it's. It's a methodology which works, and it's a methodology which avoids the same pitfalls that many researchers and and well, many people have fallen into over the years. So it's been a very enlightening process and hopefully now, yeah, exploring more about ideas of biocultural relationships, looking at how we can work with communities to to strengthen their culture, which is of course, part of of. Protecting environments it's it's a. It's a biocultural. you can't separate biological diversity from cultural. Jerome's written a fair amount about this. I'd encourage you to read his recent article in Scientific American. About this. So I think it might be. Might just subscribe to read it now. I'm not sure. Yeah. So it's a very interesting. Way of looking at all of this. And I really think that any research who now goes into some of these contexts, specifically anthropologists. You really have to think behind your your ethics. Think behind your research practices and and take decolonizing approaches much more seriously.

Chris: Thanks. Alicia, are you there?

Alicia: Yes, Just quickly, I've been following what the hell the archaeologist has been doing, and it's a bit a really frustrating because they didn't seem to be noticing all their reaction to the BLM movement is that they just changed their reading list and they don't seem to be. About motion, it might. A good. To think about changing. Pedagogy, but use this. We've got 92 people who are following the the Twitter account.

Chris: Great, So archaeologists becoming supportive of Black Lives Matter, is that the idea?

Alicia: Well, they're looking at Black Lives Matter and they're talking about it and they're called my own Twitter account. I'm watching what they're saying, but they say, oh, well, maybe we need to change. Change just our reading list. What we're suggesting students to read. They're not really thinking about the ideas. what is it telling us how we need to think? We need to question some basic ideas. It's quite frustrating.

Chris: Ok. Morna, do you want to say something?

Morna: Yeah, well, I'm actually really enjoying listening. I was just thinking about what was said at the start. The fact that we have this growing clarity about the fact that so much of what makes us really human; moral, creative, cultural, came from groups of mothers, groups of women. Whose interest was in protecting their young. And we're now at the point in human history where this is the challenge facing us as a species. Do we protect our young? Do we take care of the children or do we take care of the money? Know and the and the limited power interests at play. And it just seems like the answer is this resounding. now we act on behalf of our kids and and future kids and and not just within our own species anymore either as Jerome. Points out so. So. Well, this isn't we're all connected. All in it together. And I just love that you draw that into the radical anthropology. It's kind of, it seems like a really, really

relevant voice right now. For where? For where people need to go and the way we need to be thinking.

Chris: Fantastic. Joshua?

Joshua: Sure. Yeah. So of course I haven't had the opportunity to travel to the community which where I intend to go from my research. but some things I would just speak to quickly based on things that I've read in my literature review. Jerome mentioned that the the scientific. Reasoning applied by these people, and it's so often the in the scientific paradigm that we're accustomed to, I think that there's like this very. Evolutionist myth of progress kind of notion of this. Like we've developed this recently, but it's it's quite ancient. These this these modes of reasoning are are deep in our history. But there's also, I think there's an anthropology in reverse kind of thing that we can take from. Understanding how. This reasoning fits into their cultures. And it it reveals some of the underlying assumptions. In our own scientific paradigm, because they. They overlap, but they don't. I would say they don't completely align there, there's certain. Assumptions that I think we have a lot of blind spots around terms of. The biggest glaring one in me is the assumption that humans don't fit into. We don't have a place in this world. Conceive of as natural. And we've created this parallel. That's that's huge to the narrative of scientific progress. Most of us know. I know it. Whereas these people in Naini that I'm going to say with are also the people in the Congo they. They're well aware on a rational level of the effects that. Their their hunting and gathering activities have on the environment, they. That's why they collected the yams the way they do this, why they replant parts of those tubers, and they're aware that they're gathering activities caused the so-called resource to flourish and regenerate that, I mean, it's almost. They're aware of it on a they're cognizant of. And it's also kind of self-evident to them. Whereas a lot of our assumption is that. Any sort of? Resource utilization is has got to be extractive and destructive. But I think the hopeful thing take away from. What we can learn from some of these societies is that we, in practice, we can. Can actually generate. We do have a. We do have a a role in the ecological niche. In our surroundings. And we can apply the same types of logic. We just may need to question some of our baseline assumptions. So that's a huge positive to. That's that's like that. Always keeps me buoyed a little bit. So I don't know if that's too highly relevant to what other people have said, but that was just one thing that struck me.

Chris: I think it's extremely relevant because of course Jerome and I and all of us at RAG, we very much support the science at its... I mean the point about science is that it's the one form of knowledge in the West which is, at least in principle, at its best, is internationalist and and as as Jerome was saying, this idea of peer review. And at least there is some peer review. And it was no doubt it was invented. This idea of peer review was admitted by the very earliest. Humans, do you see what I see? Check. Don't just assume that what you see is what everyone else is going to see. But sad, there's something there's something wonderful about. But of course, the trouble with the science we know it now is it's massively crippled by the corporations

and these different states. And I mean, what's interesting? Just been. Is that because of COVID? The politicians have at least had to claim to be, as I said, following the science following the science following the science, it turns out, of course, that they pick and choose which scientists are going to follow when they most of the time. They way, way, way behind the. But if only that principle, let's follow the science and let's insist that all politics is based on science. Is it literally informed by science? Why stop with? Vanishes. I mean, the climate scientists, I mean. Then I was going to say they're screaming. The trouble is they're kind of not allowed to scream alouds the climate, the community of scientists, including climate scientists, are inhibited from speaking in their own voice. They've got this wretched inhibition through which they imagine they've got to speak through massive. Bureaucracies. And of course the everything gets lost in. But I mean, there's something about science which is massively valuable and in rag. We don't really want to be alternative. A sense we want to. We would like to think that what we're doing as scientists needs to be and will be mainstream. Mean it is just a fact that the Earth is round and it moves. Is just a fact that we humans emerge in some kind of revolution. In Africa and the culture, language and so on, emerge at the same time as Homo sapiens emerged. Is actually. The only hope we've got in many ways, it's so immeasurably better than political ideology and all these wretched religions. Are. Know dominating the minds of so many poor folk and States and elsewhere. So let's say at its best, science is internationalist, collectivist and creative, and actually magical and inspiring. But let's extend science and let's get scientists dancing and singing a bit and learning from the gather, scientists had to do those things. Right now we've only got we've got 15 minutes left. I think we should probably open this up to everybody. I'm just going to have a look now and see if I can see any hands up. I haven't seen any yet, so that thing is anyone's hand up. Anyone want to come in?

Ingrid: I just want to pick up on something you said. That is, take care of the children. You said that at the beginning of this talk and I think that this preceded by taking care of the mothers. It's really important. What's exhausting. Is to nurture in a world that really doesn't care for its mothers. And if we are really to implement a new narrative, then we need a world that does take care of its mothers and the sex strike, if women really would say, what, we're not no longer giving children in this world, we can make this race die out.

Chris: The idea of a birth-strike, I know quite a lot of the women who have been very influential in Extinction Rebellion, are already on a kind of birth strike, who would dream of being born into this world?

Camilla: Yeah, Saying how can we have children because what world will we bring them into? Terrible. Terrible.

Chris: But a birth strike is a big ask, and we shouldn't be there. Shouldn't. No one should be under that pressure. Sex Drive is a bit different. Can easily cope with... I would thought they could or we. Cope with. Not having a fix for a few for a week

or two, but birth strike would be to be forced into. That is something definitely very much wrong with the entire political system.

Ingrid: Absolutely, and that is why we need to urgently change this narrative into really taking care of the mothers that nurture this world, that nurture each generation afresh. And that is what I see as the new narrative. This is where we can really change this world.

Mark: I wonder what people think about the case of the mosquito in Nicaragua and the mosquito are in a situation where Spanish speaking settlers have been moving into their lands. Are taking the lands of many of the communities of the smaller, weaker communities and the Nicaragua to Nicaragua frontier. I'm eastwards towards the coast. Into mosquito and my ankle. Lands that they've become more violence and mosquito and my. People becoming now more impatient and they feel that they can't wait and many of them have actually turned to resistance in the form of armed violence. And this has been the case in the Community where I've been living in. Where on two occasions that the people in the village have sent parties of men, large parties of men out to. Drive away. Burn the houses down and steal and kill all the capital of people in those settler communities who come into their land. Sort. Of thing. So I know. Not all indigenous peoples are in a position to offer that kind of resistance, but I wonder what members or people in our meeting today think of that as an option.

Jerome: Yes, thank you for raising that Mark. I think it's really important. Not every community is organised in ways that can lead to. Physical resistance in that fashion, the hunter gatherers I work with, while they may respond in rage or anger on a personal level with violence, coordinating violence, is just impossible, because, of course, there's nobody who can or say oh, right, let's go off and do this. There are occasionally in the history of certain hunter gatherers in central Africa, very charismatic individuals who've succeeded in mobilizing small groups. To conduct. Raids on people they consider to be infringing on their rights, but that's really the exception rather than the rule. It tends to be among farming societies that this is easier. The Ashninga have a very nice, subtle way of doing it so. When they notice, they send regular patrols around their territory to find out who's invading and when. They find out that someone has invaded, they go there. They they summon what they call the ashen in Karam. And the it's basically the young men of the community and or the able bodied men of the community and they come down to wherever those people have been in coming into their territory and they present themselves and they say. good afternoon. They show them a map. Again, this power of maps. Say look, this is where you are and this is in our territory and we don't like it and we don't want you to be here and we want you to leave now. If you don't leave now. We're coming back tomorrow morning and we won't have our ordinary arrows and they show them the arrows. They have very long arrows with big bows. That they pull. And we will come back with our poison barrows and we will not be. And we will not be polite. And in each case this is succeeded in chasing off the invaders on their territories. And they now, and this is something that they are very this is private they they have what

they call the Ashken army which which straddles both Brazil and Peru. And they're currently in very subtle. Quiet discussions with each other to create what they call the action incarnation, which will be a binational nation across the Peruvian and the. The Brazilian borders in order to protect their territories. But they are by far. Leaders in this and it's not been it's it's been a great risk of personal health. They've had times where they've had to get the Brazilian army in to support them in those battles in the past. Currently they don't. But in the past they have and and. It's through their courage and their willingness to take on and their organizational. 30s that they've been able to do this and that's not. That is. By all indigenous people and and neither should it be, because of course it's the diversity which is important.

Jacob Fishel: I was just thinking the value of. The value comes from what we do with it, and if if we leave it in the abstract, it becomes these. These disembodied arguments of what's real science and that the real test and the real value would be through morna's work with corporal morality, of bringing it into the body. And what does what does the science mean? To the to the physical realm. And how do we organize around the children? What we'll be doing to the environment? How does this mean? What we are doing impacts where we're going. This Western suicide is taking science and extracting resources with without ever bringing the information into the body, so it just seems that, at least for me, Morna's work was really. Key to what we how science applies to. The missing bridge would be that bringing. Into the body.

Chris: Morna, do you want to respond to that?

Morna: Yeah, I've been thinking about that since Ingrid's book actually, the fact that it starts in the body and in in the most kind of visceral way in the reproductive body and in the most kind of earthy aspects of the body. We're not talking about the brain. We're talking about the gut, the solar plexus, the womb, that whole kind of bactem stratum, that really kind of earthy core part of the body. The fertile body and to bring that together with this idea, like Ingrid says of love, parental love. The ferocity that you get when people take that body knowledge and make it. Make it collective bring it out of the dyad out of the pair or the couple and into the community. That's a huge. Untapped source of power. I mean, I say untapped. It's a huge source of potential power that doesn't. Been allowed to express itself in the way it could and should, and Ingrid's absolutely right that foregrounding mothers, prioritising the needs of mothers and the voices of mothers. Is really key I think now to making any significant change. Because it's survival. I would like I said before. you. You can pay a militia to go out and and fight or or, you know. Be a certain be aggressive. But there is this kind of core love for your own children and in a community like the community. Jerome knows that. Benjelly, you're not your own kids are all kids. And and that's what you will fight for. what you would. Lay down your life to protect. It's not about money and big power. It's there's there's another element there and it really is traced back to the science of of the body, the science of the collective parental self, really. And it seems like we have to really draw on this now urgently. because. We are teetering on the edge. A precipice as a. I look at my children and. And that's my motivation to want. to be

political, to, to act, to step forward. And I I know, I know we share that. So pushing that community, pushing that that voice out is is really, really essential. Corporeal morality is what what you learn from when you listen to the experts.

Chris: Thank you so much. That's a very powerful ending and just summed it all up. So thanks everybody.

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Feb 2, 2024

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