The Bali of Anthropology and the Anthropology of Bali: how to research a fast-moving part of the 'new' Asia.

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When we were young, we went travelling – to discover somewhere we thought was Asia. Later, we became anthropologists, ethnographers of Bali, a very particular corner of Asia – atypical in some ways, but typical in others. Our Asias, and our ideas of them, became more complicated and working out how to work them out is an ongoing process. Here are our stories of how it happened and our provisional understandings of Bali, Asia and ethnographic method.

Graeme's Asia

I heard about somewhere called 'Asia' in the mid-1970s, from veterans of the overland trail between Europe and Australasia. It sounded like the opposite and antidote to all the things I thought were wrong with my own society, so I went to look for myself, travelling for months, through Indonesia, India, Nepal, Afghanistan, moving from town to city to village, walking all day (that was my method) meeting people, looking, listening and recording it in my diaries. I imagined that I learnt something about Asia and I fancied myself an anthropologist. Fifteen years later I became one. India would have been my first choice as a research site, but the logistics of extended ethnographic research there, with a family in tow, seemed daunting, so I found myself drawn back to Bali, my first stop in Asia. The idea was to revisit and interrogate a sepia-tinted memory of a village/town called Ubud – the penumbral gloom of huge lychee trees along the main street, cool, damp, brown earth underfoot, women drifting past carrying something on their heads, the scent of frangipani and clove cigarettes, the creaking of tall, ancient, black Dutch bicycles, cocks crowing and the fading notes of a distant gamelan. What had happened in the intervening years and how did it all work now?

I was fortunate, to enjoy a glorious year and a half of what was already seen as an old-fashioned style of ethnographic fieldwork. I was guided by what local people told me was important – which was essentially ritual, so much of my time was spent in apprenticeship in local temples, then in a widening circle around Ubud. This became my window into everything else – religion, cultural geography, history, political-economy – eventually even the banalities of tourism.

The 1980s and 90s were something of a golden age for research in Bali, with a cohort of brilliant researchers, mostly anthropologists, working in the reflected glow of Clifford Geertz's celebrated essays based on his experiences there.[1] They went beyond Geertz, critiquing and overturning many of his evocative, provocative and sometimes ethnographically questionable generalisations about Bali. I arrived in their wake, learnt my trade from them and worked in their shadow. Now, two decades on, most are gone – retired or moved elsewhere and now I am left, one of a handful of anthropologists still working there and even fewer with extended ethnographic experience of a local community.

Lee's Asia

Like Graeme, my Asia began with Bali, albeit more than a decade later. Similarly, my appetite whet from this first encounter, I headed to India, and spent a year in the early 90s trying to avoid the 'muesli trail', a tourist route across the sub-continent for the new breed of backpackers. I tried earnestly to immerse myself in a world that seemed profoundly different from that in which I had grown up in the UK. A desire for difference that somewhat ironically drew me back to London to study anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). SOAS at that time had a thriving Indonesian Studies department, somewhat philological in bent, but which offered captivating insight into Indonesia through the study of the classical literature of the archipelago. Taking a degree in anthropology with a minor in Indonesian Studies, I became aware of differences between the static worlds of the *hikayat* and other historical texts, and the dynamism and fluidity of contemporary realities that were the stuff of anthropological discussions and debates. I was drawn to the latter while the former, although never losing its fascination, seemed to me to perpetuate a somewhat faded image of Asian antiquity perpetuated largely by Western scholars.

I continued to return to Bali in connection with my doctoral research on Indonesian martial arts, which segued into subsequent work on informal security, and longer periods of fieldwork on the island. While I am not an anthropologist of Bali per se, as an ethnographer I have known and worked with some people and groups on the island for over sixteen years. Like Graeme, my understanding of social and economic transformation in Asia is framed by my experience of change in Bali. It is our respective experiences of Asia as itinerant tourists, and later as (relatively) disciplined social observers, that foreshadow some of the concerns we share with ways of doing anthropology in Bali today. The aim of this chapter is first to provide a rough sketch of the complex landscape of this new Bali, and second to outline the way each of us, half a generation apart, have developed methodological approaches, different but complementary, to anthropological analysis of this landscape.

Bali and Anthropology

The classic ethnography of Bali, written in the 1930s, but still widely read, is entitled simply "Island of Bali".[2] The cultural map of this island was presumed to coincide with its geographical boundaries, notwithstanding significant historical flows of people, goods and services and cultural/religious ideas across its borders. It appeared to foreigners as "…a thing apart …. [from] … the rest of the Indies"[3]. This geo-cultural island remained the assumed unit of analysis for over half a century, until the unavoidable realities of globalisation forced some rethinking[4].

Bali was changing, but so was our view of it. We began to discover political-economic realities obscured by the "anthropological romance" of spectacular cultural performance.[5] We also reminded ourselves that behind the appearance of "timeless" culture surviving even the onslaught of tourism, was a century of profound and often violent change.[6] Since the 1990s the speed and scale of change has accelerated, and the Bali of that time is now almost unrecognisable – transformed by tourism and investment-driven economic growth leading to an overloaded raft of social and environmental consequences. The primary challenge for a renewed anthropology of Bali is to comprehend and analyse this dynamic and complex landscape of multiple factors and constant change.

A new generation of scholars, Indonesian as well as foreign, are finding new ways of exploring this landscape, but most are doing it piecemeal, by focusing on relatively limited parts of it,[7] In the process we have begun to lose sight of the island as a whole. Is it too "complicated"? Is the overview too hard to grasp?

It might be argued, given the transnational flows that constitute contemporary Bali, that the geo-cultural unit of the island has lost whatever utility it once had as a unit of analysis. But we believe it remains relevant for (at least) two reasons. The first is that Bali remains, for most Balinese people, a meaningful locus of cultural and religious identity, notwithstanding significant internal cleavages and conflicts - an existential anchor in the turbulent ocean of change in which they find themselves. The second reason is that, if we reconceptualise "Bali" less as a geographical island, than as a node in a network of trans-local processes, it is a node of particular intensity, in which processes of globalisation can be seen in heightened form, on a scale feasible for integrated analysis.

The aim of this chapter is firstly to provide a rough sketch of the complex landscape of this new Bali and secondly to outline the way each of us, half a generation apart, have developed methodological approaches, different but complementary, to anthropological analysis of this landscape.

The New Bali

Here is a minimal checklist of critical issues in contemporary Bali:

- Demographics
  - Tourism
  - Expatriates and migrants
  - Visas + Land sales
  - Migration and Islam
- Social Problems
  - Unemployment,
  - Drug use and addiction
  - Gangs, violence and organised crime
- Money
  - Investment
  - Money laundering
  - Local economies
  - Land
    - Prices
    - Foreign ownership
    - Conversion
- Environment/Resources
- Construction
- Agriculture
- Environment
- Water
- Transport
- Marine Reclamation

Mining (sand/gravel/rock)
Cultural Heritage
Hindu Religion

This raw list could be more helpfully arranged into either a centre-and-periphery mandala form or a sequential flow chart, to reflect the processual and causal logics involved.

Fig.1 Critical Issues in the New Bali (2 diagrams)

Or, as a linear sequence of words … For the past forty-five years tourism has brought into Bali an increasing flow of people from all over the world. Tourists spend large amounts of outside money (of the order of four thousand million dollars a year)[8]. Some of this money flows straight back out to international tourism operators and suppliers, but some flows into the local economy. Many visitors now stay for extended periods (months or years rather than days or weeks) while others have established more or less permanent homes in Bali.[9] They too bring substantial flows into (and through) the local economy. These flows of money have gradually become the basis of the entire economy of the island.

The flows of people and money attract investment capital, which goes mainly into construction of hotels and other tourism infrastructure, but also into real estate. This has the further effects of inflating property values and driving a building boom. The building boom creates a demand for resources, some of which are imported, but others are local raw materials such as sand and gravel (for concrete), wood, bamboo and water. These demands create new mini-frontiers where these resources are available and consequent short-term booms in local economies.[10] These booms (and subsequent busts) create new patterns of wealth and poverty as well as significant environmental side-effects.

The building boom and economic growth in general, also create a demand for labour that local people are either unable or unwilling to meet, so it attracts migration of unskilled labour from other less affluent parts of Indonesia, especially East Java. These migrants are economically poorer, linguistically and culturally different from Balinese, and most significantly, Muslim, rather than Hindu. Balinese communities are not structured to accommodate this kind of diversity and consequently newcomers of different cultural background are not easily integrated.[11] These tensions are exacerbated by widespread Balinese fears of expansionist and hostile Islamic colonisation.[12]

The combined influx of well-heeled expatriates (Indonesian as well as foreign) and unskilled labour migration has had the effect of colonising both the top and bottom ends of the economy. A growing share of especially the larger hospitality sector is owned by foreign and Jakarta-based companies, while the majority of unskilled manual work is performed by immigrants from other parts of Indonesia, especially East Java.[13] Indigenous Balinese now occupy a shrinking middle ground of precarious employment in tourism-related service industries and even more precarious participation in the agricultural economy.[14]

The inflation of real-estate values, the speculative building boom, the coastal tourism zone of supercharged hedonistic consumption and the booming transport sector together have created fertile soil for the growth of organised crime. Networks of criminality often overlap with the membership of local security groups and "societal organizations" (*organisasi*

kemasyarakatan, Ormas) as well as some foreign gangs, who operate with apparent impunity in Bali. These organisations vary in style from traditionally economic mafia-like ones to nationalist and very local militias claiming to protect Bali-Hindu culture and maintain local security.[15]

The growth of the new economy, together with water shortages and soil degradation, has marginalised the traditional economic base of agriculture, particularly rice-growing. Much of the most able labour has moved to more lucrative sectors and most farming is now done by those too old, uneducated or remotely located to participate in the new economy. It is no longer possible to make a viable livelihood from rice-farming and most farm only part-time for subsistence, combined with other work for cash. Likewise the value of land in tourism and urban-fringe areas is such that farming is no longer an economically viable use for it and it is being converted to residential or commercial purposes.[16]

The primary flow driving this entire process is tourism and in recent years, the size of this flow has increased dramatically. Tourism has eclipsed all other sectors of the economy, and desire to benefit from it has been marked by chronic short termism, and blatant disregard for the consequences of unbridled development.

In 2008, there were less than two million foreign tourists and less than three million domestic ones. By 2016 this had increased to nearly five million.[17] This process a qualitatively complex, multi-dimensional, and is increasing quantitatively at an ever-accelerating rate. The overall effects are growing economic inequality, social fragmentation, loss of cultural confidence, an escalating burden on resources, and significant environmental degradation. Concerns over these transformations in Bali are not new. In 2000 the satirical comic, Bog Bog, presciently depicted globalization as a bomb, several years before the island became a target for terrorist attacks.

Fig 2. Cartoon courtesy of Jango Pramathata

In the cartoon (figure 2) the Balinese passively watch the bomb's fuse burn while protecting their ears in anticipation of the blast caused by globalization as it detonates on the island, seemingly oblivious to the fact that they are standing on the bomb. The cartoon suggests inaction in the face of threat, and a failure to appreciate the implications of global connections. Globalization is understood in this sense by Balinese commentators as a confluence of social, cultural and economic flows, the effects of which on Balinese society are greatly disruptive. Bali has become in many ways iconographic of the troubles that accompany greater connectivity to the world. This notoriety had profound consequences for the island when tourist hotspots became the target of terrorist attacks in 2002 and 2005.

This roughly sketched overview is obviously simplified, generalised and incomplete. It is impossible to study holistically but it begs for ethnographic-level exploration and filling of gaps at every point. Some of this work is being done, much of it very well, by the new generation of researchers, but at the price of losing sight of the overview. The question is whether is an overview really necessary or even relevant in this multi-dimensional landscape of shifting trans-local flows. And if it is useful, what is the appropriate scale of such an overview? The natural boundaries of the island are no longer barriers to any of these flows,

nor is Balinese culture heterogeneously contained within them. Is the notion of a culture, let alone a geographically bounded one, a defensible unit of analysis, let alone methodological point of departure? Such models were thoroughly critiqued a couple of decades ago, most convincingly and eloquently by Gupta and Ferguson[18] (1997) and have been all but abandoned since. “Asia” may have its value as “method”[19], but what about “Bali as method”? We believe that both levels of study are necessary and possible but also compatible and complementary.

Bali as Method

Despite this deep globalisation, Bali remains an appropriate scale of analysis for two reasons – one grounded in anthropological method, the other in indigenous understandings, respect for which is part of anthropological method. For most Balinese we know, “Bali” is a self-evident unit defined by an integrated whole of language, culture and especially religion, expressed explicitly in an “invented tradition” known as Tri Hita Karana[20] Their daily experience of economic survival, multicultural encounter and media exposure contradicts and challenges this, and foreign observers routinely lament the “loss of traditional culture”, but “Balineseness” is reinforced strongly and regularly – daily at the level of household ritual, and almost weekly in the customs and celebrations of local communities and temples. The level of this cultural resilience is not a function of distance from the influences of tourism and urbanisation – some of the strongholds of ritual and community are actually in the most intensively touristed and urbanised areas[21]. These are social facts of some significance, which need to be taken seriously in any anthropological analysis.

The second, more directly anthropological and methodological reason is that, while neither the wholeness of the island nor its geographical boundaries any longer define a self-evident unit of study, what happens within its boundaries becomes distinctive and worthy of study, when viewed from a more global perspective. The network of processes and flows outlined above, when seen from within Bali, appear to fragment any sense of wholeness and violate any sense of boundedness. However, when seen from a global perspective, Bali appears as a site in which flows of people, money, resources and images intersect in an extraordinarily concentrated way. This, we argue, is what constitutes the anthropological subject that we might call “the new Bali”. How then can we make sense of this new Bali?

This is a specific instance of the disciplinary methodological challenge Gupta and Ferguson identified two decades ago (1997). They argued that ethnographic methods were still part of the answer, but they had little to say about larger overviews, let alone how these levels might be integrated. Anna Tsing (2005) addresses this challenge more comprehensively. She begins with the problem of how to understand a complex local scenario of social and environmental collapse. The causes and driving factors are multiple and located at various distances and scales from the local, but linked to it by “chains of global connection”. Her method is firstly to identify and map these chains across scale and culture, then to intervene ethnographically at key points along those chains. The most productive points for ethnographic exploration are the “gaps” between understandings or “zones of awkward engagement, where words mean something different across a divide” (2005: xi) where the “friction” between global/universal ambitions and projects meet the reality of local cultures, economies and ecosystems.

The lists, diagrams and description above provide a rough sketch of the main chains of connection across various scales. We (and others) have made ethnographic interventions into various points on this network.[22] The methodological challenge now is to integrate them in such a way that overview and ethnographic interventions mutually inform each other. The result might be a book of many chapters which we imagine below, then consider two of them in more detail:

> Economic Development versus the environment: mining the sacred mountains to build sacred hotels.
>
> New Tourisms and New Expatriates.
>
> Island of Waste: the culture and political-economy of plastics, recycling and composting.
>
> Where will our rice come from when all the farmers and land are gone? A broken food-system.
>
> Tourism/infrastructure development: Reklamasi Benoa.
>
> Migration, Islam and ethnic tensions.
>
> Water.
>
> The transformation of upland economies and ecologies.
>
> Whose security? The rise of paramilitary organisations.
>
> World Cultural Heritage: global imaginings meet local

This list implies a less than optimistic picture. The reality is a familiar one of increased economic growth with undeniable economic benefits for many people, but at the price of significant costs in terms of economic equality, social harmony, cultural coherence and environmental sustainability. Clear-eyed analysis is needed to understand these problems, but equally important is focus on resistance to destructive change as well as creative and innovative initiatives to effect beneficial change. What follows are brief sketches of our modes of ethnographic intervention into the last two imaginary chapters listed above.

Methods

Lee

In my postgraduate work, I studied contemporary manifestations of tradition by researching martial arts as an aspect of the nation building project in Indonesia. My conceptual focus was cultural hegemony and forms of power. Empirically, my work centred on the institutional transformation of the pedagogy and practice of Indonesian martial art of Pencak Silat as an object of national culture. It was the practice and management of the art, rather than geographical boundaries, that circumscribed my fieldsite. This was not exactly 'multi-sited ethnography' in the sense proposed by George Marcus.[23] I simply followed the connections between people, places, ideas, practices and events, adumbrating congeries of interests and

the distribution of resources to describe the trajectory of my encounter with Pencak Silat. This was less a methodological response to perceived shortcomings of localized ethnography, than an attempt to come to terms with the complexity of studying Pencak Silat as an aspect of the national cultural project in Indonesia. Fifteen years later, it is more obvious to me how this approach was implicitly framed by broader disciplinary concerns with global trends and transformations, and indeed, could only have been conceived subsequent to these anxieties being aired.

A central concern of anthropology in the 1990s was with the limitations of the 'bounded' field site[24] as the basis for production of ethnographic knowledge capable of articulating the growing complexities of an increasingly connected world. Marcus' argument for methodological engagement with a globalized world epitomised these concerns, and became a reference point in the anthropological literature. While, despite the elisions of European historical narratives, the world has always been connected[25], the sheer scale of contemporary global connections and flows is unprecedented in human history.

Concerns with the relevance of locality in an increasingly interconnected global ecumene gave rise to attempts to trace these flows and their social and cultural relevance. Global assemblages[26], translocality and flexible citizenship[27] and 'friction' between connections[28] were all attempts to fashion conceptual models adequate for an ethnography of globalization. What seems common sense today required considerable theoretical innovation to broaden the horizons of a discipline accustomed to the study of the particular. Modern Asian realities in particular seemed ever more dynamic in light of the timeless portrayal of tradition perpetuated in some anthropological accounts, especially in Indonesian and Southeast Asian ethnography prior to the 1990s[29] (e.g. Geertz 1980, Errington1989, Tambiah 1976). It is no surprise that many innovations in the production of anthropological knowledge arose from ethnographic encounters with Southeast Asia given the intensity and pace of globalization in the region.

Some years later I returned to Indonesia, interested in the growth of citizen militia groups since the fall of Soeharto. Particularly prolific in Bali, these miltia developed in a post-bomb security space marked by the perceived need for greater vigilance and security on the island. Response to the terrorist threat in Bali provided a focal point for anti-immigrant sentiment, and concerns with the erosion of Balinese culture too found new voice in an exclusionary assertion of Balinese identity in the face of perceived threats to Balinese lives and livelihoods. A cultural revitalisation movement, *Ajeg Bali* ("let Bali stand strong"), resonating with the heightened anxiety over threats to Balinese ways of life, found increasing traction in the aftermath of the Kuta bombing in 2002. Ajeg Bali, and its discriminatory message of "Bali for the Balinese"[30] became increasingly prominent in public discourse. Preserving Balinese ways of life was no longer just about cultural preservation in the face of the onslaught of globalization, and the threat of terrorism galvanized local efforts to promote increasing vigilance in the wake of these attacks.

Prior to the first terrorist attack in Bali in 2002, efforts to safeguard Balinese values and ideals had given rise to the revival of *pecalang*, customary security guards answerable to village level authority. A term derived from the root *calang*, or 'vigilant', *pecalang* are charged with safeguarding the ritual practices important to all aspects of social life in Bali. They are sanctioned through appeal to custom, and legitimized by 'local regulation'

(*Peratuan Daerah* 3/2001) passed by provincial government in 2001 that underwrites their role as customary guardians.[31] A dual system of administration cedes authority on customary matters to the *desa adat*, or customary village, while formal administrative matters are dealt with by the civil administration, or *desa dinas*. At local level lines between these jurisdictions become blurred[32], especially in matters of communal security. The role of *pecalang* often overlaps with that of the Community Protection Groups (*Perlindungan Masyarakat*, or *Linmas*), civilian security officers under the authority of the local civil service. In many villages the same people fulfill both roles, changing uniforms according to the situation.

More recently, *pecalang* have become involved in more mundane aspects of security, checking the identity cards of migrants from other areas of Indonesia, particularly from Java. This has taken a somewhat sinister turn, resulting at times in overt harassment of Indonesian migrants to the island. Bali, as Henk Schulte Nordholt put it has become an 'open fortress' in which boundary marking and the suspicion of non-Balinese outsiders are in part justified by the continuing threat of terrorist attacks[33].

While non-Indonesian outsiders, as the main source of revenue, are treated with greater deference than Indonesian migrants, the constant exposure to western values and ideals is seen to present an insidious threat to Balinese ways of life. One of the largest militant *ormas* on the island, Baladika Bali, refers to the need to preserve Balinese identity in the face of the influx of visitors to the island, and to harness Bali's youth to protect from the threat of terrorism and the corrupting influences of western culture. The popularity of *ormas* has grown at the same time as an increasing alienation of youth from political parties. They have become political actors in their own right, fielding candidates for local parliamentary elections, and consolidating their electoral footprint. The authority of the charismatic strong men who lead these groups, backed by extremely loyal memberships, have capitalized on popular conceptions of power as a highly gendered ideal in which capacity for violence is an index of agency and efficacy.[34]

Baladika Bali has its roots in a large martial art school, Bakti Negara, which I knew from earlier trips to Bali. It was founded by influential head of Bakti Negara, who leveraged membership of Baladika from the ranks of the martial art school. Baladika now claims an active membership of over 20,000 young men throughout Bali. Ethnographic opportunity came knocking when I discovered the relationship between the two organizations. Existing friendships and relationships thus opened up new possibilities for research.

Clifford Geertz described the practice of ethnography as professional 'hanging out'.[35] It is more than this, though. My earlier visits demonstrate the importance of relationship building as a fundamental aspect of ethnographic enquiry, and the value of a methodological commitment to open-ended enquiry over time. Hanging out in Bali today one cannot be anything but aware of the global processes and flows that are transforming the island. Whether the threat to the island's water supplies[36] waste management problems[37], or the ways in which concerns with security assume such prominence in social and political life[38], the obvious effects of globalization are a stark reminder of these connections. Insight into the ways in which people negotiate familiar problems in sites where the confluence of global flows is particularly intense and turbulent contributes to our comprehension of the diverse ways in which people conceptualise and respond to change and social transformation. While

the commonality of the modern experience of globalisation cannot be taken for granted, it does provide a conceptual and methodological point of departure for our ethnographic peregrinations. From a loftier vantage point, bounded social imaginaries appear to be inundated by global flows. At a local level, however, these imaginaries are not washed away, but assume new prominence in transformed social, economic, and cultural landscapes. Sensitivity to the power relations that frame the production of ethnographic knowledge is heightened by accountability thrust on us by greater awareness of the interconnectedness of human lives and actions, easier access to global knowledge by those with whom our lives intersect, and ethnographic sensibilities agitated by the increasing precariousness of human existence on this planet. It is not just hanging out in Bali today that is a very different kind of exercise. Those doing the hanging out are themselves different.

In many ways the production of ethnographic knowledge has been transformed by the anthropology of the interconnected. Whether for analytical or heuristic purposes, both difference and distance can no longer be easily assumed, and as a consequence, we are more accountable to our ethnographic interlocutors. An example from Bali to illustrate this point, I was recently introduced to I Made Muliawan, the head of Pemuda Bali Bersatu (PBB, 'United Bali Youth'). Our meeting was at a communal *otonan* celebration (ceremonial birthday). I arrived after the ceremony proper, when twenty or so members of the group, were eating and drinking together. PBB are one of the smaller *ormas* in Bali, with some 1000-1500 active members, mostly in Denpasar, the capital city. Muliawan, known as 'De Gajah' (the elephant) on account of his imposing physique, is a charismatic figure, well-liked by the members of PBB. His easy manner, quick wit and physical presence contribute to his popularity, and more recently his political success. De Gajah sits in the provincial parliament of Bali as member of Gerindra, (*Partai Gerakkan Indonesia Raya* - the Greater Indonesia Movement Party) led by current presidential candidate (April 2019) Prabowo Subianto. As we began to talk about PBB, De Gajah brought up the matter of a newspaper article published in Australia that was highly critical of the activities of *ormas* like PBB in Bali. The article had reported cases of the extortion of expatriate home owners living in Bali by local militia members. As far as I knew this had nothing to do with PBB, but the article painted all these groups in a bad light and gave the impression that Bali had become a gangster's paradise. Needless to say, this had not been well received by militia members in Bali.

As a researcher working on security groups and militia in Indonesia, I had been interviewed for the article. I had given what I thought were fair and objective statements about the prominence of charismatic strong men in Balinese political life. While I had not been directly critical of Balinese milita or their activities, De Gajah and other PBB members called my motives for the current research into question. What were my reasons for interviewing members of PBB? Did I intend to write another article condemning the members of these groups as gangsters and thugs? I justified my position as well as I could, explaining that I had not written the piece, and while I was interviewed by the author, it did not necessarily reflect my views. I explained that as a social scientist I was interested in the widespread presence of groups such as PBB in Bali and throughout Indonesia. The question I wished to answer was why, in arguably the most democratic country in Southeast Asia, these highly militaristic civil organizations continued to grow in popularity? De Gajah took me at my word that my aim was not to defame PBB and their like, but to better understand their

place in Balinese society. He was, and PBB remain, open to my questions about their activities, organization and political motivation, and this has been the case for the majority of militia that I have worked with in Indonesia.

For my part, being held accountable for what I say publicly about these groups is a good thing, and demands a more open and critical engagement with my interlocutors. Being publicly accountable goes some way to mitigate the skewed power relationships that allow me to write about the people that I hang out with, and often provokes open discussion and debate, and a more politicised ethnographic intervention. Certainly, this approach prevents some things from being said, but arguably no more so than one would expect when working on any sensitive topic.

The accounts I produce of Balinese social and political life, of security groups and their place in Balinese society, contribute in some small way to the discursive production of multiple and discordant representations of Bali in Indonesian and English language media. In these, Bali is constituted as, among other things, a paradisiacal tourist destination, a site of protectionism and extortion, an impending ecological disaster zone, an island under siege from jihadist *fanatik*, and a bastion of Balinese identity and culture. While hanging out in Balinese security spaces, it is these representations of Bali that form the backdrop to ethnographic encounter. Groups such as Pemuda Bali Bersatu and Baladika Bali articulate conceptions of Balinese community and values against this backdrop. Part of the appeal of charismatic leaders such as De Gajah and Gus Bota and the organisations they lead is the reference point they offer in shifting social, cultural and economic landscapes. A normative militancy that strives to secure Bali from the many threats that it faces at the confluence of global flows.

Methods

Graeme

My early research was an ethnographic study of the small town of Ubud and its constitution ritually and historically in terms of cultural landscape. My plan was to extend this to tracking Balinese cultural/religious expansion into the wider landscape of Indonesia, but the circumstances of my employment and funding provided little opportunity for a project of this scale. Instead I developed a strategy of (more or less) annual visits of five to seven weeks, on a shoestring budget but with few other strings attached. Because I had neither time nor resources for systematic, let alone extended research, I simply “hung out” in my familiar neighbourhood, more in the mode Geertz refers to than with Lee’s enforced reflexivity, until something interesting or important emerged and then followed it as far as I could. Subsequent visits involved a combination of following existing interests and developing new ones. This led to a series of articles and chapters on topics including architecture, electoral politics, rice-farming, legacy of Clifford Geertz, waste management, climate change, disaster recovery, illegal mining, tourism, and cultural heritage[39]. Occasional trips to central Java and India provided material for comparative perspectives on some of these topics as well as others. Twenty years later, some of these interests have faded while others continue. This modus operandi, born of limitations of circumstance and pragmatic or opportunistic depending on one’s point of view, reminds us that anthropological method has never been independent of the material circumstances of its production. Mine is not an approach I would recommend as

a path to career advancement, but it has proved to have other advantages. While it is grounded primarily in extended engagement with site rather than topic, the accumulated "ethnographic capital"[40] has (as for Lee) enabled relatively quick and easy shifting between apparently disparate topics. The resulting pattern of generalisation rather than specialisation has also provided a basis for attention to both the big picture outlined above and to some of its parts.

One of these parts is a UNESCO World Heritage (WH) listing of 'The Cultural Landscape of Bali Province: the *subak* system as a manifestation of the Tri Hita Karana Philosophy'. It was listed in 2012, but barely a year later, the WH committee was sufficiently concerned about reported problems, that it advised the Government of Indonesia (GoI) of these concerns. An underlying concern was that the statutory body supposed to manage the heritage estate had not been properly convened. In the event of this not being addressed in an adequate and timely manner, it could conceivably lead to the national embarrassment of de-listing. A couple of years later, at the urging of the WH Committee, the GoI invited an 'Advisory Mission' to report on unresolved issues. I became interested, partly through my ongoing research on rice-farming, but also because of discussions with disillusioned members of the team who wrote the application for WH listing, but who had been excluded from the subsequent process.

The best known part of the listing is Jatiluwih, a highland basin of spectacular terraced ricefields, still planted with traditional varieties using traditional methods. Other parts of the listing include highland lakes, irrigation systems and temples, but the real heart of the listing is the intangible cultural heritage embodied in the bottom-up system of management of water, and the even more intangible set of cultural ideas underlying it. This intangible heritage is what the listing was most seeking to protect.

Jatiluwih has long been a tourist attraction, but after listing, visitor numbers increased dramatically, as did the interest of outside investors, leading to a raft of consequences including rapid inflation of land values, sales of land for hotels and restaurants and increased traffic flows and parking problems. The district (*kabupaten*) government established a management body, which levies fees on visitors, the proceeds of which are split between government and local community. The community share is divided between multiple local organisations but the farmers' organisations (*subak*) - the very institution the listing seeks to protect - receive only a very small proportion of the proceeds. Farmers see themselves as having created the attraction and carrying most of the costs, but enjoying few of the benefits. These problems, very visible and widely reported in the media, prompted the concern of the WH committee.

The story is complicated, but a key element is the failure of the GoI to establish the system of governance outlined in its application, which was designed to keep the balance of decision-making power in the hands of local communities and especially farmers, rather than government officials. More broadly, the problem is of the kind described by Anna Tsing as "friction", "gaps" or "awkward engagements" between different levels and scales along the spectrum of global process. In this case, the conceptual worlds of WH officials in Paris and farmers in the ricefields are so far apart as to be mutually virtually unintelligible. The application process and subsequent evaluations are intended to bridge this gap, , but in practice, the people doing the actual bridging on the ground are relatively low-level officials

of local government departments, whose grasp of the values and processes of the WH system are imperfect at best. Their worlds are in fact closer to those of the farmers, despite significant gaps here also[41].

My main ethnographic intervention into these gaps and frictions was in a distant and lesser known part of the WH listing – also a set of ricefields, whose irrigation waters flow from important temples. Here the problems manifested more subtly, in a set of conflicts within and between *subak*, not really caused by the WH listing, but exacerbated by it and threatening to derail it. These problems have been discussed in detail elsewhere,[42] but in terms of method it was my accumulated ethnographic capital that enabled me to understand and access, fairly quickly and easily, the three *subak* involved, the district government department primarily responsible for managing the WH site, an academic expert advising government, communities and media, as well as other parties involved. In the process I found myself becoming a middleman, trying to help the parties involved articulate their understandings of the problem, but also carrying mediating messages between them. This became, an exercise in responsibly engaged ethnographic intervention, both similar and different to that which Lee discusses above.

But this story also illustrates the way global processes, in this case the WH part of the UNESCO system, come home to roost in faraway rice fields they purport to protect, only to encounter the frictions and awkward engagement with local communities with priorities and processes of which they have little if any understanding. Likewise local communities find themselves awkwardly engaged with processes emanating from places unimaginable to them, which appear to promise much but, when they arrive deliver unexpected consequences. In between, are a complex cast of players, but especially various tiers and agencies of government, poorly equipped but struggling to fill the gaps and lubricate the friction. These specific sites of engagement are variously and often awkwardly engaged with other parts of the picture described by Lee and listed above – they are all parts of the same meta-processes which manifest variously at local, national, regional and global levels. To understand any of this, we need to simultaneously map the larger pattern of flows and make strategic ethnographic interventions into selected points on the "chains of global connection"[43] between such disparate locations as the WH offices in Paris and the ricefields of Tampaksiring.

Conclusion:

The new Bali is, like the new Asia, indeed "complicated" and the challenges for a new anthropology of Bali are primarily methodological ones, which until now, nobody has really tried to get to grips with. While our own ethnographic experiences, empirical foci, and methodological developments are different, they both respond to the challenges of globalisation and delocalisation of culture first identified in the 1990s. These challenges have not gone away and in Bali they remain largely unresolved, either in practice or in analysis. What we have tried to present here is a model, following Anna Tsing especially, of articulation between different scales of larger process and selective ethnographic focus on specific loci at different levels of scale. Our brief sketches of ethnographic method have identified some of the more specific complications that arise, including challenges of practical engagement, accountability and communication across gaps of scale and culture.

In an increasingly complex and interconnected world we can no longer maintain the myth of ethnographic enquiry as a primarily descriptive project. Rather, there is a need for greater sensitivity to the real and produced nature of the social realities that we report on,[44] and the part we play in contributing to the discursive production and perpetuation of these realities. Increased emphasis on intervention as part of any ethnographic engagement does not resolve the problem of representation, but it does bring it more readily to the fore in analysis. Our role then as ethnographers is to trace relations, make sense of global connections and flows, and indeed incommensurabilities between levels of scale as we encounter them. This we have learnt from working in Bali.

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[1] Major works of this period include Fredrik Barth's *Balinese Worlds* (1993), Henk Schulte-Nordholt's *Spell of Power* (1996), Michel Picard's *Cultural Tourism and Touristic Culture* (1996), Stephen Lansing's *Priests and Programmers* (1991), Adrian Vickers' *Bali:A Paradise Created* (1990), Margaret Wiener's *Visible and Invisible Worlds* (1995), Carol Warren's *Adat and Dinas* (1993), Unni Wikan's *Managing Turbulent Hearts* (1990) as well as collections edited by Hildred Geertz (1991), Adrian Vickers (1990), Linda Connor and Rachaelle Rubinstein (1999). Other prominent researchers of this period included Mark Hobart, Angela Hobart, Leo Howe, Jean-Francois Guermonprez, Arlette Ottino, Urs Ramseyer.
[2] Miguel Covarrubias. *Island of Bali* (New York: (Alfred Knopf, 1937).
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[7] For example, Stroma Cole and Mina Browne, Tourism and water inequity in Bali (2015); Darma Putra, A literary mirror (2011), Rachel Lorenzen and Dik Roth, Paradise Contested (2015), Matt MacDonald and Lee Wilson, Trouble in Paradise (2017).
[8] There were 4.2 million foreign tourist arrivals in 2016 (Republika 2017). The average spend per visit in 2015, was estimated as US $1200 (Wall Street Journal 2015).
[9] MacRae. Graeme. Community and Cosmopolitanism in the New Ubud. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 59, issue C: 16-29 (2016).
[10] Graeme MacRae. Frontier Bali: local scales and levels of global processes in *Transnational Frontiers of Asia and Latin America since 1800,* edited by Jaime Morena Tejada and Bradley Tatar. Pp. (London, New York: Routledge 2016)
[11] The basis of membership in Balinese neighbourhoods (*banjar*) and especially villages (*desa*) is obligations of participation in Hindu ritual. While most communities have provisions for non-Hindu residents, this does not happen automatically and it is seen as exceptional rather than normal.
[12] Pamela Allen and Palermo Carmencita. Ajeg Bali: multiple meanings, diverse agendas in *Indonesia and the Malay World* 33, no. 97 (2005).
[13] I have not yet seen any official statistical evidence of this, but it is fairly general common knowledge (e.g. Bali Discovery 2015) as well as being qualitatively apparent in my own ethnographic field of Ubud.
[14] This precarity became painfully obvious during the tourism downturn after the bombings in 2002 and 2005. At the time of writing the possibility of an eruption of Mt. Agung threatens to dramatically reveal this again.
[15] Lee Wilson and Ery Nugroho. For the Good of the People: Governing Societal Organisations in Indonesia. *Inside Indonesia*, 09 (Jul-Sep, 2012).
[16] Graeme MacRae. The Value of Land in Bali: Land Tenure, Land Reform and Commodification in T.Reuter (Ed.) *Inequality, Crisis and Social Change in Indonesia: the muted worlds of Bali* (London. Routledge/Curzon 2003).
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[18] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (eds.) *Culture, Power, Place: explorations in critical anthropology*. (Durham and London. Duke University Press 1997).
[19] Kuan-Hsing Chen. *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization.* (Durham and London: Duke University press 2010), also introduction to this volume.
[20] Tri Hita Karana refers to a triad of supposedly harmonious relationships between humans, the natural environment and the supernatural world, much celebrated in recent years and oft-cited by politicians, officials and the media but also increasingly embedded into everyday Balinese discourse. Its status as a neo-traditional

ideology has been insightfully analysed by Dik Roth. "Reframing Tri Hita Karana: from 'Balinese Culture' to politics" *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 16, no. 2:157-175. (2015).
[21] The late, lamented Made Wijaya made this point consistently, insightfully and amusingly, mostly on Facebook and Youtube.
[22] Recent examples include Birgit Brauchler, Diverging Ecologies on Bali (2018); Birgit Brauchler, *Bali Tolak Reklamsi* (2018); Stroma Cole and Mia Browne, Tourism and water inequity in Bali (2015); Darma Putra, A literary mirror (2011); Paul Green, Biomedicine and 'Risky' Retirement Destinations (2016); Graeme MacRae, Frontier Bali (2016), Graeme MacRae. Community and Cosmopolitanism in the New Ubud (2016), Michel Picard, *The Appropriation of Religion in Southeast Asia and Beyond* (2017); Thomas Reuter, Understanding food system resilience in Bali (2018); Agung Wardana, Debating Spatial Governance in the pluralistic institutional and legal setting of Bali (2015); Carol Warren, Leadership, social capital and coastal community resource governance (2016); Thomas Wright, Water, Tourism, and Social Change (2015).
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[28] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing. *Friction: An ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University 2005).
[29] E.g. Clifford Geertz *Negara: The theatre state in nineteenth century Bali* (1980), Shelley Errington *Meaning and power in a Southeast Asian realm* (1989), and Stanley Tambiah *World conqueror and world renouncer* (1976).
[30] Pamela Allen and Palermo Carmencita, Ajeg Bali (2005).
[31] Henk Schulte Nordholt. *Bali: An Open Fortress, 1995–2005*. (Leiden: KITLV 2007), pp. 31.
[32] Carol Warren. Indonesian development policy and community organization in Bali. *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 8, no. 3: 213–230 (1986).
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[36] Stroma Cole and Mia Browne. Tourism and water inequity in Bali: A social-ecological systems analysis. *Human Ecology* 43, no. 3: 439-50 (2015).
[37] Graeme MacRae and Liljana Rodic. The weak link in waste management in tropical Asia? Solid waste collection in Bali. *Habitat International* 50: 310-316 (2015).
[38] Matt MacDonald and Lee Wilson. Trouble in Paradise: Contesting Security in Bali. *Security Dialogue* 48, no. 3: 241-258 (2017).
[39] Some of these have been published in other disciplinary contexts, the challenges of which are another methodological story.
[40] "Ethnographic capital" is my term, drawing on Bourdieu's metaphor of different kinds of capital and especially their exchangeability (1991:230) to refer to the body of experience, cultural/linguistic knowledge, relationships and networks accumulated over the course of extended ethnographic research and which can be used strategically in other related contexts.
[41] The structural impediment to bureaucratic effectiveness created by the cross-cutting of departmental divisions and hierarchical levels of administration is essentially similar to the one identified in India (and discussed in more detail) by Akhil Gupta in *Red Tape: bureaucracy, structural violence and poverty in India* (2012).
[42] Graeme MacRae Universal Heritage and Local Livelihoods: 'friction' at the World Cultural Heritage listing in Bali. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (in press).
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