

APPLICATION FOR EITHER
THE EMSLIE HORNIMAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND
OR
THE RUGGLES-GATES FUND FOR BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

NOTES

- The information requested below is required for applications to both of the above Funds.
- Read the relevant notes for applicants prior to completing this form, paying particular attention to the section headed “Eligibility”.
- Applications can be made prior to obtaining visas and relevant research permits, but no monies will be paid out until all necessary permissions have been granted.
- Please submit **six** copies (collated and stapled) of the personal information cover-sheet (Section A) and your responses to Sections B-D. Applications must be submitted with three sealed references.
- Please indicate if you are re-applying for an award.

A. PERSONAL INFORMATION COVER-SHEET

1. Name of fund to which you are applying: Emslie Horniman Anthropological Scholarship Fund
2. Name: Orlando Giovanni (*surname-name*)
3. Title of research project: Understanding moral economies in Palermo, Sicily: ‘alternative logics’, agency and local constraints
4. Age and date of birth: 26, 22/10/1979
5. Nationality [please also give country of residence if different]: British Italian (*dual*), resident in the UK
6. Contact information: 6 Park Gate, N2 8DJ London (*permanent address*), tel. 020 8444 1391, giova@ukonline.co.uk

B. PROJECT DETAILS

Title of proposed research:

Understanding moral economies in Palermo, Sicily:
'alternative logics', agency and local constraints.

Research summary

This project will examine how people involved in fairtrade and organic agriculture in Palermo are creating new moral economic networks in the context of local and regional socio-economic structures. My hypothesis is that Polanyi's idea of embeddedness is being renegotiated by civil society as a new set of values, which incorporate both social justice and environmental sustainability. However, the socio-economic constraints all actors face are seldom taken into account in this process, questioning the wider applicability of a 'moral economy'. Civil society itself, and its engagement with capitalism, need problematising (Chandler 2004). My sites will be a fairtrade shop in Palermo, plus one of its neighbouring organic suppliers. By addressing the interaction between social networks and 'alternative' enterprises, I will investigate the negotiation of contested categories such as 'non-profit', 'development', 'sustainable', etc. informing the idea of embedded economies. By focusing on the fairtrade shop and organic farm, I will assess regional socio-economic constraints affecting those who work, buy and sell in these sites. I will analyse the difficulties in the construction of a 'moral' economy, how these are played out and rationalised. Extended participation through work will allow me to get a full picture. The research will explore the relevance of such forms of economic agency for anthropology (Granovetter 1985).

Aims and objectives: 'Alternative economic agency' and constraints in Palermo

My aim is to investigate how people engaged with fairtrade and organic farming in Palermo conceive and practise moral economies, and how they cope with regional structural constraints (e.g. class, gender, education) originating in southern Italy's socio-economic context. I will thus first examine:

- a) the symbolic repertoire of alternative enterprises ('inequality', 'nature', 'solidarity', 'local', 'sustainable' etc.) underpinning the agency of those involved in them;
- b) the relation between different meanings in the two schemes, their significant patterns or hierarchies of importance;
- c) how these influence the way in which the schemes act *locally*.

Attention will be paid to such different 'alternative logics', which depend on the multiple contexts fairtrade and organic agriculture create: owners', workers', volunteers', customers', etc. Fairtrade's challenge to capitalism, for example, is mobilised around 'alternative trade and consumption'; however, its engagement with chain-stores is seen by grass-root groups as mimicking profit-driven practices. Organic farming, providing local *and* out-of-season produce shipped from the global South, faces questions by green groups over its sustainable character. These and other similar contradictions will be explored.

Secondly, I will assess how the social milieu shapes the actors:

- d) what forms of ownership are in place and why? What causes a fairtrade shop or an organic farm to have a single owner, or be cooperatives, non-profit associations, etc.?
- e) how are the organisation of labour and its understandings linked to ownership: is there 'voluntary', part-time, full-time labour? Local or migrant? What networks of recruitment are activated: kinship, friendship, market mechanisms? How do they impact on decision-making and role (gender) distribution?
- f) how do these factors affect the unequal social setting with regards to exploitation (e.g. in the case of voluntary/part-time/migrant work, see Goddard 1996)?

I will also reconstruct the initiatives' development, tracking the transformations undergone by the different actors, to explore how the local and regional contexts have affected them and continue to do so (compared to other local food retailers and producers, see Mottura & Mingione 1989).

Background information: Moral economies

Claims have been recently made for ‘moral economies’: networks centred on social justice and environmental sustainability as opposed to profit (Sayer 2000). Such claims derive from initiatives acting as economic schemes *and* cultural movements, assumed as relocating the economy “within society and nature”. Fairtrade, for example, promotes the re-embedding of commodity circulation and consumption in ‘equitable social relations’; the organic movement, that of crop production in ‘sustainable processes’ (Raynolds 2000).

The two act at the material *and* symbolic level (Ray & Sayer eds. 1999). They relate themes from political economy and ecology (‘equity’, ‘sustainability’, ‘development’, etc.) to values of embeddedness, informing different stages of the economic cycle. Concerns about inequality are embodied through trade and consumption by activist groups; those about the environment materialize through production and consumption in green enterprises and lifestyles. Such ‘alternative economic logics’ represent the core of moral economies (Goodman 2004). My research will explore these.

The phenomenon originates in European ‘civil society and third sector’. Recent analyses of the latter indicate this has grown considerably (Ben-Ner & Gui 2002), but its complexity often goes unnoticed: levels of participation are *unevenly* distributed, internationally and across sections of a population, mirroring economic disparities (Edwards et al. 2001). Such trends challenge the idea of a singular ‘alternative’ model, capitalism not being as monolithic as once assumed (Lash & Urry 1987), and underline my site.

Moral economies relying on civil society in Palermo are problematic: Italy is well-known for macro differentiations between north and south (Trigilia 1992). Modern research has acknowledged the importance of regional *social patterns* for developing the country’s economic formations, particularly in small-medium enterprises (Bagnasco 1977). Sicily has been a focal point in this respect (Schneider & Schneider 1976). Theories regarding the embeddedness of economic in social structures have played an important role in explaining the region’s condition. Palermo especially has been constrained by its socio-cultural characteristics: lacking horizontal ties, blocked by vertical, clientelistic relations (Chubb 1982). This raises questions for the third sector’s role in the area. Sites of marked inequalities like Sicily, although changing (Davis 1996), render mobilisation towards moral economies difficult. My research will address this.

Research methods

From January 2003 to August 2004 I volunteered in one of Palermo’s fairtrade shops. This gives me a range of local contacts to rely on for access. Palermo hosts two fairtrade shops linked to an alternative trade organisation importing the goods (ATO), which also sell local organic fresh produce. I will spend half of each week in a fairtrade shop and half at one of its organic suppliers, as a part-time employee or volunteer. If this arrangement proves unfeasible, I will divide my year of fieldwork in two, spending half at each location. In both cases I will take care to organize my schedule following the calendar of seasonal activities pursued by the actors. From the fairtrade shop I will network towards the ATO (currently only a warehouse). The choice of the organic farm will be liaised by my contacts, who will act as gatekeepers.

My previous academic training (see CV) and experience of the setting will be crucial for data collection. To answer the research questions I will use the following methods:

- participant observation and in-depth interviews with owners, workers, volunteers, customers, etc., to investigate questions a), b) and c);
- textual analysis of the actors’ ‘cultural production’ (dossiers, leaflets, press releases, adverts, etc.) to address questions a) and b);
- focus groups for question b) and d);
- participant observation and in-depth interviews with key informants for questions d), e) and f).

Relying on my contacts, I will join civic networks (NGOs, student groups, churches) playing an important role in the local moral economy, ‘snowballing’ towards such external arenas and back to my main sites, to elicit different perspectives (Edelman 2001).

In addition to the above, trend analysis based on *secondary* data from state bodies and sector organizations will help reconstruct past and present economic tendencies, allowing comparison with primary perceptions of the different contexts, to better situate qualitative data.

Timetable

Oct. 2006	Fieldwork: preliminary arrangements (e.g. selection of living quarters, of the fairtrade shop and organic farm, etc.)	Palermo, Italy	
Nov. 2006 – Sept. 2007	Fieldwork: data collection	Palermo, Italy	
	Nov. 2006 – Mar. 2007		Participant observation, qualitative interviews and other informal methods, to build rapport and trust with informants
	April - May 2007		Archival research and textual analysis
	June – Sept. 2007		Participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, more formal methods

Ethics and research permits

Perceptions and value-judgements of employers and workers, of those in different positions within hierarchical structures, and data on financial issues might prove sensitive. This project will therefore be carried out following the ASA *Ethical Guidelines 1999*. Particular attention will be paid to informed consent (section I, 4), honouring participants' trust and anticipating harms (I, 1-2), respecting rights to confidentiality and providing anonymity (I, 5), and to obligations towards employers (II, 2). No research permits will be required, given I have dual citizenship.

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