

# EDITORIAL

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*Sovereignty* is a special issue that emerged out of the conference panel titled *Sovereignty in an Unequal World* at the VANDA: Vienna Anthropology Days Conference 2018, which I have organized on behalf of the *Extreme Anthropology Research Network*. Others have joined us along the way, as the idea of this issue caught on.

In this issue, the reader will find a range of articles dealing with the concept and meaning of sovereignty, often from radically different perspectives. Kate Tudor has interviewed and researched the world of those convicted for their involvement in investment fraud, discovering that much of their acts of economic predation can be understood through the notion and desire for sovereignty that often turns toxic. Anthony Ellis and his colleagues draw us into the world of British tourists in Magaluf and their attempts at hedonistic escapes from everyday life that, however, often end up in dissatisfaction; and yet, submitting to the social power of consumer sovereignty, they repeat the very acts that bring them little real joy each year. Charles Beach transports us into the world of petrol smuggling and armed gangs at the border between Venezuela and Colombia, looking at how the local actors involved in smuggling view the state, moving to questions of political organizing and insurgent citizenship. Victor L. Shammass moves us into the world of theory, looking in depth at Bourdieu's panentheistic conception of the state, arguing that 'it is the task of the anthropologist to channel, interpret, and challenge the panentheistic state.' Mike Grimshaw continues these theoretical explorations by playfully dealing with the reflections and letters of Jacob Taubes to Carl Schmitt and proposing three counter-decisions to what he sees as Schmitt and Taube's central decision for homogeneity and dictatorial democracy. And finally, Cindy Zeiher brings jouissance and anxiety into the theoretical debate on sovereignty, arguing that sovereignty is necessarily grounded in extimacy, thus giving substance to the Bataille claim that even if sovereignty may be little more than an illusion, we are bound to keep pursuing it.

The essays in this volume offer more polemic perspectives. Victor L. Shammass casts a critical gaze at the novel modalities of punishment, such as those emerging in Norwegian 'open' prisons, involving entirely new forms of deprivation that we may call the pains of sovereignty; 'freedom-within-penal-constraint



comes to be experienced as frustrating, deceptive, and even dangerous.’ Tania Bulakh draws us with her vivid account into the conflict zone in eastern Ukraine, showing us the way in which people hit by the conflict experience a specific mode of sovereignty that emerges in the so-called ‘grey zone’ or ‘no man’s land,’ where state power is porous and yet tangible through the constant presence of military forces.

The book review section offers engaging reviews of the following books: *Reclaiming the State: A Progressive Vision of Sovereignty for a Post-Neoliberal World* by William Mitchell & Thomas Fazi, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* by Quinn Slobodian, and *Promises of the Political: Insurgent Cities in a Post-Political Environment* by Erik Swyngedouw.

And finally, to indulge the sense, we have included a photo essay by Henry Moncrieff that explores the manifestations of sovereignty in Venezuela, a radiophonic ethnodrama by Paul Antick and Jo Langton on the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and finally an ethnographic documentary movie by Laura Kuen and Yury Snigirev, *Our Freedom*, that explores local perceptions of freedom and sovereignty at the political periphery of Russia’s remote rural areas (please follow the inserted links to listen to the ethnodrama and view the movie). Thank you for reading!