



Fighting and fearing the Other: Notes for an anthropology of nefarious systems

Ruben Andersson

University of Oxford

Date: Jan 21st, 2021

Time: 14:00-15:00

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Abstract:

“Security” is proliferating from borders to the wars on terror and drugs. We urgently need to theorize its nefarious manifestations across scales, which anthropologists (and others) have started to do by examining the spatialization of security, its embeddedness in local and national narratives, and its “imperial” reach. In conversation with these literatures, I approach security through the lens of systems-making or systemization. Drawing on research among international interveners in the West African Sahel, I show how border, counterterrorism and other security interventions share certain systemic logics, foremost of which are the mobilization of fear and the transfer of risk. Circuits of fear and risk interact in perpetuating security systems with nefarious yet also beneficial consequences for the actors involved. The conflictive systemization of security escapes the full control of any one actor – requiring a transversal lens accounting for complexity and instability that may hold lessons for the study of other political interventions.

Biography:

Ruben Andersson is professor of social anthropology at the University of Oxford, and is the author of *Illegality, Inc.* (2014) and *No Go World* (2019).

Please [contact](#) Jennifer for any Teams connectivity issues: j.mcculloch@lancaster.ac.uk