

'Cultures of Ignorance: CFP, 17th World Congress of the IUAES, Manchester 2013'

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Jenny Diggins (Sussex) and I have just issued the following call for papers for a panel on the anthropology of ignorance, to be held at the IUAES Congress in Manchester next summer. Feel free to get in touch if you're considering submitting a proposal but want to discuss it first.

Call for Papers at the IUAES Congress, at the University of Manchester, 5th-10th August 2013

Panel Title : Cultures of Ignorance

Deadline for abstracts : 13th July 2012

It is nothing new for anthropologists to be curious about things that for us, as outsiders, are hidden from view. In Melanesia and West Africa, where concealed ritual practices are central in customary politics, "secrecy" has long been an ethnographic preoccupation. With elaborate systems of esoteric knowledge, these regions have proved particularly fertile ground for western scholars with a poetic preference for the other-worldly. However anthropologists have rarely paid attention to an indispensable condition of secret knowledge: the experience of ignorance.

When faced with culturally produced forms of not-knowing, the assumption has often been that we should set out to pierce that ignorance. According to this logic, it is only "by peering behind the facade that we see things as an insider rather than as outsiders and thereby discover the truth" (Gable 1997: 215). But does uncovering 'hidden truth' risk distorting the way in which our interlocutors experience (not)knowing in their daily lives?

This panel invites contributions which explore the question of ignorance from exactly the opposite direction; beginning with the recognition that ethnographers are often far from being the only people on the "wrong" side of this knowledge façade. The discussion will contribute to a small but growing body of work (reviews in Mair, Kelly & High 2012; McGoe 2012) that aims to take ignorance seriously – not simply as the absence of knowledge, but as an ethnographic object in its own right.

Convenors:

Jonathan Mair (Manchester University)

Jennifer Diggins (University of Sussex)

For more information, or to propose a paper, please follow this link:

<http://www.nomadit.co.uk/iuaes/iuaes2013/panels.php5?PanelID=1625>