

	MONDAY 18/06	TUESDAY 19/06	WEDNESDAY 20/06
09:30 10:00	CONFERENCE INTRO	INTRODUCTION BY CEH	
10:00 12:00	GENERICITY 1: ERODING RHYTHMS	CONCRETENESS 1: PRECARIOUS CONCRETIONS	KEYNOTE 3: PENNY HARVEY
12:00 13:00	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
13:00 15:00	GENERICITY 2: LIVING STANDARDS	CONCRETENESS 2: SMOOTH AND SOLID	SPECULATION 1: CONFLICTIVE INFRASTRUCTURES
15:00 17:00	KEYNOTE 1: OWEN HATHERLEY	KEYNOTE 2: ELI ELINOFF	SPECULATION 2: POWERFUL LABOUR

#### WHERE?

The entire conference will take place at the Moesgard Campus, in the Foredragsalen (Lecture Hall). Please note this is in the "old" building and NOT at the museum.

#### WHO?

Attendance is free and open to all. There is no need to inform us if you want to come for the Keynotes. For the rest of the conference, and if you are not presenting, please let us know if you wish to attend so we can make sure there is enough coffee and biscuits for everybody, and that the canteen can prepare enough food for lunch.

#### FOOD?

Presenters will be offered lunch on all three days, others will be able to buy food from the canteen or from the Museum restaurant, or they can bring their own food. Coffee and biscuits will be available during breaks. Please note that there is no other place near Moesgaard to buy food.

#### QUESTIONS?

For any question, please send an e-mail to [CONCRETEANTHROPOLOGY@GMAIL.COM](mailto:CONCRETEANTHROPOLOGY@GMAIL.COM)

## Keynote 1

### **The Politics of the Brutalist Commemorative Mugs:** Brutalist architecture in nostalgia and policy

Owen Hatherley

Brutalist architecture today is in a paradoxical situation. In Britain, where the term was coined, it is still blamed for social ills, with the former Prime Minister David Cameron recently referring to 'concrete walkways' that 'design in crime'; at the same time it has become incredibly fashionable. Seemingly dozens of coffee table books document what has survived, Tumblrs pile up inviolate images of untouched Brutalist buildings without people, mugs, teatowels, model kits and prints depict images and blueprints of British Brutalist landmarks, and the most 'iconic' Brutalist buildings are gentrified. Does any of this matter? One answer to this question would be to investigate what the politics of Brutalism were, before we can talk about what the politics of its gentrification might be. Brutalism emerged during the welfare state era, and in Europe especially became one of the architectural emblems of that era - and was heavily criticised in the 1980s for that reason. Today, the welfare state is close to being totally dismantled, and yet the architecture that accompanied it is more prized than at any time since the 1960s itself. But what were the politics imagined by the designers of, say, Robin Hood Gardens, Balfron Tower, Trellick Tower, the Barbican or the Alton Estate, and what influence did this have on how they conceived of their architecture? To what degree is the gentrification of this architecture an injustice, where working class housing is appropriated by the 'creative class', or is it merely an unsurprising bourgeois appropriation of an architecture that was always planned and promoted by bourgeois architects? Should these buildings be protected from privatisation and gentrification, in the context of an acute housing crisis?

## Keynote 2

### **Surface Tensions**

Eli Elinoff, Victoria University of Wellington

Anthropologies of concrete are often anthropologies of power—stories of highways that obliterate neighbourhoods, dams that decimate local ecologies, and high-rise buildings that displace local forms of sociality. Such stories seem to rest upon an imaginary of the material as a perfect authoritarian sealant, solidifying power into built forms that not only remake space but also seal off dissent. In this paper, I challenge this understanding of the material, using emerging trends in the anthropology of concrete that highlight the relationship between concrete's material properties and its socio-political properties to rethink our understanding of the material's relationship with power. Specifically, I explore the notion of surface tensions—often reflected in concrete's durability, whether it stabilizes or shrinks,

cracks, and deforms—to question the role the material has played in fomenting politics in Thailand’s authoritarian present. On the one hand, I describe how the Thai military has used infrastructure to refashion the country’s political landscape, considering how extensive construction has been fundamental to the Junta’s aims at dismantling Thai democracy. On the other, I show how rather than settling the military’s power, these projects have become precisely the sites in which the Junta’s claims to authority have cracked and splintered. By exploring various sites of infrastructural “surface tension” in contemporary Thailand, this talk explores how infrastructural power corrodes and what such corrosion can tell us about the relationship between politics and concrete more broadly.

Keynote 3:

**Lithic Vitality: Human Entanglement with Non-Organic Matter**

Penelope Harvey, Manchester University

Drawing on the contrasts between stone and concrete this paper interrogates the ways in which inorganic matter assumes vitality in human affairs. Ethnographic and historical sources from Andean Peru point to an enduring fascination with the personhood of mountains and the plant like qualities of stone. However a focus on what happens to the vitality of stone when it is incorporated into a man-made synthetic material such as concrete reveals discontinuities and incommensurable vitalities. Concrete promises fixity and stabilization, but the intrinsic sociality of the aggregates (stone and sand) and the transformations effected by the life processes in which the material is always embedded, blur distinctions between the organic and the non-organic. In the hands of an artist such as Anish Kapoor, concrete offers possibilities for exploring unconformity and entropy, the qualities of soft matter that challenge the hubris of pre-determined, categorical distinctions between natural and social worlds.

## GENERICITY 1: ERODING RHYTHMS

### **Porous Walls**

Cecil Marie Schou Pallesen, Aarhus University

Since 19th century, Indian merchants have left a considerable mark on many East African towns and cities. On the main road cutting through Moshi in Northern Tanzania, numerous buildings reminisce of the colonial period when Indians controlled the majority of businesses in the country and the town center were inhabited solely by Indians. Driven by strategies of Africanization, Tanzanian post-colonial government nationalized primarily Indian-owned companies and buildings. Today, the majority of buildings are owned by National Housing Corporation and host small-scale businesses run by Africans, and they are not being maintained properly. The concrete is crumbling and the walls are getting increasingly porous. For the former Indian owners, the porous walls are linked to a more fundamental porosity, which threatens the maintenance of the 'pure' Indian communities. In this paper, I show that the perishing concrete of Indian houses are connected to experiences of post-colonial harassment, bureaucracy, pollution, and marginalization, and I argue that the concrete houses accommodate national and personal trauma and thus form contested spaces encompassing complex and conflicting feelings and stories. Speaking from a future with a low level of Indian control of the market, they generate a growing Indian nostalgia, melancholia, and anxiety.

### **The Arrhythmia of Gray Clay**

Kali J. Rubaii, University of California, Santa Cruz

In 2015, the Joad family fled from their village farm when ISIS and the Iraqi army began military skirmishes on their land. Internally displaced people now living in Kurdish territory, they find themselves "saturated with cement." Like many of their counterparts, they live in a concrete construction site, work in a cement factory, play in piles of cement dust, cook food on cement cinderblocks, and walk through soil saturated with factory sludge. Ma Joad attempts to make a tannour bread oven in spite out of surrounding materials. As she does so, she and her family describe the ethical and material qualities of cement as "gray" and "arrhythmic." These qualities she affiliates with the reciprocal dynamic between displacement and ecological harm. Her attempts to make a tannour bread oven speak not only to molecular attunements among hands, salt, heat, and clay, but also to sweeping geopolitics in Iraq. As an ethnographic story, Ma

Joad's efforts enable a material semiotic assessment of concrete's role in displacement and dispossession by posing the following questions: How do cement's "grayness" and "arrhythmia" index displacement? What are the ethics of managing cement's qualities when it is so ubiquitous?

### **Listening to Concrete Moorings: Zones on Interaction on the Great Barrier Reef**

Matt Buttacavoli, James Cook University, Aarhus University

Few structures are allowed to be built on the coral reefs of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, off the coast of Queensland, Australia. Most of those structures that do get installed are concrete mooring blocks. During my fieldwork, mooring blocks were my entry to the reef environment. I listened from mooring blocks and listened to mooring blocks. In this paper, I argue that concrete, in the form of mooring blocks, creates an ambivalent zone of interaction between reef visitors and reef animals. Mooring blocks enable humans to swim amongst the fish, but the noisy technologies the mooring blocks support have the potential to disrupt those same reef communities.

## GENERICITY 2: LIVING STANDARDS

### **A concrete wall is like a blank canvas**

Eva Juul Toldam

The housing area Blåkildegård in Taastrup where I conducted fieldwork in 2012 (Toldam 2014) is built with modernistic ideals of *béton brut* – an honest architecture much vaunted by the late Le Corbusier. Not by the residents of the area though. On a broad scale, they articulated wishes of transformation and even cover up of the concrete buildings. Examples of material reactions to the concrete were attempts to transform the visual appearance of the area by planting flowers to contrast the grey concrete or to paint it. The resident Knud, a now retired sign painter, told a story of him one day being so fed up with the bare and brutal concrete walls that he decided to take matters in his own hands. He decorated two of the concrete walls with large colorful paintings. The kids and other residents loved the decorations. To Knud the bare concrete wall seemed unfinished almost like a blank canvas. It is hard to imagine the same scenario unfolding in a housing area built out of bricks, glass or wood. So why is it celebrated when concrete walls are painted whilst it is frowned upon if brick walls were treated the same way? What material, cultural and social factors affect the perception that concrete is not worth preserving?

### **Concrete development: destruction and distraction in the eastern Himalaya**

Mona Chettri, Aarhus University

The Himalayan border state of Sikkim, India is fast becoming littered with concrete structures built for varied intents and purposes. Religious themed parks, gigantic statues of Buddha and other ethnic/religious/cultural figures are being built by the state as a gesture of political support for different ethnic groups. These structures appease different ethnic groups who are viable vote banks whilst transforming villages and districts into popular tourist destinations, leading to public demands for concrete structures. On the other hand, large-scale hydro-power projects are being built across the rivers of Sikkim, which too promise economic development. Concrete, therefore has become the focal point of developmental initiatives of the state, gives hope for a better future to the citizens of the state and is used for resource extraction by private hydropower companies. Based on ethnographic research in Sikkim, the

paper focuses on firstly, the developmental narrative and visions of modernity which is based on the construction of concrete structures; secondly, the environmental destructions and cultural distractions which, although contradictory are central to this narrative; and thirdly, how concrete heralds the collusion of the state and private finance leading to the social and spatial transformation of a Himalayan frontier.

### **Everybody lives in concrete**

Jonas Strandholdt Bach, Aarhus University

“Everybody lives in it, but no one wants anything to do with it”. Those were the words of Aarhus-architect Søren Leth when he and two of his colleagues were interviewed in 2008 about concrete as building material and the works of deceased Aarhus-architect Knud Blach Petersen, who among other iconic buildings in Aarhus designed Gellerupparken in western Aarhus. Gellerupparken is today more famous for gang war, radicalization and a large immigrant population than its architecture, though the architecture (and infrastructure) are now also considered problematic to an extent where material transformations are deemed needed by municipality and housing organization in order to improve the social situation in the estate. During my fieldwork there, I have encountered both views demonizing the modernist concrete architecture and views that hail its functional potential and the beauty of its clean lines. As such, Gellerupparken serves as a ground for “dissension” (Dolff-Bonekämper 2002) and as a “social condenser” (Murawski 2017, Buchli 2017). In my presentation, I will contrast the views of residents with that of other residents and architects and municipal officials to illustrate how Gellerupparken and its concrete tenements serve as battleground for conflicting ideologies about both welfare and aesthetics.

CONCRETENESS 1:  
PRECARIOUS CONCRETIONS

**A comparative ethnographic examination of Arctic and Andean ecologies through concrete**

Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen, Aalborg University

This paper uses a comparative approach to ethnographically examine concrete as aggregation in two different ecologies: the city of Arequipa in Southern Peru, and the town of Qaanaaq in the High Arctic of Greenland. The ecological approach facilitates situating and analysing concrete alongside other materials and elements, such as sea ice, hunting technologies, animals, and skins in the case of Greenland, and water, soil, aridity, volcanos, and gentiles in the case of Peru. I ask what kind of layer concrete makes in two radically different social and environmental contexts?

What are the trajectories of concrete, and what trajectories do concrete facilitate? What desires and aspirations are folded into concrete forms, and how are these connected to dominance in these two environments? What can we learn about the present, past, and future of environments by examining them through concrete? What stories of environmental making and destruction can be told, and what kind of analytical trajectories does concrete afford in the telling of such stories?

The exploration will be visual and textual, and crafted with inspiration of materialist approaches to the study of social life and environments, emphasizing how concrete infrastructures literally materialize and project particular imaginaries (Harvey and Knox 2012; Kaika 2006).

**Limestone and concrete housing in the Himalayas.**

Heid Jerstad, Edinburgh University

How does the excavation of limestone from a mountain that people live on lead to grey-walled houses and also climate change? Concrete housing in Asia is now ubiquitous, shaping the landscape. Cement production accounts for 8% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. India is the second-largest producer of cement after China (Olivier et al. 2016:65). Trucks take the white rocks to the factory in the plains below where they are crushed, burned and emerge as grey dust in plastic sacks. Some of these are brought back up to the villages and mixed with water and sand to rise up as 'modern' concrete housing. Ordinary people in India are



demanding this concrete housing, but after building these houses, the villagers (and some who chose not to build) have mixed feelings about the material. This paper will follow a set of households in the Himalayas, their decisions, conflicts and reflections. Central to their concerns are the thermal properties of concrete as well as its temporal properties (of fixedness, weathering and degradation, resistance to reuse or earthquakes).

### **(Unen)Durable Decay: Conserving the Concrete Future at the Mackintosh Hill House**

Rachel Douglas Jones, IT University Copenhagen

In 1904, Charles Rennie Mackintosh used Portland Cement to complete his architectural vision for a Scottish domestic home on the wind and rain blasted west coast of Scotland. Believing the advertising rhetoric of the time, he liberally coated the local red sandstone in the latest wonder product, Portland Cement, a material that he believed would allow him to forego the usual architectural requirements for handling water. This departure from the lime renders more commonly used in Scotland meant that throughout the twentieth century, the cement caused endless problems, letting in water, soaking and eroding the underlying sandstone, and putting the interiors at continuous risk. In 2018, after a century of weathering and decades of discussions amongst heritage professionals, plans were announced to encapsulate the Hill House in a protective plastic bubble, while conservation work is carried out. This paper draws on fieldwork and interviews conducted with members of the National Trust for Scotland during 2013, particularly volunteers at the Hill House, the House manager and members of the visiting public, to discuss the social life of Portland Cement. As the deliberations of the time show, the cement poses a particular kind of heritage dilemma, from its early pioneering use to its failures as a material: keeping the authenticity of the cement risks losing the remainder of the house. As an anthropological account, arising out of a project concerning attitudes towards decay, the study analyses the politics of expertise that led to impasses around the concrete's conservation, resting in diverse commitments to versions of the authentic, and unfolds the aesthetic and material politics of conserving a vision for the future made in a material that gave form to modernism itself.

## **Converting Concrete into Capital:**

### **Columbia River Aluminum Production and the Manufacture of the U.S. Military Industrial Complex**

Heather Swanson, Aarhus University

For more than 70 years, Grand Coulee Dam, located in the U.S. Pacific Northwest, was the world's largest concrete structure, a title it lost only in 2012 to China's Three Gorges Dam. When it was built in 1933-1942 from more than 12 million cubic yards of concrete, Grand Coulee was heralded as the "Eighth Wonder of the World" and a triumph of modern engineering. But the U.S. government-funded construction project initially struggled to demonstrate financial returns. The multipurpose dam provided both agricultural irrigation water and electricity, but there were too few clients for both uses. In response, the U.S. government developed a strategy to convert the dam's concrete into capital by courting energy-intensive aluminum smelting companies with heavily subsidized power at rates far below what they offered to household consumers. As these companies set up factories in the region in the early 1940s, they were not only underwritten by cheap electricity, but also directly financed by government contracts, as the majority of aluminum they produced went to wartime contractors such as Boeing and Kaiser Shipyards. The aim of this talk is to explore the material intimacies of concrete and aluminum within the convoluted conversions of U.S. government contracting. How, it asks, does a mass of concrete in the middle of a river concretely contribute to the development of a mode of government-military-private business alliance that has come to have extensive world-making effects? The weightiness of concrete, I propose, can be better understood when it is explored in relation to the other materials it begets, such as light aluminum.

## CONCRETENESS 2: SMOOTH AND SOLID

### **Stone heart: the Eastern Peruvian concrete.**

Łukasz Krokoszyński, University of Warsaw

Riverine Eastern Peruvians assume that there are no stones in this tropical region, and that concrete, as ground stone (*piedra chanqueada*) and a 'chemistry' (*quimica*), is brought from the Andes. It is the 'noble material' (*material noble*). But what makes up the local 'concreteness' of concrete, or 'concrete mythology'?

In contemporary local construals, this material emerges as an attempted answer to the (Amazonian) problem with life. From regional ethnographic perspective, generations of Amazonians have been constructing sociality without cement, with what is conventionally referred to as hard and beautiful, 'vital' goods. Yet looking closely, they appear to be literally the reverse – answers to the human predicament structuring worldviews: the default deleterious differentiation that is the life process. Such noble goods stand for that which is lacking in life, the 'generic' which promises to elude natural erosion.

Similarly, modern concrete appears to be a solution acquired from the temporal or spatial 'beyond' (modernity, State) to the precarious status of (local) life. How do the forms assumed by concrete allow sensing the invisible shapes of 'nobility', or a hyper-tangible sublime that is modernity in an Amazonian town?

### **Concrete Graves on Baluan (PNG)**

Ton Otto, Aarhus University

TBA

### **On confinement: the material incompatibilities of cows and concrete**

Katy Overstreet

University of California Santa Cruz, Aarhus University

While helping Jan, a Wisconsin dairy farmer, to milk cows one morning in 2014, I noticed that one of her cows had a large gash on her hip. Jan told me that this particular cow had slipped on the concrete ramp between her newly

built confinement barn and the milking barn. The experience of working with and moving cows during my ethnographic dissertation fieldwork alerted me to the difficulties of concrete and manure; a combination that frequently leads to slippery conditions for both cows and humans. In addition, the tendency of dairy cows to spend far more time on concrete in light of the increasing confinement of cows, is coming to be understood as a major contributor to lameness in dairy cows. In response, farmers and agricultural engineers are experimenting with flooring variations. In addition, farmers and breeding consultants are working to address the impairment of cows on concrete through genomic-based breeding for specific foot and leg angles. In this paper I attend to the material incompatibilities of cows and concrete through textures of interaction: friction, porosity, density, and pressure.

### **Prometheus Earthbound: When Art and Science Collide in Concrete**

Rachel Antoinette Cypher

University of California, Santa Cruz

After sixteen months the oxygen level of Biosphere 2, the largest closed ecological system ever built, had plummeted to 14.5%. Because the corresponding increase in carbon dioxide did not appear, scientists around the world were flummoxed until several isotopic analyses revealed that concrete laid during Biosphere 2's construction was still curing, thereby sequestering carbon and oxygen. Through the author's child's-eye view of Biosphere 2's eventual demise, this paper examines the way in which the sequestration of oxygen and carbon dioxide within curing concrete challenges some of the most deep-seated beliefs we have about art and science. Through the lens of this humble yet surprising material, the paper examines the "curing" process and playfully grapples with the art/science divide by ending with a short re-write of one of the final plays performed by the Biospherians, "Prometheus Unbound."

## SPECULATION 1:

### CONFLICTIVE INFRASTRUCTURES

#### **Strengthening the De-Facto Border: Eradicating Concrete**

Mikel J.H. Venhovens, Aarhus University

The borderlands of the de-facto/semi-recognized state of Abkhazia take a unique position in the debate on borders due its insecure, anxious and contested nature. Especially as Abkhazian statehood has been established among the ruins of a violent conflict and afterwards has been left with the scars of non-recognition, contested statehood and unresolved conflict.

This paper will focus on how spatiality, or the eradication of it, contributes to the process in which de-facto entities, such as the Abkhazian government, strive to represent themselves as legitimate and tangible entities with spatial properties. It will explore the use and manipulation of space, place and territory in governing and laying claim to contested and disputed spaces through not only specific sets of images, metaphors and performative practices, such as military presence, walls, border control and barbed wire, but also through the modification and eradication of certain special borderization aspects. In this case there will be a specific focus on the eradication of concrete, such as roadblocks, military checkpoints and walls, which are deemed to be carrying out an unwanted narrative of illegality, anxiety and frozen conflict.

#### **Cement in Land disputes in Northern Uganda**

Lotte Meinert, Aarhus University

Cement pillars and graves play significant roles as land markers in disputes over land in postconflict northern Uganda. Contemporary land cases from Acholi and Ikland display different histories of land use and conflict. In Acholi, cemented graves constitute concrete indices of belonging in wrangles. In Ikland, national nature authorities have brought cement pillars into the landscape. In this paper we explore how cemented graves and cement pillars are used for land claims in societies affected by conflict and displacement and how articulations of belonging are created, with the specific materiality of cement signaling modernity, permanence, and inflexibility.

## **"Concrete Soldiers": T-walls in Iraq**

Kali J. Rubaii, University of California, Santa Cruz

Used in counterinsurgency, base-making, and rapid landscape transformation, t-walls are a military technology with simultaneous local and transnational reach. They appear and more frequently in civilian contexts across the globe, normalizing the militarization and segmentation of social terrains. These blast-proof concrete segments, integral to wartime segregation in Europe, were introduced to the Middle East to generate "ideal" landscapes for pacifying insurgency in Palestine, Iraq, and Kurdistan.

T-walls are often theorized as a barrier technology that segregate spaces and produce or concretize borders. I argue that, rather than mark the edge, t-walls mark the middle of occupied territories, pulling symbolic, material, and political attention to loci of militarism.

In this paper, I show how t-walls, introduced to the Iraqi landscape in 2003, have generated a new opening for mutual exposure between counterinsurgency operatives from Europe and the US and Anbari "farmer-fighters." With opposing sentiment about the technology, both parties generate a semiotic and moral value for t-walls by erecting or destroying them, rearranging them, painting on them, etc.. and by doing so, tighten the tensions of their mutual entanglement with one another. This paper offers theoretical and strategic insights for organizing against the proliferation of military technologies like t-walls by reconsidering their underlying function and meaning.

## SPECULATION 2: POWERFUL LABOUR

### **Concrete against the state: Abusivismo edilizio on the island of Lampedusa**

Laust Lund Elbek, Aarhus University

The island of Lampedusa is Italy's southernmost piece of territory, and like so many other places in Italy's southern provinces, the practice of illegal construction (abusivismo edilizio) is widespread – indeed, such illegal construction is arguably but one instantiation of the relatively weak grip of state power in the country's South (Zanfi 2013). Specifically, illegal construction has exploded on Lampedusa since the 1980s, when the island saw a veritable boom in

tourism. To accommodate the influx of visitors, locals quickly built a large amount of concrete hotels and apartment complexes, often on publicly owned land with the (implicit) consent of the local administration. In addition to reflecting a historically rooted ethos of self-reliance, not involving authorities in construction projects has several advantages for the locals such as avoiding taxation and not risking rejection due to e.g. environmental concerns. In general terms, concrete has been linked to the emergence of modern state power because of its association with large-scale projects of homogenization (Harvey 2010, 30). On Lampedusa, however, concrete appears to be a material that cements a history of weak ties to central power and lends itself well to local entrepreneurs used to “flying below the radar” in the very periphery of Italian state space.

### **Sand and socio-material relations in change in Northern Kenya**

Nanna Jordt Jørgensen, Københavns Professionshøjskole

Concrete is today the most widely used building material in the world, produced from cement, stones, water - and lots of sand. In Kenya, due to a growing economy and increasing urbanisation and population growth resulting in a booming construction sector, the importance of sand as a resource is on the rise. Hence, the brown-yellowish sand of riverbeds in Northern Laikipia has become the foundation of a livelihood practice, gained increasing economic importance in areas until recently dominated by pastoral economies.

This presentation discusses how sand mining changes socio-material relations in pastoral communities in Laikipia. Sand mining is founded on and brings about new ways of seeing the landscape, which interact with educational expe-

riences and cause generational and gendered conflicts. Sand mining generates an influx of cash to communities, appreciated by most people, but the activity also destroys natural water storing areas, thereby enhancing women's workload in the dry season, and it causes erosion of pastures, thus threatening pastoral livelihoods and becoming a curse to the community, according to elders. Hence, young men who involve in loading and selling sand, and the interactions between sand and young male bodies tends to become a matter of concern in the community.

### **Leveraging Concrete to Cement Class in the Amazonian Settler Colony**

Victor Cova, Aarhus University

Until the 1960s, the Spanish-descendent inhabitants of Macas, Ecuador, had very similar lifestyles to the indigenous Shuar people they had been fighting against for the past few centuries. Their houses looked the same because they were made out of the same materials following very similar techniques, they ate similar foods and used similar plants to cure themselves. Over the past sixty years, their way of lives have significantly diverged, as had the conflict that opposes them. In this paper, I argue that the settlers leveraged concrete, as a specific construction technology, to turn themselves into a capitalist class. Professionalisation, investment in machinery, and the construction of commercial and private rental property are some of the most important mechanisms that make it possible for these settlers to assert and maintain a dominant economic and political position in the region. As a result, even when indigenous people get elected to important positions they must rely on settlers to carry out construction work.

### **Concrete Paradoxes of the Anthropocene.**

Cristian Simonetti, Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile

Concrete is an excellent material to think the place of humans in earth history. Concrete is not only the most highly produced and consumed building material in human history but a significant contributor to global carbon emissions, a contribution practically unknown to most city dwellers. Like the phenomenon of time, to which we are accustomed and depend but hardly understand, concrete is a familiar stranger of modern life in the Anthropocene. A number of similar oxymoronic terms define its place in human geology. Concrete has been regarded by the industry as an artificial stone, patented in Victorian times, and a solid fluid, responsible for the quick dissemination of a "durable" infrastruc-



ture on which modern life could "finally" distance itself from nature. Grounded on ethnographic work with workers, geologists and engineers in limestone (cement's main ingredient) and cement (concrete's glue) production labs, the article reflects on the unstable crafting of modern hopes through concrete. I argue that in the standardization of concrete forms, from the mining of its constituents to its use in construction, homogenous quantities of substance are produced, often at the costs of erasing heterogeneous qualities in earth history and manual labour.