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# Neoliberalism, universities, and anthropology around the world: introduction

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## INTRODUCTION

The idea for this dossier began with a conversation over one of those long breakfasts given at conferences. It was 2014 and the blows of the 2008 economic crisis were still being felt strongly. There was growing concern in the academic field over the advancement of neoliberalism and its effects, especially given its part in the 2008 crisis and the ensuing proliferation of “austerity politics,” which included a range of policies that were implemented as intended solutions to the economic downturn in many parts of the planet (Knight and Stewart 2016; Narotzky and Besnier 2014; Narotzky and Goddard 2016; Powers and Rakopoulos 2019). Austerity policies generated new ways of understanding the future (Bryant and Knight 2019; Narotzky and Besnier 2014), new forms of employment, and new ways of living (Fernández Álvarez and Perelman 2020; Narotzky 2018).

Thus, conferences began to debate not only the growing precariousness of growing sectors of the world population, but also the growing precariousness of the academic sphere (Heatherington and Zerilli 2017; Loher *et al.* 2019). The neoliberalization of the academy is not a new process, but through a reduction of state charges, positions, and financing the process has become increasingly visible in recent times.

Different countries and academies across the globe have been impacted by “the crisis” in disparate ways. In each of our countries, the situation was different. In Argentina – where Perelman works and lives – for example, the government, led by Christina Fernandez de Kirchner (2007-2015), enacted a series of countercyclical measures that helped lessen the blow of the global recession. Accordingly, the higher education and research systems continued to grow during this period. The opposite trend became apparent in the United States and several European countries. In the US – where Dominguez works and lives – state budgets were slashed, enrollment declined, and tuition rates continued to skyrocket, leading to a contraction of the academic job market and shift toward adjunct, non-tenured labor (GAO 2017).

The conversation over breakfast sparked debates over the character of academic systems in a broad sense, which made us realize the knowledge that exists within our discipline. Public and private institutions; inclusive and exclusionary education schemes; and pressures to divide time between teaching, management, and research coalesce in different ways in which the institutional framework marks the tasks of our discipline and anthropological work. All these institutional functions and operations have been shaped by neoliberal policies that different governments, corporations, international agencies, economists, and ordinary people implemented or struggled to implement. All of this forms part of our discipline, traveling in complex ways through what some anthropologists call the “cores” and “peripheries” of anthropology,

which constitute disciplinary practice (Ribeiro and Escobar 2006; Ribeiro 2014).<sup>1</sup>

A quick review of the literature allows us to appreciate the ways in which education systems generate forms of human action. The neoliberalization of the academy is entrenched in the makeup of education systems on a national level, guided by general trends in “education” and “science” in each country. This is an important point because state policies regulate access to both the university and the broader scientific system. In Argentina, for instance, citizens are granted access to free public education at all levels (from primary schools to post-doctoral programs), which has given thousands of first-generation students access to research. In other countries, higher education may similarly be public and free, but access remains restrictive in terms of government quotas that set the entry threshold (*e.g.*, vestibular examinations in Brazil and income restrictions in France).<sup>2</sup> Thus, the ability to enter universities and dedicate oneself to research in some countries requires an “excellent” training that ultimately reinforces the perceived uniqueness of individual researchers.

The modes through which the “world university” is constituted also have an impact on academic life and research processes. In the United States, for example, admission standards, tuition costs, and other barriers limit accessibility. In countries with many different types of universities across the nation, moving away from home to study and work is much more common than in places like Argentina. For example, most researchers in Argentina are employed by the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (Conicet). Researchers may be employed in a national scientific career but must have a “workplace” at another institution which may or may not be dependent upon Conicet. This makes it possible to change workplaces within the same city or to move to another province of the country. Similarly, research careers do not require teaching or managerial responsibilities to be mandatory job duties. Additionally, in terms of trade union membership, Conicet researchers – unlike researchers in national universities – are civil employees employed by the state. All these factors have an impact on academic work in terms of wages, labor demands, and working conditions.

There are, of course, global conditions that cross scientific fields. One such trend is the production of an “audit culture”, which generates specific forms of ethics, means of control, and measures of “excellence” (Shore and Wright

1 See, for example, <http://www.ram-wan.net/>.

2 A brief temporal note is necessary. At the end of 2023, Milei won the elections in Argentina with an ultra-neoliberal project that is affecting the scientific system and free and universal education. It has been publicly stated that Conicet has failed and that the Social Sciences and Humanities are not funded by the State. See for example Vessuri (2024).

2015; Strathern 2000) that acquire particularities within each country (Green 2016). Local histories, traditions, and structures shape the production of knowledge. This volume seeks to navigate these complex processes. In doing so, we turn to one of the central parts of the anthropological gaze: the part that seeks to denaturalize and contextualize social practices. By linking our different experiences, this volume aims to reflect upon our academic and professional practices in a more plural manner.

As Dominguez and French (2020: 2-4) say, anthropologists do a wide variety of things when we investigate. In this volume we are interested primarily in discussing and comparing the ways in which anthropologists do anthropology across the globe. This includes thinking about the ways in which anthropologists research, read, teach, engage in public debates, manage institutional bureaucracies, participate in social movements, publish articles, obtain funding, find employment, and navigate professional networks.

This dossier presents articles about (and from) Kenya (Ntarangwi), Mexico (Reygadas), Spain (Reigada), the United States (Urciuoli) and Hong Kong (Mathews). A joint reading demonstrates the ways in which these conditions, as described above, manifest at the national (and local) levels within nations. The texts illustrate the multifaceted processes that give rise to neoliberalization (and that are not solely a consequence of neoliberalization). The articles underscore the various dimensions as part of both the implications of conducting anthropological research in each country and the institutional and social dynamics that shape our work.

As Marx (1978: 595) warned, “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past”. The structures that condition us are unavoidable. In the academy, we also deal with logics typical of the different institutions where we work, avatars of local and international politics, and what we might think of as the global scientific community. Human actors themselves reproduce these frameworks, implement rules, and enforce or change policies. Our argument here is that anthropology is what anthropologists do. What we do is complex and involves observation at different scales. A look at different academies allows us to understand this multi-scalar framework and consider the impacts of institutional traditions, higher education policies, and ways of doing science.

The ways of doing science have been transformed by the ascent of an “audit culture” (something we could define as the urgent drive to publish or perish) and it has had profound effects on the anthropology we practice. Fieldwork has a central role. Guber (2016) has suggested, for example, that we usually hide some distinctive marks of our discipline – fieldwork – in texts and professional CV’s:

“there must be several reasons for our main instance of knowledge production to remain hidden or silenced in a discipline with such a powerful empirical basis and personal involvement of its doers. It occurs to me that ‘international’ charges for the advancement of science have a lot to do with all this: constantly publishing, as far as possible, in good journals with double-blind and state-of-the-art review, published in English, that as far as possible rank in the first quartile (that is why they are top), where, in the publications of the great academic publishers, the important discussions of THE discipline are supposed to take place.” (2016: s/p)

Guber raises an argument that we believe should be taken into account while also recognizing that it is not possible to reduce the current state of the discipline to the influence of audit culture.

#### THE PRACTICE OF ANTHROPOLOGY IN NEOLIBERAL TIMES

A 2014 article on neoliberalism in the *Annual Review of Anthropology* by Tejaswini Ganti started out with the following abstract. Neoliberalism, it says,

“has been a popular concept within anthropological scholarship over the past decade; this very popularity has also elicited a fair share of criticism... Although neoliberalism is a polysemic concept with multiple referents, anthropologists have most commonly understood neoliberalism in two main ways: as a structural force that affects people’s life-chances and as an ideology of governance that shapes subjectivities. Neoliberalism frequently functions as an index of the global political-economic order and allows for a vast array of ethnographic sites and topics to be contained within the same frame. However, as an analytical framework, neoliberalism can also obscure ethnographic particularities and foreclose certain avenues of inquiry.” (Ganti 2014: 89)

This dossier was always going to be about the work anthropologists do at this time throughout the world, but it is interesting to us that so much of it focuses on the current state of governmental economic policy and how it affects universities in general and anthropology in particular. Many of our contributors frame the issue as the impact of neoliberalism on universities and through universities on anthropology. They do so unhappily, that is to say critically, and they elaborate on the issues affecting academic life, academic departments, general university budgets, university reactions to those policies, publishing, and what all this means for the practice of anthropology today. Much of it has to do with forms of counting and measuring (or what Marilyn Strathern has long called audit culture). But much of it also compares

the situation today with the situation in earlier periods when value was determined in different ways. That our contributors contrast earlier times with these new conditions of anthropological work is noteworthy. It is in many ways a reminder that the current situation is not the only possible situation and that it doesn't really take that many years to see change in the making. For example, Susana Narotzky (2016: 76) argues that today's neoliberal format gave way to "the idea that the university is an environment where knowledge that is collectively being created for the common good is sidelined".

In many ways, we wish it were a situation affecting only one or two countries. But we went into this project fairly certain that many more were affected yet unsure of the details of each case, how anthropology was affected, and how we could write about it. As a result, we reached out to several colleagues around the world and asked them to write about anthropological work in the present. When the papers started coming in, it became clear that our colleagues did not want to consider anthropology in a vacuum, and the context of their discussion was in all cases the effect of neoliberalism on anthropologists, the training of younger generations of anthropologists, and the practice of anthropological research. In some cases, the emphasis was on the impact of neoliberal policies on universities – sometimes by country and sometimes by region – but in other cases the emphasis was on the impact of neoliberal ideas on other things – foundations, publishing, and the value of research.

Value looms large here. Whether we are talking about different countries, the message is really about value, how value is determined, how it used to be determined, how it is now determined, and who should be trusted with any decision about value. Many people think that the issue is about measurements of value, an overemphasis on numbers, and the skills needed to contemplate those measures. But we think that is a consequence of something much deeper and it is evident if we take all the essays in this volume as food for thought.

We live now in an era that is more instrumental than other eras have been, or than our contributors believe existed even in recent decades. Governments, administrators, and many members of the cultural, economic, and political elites of many countries want education in fields that are in demand, and they believe these to be in science, technology, math, and engineering. But it is not just that they believe these fields are in demand. It is also that they believe these fields pave the way to a future that will demand them. Many parents and indeed many students want their university education to prepare them for jobs right after they get their first university degrees. That means that jobs, skills, and immediacy matter more than learning to think about issues, developing ways of thinking about issues, and developing what in many of the human sciences is simply called "critical thinking".

This pushes us as anthropologists to think on different scales. On the one hand, there is some consensus on the futility of theories that focus on careers



based on individual achievements (meritocracy). No doubt, we can encounter discourses and practices where themes of individual progress are prominent. We carry this as well in our own practice in relation to academic politics that reify merit as a basis for occupational advancement. We find it difficult to reflect on our role in perpetuating the same structures that we critique. Although we recognize the importance of institutions in disciplining subjects and practices, we also buy into the idea that professional competence and achievement are a consequence of individual merit. How, then, do we deal with the growing hegemony of meritocratic, rationalist, and normalizing discourses?

Anthropology is not the only field affected, but it is, nonetheless, deeply affected. If we ask the question in terms of value, the question would then be whether anthropology has any value at all. We could, of course, rephrase this and ask whether neoliberalism is challenging the value anthropology had, or even whether neoliberalism is causing us to think more deeply about the way anthropology acquired its value, has maintained its value, or should change in order to be of value in the current regime.

Anthropology, of course, is a discipline with significant subdisciplines within it, especially in the US and Canada. To the extent that biological anthropology interacts with geneticists, medical practitioners, and biologists of many kinds, it is only partly affected by what we see happening to social, cultural, political, linguistic, and economic anthropologists. This is also true to a lesser extent of anthropological archaeologists, some of whose methods fit well with the STEM fields. Some anthropological archaeological work resembles architecture and art history more, and instrumental quantitative work is too narrow in scope for their inquiries.

But most of the impact we see – and that our contributors see here – concerns the teaching and practice of ethnography, the writing of long monographs on subjects that may not have obvious immediate relevance to the political, cultural, economic, and linguistic elites in many of our countries, the learning of languages spoken by small communities of people, and the championing of causes that often require criticism of existing ideological and governmental practices. To relegate anthropological training to manuals with checkboxes or secondary training of employees of large corporations seeking to learn cultural understanding or sensitivity in a few weeks would be to ignore much of what anthropologists have learned over the years. There is rigor in what anthropologists do, but it is not the rigor demanded by the new regime.

Cultural imperialism was a phrase used a few decades ago to describe the entitlements and practices of people in some prosperous countries *vis-à-vis* people elsewhere, but we wonder if it might not be a useful phrase now, too, modified in some ways but still sharp in other ways (Tomlinson 1991). That possibility rings true to our ears, but it is just a thought. If we were to use it now, it would not be the US, the UK, France, and Japan that came to mind.



It would be the market mentality, the rush to measure outcomes, the push to standardize and universalize value that are now so widespread around the world. What if neoliberalism were a form of cultural imperialism itself, spreading its assumptions and its notions of value to the workplace, the academy, and the world of publishing around the world?

One might ask how this spread is occurring and even what its characteristics are. It is interesting that the term is both so popular among anthropologists and so polysemic, as Ganti puts it. Something is going on in many places that demands a name and a description but also a critique. We are of the view that just because something is polysemic it is not just imagined.

David Harvey (2007: 2) described neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade”.<sup>3</sup> Notice that this description stresses freedom, entrepreneurship, skills, institutions, private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The last few on this list are common to earlier forms of capitalism, but the first few smack of ideas currently in vogue among political and economic elites around the world. So, while it may be true that the term “neoliberalism” is polysemic, it is not true that forms found in numerous countries today lack what Wittgenstein used to call “family resemblances”.

Consider Boas and Gans-Morse’s (2009) findings. They did a content analysis of usage of the term “neoliberalism” in 148 academic journals published between 1990 and 2004. They published those findings with three main messages: (1) that despite an evident profusion of academic articles on neoliberalism during the 1990’s and early 2000’s, they were unable to find “a *single* article focused on the definition and usage of neoliberalism” in their search; (2) that “neoliberalism” has become a ubiquitous, albeit fuzzy, concept within social science and humanities disciplines, serving as somewhat of a catchall term for a host of political economic practices that have proliferated across the globe since the 1970s, and that (3) there were, nonetheless, a few central tenets of neoliberal governance that these articles captured, and that these included the promotion of free-market exchange and free trade, privatization, and deregulation (Harvey 2007; Shear and Hyatt 2017).

Boas and Gans-Morse capture that seeming paradox well, but we are especially interested here in its impact on anthropology around the world. Will anthropology survive? Must anthropology change? Is anthropology already changing? Must anthropology resist all the changes brought about by the spread of neoliberalism? Can anthropology be improved and, if so, how?

3 Regarding neoliberal practices in US higher education/anthropology, see Kuwayama (2017), Kim (2009), Riner (2017), Shear and Hyatt (2017), and Shore (2010).

Is there something about the current climate that demands anthropological reflection, or is anthropology just hopelessly old-fashioned and *ipso facto* only worthwhile as one example of a 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century intellectual practice?

These are big questions. They are also largely phrased in the negative. This should not come across as surprising. Anthropologists in many places in the world feel attacked or undermined, and this time not by those 1980's and 1990's criticisms of the field that focused on anthropology as the handmaiden of colonialism, or anthropology as a controversial form of othering. The criticism this time is of anthropology's value, defined outside anthropology as the usefulness of anthropological training, publishing, pedagogy, and research. It is compared to fields like engineering and computer science, seen as hallmarks of political, individual, medical, and economic life in the next few decades. That anthropologists are often critical of their governments' policies and practices is part of the issue. The kind of research most commonly done by anthropologists calls many certainties and assumptions into question, and anthropologists, like journalists, think that such questioning is important. We could, of course, phrase this in neoliberal terms and say that such questioning is useful to our societies and their visions of themselves. But this is usefulness in a broader sense and a more social sense. When anthropologists talk about social justice, environmental justice, and racial justice, they may be critiquing armies, the police, legislation, and institutions that anthropologists see as getting in the way of social justice, environmental justice, and racial justice. Governments and corporations may not want to hear (or read) those critiques, but perhaps the not-so-distant future will benefit from anthropologists continuing to question the certainties and assumptions made today but not necessarily made tomorrow.

The list of countries covered here, and the issues developed here by our contributors show both the variety and the breadth of impact of the contemporary ideology and practice of liberalism on anthropology. It is clearly not exhaustive. Hong Kong, Kenya, Mexico, Spain, and the United States are just cases or examples of how neoliberalism affects anthropology, but they indeed show the depth and breadth of this current ideology and practice. Notice that these cases are from four continents. We believe, though, that few countries escape the current situation, and that this is quite remarkable, since countries long associated with capitalism are included, but so are countries less associated with capitalism.

Others have written about neoliberalism, but here we address the work and value of anthropologists around the world both inside and outside the context in which it now operates. Across the globe, decades of slashed university budgets – a product of the devaluation of public services and federal deregulation – have propelled the adoption of neoliberal reforms in higher education in general and these have clearly affected anthropologists employed by universities

and those trained in universities to be anthropologists. To offset declines in public funding, many universities have incrementally raised student fees and tuition costs, thereby passing off the financial burden to students. University leaders in many countries, and certainly in the US, have come to rely upon private revenue streams, giving rise to a host of private sector partnerships, think tanks, and subsidized start-ups. These partnerships can have the dual effect of outsourcing critical research operations to private companies and pressuring academics to seek private-sector support, opening potential conflicts of interest that place the integrity of research at risk. One of those things our contributors show and explore in depth is the impact this has on anthropologists.

The long-term trend toward privatization in many national contexts has reshaped the bureaucratic structure of academic institutions in accordance with a top-down corporate administrative and managerial model. Public and private universities are now often run by governing boards frequently dominated by individuals with expertise in business and finance (Taylor 2017). Rather than valuing education as a public service or as the training of future adult citizens, university leaders now frequently assess value in terms of the marketability and profitability of research and learning in a competitive “knowledge economy.” This does not work exactly the same way in all countries, since higher education has been structured differently in many settings, but it is amazing to see the convergence now that so much of the world is dealing with, adapting to, and/or internalizing neoliberalism. There is indeed a relentless drive to obtain a competitive edge and this imbues institutional bureaucracy with an entrepreneurial agenda that privileges efficiency and market value over research integrity. It also diminishes the value of academic labor and enables the proliferation of unregulated markets within the knowledge economy.

Faculty members and (post)graduate students tasked with fulfilling the core mission of higher education in accordance with neoliberal value systems are left struggling to churn out publications to meet the “publish or perish” criteria of tenure review. It is, of course, true that universities vary now, and have long varied, in what is required for a university position, how many courses professors teach a year, how often those courses meet, how many publications they are expected to have at each stage of their careers, and even how much they earn. But the point is that things have changed in every case, because efficiency and competitiveness have become the valued norm. This affects grant-getting, citation metrics, university ranking systems, pay, and privileges. And this is part of what Marilyn Strathern has called the contemporary world’s “audit culture,” but it is about much more than counting.

The composition of faculty in U.S. colleges and universities has witnessed profound changes as university administrators have strategically sought ways to maximize labor output and exploit labor hierarchies in academia. In fact,

78% of faculty members at postsecondary institutions in the US held full-time appointments in 1970, but there have been sharp declines since then. Contingent workers now make up about half of the total faculty workforce in the US, and there is so much concern about this that European and US colleagues now talk a great deal about contingency, precarity, and part-time vulnerable work among people in the humanities and softer social sciences, like anthropology. Many universities simply rely on exploitable pools of adjunct or part-time instructors, and (post)graduate student teachers are forced to assume a sizeable burden of critical teaching and research duties without guaranteed job security, fair pay, or benefits.

### ITS HISTORY

Where did all this come from? Our research shows that it rose to prominence in the decades following World War II and primarily in economics, but it has clearly since then spread far and wide, affecting many sectors of the economy, including higher education and research. Its ascent marked a paradigm shift, breaking away from earlier Keynesian economic principles that lauded certain forms of market regulation in response to problems like unemployment. Neoliberalism called for a style of free-market trade that envisioned economic markets as self-regulating entities that thrived best in the absence of government intervention.

While there is no uniform set of policies or universal institutional model that defines this globalized economic ethos, we do note that a few central tenets of neoliberalism have become quite widespread. These include, as noted above, the promotion of free-market exchange and free trade, privatization and deregulation (Harvey 2007; Shear and Hyatt 2017). Although the term was initially closely associated with the domain of economics, neoliberal ideas also became deeply entrenched in a political and cultural ideology that brought hyper-individualistic, business-oriented belief systems into the mainstream. Part of the difficulty in defining neoliberalism, then, is that it has resulted in a complex array of cultural ideals and political practices. As Orta (2020: 13) points out in his ethnographic study of US business programs, economic practices are, of course, “wholly cultural,” meaning that they “are shaped by a wider cultural milieu and they participate in the shaping of particular kinds of subjects”. Neoliberal reforms in higher education have accordingly restructured both the business and culture of academic life.

Existing research on the culture of higher education in the neoliberal era highlights the various ways in which global capitalism has affected the language, beliefs, and aims of the academy (Brown 2016; Kim 2009; Kuwayama 2017; Riner 2017; Shear and Hyatt 2017; Shore 2010). This dossier explores the manifold ways in which the globalization of neoliberalism has infected

the culture of academic life and the principal mission of institutions of higher learning.

While many university professors and researchers have become indoctrinated (through perceived need or accommodation) into a labor system that overvalues austerity, privileging efficiency, and cost-reduction over academic freedom (Di Leo 2017), many obviously have not. Our contributors are finding creative ways of looking at the changes and challenging them. We include here essays that focus on research, essays that focus on disciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching, essays that focus on changes in anthropological practice due to changes in standards of value, and essays that focus on a redefinition of teaching at a university level, including talk of outcomes, skills, and preparedness for the job market. All in all, we ask questions of the impact of the current neoliberal “knowledge economy” on what anthropologists do, how anthropologists are valued, and what anthropologists themselves value.

These and other questions are explored in more detail in this collection. Mwenda Ntarangwi, for example, is a Kenyan anthropologist trained in the US and now directing an important institution in Nairobi. He reflects on what anthropologists are trained to do and what universities now want anthropologists to do. He thinks about turning our skill of studying and understanding people into one of managing and/or leading people in this era of neoliberalism. As leaders, he argues, we learn to navigate bureaucratic structures of governance and management and make decisions that in one way or another shape the lives and even careers of individuals working under our supervision and oversight. But what do we really know about anthropology or anthropologists within leadership or administrative circles? Are anthropologists, he asks, by virtue of their training in engaging with people in diverse but close relations, adept at leadership and administrative duties? He explores the intersection between leadership practices shaped by close associations with individuals with anthropological training and work and assumed relationships between senior leaders and their junior staff in a system of high power distance and hierarchy, and he argues for an intersection between performing and learning leadership as an anthropological exercise in this neoliberal era.

Urciuoli writes here about the impact of neoliberal ideologies in the US world of higher education, focusing on good four-year colleges like the one in which she taught for decades. This is not, of course, the first time she has explored and critiqued some of those changes, but it is still important to include her analysis here both as a description and critique of the deep (and often unseen) impact of neoliberalism in US higher education. Indeed, she shows how, in both universities and liberal arts colleges in the US, neoliberal ideology (that is, the belief that all social life should operate in terms of market values and market logic) plays out through the imposition of marketing regimes with students cast as both products and consumers. This essay exam-

ines how a top-down marketing mosaic embedded in administrative policies has transformed student life in modern US higher education. And she explores how anthropology is perceived and valued in a small, private liberal arts college, and how, viewed from different institutional perspectives outside and within that college, the discipline takes on different values. Anthropology programs, she argues, might be used as a lens to give students an understanding of the neoliberal conditions in which undergraduates learn to value themselves as bundles of skills and learn to prove their value to the school by becoming those skills bundles. But, of course, she goes further. The neoliberal logic woven into marketing and branding practices, she shows, undervalues the very notion of an undergraduate liberal arts major, but anthropology programs can actually use this in their teaching and training.

Alicia Reigada in Seville gives us a wonderful look at the Spanish public university system and through it at the impact of neoliberalism on the European Union. She describes the new era and how it is characterized by profound change and social tension as a result of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 1999 and the subsequent implementation of the reforms set out in the Bologna Declaration. These reforms, she argues, were consistent with a political economic model of a society based on market globalization, a belief in technological innovation as progress, profitability, and competitiveness as objectives as well as the principles of efficiency, excellence, and quality. Her essay also shows the subordination of public policies to the interests of the market, the privatization of public services or their functioning within the logics of business management, and the segmentation and precariousness of the labor market in Spain. This essay addresses the main transformations and foundations of the new political economic model on and of public universities in Spain, as well as the implications for the reproduction of social anthropology. Hence, her analysis focuses just as much on the present as it does on the future. Specifically, the essay focuses on two dimensions of the institutional framework that have a special impact on teaching and research practice in universities: the strategic focus of research policy and labor regulations and employment conditions.

Hong Kong is, of course, both a special case and a good example of the spread of neoliberalism. Its relationship to the United Kingdom has changed over the past few decades but so has its relationship to the People's Republic of China. Anthropology has thrived there over the years, including at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where Gordon Mathews has been based for many years. But will it continue to thrive there? That is not clear at all, and Mathews deals with the past, present, and future of anthropology in that context. He argues that global transformations brought about by the adoption of neoliberal ideologies in higher education there have reshaped anthropology as well as other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. These transformations,



he writes, are driven by an obsession with global rankings which creates an “audit culture” in which professors are constantly being measured and evaluated by a set of corporate global norms. Aside from global pressures, distinctly national and local interests affect the production and relevance of anthropological knowledge there as well as in various other societies. This, he argues, in many cases hampers anthropology and other disciplines in the arts and social sciences. In this essay, he explores these counteracting pressures in the context of Hong Kong, his home society, as well as China, a society he knows well through research and teaching. His comparative framework focuses on understanding the structure of anthropological instruction, academic freedom, and neoliberal research metrics in both contexts. The essay reflects on the current state of anthropological scholarship in Hong Kong and mainland China, shedding light on the discipline’s potential trajectory under the specter of ongoing protests and looming uncertainties over Hong Kong’s political autonomy.

Luis Reygadas writes about the deteriorating conditions of work for anthropologists in Mexico and why that is so. He draws on data gathered in the *Historical Catalogue of Theses on Social Anthropology in Mexico* and the *Survey on Professional Practice and Working Conditions of Anthropologists in Mexico*. The changes affect both younger and more established anthropologists in Mexico. Much of this essay is quantitative, and some readers may prefer that kind of data. Reygadas makes the case that this deterioration is important because it now affects thousands of people whereas, “until half a century ago, only a few dozen professional anthropologists practiced in Mexico, and most of them had access to stable, well-paid jobs in academia or government agencies”. Reygadas argues that a move toward neoliberalism in Mexico is responsible for this change, and that the implications of all this are paradoxical. It means that most anthropologists currently work in fields other than academia, which is good since it diversifies anthropological practice in Mexico, but it is the other part that worries him (and us), namely that there is a marked tendency towards the academization of professional anthropological education.

All in all, this dossier raises important issues for anthropology and anthropologists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and it does so by having contributors address the impact of neoliberal ideologies, policies, and practices in many different contexts around the world. Will anthropology survive into the next century? Will the value of anthropology change in order to survive? And is neoliberalism the effective, if perhaps invisible, enemy of anthropology?



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