

ANTHROPOLOGY MATTERS JOURNAL

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Editorial

This issue has been a long time in the making. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020 disrupted existing ways of doing anthropology and introduced new priorities and timelines. In the meantime, the outbreak of two brutal wars has forced many to reckon with their home regions and/or their fieldsites and interlocutors coming in the crossfire—literal, metaphoric, or both. No wonder everyone has been struggling to meet deadlines—or simply struggling. For *Anthropology Matters Journal*, this has been a period of deceleration, much to the frustration of everyone involved: authors, reviewers, copyeditors, ourselves, and, we imagine, readers. The rate of submissions dropped, emails to potential reviewers frequently remained unanswered, and the turnaround time increased at each step of the process. Yet, more than a paralysing repercussion of multiple, ongoing crises, this development epitomised existing tendencies that had been casting their shadow over early-career academic publishing for quite some time.

In an academic labour market where employability is equated to a 'strong publication record' and where one has no choice but to 'publish or perish,' early(ish)-career scholars prioritise fast-turnaround, high-impact journals to keep up with the cascading requirements of an increasingly competitive milieu. Yet, encounters with the publishing

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industry are fraught with obstacles. Some authors are discouraged by the elitist bias of high-impact journals. Others have misgivings about the proliferation of journals that lack rigorous evaluation procedures. Meanwhile, the so-called 'peer review crisis,' whereby fatigued reviewers are increasingly reluctant to accept requests, means that authors trying to build their CVs face excessively long delays. Lastly, journals like *Anthropology Matters*, unaffiliated with large publishers, are entirely run by early-career academics whose predicament is no better than that of the early career scholars they see through: editors, reviewers, copyeditors, and proofreaders are often as precarious and overworked as the authors whose work they consider, foster, and publish.

Anthropology Matters Journal is not a fast-turnaround, high-impact journal—neither by design, nor by virtue of its resources. But we think that what it offers is no less important. Looking back, we are reminded that *Anthropology Matters* was formed out of a collective effort to establish a space of collaboration and experimentation. In the time elapsed between the late nineties and today, academic life and the discipline of anthropology have undergone tectonic shifts that have significantly shrunk the possibility of such a space. And yet, as we prepare to pass on the journal to its future editors, we continue to be inspired by the small student collective that brought *Anthropology Matters* into existence well over two decades ago, and to admire their cause. Moreover, we remain convinced that open-access journals led by early-career scholars might be more timely than ever—not least to provide an alternative to dominant publishing conventions, resist the culture of hyperindividualism, and cultivate collegiality and intellectual synergy.

Taking our cue from the many associates—allies? comrades?—to whom the journal owes its continued existence, we believe that *Anthropology Matters* is much more than a handful of early-ish career scholars trying to see each other through. Rather, it is a collective, who, throughout the years, have all played their part in bringing early-career scholarship to light. As we discovered, this process can be slow for a few good reasons. Most notably, and as we know firsthand, early-career work often requires more time to develop and extra care to flourish—in today's labour market these privileges are rare. Indeed, the editorial process at *Anthropology Matters* often involves extensive email

exchanges and extra rounds of peer review—which spell out not only added editorial work, but also a space of meaningful cooperation away from narrowly defined utilitarian standards.

In the current issue we have expanded the genres hosted by the journal. Thus, in addition to Trevor J. Durbin’s research article on ‘Charisma work, microstates and the production of authoritative marine space in Oceania’, and Renan Martins Pereira’s review of *Ecological nostalgias: Memory, affect and creativity in times of ecological upheavals*, edited by Olivia Angé and David Berliner, this issue features two more types of contributions. First, an interview with Professor Marilyn Stathern conducted by Nora Coman, Ruoyu Qu, Sally Fitzpatrick, and Imke van Bentum, undergraduate students at the University of Göttingen; and second, a conference report authored by Felix Gaillinger, Julia Böcker, Michèle Kretschel-Kratz, and Sarah Mühlbacher reflecting on the event ‘Doing kinship by doing law’ that took place in Vienna in December 2022.

In the future we hope to see *Anthropology Matters* host other formats too: short ethnographic and theoretical reflections, multimodal essays, film reviews, and any other genres that the journal’s incoming editors, authors, and readers might like to explore. These genres most likely do not ‘count’ under the gaze of hiring committees, although they might if they persist and proliferate. We are convinced, however, that, more than a stepping stone into professional development, an early-career journal should be a place of diversity and inventiveness—features that do not come first in faster-paced, more mainstream publications. We also hope to see *Anthropology Matters* continue to evolve into a platform that combines the freshness and resourcefulness of early-career scholarship with the spirit of horizontal collaboration.

To this end, we would like to extend a call for two new Editors, as well as an Editorial Board consisting of early-career scholars that bring together different ethnographic, regional, and theoretical expertise. We believe that a return to *Anthropology Matter’s* original collective, bottom-up spirit might mitigate the contradictions at the heart of academic publishing and restore its original purpose: that is, to provide a space of mutual

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support, intellectual exchange, and ultimately, fun—for as David Graeber once reminded us, ‘What’s the point if we can’t have fun?’ In this spirit, as the outgoing editors, we are grateful for, and hope we have passed along some of the kindness we have received from the many people we’ve worked with throughout these five years: authors, reviewers, copyeditors, proofreaders, advisors, IT support, members of the ASA committee, and the former editors who entrusted us with this task. We hope they’ve had as much fun as we did.

Ana Chirițoiu and Phaedra Douzina-Bakalaki, outgoing editors