



Dialectical anthropology after neoliberalism

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Published online: 11 February 2023

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Dear Readers,

We are excited to present the new editorial team of Jaume Franquesa and Anthony Marcus. Jaume was one of the editors-in-chief for all of 2022 and Anthony Marcus has been an editor since 2008, but the retirement of Winnie Lem after 10 years marks a huge change in the leadership of our journal. For a decade Winnie selflessly contributed her labor to the only explicitly Marxist anglophone anthropology journal that we know of¹ – whose stated ambition is “the transformation of class society through internationalizing conversations about the stakes of contemporary crises and the means for social change.” That is a lot to live up to and Winnie always did her part heroically and without much complaint.

It remains for the new team to find a way to move forward without her leadership. But *Dialectical Anthropology* has been through many iterations, transitions, and incarnations since it was founded in 1975 by Stanley Diamond whose outsized ambitions are our legacy. In many ways, this appears to us to be a moment with much potential for an Anthropology journal that seeks to contribute to “the transformation of class society”. Where Stanley rode the descending wave of post-Vietnam war radicalism and critical thinking about the status quo, subsequent editors, Donald Nonnini, Marie Josephine Diamond, Sabine Jell-Bahlsen, and Wolf-Dieter Narr found themselves swimming against the current of mature post-Thatcherite global capitalism. The seeds of the current reaction were already thriving and growing tall and strong. We salute their heroic efforts to carry on a vision of transforming class society amidst the darkness of the 1990s and the 2000s.

¹ Apologies to *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry* formerly published by Anthropologist Charles Menzies at the University of British Columbia. An excellent exemplar of Marxist social science with a disciplinary tilt towards Anthropology, it has not been published since 2020 and appears to be under some editorial reconstitution. We wish them well and hope to have their renewed competition and collaboration again soon.

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And things were not much better in 2008 when Kirk Dombrowski and Anthony Marcus took over the editorship. The “subprime crisis” was ending, beginning a period of easy money for investment from central banks, and American imperialism was fanning out across the globe into Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Libya. Disturbingly, this happened concurrently with the conclusive implosion of anti-war movements that had flourished on the left in the imperial core since the 1960s. Uncle Sam was slaughtering people across the globe and there was little opposition to mark the moment. In 2010 Ananth Aiyer joined the editorial team amidst this political somnolence.

While the period was uninspiring from the point of view of transforming class society Ananth was a natural leader with huge ambitions for the journal, endless energy and an unparalleled Marxist rolodex. The journal thrived as it hadn’t since the days when Stanley was its frontman and Eleanor Leacock was using it to theorize the origins of gender inequality. In 2015 Ananth died of pneumonia at the age of 48, leaving a mess of unfinished notes, promises, projects, and goals. Out of the confusion of his untimely death Winnie and Anthony moved the journal forward, building on what Ananth had done, but also creating new connections, new formats, and new directions. We were also surprisingly successful at increasing the journal’s impact factor and other indicators used in quantifying “professionalism”.

It is not clear what metaphor would be best used in beginning this paragraph – tipping point, inflection, cusp, sea change, pre-war period, etc. Suffice to say that change is in the air. We look out there to consider what a Marxist Anthropology might look like and we see three years of pandemic, the end of 15 years of loose monetary policy, a recrudescence of inflation, central banks openly trying to increase the pain for workers, war in Europe, and rising ultra-nationalism and identity politics (see this issue) spreading to majoritarian sectors in nearly every country. Added to these changes, the imminent threat of a third inter-imperialist conflict between the US and China, 1.5 degree Celsius swiftly approaching, and an increasingly unstable relationship between human settlement, the environment and national boundaries. The intensified competition between capitalists and their attendant nation states and other capitalists and their states is breaking apart the roughly 70-year period of great power cartel that Karl Kautsky, in 1914, described as ultra-imperialism. Finally, there is the gigantic elephant in the room whose name dare not be said – vastly increased class conflict from below – which may be driving all of this. We believe it has the potential to save the human race, but that is what our journal was founded to study.

How do we as editors plan to use our journal to prepare for the transformation of class society? To ask the question almost seems preposterous given the gigantic size of the task compared to the impact of our journal – even in the top quartile of Anthropology journals (📈). But we do appreciate the excitement of Stanley Diamond’s Marxist millenarianism. We will continue to look for the best quality critical Marxist social science of labor and the working class, and will take up many of the themes that have driven the journal since 1975. However, we will also shift our focus towards more of the type of critical political ecology that, in our estimation, sits at the origin of Marxist Anthropology. This conceptual tree trunk upon which Marxist anthropology, human geography and broader social science has grown also

links us to the environmental sciences. It appears to us that the problems of development cannot be solved within the framework of capitalist competition and the Westphalian system of nations and we hope to position *Dialectical Anthropology* at the socio-political intersection between social science, environmental science, and class conflict. Along these lines, we will be soliciting more political ecology, regardless of the academic discipline it sits within.

We also intend to spend a bit more time in the coming years providing brief commentaries like this one. The hope is to open a new dialogue and better connect the editors and their editorial perspectives with the content and readership of the journal. Also, we are actively soliciting new reviews of old classics in Marxist Anthropology and Political Economy and Ecology to figure out how Anthropology has figured in the intersection between social science and class conflict.

Where will all this go? We do not know. This new period for the journal will ultimately be shaped not by the new editorial team, but by our engagement with the editorial committee and the readers and contributors who set many of the conditions upon which we edit. Above all it will be determined by the tasks and perspectives that emerge from the current historical period. Hold on, keep an eye out, and always feel free to contribute a letter, an email, or an article or commentary. There are many dangers out there, but it is an interesting period, there is much to be done, and “we have the world to gain.”

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