



EDITORS' INTRODUCTION TO 30.1: Circles Not Pyramids

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This is our first issue as editors of *Cultural Anthropology*, but more importantly, the issue in which the journal turns thirty, old enough to understand its place in the world, but still young enough to dream of better years ahead. To edit a journal of CA's quality and legacy is a wonderful honor and a serious responsibility. Of the many excellent anthropology journals in the world, few can claim a more consistent legacy of anticipating and shaping anthropological conversations to come. For thirty years, CA has worked to extend the horizons of the anthropological imagination and helped to give these form, content, and legitimacy. At times restless, at times contemplative, the journal has always sought inspiration from the human sciences more widely, leading to remarkable exchanges with and about narrative, reflexivity, media, postcolonial studies, queer theory, globalization, science and technology studies, poststructuralism, neoliberalism, affect, and most recently reaching toward infrastructure, ethics, multispecies ethnography, and materialist and ontological turns. It is an impressive back catalog, deep in anticipations and inter-illuminations.

That catalog encourages us to adopt a capacious editorial philosophy at the level of content. The ideal CA submission is one that will say something unexpected yet generative, timely but also untimely. Editors are not seers of what

will occupy disciplinary attentions next; our job is simply to work together with authors and reviewers on the process of eliciting articles' most persuasive and thoughtful realizations. Where *Cultural Anthropology* goes next thematically and analytically thus depends not on us but on you; send us bold work that builds from field particularities toward conceptual transparticularities, well-written, carefully contextualized, aware of its origins, stakes and intervention, and we will publish as much of it as we can.

If we are open to all contributions regardless of their specific content, we are trying to be more activist in the domains of form and medium. During the past decade, the journal has distinguished itself at the forefront of anthropology's transition into digital publishing. *Cultural Anthropology* was the first American Anthropological Association (AAA) journal to actively and creatively utilize a website to augment journal-based content under the Fortuns' editorship. Under Anne Allison and Charlie Piot's guidance, *culanth.org* evolved into a full-blown publication portal with new content channels operated by the editors and the journal's contributing editors. Features hosted in the Fieldsights section of our website like *Theorizing the Contemporary*, *Hot Spots*, and *AnthroPod* are now as essential to the Society for Cultural Anthropology's (SCA) publishing portfolio as the research articles contained within *CA*, and they have helped us find wider audiences. Our recent *Hot Spot* on Ebola alone received 13,000 pageviews in its first week online. With *Cultural Anthropology's* open-access transition last year, the website serves as the journal's principal publication platform as well. Every *CA* article published since 2014 is now freely available in electronic form to anyone in the world with the ability to access and download it. In 2014, we had 160,000 unique pageviews of journal content and 250,000 unique pageviews of Fieldsights content.¹ A new era for *CA* is here, and we hope to make the most of it by taking advantage of the rich potentialities of digital information and communication technology.

In that spirit, we are proud to announce two new featured sections for the journal. *Openings and Retrospectives* begins in the next issue with a collection of essays on "Life Above Earth." Rather than a compilation of articles driven by field-research, *Openings and Retrospectives* offer bundles of three to five conceptually driven essays of less than four thousand words each, a scale that allows for depth, range, and conversation but that also emphasizes setting an agenda in a straightforward way. The idea is to put a *CA* twist on both the traditional special issue format and the anthropological theory essay and to adapt to our discipline's increasing interest in exploring shorter publication formats. *Retrospectives* will in-

tervene in ongoing theoretical conversations, seeking to spin them in new directions. *Openings* will focus on emergent thematics and analytics, imagining what anthropologists might be talking about next. Like the art world from whose language we borrow, both sections will be contemporary in their orientation, which is to say that they will provide commentary on where anthropological thinking and writing stands today. As with all content in the journal, *Openings and Retrospectives* will be peer-reviewed. We have commissioned a few collections to give a sense of what is possible, but we look forward to then stepping back and working with authors on their own visions for how this section could evolve. Please send your good ideas our way!

Sound and Vision is a feature we expect to launch in 2016 that seeks to harness the multimedia potentialities of Internet-based publication to help inspire new modalities of anthropological communication. We hope to be the first anthropology journal to offer the possibility of publishing articles with embedded audio and video materials. Have you ever imagined incorporating field conversations or video vignettes into a research article? What if you could provide animated graphics or even a sound track to your article? Anthropologists have long discussed the desirability of multimedia ethnography, and innovative projects like *Ethnographic Terminalia* have given us tantalizing glimpses of what is now possible in installation-style formats. We believe that there is no better time than now to reimagine the traditional scholarly journal article, especially in fields like anthropology with its richly and variously sensuous research. With digital affordances we need no longer restrict ourselves to the conventions of the printed article, even as we respect their rationale. New ethnographic modalities are beckoning.

We look forward to developing these and other features. We will nevertheless be honest: much of our labor will be expended behind the scenes as we strive to make *Cultural Anthropology's* mission of providing high-quality open-access anthropological knowledge sustainable and scalable on a long-term basis. We do not yet have a settled financial model for doing so, and although we might be heartened that many far more prestigious knowledge-sharing organizations seem likewise to be feeling their way through the dark of Internet and social media-era communication, we know that serious challenges await us. It is no secret that the current model of anthropological publication is broken. On the one hand, partnerships with for-profit publishers contribute to a system that bleeds libraries dry and reinforces pay walls limiting the reach of our scholarship, particularly

outside the global North. On the other hand, even the for-profit system appears to be failing as subscriptions and revenues steadily decline.

We feel that the time for a new professional standard of open-access publishing has arrived, and we aspire to prototype, in partnership with allied open-access projects and advocates, a model for sustainable peer-reviewed open access that can be scaled up to the level of the discipline. Still, we recognize that open access is no utopia. It will involve retrofits and reskilling, more work, and even sacrifice. As our managing editor, Tim Elfenbein (2014), has written recently, for a scholarly society like the SCA to become a publisher means that we scholars must understand better what happens once we hit the send button on our scholarly articles. We will need to commit ourselves to absorbing new kinds of expertise and to finding new partners like foundations, libraries, and not-for-profit publishers to help us manage the operations of the journal. This is all to say that the journal's current metamorphosis marks an incredibly important new direction. But CA's vulnerabilities and precarities will be exposed along the way, and everyone who cares about this journal must be willing to share in the labor of tending it.

The past year has taught us that open access is not just a publishing model. It also concerns the relationships we scholars seek to have with one another. *Cultural Anthropology's* venture into distributing its content freely will succeed or fail based on our willingness to work together on a project of common purpose. This means developing new institutions of journal-making while maintaining our traditionally high standards of publication. In the era of open access, CA needs to become more of a collaborative enterprise, one transparent about the many kinds of labor—some paid but mostly volunteered—on which the journal depends for its continued existence. The journal also needs to recognize its accountability to its new publishers, the membership of the SCA. However much CA might be regarded as a high-flying trendsetter, the journal needs to be creative and serious about providing value to that membership to justify its future.

We have already taken some small steps in this direction, and we expect there will be more. Each month, we are sending out between two-thirds and three-quarters of submitted articles for peer review because we recognize that high-quality peer review is perhaps the most important service CA can provide the membership beyond publication. We also offer a variety of forms of hands-on editorial and publishing experience to graduate students in the context of our contributing editor and digital content editor programs. Beyond this, we have worked to increase inclusivity by expanding the size of our editorial board, seeking

to identify representatives of the many research-oriented departments and institutions that rely on CA for publication and credentialing. We have distributed to the board a large chunk of editorial authority in the form of selecting our pool of peer reviewers. And we have also reimagined our editorial office as that of an editorial collective. That is, there are three of us who reach all major editorial decisions collectively (including the review of incoming manuscripts, editorial work on improving them, and the curation of research articles and web content). A larger group of editors enriches the journal through a multiplicity of opinions and backgrounds that help us better model what might be of interest to you, the broad and diverse readership of *Cultural Anthropology*. In short, CA will maintain its high standards and distinctiveness, but with a greater decentralization of authority and responsibility as befits an open-access model of publication. To quote our friends among the anarcho-surrealists of Iceland, “now is the time for circles not pyramids.”

Finally, we would like to say that our experience reviewing submissions during the past year has made us utterly hopeful about CA’s future. Just seeing the quality of the work done week in, week out by our peer reviewers (the true heroes of this entire enterprise), feeling the vibrant innovative energy that our contributing editors bring to *culanth.org*, and reading the fascinating research submitted on a daily basis—all speak volumes about the investment that so many scholars have in this journal. *Cultural Anthropology* is thriving because so many people care that it thrives, which in turn should reassure all of us that CA’s thirty-something years will be bright ones.

So, happy thirtieth to *Cultural Anthropology* and its readership! The next four years promise to be a marvelous adventure, one that we look forward to sharing with you.

NOTES

1. Unique pageviews are a measure of web traffic in which all pages viewed by a single visitor during a session on a website are counted once. This gives a more exact sense of how many individual pages are visited on *culanth.org*. During the same period, we received 177,000 total pageviews of journal content and 293,000 total pageviews of Fieldsights content.

REFERENCES

Elfenbein, Timothy W.

- 2014 “*Cultural Anthropology* and the Infrastructure of Publishing.” *Cultural Anthropology* 29, no. 2: 288–303. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14506/ca29.2.06>.