



## Teaching amidst change: Reflections, engagements and pedagogies

### David Mills

This issue of *Teaching Anthropology* brings together work exploring the pedagogic challenges of responding to social change. This includes the demands of working with other disciplines, the fraught politics of institutional reforms, and the importance of engaging with broader social concerns. Several of the papers originated at a 2013 conference entitled *Teaching Amidst Change*, organised with the support of the EASA Teaching Anthropology Network.

The issue starts by exploring the challenge of teaching anthropology within a rapidly changing post-socialist political context. Building on earlier writing about Lithuanian institutional reforms, Vytis Ciubranskis offers a fascinating account of the latest disciplinary politics between history, "national" ethnology and sociocultural anthropology. He unpacks the influence of national identity politics on the rival research and teaching strategies, methodologies and epistemologies of these two fields. Particularly revealing is his attention to the messy institutional politics at two major Lithuanian universities – Vilnius and Vytautas Magnus University – and the consequences for its participants.

The politics of institutional change dominates Helle Bungaard's detailed description of a decade of reform at the University of Copenhagen (KU). Helle draws on her own participation to explore the implementation of what became known within the university as a "common market" of education, leading to a sweeping process of changes to teaching, with major consequences for faculty and students. The value of this account lies in the complexity of the process and the different responses of key protagonists in both 'dry' and 'wet' faculties. Their ability to successfully "translate" the policy in a way that suits their interests is key to surviving amidst change.

Personal change is the theme of Tanya Jakimow's thoughtful account of student reactions to the anthropology of development, especially for those planning a career as development practitioners. Seeking a middle way between criticality and naive idealism, Tanya highlights the importance of teachers modelling an approach to learning within their classrooms by fostering an inquisitive and open-minded approach to knowledge construction.

Disciplinary responses to the global financial crisis of 2008 are discussed by David Bennett in an incisive review essay. Comparing the contributions of Gillian Tett (*Fools' Gold*) and David Graeber (*Debt, A 5000 year history*). Tackling the challenge of public education, David reflects on why so few social anthropologists speak out or draw on their disciplinary knowledge within public settings. He ends by highlighting the potential for anthropology in schools, despite the recent closure of the 'A' level.

Finally, two articles highlight the opportunities that anthropological teaching offer in exposing students to different ways of thinking and acting. Describing an ethnographic field schools in Rio in 2013 amidst social protest about the forthcoming Olympics, White and colleagues argue for the value of these engaged pedagogic settings for helping students learn about anthropology and its ability to respond to unanticipated situations and events. Back in the classroom, Lauren Griffiths and colleagues demonstrate the value of group-work within the introductory anthropology courses for helping students learn about, and negotiate, very different cultural perspectives.

In their different ways, the contributors to this issue of *Teaching Anthropology* highlight the dynamism and responsiveness of anthropology teachers, and their ability to re-energise and redefine the discipline in the midst of change. Despite the challenges faced within and beyond the university, a small discipline continues to surprise.