



The Afterlife of Anthropological Teaching: Uncertainty and Anthropology-as-Praxis

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Abstract

Teaching anthropology in Higher Education today requires critical engagement with the ongoing liberalisation and marketization of university degrees. This process produces much uncertainty and anxiety for the future not only in academics but also in their students, who in turn are at high risk of only engaging superficially or discontinuously with their courses (Gusterson 2011). In anthropology, this presents us with the often-neglected risk of losing important emissaries in the world outside academia, as disengaged graduates are unlikely to carry any anthropological knowledge or ethos learnt at university into their non-academic careers. This article argues that one important way to counter this loss is focusing on teaching anthropology-as-praxis (Comaroff, 2010), in order to encourage an appreciation of the pragmatic application of the discipline across a wide range of everyday experiences unfolding outside the classroom and beyond academia.

Introduction

A concern with uncertainty has gained ground in anthropological writing over the course of the past two decades, and not only in the pages of academic journals. The debate on the subject has in fact animated the anthropological public sphere at large, engaging colleagues in lively exchanges and reflections on platforms as diverse as research-based peer-reviewed journals, opinion pieces, and blogs. The conversation was stimulated by a host of socio-political and economic circumstances. Amongst these were the 2008 financial crisis, de-industrialisation and the austerity politics that came with it, the growing application of neoliberal policies to academia and the worsening of the political situation across the Western world (Appadurai 2011; Gregory 2014). The latter was signposted by the election of Donald Trump to the White House and the Brexit referendum, but also marked by the rise of right-wing politics across Europe (Edwards et al 2017). More recently, anthropologists have also begun interrogating the implications of teaching the discipline in times of uncertainty. Initiatives devoted to investigating this subject have in fact multiplied recently. In February 2017, Cultural Anthropology inaugurated a new Teaching Tool series dedicated specifically to understanding the socio-political workings of uncertainty and how to respond to them through anthropological teaching (Harp-Rushing, 2017). Similarly, the present issue of Teaching Anthropology seeks to investigate the challenges that uncertainty poses to anthropology in the classroom.

Reflecting on resistance in the classroom is but one of the many strands that make up the debate. Other strands focus on the ways in which knowledge is created dialogically in the exchange of opinions between teacher and student, rather than merely passed down to the latter by the former. The attention is centred on the mentoring relationship, generally in the perspective of generating collaborative, critical knowledge (Scott 2012). Students also appear in analyses of contemporary neoliberal academia, but more tangentially. Primarily, the student body is mentioned in the framework of a critical assessment of the negative effects of the new technocratic regime on staff's working conditions and the transformation of academia (Shore and Wright 2006). In this case, what is discussed is the raising number of students, and the prominent role of student satisfaction surveys in decisions over staff career progression. Students are thus accessory to these discussions, and their direct impact of students' experiences of anthropological teaching in times of uncertainty is overlooked. In this article, I seek to bring together different strands of this lively but fragmented debate, but with a specific focus on the challenges that today's diffused uncertainty presents for teaching. I do so by arguing that teaching anthropology matters because students, at the undergraduate as well as postgraduate level, are the 'legs' of anthropology in the outer world. By this metaphor, I mean that anthropology graduates who do not pursue an academic career are a prime

vehicle for the diffusion of anthropological ideas and attitudes in those social domains which anthropologists seek today to penetrate: public administration, the private sector and political institutions, amongst many others. Attending to the ways in which students learn anthropology, in terms of what they learn and will later take with them outside academia matters to the way in which anthropological ideas are exported, adapted and applied, and ultimately seep through the world through graduates' varied engagements in the 'aftermath' of Higher Education. The 'afterlife' of anthropological teaching (a term inspired by Fassin 2015), I maintain, is often overlooked by anthropological debates on uncertainty. As a consequence, its value is also unacknowledged, and so its potential to contribute to reducing the impact of other aspects of uncertainty on anthropology is lost. I attempt to bring this dimension to the fore. In particular, I hope to offer some preliminary insights on the impact of students' experiences of uncertainty on the teaching of anthropology, and in turn on the advancement of anthropology as a discipline in current socio-political circumstances. Exploring how uncertainty impacts student learning has implications for the growth of anthropology outside academia. In this sense, I argue that one of the goals of teaching anthropology should be that of transmitting not only theory or method *per se*, but also an 'ethnographic attitude' (Clifford 1988) that anthropology graduates might actualise in their own academic 'afterlife'. In bringing anthropological ideas, approaches and attitudes into the world, students leaving university would no longer abandon the discipline at graduation, but rather they would ensure its presence in the world by giving such ideas, approaches and attitudes a new life outside academia.

Understanding uncertainty

As one of the most evoked and debated notions in anthropology, uncertainty has been analysed from a variety of angles, which I regroup and examine here in three main strands. The three approaches, it will become clear, are evidently interrelated and their construction into separate discourses is largely artificial, for analytical purposes. The first stream concentrates on the political uncertainty that is becoming a defining feature of our societies and the added risks that this poses to marginalised populations within them (ethnic and sexual minorities, women, migrants, to name but a few; for a discussion in a longer historical perspective, see Rosa and Bonilla 2017). Anthropological theory has been engaging with the notion of risk and uncertainty for some years now (for instance Gregory 2014), but recently practitioners have been looking into ways to appropriate the uncertainty that characterises our time and turn it into a productive tool for teaching anthropology. Often inspired by Freire's work, most notably *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Freire 2000), this strand of literature seeks to turn the classroom into a site of resistance itself where to pursue a 'simultaneously reparative and radical pedagogical attachment to uncertainty' (Harp-Rushing 2017). In this sense, risk and uncertainty are taken to be an opportunity to generate new 'virtual scaffolding with which we imagine and materialise alternative and more egalitarian institutions of learning and flourishing' (ibid.).

A second strand of literature on uncertainty focuses instead on the issue of academic precarity, seeking to highlight the degree to which this had become endemic in contemporary neoliberalised Higher Education. Commentators have rendered a vivid picture of the condition of contemporary academics in audit cultures, often underpaid, overworked, employed with precarious, temporary employment arrangements which allow members of staff little to no long term security (Bal et al 2014). Of particular interest to this article are the multiple negative ways in which endemic academic precarity and the logic of financial viability impacts on teaching. Susana Narotzky (2016) has for instance argued that the new academic regime exerts an unprecedented pressure on teaching as well as learning anthropology. In Narotzky's own words,

But in university, as in other paid care services such as health care, it is almost impossible to increase staff productivity without negatively affecting quality: productivity gains through staff cuts and precarization result in lower-quality input in a creative process that requires intensive interaction between teachers and students and the building of a caring relationship (2016: 76).

Lastly, since the turn of the millennium the future of the discipline itself seems to have been a source of further uncertainty for anthropologists. Our discipline is seen as progressively losing ground to other social sciences and to be becoming increasingly irrelevant to the world outside the restricted circles of academia. In his now famous intervention on the pages of *Anthropology News*, Borofsky accused anthropologists of having plunged into 'intellectual isolation and insulation from the world's problems' (2000: 9). As public engagement, public anthropology emerged in this context as the key to break the impasse, 'a much-needed antidote for a discipline many thought had become insular, often incomprehensible, and generally irrelevant to the lives and struggles of most people' (Vine 2011: 336). Several observers have noted that anthropologists' inclination to the constant assessment and reassessment of the discipline has led them to fear or announce the end of the discipline with

certain regularity (Shore, 1996, Comaroff 2010). However, the anxiety surrounding public anthropology today indexes a growing concern over the irrelevance of the discipline to the non-specialised public, a concern that recent political events have seemingly legitimated. It is evident from this brief overview that different attempts at making sense of the impact of uncertainty on anthropology share similar preoccupations and are in dialogue with each other. Moreover, each set of concerns illuminates some of the preoccupations of the others and, in turn, also intersects and contributes to the analysis of the impact of uncertainty on teaching anthropology.

Ideas with 'legs', or why student experiences of uncertainty matters

The election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States in late 2016 was seemingly experienced as a cold shower by large numbers of anthropologists across the Western world. In Britain, this added to the shock that the result of the European referendum only months earlier, which ruled the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union. Reactions from the world of anthropology appeared online in the immediate aftermath of each event, in the many analyses and opinion pieces published on well-known blogs and widely shared on social media (Green et al 2016, Culture and Capitalism 2016). Soon thereafter, the debate also reached the more traditional academic press (see for instance the American Ethnologist's dedicated forum, Edwards et al 2017). Albeit in different ways, such writings attempted to explain how these epochal events could have happened and, more troubling still for many, how anthropologists could have failed to foresee it. Woven into much of this conversation was yet again a condemnation of anthropology's minimal presence in the public sphere, coupled with the negligible weight carried by anthropological ideas in public debates on social issues and inequalities. Again, anthropology seemed insular: it remained unable to communicate its ideas and knowledge outside the walls of academia. This added to the frustration felt by many that while anthropologists should be at the forefront of public debates on pressing social issues, in practice they and their knowledge remain largely invisible (Eriksen 2006).

Even accepting this important critique, disciplinary invisibility does not mean that anthropological ideas do not travel. In fact, the case has been made several times that anthropological ideas *do* find their way out of academia and into the world, through different paths. Fassin's thorough analysis of the public afterlife of ethnography is a case in point. According to the French anthropologist, ethnography has two lives: one consisting of fieldwork, one consisting of the writing up of the ethnographic monograph. Once publication has taken place, there begins what Fassin terms 'the public afterlife' of ethnography, where the anthropologist's ideas and work come into contact with the outer world and is received, in various debates in the public sphere, often mediated through traditional and non-traditional media, which present and represent it to wider audiences (Fassin 2015). Of course, arguments might be misrepresented, ideas misapplied; recognising these possibilities, Fassin highlights that anthropologists should try and participate in their ethnography's public afterlife as part of their intellectual project. Anthropologists interested in engaging public debates thus devote much of their writing to identifying the most appropriate ways in which complex anthropological notions might be best re-packaged for lay audiences. Much emphasis is thus given to the importance of the choices of language register (accessible, devoid of any specialist jargon), writing style (narrative, involving, empathic, not technical), and platform and medium of communication (newspaper columns, blogposts, televised interviews) (Borofsky 2000, Eriksen 2006, Checker et al 2010, also Fassin 2015). Yet, triggering or participating in public debates is not the only manner in which anthropologists can contribute to rendering their discipline relevant to our societies, and contribute to shaping the times of deep uncertainty that they are currently traversing. Although its role is often overlooked, applied anthropology is instrumental in expanding the sphere of influence of anthropological ideas outside the walls of the 'ivory tower'. In his response to Borofsky's article, Singer deems this lack of attention for applied anthropology 'a conscious misrecognition', derived from the implicit existence of a two-tier structure within the discipline. In this structure, academic anthropologists are placed above applied anthropologists, whose non-academic work is tainted with an aura of 'impurity' (2000: 6). Besides the polemics, the engagement in and concrete contribution of applied anthropologists to the resolution of social issues is undeniable. As Singer remarks, anthropologists routinely work in collaboration with public institutions, councils, local authorities and developmental agencies at all levels. Often, such interventions see the former serving as consultants for the latter on selected issues that fall within their professional specialisation. A prominent case is that of American anthropologist Ashley Montagu, a keen follower of Boasian anthropology in the first half of the Twentieth century. After the end of World War II, Montagu was recruited by UNESCO to serve as one of the rapporteurs drafting the institute's 1950 Statement on Race, a powerful rejection of biological racism (Barkan 1996). Collaborations such as this have at times been successful in influencing the adoption of policies informed by anthropological attitudes, including the World Bank (Cernea, 2015). In fact, development is one of the domains

were anthropology has been applied most widely and intensely, and one of the fields where anthropology graduates who do not choose the academic route might find employment more easily, as well the non-governmental, housing, media, and environmental sectors (Shore 1996, Singer 2000, Mills 2003).ⁱ In addition, research has shown that those holding a doctorate in anthropology are also successful in building careers in public administration, research within private institutions and management in the charity sector (Spencer et al 2011). Large numbers of anthropology graduates thus pursue a career outside academia, yet these engagements and applications of anthropological skills and knowledge largely go unremarked. A large part of the afterlife of anthropological teaching becomes invisible, as if that teaching had never happened. If it is true that anthropological ideas travel, then anthropology graduates must be their legs. Anthropologists often overlook graduates' potential ability to bring their anthropological background into the world through they work in a broad range of institutional, private and public, organisational and even informal settings. Anthropologists are acutely concerned with devising new or increasingly refined strategies to extend the reach of their craft beyond the limits of academia, and generate an ever-growing debate and literature as they do. Simultaneously, they seem to be neglectful of the potential of teaching anthropology as a way to increase the impact of their discipline on social policies and attitudes outside intellectual circles. One might argue that, to a significant degree, successful anthropology depends on successful anthropological teaching. Anthropology should thus strive to show students its concrete relevance, so that they actively transport its ideas and ethos with them after completing their course. Today, this task is rendered all the more difficult by the fact that students are subject to the same shifting and precarious socio-political landscape that we are attempting to prepare them to understand through anthropology. If we are to determine how to prepare a new generation to deal with uncertainty, risk and precarity, it is therefore essential that we manage to make students engage with the discipline in productive ways. As I will outline, this task presents some admirable challenges for teachers of anthropology in the era of neoliberal academia.

Teaching anthropology in the Age of Neoliberal Academia

Unlike what might be imagined, anthropology's struggle in the public eye is not in itself a new or recent issue. Commentators have remarked that the discipline has long suffered from a poor public image. First, anthropology is one of the lesser known social sciences, much smaller in size than sociology, politics or economics, and thus more difficult for the general public to locate. The fact that its object of enquiry and aims remain obscure affects its credibility in the eyes of non-academic publics, who are left unclear about its relevance to 'real life' concerns (Shore 1996). According to Spencer, the roots of the issue in Britain are partly found in the historical resolution of the first groups of trained anthropologists to maintain their craft a research-based discipline, contained within the upper strata of academic research and not even suitable for undergraduate teaching (Spencer 2000, Goody 1995). While anthropology departments and courses have clearly multiplied since the 1980s, we are still struggling to shake off the aura of elitism today. Eriksen is amongst those pointing out just how much anthropology is still prisoner of this reputation, which fills classes of a majority of 'students from respectable families, whose parents could afford to let their children study a useless subject' (2006: 27). The issue however is heightened by the current restructuring of academia in a neoliberal sense. This is widely reported across the Western world and, despite a number of regional or country-specific variations, the neoliberalisation of academic anthropology seems to be taking place according to remarkably similar patterns across the spectrum. Without meaning to go into the matter too deeply, I shall address here briefly a few major points that are most relevant for this discussion. Overall, this neoliberal restructuring is described as being inspired by a mix of technocratic philosophy, 'meritocratic' approaches to learning and the positivistic principles of 'excellence' and 'accountability' typical of audit cultures (Brenneis, Shore and Wright 2005, Shore 2010, Stacul 2016). The outcome of the implementation of such policies is twofold. On the one hand, universities have transformed into 'neoliberal industrial sites' (Green 2016: 47): Higher Education institutions are ceasing to be places of learning and intellectual exchange, and have rather become enterprises devoted to the production of a new type of commodity - the academic degree (Narotzky 2016). In this context, what is valuable and valued is no longer the personal or intellectual growth of students, or the contribution of knowledge to the advancement of the common good. Rather, value is placed on the usefulness of a certain degree in the labour market; that is to say, on the extent to which a specific educational qualification might be conducive to securing a job (Bal et al 2014, Narotzky 2016). The commodification process of intellectual work is in turn closely dependant on the notion of academia as a socially accountable enterprise. This means that disciplines must justify themselves in terms of how 'useful' they are in somewhat 'practical' terms to society, something that is known in Britain as 'impact' (Green 2016).

The second outcome of academic restructuring is the transformation of students into consumers, or stakeholders, whose success and satisfaction are some of the main indexes of institutional productivity and excellence, in accordance with the vocabulary and philosophy of current managerialist approaches to Higher Education (Brenneis et al 2010). Breaking with the general trend of focusing primarily on staff precarity, Gusterson (2011) and Stacul (2016) observe that neoliberal restructuring impacts profoundly on the lives of students as well. In particular, the increase of the cost of university, first and foremost the rise of tuition fees, coupled with the progressive abolition of grants and public funding (Fardon 2011), means that students must more and more often work in order to support themselves at university. This in turn engenders two phenomena. First, it has a disengaging effect on students, who struggle to keep up with their course and must prioritise work over studying in order to make ends meet. As a consequence, they often do the minimum necessary and devote the rest of their time and energy to their demanding jobs. Secondly, the current system puts students under a great deal of pressure and anxiety. This is not only true for those students who must work to support themselves, but also for those who are fortunate enough to be able to concentrate on studying alone. As Bal et al (2014) remark, students' experience of university is also ridden with risk and insecurity, in as much as the prospect of uncertain future employment looms over them constantly. This adds to the constant fear that they are not good enough and will not be able to obtain the grades necessary to succeed in their degree and to be sufficiently competitive in the job market. In such conditions, students' attention is systematically diverted from the content of their subjects, and reoriented towards their qualification's market-value.

While anthropologists might not often discuss the implications of students' insecurity, humanities undergraduate recruitment teams surely have for some time, and have attuned their outreach activities to it. The kinds of answers to the crisis that they propose are an interesting case study for anthropology. This has become clear to me through my experience in the field of academic outreach during my doctoral years, both through my university's different widening participation activities as well as external tutoring programmes. The many hours of training required by these projects gave me several opportunities to familiarise myself with the vocabulary and philosophy of neoliberal academia. Words such as 'excellence', 'skills', 'achieving' and 'merit' were all an integral part of the way tutors were trained to discuss and understand the experience and value of the university experience itself, and to portray it to prospective students. The recruitment of students to undergraduate degrees is crucial if universities want to ensure financial viability (Fardon 2011), so activities geared to that purpose must entice and at the same time suitably reassure pupils and their parents. What follows is a small example of how this is realised in practice today.

In the early spring of 2017 I was tasked to attend a career's day organised for Year 12 students, many of whom would be applying for university courses within a few months. The presentation itself had been put together by a more experienced member of the university's recruitment team, but the designated speaker could not attend, so I was sent the PowerPoint slides and notes and asked to simply relay the pre-designed presentation. Although the school was not located in a particularly privileged area, pupils performed well overall at GCSE level, so many of the students who would be listening to my presentation were likely to have an interest in applying to university. In fact, when I asked my audience who amongst them planned on undertaking a degree, most pupils raised their hands. My task, then, was not convincing them of the value of Higher Education; my task was, rather, that of persuading them of the worthiness of studying humanities specifically. As the presentation proceeded, it was clear that this pivoted around the usefulness of humanities subjects. Slide after slide, the presentation repeatedly presented students with bullet point lists of the transferrable skills that they would gain, including time management, punctuality, problem-solving, communication and writing abilities. Twice, the PowerPoint also displayed a collage of company logos, and I, following my notes, highlighted to my audience that major graduate recruiters all openly required their employees to possess such skills. *Dulcis in fundo*, the presentation offered three concrete case-studies where a humanities graduate had successfully embarked on a professional career that had little or nothing to do with their original degree subject. In one, for instance, a former student of linguistics had become an accomplished accountant. Undergraduate recruiting teams had clearly realised early on that insecurity and uncertainty was a primary issue for students at all levels, and had included responses and reassurance to these anxieties in their outreach programmes. However, by the time I thanked the first of two successive groups of pupils for their attention, it occurred to me that there had been remarkably little discussion of humanities subjects *per se* throughout the previous hour.. Rather than why students should study humanities, I had explained why students should not avoid studying them. The focus of the presentation, in fact, was the supposedly reassuring fact that students with a passion for a humanities subject could study what they liked at university and still move on to a completely unrelated career afterwards, thanks to the transferrable skills that they would have anyway acquired.

University websites, brochures and information material are more and more often styled along these lines. Pressed with ideas of marketability and worries about employability, recruitment reinforces the disconnection between concrete relevance and humanities subjects: the arts and social sciences are associated with pleasure and assigned a putative aesthetic value, but also divorced from usefulness. The diagnosis of students' uncertainty was thus on point, but the solution that academia provides today seems to me unsuitable, even counterproductive, as any claim to relevance is lost to marketability. Anthropology should take this excursus on undergraduate recruitment as a cautionary tale. Students' experiences of insecurity and risk have a disengaging impact on them, and the way we choose to handle that reality is vital to the way the discipline is reconfigured in these times of uncertainty. Ultimately, it is also crucially through teaching that we recover and reclaim the value of anthropology itself.

Teaching Anthropology as Praxis

I now return to the original question, which is how to teach anthropology in order to prepare students for a future marked by uncertainty, ruptures and change. The issue is becoming increasingly prominent, as new socio-political and economic contingencies require that anthropologists reassess the possibilities and potentialities of their craft. The question is momentous, and I maintain that it can be broken down further into two distinct movements. First, we should ask what about anthropology as a discipline can prepare students to face such futures. Secondly, we should ask how our teaching can facilitate this. In what follows, I attempt to engage with both segments of the question, and sketch answers to each.

My starting point to addressing the first question is Comaroff's (2010) assessment of anthropology as a discipline. According to this, anthropology is best understood as praxis, which is to say 'a mode of producing knowledge based on a few closely interrelated epistemic operations' (2010: 530). There are three fundamental such operations, according to Comaroff, which I briefly summarise here. First is critical estrangement, which consists in deconstructing and relativizing the lived world. In other words, this is about questioning categories, discourses and knowledge that are encountered, accepted and deployed in the everyday and which validity is otherwise taken for granted. Second is mapping and reconstructing how such categories, discourses and knowledge come into being, through various socio-political processes that hide behind a mask of perceived naturalness. Last is the 'deployment of the contradiction, the counterintuitive, the paradox, the rupture as a source of methodological revelation' (2010: 531), and the embedding of analysis in multidimensional frameworks that account for time as well as space, and their socio-political implications (e.g. empire, colonialism, postcoloniality, and so on). In Comaroff's view, anthropological theory emerges from this praxis, through ethnographic engagement: what makes up the core of anthropology as a discipline is thus the praxis, which dictates in turn its method and theoretical forms. I find Comaroff's approach extremely productive to think of ways in which anthropology may play a role in and be relevant to students' everyday experiences. The reason is that his formulation of anthropology-as-praxis constructs the discipline as stemming from an ethos of practice and direct engagement that is more versatile than perspectives that emphasises either anthropology as theory or anthropology as method. As praxis, anthropology can be presented as lenses, as a way to concretely approach the world and the quotidian with a critical eye and a particular curious and deconstructive attitude that can be employed and flourish outside academia. In this manner, anthropology is decoupled from its 'aesthetic' aura and is made available and readily relevant to the everyday life. This in turn suggests the possibility of anthropology 'here-and-now', as opposed to a traditional public perception that sees it as a discipline of the 'there' and often 'then', and thus inapplicable to contemporary societies.

This approach is useful for preparing students to *engage* productively with the volatile socio-political reality of a rapidly transforming world which they will have to learn to navigate. The breaking down of praxis into a string of operations is particularly apt to be employed in the teaching of anthropology, in as much as each represents one of the essential steps of anthropological critical thinking applied to lived experience. Anthropology becomes something systematically applicable beyond the context of ethnographic fieldwork. Comaroff's approach may be complemented with the notion of anthropology as a practice of 'engaged listening' (Willen, Mulligan and Castaneda 2010). This phrase is intended to highlight the necessity for anthropologists to embrace and maintain a serious commitment to actually *listen* to all their interlocutors with an open and receptive mindset, rather than letting assumptions and preconceived expectations guide them instead in their interactions and analyses. The idea of 'engaged listening' resonates with the previous discussion of anthropology as praxis, for its commitment to questioning and the critical posture it encourages. I maintain that this problematising attitude and this engaged and engaging mindset may be regarded as, in today's academic jargon, a core set of anthropological transferrable

skills. Because they can be carried over into the realm of the quotidian and put into practice there, these are able to move and extend more easily and effectively beyond academia. It is by promoting these skills that we may avoid the 'aestheticisation' of anthropology; if we are to teach anthropology as a concrete and practical discipline for our students, our efforts should start from here.

In practical terms, a praxis-focused teaching of anthropology would require presenting anthropology simultaneously as an academic discipline and as an approach to the world based on the aforementioned skills. I do not believe that this operation would require standard undergraduate curricula to change drastically: theoretical and ethnographic texts which are commonly used in the classroom are essential to students' comprehension of the discipline. Rather, while going over the usual syllabus, teachers should emphasise the different ways in which anthropology engages and analyses different ethnographic scenarios in the material under examination, temporarily breaking down the fluidity of research in observable operations: estrangement, mapping, connecting, etc. Of course, this approach would encourage the addition to syllabi of ethnographies that interrogate scenarios that students might encounter in a range of careers and circumstances: ethnographies of social services, healthcare, multicultural societies, development programmes, and so on. These ethnographies do exist and there should be no reason not to offer students a broad range of case studies to help them appreciate the variety of anthropological production and the breath of the anthropological imagination. In fact, the diversity of case studies that is already part of teaching would simply be encouraged further. In addition, teaching anthropology as praxis might be best realised in the context of students' own ethnographic engagements. While usually undergraduate and even postgraduate taught dissertations are not based on original fieldwork, students are often assigned small ethnographic projects during their degrees, in order for them to gain some insights into the pleasures and challenges of research. These small term-time projects would be a perfect ground for students to practice crucial anthropological skills such as critical estrangement, contextualisation and engaged listening and applying them to concrete situations. Being open about the need to engage with their fieldsite in these terms would be beneficial to both students who aspire to continue with academic anthropology and to those who desire a more applied career. The former would acquire a less 'mystical', more structured and clear understanding of how anthropology works in practice (Mills 2011). The latter might be encouraged to choose a fieldsite that they might want to choose as a career later on and would learn how to go about productively applying their anthropological training to situations they might be confronted with in their working lives. With such a pragmatic training behind them students might come to see such careers as being open to them not *despite* their anthropology degree, but rather *because* of it.

Conclusion

The perspective on anthropology that I evoke in this article is not in itself new. It resonates with the attitude of other authors, such as Comaroff (2010), Willen et al (2011) and Clifford (1988). What I seek to highlight here is rather the important ways in which it is anthropology-as-ethnographic-attitude, or anthropology-as-praxis, that should be emphasised in our teaching. Training students to adopt an engaged and critical attitude towards the complexity of everyday experience responds in fact to a number of the questions on uncertainty and anthropology that are found in the literature and were raised in this article. First, anthropology would recover part of its potential to shape the minds and civic consciences of generations of new citizens (Narotzky 2016), a formative function that is weakened in neoliberalised academia. Secondly, anthropological ethos and principles might be more consistently disseminated across society by anthropology graduates who would employ their transferrable skills and *forma mentis* in a range of professional and non-professional capacities across domains. This admittedly might not gain anthropology any further visibility in the public sphere *per se* (Eriksen 2006); however, it might contribute to a slow improvement of the discipline's public image. However, and more poignantly, anthropology might reach deeper in the social fabric, in graduates' own communities and professional circles, in more unpredictable, less acknowledged and yet potentially more effective ways. Today's precarious role of anthropological knowledge would not but benefit from and be strengthened by a broader awareness of its existence and core philosophy amongst non-academics. Consequently, and lastly, a more overt emphasis over the everyday value and significance of anthropology might effect a positive re-engagement of alienated, insecure students caught in the mechanism of contemporary neoliberal academia. This in turn would alleviate staff's anxieties over facing the demands of equally as anxious students-consumers. All of this, it is clear, would depend on a style of teaching that focuses explicitly on anthropology as praxis. This approach emphasises the role of students in the advance of anthropology, and the impact of precarity on them within the discipline.. In this article, I propose that teaching anthropology as praxis might enable us to render our discipline more concrete to students and graduates. If conceptualised and taught as a discipline with a versatile toolkit to

understand and analyse a range of actual situations in different fields, anthropology might enjoy a longer and more meaningful afterlife in the outer world, being remembered, evoked and diffused by graduates in their many everyday and professional engagements. Many teachers of anthropology surely already espouse this approach in the classroom, yet there is a need to create a broader debate on the subject. In fact, the challenge presented by teaching anthropology in times of uncertainty evidently does not solely encompass students and teachers, but the discipline as a whole. In their quest for greater social relevance and engagement with the public, anthropologists might have to rethink their neglect for teaching, and the possibility and worthiness of life for anthropology outside academia.

The direction that anthropological teaching will take will mirror the direction that anthropology itself will have chosen to face these times of uncertainty. Spencer (2000) argues that in the post-war era, sociology dramatically expanded its influence because it made itself relevant to the management of social issues and tensions that marred the new British society. Students enrolled in great numbers and the discipline's fame grew with them. Anthropology, instead, insisted in remaining insular, elitist and much more abstract than its sister discipline, thus struggling to find its place in a post-colonial world that was seemingly oblivious to it. If we are to change this historical course and find a new public role for ourselves, as anthropologists we should make the effort to explore all existing avenues within and outside academia, without prejudice. One such avenue, as I have argued, is making the most to enhance the relevance of anthropology to students, and specifically by teaching our discipline as versatile, adaptable and insightful praxis that is an always available resource to which to resort throughout life. In this perspective, the classroom becomes not only a site of resistance or academic advancement, but crucially a place from which anthropology can be projected to a new life outside universities. Taking teaching seriously might not be the entire solution to the contemporary crisis of public anthropology, but it seems an important place to start.

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ⁱ A vast body of literature has interrogated the politics and possibilities of anthropology, development and policy, including Olivier de Sardan, 2005; Pink, 2006 and Price and Robinsons, 2015.