

# Anthropologies Today: Our (Un) Certainties and Utopias<sup>i</sup>

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## Abstract

*These are uncertain times. We may be witnessing an epochal change provoked by transformations of the world capitalist system (the rise of China to the system's center, for instance). Anthropologists and other social scientists face new challenges as interethnic segmentations and the relationships among locales change, igniting old and new racisms. It seems we are entering a post-multicultural era. At the same time, the conception of what is human is increasingly undergoing radical change and the anthropocene metaphorizes the negative and unsustainable effects of the human experience after the Industrial Revolution. In many countries, the social sciences suffer budgetary cutbacks and lose their public relevance in milieus dominated by post-truths and rightist anti-intellectualism. Internet's capillarity makes the world seem transparent and the intelligentsia meaningless. There is an urgent need to rethink our positionalities, subjects and politics of visibility. Anthropologists have been interested, in different ways, in intervening with their knowledge and research in how the future unfolds. I claim that thinking on a global scale is both one way out of our current political conundrums and of regaining public visibility and influence. I also argue that anthropologists need to engage in utopian struggles in order to foster visions that may have progressive impacts on the unfolding of contemporary political, social, cultural and economic processes.*

## Introduction

The impossibility of mastering the vast literature produced in each anthropological field of inquiry should not be a reason to paralyze our attempts to make overall critiques and suggestions about the fate of the discipline. In order to examine anthropology's current situation, I will take into consideration some of the changes that impact its heuristic strength, its public visibility and political roles. I aim at addressing issues that, I assume, are recognizable by anthropologists almost everywhere when the main subject is the present and future of the discipline. I am sure that what follows resonates differently in different academic scenarios in view of the peculiarities of the histories of anthropology in diverse historical and sociological contexts. The commonalities and differences existing among world anthropologies are a most important

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