

ANTHROPOLOGICAL ENQUIRIES  
INTO POLICY, DEBT, BUSINESS,  
AND CAPITALISM

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RESEARCH IN ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY VOLUME 40

**ANTHROPOLOGICAL  
ENQUIRIES INTO POLICY,  
DEBT, BUSINESS, AND  
CAPITALISM**

EDITED BY

**DONALD C. WOOD**

*Department of Medical Education,  
Akita University Graduate School of Medicine,  
Japan*



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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Guilherme L. J. Falleiros** is a Social Anthropologist with a master's dissertation and a PhD thesis on the A'uwê-Xavante people of Central Brazil (University of São Paulo). He has been an Independent Teacher and has also been doing independent interdisciplinary research comparing Amerindian, anarchist and republican polities, and socialities. He is enrolled as a Collaborator of the Centro de Estudos Ameríndios (Center for Amerindian Studies), University of São Paulo. He was a Member of the editorial committee of *Revista Espiritualidade Libertária (Libertarian Spirituality Journal)*, publishing its second number (2010). He has been a Member of the academic committee of *Palimpsestos: Revista de Arqueologia y Antropología Anarquista (Palimpsestos: Journal of Anarchist Archeology and Anthropology)* since 2016 of Editora Entremares' (Entremares Publishing House) editorial board for current Social Sciences since 2018.

**Emma Gilberthorpe** examines the parameters of social organization, kinship, and exchange in contexts of large-scale resource extraction, with a particular interest in the implications of the cultural incompatibilities that exist between multinational corporations and small-scale societies. The majority of her work has focused on the social, economic, political, and environmental impacts of mining and oil extraction in Papua New Guinea. She has published widely on these issues (e.g., *Development and Industry: A Papua New Guinea case study; Natural Resource Extraction and Indigenous Livelihoods*) as well as on Corporate Social Responsibility (e.g., "Development on Whose Terms? CSR discourse and social realities in PNG's extractive industries sector") and the resource curse (e.g., "The Anthropology of Extraction: Critical perspectives on the resource curse.")

**Sidney M. Greenfield** is a Professor of Anthropology Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Co-chair of the Columbia University Seminars on Brazil, Studies in Religion and Contents and Methods in the Social Sciences. He has conducted ethnographic research in Barbados and New Bedford, Massachusetts, but mostly in Brazil, and ethnohistorical and historical research in Portugal and the Atlantic Islands on problems ranging from family and kinship, patronage and politics, the history of plantations and plantation slavery, and entrepreneurship to Spiritist surgery and healing, syncretized Brazilian religions such as Candomblé, Umbanda and Kardecist Spiritism, and Evangelical Protestants in Brazilian politics. He has authored and/or edited nine books, produced, directed, and authored five video documentaries, and has published around 150 articles and reviews in books and professional journals. His most recent books include *Evangelicos na Política: Por Debaixo dos Panos (Evangelicals in Politics: What Happens Under the Sheets)* – in Portuguese with Antonio Mourão Cavalcante – Editora Universidade Federal do Ceará (2016); a second edition of

*Dr. Argeu: A Construção de um Santo Popular (Dr. Argeu: The Construction of a Popular Saint)* – also in Portuguese with Antonio Mourão Cavalcante) Editora Universidade Federal do Ceará (2016) and *Spirits With Scalpels: The Cultural Biology of Spirit Healing in Brazil*. San Francisco, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008 (2012 available as an e-book.)

**Junichiro Koji** is an Associate Professor at the Department of International and Regional Studies, Hokkaido University of Education (HUE) in Hakodate, Hokkaido, Japan. He holds a PhD in Political Science with specialization of Canadian Studies (University of Ottawa). Before joining HUE, he worked at the City of Montreal as a Research Officer in youth policy and Japanese Embassy in Canada as a Political Analyst. His research interests include Canadian and Quebec politics, comparative research between Canada and Japan, immigration and integration policy, diversity management policy, local and regional development policy, local citizenship, sister city relations (Hakodate and Halifax), university-community partnership, state–society relations, and governance. He is also active in community-engaged research on building a welcoming community for foreign residents as well as supporting local development in Esashi, a small municipality in Hokkaido, through university–community partnership.

**Mathias Sosnowski Krabbe** is currently working as a Research Assistant at the Department of Marketing and Management, University of Southern Denmark (SDU), and has previously worked as a Research Assistant at the Department of Culture and Global Studies, Aalborg University. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Market and Management Anthropology from SDU and a Master's degree in Anthropology from Aarhus University. He has conducted fieldwork on gender roles in Hiroshima, Japan (2014–2015) and on student loan debt in Wisconsin, USA (2017). Besides higher education, his main topics of interest are debt, credit, money, and temporality, which he has recently engaged with through a project on credit in everyday life in Denmark.

**Andrés Marroquín** earned an undergraduate degree in economics from Universidad Francisco Marroquín in Guatemala and a PhD in economics from George Mason University. His research has been on economic beliefs, economics and culture, institutional economics, entrepreneurship, and economic development. He has done fieldwork in Guatemala, Colombia, The Dominican Republic, China, and Haiti. He has studied institutions and economic performance in two mineral-abundant societies, Botswana and the Falkland Islands. He is an Associate Professor of Economics (of practice) at Mercer University in Georgia, USA. He is a Co-editor of two volumes (forthcoming) on Douglass North and James Buchanan.

**Vassily Pigounidès** received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the Department of Social Sciences at the Ecole Normale Supérieure of Cachan and his doctoral degree from the Department of Accounting at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He now works and lives in London as an independent researcher and translator, as well as a volunteer in several food-related



projects. His current research interests centre on the politics of valuation, with a focus on pricing and business valuation.

**Anthony Rausch** is a Professor at Hirosaki University, Japan. He obtained his PhD from Monash University and is interested in social science research on rural Japan. He has authored *Cultural Commodities in Japanese Rural Revitalization* (Brill, 2010), *Japan's Local Newspapers: Chihoshi and Revitalization Journalism* (Routledge, 2012), and edited *Japanese Journalism and the Japanese Newspaper: A Supplemental Reader* (Teneo, 2014).

**Irene Sabaté Muriel** is a Social Anthropologist and a Lecturer at the Universitat de Barcelona, where she teaches Economic Anthropology, Anthropology of Consumption, Urban Anthropology, and Anthropology of Social Movements. Her research interests include political economy, reciprocity, provisioning, work and social reproduction, housing, debt and credit relations, and financialization. She has recently published articles on the moral economy of home repossessions (*History and Anthropology* 2016), popular understandings of housing financialization (*Critique of Anthropology* 2016), the resignification of mortgage debts as illegitimate during the Spanish housing crisis (*Etnográfica* 2018), and governmentality through debt (*Focaal* 2019).

**Ieva Snikersproge** received her PhD in anthropology and sociology from The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. She works on alternatives to capitalism in France. Her PhD focused on examining what kinds of alternatives emerge in different socio-economic contexts, how they articulate with the capitalist economy, and how these tentative alternatives revalue human activity, opening pathways for change. At present, she investigates an attempt to create a post-growth regional economy in Diois, a rural area in Southeastern France.

**Michal Stein** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at Ben Gurion University of the Nege, Israel. Her doctoral research investigates how Cubans in contemporary Havana engage in dance practices as they experience, make sense of, and negotiate the tensions of increasing tourism, marginalization, growing inequalities, macro political-economic transformations, and neoliberalization. Her research engages with race, gender, cultural commodification, tourism, mobilities, value, and neoliberalism literatures. She is also currently an Assistant Professor at Ben Gurion University, teaching a course on the anthropology of Cuba. In 2018, she published her documentary “Dancing Across Borders” about the lives and aspirations of dancers in Havana, Cuba.

**Raja Swamy** is a Social Anthropologist with an interest in the political economy and political ecology of natural disasters. He is presently working on his first book (University of Alabama Press), which investigates the impact of the 2004 Tsunami on economic development priorities in India's Tamil Nadu state. Exploring the contradictory outcomes of humanitarian agendas subordinated to

the demands of a World Bank-financed and state-led reconstruction project, this work attempts to bridge the gap between political ecology and disaster studies by drawing upon rich ethnographic studies of displaced and resistant artisanal fisher communities thriving on the margins of India's globalizing economy. His recent research is on the contentious politics of recovery in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey in Houston, Texas, and examines the impacts of the disaster and its aftermath on the city's communities of color, many already struggling with long-term problems of toxicity and gentrification. He has published articles on the role of NGOs and humanitarianism in disaster reconstruction, the contested spatio-temporalities and resistance strategies shaping them, the discursive and practical import of terms like vulnerability, risk and opportunity, ecologically unequal exchange, the humanitarian gift economy, and the uses of heritage tourism development as a disaster reconstruction strategy.

**John Vertovec** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Global and Sociocultural Studies at Florida International University in Miami, FL, USA. His research in Cuba examines how structural conditions (e.g., state policies/regulations, resource scarcity, etc.) create different opportunities and challenges for a diverse group of entrepreneurs, and how these entrepreneurs conceptualize and utilize local and global resources to navigate these conditions. Since 2012, he has worked extensively with a wide range of entrepreneurs in Havana, from very small-scale formal and informal business owners to non-profit community projects who use entrepreneurial strategies to effect positive social change in local settings. He utilizes theories on intersectionality, informal economies, social entrepreneurship, and post-Soviet economic transformations to guide this research. In addition to his work in Cuba, he is also a member of other pan-Caribbean research teams that utilize ethnographic methods to address health vulnerabilities. With four pan-Caribbeanist scholars, he recently published the introduction to the special issue: "Applying a Caribbean perspective to an analysis of HIV/AIDS" (*Global Public Health* 2019), which establishes the importance of transdisciplinary multi-level approaches to HIV/AIDS that are macro-level in scope but simultaneously attend to how large-scale dynamics are inflected in situated contexts and histories.

**Donald C. Wood** is an Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Medicine, Akita University, Akita, Japan, where he has worked since completing a doctoral degree in cultural anthropology at the University of Tokyo in 2004. Prior to that, he studied anthropology under Norbert Dannhaeuser and Jeff Cohen at Texas A&M University. He spent more than 15 years researching social conditions at the Hachirogata reclaimed land area in Akita Prefecture, which culminated in the publication of *Ogata-Mura: Sowing Dissent and Reclaiming Identity in a Japanese Farming Village*, by Berghahn Books (NY) in 2012 (released in paperback in 2015). He has also investigated tourism and the effects of depopulation in the Akita region, and was a contributor to the multi-authored book, *Japan's Shrinking Regions in the 21st Century* (Cambria, 2011). Recently, he has been conducting ethnohistorical research in northeastern Japan and contributing articles to *Kyoto Journal*, *Sapiens*, and *New Politics*.

# LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Guilherme L. J. Falleiros

Emma Gilberthorpe

Sidney M. Greenfield

Junichiro Koji

Mathias Sosnowski Krabbe

Andrés Marroquín

Irene Sabaté Muriel

Vassily Pigounidès

Anthony Rausch

Ieva Snikersproge

Michal Stein

Raja Swamy

John Vertovec

Donald C. Wood

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# INTRODUCTION: POLICY, DEBT, BUSINESS AND CAPITALISM (AMID ENCROACHING NEOLIBERALISM)

Donald C. Wood

Although Research in Economic Anthropology (REA) celebrated its 40th birthday in 2018, the publication of the present volume marks a new milestone: the 40th volume in the series' long history. In other words, REA has now hit the "big four-o" both in terms of years and volumes. Some might say that it's all downhill from 40 – for a person, at least. True or not (I vote for the latter), this is certainly not the case with REA, the longest-running series in the world that is totally devoted to economic anthropology. There will no doubt be much more to come for REA, if the contents of the present volume are any indication of the series' future.

Volume 40 of REA presents 11 papers. Each was individually submitted and passed a double-blind peer-review process. These represent the latest explorations in the field into topics of human life, culture, and interest, and can be broadly grouped into categories of national and international policy, cost and debt, and business and capitalism, with a final set of two papers on economic theory and behavior in Brazil. A common underlying theme running through most papers here is that of the encroachment and effects of (nefarious yet amorphous) neoliberalism on people's lifeways (see also Part III of Volume 24, and papers in Volumes 28, 32, and 38 of REA).

First, in Part I of this volume, Raja Swamy explores post-disaster relocation and livelihood issues in Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu, India. Swamy identifies a situation in which institutionalized inequality is exacerbated by neoliberal policies that prioritize wealthier populations and separate the traditional users (custodians, in their view) of the commons from these – the loss of control over water correlating with a loss of political autonomy (see also papers in Part I of Volume 30 of REA, and papers in volumes 33, 35, and 36 of the REA).

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Second, Anthony Rausch and Junichiro Koji take a look at Japan's Hometown Tax Donation Program, which – some would say – has become a tool used by the neoliberal national government to pit local communities against one another in competition for the patronage of people across the country. The overarching question here is about whether the system can help create a situation of public participation for the common good with minimal expectations for personal profit, or perhaps have the opposite effect (in my opinion, the actual effect is closer to the latter than the former). Third, and rounding out the first set of papers, Emma Gilberthorpe argues for a need for development planners to take indigenous people's needs and, moreover, their worldviews, better into account when formulating policies – an issue that resonates in a number of ways with the essay by Guilherme Falleiros at the end of the final part of the present volume (see also Part I of Volume 29, and Part I of Volume 30 of REA).

The next part of the volume, which focuses on cost and debt, also consists of three papers. In the first of these, Vassily Pigounides empirically investigates the functions of a revenue management system that was created by a small company in France. Apparently, fair prices are seen to be quite heavily manipulated, and fraudulently presented, in order to profit certain parties. Next, Mathias Krabbe explores an issue of much practical import in the USA today: the accrual of debt among college students, which tends to create ties of dependence between them and their families. Rounding out the Part II of the volume is Irene Sabaté Muriel's study of the moral economy of mortgage lending and economic reasoning during Spain's housing bubble, which popped in 2007, causing considerable social pain and suffering that transcended lines of occupation and class.

Part III of the volume consists of three papers that share the common distinction of being heavily concerned with business and capitalism (see also papers in Volume 30 of REA, and Part II of Volume 34 of REA, and also papers in Volume 36 of REA). First, Ieva Snikersproge examines a worker cooperative ice cream venture in France – part of a movement that has been held up by many in recent years as a promising alternative to the conventional capitalist mode of production (see also Part II of Volume 22 of REA). Importantly, Snikersproge calls attention to the limitations of the cooperative model as an alternative to the capitalist mode, and demonstrates the nature and causes of its shortcomings, but also highlights its potential to contribute – at least to a degree – to the forging of a true economy of, by, and for the people. Next, Andrés Marroquín pursues a meta-analytical quantitative approach to answering the question of exactly how strongly capitalist business proprietors in 18 different Latin American countries are. In general, not extremely, concludes Marroquín – a message to which many economic anthropologists, and economists in particular, should pay attention. Third, Michal Stein and John Vertovec focus on the strategies of relatively weak and/or peripheralized self-employed people to survive, or perhaps to do more than simply survive, in situations of economic and social change. True to the anthropological tradition of meticulous on-site fieldwork, they base their analysis on many months of recent ethnographic research in the largely tourism-oriented dance instruction world of Havana, Cuba. The authors find that, in this slowly transitioning economy, locals participate through idioms of neoliberalism and

state socialism, in ways that are both gendered and racial, and which involve questions about the nature of citizenship (see also Part II of Volume 25 of REA and Part IV of Volume 37 of the REA).

The final part of this volume consists of two novel essays that share a common concern with economic behavior and theory pertaining specifically to Brazilian society, culture, and history. First, Sidney Greenfield offers a treatise on a disjunction he sees between two “proper” patterns of behavior – one, globally accepted democratic moral conduct, and the other, religion-based cultural-historic practices that are rooted in the national worldview. The disjunction gives rise to tension, allegations of corruption, and public scandals. Greenfield’s argument ties into development planning and implementation concerns, thereby connecting in several ways to Emma Gilberthorpe’s paper in the first part of this volume. And last, Guilherme Falleiros presents a creative analysis of the structural shifts between global capitalism and indigenous lifeways, which echoes the disjunction between dominant global codes and locally meaningful cultural beliefs explored in Greenfield’s paper before it (see also papers in Volume 27 of REA). From an examination of divergences and parallels between Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’s nineteenth-century theories on property and Xavante mythology, relations between private property and collective ownership are highlighted, in a way that may remind a reader of Snikersproge’s investigation (this volume) of a collective business venture in Proudhon’s home country of France.

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PART I

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL  
POLICY

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# CHAPTER 1

## THE COST OF RELOCATION: WATER AND FISHERS IN POST-TSUNAMI NAGAPATTINAM, SOUTH INDIA \*

Raja Swamy

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter examines the manner in which a disaster-affected population of artisanal fishers relocated inland to new sites following the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 experienced and adapted to problems of water quality, scarcity, sanitation, and drainage. While numerous studies of conflicts over water tend to focus on issues of equitable access (see Anand, 2011), this chapter seeks to link the problem to the contested priorities driving land and resource use and access. I show how inland relocation negatively impacted households, making it harder to sustain livelihoods due to distance from the coast, while imposing new costs including that of commodified and scarce water, locational deficiencies, and the structural weaknesses of new housing. Placed in a historical context, the problem of water can be seen as an aspect of the long-term problem of ecologically unequal exchange pitting local artisanal fisher communities against an aggressively state-supported commercial fishery sector. The continuity I seek to hone in on is the pattern of imposing costs on fishers while enabling the alienation and privatization of coastal resources. Taking water not only as a vital substance presenting questions of access and quality but also as a problem of drainage and effluence enables a fuller*

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\* This chapter draws upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted by the author in the region in 2007–2008 (see Swamy, 2011).

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*consideration of how the unequal distribution of costs on poorer populations became legitimized in the name of recovery. At the same time, the chapter also highlights the manner in which fishers refused to remain docile subjects of power and used their agency and autonomy in adapting to and sometimes refusing the terms of relocation.*

**Keywords:** Fisheries; coast; Tamil Nadu; Nagapattinam; tsunami; reconstruction; displacement

## INTRODUCTION

For artisanal fishers living on the literal and figurative boundaries of modern India, water presents an intriguing combination of values. On the one hand, proximity to the sea makes it possible to conduct lives as artisanal fishers, intimately aware of its promises and dangers, and its often inscrutable interactions with wind and land. At the same time, these communities are also in close proximity to one of the most fertile regions in India, the Cauvery delta, where wet-rice cultivation over millennia has both enabled and survived empires and wars of conquest. Artisanal fishing has thrived over centuries along the coastal towns of this thriving deltaic region providing a host of goods and services to urban populations that grew around trading towns, including not only fish but also seafaring knowledge and skills (Hornell, 1925; Mukund, 1999; Raychaudhuri, 1962; Roche, 1984; Sinha, 2002; Stephen, 1997). This complex historical geographic context requires establishing at the outset because these same fisher communities, devastated by the tsunami of 2004, faced an uphill battle to resuscitate their livelihoods in the face the double challenge of contending with the trauma of the tsunami's destructive force on their lives, on the one hand, and a reconstruction process that threatened not only their continued access to their coastal habitations, but also to the coastal commons which served as their primary source of fresh water, on the other hand. This chapter examines the specific ways in which post-disaster reconstruction process imposed new burdens relating to water on ostensible beneficiaries, forcing many of them to rethink their decision to accept new houses and return to their old sites of habitation on the coastal stretches of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu's Nagapattinam district. I focus on the problem of quality, scarcity, sanitation, and drainage in post-tsunami Nagapattinam as a problem that straddles the pursuit of neoliberal policy goals and long-term patterns of ecologically unequal exchange, and consider the lessons that may be drawn from localized responses to challenges posed by a reconstruction agenda predicated on both.<sup>1</sup>

## WATER AND THE COAST

Nagapattinam's artisanal fishers live on coastal stretches of beach generally classified by the government as "wasteland" or *poromboke*. Here, they live in villages consisting almost exclusively of members of the most dominant fisher caste group