Editor's Introduction

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The year 2012 saw a number of major events that featured anthropology in some form. On a global scale, these included continuing national and international economic crises and depression, the re-election of Barack Obama in the U.S. and his nomination of Dr Jim Yong Kim for Presidency of the World Bank. Dr Kim (with a PhD from Harvard in 1993) was the first anthropologist (and medical doctor) to head the World Bank and one of the few anthropologists to work for the Bank, whose leaders and ranks are largely economists. Obama was the president dubbed an anthropologist as a form of populist or anti-intellectualist critique (Mccourt 2012), providing an illuminating vision of the, often negative, popular view of anthropology as well as other disciplines. This view, which suggested that humanities and social science-based disciplines have little relevance and no economic value, was reflected in U.K. government withdrawal of funding for degrees in these disciplines in favour of 'STEM' (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects and challenges to such funding in the U.S. A nice example of anthropology students' response to the 'relevance' debate can be found at: <http://prezi.com/vmvomt3sj3fd/this-is-anthropology>. Many more can be found in the pages of this journal, in journals such as *Anthropology Today* and a number of blogs and discussion lists.

The appointment of an anthropologist, however, or someone with an anthropological education at least to such a powerful position (Lempert 2012) perhaps signals a turn in the outlook of global institutions such as the WHO. Is the authoritative view of development and international progress also turning? After decades of global health policies which

declared Millennium Development Goals, including universal access to a 'skilled birth attendant' and birth in health facilities to reduce maternal and infant mortality and morbidity, which were not achieved except in limited cases, policy makers are beginning to rethink their ways of looking at social change and development.

One major example of this is the recent re-prise regarding the roles of Traditional Birth Attendants (traditional midwives) and their potential contribution to maternal and infant health. Previously rejected by a modernist vision that (arguably unrealistically as well as unhelpfully) advocated 'skilled birth attendance' in formal birth facilities (ideally hospitals), it is now being recognized that traditional midwives can have a role in protecting maternal and infant wellbeing and that selective training can enhance that role (Campbell 2011). Further studies show that they are more accessible to people living in poor and rural communities, and often provide greater continuity and quality of personal care than remote, overcrowded and underfunded hospitals. The investment is partly in people and skills, with appropriate technology, rather than high-technology which may be unsustainable and for many, unnecessary and even harmful. Anthropological studies, following the classic study by Brigitte Jordan (1992) have shown that traditional midwives' roles and skills vary according to the cultural context and their social status, where in some cultural settings midwives undergo a considerable apprenticeship learning. Campbell noted that despite good evidence to support the value of traditional midwives' care, the success of efforts to translate such evidence into practice has been as modest

as progress with the Millennium Development Goals. One clue to this may be in the power of the modernist development worldview. In Malawi, for example, women are being fined for giving birth at home with traditional midwives, and are told by paid health workers that this is illegal, despite the severe problems of overcrowding, shortage of staff and physical (transport) access to government hospitals rendering the safety or quality of such care questionable (Bula 2013).

Meanwhile in Europe, Hungary's prosecution and imprisonment of the obstetrician and midwife Agnes Gereb for attending home births was fought via an EU ruling on the autonomy of women to labour and birth at home, attended by midwives or without professional assistance. In that same year, a large multi-disciplinary study was published, providing large-scale evidence that supports women having the choice of giving birth in a range of settings (Birthplace in England Collaborative Group 2011; McCourt et al. 2011). This research programme included large-scale epidemiological research, but also ethnographic case studies which aimed to explore the variation and possible factors impacting on quality and safety of care in different settings. The campaign to free Gereb, however, still continues: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/22/hungary-midwife-agnes-gereb-home-birth>.

In this first (spring) issue of 2013, two articles touch on the relationship between modernist, global health promotion agendas and a more locally rooted approach to improving health and wellbeing. In the first, Romero-Daza and colleagues describe a project conducted in Costa Rica to work with local women in building approaches to education about HIV and AIDS prevention, a project which was motivated by growing concern about local men's relationship with female tourists. Their argument is that health promotion is more likely to be effective if it adopts participatory approaches and is rooted in the

communities it targets. In the second, Randall discusses a project to explore the use of traditional or pharmaceutical medicines for malaria in the Gambia, arguing that the outright rejection of traditional remedies is unrealistic and unhelpful: there is some evidence of efficacy, which could be developed further, and these remedies are more accessible to people in rural and resource-poor settings. One caution I would add to this, as has been debated by a number of anthropologists, is that communities may lose their control and access to traditional medicines once these are appropriated by pharmaceutical companies or even formal biomedical institutions.

Our third article moves onto different territory, to explore the role of anthropological approaches in the world of design and industry. It provides a further example of how anthropological knowledge has relevance and application to a wide range of fields of policy and practice, including contributions to teaching of students in a wide range of professions and disciplines. Subsequent issues this year will include articles on anthropological research on organizations, focusing particularly on debates around structure and agency, and on anthropological research on inter-culturality in education.

This issue also includes a short report on the last meeting of the recently merged Anthropology in Action and ASA Apply Network in London, where the role of anthropology in broader educational contexts was also discussed, along with discussions on the public and policy roles and visibility of anthropologists. Other recent notable events included the RAI conference 'Anthropology in the World'. A conference report can be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6mLr5st-ac>.

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