

*Condition humaine / conditions politiques*  
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Call for Papers Special Issue

**“Anarchist Anthropologies”**

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This special issue of *Condition humaine / Conditions politiques* is grounded in a shared observation: for several years now, a body of anthropological research—often described as “anarchist”, though not forming a homogeneous current—has contributed to a common shift in perspective. These works interrogate ways of world-making, knowledge production, and coexistence that do not take the state, domination, or centralized power as necessary or self-evident horizons. Speaking of “anarchist anthropologies” is therefore not an attempt to establish a new school or to stabilize a doctrinal definition of anarchism, but rather to open a pluralistic space for discussion around research practices that concretely experiment with forms of non-domination, autonomy, and coexistence.

The renewed interest in these anthropologies is not merely a matter of circumstance, nor simply a tribute to recently deceased figures such as David Graeber (2021), or James C. Scott (2024). More profoundly, it reflects a shift in contemporary anthropological questions, in a context marked by the intensification of forms of power, the multiplication of ecological crises, and the questioning of dominant models of governance, development, and knowledge production. This shift has already found expression in several recent editorial projects that have helped structure debates between anthropology and anarchism. The issue “Anthropology and Anarchy” of the *Journal des Anthropologues* (2018) offered an initial disciplinary discussion, often centered on explicitly anarchist or autonomist fieldwork. The dossier of the *Revue du MAUSS* (2023/2) addressed these questions from a largely theoretical and political philosophy perspective, while recent discussions surrounding the work of Pierre Clastres, particularly in the *Cahiers d'anthropologie sociale* (2025), have examined the foundations and limits of political anthropology. The proposals of Holly High and Joshua O. Reno (2023) also belong to this landscape, notably through their analysis of the legacy of David Graeber.

This new issue of *Condition humaine / Conditions politiques* engages explicitly with these works while proposing a complementary shift. Rather than taking anarchism as a political form or intellectual tradition as its central object, it seeks to direct attention toward the practice of our discipline itself: is an anthropology without authoritarian and/or normative a priori possible? How, and with what implications? In other words, the aim is not to produce an exhaustive overview of existing scholarship, but to problematize a still underexplored angle: anarchism as a methodological and epistemic stance in anthropology (the discipline being understood here in its full scope, including biological, cultural, and/or social anthropology, and open notably to history and archaeology). What is at stake is less the interrogation of anarchist theories than the implications of a “methodological anarchism” (Paul Feyerabend, 1988): what anarchism does—or can do—to ways of investigating, knowing, reasoning, writing, and more generally representing in anthropology.

Thus, the issue will be organized around research that does not deny the logics of submission, domination, adherence, or reproduction—nor the overwhelming place they occupy today—but that recognizes the political and historical foundations of this ontological precedence while contesting its epistemic dominance. In a sense, the aim is to rediscover the essence of the “Copernican revolution” proposed by Pierre Clastres (1974): power and domination are not inevitabilities, yet sustaining social (individual and collective) and/or scientific forms that keep them at bay requires serious intellectual and practical effort. In this respect, we openly embrace the ambition of projecting anthropology itself toward a horizon of emancipation. We are convinced that the discipline can—and must—help to imagine better worlds and act toward them, without underestimating the epistemic demands and intellectual rigor such an objective entail. In this sense, it would involve adopting the stance of “radical intellectuals” advocated by David Graeber (2018).

From this perspective, we propose two potentially convergent axes for contributions, while remaining open to any that align with the framework outlined above.

1. The first axis directly concerns research practices. Anarchist anthropologies engage relational ethics and forms of collaboration that shift the position of the anthropologist. Experiences of co-writing (Kopenawa and Albert, 2010) and participatory action research (Fals Borda and Anisur Rahman, 1991) have already shown how knowledge production can move away from academic verticality and foster reciprocity, trust, and shared responsibility. These approaches are not merely methodological choices: they challenge hierarchies between expert and lay knowledge, between analysts and those analyzed, and raise the delicate yet central question of what it truly means to “take people seriously” (Fujigaki Lares *et al.* 2014; Mariani, 2024). How can one “take people seriously” from within an epistemology and ontology that, by definition, hierarchize other forms of knowledge and ways of being in the world? How can non-scientific forms of knowledge be made to count in arenas largely structured by and around science—especially in a period marked by the rise of post-realism and a corresponding tightening of positivist or scientist values? Anthropology, it seems, is particularly well equipped to engage with these questions, because its “empirical reason” (Olivier de Sardan, 2026) grants it a unique flexibility, and because it has historically straddled both the so-called hard sciences and the social sciences.

These questions resonate closely with those raised by decolonial epistemologies, research from the Global South, and pluriversal approaches, which invite recognition of the plurality of ontologies and regimes of truth (Smith, 1999; Sousa Santos, 2011; Wall Kimmerer, 2013; de la Cadena, 2015; Escobar, 2018). One might even ask whether these epistemologies constitute, in some sense, “anarchisms of the South”—at the very least, the question deserves consideration. Anarchist anthropologies share with these approaches a refusal of the imposition of a single world governed by a dominant rationality, and an attentiveness to the multiple ways of inhabiting the Earth. They invite us to allow other concepts—forest, river, ancestor, territory, fire—to become full-fledged analytical operators (and sometimes legal ones), and to conceive research as a practice of accompaniment and/or critical dialogue rather than an instrument of capture.

2. The second axis of this call more directly concerns the “anarchist gaze,” its epistemic implications, and the interpretive proposals it may generate. To observe the world after having provincialized the State and power as we predominantly know them is to assume that things could have been—or could still be—otherwise. It is therefore an invitation to revisit a number of facts, testimonies, and historical analyses on the one hand, and to question the current state of possibilities on the other.

If the State and domination are not inevitabilities, we must ask why—and how—they can appear to be so, and examine their conditions of existence and deployment. In this sense, an anarchist perspective should pay particular attention to “incompatibilities,” points of friction that simultaneously reveal the specific qualities of centralized power and the potentialities or propositions it must deny in order to exist. James C. Scott (2013, 2017) has provided numerous and detailed examples of this kind of critical approach, contrasting homogenizing and simplifying state and capitalist logics with ways of world-making that are fundamentally more heterogeneous, fugitives, and often seek to persist in that heterogeneity. It has also been suggested that these contradictory dynamics should be explored well beyond subjective or social forms, in a materialist lineage attentive to infrastructures, topographies, agronomy, biology, and techniques. There is, in any case, a fundamental incompatibility between hegemonic power and diversity (biological, social, or ontological), as the latter generally increases as the intensity of the former decreases (Mariani, 2024). It is to the many forms of this deep tension that we propose to turn our attention.

By aiming to describe what resists or escapes—or could resist or escape—centralized power, we assume that the history and future of the world are shaped in moments of arbitration, when one direction prevails over another. We also acknowledge that one implication of an anarchist gaze is to constantly confront what is with what could have been. In doing so, it opens reflection on the conditions of possibility for habitable worlds, human and more-than-human alike.

This special issue is thus conceived as a space for reflection mirroring the anthropologies it explores: plural, non-normative, and firmly grounded in precise inquiries. It will welcome anthropological, historiographical, or methodological contributions that examine, from a

situated and critical perspective, what an anarchist sensibility can do to anthropology in general and to the various worlds in which it is embedded. By reflecting on the conditions for a more horizontal academic practice, and its implications, it seeks to contribute to the development of an epistemic pluralism (Graeber, 2015) that would not be merely an ontological relativism.

### **Submission guidelines**

Authors are invited to submit, **by June 15**:

- an abstract of approximately 3,000 characters outlining the fieldwork, methodology, and main argument (Word or LibreOffice document), along with a short bibliography;
- a brief author biography (150 words).

Submissions must include the author's name, institutional affiliation, and email address, and should be sent to [redaction.ch-cp@ehess.fr](mailto:redaction.ch-cp@ehess.fr), [leo.mariani@mnhn.fr](mailto:leo.mariani@mnhn.fr), and [alizerj@iia.unam.mx](mailto:alizerj@iia.unam.mx), with the subject line "CH/CP – Anarchist Anthropologies." A response will be sent on **July 6**.

Full articles, written in one of the journal's languages (French, English, Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese), must be between 25,000 and 40,000 characters (including notes and bibliography). They must be original and unpublished, and comply with the journal's editorial guidelines, available on its website: <https://revues.mshparisnord.fr/chcp/index.php?id=99>.

Each article must be accompanied by an abstract of approximately 3,000 characters, in French and in English (as well as in the language of the article, if different).

Submissions must be sent no later than **October 15**.

The process is therefore organized in two stages. In coordination with the editorial board, the issue editors will select proposals based on the submitted abstracts. Accepted contributions will then be evaluated through a double-blind review process.

Timeline:

- Submission of abstracts: **June 15**
- Notification of acceptance: **July 6**
- Submission of full articles: **October 15**

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