Anthropologies of Class

Rising social, political and economic inequality in many countries, and rising protest against it, has seen the restoration of the concept of “class” to a prominent place in contemporary anthropological debates. A timely intervention in these discussions, this book explores the concept of class and its importance for understanding the key sources of this inequality and of people’s attempts to deal with it. Highly topical, it situates class within the context of the current economic crisis, integrating elements from today into the discussion of an earlier agenda. Using cases from North and South America, Western Europe and South Asia, it shows the – sometimes surprising – forms that class can take, as well as the various effects it has on people’s lives and societies.

JAMES G. CARRIER is an Associate at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, and the Departments of Anthropology at the University of Indiana and at Oxford Brookes University.

DON KALB is Professor of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Central European University, Budapest, and Senior Researcher in the Anthropology Department at Utrecht University, the Netherlands.
Anthropologies of Class

*Power, Practice and Inequality*

*Edited by*

James G. Carrier

*and*

Don Kalb
## Contents

*List of figures*  
*List of contributors*  
*Preface and Acknowledgments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The concept of class</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dispossession, disorganization and the anthropology of labor</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The organic intellectual and the production of class in Spain</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Through a class darkly, but then face to face: praxis through the lens of class</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Walmart, American consumer-citizenship and the erasure of class</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>When space draws the line on class</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Class trajectories and indigenism among agricultural workers in Kerala</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Making middle-class families in Calcutta</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Working-class politics in a Brazilian steel town</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© in this web service Cambridge University Press  
www.cambridge.org
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Export processing zones and global class formation</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATRICK NEVELING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Global systemic crisis, class and its representations</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JONATHAN FRIEDMAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures

11.1 The logic of two crises ........................................ page 191
11.2 New capital raised by US corporations (percent of new capital worldwide) ......................... 192
11.3 Percent of total wealth in the United States held by the richest 1 percent of households ............... 195
11.4 The double polarization of class and cultural identities ................................................................. 195
11.5 Schemes of the passage of diametric to concentric dualism ......................................................... 197
Contributors

August Carbonella is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Memorial University of Newfoundland. He is author of numerous publications on labor, historical memory, the political culture of the United States and globalization and war. He is co-editor of the series Dislocations, and co-editor, with Sharryn Kasmir, of the forthcoming volume Blood and Fire: Towards an Anthropology of Global Labor.

James G. Carrier is a Research Associate at Oxford Brookes University, Adjunct Professor of Anthropology at the University of Indiana and Associate of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. He has done research and written on aspects of economy in Papua New Guinea, the United States and the United Kingdom. His publications include Wage, Trade and Exchange in Melanesia (1989), Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700 (1995) and the edited volumes Meanings of the Market (1997) and A Handbook of Economic Anthropology (2005, revised edition 2012).

Jane Collins is Professor of Community and Environmental Sociology and Gender and Women’s Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She is the author of Threads: Gender, Labor and Power in the Global Apparel Industry (2003), and recently co-wrote, with Victoria Mayer, Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom in the Low Wage Labor Market (2010).

Henrike Donner is a Senior Lecturer in Anthropology at Oxford Brookes University. She has undertaken extensive fieldwork in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India, and her research interests include gender and kinship, class and urban politics. Her publications include Domestic Goddesses: Maternity, Globalisation and Middle-Class Identity in Contemporary India (2008) and the edited volumes Being Middle-Class in India: A Way of Life (2011) and, with Geert De Neve, The Meaning of the Local: Politics of Place in Urban India (2006). Her current research focuses on processes of urban restructuring.
List of contributors ix

Jonathan Friedman is Directeur d’études at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris and Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the University of California at San Diego. He has done research on the anthropology of global systems and processes, Marxian theory in anthropology, and social and cultural movements as products of global systemic crisis. He has done fieldwork in southeast Hawaii, Europe and Central Africa. Among his earlier publications are Modernity and Identity (1992, ed. with S. Lash) and Cultural Identity and Global Process (1994). His most recent work includes the two volumes of Historical Transformations (2008, with K.E. Friedman).


Sharryn Kasmir is Professor of Anthropology at Hofstra University. She has studied industrial workers in the Basque region of Spain and in the southern US, focusing on class, politics and ideology in “third-way” enterprises, resulting in The “Myth” of Mondragón (1996), “Activism and class identity at the Saturn automobile factory” in Social Movements: A Reader (2005, ed. J. Nash) and “Difference and dispossession: considerations on the making and un-making of a labor elite at Saturn” in The Anthropological Study of Class and Consciousness (2011, ed. E.P. Durrenberger). With August Carbonella she has written “Du Bois’s Darkwater and an anti-colonial, internationalist anthropology” (Dialectical Anthropology 32, 2008) and “Dispossession and the anthropology of labor” (Critique of Anthropology 28 (1), 2008), and is working on an edited volume that calls anthropologists to turn toward a purposeful study of global labor.

Massimiliano Mollona is a Senior Lecturer at Goldsmiths College, London. He has conducted research on class and labor in the UK and Brazil. His relevant publications include Made in Sheffield: An Ethnography of Industrial Work and Politics (2009) and Industrial Work and Life: An Anthropological Reader (2009, ed. with G. De Neve and J. Parry).

Marc Morell is Professor Associat at the Universitat de les Illes Balears and a Ph.D. candidate at the Universitat de Barcelona. He has conducted research
List of contributors

on urban space and social class in Majorca and Malta and his relevant publications are “Fent Barri” (Etnogr´afica: Revista de Antropologia 3(2), 2009), “Gebra and the Maltese grumbling civil society” (En Cours: Mondes et Dynamiques des Soci´etes 11, 2009) and “Working class heritage without the working class” in Heritage, Labour and the Working Classes (2011, L. Smith, P. Shackel, and G. Campbell, eds.).

Susana Narotzky is Professor of Social Anthropology at the Universitat de Barcelona. She has studied social reproduction, work, class and political mobilization in different regions of Spain. In 2012 she was awarded a European Research Council Advanced Grant for her project “Grassroots Economics: Meaning, Project and Practice in the Pursuit of Livelihood”. She has recently published (with Niko Besnier) “Crisis, value, and hope: rethinking the economy” (Current Anthropology 55 (S9), 2014), “Moral outrage and political mobilization: emergent reactions to austerity measures and the economic crisis” (Suomen Antropologi 38 (4), 2014), “Europe in crisis: grassroots economies and the anthropological turn” (Etnogr´afica 16 (3), 2012) and “Alternatives to expanded accumulation and the anthropological imagination: turning necessity into a challenge to capitalism?” in Confronting Capital: Critique and Engagement in Anthropology (2012, Barber et al., eds.).

Patrick Neveling is Researcher at the Department for Cultural Anthropology and Sociology at Utrecht University. Research for his chapter was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, and based on it he is writing a monograph entitled “Relocating capitalism: export processing zones, and special economic zones since 1947”. His work is concerned with the problem of capitalism and includes co-edited publications on “Re-scaling the anthropology of tourism” (Etnogr´afica 13 (2), 2009, with C. Wergin) and Traditions Within and Beyond the Framework of Invention (2010, with S. Klein) as well as a Ph.D. in social anthropology entitled “Manifestations of globalization: capital, state, and labor in Mauritius 1825–2005” (in German).

Gavin Smith is Professor Emeritus in Anthropology at the University of Toronto. He has worked on large and small-scale agricultural economies and urban informal economies in Andean South America and Western Europe, as well as on recent forms of flexible labor organization and regional economies in Europe. His works include Livelihood and Resistance: Peasants and the Politics of Land in Peru (1989), Confronting the Present: Towards a Politically Engaged Anthropology (1999), Immediate Struggles: People, Power, and Place in Rural Spain (2006, with Susana Narotzky) and the forthcoming Intellectuals and (Counter-)Politics: Essays in Historical Realism.
List of contributors

LUISA STEUR defended her Ph.D. from the Central European University, Budapest, with the thesis “Indigenist mobilization: ‘identity’ versus ‘class’ after the Kerala model of development?”, and was recently a post-doctoral researcher at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, as part of the “Caste out of development” project. She is currently Assistant Professor at the Department of Anthropology of the University of Copenhagen.
Preface and Acknowledgments

Capitalism has been getting a lot of attention recently. In anthropology, and in the social sciences more generally, the work of Karl Polanyi and the phenomenon known as neoliberalism have attracted growing interest for the past decade or two. More broadly, the financial crisis that began in 2007, and that quickly turned into an economic, social and political crisis, made central aspects of capitalism visible, noteworthy and painful for many people in a way that they had not been for some time. This attention has led a growing number of people to the old, but long-ignored, topic of the organization and nature of capitalism. After all, Polanyi’s (1944) *The Great Transformation* is a tale of the emergence and development of industrial and commercial capitalism, especially in England in the nineteenth century. “Neoliberalism” has become the common term for the reconfiguration of capitalism and its geographical expansion that became especially visible in the last third of the twentieth century (Harvey 2005).

This growing interest in capitalism has not, however, been matched by a growing interest in the idea of class, at least not in anthropology. Rather, anthropologists generally still seem to be bewitched by the idea of *The Death of Class* (Pakulski and Waters 1995). They seem to agree with the words of the chairman of Unilever: “The old, rigid barriers are disappearing – class and rank; blue collar and white collar; council tenant and home owner; employee and housewife. More and more we are simply consumers” (Perry 1994: 4, quoted by Gabriel and Lang 1995: 36).

Class is not dead; we are not all simply consumers. The thought that it is, and that we are, springs in part from the decrease in large-scale manufacturing in Western societies. It also, however, seems to spring from a set of disciplinary prescriptions that make the idea of class unappealing. Since the rise of postmodernism we have, after all, forewarned grand narrative, a tar with which class is liberally smeared. And we have, after all, forewarned authorial authority and, with the cultural turn, increasingly restricted our concern to What and How the Natives Think, sure in the knowledge that these are *sui generis* and that we can hope only to describe them, never to identify the things that may shape them or the things that they may shape. Worse still, class is part of the Western
conceptual universe, tainted by its provincialism and, therefore, of no help in understanding that Thinking (see Carrier 2012a).

However faintly, though, there are signs of a growing awareness that the Native’s Point of View does not encompass all that is significant. However faintly, there are signs that A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1952) was right all those years ago, when he wrote that ethnographic description should be complemented by generalization, even theory.

This volume is our contribution to this process. It has its origins in a panel that James G. Carrier and Don Kalb organized for the 2010 meeting of the European Association of Social Anthropologists, “Class, crisis and anthropology: the place of class in understanding the discipline and the world.” That panel was stimulating, and we agreed that it was worth trying to produce a volume of papers from it. Some of those on the panel found that the press of their other work meant that they could not undertake a paper for this collection, and we have recruited others in their stead. The result is what you see here. In the summer of 2012, the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology invited the two of us to spend a month working on the papers for this volume. That month was fruitful, both for allowing us to think about those papers and ways that they might be strengthened, and for clarifying our own thoughts about class and about this collection. For the opportunity to do this, we are grateful to the Institute, and especially to Chris Hann, who extended that invitation.

JAMES G. CARRIER
DON KALB