

Joint CASCA/AAA Meeting, Toronto 2023

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Transitions may be the most constant feature of everyday life. With endless uncertainties that are exacerbated by political turmoil, pandemic unpredictability, and climate crisis, our quotidian experiences are steeped in mutability. Transitions present us with both challenges and opportunities, not only in our everyday lives but also in our work as anthropologists. We aim to approach transitions with a sense of experimentation, imagination, and play, even as they are often met with a growing state of exhaustion and dread. As we navigate these transitions, we continue to think about how anthropology can rise to face our current condition, or ways it may fall short.

Within the word transition, emphasizing the prefix *trans* opens up avenues of thought that celebrate various states of being. It invokes the field of trans studies, which has not been fully taken up by anthropology, though trans studies presents us with opportunities to interrogate the politics of the body, and the institutional and historical commitments to reproduction of binary systems of sex and gender that exclude so many forms of lived experience. Rather than focusing on the pressures to move on to the next thing (to be post-COVID, post-racial, post-colonial, as it may), tarrying in transition helps us to appreciate the difficult paths toward restoring, reframing, and re-imagining proper relationships. Many of us long for Indigenous self-determination, and authentic practices of inclusion and justice across lines of race, class, gender, sexuality and ability. Attaining these forms of life ultimately depends on careful attention to the transitions involved as we bridge past and future. Transitions may be understood as forms of liminality: highly structured, ritualized, and signaled. They may also represent the unknown— a move from stable ground to less certain topographies, new vernaculars, and unfamiliar grammars.

Transition accompanies varying modes of crises and movement, and is not always voluntary or consensual. Cities incorporate transitional housing as permanent residence becomes increasingly unaffordable, while migrants and refugees may exist in a state of permanent statelessness, and are subject to incarceration and detention. The on-going ravages of the

pandemic reshapes landscapes of disability and access, an active and painful transition that registers in our bodies, our communities, and our infrastructures. The prison itself serves as a site through which ever-increasing numbers of people move in and out, while abolitionist projects ask us to dream of a transition to a more equitable future, and to envision and enact the practical steps that it will take to bring about this future.

Our ability to perceive transition is linked to temporal scales. While the transitions of our day-to-day lives may be easily registered, or casually ignored, it may require longer durations to appreciate institutional transition, and even deeper scales to recognize epochal transitions. Even as climate change has had devastating impacts on our planet, our ability to observe such changes rests on our uptake of scientific knowledge and communication and our willingness to augment our perception with the technology and expertise that allows us to register such shifts. Archaeological and geological techniques can abet our perception of the material traces of such transitions.

Examining transitions allows us to reflect upon our work as anthropologists, and how it is being reconfigured as a result of contemporary states of movement and flux. These elements relate not only to theories and concepts, but also to the methodological tools of our research and dissemination, including transitions toward community-based and engaged projects, or toward the use of multimodal knowledge production and communication strategies. They are also tied to the political economy of the university and the transitions of academia that shapes our professional and working conditions. Transition takes on many faces depending on whether it is accompanied by austerity and scarcity, or plenitude and generosity. Finally, we encourage examination of how we transition towards modes of knowledge building and exchange within our discipline that challenge our traditional expectations, including the structure of conferences and professional networks themselves.

The affects through which we experience transition may range from fear to excitement, anticipation, and even boredom or disappointment. By dwelling in the process of transition, understanding it as a project of connection and mobility, our Toronto meeting will bring us together to linger in the contingencies of transition, and to understand transition as a professional, scholarly, and everyday condition.

As we gather for AAACASCA 2023 in Toronto, we invite our colleagues and collaborators to think with us about transitions, and to explore our anthropological curiosity in relation to many other explorations of the 'trans' in transition. This includes but is not limited to transnationalism, trans identities, transitivity, transdisciplinarity, translanguaging, transparency, transhumanism, transluminescence, translation, transmission, transliteration, transmedia, transcendence, transfusion, transportation, transformation, transaction, and transmutation. We encourage you to think about submissions that relate to any element of these themes as they run through all fields of anthropology.