VALUATION STRUGGLES: RETHINKING THE ECONOMY IN TIMES OF CRISIS

A Conversation with Susana Narotzky, Patrícia Matos, and Antonio Maria Pusceddu

Interview: *Corinne Schwaller, Gerhild Perl, Janina Kehr*

In May 2019, the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Bern held its biannual lecture series "Anthropology Talks" for the third time. Over two days, Susana Narotzky, Patrícia Matos and Antonio Maria Pusceddu presented the results and experiences of the ERC-funded research project "Grassroots Economics: Meaning, Project and Practice in the Pursuit of Livelihood" (GRECO). In times of ongoing precarization of lives in and beyond Europe, the ERC project's research foci are utterly timely and allowed members and students of the Institute of Social Anthropology to debate contemporary economic practices, models and valuation struggles with Susana Narotzky and parts of the GRECO team.

The GRECO research project, carried out between 2013 and 2019, took a bottom-up approach to studying economic practices and knowledges. It aimed to understand how grassroots economics – understood as non-hegemonic models of economic processes that inform everyday livelihood practices – are valuable tools for analysing the economy. The GRECO researchers investigated practices of social reproduction, projects of future-making, political mobilization and changing class relations in nine medium-sized towns in Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal.[1] Through continuous collaborative work within the research team, they elaborated a joint research framework focusing on "valuation struggles". Valuation struggles are understood as a process through which people question the primacy of capital accumulation as means of value creation, and instead focus on aspects of social reproduction like caring or having a future as central aspects in their lives that make them worth living. The GRECO team thereby explored how people negotiate valuation categories that affect their everyday lives and how revaluation processes emerge as a mode of political engagement. In their respective research fields, they studied how differently positioned social actors struggle for recognition and worth in both material and symbolic terms in a context of prolonged and multi-layered experiences of crisis. This focus on valuation struggles makes it possible to understand how the 2008 financial crisis and its subsequent austerity policies have reconfigured people's livelihoods and sense of social worth in Southern Europe. This became clear in Susana Narotzky's keynote lecture, in which she showed how austerity policies threaten people's everyday survival. She also demonstrated how working-class people perceive austerity policies as an attack on their dignity and identity since socially anchored values – such

[1] Research for the GRECO project was conducted in the towns of Vicenza and Brindisi in Italy; Kozani, Chalkida and Piraeus in Greece; Guimarães and Setúbal in Portugal; and Tarragona and Vélez-Málaga in Spain. For more information see: http://www.ub.edu/grassrootseconomics/, last accessed 02.08.2020.

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as financial independence, social advancement, equality, publicly funded social security institutions, and the integrity of the body – are threatened.

Susana Narotzky was the principal investigator of the GRECO research project and is a professor at the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Barcelona. Currently she is also a member (2019–2020) of the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) at Princeton University. With her extensive work on the relations of production and reproduction within and across generations in a broad variety of social and historical contexts (e. g. Narotzky 2016; 2015; Narotzky and Smith 2006), she is a leading scholar in the fields of economic anthropology and the anthropology of labour, who has inspired a large number of researchers far beyond the field of economic anthropology. Her prolific work on economic practices and models combines perspectives of critical political economy, moral economies and feminist economics.

Patrícia Matos (Universities of Lisbon and Barcelona) and Antonio Maria Pusceddu (University of Barcelona) were two of the GRECO project's postdoctoral researchers. Patrícia Matos investigates how Portuguese households and individuals respond to the austerity crisis in Portugal. By exploring their practices of valuation and meaning-making, she sheds light on people's struggle to establish a "grassroots economy of welfare". Thereby, she focuses on the ways in which working-class women embody "the crisis". In his work on the economy and the state in Southern Italy, Antonio Maria Pusceddu focuses on the interrelations between livelihoods, strategies of social reproduction and common-sense understandings of crisis. Combining ethnographic and historical insights, he explores the entanglement of deindustrialization, environmental issues and post-industrial transformations in the same region.

In the following conversation, we return to the key concepts and arguments that Susana Narotzky, Patrícia Matos and Antonio Maria Pusceddu addressed during the 2019 "Anthropology Talks", such as the interrelation between "grassroots economies" and "grassroots economics", "geometries of knowledge value", "class", and "crisis". We then broaden the focus to the history, value and political implications of doing ethnographic research in one's country of origin. We conclude the conversation with some reflections about anthropological knowledge and transformative politics.

Interview

Anthropology Talks (AT): Between 2013 and 2019, you worked on an ERC-project called "Grassroots Economics: Meaning, Project and Practice in the Pursuit of Livelihood". In the project, you ethnographically studied the economic practices of working-class men and women in four crisis-ridden Southern European countries: Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece. Could you please elaborate on your understanding of "grassroots economics"? What does the term imply and how can it help to "rethink the economy" (see also Narotzky and Besnier 2014)?

Susana Narotzky (SN): The project initially had two dimensions. One was to study *grassroots economies*, the other to study *grassroots economics*. It is important to clarify that by "grass-

roots" I do not mean social economies or solidarity mobilisations that are often glossed as grassroots economies. Rather, I departed from a very basic understanding of "grassroots": what happens at the level of everyday economic interactions of ordinary people? Thus, we first investigated the practices involved in making a living and getting by in a context that had changed – at least according to the dominant crisis narrative. After the 2008 financial crisis, Southern European countries were in the process of bailouts, and austerity policies were implemented. I wanted to study how these new policies and events had affected livelihoods. Despite the fact that in the immediate ethnographic encounter we observed very local things, events, actions and processes, multiple scales were at play. Accordingly, we intended to study how these different scales affect what happens to people. This was one aspect of the study. The other aspect was what I call "grassroots economics". It was about making relevant the economic understandings and logics that people use to give sense to what's happening to them, not least by forming models. I insisted on the idea that there are other economic models operating simultaneously to the mainstream economic and policy models that are widely diffused by the media. These other models, however, are often obscured, thus we have to give them some relevance. They exist in the everyday, and they are not independent from hegemonic economic models. Rather, they are co-dependent and are related to each other in different ways.

Antonio Maria Pusceddu (AP): Let me just make a short premise in relation to Susana's explanation of grassroots economies and economics to explain how we dealt with it both during fieldwork and in managing and organizing our empirical observations. Our attempt to grasp the meaning of multiple ordinary practices was reflected in the highly diversified geography of the fieldwork. We kept shifiting between quite different contexts. In my research, for example, I worked with industrial workers, unionists, people in church networks and welfare programmes, subsidized workers; and I also worked with people in more institutional contexts. By exploring economic practices in different contexts as a continuum it became possible to address the rich meaning of the word "grassroots": grassroots economies not only in terms of practices, but also in terms of economic contexts and models.

AT: This is an important point. It relates to the conceptualization of what you have called the "knowledge value" (Narotzky 2019) of different economic models, and also to experiences and everyday sense-making related to the hegemonic economic model. What kind of economic knowledge does such everyday experience and meaning-giving produce, and how is it linked to "geometries of knowledge" (op. cit.)?

SN: To me, this is an issue of evidence. Knowledge has the power to become evidence and therefore inform policy-making. And that is basically what is entailed in these geometries of value in the domain of economic knowledge. So, if we have knowledge that is completely erased or sidelined in such a way that it is not able to claim any voice, it cannot claim any power; it is completely obscured, also in policy-making. I was very interested in revealing that people who apparently did not have a very clear say in setting the economic order, actually had a big impact on the way the macro-economy changed. At the time that I designed

the project, I used the example of the many people in Spain who had been buying houses with sub-prime mortgages. Many of them were immigrants. I pointed to the context in which they had decided to buy these houses. For example, they used their kinship networks in order to get resources to be able to finance the mortgages.[2] Through this example, I wanted to show that these micro-decisions are related to people's distributed agencies because they imply an idea of the economy that goes beyond the individual and they are very much grounded in the everyday needs and objectives that people have. This has a huge financial and economic impact in terms of the macro-economy, but it is often little acknowledged. Because what the mainstream economy acknowledges – including all its new behavioural economics – is basically an individualized supply-and-demand kind of action of the social actor.

AT: Let us talk about a further key term of your research project: the notion of "class". It comes up in all of your work and seems to be central to your research. What is your view on how notions of class and class relations have been transformed and reshaped in the aftermaths of the 2008 financial crisis? Why do you think class is resurfacing as an important concept of social analysis? And how would you rethink class for the contemporary world?

Patrícia Matos (PM): Well, first I would like to say that there have always been anthropologists who have not forgotten about class. There are some of us who have been stubborn and continue to say that class is relevant. What has interested me most in the work within the project is not only to think about how class has changed in structural terms, but also to reflect upon how class values have shifted due to recent austerity measures, particularly in Portugal, but also in other Southern European countries. And furthermore, how people have attempted to tackle these differences, or to invert or contradict them.

AP: I agree. I think class is a necessary category. Not only because we can find theoretical arguments for its relevance, but also because people speak about "class" as part of their experience of inequality. Surely, class describes one layer of inequality among many, which is nonetheless an integral part of how personal and collective aspirations are designed and pursued. Thinking through class is still a productive way of trying to address how inequality shapes relations, and of how people think about their positions within social inequalities. At the same time, one cannot but see how class is a slippery concept because of its thick political history, which makes it difficult to overcome too rigid definitions of class (see e. g. Carrier and Kalb 2015). Likewise, if we stick to class as a sociological category, we might spend endless days discussing taxonomies and thus the question of how to classify class. I know it is useful and important, but at the same time it can be a never-ending discussion. What is important, in my opinion, is avoiding class as a straitjacket and undertaking contextual efforts to understand how class relations can be thought through difference and in terms of variation within relatively homogeneous structural processes.

[2] Susana Narotzky is referring here to research conducted by Jaime Palomera (2014a, 2014b). See also Narotzky (2012).

AT: You conceptualize class struggles not only as class opposition. You also address the multiplicity of working-class values and the struggles between differently situated labouring people, paid and unpaid, who are trying to secure social reproduction and a life worth living.

AP: Well, I think that this multiplicity of forms and values of labour – as well as nested forms of subordination, such as the uneven (and mostly gendered) relations between waged and unwaged work – can be better grasped if we think of them in terms of "continuum" of class experiences and in terms of the highly heterogeneous experience of dispossession in the process of social reproduction (see e.g. Kasmir and Carbonella 2014). As Marx put it, class is defined in relation with capital accumulation – which is itself a social relation. The challenge is to investigate how changes in capital accumulation reconfigure class relations – as well as how different scales and forms of class conflicts trigger reconfigurations in the process of accumulation. In the GRECO team's experience of the dominant framework and narrative of the industrial revolution, class relations were basically thought of in terms of wage relationships within industrial capitalism. But, obviously, that has changed and, somehow, also the way we think about it. And it has changed in many different ways. Not only through financialization, but also through new kinds of platform economies[3]. They produce what one could call "rent economies", which are very different from the kind of accumulation that we have seen in other historical periods. We have to go beyond the capital–wage relation to understand class today, and include, for example, different forms of rent extraction. And actually, this going beyond the wage has been in the academy for a very long time. Just think of Jan Breman's (1996) work on the informal economy and footloose labour in India. He sketches a class relationship that is not determined by the classical wage relationship.

AT: Another important term in your research is the notion of "crisis". *As you emphasized repeatedly during the "Anthropology Talks", crisis is not simply an objective description of the world. The notion of the crisis, rather, comprises both politicizing and depoliticizing qualities. Patrícia, you elaborated yesterday on the fact that, at the beginning of the project, you did not conceptualize crisis as something given, but rather the notion functioned as a question to interrogate very different situations, structures and positionalities. And Susana, you added that for many of your interlocutors, crisis is just "more of the same". Could you tell us about your bottom-up approach to crisis, and what it means to you and your interlocutors?*

PM: It is important to know that – both prior to and during field research – we did not assume that there *was* such a thing as *a* crisis. Rather we went into the field knowing that, of course, there are several structural and historical patterns of crisis, but we did not want to project upon our informants preconceived explanations and conceptualizations. We wanted to know how people relate to structural, transitory and historical patterns of crises that we had read about in the literature. What meanings do people attribute to them? How do they explain

[3] "Platform economy" refers to economic activities which are facilitated via online platforms that work as "digital matchmakers" between providers and clients of specific services such as, for example, Uber and Airbnb.

them? How do they classify and conceptualize the notion of crisis? How do people experience the effects of the crisis and how do they act upon them?

SN: This is absolutely true. There is all this literature on economic "crisis", what it means, how it operates and so on. And you have different scholarly and political accounts of what a crisis is. But, generally, crisis is understood as a breakdown of expectations, whatever these expectations are. Like with the notion of grassroots, we started with this very basic definition of crisis as a breakdown of expectations. But we did not know what the expectations were exactly about, how this breakdown was conceptualized, or even if it was conceptualized as a breakdown at all. As Patrícia was saying, we tried not to project a particular concept of crisis onto the people we were talking with. We wanted to know how people relate to and explain patterns of change that are completely unexpected. How do they act in order to keep things more or less the same, even in times of dramatic change? And in fact, one of the very first things that we found is that in many of our field sites, for the people we were talking to, the crisis was not the 2008 crisis: it was the 1980s. That was very clear to them. The big breakdown was the neoliberal transformation of the industrial capitalist reality, which developed into different patterns of capital accumulation and class relations.

PM: That many people related the actual breakdown back to the 1980s is a crucial point, because in much of the anthropological literature on austerity, the austerity crisis is often taken as a point of departure, slightly detached from what happened before. While in fact, as Susana stressed, the people with whom we interacted put the root of the crisis in a *longue durée.*

AP: I agree. Besides the relevance of the macro-structural breaks we were evoking, there are also many other factors that shape the ways in which people think about a crisis and about how different forms of crises intersect in very much localized senses. In some cases, escaping becomes a solution. For example: emigration. Additionally, in the case where I worked, environmental and social crises are very often thought of as something that is bound up together through the same historical processes. So, in general, there are different (dis)continuities and intersections that give meaning to local crisis experiences, which are, of course, not local, but unfold locally.

AT: The other declared crisis in Europe, besides the 2008 financial crisis, was most certainly the so-called "refugee" or "migration crisis". In your presentations during the "Anthropology Talks", you mentioned that the people you worked with increasingly left their countries to look for work elsewhere. At the same time, Southern European countries, which are most affected by the financial crisis, are also deeply affected by the arrival of refugees and migrants from the Middle East and Africa. What role does this twofold migration– the emigration from the countries, but also the immigration towards your field sites– play in your work? How would you conceptualize migration in the context of the project "Grassroots Economics"?

SN: This is something that I was clear about from the start. This is not a project on migration. There are lots of projects on migration, and this project is about something else. We wanted

to look at what is happening in medium-sized towns. We started without the preconception that migration was important, or that any other thing was important. What happened then is interesting. One of the researchers from our team, Olga Lafazani, did fieldwork in Piraeus when the "migration crisis" arrived. And there were these hotspots where migrants were "parked". And she immediately became involved. She had already been studying local solidarity groups emerging among the working class in areas of high unemployment of Piraeus. And the people she was working with were very ambivalent towards refugees. It was rather the more middle-class urban people who were pro-refugees and who were the ones organizing charity networks within these neighbourhoods. But some of the local people were also anti-refugees. I thought this was a fantastic chance to look at this! This would have been important for the project because through this kind of ambivalence and conflict, we would have seen issues that relate to the question of resource access at moments when resources are very scarce. But then Olga decided to become a full-time activist in the refugee issue and could not pursue research in our project.

PM: The project was indeed not a project on migration. Yet, what was relevant in my research was a historical Portuguese specificity in terms of emigration. Every time there is a severe economic downturn, historically speaking, in Portugal, emigration has served as a sort of escape, as a possibility of hope. In most of the households I followed, the male partners in particular had been forced to emigrate. I am emphasizing this because it also relates to how people define and explain the crisis. Many times, people would explain the crisis not in terms of austerity policies, but, for instance, by relating their own experience to previous generational emigration patterns. To this extent, it was relevant to think about migration as a further aspect of a notion of crisis which emerges less from the top and more from the bottom.

SN: Exactly. Generally, in migration studies and particularly in the context of western countries, one tends to focus a lot on immigration, and less on emigration. Yet in the Greek context, for example, in Kozani and Chalkida, many young people also emigrate. And in Spain, the younger generation went to the United Kingdom, or elsewhere to look for jobs. In that sense, migration was something that became present not only in the form of migrants arriving at our coasts, but also in the form of emigration of a younger generation of Southern Europeans going north.

AP: In my case, immigration and emigration co-existed. During fieldwork, I volunteered in a Caritas soup kitchen in Brindisi. And there were two kinds of recipients: the ones who went to pick up a meal and headed home, and those who ate their meal in the soup kitchen. The latter were mostly agricultural day labourers, young men from central and western Africa. Most of them lived in what used to be a slaughter house, converted to accommodate around a hundred guys. The volunteers, mostly women, who prepared the food for the day labourers often complained about the fact that their sons and daughters were forced to emigrate north because they could not find suitable jobs in Brindisi. This gives an idea of the coexistence of different labour regimes in such a small area and how different labour mobilities can be intertwined, though shaped by different geographies of power and inequality. This aspect is also

revealed in interesting ways by the local memory of migration. The history of Italian capitalism has been strongly shaped by internal mobility along the South–North axis, so that southern self-representations have been strongly shaped by the idea of migration. This was made clear when Brindisi, first among all Italian cities, witnessed a massive inflow of refugees in March 1991, when 25 000 Albanians reached the town's shores. Locally this is remembered as an epic moment of hospitality and generosity, of trying to do good – in the total absence of institutional support. It is interesting how this positive memory is now somehow questioned by often negative attitudes towards refugees today. A quite controversial way of playing with the memory of migration exists, of people's own migration, of their acting positively towards the first migrants that they ever saw, and the often negative, even resistant attitudes towards present immigrants and refugees.

AT: *We would like to tackle some methodological issues. You all do anthropological research "at home". At least since the writing culture debate and the anti-colonial movement in anthropology there has been much critique of othering and exoticization within the discipline. Anthropology is "exotic no more" (MacClancy 2002). Our discipline increasingly engages (or should engage) with the politics and powers of the contemporary world not only in faraway places. You do this kind of politically inclined anthropology very successfully, and you have always done so in your countries of origin. We, as German-speaking anthropologists working in European contexts, note that within German-speaking anthropology, a strong outer European self-image of the discipline still prevails. To exaggerate our case: if you work in and on Europe, you might not always be seen as a "proper anthropologist". Do similar situations of "anthropological (il)legitimacy" exist in Spain, Portugal, Italy or other academic contexts you have worked in? What are your motivations to pursue ethnographic work "at home" or in close-by fields?*

SN: This is not only the case in German-speaking countries, the same thing happens in France and to some extent in the UK too. I don't know about other places, but I can answer for the Spanish context. In Spain, anthropology is a rather young discipline. At the beginning, it was very concerned with the history of the Americas linked to the colonial past – like in all these other places (Germany, France, UK). The few Spanish anthropologists of the 1960s or 1970s usually did fieldwork in Latin America. Peru was a typical field site, because one of the founding scholars of Spanish anthropology did fieldwork there and his students followed him. Mexico also became important because there were relationships with Mexico that went back to the Civil War. There was Ángel Palerm, who was a very important anthropologist working in Mexico. This was one side. And there was also another tradition, initiated by Carmelo Lisón Tolosana, who was inspired by British anthropology and the Pitt-Rivers tradition (e. g. Pitt-Rivers 1971). Julian Pitt-Rivers was actually the one who went to an exotic place, which was Spain, but I think Lisón Tolosana went back to his own hometown (e. g. Lisón Tolosana 1966). And he basically established an anthropology school in Madrid where the students did fieldwork "at home", without giving it much thought. And there is yet another important aspect: when my generation started doing fieldwork, there was no money. We had no grants and thus, we had to go to nearby places and spend as little as possible because it was our own money. I mean, this is something that people today do not realise.

Most of us, at least in Spain, did fieldwork with zero support from the state or the university or anyone. Doing anthropology "at home", then, was not a choice, but just something that you did. And there were other people doing it too because of this Pitt-Rivers tradition in Madrid. So it was not a problem.

AT: Where do you see the heuristic, but maybe also the political potentials, of an anthropology of Europe, and/or of an "anthropology at home"?

SN: Some of the anthropologists who did anthropology at home were very politically engaged: Marxists tied to French and Italian radical intellectual traditions. For them, working at home was also a kind of political engagement. Joan Frigolé for example; and Joan Martínez Alier, who did fieldwork with his then wife Verena Stolcke. They did historical ethnographic work with a clear political objective. And I would say that when I started to think about doing "anthropology at home" as a category – which is something I had never thought about in this way – I was very interested in reading the works of Latin American people, especially Alcida Rita Ramos in Brazil, Myriam Jimeno in Colombia, and other people who had been doing "anthropology at home". For them, anthropology is inescapably political when you do it "at home". They did not perceive themselves as outsiders in relation to the communities they studied; rather, they acknowledged that they were all citizens fighting the same struggles.

AP: This view of the anthropologist as studying strange things in strange places is quite conventional. It is part of the mainstream development of the discipline. And I think it replicates in different ways in more or less all national traditions. In the Italian case, where I was trained, for a long time there was a historical division into an ethnological and an anthropological tradition. The latter always had strong political connotations, as it very much grew out of the heated socio-political climate of the post-World War II period. Many of the anthropologists who shared a Marxist commitment to investigating the profound transformations of the country at the time were influenced by Antonio Gramsci and his emphasis on subaltern groups, that is the theorization of popular cultures in terms of class relations. An outstanding figure in this respect is certainly Ernesto de Martino, a public and committed intellectual, who wrote sophisticated philosophical ethnographies on magic and popular religions (2005; 2015), but who also frequently published in party journals with a wide readership, drafting concepts like "progressive folklore". At the same time, this strong commitment to doing anthropology at home, nonetheless, coexisted with more antiquarian folklorist traditions.

PM: The tradition in Portugal of a so-called anthropology at home – taking into account that most people in Portugal do not call it anthropology at home – is very similar to the Spanish and the Italian cases. Yet, in Portugal there was an important school of biological anthropology. This school was very useful to the authoritarian Estado Novo regime and facilitated the implementation of colonial rule in the Portuguese colonies in Africa. After the Carnation Revolution in 1974, the Community Studies influenced by Robert Redfield became predominant. Scholars who developed what could be called the modern discipline of anthropology

in Portugal were very much aligned with the French tradition – the same holds true for sociologists. Speaking about my generation, it is interesting to note that many of those who do fieldwork "at home" were trained in universities outside of Portugal. This complicates the notion of "anthropology at home" inasmuch as it touches upon the question of *how* we carry out our fieldwork and analyses. I am sceptical about the notion of anthropology at home since the expression has a particular history which is linked to specific power relations within our discipline. I also think that no matter where your fieldwork is placed, there are certain research procedures – such as the choice of theories, concepts and methodologies – which are not only important but ultimately determine what the end product of your research will look like. I think it is more useful to reflect upon our use of methodologies, epistemologies and theories than worrying about labelling something as anthropology at home or anthropology abroad.

SN: Patrícia is absolutely right, and we, the GRECO researchers, did not label it anthropology at home. We suddenly discovered that what we were doing was labelled by others as anthropology at home. And I would add that even at home, one is never at home.

AT: What you just evoked connects very well with our last question about anthropological knowledge as transformative politics. In a recent article, you, Susana, wrote that the meanings and practices of securing a livelihood and social reproduction among "ordinary people" contribute not only to explaining the economy, but also to participating in its transformation (Narotzky 2019). Based on your field experiences and your ethnographic findings, we are interested to know: How does this happen and how can anthropological knowledge contribute to transforming the economy, or society, or– more specifically– the policies and models that regulate and shape the world today?

PM: There is one aspect I always liked about the framework Susana designed for the project: examining *grassroots economies* and, thus, people's practices of making a living – including investments to make that life worth living – with the aim of giving value to *grassroots economics* and, thus, the logics and models underpinning people's livelihood pursuits. This has the potential of enabling a strong anthropological critique of the theoretical and political limitations of mainstream orthodox models of the economy. It allows us to understand why they keep failing to improve human welfare and to envision alternative ways of thinking about economic processes and what the economy is. Further, it allows anthropologists to gather relevant empirical evidence and knowledge capable of informing society and the general public about the conditions potentially most suited to promoting and enhancing certain political solutions and transformations.

AT: Did people in your field sites project their own hopes upon your ethnographic work? Did they expect your research to have some impact?

SN: I would say this is a very patronizing way of thinking about how we do fieldwork and anthropology, and how we relate to the people we work with in the field. But I can only speak about my own ethnographic experience, which is with a particular group of people who are

very savvy about political action and mobilization and very resistant to discouragement. One is aware that sometimes they use us, but in a different way than we use them for our scholarly products. They decide what they want to do with your work and with the information you provide. For a long time, every time I went to the field site, I had to go to the radio station with them to give an interview, I had to write a piece for their journal, for the local newspaper, and so on. And they were the ones setting the agenda; they were telling me what I should say. And I said: "Well, I will say whatever I want, you know?" [laughs]. But they were very clear about what they wanted my work to be for them. And I think this is fine, and we had great debates and disagreements about the analysis of the political and economic realities we experienced. I think that this is how it should be. Of course, some people are more aware than others that an anthropologist and her work can be useful. Generally, these are the more politicized people, who also are very literate. At least the ones in my field, they read a lot. Even people who did not finish high school, they read all sorts of books and magazines, alternative things, whatever. So, the thing about doing fieldwork at home is – as I have said before – that you are one of them. You are not like the colonial anthropologist going there. Rather, you are a citizen. Maybe you are a more favoured citizen because you have a better job or you are an intellectual or whatever images they decide to pin on you. But you are in the same political context and environment.

AP: I absolutely agree with both Susana and Patrícia on the question of politics. And yet I want to return to the issue of knowledge value and value as such. Because all of us have been talking about valuation struggles and re-valuation projects. This is something we have learned from the people we have been dealing with. We have tried to elaborate on this more in order to recognise what these people are trying to do, which is to give value to aspects of social life that are devalued, or for which value is not recognised. This is also a political statement by people about their lives, about what they aspire to, what they would like their life to be. I think that this is an important point and – at least for me – a necessary connection between knowledge production and political transformation. Otherwise, I would see no reason to produce knowledge if it were only to confirm the *status quo*. If you produce knowledge, you are trying to articulate a critical argument about the state of the present. But that does not mean that you are triggering transformation. To do that, you have to not simply be an anthropologist: it means that political work must be done. And you can do it in many ways, either by joining many others in organizing political action, or by contributing in building political narratives. And I absolutely agree with the fact that we were doing fieldwork in our own countries and thus we often shared similar situations with the people we were interacting with. If we produce knowledge, it is not just because we enjoy producing knowledge, it also makes thinking about our own situations possible.

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