

ANTHROPOLOGISTS WANTED

ANTHROPOLOGISTS WANTED

Why Organizations Need Anthropology

Laurens Bakker, Masja Cohen en Walter Faaij

Amsterdam University Press

Originally published as: L. Bakker, M. Cohen, W. Faaij, *Antropoloog Gezocht*.
Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020. ISBN 9789463728430

Translation: Vivien Collingwood

Book design by Selma van Gorkum of Good Roots Design, who is both a
designer and an anthropologist.

ISBN	978 94 6372 226 1
e-ISBN	978 90 4855 439 3
DOI	10.5117/9789463722261
NUR	764

© L. Bakker, M. Cohen, W. Faaij / Amsterdam University Press Ltd.,
Amsterdam 2021

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved
above, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into
a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic,
mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the written
permission of both the copyright owner and the author of the book.

Table of contents

Preface to the 2021 edition	9
Foreword	11
Acknowledgements	15
Introduction	17
1. What is anthropology?	21
Why anthropology?	22
Participant observation	23
Structuralism and relativism	27
Context and holism	29
Ethnography	31
Academic and applied, reflective and engaged	33
Applied anthropology	39
...and what's the salary?	43
Interlude with Corina Enache	45
Interlude with Anneke Beerkens	47
Interlude with Emma Ratia	50
2. 'What can I do with an anthropology degree?'	53
As an undergraduate student, how can I prepare for the job market?	54
What is the added value of a master's degree in the job market?	58
What distinguishes anthropologists from other social scientists?	62
Why would an employer want to hire an anthropologist?	64
How can I 'translate' my discipline for employers?	65
How do I land my first job?	67
Interlude with Lianne Quax	73

Interlude with Rita Ouédraogo	76
Interlude with Sam van Vliet	78
3. Academic anthropology: working at a university	81
Getting a doctorate	82
A postdoctoral position	86
Interlude with Bart Barendregt	91
Interlude with Naomi van Stapele	94
Interlude with Loes Berendsen	97
4. Unique skills of an anthropologist	101
Ordering chaos	102
Seeing the invisible	106
Understanding the internal logic	108
Discovering patterns	111
Guiding change	113
Telling persuasive stories	115
Enriching decision-making	116
Interlude with Olof van der Gaag	119
Interlude with Mark Middel	122
Interlude with Michelle Steggerda	125
5. Branding anthropology	127
Framing: anthropologists as fixers of human issues	128
Power: own your rank!	130
Language: multilingual, strategic and playful	131
Tempo: faster and with the beat	133
Nuance: strength and weakness	134
Ethics: pragmatic, bold and brave	134
Change: to describe and to create	135
Always underline you are an anthropologist	136
Interlude with Martin Ortlieb	138

6. Anthropologists, employers and the job market	141
Anthropologists on starting out	142
Anthropologists on their career paths	149
Professional fields: where anthropologists work	151
Trends and developments	152
Employers on anthropologists	153
Employer tips for anthropologists	155
Tips from working anthropologists	157
Interview with Frans Lustermaans	163
Interview with Lilian Swart-Eekhout	168
Interview with Meino Zandwijk	172
Conclusion	177
Bibliography	180

Preface to the 2021 edition

Anthropology is a global profession. Its practitioners frequently find themselves studying or working in other countries than their own for at least part of their career. The three authors of this book have worked in the Netherlands, but also in Belgium, the United Kingdom, Estonia, Italy, Greenland, Indonesia, Kenya and Nigeria. These international experiences shape our understanding of what it is like to work as an anthropologist and have shaped our own careers. As we conducted the research for this book, we noticed that many interviewees and respondents referred to the international dimensions of their own experiences.

These notions of the global character of anthropology as a field of work echo strongly in this book, which was originally written with an audience in mind of (prospective) university students, recent graduates and practitioners in the Netherlands. The original 2020 book was very well received, and we decided to publish an edition for a wider international audience.

In this book, we provide insights into the labour market and career paths of anthropologists; information which is often poorly included in academic degree programmes. Potential employers form another audience we aim to address, given that anthropology and its usages remain relatively unknown outside of the university. In what follows, we explain differences in academic and applied careers, discuss the main strengths of an anthropology training versus other academic careers, and present employers' responses to our questions as to why they would (or would not) employ an anthropologist. Overall we aim to provide a clearer picture as to what a career in anthropology might entail, and as

we find that anthropologists end up in all sorts of working environments, we have included a considerable number of portraits and examples to illustrate just what we mean by that.

Much of what we discuss in terms of work and the labour market holds true in many countries, if with differences that make each of them unique in their own right. Marked differences between countries can be found in, for instance, PhD defence procedures, research finance, and academic hiring systems and titles. We consider these to be marginal elements of the book's message, and they will become clear to interested readers as they consider such specific characteristics in their own contexts.

We strongly believe that society is faced with a series of major challenges:

- A growing and ageing world population with massive societal impact in terms of megacities, living environments, food systems, the labour market, pension systems, and the distribution of wealth.
- Global warming resulting in increasing pressure on natural resources and land and requiring a shift to a low-carbon economy.
- Increasing inequality, both within and between countries, resulting in conflict and migration.

To better understand these challenges, and particularly to create change and find better solutions, we need to understand people. Why they do what they do, how they live, work and travel. How people make sense of their world. Exactly what anthropologists are great at. So, let's up our game. Claim our seat at the table. And build that sustainable, inclusive and future-proof world.