

# KEYNOTE LECTURE

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The George Washington University

// 6 November from 16.30 - 18.00 // online webinar



## *THEORY IN UN-DISCIPLINED PRACTICE: ANTHROPOLOGIES OF CHANGE/ ANTHROPOLOGISTS IN CHANGE*

My aim is to provoke discussion about what at first may seem to be two somewhat distinct questions—and to consider some aspects of their relationship to each other. These questions are:

- 1) How anthropology as a discipline has theoretically addressed social and cultural change – and –
- 2) if, how, and on what grounds, anthropologists might become involved in fostering social change—and change of what sort.

I first draw on a number of recent anthropologies of crisis and/or intervention to highlight contrasts along what might be thought of as a continuum of anthropological approaches to analyzing how the socially novel is imagined and garners subscription (or not) -- ranging from the largely descriptive to the theoretical. I then draw reflexively on my own engagements in a variety of public, policy, and civic engagement arenas -- including refugee research and immigration advocacy, humanitarian action, the archeology of the slave trade and public engagements with its enduring legacies in the present, and ethnographic investigations of census taking—to reflect on how positioning across that continuum may inform possibilities for, and thinking about, both critical/de-constructive and/or generative/productive engagements with power in contexts where opportunity structures are in flux and sociality is contested. In conclusion I reflect on whether anthropology should aspire to a comprehensive “ethics of engagement”; or conversely whether there are moments in which action and engagement are best served when we “stop being anthropologists”—even as, and if, we still draw on what anthropology may allow us to understand about change.

The event is free and open to all via the registration

<https://events.au.dk/keynotestephenlubkemann>