

The logo for the Anthropology Book Forum, featuring a stylized blue swirl design on the left side of a dark blue rectangular background.

Anthropology Book Forum

Open Access Book Reviews

Year in Review

Beloved readers and authors, we are happy to, for the third time, reach out to you with a summary of the year that has passed, and present you with our plans for the future. For those unfamiliar with the Anthropology Book Forum, it was founded by the American Anthropological Association as an experimental digital platform aimed at accelerating the scholarly book review process and expanding conversations around newly published work. As an [open access journal](#), committed to a set of principles that aims to reduce barriers to accessibility, the Forum publishes reviews in multiple formats weekly, every Monday. Based on the idea that book reviews are not just summaries of academic texts, but engagements with scholarship, ideas and authors, the Forum seeks to facilitate connections and exchange between authors and readers within and outside of anthropology. With an online readership of around 3,000 per month, and a contributor base of 1300 and growing, we are constantly exploring and experimenting with new modes of engagement and new forms of written, audio and visual review formats. Working with over 100 publishers around the world, we continuously seek to make available a broad range of texts relevant to anthropological audiences, broadly conceived.

When we last wrote to you in our [2020 Year in Review](#), we were nearly a year into a global pandemic that has both amplified modes of connectivity while also exacerbating various kinds of exclusions within anthropology and academia more broadly. We wanted to take the opportunity to rethink our, albeit small, role in making anthropological scholarship more accessible – not as a short-term reaction to the conditions brought on by the pandemic – but as a long-term and ongoing project. We begin this review by looking back over the past year, before introducing some new options for interactive reviews and scholarly conversations in the year to come.

Looking Back: 2021 Year in Review

This has been an eventful year. We have finally moved to our [new home](#), a site dedicated entirely to the Forum. Here, we have developed and expanded multiple ways to engage with recent scholarship and film other than through text alone. We have launched an option for authors to engage their readership through what we call [Author Book Talks](#), a format in which writers and researchers contextualize their work and the importance of their scholarly contribution in video or audio form. We have also sought to encourage [Video Reviews](#) where authors and reviewers alike can be ‘present,’ albeit virtually. Moreover, we continue to provide audio versions of some reviews in order to enhance accessibility. The new website also includes an elaborated [Journal History](#) and [Focus and Scope](#) sections, and we have started a [Contributor](#) section where our reviewers are briefly presented to both acknowledge and convey the many voices that make up the Forum. We hope these changes have contributed to making the Forum a lively and interactive space for learning, discussing and communicating insights from anthropology and beyond.

Additionally, our [Facebook](#) page (launched in autumn 2019) has started to attract a large following. At the time of writing, we have over 2200 followers and growing. We find this useful as Facebook allows us to share our reviews and available titles with readers who would otherwise most likely not locate us through our website alone. Thus, this increase in our online presence is important to us and we are much appreciative to all those of our followers that share and engage with our posts. Moreover, the number of academic presses that we work with continues to expand, now including several smaller independent publishing houses. This is important to us as we work to make the Forum more inclusive, not only with regards to who reviews a book, but also to where books are published and which subjects they engage with. Including a broader representation of titles from minority- and women-owned publishers moreover allows for a much broader and stimulating discussion wherein multiple voices from different perspectives can be heard. The *Anthropology Book Forum* will keep on working for an inclusive scholarly environment free of exclusive walls of different kinds, such as paywalls – hence our abiding efforts to maintain Open Access publishing.

Carrying on a concern we have maintained since 2019, we have worked to increase the number of archaeology titles reviewed in the Forum – out of the 51 reviews published this year, nine are within the domain of archaeology. It is our ambition to continue the work to increase the number of archaeology titles reviewed to ensure a more equitable representation of the four fields, and encourage archeology students and scholars to check out our [archaeological titles](#) available for review. Finally, ending our review of the last year on a proud note, we are excited to announce that we have published our first [review](#) of a non-English title, *En bra plats att vara på* (2016). It is our hope that we will be able to publish many more reviews of this kind to increase awareness and gain perspectives from outside the English language sphere – something we believe can be of great value for further broadening conversations relevant to anthropological audiences.

Looking Forward: 2022

This year we have published both joint reviews as well as a review of a non-English title. This is a start. Yet, we want more! We strongly encourage anyone interested to get in touch with ideas of books that would make a good combination for a joint review, or of titles that are published in languages other than English of which you could provide a review (in English). Additionally, two formats that have been slow to develop, and which we would like to expand in the next year, are our [Author Book Talks](#) and [Author Interviews](#). We would especially welcome any graduate students seeking to interview authors regarding their recent work from their departments or from outside their university. Additionally, we invite any publishers to reach out to authors they work with to convey this resource. If you would like to propose a Book Talk or Interview, please [get in touch!](#)

In continuing to offer a vibrant space for knowledge exchange, we are excited to announce two new aspects of the Forum called [Conversations](#) and *Trajectories*:

Conversations: Published on a rolling basis, this venue will feature informal conversations around a particular theme invoked by a recent publication, for instance, a new definition of a concept like kinship or a novel regional perspective. We invite proposals from individuals who are interested in taking the lead on putting together a Conversation with at least five participants.

Trajectories: Similar to a review article, trajectories are between 1500 and 3000 words and attempt to succinctly tease out major themes in recent scholarship within a topic or subfield. For instance, this review may focus on recently published titles relevant to biological

anthropology and suggest how these newly published texts are pushing the field in new directions, or perhaps, revisiting old debates.

Beginning in 2022, we will also work to offer expanded resources to students and early career scholars. Namely, this will include opportunities for publishers to engage possible future authors via the *Anthropology Book Forum* as a way to stimulate and assist early career scholars to learn the craft of effective book proposals and how to attract interest from academic publishing houses. These opportunities will be presented on the Resources page of the site, which we hope to share with you shortly.

Additionally, we are working to make the new site more navigable and the process of locating reviews and available books easier. Moreover, we acknowledge that ‘inclusivity’ and ‘accessibility’ can at worst be empty terms, and at best mean different things to different people. Therefore, we would like to encourage readers, authors and publishers to engage with us and help us refine the Forum to best serve the scholarly community. Please share your thoughts with us [here](#) on what you like, or dislike, and if you have suggestions for what we could do to make the *Forum* more inclusive, interactive and accessible for you – we are constantly working to improve!

Summing up

Last, but not least, we want to thank our readers, authors, contributors and the increasing number of publishers offering us their titles for review. We are confident that the Forum will continue to grow during 2022 at its new home and that we will, with your help, continue to offer a useful and dynamic resource for knowledge exchange.

Your editors,
Rasmus Rodineliussen and Emilia Grouppp

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