

# OPINION PIECE FOR THE ASCONA TRANSFORMATION CHARTER

*Danny Pinedo*

The values and principles set out in the Ascona Transformation Charter are highly relevant to the Peruvian case. Many of the pressures and challenges faced by anthropologists in Switzerland and Europe are also present in anthropology practiced in Peru. An example of these common difficulties is the increasing precariousness of the academic work of anthropologists. In Peru, by law, the functions of a university professor include the permanent improvement of teaching, research, university management, and social outreach. However, the anthropologist must perform these functions in an environment of job insecurity, characterized by low wages, lack of job stability, and exhausting workdays, considering that he/she must teach at several universities at the same time to earn a decent salary.

Work overload affects the right to rest, compromising the physical and mental health of college professors, and negatively impacts their performance in teaching and research. Thus, the salaries received by university professors do not reflect the high workload and multiple responsibilities they must assume. This situation is even more serious in public universities, where successive governments have applied, for several decades, neoliberal public policies that have restricted budgets and investment in higher education. As a result, the important work carried out by professors is not recognized, which discourages their commitment to achieving academic excellence.

An additional element that accentuates the precariousness of academic work is the implementation of policies that promote an organizational culture that prioritizes quantitative indicators to measure productivity, which has as its main purpose obtaining accreditations for academic programs and departments and improving their positions in the rankings. Under these criteria, the success of professors is measured through the number of publications, especially articles published in journals indexed in databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, and not through the performance of the professor in the comprehensive training of students. These quantitative productivity parameters are also used to determine the granting of bonuses to encourage research among university professors, which are so necessary in a country like Peru with so little support in this regard. This situation creates a climate of constant pressure to publish, which in recent years has encouraged the emergence of dishonest practices such as the purchase of authorship in scientific publications.

This way of evaluating the performance of academic work implies a bias towards a reality more in line with the Global North academy, where professors have greater economic opportunities to conduct research and publish. This evaluation model is also discriminatory towards the social sciences and humanities since it establishes minimum scores that can only be achieved by publishing a large number of articles in databases specialized in hard sciences.

In Peru, as in other Latin American countries, anthropologists and other scholars in the humanities and social sciences do not necessarily publish in journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science, but in indexes such as Latindex, which are not taken into account as evaluation criteria or receive lower scores than the other indexes. In this way, it is very difficult for anthropologists to meet the requirements that allow them to access financial support for research.

Therefore, as a professor of anthropology at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, I subscribe to the values and principles assumed by the Ascona Transformation Charter, especially with regard to combating precariousness among anthropologists in all its forms and effects, ensuring conditions for the practice of slow science instead of neoliberal imperatives such as “publish or perish,” and challenging the current parameters of research evaluation by proposing alternative models. I believe that to the extent that we can make effective and real changes in this direction, we will have taken important steps towards a more committed, democratic, and transformative anthropology, especially in a country in permanent crisis like Peru.

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