PREFACE

Anthropologists, and presumably other investigators of social processes, are often faced with a tension between understanding problems and suggesting ways of dealing with those problems. The problems in question may be theoretical or practical, and ways of dealing with them may vary from simply writing about them to being employed directly as an agent to bring putative or actual "solutions" to a local population. The issues of "whose problems" and "whose solutions" are bound to arise in such contexts. The category "applied anthropology" has been used to demarcate the work of anthropologists when they specifically attempt to apply their knowledge in order to bring about changes in people's perceived situations. Most notably, these changes have occurred first under the conditions of colonialism and subsequently in post-colonial situations where various kinds of development are being introduced, are planned, or have already come into being. A considerable literature has developed around this enterprise.

Writings on applied anthropology tend to fall into one or other of two groupings: one is the "how to do it" genre of manuals and textbooks for practitioners who will be trained to make applied work their career. The other belongs to critical anthropology, with its focus on critiques of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and exploitative aspects of development generally. One genre tells readers how best to carry it out, the other marshals arguments essentially against doing it at all, perhaps without offering any concrete alternatives. There is, however, a more nuanced stream of work that tries to be critically aware of wider contexts while at the same time seriously discussing engagement with specific pieces of work and what can be learned from them. Such pieces of work may involve short-term consultancies or longer-term studies. The ethnographic method has itself been invoked in order to gain a reasonable overview, for example, of how aid agencies around the world actually operate (Crewe and Harrison 1998; see also Stirrat 2000 on "Cultures of Consultancy"). Anthropologists

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who have a long-term knowledge of a particular region have sometimes turned to an assessment of the problems surrounding development in that region, using their experience to do so, as Victor King has done for South-East Asia, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia (King 1999). Especially in fields such as medical anthropology that intersect with the work of health care personnel, the value of the anthropologist's perspective is well recognized (Frankel and Lewis 1989; King 1999:214–238). In some instances the anthropologist's involvement may arise out of long-term biographical experience. Gideon Kressel, writing on his long-term work with Bedouin pastoralists in the Negev region of Israel, begins his account with his childhood memories of seeing Bedouin "herds, campsites, and tents" and his later time as "a young shepherd" at a kibbutz in 1951–1952. His interest in the adaptive preservation of Bedouin pastoralist ways and the role of applied anthropology in interfacing between these pastoralists and the state is underpinned by his concern for the shepherds. He notes, for instance, that the shepherds are not equipped to pursue complaints against government officials, who use the power of the state to override them (Kressel 2003:xiii, 77). (See also Raz 2004 for an applied medical anthropology study of this same Bedouin population.)

Debates about applied anthropology are closely interwoven in general with debates about development anthropology and the anthropology of development (Willigen 2002), and about modernization theory and the whole concept of "modernity". Katy Gardner and David Lewis have reviewed the demise of general modernization theory and the monolithic assumptions regarding inevitable trends toward modernity that it entailed, proposing that we reconsider applied anthropology in the light of "the post-modern challenge" (Gardner and Lewis 1996; see also Grillo and Rew 1985 for an earlier study of comparable issues and Mars 2004 for a contemporary overview). Essentially, this involves responding to the heterogeneity and specificity of situations where applied anthropologists work, giving full recognition to the conjunctural forces involved but also to the agencies of the people who are intimately involved in the development policies, sometimes as the targets but sometimes as consultants. Recognition of agency may also merge into advocacy (and Kressel's work, cited above, has a clear element of advocacy in it, backed up by intensive long-term research). Gardner and Lewis note the pitfalls that may be involved in advocacy; but they also note that this role has nowadays often been appropriated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and by community groups themselves. "Sustainable development" is often a focus of such groups, in opposition to outside developers. The Earthwatch Institute is an example of a foundation that is a non-profit international organization devoted to promoting policies and actions that they define as being conducive to a sustainable environment generally. A classic example of how mainstream anthropological work can imply a need to alter policy without having to advocate this directly comes from work by John Grayzel, who

worked with FulBe pastoralists in rural Mali in Africa. Grayzel showed that while FulBe herd management generally followed so-called rational principles of maximizing livestock production, there were individual variations in behavior, which he was able convincingly to relate to the FulBe value of *pulaade*, centered on ideas of "intelligence, beauty, wealth, and independence". These cultural values meant that policies of development planners that did not take them into account were likely to produce false predictions and to fail (cited in Nolan 2002:12–13).

The lessons implied in the instances given above reinforce the point that applied anthropology is an extension of anthropological work in general. It is not a marked sub-field, although it may represent a specific professional vocation. (Mars 2004 argues that applied anthropology should be integrated more into the work of departments in the U.K. Interestingly, he cites the theoretical work of Mary Douglas on perceptions of risk as having stimulated the work of professionals in the applied sphere.) In certain contexts anthropologists have been drawn increasingly into applied work. This is notably the case in Australasia, and perhaps most markedly in the case of Aboriginal studies in Australia, where the legal decisions granting land rights to Aboriginal populations unleashed a flood of problems relating to the determination of who had authentic claims to particular stretches of land. All the theoretical and ethnographic debates that anthropologists had engaged in for half a century or more among themselves found their way into this new context, and applied pieces of work have become a stock-in-trade of many specialists on Aboriginal studies in Australia since then (see, for example, the studies in Rumsey and Weiner 2001 and in Toussaint and Taylor 1999). The sources of funding for such studies clearly impact their terms of reference and outcomes. Strenuous arguments occur about the validity or otherwise of testimonies regarding "ownership" of resources (e.g. Peace 2003; Povinelli 1993; Weiner 1999, 2001). These arguments in turn tend to reflect political and ideological positions as well as questions of objectivity in anthropology as a "science" (Keen 1999, in the volume edited by Sandy Toussaint and Jim Taylor, reviews this question in the context of applied anthropology).

Anthropologists working in Papua New Guinea have been confronted by applied issues with particular sharpness in relation to mining projects which can bring large influxes of cash to populations but also precipitate severe social problems and entail considerable displacements of people. As with the Australianists, anthropologists, specializing in Papua New Guinea have often been brought in to determine who has rights in relation to land and who therefore should receive compensation or royalties from mining operations. Since mines may cause environmental pollution and are certainly suspected of doing so, ethical and ecological issues are intertwined here. The volume of studies edited by Alan Rumsey and James Weiner (2001) explores this terrain of work in

depth. The anthropologists who contributed to this volume tended to be long-term professionals whose ethnographic knowledge pre-dated the mining projects at stake or was independent of their work on these projects. They were not "applied anthropologists" but undertook pieces of applied work, or were commenting on such pieces of work, from their own knowledge-bases and their own intellectual positions. The question of whose knowledge is involved comes strongly to the fore in two chapters on competing versions of "land ownership" in the region of the Nena mining project. Dan Jorgensen pertinently asks, "Who and what is a landowner?" (Jorgensen 2001; on similar issues among the Duna people, see Stewart and Strathern 2002). Don Gardner, dealing with the same case, looks into the deeper philosophical background in the people's own ideas about "truth", including the idea reported by Jorgensen that "the indeterminacy of the world transcends human knowledge" (Gardner 2001:117)—which would make debates about who really holds claims to land ultimately moot and also makes of the Telefolmin people something resembling post-modernists. More generally, the bureaucratic and political concept of exclusive land ownership impinges awkwardly on the fluid complexities of New Guinea ideas, adapted to a world of local movements and overlapping claims to resources. The problem arises from the conjuncture of sharply different regimes of political economy and mythology. The mythological contexts are delineated further by Wardlow and Ernst in the same volume (Ernst 2001; Wardlow 2001); Bill Sagir examines emergent local politics in the context of petroleum extractions at Lake Kutubu (Sagir 2001); and Stuart Kirsch explores the experiential dimensions of the impact of pollution from the Ok Tedi mine on the Yonggom people (Kirsch 2001). "The land" in these contexts has to be understood in its full experiential and mythologically established senses in which land and human bodies are linked together in cyclical fashion (Stewart and Strathern 2001a, 2002). Applied anthropology comes full circle with interpretive anthropology here.

Closing circles in this way provides options for anthropological workers, who may be hired for short-term applied projects or engaged in longer-term ethnographic work. Our collection of essays in this volume is designed specifically to demonstrate the practical efforts of ethnographers who are faced with a variety of concerns in their field areas that raise issues that are debated within the field of research itself. This collection is also particularly intended to show the links and similarities, as well as the disjunctures and dissimilarities, between different contexts of ethnographic work, and therefore to break down artificial dichotomies such as "pure" versus "applied" work. Our aim has been to create a level playing field for the debates surrounding consultancy, not to arbitrate between players in terms of "high" or "low" ground (*pace* Bastin and Morris 2003:78). We stress the point that, in practical terms, ethnographic work is inevitably involved with the world at large and with the forces that work

in it (see, for example, Harper 2002); while we also point to some particular conditions that constrain the special world of consultancy work (see again Janes 2003 and Stirrat 2000). Equally, the studies that we present in this collection recognize the contingency and the variety of issues a consultancy project may entail, while pointing to numbers of generalities that are involved.

Our primary aim in this collection was to provide a forum where anthropologists engaged in the practice of their work, using this term in a broad sense, could reflect on the implications of their position either as consultants in the immediate context, or as ethnographers working in an environment occupied by collective consultancy organizations such as NGOs. Interestingly, one of the essays published here, by Paige West, which discusses her experience of working in the same area of the Papua New Guinea Highlands where an environmental NGO had a project for wildlife management, won the American Anthropological Association's Anthropology and Environment Junior Scholar Award. West's discussion is substantive, critical, and reflexive, as are the other fine essays presented here which bring an insightful range of perspectives to bear on the topic.

Essays that have been published after our collection first appeared as a special issue of *Social Analysis* in 2001 (Stewart and Strathern 2001b) have in many ways followed our lead by presenting reflective practical experiences. For example, Craig Janes, a well-known epidemiologist who has done much to broaden the scope of epidemiology in the direction of ethnography, discusses attempts made between himself and an Asian Development Bank (ADB) professional officer to resolve his criticisms regarding the impact of ADB-sponsored reforms on the health care system in Mongolia (Janes 2003). George Henrikson outlines the work of the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, noting difficulties with the term "indigenous" here (Henrikson 2003:117), and he goes on to reflect upon his own work with the Innu nation on documenting their land use patterns in order to secure their rights to the land, and his later involvement in claims relating to a mining project in their area. He stresses the difficult situations of both the Innu and himself as their consultant in between various state and commercial organizations (pp. 119–121). And he recognizes, finally, the dangers that may be involved in advocacy: "the consultant, perhaps building on the vision that the indigenous people have for their future, may come to create aspirations that are wholly unrealistic, and therefore in the end both dangerous and destructive" (p. 122).

Steven Robins also takes up the question of working with "indigenous peoples", in his case study of resettled San communities in South Africa (2003). He was commissioned by the Africa-Pacific-Caribbean/European Union to write a report that would give credit to the South African government and would also advance the claims of these San people to international donor funding. He asked himself if a report which "detailed San

involvement in modern warfare and strategies of state terror that tainted romantic images of 'the harmless people' living close to nature" would be congenial to potential donors and indigenous peoples NGOs (Robins 2003:131). He goes on to discuss the roles of NGOs in general "in local political processes, in mediating representations of the San, and in brokering global discourses on 'civil society'" (p. 132). Rival NGOs engaged in turf wars, and San communities were split between those advocating "traditional culture" versus those arguing for the adoption of "Western ideas and practices" (ibid.). Robins aptly calls these contexts and processes "NGO culture wars".

The arguments about culture in general that have preoccupied anthropologists in their theoretical debates thus find their replicas and simulacra in a transmogrified domain, that of the aid agencies and NGOs themselves. The studies in our collection here discuss these dilemmas in nuanced and reflective ways. While fieldwork cannot by itself solve the problems that occur in contemporary contexts, it is an essential precondition for reflecting on and understanding them, and hence of providing more thoughtful ways of approaching them in future. (This includes research done by those from outside of the group[s] under study and those from inside the group[s] being studied.) *Experientia docet.*

One relatively new strand of work on the problems of development reinforces the point that detailed fieldwork, while not necessarily presenting clear solutions to these problems, is essential to making an approach to such solutions. This is the strand known as indigenous knowledge (IK) studies. Here indigenous knowledge stands in much the same semantic space as terms like "culture" or "value orientations" have done in previous times. The basic proposition is that better understanding of the practical workings and scope of the indigenous knowledge of topics such as forest growth, soils, plant types, livestock patterns, cultivation processes, and the like, must surely help to create an interface between local people and introduced forms of technological development based on forms of knowledge from outside sources. In a broader sense, all kinds of culturally established "knowledge" may be relevant to the development process, and this is why local people need to be an integral part of programs and projects in their areas. In one of the recent volumes devoted to an exposition of the IK approach (Bicker, Sillitoe, and Pottier 2004; see also Ellen, Parkes, and Bicker 2000; Sillitoe 2000; and Sillitoe, Bicker, and Pottier 2002), we have also pointed to the significance of mythological knowledge (*malu*) among the Duna people of Papua New Guinea, giving them a way of negotiating for compensation and royalties from the Porgera Joint Venture gold-mining operation (Stewart and Strathern 2004). What is at stake here is not whether such knowledge is in all respects "ancient" or "authentic", but how it is developed and presented as a performance in contemporary interactions. Whether knowledge is "hybrid", "pure", "ancient", or "invented", what matters is the

efficacy of such knowledge in processes of negotiation about development and conservation issues, as Colin Filer argues (Filer 2004). The IK approach is not a means to obviate or nullify the many difficulties that applied anthropology encounters in the field of development, many of which difficulties result from power differentials beyond the control of the anthropologists and the people with whom they work. Its value, however—and this is a very considerable value—lies in its insistence that significant knowledge, whether technical or symbolic, does not belong only to the developers, but rather is found importantly, and often crucially, among those who are locally most impacted by development projects. Here again the general orientations of the ethnographer and the requirements of the applied anthropologist come full circle with each other. If a problem has a solution, it is in the details of the case studied, and in the imaginative insights that are brought to bear on these details.

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— Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart

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