INTRODUCTION

The Anthropology of Expertise and Professionals
in International Development

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David Mosse

This is a book about experts and professionals in the world of international development. It brings together ethnographic work on the knowledge practices of communities of development advisors, consultants, policy makers, aid administrators and managers – those involved in the construction and transmission of knowledge about global poverty and its reduction. Recently, anthropological interest in contemporary knowledge practices has turned ethnographic attention to professional fields as diverse as global science research (Fairhead and Leach 2003), international law (Riles 2001), finance (Riles 2004, Miyazaki and Riles 2005, Holmes and Marcus 2005, Maurer 2005), accounting and audit (Power 1997, Strathern 2000), academic research and its funding (Brenneis 1994) and journalism (Hannerz 2004, Boyer and Hannerz 2006). Anthropology's encounter with international development has perhaps been longer and more intimate than any of the others (Ferguson 1997). This invites reflection on the relationship between policy making and anthropological knowledge. After all, as Maia Green notes in Chapter 2, both share a concern with categorization and social ordering, but '[w]hereas anthropology interrogates categorical constructions with a view to disassembling and hence render meaning explicit, policy makers are concerned with reassembling and reconstruction' (this volume); they aim to alter social ordering, not just to interpret it, and to effect such transformations through the channelling of resources.

The anthropological critique of development initially began by dichotomizing the programmer's 'world-ordering' knowledge and the indigenous knowledge that it dismissed while pointing to the ignorance and incompatibility involved in development encounters (Hobart 1993). However, the closer ethnography got to development practices, the harder it was to sustain the distinction. Attention shifted to dynamic knowledge interfaces and battlefields (Long and Long 1992), and to frontline workers

in development who participated in apparently incommensurate rationalities, skilfully translating between them, but only ever being partly enrolled onto the outside planners' projects (Long 1992, Lewis and Mosse 2006). But little attention was given to the knowledge practices at the top, which were commonly dismissed as ahistorical and depoliticizing managerial prescriptions that were inherently repressive or governmentalizing, being oriented towards the reproduction of power and knowledge hierarchies and stabilising boundaries around development professionals and those subject to development (Long 2001: 340).

This not only disabled anthropologists' own engagement with visions of the future, social reconstruction or the connection to people's capacities to aspire (Green, this volume, Appadurai 2004, cf. Quarles van Ufford et al. 2003), it also diverted attention from the knowledge producers themselves, anthropologists among them. One problem is that in anthropological hands, policy discourse is disembedded from the expert communities that generate, organize (or are organized by) its ideas. The products of the policy process, visible as documents, are privileged over the processes that create them (e.g., Escobar 1995); whereas documents can better be seen *as* sets of relations (Smith 2006). Consequently, the rich literature on the intended and unintended effects of development interventions on populations, regions and communities is hardly matched by accounts of the internal dynamics of development's 'regimes of truth' or of the production of professional identities, disciplines and the interrelation of policy ideas, institutions and networks of knowledge workers who serve the development industry.

This book is about life within what Raymond Apthorpe (Chapter 10) refers to as Aidland. Its chapters constitute 'aidnography' that 'explores the "representations collectives" by which Aidmen and Aidwomen say they order and understand their world and work'. The book closes with Apthorpe's lighthearted allegorical pondering on the adventures of Alice in Aidland, a mysterious world in which she finds places-that-are-not-places, non-geographical geography, undemographical demography, un-economics and history made from policy design. In Aidland's political mathematics 'doubling' aid will 'halve' poverty, but its morality is that of the return gift, accruing larger benefits at home, protected by Aidland's 'firewalls against accountability'. Why, Apthorpe asks, 'does the bubble that is Aidland not burst?' Other chapters in this volume offer versions of an answer which remind us that Aidland may look like another planet, but its reality is not virtual. 'The perpetuating institutions and "mechanisms" involved lie in the distinctly unvirtual *Realpolitik* of states, inter-state organizations, and international non-governmental organizations' (Apthorpe, Chapter 10 this volume).

The broad questions implied in Apthorpe's hyperbolic satirical sketch are how does international development produce 'expertise' and how does such knowledge work within the global aid system? This opening chapter

provides the context for a discussion of such questions about expertise and professionalism, first by identifying recent policy trends within the aid industry; second, by setting out some different approaches to the study of expert knowledge; and third, by turning to the identity and social world of border-crossing professionals themselves. The chapter sets out an overall argument presented by the book as a whole. This concerns, first, the way in which extraordinary power is invested in 'global' policy ideas, models or frameworks that will travel and effect economic, social and (within a 'governance agenda') political transformation across the globe and, second, the way in which, in reality, policy ideas are never free from social contexts. They begin in social relations in institutions and expert communities, travel with undisclosed baggage and get unravelled as they are translated into the different interests of social/institutional worlds and local politics in ways that generate complex and unintended effects. And yet, in addition, the work of professionals of all kinds is precisely to establish (against experience) the notion that social and technical change can be and is brought about by generalizable policy ideas, and that 'global knowledge' produced by international organizations occupies a transcendent realm 'standing above' particular contexts (cf. Mitchell 2002), and a globalized 'present' that compresses historical time.[1] Such notions of scale and temporality are also constitutive of professional identities in development.

Finally, this introduction raises some important problems of method for anthropology. These arise from the authors' concern with process rather than product, their interest in understanding international knowledge making, rather than debating policy ideas, and by the ethnographic engagement with expert informants that this involves.

'Travelling Rationalities'

Perhaps never before has so much been made of the power of ideas, right theory or good policy in solving the problems of global poverty. There is today unprecedented expert consensus on how global poverty is to be eliminated and the poor governed, brought about by new processes of aid 'harmonization' or 'alignment'.[2] Meanwhile, an emphasis on partnership, consultation and local ownership set the ideological conditions for aid such that aid agencies claim they no longer make interventions at all, but rather support the conditions within which development can happen (Wrangham 2006). At the same time, a growing demand for domestic and transnational accountability and transparency of aid signals a distrust of expert knowledge, even though the 'accountability tools' and arrangements put in place in fact further entrench expertise (Boström and Garsten 2008a).[3]

Between global expert consensus and citizen participation, much disappears from view: the institutional conditions of global policy thinking at the point of origin; the enclave agencies and expert communities

involved in the unseen processes of international transmission; and the political processes and institutional interests which interpret and transform global policy at its points of reception. I will return to this ethnographic agenda but, first, what are the characteristics of the new expert consensus?

At the centre of the consensus is a marrying of orthodox neoliberalism and a new institutionalism, the latter being the notion that poverty and violence are the result of bad governance and what is needed are stronger institutions, or example, institutions for the delivery of services accountable to the poor (Craig and Porter 2006: 4–5). This is not a return to state provision but a matter of giving resources to governments to make markets work so as to reduce poverty (Fine 2006) or, as Craig and Porter put it, disaggregating and marketizing the state, that is, breaking up existing forms of state rule (dismissed as corrupt or patrimonial) and then 'using markets to replace and reconstruct the institutions of governance' (2006: 9, 100), while at the same time re-embedding markets in regulatory and constitutional frameworks such as the rule of law or freedom of information.

It is the characteristics of policymaking relating to 'neoliberal institutionalism', not the details, that are relevant here. First, the process involves what Craig and Porter (2006) refer to as 'vertical disaggregation': the delegation upwards of rule making and policy framing from poor country governments to the international stage, international agencies, private organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or companies; and the delegation downwards of risk to 'responsibilized' regions, localities, communities and ultimately individuals. Second, the policy models involved are formalistic, that is, framed by the universal logic of new institutional economics (rules/incentives) and law (rights/accountability/transparency). These are 'travelling rationalities' with general applicability in which 'the universal [is asserted] over the particular, the travelled over the placed, the technical over the political, and the formal over the substantive' (Craig and Porter 2006: 120), in which (as both Eyben's and Rajak and Stirrat's chapters – Chapters 7 and 8 in this volume – will point out) processes take over from places and categories from relations.

This is relevant for our understanding of expertise. The combination of formalism and internationalization ('delegation upwards') allows a technicalization of policy and the centralization of expertise. This enhances the status of a certain transnational class of experts entrenched at the national level in ways that involve unprecedented convergence (Woods 2006: 66, 67, 68). Development policy trends of the 1980s in particular demanded high levels of expertise and produced economic models that were rapidly internationalized, often in the context of crisis or uncertainty (2006: 66–67). Economics retained its pre-eminence as the diagnostic and rulemaking discipline of Aidland (ibid.).[4]

Then, the linking of formalism and 'delegation downwards' extends (quasi-) formal modelling from national economies to the intimate spaces of

communities, bringing new interest in re-engineering institutions and state-citizen relations by changing incentive structures, modifying rules, introducing new forums for accountability or conflict resolution, or local competitive bidding for resources (e.g., Barron et al. 2006); in short, an interest in 'get[ing] social relations right' (as Woolcock, cited by Li, Chapter 3 in this volume, puts it). In Chapter 3, Tania Li shows how this, in turn, requires new forms of expertise and the deployment of social science (including ethnography) 'to render society technical', that is, conceived in terms of calculative rationality, neoliberal ideas of self-organization or the deficits/surpluses of social capital, so as to allow expert-designed interventions (see also Li 2007). Taking the case of a very large World Bank 'community-driven development' programme in Indonesia, Li shows how ethnographic description is used to identify norms, social practices and incentives for such 'remedial interventions'. Here she understands 'social development' as a neoliberal governmental assemblage in which communities come to govern themselves in line with designs shaped by expert conceptions of society that allow economic and political structures to remain unaltered.

The point is that with such moves of decentralization and participation, expert knowledge does not work to impose universal modernist designs from the centre (the usual critique of technocratic knowledge, e.g., Scott 1998), but rather to disembed and recombine local institutions, processes or technologies. Through participation in expert designs for farming, microplanning or resocialization, citizens themselves become 'expert' at rationalizing – disembedding and recombining – elements of their own institutions or socio-ecologies, and acquire a new technical (disembedded) view of themselves and of processes of social or ecological change. Compliant citizens become 'empowered' by expert knowledge or, as Arun Agrawal (2005) recently argued in the case of Indian forest protection, their subjectivities are shaped by participation in formal institutions.[5]

Expert Models Unravelled

Ultimately, however, institutions or technologies (national or local) fashioned by expert techniques come to be re-embedded in relations of power that alter their functionality, as is plain from recent ethnographies of neoliberal reform. Gerhard Anders' (2005) study of the life of civil servants in Malawi under the shadow of 'good governance' reform is a good recent example, showing how expert models of public sector reform did not enhance efficiency and transparency, but rather revealed faults and fissures, fragmenting the civil service and intensifying internal divisions within a professional hierarchy (e.g., between winners and losers, young economists and 'old school' officials). Anders' work is part of a literature describing the many and unpredictable ways in which development's 'travelling rationalities' (and technologies) get translated (back) into local social and

political arrangements – perhaps through the interests of local collaborators, official counterparts or brokers – with unanticipated, maybe even perverse effects sometimes exacerbating the crises they claim to address. A retired Malawian Principal Secretary told Anders of his experience in government negotiating teams of feeling 'outmatched and overwhelmed by the "expert knowledge" of World Bank delegates', but equally of being bewildered by their 'lack of insight into local conditions and their arrogant belief in the market'. However, rather than challenge unrealistic models, government representatives adopted a 'sign first, decide later' approach (Anders 2005: 83–84). The reform agenda is subsequently ignored and is subjected to delaying tactics and reversals, for example, when bureaucratic patrons rehire client employees following public sector reform retrenchment exercises.

In their recent book, Craig and Porter (2006) show more broadly how local power easily colonizes the spaces created by national poverty reduction strategy (PRS) programmes, turning new rules to different ends. Their careful case studies from Vietnam, Uganda, Pakistan and New Zealand show that donor-established liberal frameworks of governance (under PRS) are incapable of disciplining existing power. Instead they have the effect of pulling 'a thin institutionalist veil over fundamental (often territorial) aspects of poverty, and making frail compromises with territorial governance around community, local partnership and some kinds of decentralization' (2006: 27). They disabuse the formalist 'delusion that agency can be incentivized to operate independently of political economy' (2006: 11, 120) or that political orders can be reorganized by international policy or aid flows (cf. Booth 2005). In these cases, the effects of policy and expertise are real enough, but the point is that they do not arise from pre-formed designs imposed from outside, or from their own logic, but are brought through the rupture and contradictions they effect in existing social, political and ecological systems and their logics (Mitchell 2002: 77; cf. Mosse 2006d).

Development professionals are not ignorant of these facts. Many understand all too well that formal models are slippery in application, finding 'fraught accommodation with the political economy of place, history, production and territorial government' that liberal doctrines can produce markedly illiberal consequences (Craig and Porter 2006: 120) and that the largely technocratic buy-in to the poverty reduction policy consensus does not erase national or local politics (Booth 2005). Technocratically excluded politics have even become the object of new technical instruments, such as the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID)'s 'Drivers for Change', which is intended to analyse the agents, institutions and structures of power driving change; however, because of the strong institutional push towards universal policy models and the 'etiquette of the aid business', these remain peripheral to mainstream aid negotiations (Booth 2005: 1).

The fact is that development policy remains resolutely optimistic about the power of its favoured approaches and institutional solutions, overplaying the impact and blurring the distinction between normative representations and actual outcomes (Craig and Porter 2006: 11; see also Green, Chapter 2 this volume). Expert ideas at the centre seem remarkably resilient in the face of contrary evidence – not only the high-profile blindness of orthodox neoliberals to the warning signs, for example, of economic freefall in Mexico in 1994, the East Asian crisis in the late 1990s or the social effects of market liberalization in Russia starkly portrayed by Joseph Stiglitz (2002), but also the many technical 'fads' and fashions such as the 'Training and Visit' approach to agricultural extension that continued to be upscaled, internationalized and packaged into multimillion dollar loans long after it had lost credibility externally (Anderson, Feder and Ganguly 2005).

Economists such as Easterly (2002, 2006a) argue that it is the selective examination of incentives in aid implementation that leaves (false) hope for the grand new scheme and the one big push, whether it be Jeffrey Sachs's *The End of Poverty* (2005) or Gordon Brown's big financial allocations for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (Easterly 2006b). Such optimism is premised on denied history as well as concealed politics and hidden incentives. The problem, as Pritchett and Woolcock put it, is of 'skipping straight to Weber', that is, transferring from place to place principles of bureaucratic rationality, which carry with them institutional mythologies that conceal the fact that in reality institutional solutions 'emerge from an internal historical process of trial and error and a political struggle' and that part of 'the solution' is to hide this fact (Pritchett and Woolcock 2004: 201).

Over-ambition about the manageability of institutions for global poverty reduction is, of course, politically necessary in order to mobilize support for international aid. Here is the conundrum: the more technical (or managerial) the policy model is, the more it can mobilize political support, but the less that is actually managed; and the less that is managed, the more necessary is a managerial (or technical) model in order to retain support and legitimacy. The world of policy may be a 'chaos of purposes and accidents' (Clay and Schaffer 1984: 192), but its knowledge workers are engaged in a constant refutation of this fact.

Development's 'travelling orthodoxies' ought to be fragile in the face of historical reality, local politics and perverse incentives, but they are not. In fact, they are remarkably resilient. In asking how expert optimism is sustained, we turn from the characteristics of policy thought and its weak purchase on local reality to the institutional processes that produce it. How have development knowledge processes been studied ethnographically?

Paradigm Maintenance: Ethnographies of Expert Knowledge

There are already a number of different approaches to the study of expert knowledge or policy making in international development. First, there are those concerned with the political economy of knowledge, its relation to institutional power and the maintenance of organizational legitimacy. Several such studies focus on the World Bank as the most prominent knowledge making development institution. For example, commenting on World Bank economic expertise, St Clair points to 'a circular dynamic between expertise, audiences, and the legitimacy of that expertise': 'many of the audience bureaucracies that legitimise the Bank's knowledge claims have eventually become dependent on the money delivered by the Bank to carry out work that has been defined and promoted by the Bank's experts' (St Clair 2006a: 88). In a similar manner, Goldman (2005) shows how World Bank expertise in the environment and sustainable development defines problems in ways that legitimize (and require) the role of the Bank and its interventions. As a 'regime of truth' and a framework for intervention, the Bank's new 'green neoliberal' policy gives birth to 'new experts, new subjects, new natures, and a new disciplinary science of sustainable development, without which power could not be so fruitfully exercised' (Goldman 2005: 156).

These critical accounts focus both on the quality and the accountability of expert knowledge. Several suggest that World Bank research uses data that are privileged, confidential or otherwise unavailable for public scrutiny, which may derive from unreliable national surveys or from research funded by Bank operations with restricted 'terms of reference' linked to the interests of loan management, and which contribute to Bank research which is policy-supporting or overly self-referential (Goldman 2005: passim, Bretton Woods Project 2007, Broad 2007). However, for Goldman, St Clair and others, the issue is not so much that World Bank data and reports are open to criticism – the poverty of the science of poverty – but the way in which they acquire discursive dominance among their prime audience of policy makers who have discretionary power (within the Bank or in recipient countries), without any expectation of democratic accountability (Goldman 2000, St Clair 2006a: 82, 84–86; 2006b: 59). Although the science of global poverty is as much in need of public debate as other science-policy contexts such as climate change, pollution effects or public health, there is no balancing citizen participation in the definition of knowledge about global poverty, no hybrid panels with non-expert participation that acknowledge that 'these problems are not only about science, but also about social relations and value choices' (St Clair 2006a: 82).[6] In Chapter 5 of this volume Desmond McNeill and Asun Lera St Clair illustrate precisely this subordination of value choices to economic expertise in the processes of the Bank's World Development Report 2006 on 'Equity and Development'. To do this they first examine what kind of

evidence is considered relevant for asserting that equity matters and, second, whether the argument that it does should be made on intrinsic or instrumental grounds. This leads to a reflection on the wider question of the 'management' of the issue of human rights within an institution whose professional language is economics. Here the Bank's thought work has to be understood in terms of its wider relationships with audience and clients.

A second ethnographic approach focuses on the transmission mechanisms of expert knowledge. Some of these operate externally, through the participation of a wide range of professionals in transnational agencies, firms and NGOs, or through 'national capacity building', funded 'research institutes, training centres, and national science and policy agendas' (Goldman 2005: 175). Janine Wedel (2000, 2004) offers a striking account of policy shaping through extra-institutional networks in her work on the U.S. economic aid programme to Russia, and the description of crony relationships between expert players from Harvard and their Russian partners in the so-called Chubais Clan. Other transmission mechanisms operate internally within institutions, as part of the everyday practices of professionalization, ideological control, internal career building, the self-disciplining of aid bureaucrats and the various 'paradigm maintaining' incentives which may be intensified and globalized by electronic communications both between the head office and regional staff, and across institutions (Goldman 2005: 175; Broad 2007). In Chapter 2 Maia Green opens up this professional world within one major donor, while Rosalind Eyben (Chapter 7) shows how the spread of prior reputation between institutions ensures conformity and compliance of thought and action within global expert communities.

Commenting on overplayed expert models, Ngaire Woods suggests that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank experts are required to be positive so as to avoid self-fulfilling economic downturns or critical reports that would exclude them from sensitive national statistics or would lead to the loss of important clients – or, worse still, 'signal a failure of the Fund and Bank's more general project of persuading countries to liberalize and deregulate their economies' (Woods 2006: 58). As Robert Wade put it, '[l]ike the Vatican, and for similar reasons, [the World Bank] cannot afford to admit fallibility' (quoted in Goldman 2000). The interlinking of the orthodoxies of different international aid organizations now lends further stability to established models (Eyben, Chapter 7 this volume). And approaches to programme evaluation that distribute events either side of a divide between the intended and the unintended allow failure itself to sustain rather than challenge dominant paradigms.[7]

However, beyond this, the tendencies towards 'group think', censorship and reliance on templates arise from the self-disciplining of professionals who, Ngaire Woods argues, strategize to minimize individual risk by dispersing accountability and blame (in case of failure) to the institution as a whole (Woods 2006: 62–63; cf. Goldman 2005: 126–46). Development

experts here mirror the intellectual self-disciplining of professionals of all kinds, as described by Jeff Schmidt (2000), through processes of professional training and systems of qualification, among others. Schmidt's argument is that the 'ideological discipline' and 'assignable curiosity' of professional subjectivity are governmental effects. These involve unstatedly ideological and system-maintaining political work in which both professional careers and academic research are implicated. Yashushi Uchiyamada, in an intriguing analysis of his Kafkaesque experience of working in a strongly hierarchical Japanese aid 'bureaucratic machine', argues further that self-discipline occurs not autonomously, but through the pairing of junior 'clerks' under supervision in a manner that renders them uncritical, silent 'motifs' (living motifs) arranged spatially and relationally so that they themselves work, unintentionally, to (re)produce the wider form (Uchiyamada 2004: 13). This pattern replicates itself through immanent power which is both architectural (spatial) and brings together present-day and archaic Japanese political forms, while resting on compliance born of mundane incentives such as attractive remuneration, travel, high lifestyles and 'self-sacrifice for the sake of the family' (2004: 18).

Another ethnographic approach shifts attention away from the rationality of power – disciplining or governmentalizing – towards the more ambiguous processes of actual knowledge production, to actor worlds and the social life of ideas revealed through the still rare fine-grained anthropology of policy (Shore and Wright 1997, Wedel et al. 2005). This has two reciprocally connected aspects. One is the importance of actor relationships in the shaping and salience of policy ideas; the other is the importance of policy ideas in mediating professional relationships. These will be considered in turn.

Experience suggests that decision-making knowledge, including apparently hard economic facts and statistics, are the outcome of complex relationships including negotiations over status, access, disciplinary points of view, team leadership struggles, conflict management or compliance with client frameworks defining what counts as knowledge (Wood 1998; Harper 1998). In his engaging story of a World Bank-funded consultancy on economic analysis of food policy in Sierra Leone in the mid 1980s, Peter Griffiths (2004) poignantly reveals expert knowledge as the product of semi-clandestine detective work, negotiating gossip, absent data and misinformation, wishful thinking or deliberate lying, not to mention dangerous driving, loneliness, alcohol and sex – a panoply of experiences, quick impressions and hunches stabilized as statistics and rational processes (tables of figures and logical frameworks). Then, in his ethnography of the work of IMF missions, Richard Harper (1998, 2005) illustrates the way in which financial figures are made authoritative not by being challenged or changed, but through a social process in which IMF economists shape a national authority's perspective, and a ritual process that achieves a kind of 'moral transformation' of figures into agreed

economic facts; that is, properly interpreted usable numbers.[8] The point is that expertise is relational and expert knowledge is social: 'numbers and persons go hand in hand' (Harper 2005: 326; Porter 1996). Clearly, to be 'expert' requires skilful negotiation, enrolling supporters and maintaining coalitions within a development system (Mosse 2005a). Moreover, expertise can fail. Relations may not produce agreement; it may not be possible to determine the facts for social rather than technical reasons.

Furthermore, Ikenberry showed how in the foundation of the IMF and World Bank themselves, actual policies were not driven by pre-existing expert consensus: 'Rather, what became a consensus was forged in response to policymakers' exigencies and questions. Politics drove the technocrats not vice versa' (Woods 2006: 68–69, citing Ikenberry 1992). However, Janine Wedel's research on the expert networks involved in the process of Russian privatization shows that transnational experts, through their multiple roles and tight networks, also constitute themselves as powerful political actors with their own independent interests that militate against the coherence of policy and the interests of states or international agencies (2000, 2004). Wedel's remarkable ethnographic work describes the extraordinary influence and power of transnational U.S.-Russian 'transactors' or 'flex groups' (as she calls them) having limited accountability, being able to operate across national and public/private boundaries to pursue their own ideological and material interests.

The other aspect of an actor-focused approach to expertise is the one that focuses on the importance of policy ideas themselves (and their artefacts: papers, reports, diagrams, etc.) in mediating social and professional relationships. Policy ideas gain currency because they are socially appropriate; perhaps because, as I have argued for the idea of 'participation' in a DFID-funded agricultural project (Mosse 2005a), they can submerge ideological differences, allowing compromise, room for manoeuvre or multiple criteria of success, thus winning supporters by mediating different understandings of development (such as those of plant geneticists, soil engineers, economists, marketing managers, social anthropologists, donor advisers, government officials, NGOs and activists). The idea of 'participation' here is a necessary concept, a good 'translator' in actor-network theory terms (e.g., Latour 1996). So, ideas are 'cutting edge' or able to legitimize financial aid flows because they have social efficacy as well as intellectual merit or because they function as 'boundary objects', allowing dialogue but preserving a certain structure of institutional power (St Clair n.d.).

In Chapter 4 of this volume I provide another example of the social efficacy of expert ideas showing how in 2003–4 non-economist social scientists in the World Bank HQ were defining social development concepts and packaging them as corporate knowledge 'products' so as to manage their relationship with the dominant disciplines and power holders in the Bank (economists, task managers, vice-presidents and

regional budget holders), in order to deal with their structural vulnerability in an 'economics fortress' (Cernea 1995: 4) and thus to attend to their own 'system goal' of protecting professional space. Such ethnography examines the 'social work' that expert ideas do at their point of formulation, showing how professional relationships are mediated by the strategic use of concepts formulated (in part) with that function in mind. It shows how global policy is the product of village politics – in this case, those of 1818 H. Street in Washington D.C.[9]

As Maia Green (Chapter 2 this volume) points out, through the medium of key concepts or categories, professional relationships are routinely 'transformed *into* documentation', perhaps as meeting minutes, reports, policy statements or technical documents that are the vehicle for the travelling ideas of development. Documents contain hidden relational baggage: statements that are best understood as bargaining positions in ongoing disputes over policy within or between professional teams, or as negotiating positions for future disagreements. Documents themselves are then also the means for agency, through tactical readings, soliciting comments and the inclusions/exclusion of email circulation lists, as well as public airings of policy choices. Documents are not to be analysed as dead artefacts; they are alive with the social processes that produced them and they have a 'performative quality' and social effects, even though the salience of policy ideas that they convey summarize and hide this 'politics of interaction' (see Green, Chapter 2 this volume; cf. Riles 2006, Smith 2006).

However, one thing that anthropologists immersed in the world of 'global policymaking' are good at demonstrating is the thinness of this concealment; that is, the lack of coherence behind apparent documented consensus. In her recent study of expert negotiations on pension reform in Mexico, for example, Tara Schwegler (2009) was struck by the underlying incoherence and instability of a World Bank-led neoliberal policy framework. The policy narrative did not gain unity and coherence as one ascended the hierarchy from local interests to international players. No one could give a definitive account of the framing of reform. The top people had authority, but did not know about critical decisions below. There were different accounts of the policy process which were themselves statements about the power relations through which Schwegler's informants defined each other. Expert knowledge was always 'anticipatory', that is, shaped in ways that anticipated the reaction of others. In this political field of policy, each player preserved a sense that they had succeeded. Examples could be multiplied to show how fragile and responsive to politics expert consensuses actually are.

Given how prevailing expert models are both shaped and unravelled locally in political relations, it is not the failure of harmonized development policy to execute planned social transformation that is remarkable, but rather its success. What is striking is the capacity of professionals (who are by no means ignorant of these processes) to sustain neoliberal

institutionalist models as a structure of representation, an accepted interpretation of what is going on and what can be accomplished. There is a striking expert capacity to represent complex events in formalistic terms that allow social change to be understood as subject to policy levers acting directly on the behaviour of economic agents through manipulable structures of incentives so as to produce accountability, efficiency and equity (Craig and Porter 2006: 20; Mitchell 2002: 266–67). And, of course, this is a collaborative capacity since, through the 'politics of the mirror', in-country experts work with their international counterparts to preserve the fiction that the processes of neoliberal reform are locally owned (Anders 2005: 113).

Timothy Mitchell's insight in *Rule of Experts* (2002) is precisely this – that the pervasive 'gaps' between policy and practice, ideal and actual, and representation and reality are not a disappointment but are actively maintained by the operations of expertise in order to preserve policy as a structure of representation. This allows actual practice to be seen as the outcome of the policy ideal and to reproduce a sphere of rational intention that can appear external to and generative of events, so as 'to rearrange power over people as power over ideas' (Mitchell 2002: 90). As ethnographers of expertise in development, we then have to examine the professional processes that make and stabilize the efficacy of 'global' policy regimes.[10]

There is an additional and final approach to expert and institutional knowledge that begins not with the political economy of global institutions, internal processes of transmission or self-discipline, nor even the strategic deployment of ideas, but with the analytical forms of expert ideas themselves. In her important departure from conventional concerns in the sociology of knowledge, Annelise Riles (2001) takes the case of the production of legal knowledge by human rights NGOs in the lead up to the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995 to direct our attention to the effects of knowledge forms, their precedence over content, style over substance (a counterpart to Uchiyamada's [above] replication of institutional form that vacates policy ideas of their content – Uchiyamada 2004: 9). By studying forms such as the network, the bracket, the system or the matrix as documents and diagrams, she reveals professional knowledge as 'an *effect* of a certain aesthetic of information' (Riles 2001: 2, original emphasis). In fact, she does more – she repositions our investigation of development professionals so that it takes place inside the knowledge forms themselves. Studying experts through their own knowledge forms, which are also their modes of sociality (as in the network), is an approach increasingly relevant for communities formed around formalist knowledge where 'the global' is not a spatial scale but, as Riles argues, something generated internally through mundane tools like the network or matrix; 'an aspect of late modern informational aesthetics' (2001: 20).

The World of Professionals

Strangely late and reluctantly, anthropologists have turned to the study of the social and cultural lives of global professionals themselves, their class position, biographies, commitments and anxieties. The chapters in this volume show how international experts are, like their policy models, mobile and separated from contextual attachments yet, paradoxically, are a highly visible group in the capital cities of the developing world where, far from instantiating a cosmopolitan outlook that 'encompass[es] the world's [cultural] variety and its subsequent mixtures', they occupy cultural enclaves of shared consumption, lifestyle and values (Friedman 1997: 74). As Freidman puts it, 'while representing [themselves] as open and including the entire world [international experts are] socially at least as restricted as any other strong ethnic identity' (Ibid, 2004: 165; cf. Argenti-Pillen 2003). Friedman's further argument is that claims to cosmopolitanism are expressions of the class position of a global elite whose power is effected through 'clubs' and that actually displays a 'retreat from the social' that takes the form of a global 'top lifting' and an exit from representative democracy 'upwards into the stratosphere of governance' (Freidman 1997; 2004: 167). The ethnographic accounts offered here make a different point by showing how homogenized development policy knowledge has its social basis in the locally transient but internationally permanent and close-knit communities of experts whose reach, intensity and centralization is increased by electronic information and communication technologies (Eyben, Chapter 7 this volume).

In Chapter 6, Ian Harper reveals the parochialism of internationals as against the cosmopolitanism of 'locals' by contrasting two groups of international health workers: on the one hand, global experts (development consultants and advisers) and, on the other hand, Nepali health worker migrants to countries like the U.K. and the U.S.A. First, he shows how the universalizing knowledge of global experts is 'closed off from other epistemologies' (and other health systems) through the 'spatial dynamics around where knowledge is produced and stabilised': the 'walling off' of 'fortress' hospitals bounded from 'the cacophony of the street'. In contrast, the migrant health workers cross boundaries between health systems and languages. They cannot isolate themselves from the demands of those who are poorly paid, have low status or are socially insecure in the countries to which they migrate. It is these migrant health workers who are cosmopolitan in Hannerz's sense of displaying a 'reflexive distance from one's own culture'; they are 'open to new ways of knowing and being' (Hannerz 1996).

Rosalind Eyben (Chapter 7) reflects on her own role as 'head of mission' of the U.K. DFID in Bolivia and focuses on the everyday sociality of aid professionals in the country – the social round, the party and picnic circles, the strategic inclusions, exclusions and reciprocities, the rituals of entry and

exit into expatriate communities, and the circulation of 'prior reputation' between them. In offering important insights into how expert communities are forged nationally and globally, Eyben takes up the point that 'the efforts at constructing and sustaining such a community are an essential component of a harmonized approach to aid'. Correspondingly, policy disagreements rupture social relationships. As in Harper's chapter, it is clear that sustaining expert communities involves a retreat from the street outside, from awkward complexity and dangerous contradictions, and the need for intermediating brokers, simplifying templates and inherited stereotypes.[11] In a postscript, Eyben reflects on the impact of major political change on the maintenance of aid community relations in Bolivia.

In Chapter 8, Dinah Rajak and Jock Stirrat offer a parallel analysis of the way in which development professionals fail to be cosmopolitan. They see this failure as a feature of isolated expatriate social worlds, as well as an effect of standardized neoliberal policy thought, which denies both difference – so that to the expert all countries appear the same – and its own historical specificity. However, they argue that the 'parochialism' of rootless professionals takes a specific form: nostalgia. International experts not only create self-enclosed social worlds that are a nostalgic parody of 'home', but they also bring an 'imperial nostalgia' (Rosaldo 1989) to their imaginings of the countries in which they work. They 'mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed' (ibid: 69), that is, an anterior traditional order eroded by the 'discontinuities, disjunctures and displacements' of development itself. Through collecting the past as artefact, inhabiting old colonial hotels and rest houses or visiting 'the field', the necessary oppositional framework of the 'under-developed' and the 'developed' is stabilized. Youthful ideas of unmediated cross-cultural contact that drew many into development are contradicted by professional lives in parochial development enclaves – a 'small tragedy' from which nostalgia rather than cosmopolitan sensibilities is born.

David Lewis (Chapter 9) uses life histories to further explore the complexities of professional identities and their relationship to dominant paradigms in development, this time among U.K. voluntary sector and NGO workers. These personal narratives reveal career histories shaped by values, political and religious commitments, experiences or family background (diplomatic, colonial or missionary; cf. Stirrat, n.d.). Lewis also makes a further point, noting how professionals' life stories of ambition, adventure or self-realization also work to instantiate and reproduce sectoral divisions and dominant policy models. In particular, two prominent rationalities of aid or governance become compacted in the stories they tell. The first is a colonially-rooted discourse that separates poverty at home from poverty in the developing world (denying the 'interconnectedness of global social inequality' or the poverty-related domestic issues of immigration and racism). The second is a tripartite model of the state, the market and the 'third sector' (including NGOs), which allows neoliberals to

conceptualize a 'good governance' agenda that finds synergies between these three sectors or to speak of 'comparative advantage' and other reassuring policy simplifications. Lewis' informants may have become prisoners of the policy categories they reproduce, but the 'three sectors' and the 'home/away' models present an interesting contrast. While the boundaries of the 'three sector model' are maintained conceptually (in policy) even as they are crossed/complicated in practice, the home/away away model is actually dismantled conceptually – as policy, the distinction disappears in the common ideas on poverty, the same micro-finance models or Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methods – but the division is reproduced/reinstated in practice in professional networks.

In different ways these ethnographers reveal an awkward tension between the maintenance of professional modes of thought and identities, and the world with which these have to engage. On the one hand, professionals – and here I am thinking of international agency staff, consultants, fieldworkers, NGO staff, even missionaries and anthropologists – have to secure their place within particular institutional and social contexts, which (as I have suggested) are hugely complex. They work hard to maintain relationships, negotiate their position within agencies or on consultancy teams, build networks so as to negotiate their presence within foreign bureaucracies or NGOs for access and influence, and manage interfaces within and between agencies. Theirs is the messy, practical, emotion-laden work of dealing with contingency, compromise, improvisation, rule-bending, adjustment, producing viable data, making things work, and meeting delivery targets and spending budgets. In doing so, they have to negotiate national identity, race, age or gender. They have to manage personal security, family relations, loneliness, stress and anxiety – issues which have hardly been touched upon in the literature – while also shoring up their motivation within moral-ethical or religious frameworks which remain private.

On the other hand, as experts and professionals, they have to make themselves bearers of travelling rationalities, transferable knowledge and skills, context-free ideas with universal applicability or purified moral action – whether in the realms of plant science, water management, environmental protection, economic analysis, institutional capacity building, health sector reform or people's empowerment, whence come the cosmopolitan and technocratic claims. Status and professionalism are produced by recovering the universal from the particular, technocratic knowledge from the illicit relationships on which it is actually based (Riles 2004), conceding what is known from experience to the simple instrumentality of the models of employers, bosses or supporters (Verma 2008), or wider paradigms of the 'industry'. For different reasons, both the World Bank's investors and borrowers and the charitable donors to Oxfam or Care require the 'illusion of certainty' from their experts (Woods 2006).

Of course, the 'instruments' of professional practice facilitate as well as require the disembedding of models from the politics of programme

relations and the separation of expert diagnosis from the multiplicity of points of view. Among these instruments are deductive 'terms of reference', the time-pressured information gathering, reporting templates (prescribed sections on strategy, progress and recommendations), charts, matrices, 'accountability tools', 'logframes' or classifications that have effects of their own. While these interpret situations for higher policy, they also produce standards for judgement and stabilize a given framework of interpretation (Mosse 2005a, Riles 2001, Goldman 2005: 168).[12] As Mitchell (2002) argues, expertise is made and has effects not through the imposition of designs that pre-exist events but by relocating the site of the production of significant knowledge from the periphery to the centre. The participatory turn in international development has made the constitution of expert development identities yet more complex. Professionals of participatory programmes have to deny or conceal their own expertise and agency (and their practical role in programme delivery) in order to preserve an authorized view of themselves as facilitators of community action or local knowledge, as 'catalysts', hastening but not partaking in the reaction (White 1999). 'No, my contribution is nothing' proclaims one Indian community worker, 'because I am only [a] facilitator and mobilise the community who have the main power' (Mosse 2005a: 154). Where 'expert' action is inaction, or expertise requires self-effacement, it is harder to constitute professional identities.[13] Such development workers (often in NGOs) have to simultaneously find ways of engaging deeply with communities while making themselves professionally absent. The dilemma is well captured in Celayne Heaton Shrestha's (2006) study of identity formation among Nepali NGO workers who, to be progressive and professional and to 'embody' the universal value of *bikas* ('development'), have to transcend social difference by 'bracketing' those aspects of themselves related to personal history, gender, ethnicity or class, and yet to be moral and thus capable of acting in local social arenas they have to respect social difference. 'Bracketing' is their way of saying that 'difference makes no difference'.

Therefore, to the professionals who face the problem of stabilizing universals of expert knowledge, we must add those NGO employees, charity workers, missionaries or other 'professional altruists' (Arvidson 2008) whose commitment is to moral rather than purely technical universals; whose professional subjectivity is framed by stories of facilitation, altruism, heroic commitment and sacrifice, which involve processes of 'moral selving', that is, making the self virtuous through action and reflection (Arvidson 2008, drawing on Allahyari 2000). These processes also involve a denial of agency, context and identity in ways that are experienced as difficult. For example, equipped with an ideal image of their work, Allahyari's charity workers experienced moral and emotional anxiety when confronted with reality, which led to the avoidance of situations, distancing themselves from clients, the transfer of blame onto

ungrateful recipients or becoming closed to communities – a 'failure of sympathetic identification' (Graeber 2006) that is equivalent to the 'retreat from the local' that Harper and Eyben identify among aid professionals.

Development expertise involves, as Quarles von Ufford and Salemink (2006) put it, a curious but inevitable 'hiding of the self in our relations with others'. To be on the receiving end of professional concealment is to be subject to the peculiar diagnosis or unexpected remedy, the unanticipated change in expert judgement or shift in policy, or the mystifying withdrawal of support, all of which can have the dramatic effect of rupturing relationships, precipitating crises or producing failure (see Mosse 2005a: Chapter 8). From this suspicion of experts and what they do not reveal comes the demand for public visibility, openness and transparency. However, efforts to embrace transparency bring their own dilemmas, even eroding professional trust. As Garsten and Lindh de Montoya (2008b: 7) point out, the more professionals attempt to reveal through evidence, facts and figures or 'access points' for public-expert mediation, the greater the public awareness of its ignorance of expert knowledge systems and the greater the suspicion of concealment. At the same time, transparency produces new regimes of professional self-regulation ('regulation by revelation') of workers with public diaries, in open-plan offices in glass buildings who exercise even greater control over their professional conduct and selves (2008a: 5, 12).

The constant demand to turn the political into the technical, to represent the mess of practice in ordered expert or moral categories, the management of demands for transparency and the fragility of professional identities that depend upon these processes is not easily handled. Development professionals are often intensely aware of their dilemma and the contradictions they face: the complexities of relationship and meaning, and the 'instrumentalism which is [also] the condition of their daily work' (Riles 2006: 60). Backstage scepticism and the escape into irony, self-criticism, spoof or humour are common responses (cf. Riles 2004). Indeed, there is little external criticism of development practice that is not prefigured within expert communities. Sometimes, like Riles' human rights lawyers, experts attempt to marginalize themselves from the zealous naivety of 'true believers' and from their own power (ibid.). This may be a mark of the 'true expert' (Riles 2006: 58); but so too is resignation to the immovable dominance of official knowledge which ensures that for many scepticism is closeted and concealed.

Only occasionally do aid professionals offer fuller first person accounts of the real micropolitics of their own expert practice, revealing for the general reader the chaotic, arbitrary underbelly of 'objective' economic data, or the rough politics of loan negotiation in developing counties. Peter Griffith's *The Economist's Tale* (2003) and John Perkins' *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (2003) are striking accounts of the moral ambiguity of expert roles: the first is a tale of heroic struggle, while the second is a regretful confession of harm done (see also Vaux 2001). As development

experts, anthropologists too have chosen positions of reflective marginality in order to study themselves as well as those for (or with) whom they work, aiming at insights that cannot be gained from within expert frames or management cycles (Eyben 2003, Mosse 2005a, Riles 2006: 53).[14] For professional altruists (charity workers or missionaries), the escape into irony or sceptical expressions of doubt may be more difficult and the experience of contradiction more personally devastating, which may have some part to play in the high levels of stress and their emotional consequences reported in psychological studies of aid workers and missionaries (e.g., Lovell-Hawker 2004, Foyle 2001).

The vulnerabilities of being expert only increase with the growing intensity of targets and uncomprehending demands of audit and accountability across the board (Strathern 2000). With the rising scale of ambition in international development come spectacular possibilities for failure, in which enterprises do not simply fail, they fail in detail. But my point here is that failure is not simply a plan unrealized, it is also the unravelling of professional identities. Failure may be regarded as the irruption of precisely those things that professionalism necessarily suppresses – events, contingencies and relationships. While success buries the individual action or event and makes a project a unified source of intention and power directing attention to the transcendent agency of policy and expert design (and hence replicability), failure fragments into the dynamics of blame (Latour 1996: 76). While success emphasizes the professional, the policy and the collective, moments of failure search out the individual person. Failure points to the contingent, the arbitrary, the accidental, the exceptional and the unintended. By releasing the anecdotal, failure can unravel the work of expertise or professional identity formation; it may license the expression of suppressed and scattered doubts, drawing attention to the informal processes underlying official actions. Narratives of failure individualize downwards to the actions/events of junior people, or upwards, for example, to the singular actions of a corrupt senior official. While stories of success emphasize the system and expert ideas (they are theory-rich), those of failure are inherently event-rich.[15]

From the Ethnography of Failure to the Failure of Ethnography

Researching professional lives, 'studying up' (Nader 2002 [1969]) or 'through' (Wedel 2004) and writing ethnographic accounts of those expert communities open up important methodological and ethical issues quite separate from the matter of techniques for describing networks or 'following the policy' (Shore and Wright 1997). There are aspects of professional identity discussed above that perhaps make ethnographic description difficult, contested or impossible.

First, it may simply be impossible to subject expert communities to ethnographic description. For those close to (or members of) professional communities, it becomes impossible to provide accounts of their own social relations and politics because ethnographic subjects refuse to be objectified in these terms (Riles 2006: 63; 2001: 18). Miyazaki and Riles (2005) regard the 'ethnographic failure' that is associated with attempts at research on/with expert subjects whose parallel theorizing already incorporates sociological analysis as an 'end point' of anthropological knowledge. For an anthropological process premised upon difference, this 'epistemological sameness' indicates the 'failure to know the ethnographic subject' or rather the failure of ethnographic knowledge to be accepted as such (2005: 327). This descriptive failure results from the inability to 'objectify' or to 'localize' expert subjects and to maintain a 'defining distance' between the ethnographer and the subject.

Holmes and Marcus (2005) suggest that this can be averted and ethnography can be 're-functioned', in part, by recourse to experts' own sceptical or self-critical moves. Writing of professionals in the financial world, these authors refer to the existence among experts of a 'self-conscious critical faculty that operates … as a way of dealing with contradictions, exceptions, facts that are fugitive, and that suggest a social realm not in alignment with the representations generated by the application of the reigning statistical mode of analysis' (2005: 237). Making use of this 'para-ethnographic' dimension of expert domains, Holmes and Marcus invite anthropologists to find a 'collaborative' mode of research with those expert subjects who are neither natives nor colleagues, but who stand as counterparts (2005: 248). As outsiders or insiders, ethnographers may then draw on the 'kind of illicit, marginal social thought' that exists among managers, international experts and field staff, scientists or consultants (my colleagues and myself) whose practices are dominated by official technical discourse. Holmes and Marcus suggest that such anecdotal or intuitive thought, deployed 'counterculturally and critically' both by privileged and subordinate actors within development systems, provides a bridge 'to further the production of fundamentally *anthropological* knowledge' (ibid.).

This, indeed, was my own strategy in producing an ethnography of an international development intervention (Mosse 2005a). However, 'collaborative ethnography', even 'self-ethnography',[16] founded on the para-ethnographic may not be so easy to pull off in practice. Holmes and Marcus themselves identify the key aspect of the problem when they refer to the 'implication for these [technocratic/managerial] regimes of the return of ethnography derived from the subversive para-ethnography by some strategy of overture, writing, and representation back to the project's originating milieu' (2005: 241). When presented with my own ethnographic (or para-ethnographic) account of the social production of success and failure, my expert and professional subjects (and colleagues) raised objections. They

sought to interrupt the publication and advanced official complaints to my university, to the publisher and to my professional association, insisting that the ethnography was inaccurate, disrespectful and – most significantly – damaging to professional reputations (see Mosse 2006a).

Indeed, the question of professionalism was at the very centre of this particular controversy. My point above was that in deferring to the instrumentality of expert models, professionals are required to deny context, contingency, compromise, even their own agency, and to suppress the relational – all those things from which ethnography is necessarily composed. Little surprise, then, that the parts of the ethnography that my colleagues regarded as 'defamatory and potentially damaging to professional reputations'[17] were precisely those that mentioned unscripted roles, relationships, events or interests; those parts that concerned the real-life connections of consultant work, that alluded to competing rationalities (of donors, clients, staff and beneficiaries) or provided unofficial interpretations.

One colleague, for example, wrote that he took 'exception to the idea that we [international consultants] were motivated by seeking to secure an enduring relationship with the donor or project/area as a site for research and future consultancy income', insisting that, 'we were a professional team'. A description of the wider social context of consultancy work also questioned professionalism, as did comments on informal processes such as the many ways in which lethargic bureaucratic processes of approval and budget release had to be 'facilitated' – 'the many courtesy calls, foreigner visits, cards, gifts, overseas training opportunities' (Mosse 2005a: 123). The same is true of references to informal brokerage, the chameleon-like manipulation of insider/outsider roles or the out-of-sight economy of favours and obligations existing on the margins of legitimacy (ibid.: 125). My colleagues could of course themselves describe such roles and relationships, and did so in the course of the interviews, but they were professionally committed to their denial. Similarly, in her interviews with development professionals in the U.K., Kaufmann notes the desire to rewrite the script of the 'informal and chatty discourse [into] a formal and jargon-ridden one', as well as an anxiety about anonymity (1997: 111).

Any notion of self-interest, not least the observation that, proportionately, we expatriate experts were far greater beneficiaries than tribal villagers of the aid gifts we were honoured for bringing (or that some thirty-seven percent of project costs went to technical cooperation, mostly to U.K. institutions and consultants), or that it is the expectation of trainers, consultants and U.K. universities, as well as project workers and managers, to profit from the flow of aid into projects (Mosse 2005a: 126–30, 249), also undermined professionalism. In an ethical register, such comments in my text were 'unnecessary' because professionals' work in development is charitable. '"Profit"', my colleague wrote to me, 'is the wrong word … we all could have earned more doing something else. We chose not to because

we believed in what we were doing'. In other places, the description of the contradiction between actions/events and authorized models was itself regarded as damaging to professionalism. This included accounts of the realities of implementation pressures (budgets and targets) and the actions of workers who were meant to facilitate a community-driven process, or the suggestion that the scientifically demonstrated benefits of new farmer-first technologies could disappear when re-embedded in complex micro-environments, networks of obligation, debt and migration of tribal farmers. Such accounts 'questioned our professionalism' and threatened to damage professional reputations.

My 'para-ethnographic' work encountered a professional habitus that automatically transferred the actuality of events into the preconceived categories of legitimate meaning and ideal process: 'decisions taken democratically by the committees', relationships denuded of power/interest, the power-free flow of information, or the absence of pressure on staff to meet targets, the threat of transfers, etc. It brushed up against self-representations that required the erasure of discrepancies of practice, disjunctures, the effacing of individual action or denial of relationships. Quite inevitably, such ethnographic description is experienced as disempowering or threatening to a professional (or epistemic) community formed around shared representations (Mosse 2006a). Even so, the attendant upset and anger that revealed a fundamental antipathy between professional identity and the ethnographic project was a shock to me. Perhaps it should not have been. After all, such ethnography examines the instability of meaning rather than defining successful outcomes of expert design, and draws attention to the irrelevant, the routine and the ordinary. It intercepts the interlinked chains of theory, events and professional reputations in development. The ethnographic concern with individual actions and events (rather than policy theory) connects it to narratives of failure such that ethnographic description is read as negative evaluation (ibid.), and when it turns its attention to the unnoticed effects of analytical forms (documentary artefacts, networks, matrices, annual reports, etc.: Riles 2001) it detracts from the substance of official narratives.

From another point of view, however, we anthropologists of professionals are making arrogant claims to understand and represent others. In various ways we make ourselves cosmopolitan by rendering other experts 'local', whether World Bank officials (Mosse), aid consultants (Rajak and Stirrat) or international health experts (Harper). Ethnography denies to others their cosmopolitan claims by contextualizing, localizing and placing them in relationships. It may reduce 'the global' claimed of international networks to an effect of the aesthetic of trivial knowledge practices (Riles 2001), and it is clear that when anthropologists point to the relational or the arbitrary – the compromises and discrepancies – in development, or when they prioritize form over content, they can demean

and provoke rage. Claims of damage to professional reputations may follow; defamation cases may be threatened. Our ethnographic 'localizing strategies' cause damage to cosmopolitan claims that are always fragile.

However, matters do not end here; that is, with objections raised against illicit accounts that subvert official technocratic/managerial views or intercept the rule of experts. First, anthropological knowledge may itself be delegitimized as 'unethical' when professional groups use the rubric of research ethics codes either to claim harm as human subjects of research, suffering damage to professional reputations, or to assert control over the research process by extending the demand for 'consent' from data gathering to analysis, research outputs and especially publications (see Mosse 2006a, b, c). Second, professional groups may challenge not the factuality of an ethnographic account but its social base. Those who objected to my ethnography of the DFID project in western India challenged an account that departed from consensual, participative truth making, but more significantly they sought to reincorporate the ethnographer into a set of project relations of power and authority (see Mosse 2006a). Indeed, while my expert colleagues took exception to my ethnographic interpretation of relationships as prior to knowledge (and to my description of the investments directed to maintaining these relations as part of the execution of a programme), their own means of contending with ethnographic objectification was precisely to set the demands of professional relationships against anthropological knowledge production. In other words, my informants sought to unravel my ethnographic data back into the relations of our professional team. So, anthropologists' professional interlocutors may themselves work to localize our own cosmopolitan claims and to unravel our professional anthropological knowledge. The way in which expert informants raise objections may challenge the basis of ethnographic description through the erasure of the boundary between ethnographic writing and the relations of fieldwork, and by the refusal to engage with a textual representation and the insistence on re-incorporating its author into the moral relations of a project. Given the essentially relational nature of ethnographic knowledge – in the sense that knowledge is collaborative and dialogical, gained by way of relations, and that (in consequence) the relationships between researcher and object of enquiry become a property of the object itself (Hastrup 2004: 457) – ethnographic representations always have the potential to unravel when our informants (as did mine) attempt to unpack our 'evidence' back into relationships with them.

Expert informants offer an epistemological threat by localizing/parochializing ethnographic cosmopolitanism, re-embedding academic knowledge, denying the worth of 'evidence' or social research, resisting the boundary making between field relationships and research that is the pretext for description (Mosse 2006a).[18] This traces another route to Miyazaki and Riles' ethnographic 'end point' when expert subjects make a

'radical disjuncture between the moment of ethnography [the ethnographic encounter] and the moment of writing [the description and analysis] untenable' – when there is a failure 'to assert analytical control over the material' (2005: 326–28). Sometimes, anthropologists will find it impossible to mark a boundary and 'objectify' cosmopolitan colleagues as social actors; they may fail to exit from professional communities so as to allow the production of ethnographic description (or the analysis may have to sidestep into mimicry or parallel modes, as in Riles 2001, 2006). At other times such boundary making may be contested through objections, as I have described.

It is now widely recognized that the right to academic knowledge can no longer be taken for granted and has to be negotiated alongside other forms of knowledge. Particular dilemmas (ethical and epistemological) arise where the users of research are also the subjects of research (and vice versa), and where research generates information on 'non-public' aspects of systems of public knowledge within which, when published, it also circulates. Anthropologists now have to find modes of post-fieldwork interaction with professionals and public knowledge regimes that solicit responses/objections to ethnographic representations without requiring resolution or consensus, while still acknowledging the genuine underlying tensions of epistemology and purpose.

Notes

1. Call for papers for seminar series 'Conflicts in Time: Rethinking 'Contemporary' Globalization', Laura Bear, London School of Economics (January 2007).
2. The new drive to expert consensus and 'harmonization' is evident, for example, in a series of donor-sponsored and UN agency-coordinated High Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness, in Rome (2003), Marrakech (2004), Paris (2005) and Accra (2008), and on health Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) in Tunis (2006). A recent visit to China (July 2008) reminded me that this common approach to aid and state-society relations also has an important exception (or variant).
3. Boström and Garsten (2008b) throw light on the contradictory implications of transnational accountability for expert knowledge regimes in international development. On the one hand, the rising demand for accountability (including the demand for a negotiation of the meaning of 'accountability' itself) implies a loss of trust in experts. On the other hand, the reorganization of agencies for accountability – the demand for new 'accountability tools', for 'inspection regimes', for numbers, 'robust' output data, and credible accounts of institutional performance – all involve greater dependence on expertise.
4. Of course, the dominance of economic reasoning and quantitative modelling in international development is just part of a widely-explored historical trajectory. At its broadest, Charles Taylor recalls that the pre-eminence of economics is rooted in a rise of 'the economy' in the Western social imaginary from the eighteenth century, 'as an interlocking set of activities of production, exchange, and consumption which form a system with its own laws and its own dynamics' (2007: 171). As a social order caused by human needs and mutual benefits, it replaced the older notion of polity as a normative order ('form at work in reality'), opening social order up to explanation and planned intervention. The particular importance of quantification and number in the bureaucratic and administrative techniques of government and planning is taken up by Porter (1996,

2003). His specific point, that quantification was a political project (to manage populations) before it was a scientific or economic project, is relevant to the present argument. Quantification was part of the centralization of control and decentralization of responsibility (2003: 98) established as a relationship of governance that required central expertise as well as local self-monitoring, for instance through systems of financial accounting (complicated by tax law). The quantification of public policy – the use of instruments such as cost-benefit analysis in project appraisal, policy argument and political justification – increased demand for expertise and technocratic rule. Meanwhile, the presumed neutrality and communicability of numbers (linked to presumed uniform categories: Bowker and Star 2000) make them the quintessential form of translocal knowledge in development.

5. The processes by which a participatory project makes experts out of locals by disembedding their knowledge from its social context has been explored in the case of participatory agricultural development in tribal India (Mosse 2005a, 208). In this case, expert engagement, whether of plant breeders, soil scientists, microfinance specialists or (like myself) anthropologists, had the effect of disembedding technology from agrarian relations, and money (microfinance) from social obligation. In the participatory plant breeding (PPB) programme, it was precisely the separation of farmers' knowledge from social and political relationships that legitimized it as 'expert' or 'scientific', in contrast to research station scientists, who were too embedded in the political matrix of professional career building (Chambers et al. 1989). People participate in expert designs through PPB techniques, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), even ethnography, which allow communication to 'learning elites' who direct the process (Wilson 2006).

6. For an economist's view on the risks that might be involved in the democratization of expertise in international development, see Collier 2007.

7. This does not negate Ferguson's point that failure may also disguise other political effects which transcend developers' intentions (1994: 255).

8. Uchiyamada offers an interesting case of a reverse ritual process aimed at effecting the transformation of information into non-information. A senior officer in a Japanese aid bureaucracy 'morally erases' the minutes of an internal seminar emailed in error by a junior clerk to external participants (which was embarrassing because the email contained a record of internal process). The erring junior is sent a large number of empty envelopes, asked to 'recall' the email from each recipient, print it and return it to the Secretary General for destruction (2004: 8).

9. In a paper prepared at the conference at which this book project began, Philip Quarles van Ufford and Oscar Salemink (2006) extended this interest in the work that development ideas accomplish not by transforming the Third World, but by redefining the identities of those in power in 'the West', with a critical engagement with the moral philosophy of Martha Nussbaum. Through ethnographic cases set in Vietnam and Indonesia, they showed how development's moral and expert 'care of the other' is shaped by an unrecognized 'domestic' self-interest and a necessary 'care of the self'.

10. Bowker and Star's (2000) work on the social life of professional standards and classifications, specifically the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), has an important bearing on this discussion. They follow Latour (1987) in viewing the fact, the datum or the category as a consequence, not a starting point, and then retrieve the stripped-out political and ethical work of individual and organizational agents that make up a classification infrastructure (Bowker and Star 2000: 266). Moreover, they show how classifications and standards regulate information flows, organize institutional memory and provide a means to professionalize (or to become subject to professional surveillance). Classifications mediate communication between groups and the formation of cross-cultural professional communities, but at the same time lose definition under local interpretation as they are contextualized into 'informal' counterparts.

11. Other ethnographic accounts reveal just how complex the processes of expert isolation can be and how mediated the relationship between global expertise and local experience is.

Argenti-Pillen (2003) shows how Western mental health professionals working in the field of humanitarian aid in Sri Lanka are disabled by their exclusion from a complex politicized translation process in which Sinhala intellectuals-collaborators promote Buddhist nationalist language (subjugating villager expressions of trauma) through the translation of a locally unintelligible international humanitarian discourse on war trauma.

12. Riles (2004) describes a technical intervention in Japanese banking specifically designed to resolve the dilemma, that is, to erase relations (with clients) that are a necessary part of technical knowledge through a mechanism to inbuild 'realtime' processes (2004: 398).

13. The dilemma has not escaped those outside experts responsible for community-driven development, who, as Li (Chapter 3 this volume) shows, resolve the paradox by emphasizing the expert design of 'meta-rules','mediating institutions' and 'minimum standards' for the *local* crafting of rules and solutions.

14. Riles (2006) is especially interested in how anthropological ideas of culture are appropriated as a mode of critique or irony by critical human rights lawyers. But since these ironical commentaries remain within the 'iron cage' of legal instrumentalism, anthroplology (or culture) itself becomes instrumentalized in very unanthropological ways. The closest parallel in the world of international development (but also a more extreme case) is the 'critical' introduction of the idea of social relations and culture within economics discourse in the World Bank and their instrumentalization, notably in the concept of 'social capital' (see Mosse, Chapter 4 this volume).

15. The distinction between 'success' and 'failure' as contexts of narration may be relevant to variation in the patterns of remembering and forgetting that Bloch analyses in relation to the differences between official histories (prototypical representations) and event-driven accounts (1998).

16. Something Riles (2006) describes as 'circling back', referring to her return as an ethnographer to the community of human rights lawyers of which she was a member.

17. Unattributed quotations are from correspondence with my critics who I refrain from identifying.

18. In my own case, this boundary was reasserted procedurally and institutionally in a way that reminds us that in the end anthropological knowledge is a 'social achievement' (Crick 1982: 20, cited in Hastrup 2004: 456) (Mosse 2006a).

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