

INTRODUCTION

Anthropology and Consultancy— Ethnographic Dilemmas and Opportunities



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Background Concerns

The essays that we have collected here speak to many of the dilemmas inherent in anthropological practice today, as well as to the philosophical roots of anthropology itself. What is our position as anthropologists in the worlds that we study, be it those we are indigenous members of or those to which we are outsiders? Do we see ourselves as relatively detached observers or as persons committed to some program of action in relation to the people we study, and how is our study altered by our involvement? Clearly, we do not need to see these alternatives in absolute terms. Each anthropologist may choose a nuanced position along the continuum from detachment to involvement; or may move from one position to another depending on changing circumstances or projects over time. The idea of participant observation, which has been central to anthropological fieldwork, itself implies a combination of these two opposites of detachment and involvement, which fieldworkers have to balance out for themselves. Fieldworkers must be able to offer something of value to those with whom they work, and the needs or demands of their subjects do not necessarily equate or mesh with what the anthropologist is able to offer or feels is appropriate. As more and more trained anthropologists are studying their own cultures it becomes sometimes difficult to balance the placement of the anthropologist in the community that she/he is studying and to negotiate and disentangle work situations from those involving close kin and/or friends. These considerations show that many of the dilemmas which anthropologists particularly face in carrying out consultancy

work are in fact implicitly faced by all anthropologists, whatever the sponsorship, constraints, or requirements of their study. One main concern is how to recurrently deal with basic questions of the management of reciprocity in historical contexts influenced by differential distributions of social power.

Consultancy work is the contemporary transformation of applied anthropology and inherits some of the particular problems linked to this branch of the discipline. Two quite different problems are frequently found here. One is the opposition that is sometimes made, on the basis of models from other disciplines, between “applied” and “theoretical” studies. The latter are accorded higher prestige. This opposition, however, is somewhat misconceived. If applied work is to be sound, it must incorporate adequate theory to guide its own analyses; and if theoretical work is to be valid, it has to be applicable to “real world” situations about which it theorizes. The second problem has to do with history. “Applied anthropology” as a category term is sometimes associated with European colonialism and regarded as having arisen as an instrument of imperial domination, a “science of colonialism”. The debates on this topic are well-worn. Here we may say that this view of anthropological work greatly oversimplified the relationship between particular anthropologists and the controlling powers in the areas where they worked in colonial times; and although the frameworks of thought of anthropologists were of course influenced by the wider presuppositions of their day, many resisted colonial projects rather than supporting them. Goody, for example, has discussed this question for British anthropologists working in Africa prior to the Independence of African states in the 1950s (Goody 1995:7–25), including mention of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute research workers evaluated also in Ferguson (1999: 27–29). The association itself probably arose from the employment of anthropologists in governmental service. It is interesting to note that F. E. Williams, who was the government anthropologist in Papua from 1922 to 1943, is remembered nowadays as the author of several fundamental ethnographies of Papuan peoples rather than as an instrument of colonial domination over these same peoples. Williams was employed under the auspices of the colonial native welfare fund in Papua, derived from taxation, and his applied interests largely had to do with education. His extraordinary contributions to ethnography (e.g. Williams 1940) must surely have taken up the bulk of his time and energy to produce; and the Papuan government paid for their publication by the Clarendon Press in Oxford. The fact of working for a government does not necessarily mean that the anthropologist becomes simply an instrument of domination, although it may sometimes be the case: everything depends on the governmental context and program itself.

Ideas about the development process generally also continue to change. The theory of modernization, with its assumptions about technology transfer and the inevitable or desired trajectory of societies toward a

global norm shaped by capitalism, has been shown to be deficient for explaining and handling the complexities, variations, and contradictions that constitute post-colonial processes of historical change. Anthropologists, economists, sociologists, historians, and political scientists have all been sent “back to the drawing board” by these complexities and have entered into a new phase of empirical, evidence-based studies informed by ideas regarding political ecology and sustainable development. The work of Arturo Escobar and his collaborators on Latin American social movements, and the involvement in these of non-governmental organizations funded from outside, particularly represents critical trends of analysis in this domain of work (Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998; Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Schild 1998). In this context anthropologists have come somewhat to the fore through their close, empirical knowledge of the culturally established thought-worlds of the peoples they study, whether these are their own people or others. James Ferguson, for example, has innovatively brought together local field study and an analysis of the wider political and bureaucratic processes that impact and are impacted by development schemes in his studies of LeSotho in Southern Africa, specifically his work on the Thaba-Tseka stock grazing project, and in his research on the Zambian Copperbelt (Ferguson 1994, 1999). Ferguson’s work has contributed to the demise of the myth of modernization in which development was seen in terms of a putative transition from an isolated subsistence ‘stage’ of economy to a ‘modern’, capitalist market economy; an approach which ignored the existing historical complexities of the situations encountered, as well as the political conflicts generated by development schemes and their unintended social consequences. Ferguson integrates large-scale sociological analysis with representations of the biographic and cultural worlds of the people who are enmeshed in development processes.

The new emphasis in development studies pays much more heed to these cultural worlds, not as hindrances to development as in earlier views, but as possible vital clues to how development plans should be set up; in other words as valid forms of knowledge not just for the past, but for the future also, and as elements that must be incorporated into rather than factored out of a vision for the society. We may refer to this as the indigenous knowledge (IK) movement within development studies. One well-known anthropologist, whose earlier empirical and theoretical work on a Highlands society of Papua New Guinea was influential in shaping the field of New Guinea studies generally, Paul Sillitoe, has successfully applied his data-based methods of enquiry in the field of IK studies (see, for example, Sillitoe 2000; also Antweiler 1998). Promoting IK studies as an integral feature of discussions about development planning is an intrinsically congenial role for anthropologists, although as Sillitoe notes they may have a hard time trying to demonstrate the relevance of their field of observations to development planners themselves. How, for example,

are ideas about important concepts, e.g. spirit beings, to be seen as a relevant resource, rather than a hindrance in introducing new types of crops? Part of the solution lies in demonstrating that the people's own approach to knowledge as such is flexible and open-ended and therefore they may be ready to innovate rather than simply resistant to change. Another part of the solution depends on developing a fundamental respect for the people whose lives are being impacted by change and listening to their wishes and concerns before making plans or implementing them.

The peoples of the Pacific, including Papua New Guinea, whom we have studied as anthropologists are all undergoing quite rapid processes of change and are all involved, one way or another, in development schemes that bring them into articulation with global forces. This means that the ways in which we discuss and analyze their lives must grapple intimately and extensively with such processes, thereby problematizing our units of study and our resources for interpreting the information we gather. Consultancy work emerges in this context as a new role for anthropologists, throwing them not just into "participant observation" but into participation as agents and mediators in the processes of change themselves. Indeed this is more generally the situation for any anthropologist setting out to do a study nowadays in arenas also occupied by governmental, company or NGO agencies concerned with development and change. We think that this was also partly the case in earlier times also, but that the terms of discussion have altered in post-colonial contexts to ones in which wider sets of vocally interested parties are involved. One anthropologist whose work we know, for example, was faced with hostilities from an NGO in an African context in ways comparable to those experienced by two of our contributors (Wagner and West) and was eventually forced to leave the field because of this. In another recent instance, relating to work in a Pacific island, the government of an anthropologist's country of origin attempted to coerce the anthropologist into forms of applied work there that were unconnected with the anthropologist's own projected study. In this case, the anthropologist was able to resist these suggestions. When pressure is brought to bear by a national government in an area where a visiting anthropologist from elsewhere is working, such resistance may not be so easy, especially since the visitor depends on national, provincial and local authorities for permission to carry out research of any kind. Conflicts of interest and preference can also arise among the authorities at different levels, or among those at a given level, for example, within the community itself. The arena of research in general, especially in places affected by large-scale development projects, is rather like a minefield through which researchers must pick their way. In more remote areas, less affected by development, this may not be so to the same degree; but all areas reflect in one way or another the contemporary pressures of large-scale change which subtly intertwine themselves with local conflicts and factional or ideological struggles.

As editors of the present collection of essays, our plan was to invite anthropologists who were in various ways involved in these partly new contexts to reflect upon their roles, to stand back from them a little and analyze them, and so to incorporate their own experiences into an unfolding ethnography of change. It is our intention here to provide a forum for individual views and reflections of this kind, building up a portrait of perspectives, rather than developing any programmatic or evaluative views in general. Each contributor therefore presents a personal facet of a complex, emergent situation within our discipline, one that we think is of interest for the problems it raises for every anthropologist, not just those who specifically have done consultancy work as such.

The circumstances and problems our contributors explore are likely to be similar to those that anthropologists have experienced as consultants in other parts of the world. It is by convenience, rather than theoretical design, that the studies presented here belong to Papua New Guinea. What gives them their particular flavor is the mix of post-colonial historical factors that have conditioned the ethnographic work of anthropologists generally in Papua New Guinea in recent years: for example, the combination of people's eagerness for development as such, the democratic processes of government, and the extraordinary opportunities given to companies and to NGOs to pursue their own agendas; along with the severe difficulties of containing violence and resentment of local peoples when they become disillusioned with government or company actions.

There is a further reason why it is apt and timely to produce a set of reflective studies of this kind on Papua New Guinea (PNG) today. This is that there has been an escalation of consulting work done in PNG by professional anthropologists, which may be described as the emergence of a special class of applied anthropological workers who have become quite significant in the overall process of development itself. When we first thought of collecting a set of essays to edit on consultancy work, while visiting at the James Cook University of Northern Queensland in Australia in 1997, we attempted to bring together a number of these anthropologists and to find company, university, or governmental funding, for a workshop where they could discuss their experiences as consultants and how this work affected their placement in anthropology as a whole. We received expressions of interest, but in the end all the anthropologists, lawyers, and others whom we approached were too busy actually doing consultancy work to find one single time to sit down and discuss the topic together. We therefore shifted the venue to the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) meetings which we describe below, aiming to attract interest from a wider set of professionals.

The growth of consultancy work in Papua New Guinea, particularly in regard to large-scale mining operations, is a phenomenon in itself, and prominent participants in it, such as Colin Filer, have recently provided their own reflections on its purposes, dilemmas, vicissitudes and conflicts,

as well as its empirical findings and the ethical questions it raises (Filer 1999). This corpus of work makes it particularly interesting to have also a set of studies that attempt to stand back and take stock of the arena of discussion. The positionality of the ethnographic or social impact consultant is a problem that these practitioners have themselves debated and analyzed among themselves in ways that can be compared with the views of our contributors. The issue of involvement and partisanship emerges as central to the debates, tied in with competing analyses of the effects and meanings of development generally which can be related to the critical work of Escobar and Ferguson we have mentioned earlier (Ferguson 1999). Some authors advocate an activist role of supporting the claims of local peoples in the face of environmental damages caused by mining (see Hyndman 1994, 2001). This is in line with the 'tradition' of anthropologists supporting the viewpoints of the people they specifically work with in the contexts of colonial and post-colonial struggles. Colin Filer and John Burton have both shown how a close-grained ethnographic analysis of the process of negotiation about the outcomes of development can itself help to pinpoint where conflicts arise and performance falls short of prescribed aims (Burton 1999; Filer 1999). In several regards they also show how an understanding of historical processes and their ethnographic study can help in devising programs for the future, particularly with respect to baseline studies prior to the beginning of development projects. A range of viewpoints, moderate, activist, and descriptive, is also supplied in a set of essays edited by Glenn Banks and Chris Ballard on the Ok Tedi gold and copper mine (Banks and Ballard 1997). Much earlier, a holistic and balanced anthropological perspective on the 'cultural impact' of the Ok Tedi project was produced by Fredrik Barth and Unni Wikan in a report to the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies. Their report predicted many of the deleterious sociocultural results of the mine well before they had occurred (Barth and Wikan 1982). Their work was financed by a grant from the Department of Minerals and Energy and administered through the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies (see also Filer 1999:95). Another collection of essays has examined the complicated issues of 'compensation for resource development' in PNG, studies that engage crucially with the prolonged social effects of mining on communities, and also with the effects of local peoples on mining projects (Toft 1997; for an overview see the introduction to this volume by A. Strathern and for a discussion of environmental pollution from a local viewpoint see Kirsch's essay in the same volume on the Yonggom people downstream from the mine site). Dan Jorgensen has also written about the problem of determining who is a 'landowner' in contexts of change and in relation to compensation claims from mining companies: problems that have inevitably emerged in both the Ok Tedi and the Porgera areas (Jorgensen 1997).

Filer has, in a number of publications, explained the divisive consequences of large compensation payments (e.g. Filer 1997); and these are

compounded by processes of indigenous in-migration around the Porgera gold mine site, as some of the contributors to Filer's 1999 edited volume attest (Banks 1999; Biersack 1999; Bonnell 1999; and see also Imbun 2000). In a more general context, Filer has himself provided a nuanced analysis of the question of positionality in a volume on the anthropology of power, edited by Angela Cheater. Clearly answering to the critical terms of earlier discussions, he suggests that ethnographic inquiry in general into "the political setting of mineral resource development" normally needs to begin by entering into a dialogue with all the stakeholders, and that in these circumstances it (normally again) makes more sense for the anthropologist to act as a mediator or an "honest broker" (Filer 1999: 89) than as a partisan or advocate. He recognizes, however, that there will be circumstances in which anthropologists may be obliged to adopt a more firm position in order to achieve a transfer of power from 'the system' (e.g. the government, or a company) to 'the community' (ibid.). He therefore gives recognition to both activist and moderate stances, according to circumstances. In addition, we may add, if the anthropologist is not specifically employed as a consultant, there is the legitimate possibility of remaining a concerned, but not directly involved, commentator, whose work may in principle be helpful to all sides; although in partisan contexts such a role is also hard to maintain, as ethnographers working 'in the shadows' of development projects must all have experienced. Our contributors have all been in those shadows in one way or another and in this collection they have tried to introduce some light into them.

The essays in this collection themselves emerged, then, in part from two sessions, co-organized by ourselves and Martha Macintyre, held at the 1999 and 2000 meetings of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania, in Hilo, Hawai'i, and Vancouver, British Columbia. Our purpose in organizing these sessions was, in the context of Pacific anthropology generally, to bring together anthropologists who had carried out consultancy work, those who were interested in working as consultants, and those who had not worked as consultants but who were interested in the process whereby consultancy work is done or had observed it from the vantage point of their own work. Many ethical and pragmatic issues arise from consultancy work, and persons doing this work outside of anthropology, such as biologists and geologists, also have to reflect upon the research that they are doing for their own investigations versus the work that they are paid to do for companies. They may also have to reflect on their motivations for entering into consultancy work and on whether their own expectations and ambitions have been realized through doing it.

We became interested in the topic in the 1990s when it became evident to us that more people that we spoke with, especially in Australia, were conducting some forms of consultancy work. Often these were people who had been working in a particular area with a set of people for a number of years and had written ethnographic studies in academic contexts.

Companies were now approaching these same persons for their expertise in order to negotiate with local people over a myriad of issues such as land use, water use, labor forces, and compensation payments, and also on how to carry out social impact research (see Goldman 2000).

We were interested to know what the reflections of these people might be on the ways in which the consultancy process impacts ethnographic work and the ethnographer; also, to consider what aims, theories, aspirations and tools the ethnographer brings to the consultancy work itself. A major question is how consultancy impacts ethnographic work and vice-versa. Issues of the kind that concern anthropologists who work in consultancy contexts are bound to emerge during the course of reflecting on the overall process of engagement with consultancy. These issues have to do with the types of development projects that are at stake, the funding of such projects, control over the projects and the results generated by them, relationships between indigenous people and development agencies, and the like. In other words, questions relating to development are tied in directly with questions of values and overall aims and therefore also with the ethical and political situation of the anthropologist. Specific professional matters are also likely to be involved, primarily having to do with rights over materials gathered, freedom to publish, freedom or otherwise to disagree with policy objectives or pragmatic decisions of hiring agencies. There is a whole arena here in which anthropologists have built up knowledge, but it has not been drawn into the mainstream of ethnographic and theoretical discussion. In some instances quite a large proportion of the professionals in anthropology spend considerable effort in consultancy work, sometimes in accordance with institutional requirements placed on them. Recently, professional meetings have included sessions on consultancy issues pertinent to a particular country, such as Australia. Yet there is a sense that consultancy work is unusual and is enclaved away from the supposed mainstream array of topics.

We maintain that a rigid compartmentalization of the work of anthropological consultancy within the discipline as a whole is unrealistic. Theory, analysis, description, and practice need to be related to one another, and the pragmatic problems, the ethical questions, and the imponderabilities of making appropriate theoretical analyses which face the anthropologist as consultant also face the anthropologist as general ethnographer. The question of analysis of material in relation to policy aims is particularly and obviously crucial. What otherwise exists only as an imaginary construct here exists in immediate reality, because what the anthropologist writes may result directly in policy choices that are made. Such a fact in turn must lead the contemporary anthropologist to think very hard about issues of truth, accuracy, and interpretation of data: this at a time in anthropology when various "truths" have been thoroughly relativized as a result of the supposed crisis of representation, the question of indigenous versus outsider perspectives, and the whole theory of the positionality of agents

who maintain forms of knowledge: all aspects of what has been called for a decade or more “the crisis of postmodernity” in anthropology.

How the Consultancy Process Impacts Ethnographic Work and Ethnographic Writing

In many instances it appears that when individuals are working with a company and also collecting ethnographic data for their own research it can become confusing to the people what their relationship is with these ethnographers and how much to trust them in light of the fact that what they say might be used subsequently by the company in ways that are unanticipated by the local people. Also, situations arise in which local people feel that the ethnographer should be given information particularly in order to possibly obtain some material rewards from companies in the form of compensation payments. The relationship can therefore be an uneasy one for the ethnographers, who may feel as though they are being placed in the middle of ongoing disputes or issues between a company and local people. But in some ways this is not unlike the sorts of situations that ethnographers find themselves in generally because local people realize that the ethnographer may be able to make their concerns or frustrations known to the outer world and thus may alert government or other agencies to assist in ways such as improving health care, infrastructure, education, etc.

Unlike many ethnographic contexts in which a person or two people go to work with a community of people in a closely established context and the people soon learn that the ethnographer works for a university and is hoping to understand enough of the local people’s lifeways to write a description of them for an academic community, consultants are seen as tied to the company for which they are working and this tie is one that the local people realize is to be considered in terms of what information to share or withhold.

In the Duna area where we work in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea the people live near to the Strickland river downstream from the Porgera Joint Venture Gold Mining Company. The company commissioned workers to act as consultants who were employed to collect the origin stories called *malu* among the Duna in order to determine which areas of land were claimed as being owned by which local groups. This information was written down in reports that were presented to the company and used in determining compensation payments that were to be made, as mandated by the Papua New Guinea government, for use of the Strickland river by the mine as a site for the mine’s tailings runoff. The knowledge of these *malu* origin stories is owned by members of a group and is exceedingly complex in detail. The particular parts of a *malu* narrative that are given are determined by the context in which the story is being

told and what is at stake in the telling of the story. The versions of these *malu* that would have been collected for the water use payments would have highlighted particular points that a telling in another context might not recount in the same way. The basic story line remains the same but particular details are either recounted or not depending on their significance in particular circumstances. Thus, definitive versions of *malu* cannot be obtained, only versions of *malu* that are context dependent. This in turn illustrates the contextual character of what is to be seen as a “true” version of a story. In contexts of this sort one influence may be the expectations of receiving compensation payments. Lorenzo Brutti in his essay for this collection examines in detail this same issue on the basis of his intensive work with the Oksapmin people, western neighbors of the Duna with whom we work.

A more general issue that arises here has to do with rights over materials for publication. Consultants may be required by their sponsors to produce reports only for the sponsors themselves. Negotiations over rights to the wider publication of findings, particularly if these are critical of the sponsoring organizations themselves, may be complicated. Anthropologists to whom we have spoken about this problem report varying experiences. One senior anthropologist indicated that there was indeed a serious problem here and that this would also constitute a constraint in discussing the consultancy role itself. A few younger anthropologists claimed that in their case the company that had hired them would allow them also to use all of their data for their own Ph.D. studies. The situations that emerge are comparable to those of natural scientists who do research paid for by companies and then find that the companies refuse them the rights normally claimed by academics to publish their findings. Close attention to this problem by organizations and individual scientists seems warranted and fundamentally important. The difficulty is that the sponsor and the research worker may have different interests and aims, which can come into conflict. In the absence of third party adjudication being available, it is the research worker who is vulnerable. Here is one arena where professional associations need to expand their concerns for regulations in research to include more fully a concern for the rights of the research workers themselves vis-à-vis sponsors.

Types of Development Projects and Their Relevance for Consultancy Work

The type of development project involved influences greatly the question of how consultancy work can be pursued. There is a great difference between projects designed to help local people themselves to develop small-scale businesses or farming activities, for example, and large-scale mining, logging, or fishing enterprises involving international corporate

capital, investment flows, and requirements for profit margins by companies and their shareholders. Anthropologists tend to be involved either in working for government bodies to assist in development work with local communities, or in working for companies to try and improve communication between the company and local communities impacted by development. In both cases their role depends on the knowledge they have, or can acquire, of how local community processes work. In particular, they are often involved in trying to advise on several areas of concern for the development involved.

The first and most fundamental area is that of community representation. What is the community and how is leadership exercised in it? Who can represent its views? Are there factional differences within it? Who holds the rights to various resources that may be at stake? This point corresponds to the second fundamental area, that of rights to resources, including how these are divided up between kinsfolk, and between men and women and older and younger people. Since the resources involved are also those that the company is using or seeking to use, a third area of concern that emerges from the first two areas is that of the distribution of returns to the people from the company's project. Such distribution usually takes the form of a benefits package offered to people in terms of royalties on sales, fees for access rights, land damages payments, transfer of ownership of resources, investment options, or educational, housing, or communications improvements, and the like, the idea being to balance long-term and short-term benefits. From the standpoint of local people in a country such as Papua New Guinea, the whole package is often referred to simply under the rubric of compensation and likened to the payments the people make among themselves for killings or injuries to persons. They place a premium accordingly on large scale single cash payments but are also happy to receive services that extend over time. They see these services as all implicitly a part of the compensation paid to them, and therefore as something the company in fact owes to them. The development process itself impacts local social organization. Given people's preferences for cash payments and immediate distribution of these several further consequences arise. First, the money is dissipated quickly, entering a ramified network of exchanges. Second, disputes arise between people about the equity of distribution. Third, new people become prominent in the community as a result of gaining benefits. And fourth the alignment of groups and factions in the community shifts in accordance with a new power situation.

What we may call spatial and temporal factors are also important. People who live close to a large development arena such as a mine are affected considerably and in many ways within a short period of time. These effects may in turn last for a long time subsequently. While one generation may benefit broadly from company payments, the next generation may feel left out or may want more. In cases where people live on the periphery of

influence of a mining enterprise, they are concerned more to contribute at some level to its work force and to obtain spin-off benefits such as a health center or a road or to receive compensation for environmental damages such as river pollution caused by mine tailings. Over time, whether an area is close to or distant from the mine, people's ideas change. Factors such as environmental damage, for instance, may not enter into people's thoughts until a decade or so after a mine is established. At first it is often the case that they are primarily interested in getting a share of cash returns. Later they may become more seriously concerned about the environment, at which point international non-government organizations may also get involved on their behalf. The people far from the mine area usually have little influence over mine policies, but in the long run they may seriously suffer from the mine's indirect environmental effects as well as benefiting from payments and infrastructural improvements.

We cite these rather well-known points in order to highlight how all of the factors involved must inevitably impact the anthropologist as consultant. Good advice at one stage may not be so good at a later stage of a project. Understanding how the community "works" or is changing has continually to be updated. The anthropologist's work is enhanced if it is marked by regular visits and maintained over time. If the involvement is long term, the people may over time come either to blame the anthropologist for 'failures' to influence policy or praise the anthropologist for 'successes' in doing so but expect that these 'successes' can be prolonged and surpassed in the future.

If we compare these longer term processes to the situations of ethnographers outside of consultancy contexts we can see parallels. The longer the fieldwork period, the more people may become dissatisfied with the returns they get from the research worker, for example. When people have become used to getting benefits from a company or other private bodies they may begin to expect from the ethnographer things that only their government or a corporate organization can provide. In a region where some people work as consultants and other research workers are carrying out a different set of inquiries, confusions and difficulties about expectations of returns can arise. These confusions reflect community divisions and factions that already exist and they can also cause new constellations of factions to arise. These same problems affect both consultants and non-consultants as research workers because of the inherently political character of their positions in relation to the communities in which they work. This political position of the research worker can be characterized by the following elements:

1. The research worker is interstitial between power groups.
2. The people may therefore overestimate the research worker's ability to mediate between these groups.
3. The research worker is perceived as someone whose loyalty to one or another interest group must be won.

4. The research worker must then demonstrate this kind of loyalty; but from the researcher's own viewpoint it is most important to be able to preserve a degree of neutrality, in order to remain impartial.

For consultant anthropologists the situation is doubly difficult if they have worked as "mainstream" researchers with the community previously but are now being employed by a company to which they have contractual obligations.

Consultancy versus "Mainstream" Work in Anthropology

Consultancy work is often spoken of in terms apart from "mainstream" or "non-applied" research work. In practice, once people enter into consultancy work, as we have seen earlier, their work does become differentiated, because of the special demands of the consultancy work itself. For example, consultants are more legally accountable to their immediate employers than are anthropologists who work for universities or research institutions. It is worth remembering, however, that professional bodies such as the American Anthropological Association and individual universities in the United States lay down a long list of standards of practice for all research work. At universities an Institutional Review Board, operating in accordance with Federal US principles, approves and monitors all research involving human subjects that is funded from the US itself. However, such constraints do not bear so directly on the "independent" research worker as on the consultant.

The gap between consultancy work and "mainstream" work has recently closed in some ways and widened in others. It has closed somewhat because of the processes usually signified by the term "globalization". Given the spread of education, literacy, and information media throughout the world, what an anthropologist publishes about the people may more quickly be read by the people and in some instances people within research communities are conducting their own anthropological research after receiving higher education degrees. The anthropologist is thus accountable to the people with whom the work is done in a way that parallels the accountability of the consultant anthropologist. This may in particular apply to indigenous anthropologists working in their own communities, and especially if they are employed as consultants there.

On the other hand consultant anthropologists who are contractually employed by companies or governments are, as we have seen, greatly constrained in terms of what they publish and where they publish their results. Here the work that the anthropologist does is less readily available for colleagues at large and thus it is no longer subject to the academic processes of peer review and published debate. Instead it may belong to the agency that hired them. While the work itself may be impartial and may

criticize the development project it discusses, its author cannot always publish this criticism elsewhere since to do so might hurt the image and the corporate revenues of their contracting agency. For the consultant anthropologist, then, the major need is to have some flexibility in this regard. In practice this may be hard to achieve. Companies may pay the consultant more in order to obtain rights over the worker's writings. The anthropologist may try to negotiate terms which permit the writing of materials that do not blame the company for mistakes, faults of policy, or deficiencies of practice, but this in turn may reduce the interest value of what the anthropologist has to say about the local people affected by the company work.

The "mainstream" and the consultant anthropologists nowadays face a similar range of problems regarding publication, but they are positioned differently in relation to these problems. The range of problems has to do with:

1. Questions of publication rights
2. Questions of use: who can or who will in practice use what is published and in what ways?
3. Questions of regulation: who will regulate processes 1 and 2?

The consultant anthropologist is constrained and regulated by a particular monetary contract in relation to questions 1 and 2. The mainstream anthropologist is constrained more loosely and has a broader range of venues to publish in, but is clearly accountable both to the people worked with as well as to their own institution and to bodies of professional peers at large. Issues of conscience, ethics, and choice are bound to arise for all. Ethnographers are becoming more and more aware of the implications of work published, especially as more indigenous people become involved in anthropological work themselves. Consultant anthropologists work with contractual constraints but in some ways they may be more free to negotiate directly between local people and companies than can be done by mainstream anthropologists.

For both categories a major issue has to do with the potential exploitation of one's writings as opposed to one's intentions in writing. And both categories are faced with the implications of publishing and distributing in written, available form the fluid flows of oral discourse of cultures that have depended on non-literate communication. The research work itself introduces a new set of factors in the communication process and contributes to changing the character of local knowledge itself.

All anthropologists as fieldworkers and writers are both enclaved in particular contexts and also incorporated into wider spheres of communication. The major problem that distinguishes the consultant's position from that of others has to do with rights of publication and consequences of what is written in terms of immediate impact on local people in regard

to compensation and services provided. Until consultants are able to “tell more” about their consultancy work, that work will remain enclaved in special contexts. In many ways the consultancy projects themselves might benefit from a wider input into their research endeavors through receiving the reflections of colleagues at large, because many problems and dilemmas are shared by all anthropologists, as we have argued here.

This Collection of Edited Essays

The essays presented here richly illustrate both the problems and perspectives we have touched on so far and reveal a number of further dimensions of interest. These dimensions arise out of the diversity of contexts that the essays cover under the rubric of consultancy work itself. The first two essays, by Marta Rohatynskyj and Richard Scaglione, portray anthropologists working for governmental agencies, Rohatynskyj at provincial and Scaglione at national level. Rohatynskyj was concerned with “inter-ethnic” relations, Scaglione with “customary law”, both classic matters of ethnographic analysis in general in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The second set of essays deals with a phenomenon of growing significance, the activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in development programs. John Wagner worked as an anthropologist in the area of the Kamiali conservation project in Morobe Province, PNG, which, he writes, “was shut down largely as a consequence of villagers’ perceptions that their own interests in the project were taking a back seat to those of the facilitating NGO” (Wagner, this volume). In such a context the word “facilitating” reveals a certain irony. In a similar vein, but for a different region, Paige West writes of the Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area among the Gimi speakers of the Eastern Highlands Province, that the conservation NGO personnel involved in the project developed their own forms of discourse about the people which “facilitated” or legitimized their ideas about how the project was to be controlled. West argues that the NGOs in fact appropriated stereotypes purportedly taken from anthropology itself in order to do this, reinventing the idea of “the primitive” much as was done successively in colonial times and in post-colonial periods where modernization theory held sway (see our previous discussion here). Another irony emerged here, then, for West as the ethnographer trying to make her own account of the Gimi People. These two studies take us a step outside of the consultancy context, showing us ethnographers looking at organizations that in effect operate as consultancies to governments and questioning the ideologies in terms of which these NGOs operate. The two essays fit within our overall framework of examining the relationship between ethnographic work and consultancy work by revealing how two anthropologists not employed as consultants became enmeshed in, and perceived the impact of, NGOs involved in ‘development’

in the areas where they themselves were working as ethnographers. Wagner and West's experiences in this regard reflect the often interstitial, if not peripheral, position anthropologists occupy in relation to governmental and company activities in the areas where they work. It is often their response to circumstances of this sort that sometimes stimulates research workers to become involved in consultancy work and to try to use their knowledge in a wider context.

Two studies deal with consultancy work for companies. Lorenzo Brutti gives a detailed delineation of his work for a gold mining company in the Strickland area of Sandaun province in PNG. Brutti analyzes both the switch in his position from a student-ethnographer working on his Ph.D. research to a temporary company employee carrying out a survey to the company's specifications, and the actual historical and cultural context of the changes the people were experiencing at the time. He also reports on how he managed to use positively his ethnographic training in order to mediate his new relationship to the people studied, while recognizing the ethical quandaries involved. In her essay, Martha Macintyre, who has carried out long-term consultancy work in more than one area for mining companies, reveals one of the analytical concerns which her work has uncovered: how the interaction between local people and company activities can produce gendered discourses in which men use neo-traditional versions of customary notions to legitimize their own access to company benefits and to place constraints on women's access to these new resources. In both Brutti's study and Macintyre's, then, we see closely observed historical instances of how custom becomes opportunistically reshaped and commodified in the context of development processes; a theme found widespread in the Pacific and elsewhere. The consultancy work brought these themes into high relief in the experiences of the anthropologists themselves.

More and more nowadays, anthropologists are finding themselves involved to one degree or another in consultancy work. Sometimes in fact they do this work for free for companies so as to try to better conditions of the people they work with, sometimes they do the work for free for the people they are working with who ask them to seek special audiences with company personnel

There are obviously ethical concerns involved in conducting both consultancy work and conducting anthropological research. There are also various practical difficulties in consultancy work, as demonstrated in this entire collection of essays. For example, anthropologists may not see eye to eye with the hosts. Governments or companies may place requirements on work that are not agreeable to the investigator. On the positive side, we may also argue that prior academic work can feed in well to consultancy work. The existing expertise of our contributors here undoubtedly informed and enriched their consultancy work. All of our contributors also see consultancy activities as a part of an overall reciprocity between

anthropologists and their host communities. This certainly does not mean that all anthropologists should have to do consultancy work if they do not want to undertake this. It does mean that those who undertake it see it at least partly as one way to make returns to a community or to benefit that community or the wider units to which its people belong.

Outside of consultancy anthropologists perhaps increasingly are called on to play collaborative roles. In our field areas, for example, we ourselves are frequently asked in a personal capacity to help people in their relations with government or business, thus being placed in the potential roles of mediators or brokers, roles that we are not always in fact empowered or equipped to play. In the part of the Hagen area of the Western Highlands Province of PNG where we work recent archaeological excavations of the Kuk swamp area following the earlier work by Professor Jack Golson and others, have overlapped with our own field visits in the same area where the archaeological work has been carried out. As a further development, there has been a drive by some researchers to set up this area as a World Heritage site with UNESCO. We have been approached on various sides, informally and on a personal basis without being employed as consultants, to act as mediators, advisors, or negotiators in this whole enterprise. This has happened while we were conducting our own independent research in the same local area among the Kawelka people. Those who approached us were both nationals and expatriates specifically involved in the project. We have tried to respond to these requests, particularly for background advice, without becoming directly involved, since to do so would unduly complicate the picture of “stakeholders” in the issues and would also result in heavy pressures to deliver results far beyond our capacities. The way in which we have mediated the difficulties involved has been to put a good deal of initiative and energy into producing or contributing to academic publications (Stewart and Strathern 1998, 2002; Strathern and Stewart 1998, n.d.). The collection of essays that we edited entitled “Kuk Heritage: Issues and Debates in New Guinea” included essays from several Papua New Guineans working at the PNG National Museum who were involved in the Kuk project at one level or another as well as contributions from others who had been working in the Kuk area or had an interest in the Kuk project. We have also, at the request of one of the land-holders, re-written and re-illustrated a version of his own life-history along with other ethnohistorical texts and a set of historical discussions of their wider context, also as a way of providing further information on the area. Our effort has therefore been directed toward making a return in an arena where we are independently working as opposed to involvement in arenas where we are not since we have not been employed in any capacity by those involved (Strathern and Stewart 2000).

Given the sense of an ethical imperative with regard to reciprocity, some anthropologists who have specifically switched to consultancy work have also experienced difficulties, contradictions, and ambivalences in

relation to this work. These difficulties have challenged the anthropologists in some cases productively to work through the analytical problems at issue in relation to the terms of reference set for them by sponsors. Marta Rohatynskyj, for instance, was required to investigate “minor ethnic groups” in relation to the dominant group of the Tolai in East New Britain Province in PNG. This formulation stimulated her to rethink the concept of ethnicity involved. Couching her remarks in the language of George Marcus, she writes: “In my struggle to fulfill the terms of reference to the satisfaction of the sponsors, I was forced to confront the limitations of a realist ethnography based on primordial identities, in favor of a multi-locale perspective amenable to a modernist treatment.” She came to see the problem along the situational, historical lines advocated by many scholars working on ethnicity today (e.g. Eriksen 1993). In practical terms, a certain ambivalence remained. Treating the people studied, the Baining, as a minority group might give them an advantageous special status, but it could also, she saw, rob them “of the generally held rights of other citizens”. In attempting to forestall this possible result she recommended a policy approach based on an inclusive category of “citizens of the province”. Rohatynskyj’s narrative of her problems and reflections on them turns into an illuminating retrospective on history and on the anthropologist’s ongoing roles within history; on the need to move with the times and to both relativize and respect the essentialisms that people throw out in a strategic search for identity.

Richard Scaglioni’s essay shows us another impressive effort to mediate, in this instance between his new role as a government bureaucratic officer and his earlier one as an “independent” anthropologist in the field. Scaglioni had the important job of fashioning a program of research on customary law to support the move toward Village Courts in PNG after Independence came in 1975. He was in charge of a team of local research workers, whom he also had to train for their tasks. He had the opportunity to apply his own “modernist” view of customary law; that is, to stress the importance of “procedural law—the processes by which disputes were actually resolved—rather than substantive law—the ‘rules’ that most Melanesians seemed to lack but that the lawyers seemed to think were so important”. Scaglioni was thus placed as an anthropologist among lawyers in the capital city of Port Moresby, while to the village people he studied he became an important point of possible access to the power and wealth of the capital, a patron-figure instead of being simply a friend. He was faced with the objectifying practices of both his colleagues in the Law Reform Commission and, in the longer run, villagers themselves in PNG who, when confronted with questions about their customs and the legal recognition of these, tend to re-essentialize themselves in order to acquire standing in a new bureaucratic and political world of identities: much as Rohatynskyj found in East New Britain. Scaglioni found in general that his post brought with it many pressures he had not experienced before. He

became annoyed with fellow-anthropologists who were better at pointing out problems than coming up with solutions (a complaint that colonial government officers frequently used to make in general, questioning what was the use of anthropological information for their purposes). Scaglione had to deal with demands for policy solutions, and he found himself at times in disagreement with draft legislation the Commission was proposing, for example, against the practice of “excessive compensation” payments for offenses. In regard to this issue he took the tack we also later took in relation to the Kuk heritage issues: he pulled together and edited a volume of contributions in which anthropologists argued that making too rigid a set of rules would stifle the adaptive dynamism of indigenous processes of settlement. The bill was accordingly modified. The issue, incidentally, continues, now often transmogrified into claims against the State of Papua New Guinea by local groups (see Stewart and Strathern 1998). Like Rohatynskyj’s study, Scaglione’s account is both a narrative of an interesting set of role changes and itself an analysis of historical changes at national and local levels in PNG. Their essays amply show, as do the others, that an auto-ethnography of consultancy leads outward into the world of anthropology and history in general.

The two essays by Wagner and West constitute a kind of *Intermezzo*. They follow a different pathway or theme, playing like a melody that intersects with another. They also, in so doing, reveal a new arena of ethnography, the ethnography of the NGO. It is a narrative, again in modernist vein. NGOs have entered the scene in PNG and elsewhere to provide enlightened action on behalf of local communities in post-colonial contexts. Their workers genuinely profess to assist local people to attain their goals. At the same time they are organizations with their own imperatives, one of which is to obtain funding. Like churches seeking funds from congregations back home for their activities, they set up a discourse of fund-raising that depends on a certain stereotyping of the people they work with. In an acutely observed and argued essay, Paige West draws attention to this discursive practice and shows how it ran counter to her own ways of perceiving and studying the Gimi. Interestingly, perhaps inevitably, her study also turns on a question of identity. The conservationist NGO in her area was committed to a view that Gimi identity was or should be rooted in a primordial past and that contemporary people who no longer practiced the old customs were “not Gimi”. West situates her own work and approach in the focus on connections between local sites and global processes, to which, again, Marcus and Fischer have contributed (Marcus 1998; Marcus and Fischer 1999). She therefore expected to look at awkwardly competing representations of the kind she actually encountered. She does not relativize these observations, however; instead she analyzes the NGO’s production of stereotypes as one that misrepresents the people. She recognizes that this made her work unpopular with the NGO’s workers themselves. Her implication is perhaps that for consultants there

is always the danger of adopting or falling into such motivated forms of stereotyping. And yet the people themselves often, at a certain point, self-objectify in similar ways, making their own stereotypes in order to advance their own interests. West poses a difficult question. Can we write in ways that both counter other discursive productions and at the same time avoid deconstructing the people we write about “to the point of powerlessness?”

John Wagner’s study is a sharply etched account of the actual historical trajectory of an NGO and of why its efforts failed. Wagner’s argument in many ways follows on from that of West, pursuing it further into the realm of praxis. He asks why the Kamiali conservation project was shut down, and answers that it was not grounded well enough in the actual institutions of local communities. In other words, incomplete ethnography can have real-world results in the context of development activities. This reinforces the point of the importance that anthropologists feel attaches to their own work as consultants. Wagner also stresses that conservation projects make biodiversity a kind of resource in itself, to which they claim custodial rights. This again sets up a problem of control and participation. The local people are unlikely to see the matter in the way the NGO personnel do. They may see NGO personnel as acting in a self-interested way, even though these personnel say they are there only to help the villagers. The parallel with perceptions of colonial officials is clear. For consultancy work this is another cautionary tale. It would be interesting to know what responses NGOs would make to these ethnographic accounts of their work. Surely some anthropologists have worked as consultants for NGOs and will know the issues from that perspective.

The case of the NGOs bridges over from that of government to the case of consultancy for companies, organizations explicitly and clearly, rather than implicitly or ambiguously as in the case of NGOs, set up to benefit themselves. Lorenzo Brutti provides a detailed ethnography of his work for the Porgera Joint Venture company (PJV). The setting is fairly benign, for his task was to gather basic ethnographic data to determine how payments should be made to local people for the use of the Strickland river in PNG as a means of waste-disposal by PJV. PJV sponsored and paid for the study, but it was obviously in everyone’s interests to see that the study was carried out accurately. On the other hand, the prospect of payment must have influenced people’s narratives and it certainly led to demands for payments that would be adequate to share among numerous groups, as it did among the neighboring Duna people (see Stewart and Strathern 2002). Brutti was therefore in the thick of a local political situation and experienced its pressures accordingly. His position here paralleled to some degree that of Scaglione, although he was not a government bureaucrat. As an ethnographer, he felt he needed to explain to the company the “eco-cosmological” reasons why the water-use permit payments were very important. The study probably sharpened his knowledge of this cosmology and thus contributed to the deepening of his ethnographic knowledge. Among

the Duna we ourselves observed in 1999 an efflorescence of “myth-related” narratives and recitations of origin stories of groups that occurred in the context of a company drilling for oil at the Strickland river area (Stewart and Strathern 2002). Brutti further proposed ways in which the company should follow up the payments for water-use. Here he adopted an ethical role on behalf of the people, going beyond the remit of his sponsored study. We see him stepping back into the shoes of the anthropologist as local advocate. But he also acknowledges that the people saw him differently, and stepping back and forth between roles may not be so easy.

Brutti’s meticulous study and his ethical concerns are matched by Martha Macintyre’s essay on gender relations and development in the context of mining. Her findings resonate with the theme of self-objectification we have found in some of the other essays. In a powerfully argued presentation, she notes that men can be inventive in finding “customary” reasons why women should not share equally in job opportunities and benefits of development. Again, we find that consultancy work has pitched the anthropologist into a valuable but painful arena of observations, enriching the ethnographic experience and placing it into the heart of struggles for power. She writes, “While academics delight in the diversity and hybridity of Melanesian religious cults and practices, noting the imaginative blend of western, traditional, and global elements, communities struggle with the social disruption and internal conflicts they generate”. As consultants, anthropologists are drawn into the core of such conflicts. As fieldworkers they are also brought close to them. These encounters touch on an overlapping range of issues, dilemmas, and opportunities which Macintyre energetically explores.

We are happy to present these contributions to what we think is an important topic, the contested arena of anthropology and consultancy; not because we regard consultancy as a special domain of enquiry, different from others, but rather for the reverse reason, that issues which emerge through consultancy work speak in an urgent way to issues in anthropology at large. Equally, we think the studies presented here show that consultancy work and commentaries on it must be looked at in the light of anthropological theory and practice as a whole.

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