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**Articles**

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## FOREWORD

Yasmeen Arif

This issue of the WAN journal has been long overdue - however late, I am privileged to present this set of six papers in a forum with which I have associated myself with great pride and greater hope. My interaction with this journal and the WAN has been for almost a decade now, since I was a doctoral student at the Department of Social Anthropology at Delhi University, in India. Allowing myself a few lines at the very beginning, I would like a personal dedication to Arturo Escobar, our colleague, a gifted anthropologist and most of all, the rarest of all breeds – a generous scholar. Arturo and I have not met yet, however my association with him captures a bit of the WAN spirit and I shall not hesitate to express that here.

At the time of my first association with WAN, I was struggling to find a disciplinary place for my endeavors which involved an unlikely doctoral project that I ambitiously designed for myself. This project took me from Delhi, India to Beirut, Lebanon for my fieldwork with an intention of understanding what recovery implies in the everyday world of post-war urban conditions. That was not a journey easily transcribed in disciplinary routine as it entailed a fieldwork encounter between two locations that so far could only be thought of as ‘peripheries’ in the ubiquitous paradigm of the ‘center-periphery’; especially when ‘peripheral’ anthropologists were expected, willingly or otherwise, to be studying their own selves. Some of the issues that troubled me at the time found some clumsy expression in an essay that I was advised to send to Arturo. Almost a year later (it was a difficult year for Arturo), Arturo did not fail to reply and I was surprised and excited to receive, some very sensitive and encouraging comments and an invitation to publish in the second WAN journal issue. I have, with pride and commitment, retained that association. Thank you, Arturo.

This issue was intended as a volume that would collect a set of presentations made at a panel organized by Gustavo Ribeiro and myself at the IUAES Inter-Congress held in Antalya, Turkey, October 3-6, 2010. The panel was called “(Re)-Connecting Global and Local Anthropologies. Debating UNESCO’s World Social Science Report 2010 and the World Anthropologies Network” and was held on the 5th of October, 2010, as the closing event of the session “Globalization and Anthropology”. While some of those excellent presentations have found their way into this issue, I am happy to have two other contributors...both of whose work have a special place in the way I imagine the WAN intent to be. Faye Harrison is Professor of Anthropology and African American Studies based at the University of Florida and Vasundhara Bhojvaid is a PhD student of Social Anthropology at the University of Delhi. Both essays, along side the others (as I introduce below), suggest that the struggle for a meaningful re-orientation of anthropological knowledge production practices in inclusive ways does not chart a static map. In fact, the dilemmas, the challenges are yet embedded in the ‘centers’ (Harrison) as much as they are in the changing horizons of the ‘peripheries’ (Bhojvaid). The compelling WAN intent remains – the goal is not about mapping an alternate cartography (or creating dubious labels like the “global – south”); nor is it to pre-empt hegemony to locations of centrality (in other words, recognize struggles both within the centers or peripheries). Rather, the need is to reveal the inequities that any practice of knowledge production, whether disciplinary or bureaucratic, epistemological or locational, support. Further, criticism alone is not sufficient – the force of argument must lie in the innovative potential that can be harvested from understanding the challenge in all its fullness.

While each essay speaks for its own engagement with the politics of knowledge production within (and rapidly moving out of) the disciplinary contours of anthropology, I frame them in three pairs. First, the demand for innovation is addressed by Gustavo Lins Ribeiro’s and my own contribution. I note here a valuable practical consideration that Ribeiro channels through his earlier conceptual formulation of ‘cosmopolitics’ (Ribeiro 2006). Following his notion that anthropologists undertake their work, not just in disciplinary terms of inclusiveness, but rather, in more active political work, he urges that difference and diversity be taken beyond its ironic encapsulation in metropolitan hegemonies of appropriation. His suggestion is to actively build organizational support for WAN (World Anthropologies Network) or the WCAA (World Council of Anthropological

Associations) so as to enable a larger, different and diverse network of anthropologists which may yet provide the forum for a new politics of knowledge production. This, indeed, would be a keener understanding of what diverse does mean in anthropological work; how the persistence of English persuades us to re-examine diversity and difference and how we could think of accommodating that diversity in equitable language practices. In so far that anthropological method articulates a disciplinary practice, my own contribution in this issue hopes to suggest a methodological innovation. By attempting ethnographic or empirical encounters between locations that deny any former anthropological cartography, for instance, north vs. south, metropolitan vs. periphery, self vs. other, I propose a way of allowing emergent encounters that enable the empirical meeting of locations through connections of resonance and association. I connect Delhi and Beirut through an exploration of the idea of 'recovery' after crises and show how such encounters could entail an epistemological politics.

Petr Skalnik and Vasundhara Bhojvaid both deal with researching the state, but from separate anthropological moments that measure the changing terrain of anthropological research on the 'state'. First, Skalnik explores the question of how the conceptualization of the 'state' is so much a product of actual state presence in research activity - wonderfully illustrated by his personal trajectory of studying the state (in Africa) within and outside communist regimes. This does seem to throw up an interesting 'dilemma' about our grounds of doing anthropology - in the collapse between the merging of the conditions of study and the object of study - and its place in the politics of making knowledge. In another way, Skalnik's sensitive essay tells us about what challenges 'peripheral' disciplinary practices hold within themselves, especially when the stake is the formulation of a critique to dominant state theory. Bhojvaid studies the state, but from another moment in anthropological endeavor - the study of Europe by an Indian student of social anthropology - a reversed gaze of sorts. Her work in researching a legal domain that has similar resonances in both India and Denmark, show what horizons of practice open up - first, when the classical tradition of field work come to be reversed - How does the object of study come to be formed in this new equation? Second, what do such reversals (India studying Denmark) allow in the understanding of an anthropology of the state? Especially, when the reversal enables a conversation on a common ground (in this case, a law

regarding state transparency) between locations that would have otherwise remained separate as incommensurable contexts.

Faye Harrison and Alcida Ramos both bring poignantly personal, yet, compellingly relevant experiences to their essays. Harrison writes about the peripheralization, heirarchization and often, the negation and silencing of those (in her emphasis, the AfroDiaspora) whose profound presence in knowledge making was systematically removed from the discipline's memory. But, Harrison does not call for a mere inclusion of these erased voices as a nod towards the fashionable trend of ethnic inclusions in the metropole. She traces her own work and career to suggest the singular importance of understanding the implications of, in her words – 'interlocking dimensions of difference, inequality, and power' – that permeate the business of doing anthropology, however our locations, our bodies, our identities are placed. The last essay by Ramos echoes this theme, but takes us into a literary metaphor – an imagination of a utopia, a dream 'Cosmanthropolis' - that captures in expressive eloquence the pathos that our discipline circumvents in maintaining its authority and power over indigenous knowledge. Through this metaphor, she urges us to look closely at the wily manipulations hiding in the metropole under the alleged inclusions of 'difference' and commits herself to paving the path towards the possible anthropological utopia glimmering in the WAN.

I thank Marisol de la Cadena, Gustavo Ribeiro, Suzana Narotzky and Sandy Toussaint for their invitation to edit this issue. Without Eduardo Restrepo's masterful skills in delivering these writings, this journal would remain only an aspiration. Last, but with the deepest of sentiment, I thank all the contributors for their patience in bearing with me the unavoidable delay of this issue. In a continuous struggle to bring those ideas that mainstream academe look upon askance, this WAN issue is another step forward.

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## THE PROBLEM OF HEGEMONY, FLOWS AND EQUITY IN WORLD ANTHROPOLOGIES

Gustavo Lins Ribeiro

### Hegemony

In the year of 1982, the Swedish journal *Ethnos* published an issue, edited by Thomas Gerholm and Ulf Hannerz, dedicated to debating “national anthropologies.” A critical standpoint about the global anthropological scenario was implicit in a metaphor Gerholm and Hannerz (1982) coined in the introduction to the volume. According to them, world anthropologies were an archipelago in which “national anthropologies” were islands that kept no communication among them but had bridges with “international anthropologies” located in the mainland. In the rare occasions some of the islands communicated with each other, they did so via the mainland.

An approach highly concerned with power imbalances was soon to develop. Gerholm himself, in 1995, mentioned the existence of central and peripheral anthropologies and coined the notion of a “world system of anthropology.” Mexican anthropologist Esteban Krotz (1997) wrote about “anthropologies of the South” while Brazilian anthropologist, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (1999/2000) also discussed peripheral anthropologies and underscored the problem of mutual ignorance among them. Japanese anthropologist Takami Kuwayama, in 2004, argued that the United States, Great Britain and, to a lesser extent, France constituted the core of the world system of anthropology. He wrote:

Simply put, the world system of anthropology defines the politics involved in the production, dissemination, and consumption of knowledge about other peoples and cultures. Influential scholars in the core countries are in a position to decide what kinds of knowledge should be given authority and merit attention. The peer-review system at



prestigious journals reinforces this structure. Thus, knowledge produced in the periphery, however significant and valuable, is destined to be buried locally unless it meets the standards and expectations of the core. (2004: 9–10).

Indeed, anthropologists are aware that the production and dissemination of the discipline happen within unequal power conditions structured by national and global forces. I want to explore this inequality within the “world system of anthropology” rather than within the nation-state level.

Anthropology as a discipline globalized itself in the last 30 years. Whatever the peculiarities of the indigenization of universities and of the disciplines that travelled along with them, the growth of anthropology departments around the world caused a major change of the demographics of the global population of anthropologists. In 1982, Fahim pointed out that anthropologists outside of the core of anthropological production represented a “relatively small portion of the world-wide community of anthropologists” (1982a: 150-151). This is no longer the case. There are more anthropologists working outside the hegemonic centers than the other way around.

The growth of the numbers of practitioners in all continents generated interesting and apparently contradictory results. On the one hand, it allowed for an increase in the worldwide consumption of the literature and theories produced by hegemonic anthropologies. It also allowed for an increase in the quantity of foreign professors, ironically called “ethnic intellectuals” by Ahmad, who are working for American and British universities as well as a consolidated global academic regime (Chun, 2008). Brain drain notwithstanding, this sort of emergent global academic labor market seems to imply an assessment of the professional quality of the anthropologists involved in which the only imperial center would be the Anglo-Saxon academic world.

There is a need to go beyond the usual approach that looks at the institutional disparities within the world system of anthropology in order to try to understand how hegemony is constructed within our discipline. Hegemony is the silent mode of exerting power that counts on the active consent of the dominated. In the academic world, admiration and scholarship play a central role and they may be the basis upon which academic genealogies and myths are built. Many of these genealogies and myths are taken in different countries to constitute the social foundation of what is taught as the anthropological classics. Nothing wrong

with this if most graduate courses in different countries outside of the hegemonic core included among the mandatory classic readings indigenous researchers. Aren't there Brazilian anthropologists who deserve to be read in Brazil (and elsewhere) as great contributors to anthropological knowledge? What I am aiming at is to say that most scholars outside the hegemonic centers accept their hegemony and reproduce it.

Hegemony speaks English on the global level. Irina Bokova (2010: iii), Director General of UNESCO, considers, in a foreword of the 2010 World Social Science Report, that "social scientific endeavor is also poorer for its bias towards English and English-speaking developed countries. This is a missed opportunity to explore perspectives and paradigms that are embedded in other cultural and linguistic traditions." It is clear that those colleagues who are native of the English language and work in an English-speaking country have an advantage over those who are natives of the Japanese or Russian languages, for instance. We can suppose that the relative loss of global importance of French anthropology may be a result of the relative loss of importance of French as a global language.

Can we de-"babelize" anthropology? In a sense, and this is true for all academic disciplines, de-babelization is already happening with the role that English plays as the global language. It is a linguistic paradox: to talk about diversity we need to use a same and common language. It is also something that could be dubbed the linguistic pragmatism of global communication which is historically and sociologically structured. Unless, in a futurist vein, we can count on a universal translating machine, we need a single language in order to communicate across all linguistic barriers. Does this mean, on the international level, the end of the importance of all other languages which cannot compete with English as means of academic communication? I don't think so. Here strong regional languages, such as Spanish, in Latin America, will continue to play an important role. On the national level of integration, major languages, in countries where there are large and consolidated scientific communities, such as in China, Japan, Russia, France, Germany and Brazil, will also continue to play an important role. For each of one of us, all this means that being a polyglot is a most welcome skill, if not a necessary one, to engage in cosmopolitan communities of communication.

While the linguistic monotony of the global scientific scenario is increasingly acknowledged as a major problem there are few solutions offered so far. UNESCO itself could think of an

electronic international journal that would be a clearing house of articles already published in major social science journals of the world.

## **Flows**

In the beginning of anthropology's global expansion, the flow of a few scholars from the centers was crucial for the establishment of national initiatives and international networks. Indeed, many of these global pioneers (un-)wittingly played the role of founding fathers in different scenarios. The sociological implications of the globalization of anthropology certainly indicate the presence of powerful centralizing forces rather than a move towards a decentered and more equalized distribution of visibility and influence in world anthropology. But the awareness of a hyper centralization triggers a need to surpass it. Furthermore, the outnumbering of hegemonic anthropologists by non-hegemonic ones has other impacts. It generated, for instance, a series of heterodox alliances, networks and scholarly exchanges. All this was made possible by an increased time-space compression which made international trips more common, international phone calls cheaper and, more importantly, generated the most far-reaching tool of academic communication today: the internet. If in the early 1980's, within the anthropological archipelago, communication among "national anthropologies" had to go through the mainland where the hegemonic anthropologies were located, today this is not really necessary. The internet has prompted a multifarious virtual public space at the disposal of all anthropologists anywhere. At the same time, new political ideologies that were soon to be globalized from the hegemonic centers, especially from the U.S., strengthened tolerance for multicultural politics and identity politics. Cultural diversity and respect for otherness became major values in daily institutional life and in politics. This is the right juncture to try to do something different.

## **Inequality and Politics**

Politics is a keyword here. As we know, sociological changes need to be accompanied by political thought and action if we want some trends to develop in the right direction. And this is exactly what happened with the world anthropologies project, a political project that Eduardo Restrepo and Arturo Escobar summarize in this way:

rather than assuming that there is a privileged

position from which a ‘real anthropology’ (in the singular) can be produced and in relation to which all other anthropologies would define themselves, ‘world anthropologies’ seeks to take seriously the multiple and contradictory historical, social, cultural and political locatedness of the different communities of anthropologists and their anthropologies. (2005: 100).

If anthropologists have made efforts to contribute to the building of national imagined communities that are more democratic and open to difference, they can likewise make efforts to contribute to the construction of other kinds of imagined communities, including international and transnational ones, where pluralistic integration can be an explicit political goal. Indeed, we need to be proactive in all levels of integration.

I don’t see why we shouldn’t strive to attain this goal within our own community, within the global community of anthropologists. In order to do it, we anthropologists, like any other political actor that may have a clout in the political realm beyond the nation-state, have to recognize the peculiarities of our insertions in local, regional, national, international and transnational levels of integration and act upon them. My claim is not that we forget the importance of acting on the local, regional and national levels, but that we clearly add a supranational dimension to our academic and political responsibilities. This task is facilitated by the fact that anthropologists are prone to believe in universal categories and are firm believers in the role of diversity in the enhancement of human inventiveness and conviviality.

But we need to go beyond what Benoît de l’Estoile (2008) calls the “gravitational power” of “hegemonic internationalization” that attracts everyone to the center of the discipline, i.e., the United States. Even those anthropologists that have no interest in the international dynamics of the discipline are supposed to read the mainstream international literature of the day, something that most of the time amounts to reading the production of hegemonic centers. Publications are also subject to the gravitational power of hegemonic internationalization and, even more sadly, their impacts are almost completely controlled by a single corporation, Thomson Reuters, the policy of which, also known as bibliometrics or “citation-based metrics”, reflects the dominance of English as a global language and creates a global hierarchy that is taken by governmental agencies and others to be an objective picture of the “who’s who” in science (see Brenneis 2008).

All anthropologists are inevitably part of an internationalized discipline, since they share some canons that are well-known and widely accepted everywhere. But more often than not, the dissemination of these canons are a result of the kind of imperial power of the academic center we have been criticizing because either it blocks the dissemination of other canons or promotes the dissemination of a few selected ones.

### **Cosmopolitics**

The plural integration of world anthropologies can be more easily achieved if we do not restrict ourselves to think of anthropology as a discipline and look at it as a cosmopolitics. In 2006, I wrote,

The notion of cosmopolitics seeks to provide a critical and plural perspective on the possibilities of supra - and transnational articulations. It is based, on the one hand, on the positive evocations historically associated with the notion of cosmopolitanism and, on the other hand, on analysis in which power asymmetries are of fundamental importance (On cosmopolitics, see Cheah and Robbins 1998, and Ribeiro 2003). Cosmopolitics comprises discourses and modes of doing politics that are concerned with their global reach and impact. I am particularly interested in cosmopolitics that are embedded in conflicts regarding the role of difference and diversity in the construction of polities. I view anthropology as a cosmopolitics about the structure of alterity (Krotz 1997) that pretends to be universal but that, at the same time, is highly sensitive to its own limitations and to the efficacy of other cosmopolitics" (Ribeiro 2006: 364 - 365)

Although anthropology is surely not only that, I consider it as a cosmopolitan political discourse about the importance of diversity for humankind. In the era of globalization cosmopolitics proliferate within and without the academic world, some of them in competition with anthropology. Is this a negative scenario for the future of anthropology? Quite the contrary, by looking at anthropology as cosmopolitics we immediately place it within a family of other discourses on alterity that pretend to have a planetary reach. In doing so, we are forced to admit a more pluralistic exchange among all modes of interpretation, and not only the academic ones, that wish to answer two quintessential

anthropological questions: why are we so different? Why are we so alike? These are basic questions that, I presume, have been raised since the first time human beings had to face people different from them. In a sense, we can say that all peoples have always produced spontaneous anthropological knowledge, to paraphrase Pierre Bourdieu. Our main issue would be to understand the equivalency and validity of all such formulations.

Looking at anthropology as a cosmopolitics also immediately places us in the realm of politics – tout court. This simple recognition impels us to act politically if we want to change the current state of affairs. And this is what many anthropologists organized around the World Anthropologies Network and the World Council of Anthropological Associations have been doing.

### **The WAN and the WCAA**

The fact that the WAN is made up of individuals gives it more political flexibility in comparison to the WCAA, a network of institutions. Both the WAN and the WCAA are openly directed to fostering pluralism in anthropology and are not “located” in the centers of the discipline. However, several colleagues that are driving forces behind these movements work in metropolitan centers and it is impossible not to mention the role that the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research has played in this universe (see Diaz Crovetto 2008, for the importance of the Wenner-Gren in this regard). This only shows how sensitive many anthropologists everywhere are to a project that aims at fostering diversity and heteroglossia.

The World Anthropologies Network started in 2001, has organized several sessions in different national and international congresses and publishes an electronic journal on its website ([www.ram-wan.net](http://www.ram-wan.net)). The WAN project attracted the attention of practitioners and students from all over the globe but a concentration of Latin American scholars is noticeable. This certainly reflects the fact that several Latin Americans are involved with the creation and maintenance of the network from the beginning, something that has made Spanish a highly present language in the network and in its electronic journal. The World Anthropologies Network relies on voluntary and collective work of anthropologists from different continents. The interaction is facilitated by the internet but also by the political and ideological affinities of its members who sometimes meet in real public space to cooperate in related projects.

The foundation of the WCAA was itself a result of a Wenner-Gren sponsored international meeting that happened in Recife, Brazil, in June 2004, a few days before the 24th Biannual Meeting of the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA). It brought together representatives from 14 national and international anthropological organizations (see its founding agreement in [www.wcaanet.org](http://www.wcaanet.org)). A second WCAA meeting was held in 2008 in Osaka, Japan. The WCAA has promoted several sessions and debates in national and international meetings in Argentina, Brazil, England, the United States, South Africa, Portugal, Slovenia and Japan. Issues such as the public image of anthropology and the need to change the global flows of anthropological knowledge have been debated in these sessions. The World Council has grown steadily and, in June 2009, it was made up of 26 members.

Both the WAN and the WCAA define themselves as networks and do not claim to be organizations or institutions of any kind. The flexibility of the network format seems to fit the needs of international politics. Both initiatives should be understood in an environment in which national forces and hegemonic internationalism are highly effective. I fully agree with de l'Estoile when he states that:

In many ways [...] pluralistic internationalization is much more difficult to achieve than the juxtaposition of national differences of hegemonic internationalization, because it involves ideally both the respect for local specificities and the creation of a *common ground* where a more equal exchange may take place. To achieve this, meeting grounds and forums of discussion have to be so devised as to favor communication over barriers that are not only linguistic, but also cultural, economic and social. In fact, translating utopia into practice involves a form of intellectual activism which demands great effort, while it is much easier to follow routine procedures. (2008: 124).

The effectiveness of pluralism is a power issue. It entails problems that are typical of constituency enlargement. How do we construct broader and more inclusive political bodies? Who are the representatives of the excluded actors? Who are the new brokers/interlocutors and which are their interests? Just to name a few of the political problems that may arise.

Leadership and institutional efficacy are two major ones. Both the World Anthropologies Network and the World Council of Anthropological Associations exist because of the leadership of several colleagues who donate their time and imagination to a project they believe in. We can only thank them for their valuable effort. But one problem with relying on voluntary work on the international level refers to the power of structuration of the other levels of integration. Most of the leaders of the world anthropologies project are heavily involved with local and national demands that already consume a great part – if not all – of their time and energies. In sum, to participate in supranational initiatives quite often means an extra-load of work for an already overworked group of professionals. Indeed, the organizational problems to be tackled with are time and resource consuming especially when institutions are involved, which is the case of the World Council of Anthropological Associations. Consider, for instance, the costs of convening more than 30 representatives of associations from different countries. They periodically need to meet each other in face-to-face encounters in order to build more solid personal, social and political ties.

These problems occur in a milieu that has a serious organizational dearth. Only a handful of national associations are strong enough to hire staff, publish books or journals, organize conferences and do advocacy work. Our only international organization, the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, is basically dedicated to organizing a world congress every five years and is in need of a serious reform in its constitution and goals. Sister organizations such as the International Sociological Association may be a source of inspiration for those who believe that a stronger institutional presence on the global level can be attained.

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## EMERGENT ENCOUNTERS TOWARDS A POLITICS OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Yasmeen Arif

There is no end to the project of universal history, only the infinity of connecting links and if these are to be connected without domination, links will need to be lateral, additive, syncretic rather than synthetic. The project of universal history does not come to an end, it begins again, somewhere else.

Susan Buck-Morss (2009)

Wat joyful news, Miss Mattie,  
I feel like me heart gwine burs  
Jamaica people colonizin  
Englan in Reverse

Be the hundred, be de tousan  
Fro country and from town,  
By de ship-load, be the plane load  
Jamaica is Englan boun.

Dem pour out a Jamaica,  
Everybody future plan  
Is fe get a big-time job  
An settle in de mother lan.

What an islan! What a people!  
Man an woman, old an young  
Jus a pack dem bag an baggage  
An turn history upside dung!

Louise Bennet (1996)



Critique, crises and re-invention in social and cultural anthropology have punctuated a dramatic disciplinary history which traverses the distance from the seemingly insurmountable follies of colonial hegemony to the perplexing dilemmas of multiple indigeneity. In this narrative, the 'contemporary' provides another intriguing turn in the quest for anthropological renewal. This time, it acquiesces to both – the metanarrative of the global and the insistence of the local. The challenge now is to achieve an engagement with both simultaneously, yet remain radical enough not to repeat the past.

Two distinct, powerful recent trends in this are, first, a recognition that the relationship between assertions of the global and negotiations of the local manifest 'emergent forms of life' (following M. J. Fischer 2003, 2005, 2009; Maurer 2005) especially evident in the terrains of techno-cultures, bio-sciences, environmental ecologies, media and communication industries – terrains that demand re-orientations of anthropological method and epistemology. Second, an acknowledgement that the hierarchies of the center-periphery kind inherent in anthropological knowledge production demand 'disciplinary transformations' that would be more sensitive not just to epistemologies outside the discipline or the academe but to those articulated from locations outside the centers – thus, 'other anthropologies/anthropology otherwise' (following Escobar and Restrepo 2005, Escobar and Ribeiro 2006). The path towards recognizing emergent forms of life or inherent hegemonies in anthropology carry distinct strands of earlier critiques – critiques which have indeed had the intent of turning history 'upside down'. The turbulence faced in many critical turning points were, in many ways, echoes of the complex inequity rooted in the colonial origins of anthropology as a discipline that followed the power and knowledge mechanisms of ascendant empire. The consequent postcolonial backlash or in another way, the natives writing back secured a prized place for the recognition of multiplicity and more crucially, autonomy of the multiple. A tremendous follow up has been the reflexive turn in anthropology, sometimes called the postmodern or deconstructive moment, and better known as the 'crisis of representation'. Producing ethnographic texts was no longer the unproblematic product of authoritative, rational or realist fieldwork and writing largely anchored in the metropolitan ego; rather, it was an epistemological exercise that had to lay bare the subjective, reflexive conditions of writing by the anthropologist on one hand and on the other, the politics/poiesis of negotiating and representing

the authentic voices and expressions of those about whom the writing and representation was being done.

In both trends above, there is an embedded politics of epistemology, yet neither successfully displaces the solipsistic centrality of the west in the critique of concept or in the reformulation of method. The project that the following arguments undertake is the proposition of a politics of epistemology, but through perspectives developed elsewhere and ‘otherwise’. This is neither a call for opposition and reclamation, nor is it a claim to authenticity and authority, but a proposition that learns from either in order to suggest a *methodological* innovation that abides by the foundations of anthropological method – fieldwork and ethnography. In keeping with those foundations, my principle motif here is the concept, method and practice of fashioning emerging *encounters*, especially hitherto untapped ones - which can provide the basis for another epistemology. In a nutshell, I argue that the force of these emerging encounters and their potential in epistemological innovation lie in the mappings, the connections or the associations they enact. The propositions are - what if the idea of the anthropological encounter is brought back to center focus again, but this time re-imagined in and as a multiverse<sup>1</sup> of possible connections methodologically initiated and epistemologically energized by logics of compatibility and resonance, between and among unconnected sites, locations and people which have been so far trapped either in imperial classifications or in epistemological orientations of academic locations, disciplinary boundaries, empiricism or theory? Can these encounters be recast away from conventional polarities of center/periphery, north/south, west/rest, self/other or even, intra or inter disciplinary, academic/nonacademic - in ways that are historically informed and critically relevant so that they do not lose sight of existing inequities yet gain epistemological potential? What would be this potential and what could it effectively achieve in not just the anthropological pursuit but in a more generic sense, in constituting ways of knowing.

## 1

Amitav Ghosh (2002) tells the story of an encounter between an Egyptian Imam and an Indian anthropologist in Egypt, when the

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1 Anchored in theoretical astrophysics, the metaphor of the multiverse I draw here refers to the base notion that contrary to the notion of a single ever expanding *uni*-verse, there are simultaneously developing universes - thus, *multi*-verse.

Indian (Ghosh himself), predictably in pursuit of tradition asks the Imam about his herbs and potions. The Imam's 'traditions' are no longer as much in demand in the village and his somewhat depleted position makes him retort sharply to the Indian that surely his own culture has enough of herbs and traditions, so why does he not go and study those. The Imam and the Indian meet again and the Imam by now is armed with stories of how Indians burn their dead (instead of burying as the Muslims in Egypt do) and worship cows. He uses this knowledge to confront and ridicule the Indian accusing his culture of being primitive and savage, saying

[...] You've been to the west; you've see how advanced they are. Now tell me: have you ever seen them burning their dead. They don't burn their dead in the West. They're not ignorant people. They are advanced, they're educated, they have science, and the have guns and tanks and bombs. (Ghosh 2002: 11).

In retort, the Indian shouts back that they too have bombs and guns and tanks, much better and ahead of the Egyptians. Ghosh then, concludes, "So there we were, the Imam and I, delegates from two superseded civilizations vying to lay claim to the violence of the West... We were both traveling, he and I: we were traveling in the west" (2002:11). David Scott interlocutes this story to make the following comment,

[...] what I want to notice is the way the imaginary West interrupts and mediates the intersection (or collision) of postcolonial identities and histories. The history of colonialism and neocolonialism is probably such that this is inevitable – two pathetic figures invoking the imaginary west under the fabled light of an Eastern sky. (Scott 1989: 83).

Can there be a meeting of such 'pathetic' peripherals, where their encounter does not perforce invoke the west? My arguments in this essay grow out of such an encounter of peripherals - my doctoral fieldwork in Beirut, Lebanon as a student of from the Department of Sociology, Delhi University, India, when I pursued issues and questions in relation to post-war recovery strategies, covering nuances of both formal reconstruction and informal coping. I have since conducted fieldwork in Delhi, India where I have again developed this theme of recovery in the lives of survivors of a communal massacre. Building up from these ethnographic foundations, my current work is an expansion from

local motifs into larger theoretical and empirical issues about how recovered life comes to be constituted in the interstices of aid and affect. I have now extended my list of events to include nuances from Hurricane Katrina in the United States; the South Asian Tsunami alongside my own ethnographic documentations of India and Lebanon. Although my initial encounter can be called one between postcolonial spaces, I emphasize that I do not chase the connection between postcolonial locations as much as I recognize the potential of that interconnection, and draw from it the epistemological possibility of other resonant interconnections.

These resonant connections are ones which, I suggest, can veer away from a solipsistic positioning of the west in debates on epistemological privilege and legitimacy. The presence of the west, in authoring critique or claiming epistemic privilege is a well fought out turf and my attempt to formulate a methodological alternate is not to seek an opposition to the west (in another way, the metropolitan centers), which I understand to be a misguided task, but rather to discover and invent ways in which the invoking of the west becomes less of a dominant mediation. Furthermore, the intent is to see how ethnographic and fieldwork re-mappings can make actual the kind of epistemological re-routing required to make viable the reach from the particular to the global (sometimes also called meta-narratives) without necessarily reiterating western privilege. There are two distinct ways in which this mediation/privilege is already under interrogation, displacement and critique in anthropology. The first, of course, is that the empirical necessity of emergent forms of anthropological life demand analytical deliberations that have left behind the mappings of center – periphery idioms, but rather work through interlinked, networked, collaborative circulatory movements across the globe. The second is the epistemological desire that goes beyond the postcolonial triumphs of multiplicity and heterogeneity on one hand and autonomy, authority and authenticity on the other to produce anthropological knowledge that is properly global and yet local without losing the postcolonial, post-oriental or post-occidental inscriptions that instigate this desire.

Analytical and practical configurations in anthropology have indeed tried to do away with binarisms of the center-periphery sort, or, have also remapped research locations into multi-sited ethnographies – as M.J. Fischer states,

The original notion of a “multisited” or “multi-local” ethnography [...] was called forth by the challenges of comparative, cross-cultural and polycentric analyses of phenomena. These were

not only distributed spatially [...] but also vertically. Anthropology has long since given up the perspective of binary logic (us - them, civilized - primitive, Europe - the rest, Christian - savage, developed - underdeveloped) which constantly scan for difference, multiple voices and knowledge sets. This linguistically and sociologically attentive cross-cultural perspective of anthropology prepared the ethnographic method to scan for differences among occupation, expert, civic, consumer, entertainment and educational cultures (not merely, national, religious or ethnic ones). (2005: 60)

This meant not just that the anthropological imagination encompassed a variety of empirical locations, various agencies and syntaxes of articulation, but also that multiple disciplines and genres came to influence the concepts and objects of enquiry as well as their conduct in method and analysis. However, what multi-sited approaches pre-empted was the recognition that anthropological attention and method had to adapt to conditions of life and the possibilities of research where all formulations of location or context, dispersal or circulation, consumption or production, would in effect, completely realign the kinds of relationships or connectivities that the constituents of a field or concern could substantiate. Some compelling aspects among these are media, communication and information technologies; technocultures, biosciences and medical knowledges; ecological and environmental concerns; or massive upheavals in transnational movements like displacement or migration; or complete societal reformulations and reconstructions in societies undergoing sustained violence, civil wars or various catastrophes, natural or otherwise.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of such crucial recognitions, it is yet unclear how much success has indeed been achieved in tracing epistemological dispersals in theory making or even, in acknowledging that theory is not always a top – down flow (inevitably with the North at the top), especially when the subject areas are not those of emergent biotechnologies or technocultures which demand conscious collaboration, often across sites of expert knowledge

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2 These are by no means exhaustive new arenas of anthropological interest. I am following, roughly the list that Michael M.J. Fischer (2003) suggests in his “Emergent forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice.”

or multiple practices as well as political needs and ethical negotiations. Moreover, the legitimate sources of 'anthropological' knowledge continue its location in metropolises – however far away the collaborative ventures may have gone. In another way, how much have the erstwhile peripheries embraced this doing away of binarisms, in concept, method or practice, or, in intent and potential to reverse the gaze from the local outwards or even, in acknowledging their part in larger networks?

To rephrase Scott's concern above in this context then is to ask why is it that when the post-colony is so much of a paradigm, both ideological and epistemological, the same concerns of ideology and epistemology are rarely placed in the spaces that occur between postcolonials – or for that matter between and among locations that resonate such potentially connectible cartographies. In the contemporary present of an alleged new world, should dominant anthropologies continue to be the defining myth of origin that secure a relationship of power and inequity amongst the various loci of anthropological knowledge production? The obvious hegemonic enterprise of the colonial encounter and of the knowledge produced thereby; the subsequent postcolonial criticism that reclaimed the native/peripheral voice - are all well acknowledged discourses, critiques and revisions in the story that the history of anthropology has so far narrated. However, could an anthropology conducted through individual encounters which consciously reject the labels that constrain each (center/periphery, self/other etc.), but rather sculpt each encounter through its own trajectory of mutual discovery, fashion an alternate, perhaps another epistemology? Could this become possible especially because they are between centers and peripheries, or intra-center and intra-periphery, initiated from and to any which direction; because their encounter has been accessed through a belief in idiosyncrasies not contrarities, through dialogue not insularity, through complementariness rather than incompatibilities and most of all, through intentional equitability rather than hierarchy.

## 2

In many ways, one sense of the contemporary could be the common condition which simply stated implies that localized ways of living, the heterogeneous and the multiple are connected to larger and expanding discursive universes as well as intra - connected within themselves in their local, cultural or institutional practices. In another way, seemingly general and 'universal' discourses in turn manifest constant negotiation with the local or

the particular. For the pursuit of anthropology, this contemporary ontology of global connectivity and local interface is also about the likely emergence of new forms of socialities, ethics and politics, economics and practices that need apprehension through appropriate ethnographic method and fieldwork.

As I formulate my arguments in the following, I draw on the notion of contemporary emergence sketched above and argue that such a connection can, paradigmatically, lead to 'emergent encounters'. It is, first of all, a response to the notion that in the dominant anthropological critiques of the day, while the intent is to craft appropriate objects and tools of enquiry which also destabilize epistemic and authorial privileges, there is yet an inadequate expression of a politics of epistemology. To reiterate, my proposals here suggest that while critiques are frequent and intense, there are yet few stances that successfully displace the solipsistic centrality of the west in concept or in the reformulation of method and practice.

A connection between Beirut and Delhi quickly suggests an obvious interpretation of the politics of location, where it could be placed within a postcolonial set of affairs, specifically within the supposed genre called 'anthropologies of the south' and discuss the attendant issues. However, that position seems to me to be far from adequate. In all of the ways that postcolonial consciousness has permeated the critical turns of the anthropological imagination in both theory and practice, one of the most persistent of contestations has been the intractable relationship of power of the metropolis over the periphery, usually categorized as the west and rest.<sup>3</sup> The postcolonial move, initiated and authored as it has been within metropolitan academia seem to have laid the terms of the contestation in such a way that it is once again the western ego that plays the protagonist. The terms of reference in critique rarely displace that centrality, and in that process make partial other negotiations, contestations and interfaces which can be or have already been manifest in many arenas of anthropological knowledge production.

To begin an argument for these 'other' negotiations is also to engage with an epistemological concern that begins with the futility of opposition between the characteristic binaries of center-periphery in the pursuit of freedom in knowledge production.

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3 The center-periphery tussles have their incarnation outside the west-rest pair – within local, national, regional regimes of hegemony. The authorial privilege of critique however, largely remains in the west-rest paradigm.

While I do not suggest a revisitation of the dichotomy debates, although they form a necessary foundation, a few reiterations are useful. Homi Bhabha writes,

Can the aim of freedom of knowledge be the simple inversion of the relation of oppressor and oppressed, center and periphery, negative image and positive image? Is our only way out of such dualism the espousal of an implacable oppositionality or the invention of an originary counter myth of radical purity? (1994: 19).

The dualism that Bhabha alludes to in his query above is one between theory and politics, or that supposed inalterable opposition which maintains that the real alchemy of critical knowledge can only be gained if the 'metatheorizing' West is placed at a polarity with the 'engaged, activist experience of Third world creativity' – particularly amidst the supposedly distinct ground of Third World 'cultural' practices (Bhabha 1994:19 -20). Bhabha steers his analytical gaze at this kind of counter from the Third World 'Others' and finds the improbable creation of a mythical collectivity with a pure radical will with which to challenge and topple western might. Dissolving this myth, he suggests that the alleged contestation is indeed a negotiation of political identifications, but one that works without any narrated fixity of identity or stability of antagonism, but rather gets reconstituted in the translation and transformation of a historical identity (a culture) into that of the political present. Properly historical, this negotiation, in effect, takes into account the profound changes that the post-colonial condition entails, from that of the colonial period and towards the present time of cultural uncertainty, thus marking most crucially, the signficatory or representational undecidability of any uniform, authentic post-colonial identity. Finding a Third Space of theoretical possibility between the redundant binarism or the two polar opposites of theory and practice thus constituted, he espouses the actuality of a hybrid position that takes little or none from either and makes a third.

I want to take my stand on the shifting margins of cultural displacement - that confounds any profound or 'authentic' sense of a 'national' culture or an 'organic' intellectual - and ask what the function of a committed theoretical perspective might be, once the cultural and historical hybridity of the postcolonial world is taken as the paradigm.



matic place of departure. (Bhabha 1994: 21).

Homi Bhabha's discussion on the third space of post-colonial difference is a finely nuanced argument that discerns the impossibility of a pristine, pure position of the post-colonial 'Other', from which to counter the insular monolithic of the Western, colonial, hegemonic 'self'. Rather, the enunciative moment of critical countenance (in the post-colonial world) is achieved in the here and now, when the stable (alleged) historical system of cultural identity (perhaps, national) interfaces with the immediate problems of a political present to produce the crucial cultural difference of hybrid identity. Once the Other (as is the Self) in this sense, is fragmented and unstable, the binarisms of theory/politics, of self /other become void. Negotiation and critical positioning then is indeed a privilege obtained accorded from a third, hybrid space.<sup>4</sup> The point of using Bhabha's words is not to revisit the debates of postcolonial criticism,<sup>5</sup> or more aptly – the critique of the postcolonial binarisms, but rather to reinforce two premises. First, that the freedom of knowledge cannot necessarily be limited to the relation between the oppressor and the oppressed as an epistemological foundation. And second, that the binarisms substantiating that relationship are redundant and even obsolete at this time.<sup>6</sup>

However, disclaiming the binary is not adequate nor enough in suggesting how indeed, then, could the potential of new knowledges be sought. Bhabha's reference to the efficacy of direc-

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4 This is, of course, a much too brief summary of Bhabha's exposition. See Bhabha (1994: 19-39).

5 Using Bhabha as a main interlocutor also does not cover the immense range of issues the postcolonial critique has engendered and sustained. It will be a rather pointless, if not, impossible exercise to summarize post-colonial criticism and therefore I have chosen to limit my reference to a point closest to my arguments.

6 My intention is not to brush aside an enormously rich set of debates that have been undertaken in disciplinary anthropology (as also in other approaches that are involved in understanding the colonial legacy). Especially during mid -20th century, the recognition of a crisis within the discipline, particularly as regards the epistemological privilege of the North, the possibility of articulation from the south and the critical issues therein. Through fine arguments that I can best summarize as the poetics and politics of representation and reflexivity, the corpus of work that has developed in this genre has laid bare the significance of the colonial relationship in the inequities of knowledge production.

ting theoretical work to cultural difference *rather than* diversity is a strong foothold with which to seek this potential. The argument of cultural diversity rests on the point that the position of the historical 'Other' as one of identifiable fixity is one that leads to the identifying segregated, culturally diverse others – a conceptual move that retards the progress of any critical theorizing to an 'implacable oppositionality' of hegemonic theory against given and identified others. On the other hand, if the position of the (ironically monolithic) culturally *diverse* Other is understood as the *different* Other, this positionality takes into account the vital force of negotiation that can emerge out of the interface of the hybridized Self and Other, each of which is properly historical and located in the present as well as in the new problems, challenges and complexities of the political immediacy.

My fieldwork episode seems to fit best, as an initial positioning, this hybridized third position where elements of either are retained but belonging to none seems appropriate. First, because it allows me steer away from, to the extent possible, a devout opposition. Accordingly, my field experiences in Beirut does not get referenced to the limiting world of binarisms but better placed in the discursive and practical sphere that Arturo Escobar and Eduardo Restrepo develop around the concepts of 'dominant anthropologies' and 'other anthropologies/anthropology otherwise'. By 'dominant anthropologies', they indicate, "the discursive formations and institutional practices that have been associated with the normalization of anthropology under academic modalities chiefly in the United States, Britain and France" (Escobar and Restrepo, 2005:83). They add that,

'Dominant anthropologies' [...] assumes a single epistemic space within which Anthropology functions as a real, albeit changing and contested practices. 'Other anthropologies /anthropology otherwise,' on the contrary, suggests that the space in which anthropology is practiced is fractured – perhaps even more so today than in the past, and despite increasing normalizing tendencies world wide – making it into a plural space. (Escobar and Restrepo, 2005:81-82).

My discussion is best enunciated from this 'plural' fractured space because it opens the possibilities both methodological and analytical of this plural positioning that can indeed contribute to the making of world anthropologies. Two conceptions

(among others) that the authors above develop their trajectories from are, first, the framework of geopolitics of knowledge that Walter Mignolo has amplified (2000, 2001 and 2002) through his notions of “border thinking”. Crucially, Mignolo’s position refers to a meta-politics of location, where legitimacy could be claimed and hegemony be challenged by an implication of positioning on the map of global power orders. Second, Dipesh Chakravarty’s (2000) “provincialization of Europe” effectively illustrates how Eurocentric modernity, although indispensable in its base, is not necessarily translatable to or from non – western contexts of modern rationality and reason. Clearly, either stance endorses that knowledge production has as its working template an unequal balance of power, sustained not just through inequities in global legitimacy but also in epistemological hegemonies – hegemonies and inequities whose redress echoes the need for a politics of location enunciated by multiple, hybridized positions.

However, multiplicity or heterogeneity per se is not the solution. For instance, Escobar and Ribeiro (2006:5) suggest Nestor Garcia Canclini’s “interculturality” as a viable alternative where,

Multicultural conceptions admit the diversity of cultures, underscore their difference and propose relativist policies of respect that often reinforce segregation. Dissimilarity, interculturality refers to confrontation and entanglement, to what happens when groups establish relationships and exchanges. The term supposes two (different) modes of production of the social: multiculturalism supposes the acceptance of what is heterogeneous; interculturality implies that those who are different are what they are in relations of negotiations, conflicts and reciprocal loans. (2004:15).

Interculturality in this sense seems to be a term for relationships that implicate a matter of difference – one that allows a contact, a negotiation or potential exchange between those who seek to do so. Even with the hybridized Third Space that Bhabha postulates, the problem of epistemology and knowledge production seem to remain trapped within the two inadequate stances of the last decades of the 20th century. In Garcia Canclini’s words,

[...] on the one hand, the entrenchment of certain African, Asian or Latin American thinkers with ‘their own ways’ of producing knowledge and developing culture; on the other hand, post modern narratives – particularly influential in metropolitan anthropology and cultural studies – which carried to

an extreme the praise of difference and the positioning of the autonomy of the forms of knowledge of each ethnic group, gender, country, or subaltern group, as a supreme value. (2006: 296 -297).

The inadequacy does not, of course, lie in these knowledges themselves, but rather in their inability to transcend their insularities and their relativisms in order to comprehend a global order that links each of these knowledges, each of their positionings or their vulnerabilities in an incessantly interactive web. The challenge then is not just to acknowledge the presence of multiplicities, or rather multiplicities as fragments but to fathom how these multiplicities/fragments are interlinked and interdependent in a current world across complexities of geography and history. For instance, anecdotally, Garcia Canclini writes that 90% of the global music market is owned by four discography companies; in the west, 60% of book production, who and what will be published is decided by two multimedia editorial companies. These monopolies are successful not just by their homogenizing capacities, but also by their keen skill in incorporating multiple sensitivities, which results in a literal synchronicity of production, circulation, and consumption of symbolic and practical ways of living. And it is again this interdependent web that dismisses, devastates, challenges and delegitimizes ways of being and knowing that sometimes reassert their place in the web in cataclysmic ways. Quoting Garcia Canclini again,

The socio-economic, political and cultural catastrophes of the last decade show that the most upright towers of New York and the apparently most reliable investments of the occidental metropolis teeter when they interact with the beliefs and rites of people who hide computers in caves, and together circulate drugs, arms and peasant utopias. (2006: 297).

The event itself is about the clash of two iconographic opposites, but the orders of comprehension that it provokes are that this singular event has repercussions to the far and near reaches of the contemporary globe. But that is not all –the problem lies in understanding how caves, computers, arms, peasant utopias and New York assemble together in the same event and yet successfully communicate multiple meanings to multiple peoples in ways that emergent practices and ideas encompass the globe in totalizing interconnections but also appear in vernacular forms with critical local implications. What way of knowing,

what epistemic stance can comprehend this challenge and find ways, simultaneously pliant and robust, which can comprehend multiplicities and acknowledge fragments, yet comprehend their static or kinetic place in an interactive, often abstract web. In another way, what bridges of understanding can make the connection between multiply saturated times and places, multitudes of groups, worldviews, ways of living and their unequal relations to a planetary web of production and consumption, terror and violence, media and information and a myriad other interconnectivities – between, as Garcia Canclini (2006) could suggest, totalizations and detotalizations.

Clearly, an anthropological attempt that can tackle this horizon will require a combined crafting of conceptual innovation and empirical rigor. It has to avoid the obvious pitfalls of totalizing discourse or fragmentary ethnocentrism. Bringing together the notions of meshworks with that of multiple fragments, an approach beginning to find articulation in the ethnographic imagination is that of an epistemological assembly. Jean and John Comaroff's (2003) notion of 'anthropology on an awkward scale' endorses the kind of assembly I suggest. Speaking both of ethnographic methodology and epistemic implication, they discuss this possible anthropological approach in terms of their research on the rise of an 'occult economy' (which implies practices and beliefs that connect magical means and mysterious techniques to the materialization of wealth) in South Africa. Investigating the peculiar appearance of 'zombies' in Mafeking, they make an interpretive suggestion that the figure of the zombie, in effect, is a peculiar product of the interstices of neoliberal capitalism and vernacular ways of refracting multifaceted experiences of globalization, poverty, alienation and so forth. It is a product that does not find interpretive fullness in the ethnographic limitations of the locality, say, in relations to sorcery and witchcraft, but rather in a social imaginary that is surmised from an 'awkward' ethnography that starts with something found *in situ* but whose explanation marks the movement from the local to the supralocal, the concrete to the conceptual. In their words,

We came across zombies, recall, through an empirical conjuncture: it was by force of historical fact, rather than by way of abstract analytical interest, that we found ourselves compelled to make sense of them *in situ*....By what ethnographic means does one capture the commodification of human beings in part or in whole, the occult economy of which it is part, the material and moral conditions

that animate such an economy, the new religious and social movements it spawns, the modes of producing wealth which it privileges, and so on? Inherently, awkward of scale, none of these phenomena are easily captured by the ethnographer's lens. Should each of them nonetheless be interrogated purely in their own particularity, their own locality? Or should we try to recognize where, in the particularity of the local, lurk social forces of larger scale, forces whose sociology demands attention if we are to make sense of the worlds we study without parochializing and, worse yet, exoticizing them?

The challenge, then, takes the following formulation. A conventional geographical locale, while it situates the empirical fact of the phenomenon, does not also situate, in its own physical limits its possible analytical frame of interpretation. The necessary situatedness of any phenomena that triggers off the exploration is an intimate ethnographic recognition found in fieldwork, but one that demands a social imaginary that can connect the local to the translocal, interlocal or global; or the empirical to the theoretical that they may be part of. This is not a situation where the local, or the revered anthropologist's ethnographic location has lost its place and that ethnography is no longer relevant and the move is toward generic abstractions or meta-narratives that in the first place led us to our crises of representations. Rather, it is the empiricism, the intimate ethnographies that allow access to the possibility of a multidimensional social imagination that can reveal the connections to the larger scale analytic. In effect, it is the vernacular, contextual, localized ethnographic motif that sets the frame for the assemblage that will constitute the larger theoretical analysis. But, the converse – that is, the understanding that the local can also provide sufficient, if not the best, explanation and analysis of the localized phenomenon is possibly a drastic short-sightedness that refuses to acknowledge that human experience can no longer be contained within its experiential margins.

In another instance, Garcia Canclini (2006) remarks on the blending of, in Latin American countries (and certainly in many other parts of the world) alternate medicines, gastronomies, farming practices, native sciences and craft techniques, languages and everyday education with recent internet technologies of archiving and disseminating. This is not a set of heterogeneous elements that find useful analysis in an obscure teleology of tradition vs. modernity, or of scientific knowledge vs. native

knowledge and so on. Rather, the problematic is about understanding the ‘global dynamics of combined homogenization and differentiation processes’ (i.e. “the dominant technology and the differentiated uses of this technology”, Garcia Canclini 2006:300) that suggest the localized, vernacular renditions and negotiations of larger structures, where its fullest contours can only be revealed through an anthropologically awkward investigation that takes the important steps away from the immediate or the localized particular to focus on the larger interconnections, the substantiation of the ideas, concerns, issues that the local seems to channel.

The combined approaches of Garcia Canclini’s ‘interculturality’ and the Comaroff’s ‘awkward ethnographies’ provide the methodological anchors that lay the ground for what I call emergent encounters. To reiterate, the former suggests the movement beyond multiplicity into a communication between correspondences and resonances among and between the heterogeneous and the latter suggests the analytical reach from the local encounter, the empirical motif into global, theoretical, universal contours of anthropological knowledge. I suggest that another kind of epistemological intervention is possible when the empirical motif is built through encounters between resonances that carry the possibility of a particular political correspondence – an anthropological encounter like that of my own between Beirut and Delhi.

My research in both these places over the past years have been about how life is lived in realms of coping and recovery after devastation and damage, especially when these contexts have been of political violence. The methodological meaning in this interface is to suggest an analytical horizon that could, potentially, make an epistemological movement possible. This is a movement that directs a re-routing of empirical and fieldwork connections and frames a certain ensemble of ethnographic motifs. Through these newly drawn maps of the anthropological imagination an epistemological potential emerges, one that expresses itself through a methodology in order to access a horizon of politics in knowledge production. I started with a notion of how ‘recovery’ plays itself out in the urban spaces of post-war Beirut, in the milieu of a nation devastated by 15 years of Civil War. My movement to Delhi was a foray into recovery in another urban context of political violence – the carnage of the Sikh community after the assassination of our then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards. The slow assembling together of vignettes in Beirut, for instance of remembrances in a city that em-placed, often together, both destruction and nostalgia; of spaces that

included places for architectural futures and scarred presents put together a empirical set of motifs in and for 'recovery' in Beirut. The notion of recovery in Delhi assembled for itself and further in the same frame of understanding recovery, experiences of city spaces as those of places of exile; or as places that circumscribed identity and stigmatized livings and biographies.

Both Beirut and Delhi, in their ethnographic density and interpretive potential, together constituted not just the possibility of ethnographic connections between located spaces (with their own histories and geographies and socialities) that resonated a conceptual linking but also an emerging frame of what recovery could entail. These were linkings that liberates empirical motifs from preconceived location of meaning (derived from history, geography or theory) to flow out and meet other motifs in order to find, in these associations, and connections, bursts of new conceptual coherence and theoretical formations. In this ethnographic movement between Beirut-Delhi (eventually including a return to Beirut), that 'recovery' now describes lives that are lived in a chaotic jumble that includes semblances of adequate normality, of ubiquitous grief and loss, of the persistence of hope and futures intertwined along with experiences of identity and notions of insecurity, unstable belonging and also incomplete justice – to cite a few facets. No over arching narratives of space (geography) or time (history) nor singular theoretical formulation of bio-politics, or neoliberalism or the political economy of political violence can draft for my analysis an adequate encapsulation of these nuances. Understanding, illustratively - memory, or loss, or hope as part of a larger terrain of 'recovery' came about through an epistemological work that did not just relate, for instance, the 'Theory' of memory to a localized interpretation in either Beirut or Delhi (as illustrations of already accepted theory), but rather as a nuanced meaningfulness that combined instances of both in order to situate a epistemological potential to further theory-making. This is how I would suggest the potential of emergent encounters that assemble, in this case, in the larger frame of recovery, inscribing in this methodological orientation an epistemological rerouting which moves towards larger conceptual terrains that can carry the force of theorizing.

First, it is an encounter between locations that have a particular historical location in the anthropological cartography of encounters – they are both locations that are erstwhile 'others'. In the least, this by itself creates a frame of reference which provides the potential for a transgressive shift in classical ethnographic journeys. Second, the ethnographic encounter so conducted



through corresponding empirical motifs in resonant locations directs the anthropological social imaginary to understand a routing which does not just endorse intercultural negotiations and global connectivities but also brings into relief, in their interpretive fullness the meaning of vernacular formations in their maximum possible conceptual and analytical clarity. This is the kind of interpretive fullness that shifts the negotiation away from one empirical location with a global narrative but rather enacts a correspondence between resonant particulars, which interaction then informs and substantiates the communication with the universal.

I conclude by sketching the initial blueprint for emergent encounters thus far suggested - an assembly of encounters that is framed through an isomorphic cartography of dialogic spaces which play with the dynamic of "others", now released from erstwhile binaries and from insular heterogeneity. A contemporary mapping that identifies such a mapping is the metaphoric 'global south' but I would suggest that the anthropological imagination articulates its awkwardness by transgressing those cartographies that iterate limiting classifications. It is an imaginary routed through an anthropological intent that makes connections and analytical jumps between cultures, locations and places that changes the original encounter between the west and the rest, simultaneously dismantling the original self/other dynamic into an interface, collaboration, negotiation and interaction of different others. In my continuing work, I now look into the practices of recovery in the context of Hurricane Katrina in the United States to elaborate further on what its conceptual reach could be. The assembly in this case, which would allow access to both empirical and epistemological possibility is to interface these differentiated cultures, knowledges, social formations and experiences with *each other*, in order to see how they negotiate with the larger archive suggested by the thematic empirical motif of recovery. This then becomes another routing through which to trace the reach between the universal and particular, or even, empirical motif and theory. What, then, emerges in this methodological intent is an interactive understanding of *intercultural* interfaces - in other words, between and amongst multiplicities that are not seen as isolated diverse wholes but rather as *different* analogous or resonant nodes under global discourses. The epistemological shift lies precisely in the routing through isomorphic encounters, which by contouring emergent objects of enquiry though resonant encounters do not simply map the path from the local to the global (and vice versa), but in effect, show how such correspondences

negotiate with each other in ways in which both the particularities of the local and the universalisms of the global continually change and reformulate themselves. This epistemological reformulation becomes potent for another kind of anthropological knowledge production because these isomorphic mappings have been enacted through a politically motivated cartography – one that makes a conscious acknowledgement of hegemonic patterns by deliberately denying them in practice. The innovation in method is not just in making those connections, but also acknowledging these as conscious innovations and finally, in judging them as epistemological moments with political intent.

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**THE STATE AND THE ANTHROPOLOGIES  
OF THE STATE  
(A POLITICAL ANTHROPOLOGIST'S TESTIMONY)**

Peter Skalník

**Prologue**

Why do we, social anthropologists, study the state? I presume that we want to know as much as possible about the origin, structure, function, the role in society, possibly also decline of the organization which at present (still) seems to be hegemonic in all what is human, if not natural and supernatural. At the same time we often forget that our work, thinking, fieldwork, writing up, teaching and public engagements are embedded in the existence of the state. While we would like to objectify the state by our scientific inquiry, we tend to forget that simultaneously we are objects of the state. In other words, the state dominates over our destinies as both humans and investigators.

Anthropologists, as other students of the state, face a potentially precarious situation. They are parts of the state and at the same time try to behave as if they are outside of it. In this piece I would like to point out the conditioning by the state of the work of political anthropologists such as myself but at the same time give thought to a possible import to theory of the state as a result of subject/object interplay. There are, perhaps, two extremes in this dilemmatic situation. In highly oppressive states hardly any political theory can emerge except apologetic. Critical thought is impossible. Seemingly paradoxically, in the most democratic states the degree of voluntary identification with the state could be so high that the research on the state produces laudatory, self-praising or narcissistic texts devoid of critical approach as well. Thus the best conditions for the study of the state are in countries which do not suppress independent research but where there are enough contrasts between the interests of the state and the society. I think that Simone Weil was right when she said, and was noted down by one of her students in the pre-war years, that

the secret of every state is its will to power and domination: “All power tends in the direction of making itself greater. The state has natural tendency to be totalitarian. That is seen everywhere” (Weil 1978: 158).

Anthropology was born as one of the products of the existence of the state. Specifically it was born in capitalist states that strove to extend its power by occupying and colonizing less militarily equipped societies, whether state-ruled ones or not. Although anthropology, similarly to other scientific disciplines, tries to present pure knowledge and be independent of the state and critical of it, anthropology cannot escape its dependence on the state as funder and censor, indeed a customer buying knowledge generated by anthropologists. In most countries where anthropology exists it is part and parcel of public institutions which are partly or fully funded by the state and increasingly the funder wants to know for what the money was used.<sup>1</sup> (Of course, the state as such has no money but it has power to collect and redistribute taxes that are then reaching anthropologists in the form of salaries, conference funding, travel allowances and research grants.) In the new neoliberal audit conditions there seems to be no place for “pure research” that used to be financed and evaluated without much more than academic peer reviewing although the demand of “relevance” for praxis or development is not new to anthropological projects. The state even more than before coerces the academy to be productive, to show results which can be useful to the state.

Of course the state is no *deus ex machina*, but, quite a human product. We may discuss how, where and why the state emerged, but the fascinating discovery that states did not exist during most of human history is due to the inquisitiveness of those who enjoyed research leisure because of the functioning of the state. Even those of us who would like to prove that the state should wither in the future do it in the framework of the existence of the state at present.

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1 In most European countries whether they had colonies or not, whether capitalist or so-called socialist, ethnography and folklore studies emerged hand in hand with nationalism. These disciplines such as Czech and Slovak *národopis*, German *Volkskunde*, Polish *ludoznawstwo*, Hungarian *néprajz*, Romanian *folklor*, Bulgarian *narodouka*, English *folk life studies*, Swedish *folklivforskning*, Dutch and Belgian Flemish *volkskunde*, etc. mostly studying their own nations and minorities survived till our times. They were directly expected nay requested to produce knowledge celebrating the nations and states which paid them to do so.

This paper does not constitute another attempt at resolving age-old disputes about origins, present role and future of the state but instead tries to attract attention on the state as a 'constant variable' of anthropological knowledge. In other words while the state as a principle stays hegemonic for several millennia there are different kinds of state to which anthropologists relate and react differently. In my experience, life has been a continuous field-work and this praxis has been evolving within the conditioning regulation by the state, or better, states. I shall not entirely limit myself to my own experience but will also reflect more broadly about the fate and status of anthropologies in different historical settings dominated by the state.

### **African States**

My decision to study the state in Africa was informed by two important ramifications. On the one hand it was the almost sudden acquisition of political independence in many African colonies and dependent territories which took place when I was deciding about the direction of my university studies back in the early 1960s. Then, as a young man, I witnessed a virtual avalanche of newly formed states. Expectations were huge but often the most apparent change was that of the name, not so much of substance. Anglo-Egyptian Sudan became Sudan, French Sudan became Mali, Gold Coast turned into Ghana, Oubangi-Chari became Central African Republic, Moyen Congo changed into République du Congo. But many colonial state names did not change upon independence (Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Sierra Leone, Guinea, etc.) Without exception, the newly independent African states emerged on the same territories where colonies were previously established. The freshly elected political representatives of these states agreed that they did not wish to revise received (colonial) borders. At the same time ethnic groups only very exceptionally overlapped with the territory of new states (Rwanda, Burundi, Swaziland, Lesotho, Somalia, and Madagascar). If nations were to self-determine themselves, then in Africa, they would have to emerge within the colonial/postcolonial borders disregarding (pre-state tribal) ethnic divisions. But that was hardly to happen overnight. Eminent Polish historian Michal Tymowski, in his penetrating essays, remarked that while in early mediaeval European history tribes were soon absorbed by the newly formed states/kingdoms, the African situation dramatically differs by simultaneous existence of tribes within states. Tribes do not disappear in Africa, they accompany modern state formation: "African states were organizations built *over* the

tribes rather than in *place of* (Tymowski 2007: 155, 2008: 180).

On the other hand, I was living in a society (communist-ruled Czechoslovakia) which placed enormous emphasis on the all-encompassing power of the state. To do anything against the state - especially in favour of another, namely hostile, state - would equal to treason and was often punishable by death penalty. However, Soviet and eastern European totalitarian and post-totalitarian states have ostensibly followed prescriptions of 'leninized' Marxist ideology which contained, perhaps rather surprisingly, the idea that the state will, by virtue of historical logic, eventually wither because people would manage their affairs themselves (after all the eschatological aim of Marxism was "communism" which did not require any central power).

For me, the fascination with Africa consisted in the coexistence of modern imported western type of state and various traditional or neo-traditional forms of politics, especially chiefdoms or chieftaincies on the one hand and acephalous/anarchic 'tribes' on the other. By studying the emergence of the state as a theoretical problem and the state in Africa in particular, I was hoping to find out more about the modern state and its current hegemony, especially in state-centred nationalist and communist societies.

When I started my research I had to negotiate a twofold adversary: the data on Africa were mostly available from the works of social anthropologists who in turn were almost all non-Africans employed by the colonial or metropolitan states in order to optimize governance in the colonies. At the same time, in some countries, which opposed western imperialism, social anthropology was branded as a bourgeois science at the service of imperialism and was thus not acceptable. Moreover, Marxism-Leninism as a ruling ideology did not allow much space for the research on the state by using data other than those already supplied and canonized in the communist doctrine. Evidently my study of the state was bumping into the 'really' existing states that did not allow any other research on the state that would not confirm their historical teleological paramountcy.

Luckily, in the 1960s the research into the state problematic had taken place in the period of relative loosening of the communist regime which also reflected itself in the relaxation of the historical materialist Marxist dogmas. The contradictory data (Godelier called it rebellions of evidence) coming from the newly independent Africa and other non-European areas had to be processed even by the Marxists. Thus, for example, a new

wave of discussions on the concepts such as the Asiatic mode of production (Marx) and Oriental despotism (Wittfogel) gave impetus to my African state research.

In 1963, I was sent with a Czechoslovak state scholarship to the Soviet Union in order to continue my African studies at the Leningrad *State* University. Once there, however, my 1966 annual student essay on “State and community among the Mossi” was rejected because I introduced in it data about immigrant or conquering elements in West African state formation. The examiner (historian V.M. Misyugin) deemed me liable for several sins but most importantly he accused me of “drivel in the spirit of Great Germany” [*bréd v dúkbe Velikoy Germanii*] as if I approved of the *German Drang nach Osten* policy of conquest of Eastern Europe and Russia (Skalnik 2002: 46).<sup>2</sup> The question on the origins of African states suddenly became a highly sensitive topic touching upon the existential questions of European statehood to the east of Germany. Luckily again, these were no more times of sending ideological dissenters to Gulag camps and I only had to expand my paper into an MA thesis and find a new examiner. I did not need to repent or change the topic; it was enough to write the thesis in English because as a foreign student at Leningrad I was allowed such a language switch. The original examiner did not know English well and the new one (culturologist S.N. Artanovskiy) proposed the best mark. I returned to Czechoslovakia with the ‘red’ diploma reserved for eminent students. Back in Prague my thesis entitled “The political systems of five Voltaic societies. An attempt to make a comparative analysis” was welcomed, further expanded, revised, and defended as a PhD thesis in 1968.

The communist state had again intervened soon after PhD diploma was handed to me. The Czechoslovak attempt to liberalize communist system was ‘rewarded’ by an invasion of the Soviet army and armies of some Soviet satellites. I was, at that very moment, a conscript in the Czechoslovak army because I wanted to fulfil my citizen’s duty before continuing my studies at Northwestern University in Evanston, near Chicago. I had hoped that from Evanston, which boasted the first African studies centre in the USA, founded by Melville Herskovits back in 1948, I would be able to do fieldwork in West Africa. However, the Czechoslovak state, now under direct Soviet tutelage, prevented me from using the American scholarship and I had to write my next major scholarly thesis without fieldwork. This was “The dynamics of early state development in the Voltaic area (West

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2 I keep the original hand-written annual essay among my papers.



Africa)” (Skalník 1973) that earned me the postdoctoral scientific degree of Candidate of Science (CSc.).<sup>3</sup> Frustrated as I was, I nevertheless used the period of 1970-1976 for a fieldwork in a sub-mountain Slovak village of Nižná Šuňava. The decision to carry out the research there was made when I coached Bratislava students during a winter research practice. It appeared that the villagers suffered a violent police razzia in 1950 when they resisted unrealistically high ‘contingents’ (forced supplies) and gave support to their parish priest. The research revealed contradictions in the state’s treatment of this village and the nearest neighbour, Vyšná Šuňava, which was almost fully cooperativized. My Slovak village politics research lasted intermittently for six years but the appointment in Bratislava ended, officially because Slovakia could not afford an Africanist.

### Early states research and the modern state

Here I wish to make a terminological remark. While ‘political system’ was a term coming from the western anthropological and political science tradition (see Skalník 1990), the term ‘early state’ was my modest revision of the late Marxist ‘early class state’ (see Skalník 2004: 79). As I see it today the naiveté of the research on early states which was set into momentum by the publication of *The Early State* (Claessen and Skalník 1978) resulted in what I would call ‘state hegemony’ in the then theory of political anthropology. Practically any kind of political centralization was a state in our understanding of those years. Service, whose neo-evolutionist sequence contained ‘chiefdom’ as a precursor to the state (Service 1962, cf. Carneiro 1981), was ignored by the then champions of ‘early state’ theorization. Interestingly enough and perhaps because of this insensitive all-embracing conceptualization of ‘early state’, the concept never achieved the popularity it initially hoped to gain (see Skalník 2009a). When writing the editors’ chapters for *The Early State* we also unintentionally ignored Pierre Clastres’ pioneering research which was in print in its original French since 1974. Thus our anthropological theory of the state appeared ‘insularized’, in effect without bridges to chiefdom on the one hand and the historical, archaeological and

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3 The prevailing political conditions in post-invasion Czechoslovakia were so hostile to non-supporters like myself that the CSc. thesis could only be defended in 1990, i.e. 17 years after it was submitted. I still keep a letter that came with the three returned copies where I am told that the thesis cannot be allowed for defence because I am politically unacceptable.

political science research on the state on the other. After *The Early State*, the small group of early state theorists has produced an impressive series of international volumes (Claessen and Skalník 1981; Claessen, van de Velde and Smith 1985, Claessen and van de Velde 1987, 1991; Claessen and Oosten 1996, and later also Kradin and Lynsha 1995; Feinman and Marcus 1998, Grinin et al. 2004) which were well received, for example, in Russia and Germany but did not spark the imagination of a new generation of political anthropologists. To them, this vast literature seems to have appeared less than relevant as testified by the most recent worldwide anthropological research on the state (cf. Vincent 1990, Abélès 1990, Gledhill 1994, Nugent and Vincent 2004, Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005, Sharma and Gupta 2006, cf. Skalník 2009a). The exception is the textbook by Lewellen that pays considerable attention to the early state concept (1983 and subsequent editions).

Research into African post-colonial states has been a response to Weber and Eisenstadt who respectively coined 'patrimonialism' and 'neo-patrimonialism' as concepts meant as impetuses for a fresh look at the state outside the orbit of western liberal democratic model of governance. That research travelled from a pragmatic understanding of the state as machines for personal aggrandizement of rulers (Bayart 1989, Bayart, Hibou and Ellis 1997) to more anthropologically sensitive analyses (Chabal and Daloz 1999, 2006; Chabal 2009, for the latest position different from Chabal, see Nugent 2010; cf. Skalník 2001). Meanwhile, following Clastres (1977, orig. 1974) a new wave of research on chiefdoms as alternatives to states has emerged and indicated that the alleged state hegemony might be less hegemonic than previously thought (Earle 1991, White and Lindstrom 1997, van Rouveroy and van Dijk 1999; Skalník 1983, 1989, 2004; Ray et al. 2011, a special issue of *Social Evolution and History*, 2011).

My own fieldwork in northern Ghana, made possible only after I escaped the embrace of the communist state and settled in the Netherlands in 1976, began as an attempt to capture a neo-traditional encapsulated 'state' situated in a belt of presumably least acculturated societies between the forest and Sahel zones of West Africa. However, the then politically correct respect for the interest in 'relevant research' of both Dutch state (whose Tropical research foundation or WOTRO was financing the initial stages) and the modern state of Ghana (whose University of Cape Coast's Centre for Development Studies was receiving me) led me to enlist it as primarily an inquiry into political aspects of development issues in the underdeveloping Ghanaian North.

Soon, once my field research progressed I was to be given a lesson that had to do with a case of coexistence of a chiefdom (Nanur) with a state (Ghana), not one state within the other.<sup>4</sup> During armed clashes of 1981 the Nanumba 'state' was unable to defend itself vis-à-vis Konkomba 'acephalous tribesmen'. At the same time the modern Ghanaian state even when weakened by economic breakdown of the late 1970s and early 1980s survived the crisis and today serves as an example of a functioning African democracy (cf. Skalník 1981, 1986, 2011a). This does not take away the potential usefulness of a 'new indirect rule' model of governance in which chiefs would play a role of watchdogs of democracy in Africa (Skalník 1996, 2011b).<sup>5</sup>

In the early 1980s the state of the Netherlands, as if pre-empting the present debt crises facing Greece and many other states in Europe and elsewhere in the world, began to limit its expenditures for education, among other 'soft' spheres. Temporary jobs were phased away, among them also my part-time senior lectureship at the University of Leiden. The unemployment benefits were, however, generous at that time and in the initial periods (so-called *uitkering*) I even did not need to be present in the Netherlands. Thus, paradoxically loss of the formal job and therefore no teaching obligations created for me conditions for an extended fieldwork stint in Ghana. This also helped me psychologically because I happened to be in a challenging environment of a fieldwork site in Northern Ghana which, at the time, suffered unprecedented economic malaise. I realised that I, as a retrenched Dutch academic, am still much better than average Ghanaians. The research in Ghana coincided with

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4 'Monarchies within Republics' was the title of my first article on Ghana printed three years before the start of my fieldwork in Nanur (Skalník 1975).

5 A thrilling reconstruction of attitudes and actions during the encounters between Westerners and Oceanians was offered by Sahlins (1981, 1985). His analysis is another strong evidence for the existence of a different logic in politics, deemed by the Europeans as governed by state organization, but nevertheless proving that they were not commensurable. At the same time the history of Hawaii in the 19th century shows the possibility of modernization of chiefdom and the formation of the modern state. Similar developments could be traced during the 19th/20th in countries as varied as Siam/Thailand, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bali, Japan or Egypt. Today only few Asian and Oceanic states combine the qualities of chiefdoms with those of modern states. In Africa some states toy with the introduction of chiefs into modern politics but thus far with no credible results (cf. Ray *et al.* 2011).

dramatic developments on the political scene involving the second coming to power of Jerry John Rawlings, dubbed as “Junior Jesus”, and in Nanuŋ, armed clashes between the Nanumba and the Konkomba. The clashes took place on the background of the economic and political weakness of the civilian democratically elected government of the Third Republic of Ghana. They no doubt contributed to the coup of 31st December 1981 because it was apparent that Limann regime was unable to keep peace in the country. This eventually led me to a theorization that during the civilian-democratic regime in weak states such as those in Africa the likelihood of open local, ethnic or regional political conflicts is higher than during the authoritarian, military regimes (Skalník 1986, 2011a). And indeed, soon after Rawlings’ Provisional National Defence Council took power, the commission of inquiry appointed by Limann’s civilian government was suspended indefinitely and Nanuŋ almost instantly became peaceful, at least superficially, because the power of the Ghanaian state was again felt in the far-away regions. My thesis about the weakness of civilian regimes in Africa and the likelihood of revival of old or suppressed local enmities was confirmed when Ghana, now with Rawlings as an elected president, became democracy under the Fourth Republic constitution in 1993. A much bloodier violent clashes involving several ethnic groups, chiefly and ‘acephalous’, broke out in seven districts of Northern Region, early in 1994 (Skalník 2002, 2003, 2011a).

### **The state and jobs**

The state has influenced my anthropological life even deeper when Adam Kuper, while I was in Ghana, involved in the above mentioned unemployment fieldwork, urged me to apply for a job in South Africa, specifically at the University of Cape Town. Originally I never contemplated searching for job in South Africa (at that time the country was in final, quite violent, stages of the apartheid regime) but the relative autonomy and defiance of liberal universities such as Cape Town vis-à-vis South African state persuaded me to accept the offer of a Senior Lectureship in Social Anthropology there. Again I happened to be in the ‘care’ of an authoritarian state that took three years before granting me a permanent resident status. I arrived in South Africa as a Dutch national but for three years I was unable to obtain permanent residence and thus, was also unable to buy a house and use university subsidy for that. When I inquired at the Ministry of Justice they told me that either my wife joins me in Cape Town or I divorce. Separation while each partner lives in a different

country is not tolerated. As my wife did not want to go to South Africa we divorced. Otherwise, academically the conditions at the department and at the Cape Town University were demanding, but generally fair. In spite of my heavy teaching load I could begin to publish the results of my Ghana research (Skalník 1983, 1986, 1987, 1989), attend international meetings and even go to Ghana for a short fieldtrip. I tried to begin a study of a reform movement in a vineyard village of Franschhoek but that research floundered because a 'black bomb' exploded there: Vincent Crapanzano's book *Waiting* (Skalník 1993). However, the conditions in South Africa deteriorated in the late 1980s and I decided to apply for a grant to study the socio-cultural effects of a gold mine project in the Lihir Archipelago in Papua New Guinea (I spent a three-month leave in PNG in 1988 at the encouragement of my Swiss friends Florence Weiss and Milan Stanek with whom I also visited Lihir). When I was planning the Lihir fieldwork, the news of the fall of Berlin Wall and eventually overall collapse of communist regimes in central and south-eastern Europe reached me in South Africa. I nevertheless went to Lihir in 1990 because the Human Science Research Council of South Africa accorded me a generous research grant.<sup>6</sup> Prior to my departure for Lihir, I spent June and July 1990 in Prague preparing my 1973 CSc. thesis for defence. Meanwhile I was rehabilitated both by Bratislava and Prague universities and offered a post at Prague's Charles University, my alma mater. I accepted what was initially a visiting position that eventually became a permanent teaching post. This logically heralded the end of my Cape Town job. But following a year of sabbatical leave I had to return to Cape Town for at least one semester of teaching. This I did in the second half of 1991 when I also resigned my permanent position there. Ironically, soon after I returned for good to Prague and Charles University, I learned that all permanent positions in universities were turned into temporary. So it has been with all my positions since - they have been invariably temporary.

I tried to use my Prague job for the promotion of social and cultural anthropology. What was taught until then was physical anthropology and ethnography with folklore, in separate departments of separate faculties (natural sciences and arts respectively). My appointment was in the Department of Near East, India and Africa where I started teaching courses of overtly anthropological nature. Ethnology students who were dissatisfied

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6 I spent four months in Lihir (August-November 1990) but fell ill there. In spite of few attempts to resume this promising fieldwork I never managed to return.

with old fashioned subjects taught in their department flocked to my courses. I also contacted the Dean of the newly established Faculty of Social Sciences and he created a lectureship in social anthropology in their department of sociology. This was a great leap forward but much short of my original plan to either create a new department or reshape ethnography into anthropology. To say the truth, I was basically disappointed by very little institutional support for social and/or cultural anthropology at Charles University.

That is why I was not opposed to the opportunity of working part-time for the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs in their department of analysis and planning. The ministry looked for people with the past untarnished by collaboration with the communists. Pretty soon I was asked to assume the post of ambassador to Lebanon. That country emerged recently out of civil war which lasted for 15 years. Czechoslovakia's diplomatic mission in Beirut was barely functioning, but without an Ambassador. I accepted the offer because of the very special position of Lebanon among the Arab countries. The only democracy in the Arab world, the country was now in search of a new identity in between two major opponents, Israel and Syria. The latter, the eastern neighbour, had her army deployed in Lebanon. The billionaire entrepreneur Rafiq Hariri was considering helping reconstruction of his country by entering politics. At that time he did not suspect that his assassination thirteen years later would trigger off popular movement leading to the departure of the Syrian Army from Lebanon. My anthropological encounters with the state had become suddenly enriched by close contact with top representatives of two or rather three states. Soon after my credentials were handed to the Lebanese president Elias Hrawi, Czechoslovakia fell apart and I became by default Czech ambassador to Lebanon. One of my tasks was to promote one of two successor states in a country which was used to the existence of Czechoslovakia as a permanent fact. The period of more than four years of my ambassadorship were filled with observations, meetings with ministers, political party leaders, diplomats, Lebanese businessmen and other public. It was an exciting period of my life which still awaits deeper analysis. I have published, though, several articles (Skalník 2004c, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2011) reflecting the relative importance of the state in Lebanon.

After my return from diplomatic summits I fell almost instantly into the ditch of mundane academic existence in the Czech Republic. The state has shown its back to me or rather its normal Janus face. All my efforts at establishing socio-cultural

anthropology in the Faculty of Arts, Charles University were in vain (cf. Skalník 2002b). So I left that faculty for another, namely Department of Anthropology in the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Ostensibly the biological anthropologists there wanted to add socio-cultural anthropology to the portfolio of subjects taught there but in fact these people had no understanding for non-biological data. When in 2001, I presented my selected published works for a special evaluation leading to the so-called habilitation.<sup>7</sup> I was told that there is not enough biology in my writings. When I explained that socio-cultural anthropology is not biological anthropology my documents for habilitation were returned to me, this time not for political reasons like in 1973, but for reasons of disciplinary boundaries which internally structure anthropology. The would-be chairperson of my habilitation committee, a political geographer, openly told me that he was sure that, even if he would recommend me for habilitation, I would not get enough votes. Therefore he withdrew even before the start of the procedure.<sup>8</sup>

In the meantime I was lucky enough to enjoy ten months in the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Study in Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) which offered me a full fellowship for the 2001-2002 academic year. The state of the Netherlands that finances NIAS has shown a friendly face. First time in my life, I had full ten months just for research. It contrasted sharply with the unanimous vote in my home department against granting me at least a half year of sabbatical leave for which I was in

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7 Habilitation in the Czech Republic and a number of central and east European countries, which were historically under German academic influence, is a kind of bench marking. When a candidate who has taught as assistant professor at university level for some years, presents a book-length text or a selection of her/his published works, gives a specialised lecture, and must be approved in a secret ballot of professors to be qualified for a title of docent. According to law on higher education only docents and professors are fully qualified university teachers. In practice, though, many assistant professors teach independently as well.

8 Interestingly enough, I repeated the attempt in 2007 at the Science Faculty of the Brno Masaryk University, but there I was told that even a habilitation committee could not be assembled due to the unusual subject. In another, social studies faculty of the same university a committee gathered once but found that my selected published writing did not have enough integrity and recommended that I concentrate on only one topic out of five or six. The committee also mentioned that the approach is not sociological enough. So I withdrew my application.

principle entitled because I have worked more than seven years since returning to Charles University in 1990. This time it was not a hostile state but just hostile colleagues! I was at least granted an unpaid leave of absence but my university internet account and Czech health insurance was discontinued for the period of absence. While enjoying the freedom of research in congenious conditions of NIAS, I was told by the head of department back at home that my post will be re-advertised (the contract was for three years) and that I may apply. Even though I knew that the department wanted to get rid of me I dutifully applied and stressed that I wished to work in the department the last seven years before retirement. And so it was that I was returning from the Netherlands back to Prague with a letter telling me that the selection committee did not select me. Later I learned that they appointed a less qualified biological anthropologist. The department apparently did not want to be disturbed by a “stranger” from socio-cultural anthropology.

I was lucky enough that already in the year 2000, I was approached by Bohuslav Šalanda from Prague’s Institute of Ethnology at Charles University who invited me to join him in the newly established department of social sciences at a regional University of Pardubice (a city situated some 100 kilometres east of Prague). Šalanda used to be a head of the then Department of Ethnography and Folklore Studies at Charles University during the last two years of communist rule. A folklorist who was a former communist now came with the idea of establishing social anthropology in Pardubice, close to his native town of Sezemice! Obviously, as a former escapee from communist rule, I had my hesitations. But I decided to join him because it looked as if at long last I could help establish social anthropology in a Czech university, however marginal. First I was appointed to a 25% job as from 1st October 2000. I proposed to teach a course on modern anthropology of Africa which was attended by quite a number of students. Most importantly though, I suggested to apply for a grant enabling a re-study of the commune of Dolní Roveň located some 15 kilometres eastwards of Pardubice. The village was studied in the second half of 1930s by a rural sociologist Galla and of course, many things had changed there since that research. I went to visit the village in March 2001, collected basic data and impressions, and soon afterwards applied for a three-year grant for the re-study of Dolní Roveň at the beginning of the third millennium (Skalník 2004b, 2008). Before the end of the year (while in the Netherlands) I learned that the grant was approved by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic (GAČR)



and we could start the research in 2002. Beside myself as the leading researcher two other Pardubice colleagues (Šalanda and the sociologist Šubrt) would complement me as co-researchers. The idea was that students of social anthropology (who started their study in October 2001) would assist us in the research starting in July 2002. My intention was that throughout their study each and every student would have to do fieldwork.

The re-study of Dolní Roveň proved to be a great opportunity to realize this maximalist criterion and cohorts of our students went through the fire of fieldwork in Dolní Roveň. A number of their bachelor and master theses were written about various aspects of that commune. The state, represented by GAČR, showed its positive face because social anthropology established itself in Pardubice vigorously and the Department of Social Studies, especially after it also obtained accreditation for sociology, was soon recognized as probably the best in the country. These successes were however not well received by the leadership of the Faculty of Humanities, later renamed into Faculty of Arts and Philosophy. The problem was partly due to the fact that the faculty was dominated by historians, apparently envious of a more scientific discipline of social anthropology. Social anthropology demanded money for field research which was consequently denied to us even though fieldwork was included in the state approved accreditation. Our department was most successful in international exchanges; we had excellent publication record, organized yearly conferences in which students and staff reported about their research. But we were also defiant whenever scholarship was compromised in favour of bureaucracy and xenophobic provincialism. In 2010, the frictions came to a pitch after the new Dean did not appoint any of the carefully selected candidates for professorship probably because they were foreigners. So after ten years of service I left Pardubice unceremoniously and the doctoral programme in social anthropology which we wanted to apply for remained a pipe dream...

Back in 2005, I was approached by the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at University of Wrocław in Poland, with which Pardubice had an exchange agreement, about helping that department with teaching their master students. I accepted this challenge and used an extraordinary professorship for launching another community re-study in Dobrzeń Wielki, a 'gmina' (commune) composed of nine villages near Opole in Silesia. This gave me an opportunity to look into the functioning

and problems of local autonomy in a neighbouring country, a fellow member of the European Union (both countries joined the Union in 2004 together with eight other countries). What was intriguing in Dobrzeń was the triple ethnicity composition. A number of locals were Silesian Germans who since 1990 were allowed to carry two citizenships: Polish and German. Thus they were able to work in the united Germany long before the accession of Poland into the European Union. This had expression in economic advancement of the commune that displayed a great number of enterprises and comparatively high standard of living. The other two ethnicities were Polish and Silesian. Polish were mostly those who came to western Poland from former eastern Poland annexed by the Soviet Union with the end of the World War II. Silesians were autochthons who either carried only Polish citizenship or those mentioned above who were also German by nationality. Unfortunately this promising fieldwork was interrupted by the end of the Wrocław appointment in 2007. As I am now back in Wrocław as a visiting professor I am hopeful that I can bring the Dobrzeń research to an end by combining it with the findings of the re-study of Dolní Rožná. The completion of this research project will provide insight into the functioning of at the lowest echelons of two post-communist states.

Before closing, I should mention another of my encounters with the state. For some time I have been spontaneously interested in political culture. My work on northern Ghana and South Africa can be cited as an evidence of it (Skalník 1989b, 1999). Since 1989, I have been also gathering data on post-communist Czechoslovakia and Czech Republic, their political scandals, and a very arduous march towards more direct democracy. While in Lebanon, as Ambassador, I also became fascinated by the complex political culture of that exceptional country. This all has drawn me into a serious study of the theory of political culture which obviously has lots to do with the state but also citizenship and ordinary daily attitudes to politics. I won a research grant, have developed a theoretical framework (Skalník 2000) and worked several years on both post-communist and post-colonial political culture in Europe and Africa (Skalník 2004b, 2004d, 2006d, 2009b). Interestingly enough, whereas initially there was little interest in political culture and this direction of research seemed to be underestimated. With time, however, a realization grew that politics has different features even in Europe - the continent that believed in its joint cultural heritage - each country and even region has drawn on the past and thus displayed a wide variety of political cultures. The more it was true of Africa with

its complex ethnic, economic and political structures, pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. I am still hoping to draft a synthesis on political culture in the era of restructuring of relations both within and between continents.

I think at this juncture that one of the conclusions which could be drawn from the above is that the direction of future research on the state leads away from the present exclusivist disciplinary solipsism towards more coordination among anthropologists, archaeologists, sociologists, political scientists and various area specialists. If the state really is to wither, there will be new thus far unknown candidates to fill the vacuum and anthropologists will find themselves both cornered by the successor(s) and challenged for studying those future Leviathans (cf. Hannerz 2010). Quite naturally the emerging research paradigm within anthropology viewed as a pluralism of *anthropologies* will contribute to this shift.

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## ENCOUNTERING THE FIELD

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Vasundhara Bhojvaid

[...] the secret is not as important as the paths that led me to it. Each person has to walk those paths himself.

Jorge Luis Borges (The Ethnographer)

The centrality of ethnography in anthropology cannot be underplayed - the contours along which the entry into the field is made, the way that the field is chosen by both institutional and personal factors, and the dynamics of time spent in the field have been debated for some time now (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, Harding 1988, Clifford and Marcus 1986, Crapenzano 1985, Montuschi 2003). Even so, there has been little talk of ethnography being conducted from contours not defined in line with the way that the hegemonic discourses project it in (Escobar and Restrepo 2005). In lieu of this, finding myself as an Indian student from Delhi University, with an opportunity to conduct a short stint (45 days) of fieldwork in Europe (Denmark), seemed both exciting and daunting all at once. There are several reasons to this state of mind which emanate from my particular 'anthropological position' and my relation to the field thereof. Taking account of the brief amount of fieldwork time, my engagement was more about what it meant to be in the field rather than in strict terms of the substance of my research. In order to exculpate on this I will take up how the ethnographic experience emerges through multiple encounters with and in the field.

If the crux of the discipline is defined in the specific encounters that the anthropologist makes in the field, the specificities of how these encounters take place cannot be undermined. Not attempting to disavow the encounter in itself, I place emphasis on what allows the encounter to exist at all. I seek to stress the institutional and inter-subjective positions of agents/entities

who, through their mutual engagement come to form the anthropological encounter. More importantly, I try to trace how the exchanges that transpire in such encounters re-orient viewpoints to then lead to future encounters, invariably defining the way in which the research progresses.

In a nutshell then, the focus of the paper is on how the paths to and from the encounter get constructed. I argue that it is in these paths that the essential nature of the encounter is made. Further, I look at how previous encounters inform future ones in the field which ultimately defines how the ethnographic product is generated. In attempting to address this question I view the encounter essentially as a means to grasp the 'ethnographic secret' of the ethnographic object being investigated of which the anthropologist attempts to become privy to. In my case, this becomes an attempt to understand the way that my respondents viewed and experienced the ethnographic object I was attempting to study. Before fieldwork this knowledge is essentially a secret for the ethnographer as the very basis of fieldwork is the premise that only through detailed and prolonged interactions with respondents in their everyday life situations can information about the ethnographic object under investigation be attained. The final product from these associations is embodied in the ethnographic text. This text is a result of encounters, re-contextualisation of viewpoints that occur therein alongside texts that are read, which guide the manner in which the ethnographer chooses to comprehend the 'ethnographic secret' and hence orient her argument in the construction of her ethnographic text. In adopting this stance I ask not so much of the content of this secret, but the mechanisms by which it is constructed and through which it gets disseminated.

### **The possibility of the path**

My 'position' finds itself placed as an attempt at conducting what Escobar and Restrepo term as 'world anthropologies'. For them 'world anthropologies',

[...] does not claim an epistemological and ontological privilege on some other criteria (e.g. the identity of the speaker, geographical location, or type of contestation). Rather, we see the project of 'world anthropologies' as an intervention aimed at loosening the disciplinary constraints that subalternized modalities of anthropological practice and imagination have to face in the name of unmarked,

normalized and normalizing models of anthropology (Escobar and Restrepo 2005: 3).

In lieu of this, I use the notion of ‘world anthropologies’ as a mode that seeks to address questions such as - What does it mean for an Indian Student to get an opportunity to conduct ethnography in Europe? More significantly, what does such a possibility or such an opportunity imply and why has there been a lack of such instances in the past? I place these questions within the larger framework of classificatory schemes that emanate from the hegemonic discourses of who studies who - which are largely labelled as ‘dominant anthropologies’. The bleakness of such opportunities and how such a possibility truly represents something other than the norm can be located in two particular instances. Firstly, there exists little literature on the specificities of a brown anthropologist conducting studies in the white world. Most texts on methodology engage with the question of the encounter in regard to the white man’s experience in worlds other than his own and more recently, critiques stemming from this approach which address the politics of a native conducting ethnography in her own land (Guha 1983; Srinivas and Ramaswamy 1979; Madan 1982). The position I found myself in not only had little relevant literature, but also such instances were hardly common. Secondly, this opportunity only became a possibility through funding from the European Union. Within the program that allowed me to take benefits of this opportunity, the time I spent in the field or even the ethnographic site I chose in an European country was limited to one that had a partner university with the program in question. These instances point to the institutional restrictions that allow for the proliferation of such a trend (Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

Having studied a law (Right to Information 2005, hereafter RTI)<sup>1</sup> that operates in India, I chose to go to Denmark to get a taste of how the same law (the Danish version- Access to Public

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1 On 12th October 2005, the Right to Information (RTI) came into effect in India after much debate. It signified an attempt to revitalize the notion of ‘democracy’ for the state and its citizens through propagating a more transparent system of governance, as it allowed Indian citizens to seek written material on the way that the state functions. Since its inception it has led to vigorous public debate and media attention on a host of issues which are chiefly a result of the manner in which corrupt activities of state officials have come into the public domain and which state officials fall in the ambit of the law.

Administrations Act 1985, hereafter APA)<sup>2</sup> operates in the Danish case. Both laws in their specific contexts give citizens the right to access written information from the state on its functions. Thus, in both cases it was seen as a tool encoded in state law to deface corrupt activities of state actors and widen the ambit of transparency. My central research question was – what did such a law do to the idea of the ‘state’ in the everyday world of the citizens by allowing for the circulation of stories to do with state corruption? India and Denmark represented counter-opposites for me. In India the citizen operates with the pre-conceived notion that the state is rampant in corrupt activities, whereas the average Dane prides herself in the transparent system of governance in Denmark. The research question then sought to investigate how the ‘state’ as reified object gets instated in the everyday through that which both laws in their respective contexts allow to come into the public domain. In essence, I was trying to grapple with the ‘ethnographic secret’, which in my case was the understanding of people’s experiences that had used the law in question. For me, the true hallmark of anthropology and its valid claim lay in the study of an anthropological object through the route of another. Thus I hoped to exculpate on the Indian case through my understanding of the Danish example and vice-versa. In attempting to do this, I viewed both cases as specific to their own ethnographic sites, without ascribing any pre-defined binary to the two (such as developed/underdeveloped, east/west, centre/periphery etc). The dominant template I used for this became Arif’s notion of ‘difference’ as a means to carry out ‘world anthropologies’ (Arif 2007). This notion of ‘difference’ is treated not as a resolved analytic and thus not reversed ethnocentrism, but as a proposition to be addressed. In order to avoid the pitfall of creating a reverse-ethnocentrism by advocating a discourse counter to ethnocentrism the need is for the anthropologist to place herself beyond the dichotomy of self and other in order to constantly question the discourses that make up these binaries and her own position (Lee 1997). The position is one which is simultaneously external and internal - recognizing the binaries but not allowing them to drive the mandate of the research. This can be made a possibility for Arif by viewing particular instances not in the substitutable terms (of opposition thus

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2 In 1970, the Danish Parliament adopted the Act on Access of the Public to Documents in Administrative Files, which was replaced in 1985 by the Access to Public Administration Act. In a general sense it meant the legislation of a law that allowed the citizen to ask the state for information regarding its functioning. Unlike India the law is chiefly used by investigative journalists in Denmark.

avoiding the threat of creating a reverse ethnocentricism), but in the mode of a Deleuzian repetition. This stance advocates that each encounter is treated as an anthropological ‘concept’ so that in ‘its internal profound vibration is an instance of repetition and not substitution’ (Arif 2007). The attempt is to formulate a disciplinary template that without denying history and getting trapped in traditional binaries, allows a movement forward. The moment forward into this sort of a formulation will be made possible when dominant anthropologies are no longer viewed as the defining myth of how relationships are structured in the loci of anthropology.

I viewed the opportunity presented to me, of being an Indian going to Denmark to conduct anthropological work and present my findings to the department in Delhi as a step in that direction. By viewing the world of anthropology through the trope of difference and not the binaries enunciated in ‘dominant anthropologies’ (self/other, centre/periphery, colonial/postcolonial), I aimed to view each encounter as sculpted through the trajectory of mutual discovery. That being said, I found myself being constantly reminded of the classificatory schemata that emanates from the dominant anthropologies while in the field (Foucault 1972)<sup>3</sup>. This difficulty was made most explicit to me by the way that I was perceived while in the field. Broadly speaking I found my presence to be understood along three broad ‘frontiers’, each of which was pronounced by a distinct form of consciousness in which a particular sense of the self and stemming from it – difference, emerged.

The first is, of course, the manner in which I was perceived within and outside academic circles. Further, within the academic world my presence was understood differently by those intellectuals that studied ‘India’ and those that took up ‘Europe’

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3 In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault puts forth that power in any episteme is embodied in the classificatory mechanisms that are set into motion and define the way that discourse is formulated. As discourse, ‘anthropology is a rule-governed system of utterances (a discursive formation, in Foucault’s sense of the term) that systematically constructs “facts” in ways that have at least as much to do with the goals of the discipline and the organizations it sustains as with the world “out there” ’ (Escobar 1993: 379) I use this analytic to understand how in my time in the field even though I attempted to view the ethnographic object through the trope of difference, several ‘encounters’ constantly informed my position as lodged in the traditional binaries of developed/underdeveloped, east/west, centre/periphery etc.



as an object of study. In all of my discussions, not just what I had come to study, but more importantly the manner (paths) in which this had been made a possibility for me was inquired into with great interest. For instance, over a long discussion with one of the professors who studies India, he remarked with gravity, 'It is about time the gaze was returned!' A similar, reaction was elicited by those who engaged with the question of India. This could possibly stem from the fact that I was taken to be a native, and hence could speak with some certainty on issues, that they themselves were concerned with. However, on another level, I felt there was an attempt to take my presence as a serious one and my study as important, maybe because they were aware of the kind of anthropology being practiced in India. Further the Danish law<sup>4</sup> I wanted to look at had not been studied from an anthropological point of view, to their and my knowledge. The fact that I had taken an interest in the same was treated as stemming from my prior work on the Indian law, but more importantly my study allowed an aspect of Danish culture (the mere possibility of and acknowledgement of corruption in their state system) to come to the forefront which had not been considered in the past. This became especially explicit through my discussions with Europeans that were not Danish, as one professor at the University explained 'There is a form of corruption here, but it's different. I see it, but it is garbed you see, it goes unacknowledged every day and one way of doing so is through the large amount of state funded research on studying why Danes are the happiest people in the world'. My research interests then allowed for their viewing of Denmark in an explicitly different way.

From my interactions with the specialists on India, those positioned outside India, for the first time I became conscious of how one's membership to a community is taken to refer to an almost automatic knowledge about one's own culture (Buchowski 2004). Through questions posed to me not just on my research topic but on India in general I wondered having received all my anthropological training in India what was the specific 'stuff' that attributed me my Indian-ness? This question became even more pronounced through my interactions with Danish students studying India. For them my Indian-ness was taken as some sort of a guarantee of my knowledge on India. However, as I was

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4 The Access to Public Administrations Act 1985 had not been studied in my knowledge by any scholar I met or attempted to contact. In texts that I could lay my hands on (I was limited by language, as I did not know Danish) I could not find any work on the aforementioned law.

to learn, their way of approaching India projected my home to me in a very different light from what I had ever viewed it in the past. For instance, the Hindi I spoke was quickly connoted as 'market everyday Hindi'. My Hindi had been a result of habit while their Hindi was a result of intensive grammar classes. In time, the way that I related to India became easy to chalk along the lines of how they related to Denmark, a site that was home and object of study at once. This occupied a diametric position to how I viewed Denmark and they viewed India, a site that remained an object of study (Abu - Lughod 2000).<sup>5</sup> Both sites were however viewed through the lens of the other so that in these encounters I found myself simultaneously distanced and brought close to both sites of Denmark and India through the discovery of sameness and difference. What became particularly interesting was how previous notions of sameness and difference were re-contextualised. For instance, a young Danish student of India said, 'Look at my name, the first part is my name, the second part denotes my village name and the third the fact that I am part of a lineage that stems from a common ancestor. So understanding the caste system in class was never difficult for me. Why should anyone presuppose that it would be an inconceivable idea to me?' These differences brought me closer, through the route of another, to my inside social conditions from which I was personally and spatially removed. Thus the way in which I viewed both sites was exposed to me in different lights through these engagements and became the first type of 'encounters' in the field that informed my notion of the field (Cheah 1999).

It could be convincingly argued that if I had gone to southern or north-east India (parts of the country I have little knowledge of), I would approach them in the same way as I had approached Denmark. The question of proximity to the field is thus placed above geographical and cultural differences; at the level of boundaries created by 'dominant anthropologies'. It is by giving

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5 Abu-Lughod argues that whatever objectification takes place in case of socio-scientific representation is countered by what she calls 'discourses of familiarity', the way we talk about ourselves with our friends. The way that I viewed India (*vis-à-vis* Denmark) and the Danish students of India viewed Denmark (*vis-à-vis* India) finds resonance in how Abu-Lughod puts forth, 'We know that everyone is different, that people are different, that life is complicated, emotional and uncertain. This counter discourse does not usually exist for us with regard to distant communities where all we might have is the social-scientific analysis, the ethnographic description, the timeless ethnographic photograph, not to mention popular racism and political domination' (Abu-Lughod 2000: 4).

eminence to binaries as opposed to differences that these boundaries get constructed. I am not trying to deny that there are no boundaries between the researcher, the field and the researched; only that the contours of these boundaries should not operate on the template laid out by the binaries of dominant anthropology (colonial/post-colonial, centre/periphery etc). Boundaries exist and it is essentially an exploration along and within these boundaries that form the crux of what the discipline is. Freezing these boundaries along pre-determined outlines decreases the depth of the anthropological enterprise. For instance hierarchy in India has become a gate keeping concept which limits anthropological theorization about the place in question (Appadurai 1987). What such concepts have done is not allowed for using the lens of viewing certain objects in India (or Europe) beyond the Indian (or European) field and hence leaving them under studied. This is exemplified in my case in that I found there was little academic concern in the Danish law I was interested in as a mode to curb/change/conceive of state corruption. More specifically, the possibility of such a gaze stems from my prior location in India and became possible by attempting to understand the Danish situation through the Indian lens. Since in India the RTI was used as a means by the common citizenry to deface corrupt state officials in the public domain, I attempted to grasp what such a law allowed/did not allow for in a society that prided itself for being transparent in its states functioning. This position was essentially a result of the fact that I had perceived the functionality of the RTI in India in a particular way before coming to Denmark. It could be argued that the dearth of such instances is primarily a result of practical and technical factors such as funding, resources etc., but also the degree of interest in the same is strongly lacking due to the dominant tropes for understanding particular types of societies (Buchowski 2004).

As I was to learn, attempting to place myself in such a formulation wasn't always easy. While explaining my project to those theorists who engaged with 'Europe', the first question that was asked of me was, 'So, this isn't like a Ph.D., right? You are just doing this for yourself?' On replying in the affirmative and also stressing the fact that opportunities like this are rare and I couldn't let it go, perceiving it as an important site to learn in practice. I was often told, 'Well it sounds like a Ph.D. topic to me, have you applied anywhere?' I wondered to myself if such statements did not point towards the fact that serious ethnography, must emanate from a structured program that is linked to an institution in some sense. Somehow my saying that I was still affiliated to

the Department in India, made little sense as my research did not fall into a demarcated study program. In fact, on putting forth that I did contemplate future studies but hadn't decided where and how yet, I was told by one professor, 'You guys only apply to the U.S., I mean all the Indian scholars that have some name are from there, or have studied there' (Buchowski, 2004). Was this an attempt to lodge me within the classificatory scheme of 'Dominant Anthropologies', by deriding the status of my research and my affiliation? I treat these engagements as 'encounters' in their own regard, in that they tell of my own 'position' in the field.

My reception, outside academic circles as it turned out, aided in the possibility of my research. People were more than willing to talk to me, as to them I represented a 'true outsider'. I was often told, 'you have come all the way from India, to talk to us about this. It must be difficult'. They too were interested in the logistics that allowed me to come to Denmark, but for them, my marked difference was reason enough to suggest that I was indeed undertaking some sort of a serious undertaking; whose importance though not easily comprehensible to them could not be derided. While my Indian-ness was not forgotten here, my agency was the ability to communicate through a problem that was both local and universal at the same time (perceptions of state corruption). I was taken as someone who had finally risen up to talk about something that not only formed an intrinsic part of the lives of Danes, but had not been spoken about 'enough' in the past. This communication set me up as a student of social science beyond anything else.

### **Grappling with the secret**

The encounters one becomes a part of in the field are always in a state of 'becoming', that is the act of doing ethnography is contingent on several factors that occur before, after and during the course of events that transpire in the field. Each previous encounter informs the next. The emphasis ultimately becomes about the complexity of individual contact points made in the field. Thus, my journey to Denmark was much more than just a journey to the west. What is retained by the researcher through these engagements consolidate to form the 'ethnographic secret', that she hopes to disseminate through what is written. The manner, in which these encounters unfold, is intrinsically tied to the position of the ethnographer before and after her entry into the field and the multiple encounters in the field. This unravelling of relationships is between unequal partners i.e. the researchers,

the researched and the field. Grappling with the 'ethnographic secret' then becomes an attempt to mould and be moulded by the discovery of these relationships and what they come to mean. It is in this sense that ethnography emerges from the site of the field.

In order to amplify how this works I view the field as constructed like a 'meshwork' wherein I use the Actor Network Theory (ANT) as a means to work through this 'meshwork'. By posing the field as a 'meshwork', I take on Arif's (2007) notion of structuring encounters in the field not through the binaries of centre/periphery, the colonial/post-colonial but through the trope of difference or a world of differences. By the 'meshwork' she implies,

-meshworks are self-organizing; grow unplanned and unpredicted; they are constituted by diverse elements; uniformity and homogeneity are not the criteria for inclusion and lastly; they survive on a degree of connectivity that enables self-sustenance....i.e. circumstances at which ethnographic encounters come to be placed outside of west vs. the rest, centre vs. periphery, colonial vs. post-colonial by highlighting their heterogeneity' (Arif 2007:3).

By viewing the world of anthropology through the trope of difference and not the binaries enunciated in dominant anthropologies, I aim to view each encounter as sculpted through the trajectory of mutual discovery, using ANT as a guiding principle. In so far, as ANT can be understood as a way of navigating through research, the word 'network' in ANT implies a way of registering the 'surprise' we have when we do research, to see the number of entities that become visible through description (Latour 2005). This 'surprise' is registered by what is made visible in the course of research, which is made explicit through the specific dynamics of the 'encounter'. This is structured by the positionality of those that make the encounter and also by how previous encounters inform future ones. This act of making visible is precisely that which informs the possibility of future encounters and that which structures the network, which finally forms the 'meshwork'. The directions that my meetings took were constructed by previous encounters. This process began while I was still in India, in my trying to contact individuals in Denmark who had heard/knew about the law I wanted to study. These contacts later fed into the people I was to meet during my time in the field, but also

how I approached the field. For instance, feeling like I had hit a dead end, when I got no concrete replies to e-mails explaining my purpose in Denmark, I was delighted to one day receive not only a detailed reply, on the current status of the law, but also some references of people who would be willing to talk to me. In all the exchanges that took place henceforth, my having come from India was treated with great importance, and meetings were quickly fixed. In exchange for people's time, I had to share my knowledge of the case of the Indian law. It cannot be denied that the easy facilitation of these meetings was also a result of the fact that during my time in Denmark, a committee had come out with the draft of a new bill for the law in question after eight years of deliberations.<sup>6</sup> While the draft was undergoing reviews in the parliament, a strong movement<sup>7</sup> had been set into motion, by a group of journalists that found the new bill as problematic. As, I was to learn, my chief respondents became these journalists that had used the law in the past and were now the torchbearers for the movement against the new bill. Thus, in exchange for them giving me their time to speak to them, I was asked to do

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6 On 16th May 2002 the Danish government created a twenty-one member Public Disclosure Commission composed of senior level journalists, state authorities and specialists of law to review the APA. The commission was appointed with the task of considering how new information technologies could be employed for improvement of access to public information, as well as assess the necessity for review of other laws related to freedom of information. After eight years of deliberation on 8th December, 2010, the Ministry of Justice presented a new bill to replace the APA of 1985 to the Danish parliament.

7 Members of the public disclosure commission framed the release of the bill, as a long laborious battle that would ultimately lead to greater degree of transparency in the state system. This view was challenged by a group of dissenting journalists that claimed that the new bill in fact closed up the possibility to access information. Two sections of the new bill were seen as especially problematic on account of the fact that they barred the possibility of the Danish media in getting recently acquired information (through the APA) of a state scandal popularly dubbed as the 'email case' which involved senior officials hiding information of corrupt activities through the deletion of particular emails. While the new bill was being debated investigative journalists were still in the process of getting their hands on the contentious emails or concrete proof of their deletion. Due to the call of state elections on September 15th, 2011, the new bill did not see the light of day as it did not go through three parliamentary hearings. The process must now be started anew.

an interview on the state radio channel, documenting my views on the operation of both laws in India and Denmark respectively. After getting over the first shock of being introduced as 'a specialist on law from India', I found myself feeling even more uncomfortable on being asked to give my views not just on the Indian law, but what Denmark could learn from India. Repeated efforts to explain that the laws, their use and thereof the events that were elicited were particular to the specific social-political contexts of both countries, registered little. Choosing my words carefully, I attempted to enunciate what I knew without giving any sort of advice.

Not ascribing any sort of hierarchical order to the two cases, I viewed the Danish case through the lens of the already familiar Indian case. What did this do for the way in which I approached Europe as an object of study? Cheah uses the 'inverted telescope' metaphor to describe Anderson's (European) surprise at the way Sukarno (Indonesian) described Hitler as a nationalist leader. Cheah takes on the surprise that a young Benedict Anderson pens down in the introduction of his book 'The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World' (1998), on hearing a young Indonesian, Sukarno characterize Anderson's Hitler as a 'great nationalist leader'. Hearing Sukarno frame Hitler thus, Anderson was forced to see a 'distanced' Europe mapped through a series that began in Indonesia. Not only did such a description have a 'dizzying effect' on Anderson but more importantly, it was an invitation to Anderson to see 'his Europe' through an 'inverted telescope'. Such a viewing of Europe places it as 'distanced and miniaturized' for Anderson. Cheah problematizes such a conception by asking whether Europe through such a viewing is in fact distanced, or brought closer as an objective reality? Further, he questions whether the placing of the comparative point for Europe in a context outside Europe, is not a reverse ethnocentrism (Cheah 1999)?

Without trying to displace the importance of the two points raised by Cheah I contend that with regard to the inverted telescope metaphor, what becomes important is not so much what is distanced and what made close, but what magnification through the telescope does to the two objects being observed. This is precisely what allows the viewing to take on a notion of difference rather than a binary that represents a hierarchical order. It is not whether the telescope is inverted or not, rather the fact that there is a mutual directionality of viewing. A viewing that is simultaneously moving in and out, which re-interprets the object/s being viewed. Thus, with regard to Anderson, not

only is 'his Europe' seen in a different light, which 'distances' Europe for him, but this re-looking at Europe, makes him re-look at Indonesia too. This re-looking at Europe in fact makes 'his Europe' closer to him after an initial distancing. It is this mutual directionality that aids in understanding through difference. This is most pronounced in the encounter. In my case my viewing of the Danish case through the Indian lens, not only presented Denmark as a particular type of object, but this could only be made possible by a re-viewing of the Indian case. For instance my encounters with respondents often led to discussions around the fact that citizens of India and Denmark both perceived the state system as problematic (in their own ways), yet whereas the average Indian citizen sought deliverance through the usage of the RTI most Danes had not even heard of the APA. It was only investigative journalists in Denmark that were really using the APA. In India on the other hand not only were most citizens aware of the RTI and also learnt of it through regular reportage of stories in the public media about what the RTI had uncovered, but there were different private bodies and NGOs that pushed for the heightened usage of the RTI by citizens. As a result of such encounters I often found myself reassessing why the Indian citizen placed such faith in the RTI, thus I viewed India differently from the European lens. My respondents often asked me (since I was allegedly the social scientist) why I thought Danes did not use the APA more often. This bi-directionality is that which made possible the provisioning of a space to do 'world anthropologies'. In this context the notion of difference allows for a re-evaluation of the way that the idea of the 'state' as reified object is actualised in the everyday in India – an understanding that occurred to me after my affinity with the APA in the Danish field.

What did it mean to understand the Danish case in this sort of a framing? How did it influence the way in which I saw and grappled with the 'ethnographic secret'? Most certainly, my take on the Danish case, inadvertently led me to being directed to other respondents in the field. For instance one respondent put forth, 'I get why you are here. The Indian law is a hot topic back in India. No one in Denmark even knows about our law. You want to know why, right?' In a sense this encapsulated my presence. But this assessment of my situation could only be reached through a mutual directionality that we both understood in our respective positions that together came to form our encounter. The way that I was understood was a key element in the way and the type of people I was directed to for further meetings. For Latour, ANT can only be used as a mode to register the trajectory that the



research has taken. It registers the 'surprise' of heterogeneous actors connected together which defines the many unexpected paths that the research has to pass through (Latour 2005). I locate this 'surprise' at the site of the encounter, which re-structures the way in which the anthropological object is perceived through a constant re-contextualisation of sameness and difference. That is the 'surprise' that both the interviewer and interviewed register through the mutual directionality of the gaze which gets constructed in the 'encounter'. In my case, this 'surprise' was registered in the way that those I interviewed reassessed themselves through the specificity of my position and vice-versa. For instance, a journalist who had used the law extensively to uncover a state scandal said, 'I don't know why more Danes don't use the law? I know we are very different as a country from India, but it's not like everything is perfect here. People do care about the way things are going on, but their interest is manifested in different ways'. Such statements aided in my assessment of not only the Danish case, but from it I was allowed a new lens through which to view the Indian case. It is at this level that my 'surprise' was registered. For the interviewed this 'surprise' is registered by giving them the Indian lens to think through the Danish case.

This 'surprise' is registered by approaching the field through the trope of 'difference and not the classificatory schemes emanating from 'dominant anthropologies'. In doing so, the temptation to quickly categorise observations into binaries ceases. It is precisely this act of not going to the field with a prepared list of world binaries that allows the 'surprise' to exist. The temporality of such encounters is thus emergent. It does not always involve new forms, but forms that are shifting, in formation, or at stake. It is this 'surprise' that then draws out the paths through which the research transgresses. This mutual 'surprise' defined the way in which I navigated through the field, the type of people I was led to, formulated the questions to ask and to whom. My grappling with the 'ethnographic secret' essentially became a means to register the 'surprise' that pronounced the mutual directionality of my encounters. The notion of difference then does not operate as one that pre-supposes and hence leads to a case of heterogeneity but it is an emergent bi-directionality which re-aligns contact points in the encounter through mutual 'surprise'. This 'emergent bi-directionality' then does not allow for a simple alignment of the ethnographic secret in the dominant binaries of centre/periphery, east/west etc., but is always in a constant process of re-contextualisation of contact points within and beyond the encounter defining paths towards the ethnographic secret.

### **Disseminating the secret**

After engaging with the field, the task that remains at hand is to pen down what has been learnt and also to disseminate the knowledge so gained. This act of 'writing' and the final output that is generated is dependent on the way in which the ethnographic object is comprehended and approached. While in the field, this is determined by not only the position of the ethnographer but also the ethnographic texts she has read/continues to read which then, informs her position and her gaze. Overall, my research work in Denmark seems to have been handicapped in two ways – first, I found no texts that aided me in approaching the specificity of my engagement with my field (a brown ethnographer in the west) and secondly, the Danish law that I had gone to study had not been academically addressed in the past to my knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

Being given the opportunity to conduct fieldwork in Denmark is not merely a question of being able to combine empirical data with theoretical sophistication. The point is about the theoretical framework through which one frames, interprets and analyses ones empirical data? My specific research agenda was best informed by contemporary theoretical reflections that emerged from theorization conducted by anthropologists seated at western institutes who had studied the indigenous world, or Indian anthropologists who had studied their own worlds. What did this mean for the way in which I looked at Europe as an object of study? What role did this play in the way that I not only approached the 'ethnographic secret', but the way in which I understood it and then disseminated its message?

My aim was to understand state corruption and the way in which it structured the idea of the 'state' in the everyday that is state creation. But how was I to comprehend this in the short time I was in Denmark, a country which was famous for its transparent state system? It took me little time to realize that I could not approach the matter as I had done in India. Even such assessments came from the position of realizing the difference that operated in the Danish field vis-à-vis India. Further, I found myself constantly referring to texts that dealt with the same problematic but which were ethnographically located in India, Africa or Latin America. Using such texts most definitely defined

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8 The Access to Public Administrations Act 1985 had not been studied in my knowledge by any scholar I met or attempted to contact. In texts that I could lay my hands on (I was limited by language, as I did not know Danish) I could not find any work on the aforementioned law.

the contours of my ethnographic product. In this line of argument I ask, is it possible for the anthropologist to become fully aware of the 'ethnographic secret' without distorting it in so far as the aim of the ethnographer becomes an attempt to appropriate the energy of the ethnographic secret without distorting its inner core, in other words - undertaking a revelation that does justice to the secret? (Taussig 1999) The fact being that becoming privy to the knowledge encoded in any secret distorts the very knowledge encoded in the secret by making it more public and shared. Does such an attempt to grasp the knowledge (which is the underpinning of ethnography) not lead to the re-creation of the very content of that secret? I contend that any sort of encounter essentially leads to becoming privy to the 'ethnographic secret' through its distortion. Any engagement necessarily instils change, nothing can remain untouched. Any distortion then leads to a simultaneous creation. However, through an orientation that treats of the 'other' through the trope of 'difference' and thus goes to the field without pre-conceived notions of traditional binaries embedded in 'dominant anthropologies', leads to a minimal distortion of the 'ethnographic secret'. This is made possible by allowing for the element of 'surprise' to remain in the encounters by not pre-determining which and how entities will present themselves as intrinsic to the assessment of the 'ethnographic object'. The implication being that the distortion from any kind of ethnographic engagement is interlaced with a simultaneous creation, which is minimised through 'emergent bi-directionality'. In my case this does not mean that I attempted to find in Denmark what I had seen and studied in India, but there was a way in which my gaze was defined along the tangents of similarity and difference along the Indian example. In so doing, there is most certainly a moment of coming together before a moment of breaking away through differences in both contexts of India and Denmark. In fact this is a constant process during and after the field engagement. This constant process of re-contextualisation informs the way in which the 'writing' component of research is conducted and the 'ethnographic secret' disseminated. In my case I saw the operation of state formation through the vantage point of garbed state corruption, something Denmark prided itself in not possessing. Such a comprehension could not have emerged without my prior engagement with the Indian case. Herein lay the construction of a path in itself. This path is intimately connected to and constructed by prior paths that finally led to the engagement with the 'ethnographic secret'.

## Conclusion

Does the shortness of my stint and hence the degree of affinity to the APA in the field disavow the status of my research? It could be convincingly argued that I had not engaged in serious ethnography, but that is too simplistic a rendering. Institutional factors more than anything else defined the shortness of my time, but even this meagre affinity with the European field aided in my perception of the Indian field, a site that I was much closely acquainted to. Retrospectively, this was the greatest learning I got from the Danish field, a chance to re-look at India through what the Danish lens allowed me. Further, it is with some certainty that I can state that such learning was intrinsically different and perceptively more rewarding from what ethnographic texts that dealt with notions of state corruption in India, Latin America and Africa allowed me to gauge.

My attempt has been to show that ethnography is a process, defined through the craft of grappling with, becoming a part of and then disseminating what has been learned of the 'ethnographic secret', which is gained/constructed through the encounter. Approaching the 'ethnographic secret' is tied to perceiving the field in particular ways. In order to avoid the trap of codifying the field and its entities in binaries embedded in 'dominant anthropologies', taking up Arif's trope of 'difference' aids in a more meaningful and well rounded ethnography. Even so, the tools for ethnography as I discovered emerged from the specificity of the field. The specific emergence of these tools is tied to the manoeuvrings through the 'meshwork'. The 'meshwork' then becomes a way of manoeuvring through the field central to which is the positionality of the ethnographer. The question then becomes - how does the ethnographer become an extension of what she studies? Is this extension defined by the 'meshwork' that the ethnographer becomes a part of when in the field? Most definitely yes! As I experienced in my case the differences in the field brought me closer, through the route of another, to my inside social conditions from which I was personally removed. These differences aided in my reception in understanding the object of Europe through my location. This realization was structured through heterogeneous differences rather than hierarchies that slotted the observer in relation to the observed. Since I had looked at the Indian law in detail, I was constantly struck by the way in which both India and Denmark approached the idea of the state, even if they were differently oriented to what their specific laws may entail. This possibility was also intrinsically linked to the issue of readability that I could comprehend from having been

in both fields. For me the two situations not only spoke to each other, but more importantly informed my perception of either and both. This not only meant the ability to look at 'Europe' through the Indian lens which was scarce in itself, but more importantly it meant an ability to re-look at India through the recently experienced European lens. My notion of both India and Europe were distanced and merged simultaneously which meant that, for me, there was a metamorphosis on not just a theoretical level, but allowed me to see analytics that I previously had not perceived.

My stint in the field in a nutshell can be described as a story of realizing and attempting to review relations of power and understand how discourses ossify. By giving eminence to difference in the field through the practice of a different type of ethnography (the very fact of my being in an European field), there is a possibility that boundaries and insularities do not get reified, but rather that anthropological knowledge achieves meaningful fructification. The hope is that such a trend becomes a commonality rather than a one off "lucky" chance I was privileged to have received.

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## DISMANTLING ANTHROPOLOGY'S DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL PERIPHERIES

Faye V. Harrison

If, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2008) and others have argued, another knowledge or *other knowledges* are possible beyond the imperial gatekeeping of northern epistemologies, then anthropology as we know it must be decolonized and transformed (Harrison 2010 [1991]). A fuller understanding of these processes can be informed by taking theoretical trajectories within the southern hemisphere into serious consideration (e.g., Connell 2007, Nyamnjoh 2011). Social analysis and especially “theory from the south” (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012) have historically been relegated to the margins of established canons—whether in anthropology or any other field in the social sciences and humanities. However, there now appears to be growing interest in imagining an alternative status quo. This trend is reflected in recent conversations framed by the concerns of world social sciences (ISSR 2010) and, in the specific case of our discipline, world anthropologies (Ribeiro and Escobar 2006).

Granted, anthropology has come a long way since calls were issued to reinvent, recapture, and decolonize it, beginning at least four decades ago (e.g., Hymes 1972, Fox 1991, Harrison 2010[1991]). Nonetheless, Francis Nyamnjoh does us a timely service when he reminds us that even the most liberal anthropology, the beneficiary of some degree of reinvention, is still perceived negatively and “denounced . . . for its radical alterity and for talking without listening” (2011:702) to what subaltern, particularly African knowledge producers have to say. Even African intellectuals who appreciate the value of ethnography as a research methodology tend to distance themselves from anthropology. They prefer to identify with sociology, social history, and even fiction as more congenial “modes of self-writing” (Mbembe 2002, quoted in Nyamnjoh 2011:702). An embedded ethnographic and ethno-historical sensibility within creative writing is also found in some expressions of African-diasporic intellectualism, such as that among women who practice varieties of “writing culture”



(Harrison 1993, 2008:109-133; Behar & Gordan 1995). This arena of cultural production is often generative of compelling counter-narratives against the dominant regime of truth.

In this essay I wish to make a claim for an alternative space for critical anthropological praxis. The alternative space I envision would be neither a margin nor a periphery vis à vis disciplinary core knowledge. Although peripheries are often dynamic sites of significant insight and innovation, their existence implicates disparities of discursive and institutional power that engender subjugation. I imagine an alternative space as a post core-periphery setting, a democratized and decolonized environment in which a diversity of anthropologists and kindred thinkers, whether academic or not, come together, productively engaging each other at the “crossroads of knowledge” (di Leonardo 1991). As I have written elsewhere,

Within this radically reconfigured intercultural and cross-fertilizing context, the anthropology laden with the stark gender, racial and national hierarchies that, within the context of the United States, marginalized Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Eslanda Goode Robeson, Ruth Landes, Allison Davis, and St. Clair Drake, will no longer hold sway. The hierarchical ordering of knowledges, depriving some of canonical status, occurs within national anthropologies as well as among them. The history and politics of canon formation and disciplinary boundaries have been important concerns among feminist, racialized ethnic minority, indigenous and world anthropologies (Harrison 2011:100; also see Harrison 2008:4).

My approach to the politics of anthropology’s transformation is meant to foster productive dialogues between world anthropologies and the anthropologies of outsiders within dominant national traditions, including the metropolitan variants in which some voices have been “minoritized,” if not altogether rendered silent.

### **Remapping anthropology’s international division of labour**

Particularly as the discipline has been constituted in the United States, anthropology is made up of multiple modes of ethnographic, archaeological, and laboratory-based inquiry; sociocul-

tural and sociolinguistic analyses; and theory formulation, both nomothetic and idiographic in scale. All varieties and traditions within the field have not gained canonical recognition and legitimacy, especially in the most prestigious and resource-rich research universities and supporting institutions. According to Arjun Appadurai (1986), the prestige zones of anthropological theory have been largely concentrated in the world's metropolitan centers. In these particular places gate-keeping concepts and metonyms have been authorized for explaining key, but only partial, dimensions of sociocultural life in other places, which usually remain exoticized and far-off. Sometimes distance is more social than physical, as in the cases of European and Euro-American ethnographers "studying down" the sociocultural, class, and ethnoracial hierarchies in their own "backyards." Distant places, however they are mapped, have been the major loci for ethnographic fieldwork and anthropological theorizing and model building for more than a century. For the most part, exotic and often tropicalized field sites coincide with post- or neo-colonial legacies of a past colonial geography of political-economic interests.

Anthropology's prestige zones have been formed largely through the workings of "universities, research institutes, museums, research philanthropies, and publishing outlets in the North Atlantic, with Great Britain, France, and the United States [as] the principal sites of epistemological and institutional hegemony" (Harrison 2011: 101). These metropolitan centers have exerted far-ranging influence on anthropology's international division of labour. In the light of the field's uneven and unequal development on the global terrain, the contributions made in the so-called peripheries have largely been absent "from the metropolitan gaze" (Appadurai 1986: 360). This absence has developed despite the actual substantive and theoretical significance of the contributions. As a consequence of this pattern, Ph.D. alumni from many research institutions in the north have rarely had any rigorous "exposure to anthropological theory and practice beyond the bounds of the hegemonic canon" (Harrison 2011:101). This does not necessarily mean that "local anthropologies" are not read or cited at all.

Within the context of traditional area studies, knowledges produced within those national and regional trajectories have not been disregarded. Nonetheless, there is the problematic tendency for southern anthropologists to be treated as high-level informants or over-qualified fieldwork assistants who provide data that northern scholars mine and refine, if there is

interest in extraction and appropriation (Jones 1970). At best, local anthropologists are relegated to the role of minor-stream scholars, rather than being regarded as significant sources of theoretically-nuanced mainstream knowledge. As I have pointed out before, this troubling observation has been corroborated by a number of anthropologists from both the global south and the metaphoric southern zones within the stratified north (Harrison and Harrison 1998; Connell 2007). An example is found in Ugandan anthropologist Christine Obbo's account of her experiences in Roger Sanjek's (1990) *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*. The late South African anthropologist Archie Mafeje (1998) and, more recently, Francis B. Nyamnjoh (2004, 2011), originally from Cameroon, have also interrogated the peripheralization of African anthropologists and kindred scholars whose writings are ethnographically grounded.

A hierarchical ordering of knowledges—achieved through processes of differential valuation, unequal exchange and “Western-mediated validation” (Ribeiro and Escobar 2006: 11, 13)—is sustained by a politics of stratified reception (Vincent 1991; Harrison and Harrison 1999; Harrison 2008). The result is that some categories of anthropological inquiry and analysis are relegated to the ranks of what the French philosopher Michel Foucault labelled “subjugated knowledge” in his writings on “power/knowledge” (Foucault 1980). However, the concerns of disqualifying and, on the other side of the equation, recuperating and reclaiming non-canonical knowledges have not been restricted to Foucault (e.g., Taylor 1971; Green and Driver 1976; Jordan 1982). This should be obvious, but prevailing citation patterns suggest a different story, one in which engaging Foucault is more valued and a more highly regarded measure of competitive worth in the academic market than “organizing one’s formulation around an equally brilliant thinker whose ‘situated knowledge’ (Haraway 1988) was produced outside of the prestige zone(s) of theory” (Harrison 2011: 102).

Archie Mafeje addressed this problem, which can be characterized in terms of *epistemological apartheid*. He critiqued the tendency in African studies and Africanist anthropology for Western scholars to attain authority and stature for texts that fail to acknowledge the role African intellectuals have played in debates and paradigmatic shifts (Harrison 2008: 30-31). This erasure, he pointed out, reflects the deep-seated presumption that Africans are objects of study rather than subjects who make anthropology (Mafeje 1997; see also Ntarangwi 2010 and Schmidt 2009). It is imperative to unlearn this problematic colonial presupposition.

The unfolding of my own thinking about the subjugation of knowledge and those who produce it on an uneven and unequal playing field has been influenced by trends within the sociology of knowledge—though I much prefer calling it “the anthropology of knowledge.” The literature that has been most informative for me as a U.S.-based specialist in African Diaspora studies is that which gender-subordinated and ethnoracially-minoritized social scientists have produced. Their critical analyses have sought to resuscitate largely neglected scholars such as Ella Deloria, Franz Boas’ Lakota Indian research assistant; the African American philosopher and social scientist W.E.B. Du Bois, whose antiracist social research developed parallel to and in conversation with Boas’ work (Diggs n.d., Taylor 1971; Green and Driver 1976; Harrison 1992; Baker 1998); and, beyond the boundaries of the United States, the late 19th century Haitian ethnologist Anténor Firmin (1885), whose robust *antropologie positive* contested the scientific racism of Count Arthur de Gobineau (1853-55), whose ideas resonated with his contemporaries in metropolitan Europe and Anglo-North America. Antenor’s legacy in the 20th century was a vibrant school of *ethnologie* that documented and theorized the African-derived cultural heritage shaping Haiti’s socio-cultural landscape. This ethnological project aimed to vindicate Haiti and assert the first Black Republic’s right to state and cultural sovereignty in the face of widespread international hostility and, most immediately, U.S. hegemony. At one point the latter assumed the form of a military occupation (1915-34); however, other mechanisms of constraining Haiti’s self-determination prevailed in later periods. Ethnologists of particular significance included:

Jean Price-Mars (1983[1928]) and writer Jacques Roumain (1978[1944]) [who] set the tone and standard for Haitian intellectual activities, which often included folkloric projects and the production of a genre of writings that blurred the boundary between ethnography and fiction” (Harrison 2011: 103). Contemporary heirs of this intellectual history include U.S.-trained anthropologists Michel Rolph Trouillot (2000) and [transnational] feminist ethnographer Gina Ulysse (2007) (Harrison 2011: 103).

The intellectuals mentioned here are only a few examples from the much more extensive *negation* (Green and Driver 1976) of individuals and entire intellectual streams. The negation, erasure, or peripheralization of indigenous and Afrodiasporic scholarship from mainstream anthropology’s intellectual memory is, ultima-

tely, part of a “globally distributed pattern within the intellectual life and professional development of anthropologists and the discursive and institutional formations within which they work at national, regional, and international levels” (ibid.).

### Shifting the paradigm, reversing the gaze

The most stark patterns of negation and peripheralization in our discipline (Harrison 1988) may be eroding as more anthropologists translate notions of dialogue, multivocality, and collaboration into ethically consistent concrete practices. Such practices must be cognizant of the power differentials that influence relationships with our research consultants (i.e., “informants”) as well as with our professional counterparts who produce knowledge within other national varieties of the discipline, especially in and of the south. Nonetheless, dialogue, multivocality, and collaboration are too often merely buzzwords appropriated as rhetorical devices or textual tropes for claiming ethnographic authority. These constructs should be invoked instead to affirm an ethic of democratic worldly practice, which, ultimately, can only be accomplished collectively and collaboratively. Our goal is to create more decolonized (Harrison 2010 [1991]), and intercultural (Ribeiro and Escobar 2006; García Canclini 2004) conditions for new forms of cross-pollinated, reciprocally-negotiated knowledge. This end cannot be achieved within a single national setting from a single set of “partial perspectives” (Haraway 1988).

Another possible index of shifting away from the (neo) colonial division of intellectual labor lies in the role that “post-colonial” intellectuals are now playing in metropolitan centers. These southern scholars are situated within deterritorialized epistemic fields that span across the north/south divide. The presence of postcolonial intellectuals in the North Atlantic definitely complicates the picture I have drawn thus far—but without really altering the basic disparities that endure between northern and southern anthropologies.

Appadurai (1996) is a prime example of this new trend. He is widely read and cited in the disciplinary and interdisciplinary literature on globalization and modernity. Other prominent U.S.-based anthropologists with origins in the south or east include Arturo Escobar, Aihwa Ong, past president of the American Anthropological Association Virginia Dominguez, and Veena Das. In addition to the academic celebrities, whom Virginia Dominguez (1994) has described as a hyperprivileged new-immigrant elite, there is also a secondary tier of international

anthropologists who are largely read through an area studies lens. Their scholarship tends not to be engaged for its theoretical implications beyond specific regions or local areas. Included in this category are Ifi Amadiume and Filomina Chioma Steady, both with jobs in well-regarded universities in the United States. Their research has been undertaken in West Africa and African diasporic settings in the Americas and Europe.

Few African or Afro-descendant anthropologists have been able to break out of the radically localized “black box” into a more cross-cultural or global stage of social analysis. There are a few notable exceptions to this pattern, however. For instance, the late Haitian Caribbeanist Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995, 2003) is widely read and theoretical implications of his analyses of globalism, the state, and the silences within history are applied well beyond the Caribbean. His scholarship has canonical status. Another noteworthy exception is the recent reception that the Cameroonian philosopher and postcolonial theorist, Achilles Mbembe (2001), who is based now in South African academe, is enjoying in U.S. anthropology. I hope this sets a precedent for a future that will transcend the paternalistic tendency of “adding and stirring” a few highly visible scholars symbolizing much more than the token change they actually materially embody. As I have argued before, “[m]ore substantive epistemological and institutional changes within the universities, professional associations, philanthropies, and publishing outlets of hegemonic varieties of anthropology require going beyond the limits of superficial symbolic representation” (Harrison 2011:105).

Members of the transnational intellectual elite (both the upper crust of hypervisible stars and the area studies scholars) work in anthropology departments or interdisciplinary centers where they enjoy advantages that their counterparts back home in the global south do not. (In fact, the most prestigious among them enjoy advantages that the majority of academics in the metropole do not.) While the immigrant “stars” enjoy high rankings in the citation index, the writings of most scholars based in the south are less accessible and largely absent from the discipline’s core discourse or canon.

Although many metropolitan universities are undergoing some measures of internationalization of their faculty and curricula, this frequently amounts to little more than impression-managing rituals of “adding and stirring” difference, others and “outsiders within” (Harrison 2008). However, tokenistic forms of diversification do not lead to fundamental shifts in how anthropology

is undertaken and taught. Shifts in the demographic profiles of faculty and students in North Atlantic departments of anthropology should lead to the diversification and enrichment of curricula and research agendas in more than cursory ways. The modifications that have already occurred sometimes generate disjunctures that underscore the need for more thorough-going retooling and re-education on the part of faculties who need to develop more heterodox toolkits and skill sets to effectively internationalize undergraduate and especially graduate training programs. If the process of internationalization is to result in more than lip service or in assigning the responsibility to the faculty representing diversity, then a great deal of sustained cooperative work is necessary. Fortunately, more anthropology faculties—but certainly not enough of them—have begun to address these issues forthrightly.

A few years ago, I was invited to be a part of a small international team of external consultants assigned to review the social anthropology graduate program at a fairly prominent Canadian university. I found it interesting that the university was aware of its relatively peripheral status in relation to major research universities south of the border in the United States. This was an issue raised in our discussions with faculty and administrators. Over three intense days, we conducted what was basically a mini-ethnography of the graduate program as it was encapsulated within the wider university, whose strategic plan gave a high priority to internationalization. The need to restructure the curriculum was a recurrent concern in our interviews with both faculty and students. The syllabi for core courses, especially that for the year-long seminar in theory, revealed a clear Eurocentric and North Atlantic bias—something that international students broached when we met with students in the master's and doctoral programs. Although the department had clearly benefited from recent hires that had brought more intellectual and ethno-national diversity to the faculty, the core courses that all graduate students were required to take were organized around a Western anthropological canon. Encouraged by the external review as well as by a workshop on decolonizing graduate training that I had facilitated several months earlier, the faculty had already begun to discuss potential strategies to revise the core curriculum along more diversal (Robeiro and Escobar 2006: 5) or *polyversal* lines—without “throwing the baby out with the bath water.” I suggested that it is not necessary to abandon the Western classics to integrate non-Western scholarship. Understanding this in principle, the

faculty, nonetheless, were struggling to reach consensus on effective strategies.

This case reveals that a considerable amount of retooling and re-education is necessary to prepare faculty, both intellectually and psychologically, to accept the challenges and unexpected consequences of decentering, parochializing or “provincializing” the West (Ribeiro and Escobar 2006: 3). Once the challenge is accepted, it may lead some faculty and students to seek a *reversal of the conventional gaze*. A recent exemplar is the provocative project of Kenyan anthropologist Mwenda Ntarangwi (2010). He has directed his ethnographic gaze at U.S. anthropology—not only its texts but also the wider social organization of the profession. He analyses U.S. anthropology’s departments, graduate training programs, and professional meetings. He compares American Anthropological Association (AAA) meetings to those of the Pan-African Anthropological Association. Relying on journals accumulated since his graduate student years at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, he has produced a thought-provoking *anthropology of anthropology*.

Ntarangwi’s courageous intervention represents the kind of work I have encouraged more of us to do in my own critical anthropology of anthropology, written from the perspective of a racially marked and gendered “outsider within” the profession as it has been constituted in the United States (Harrison 2008). While Ntarangwi is not the first African or southern-hemisphere anthropologist to conduct fieldwork in the United States, he has resisted the tendency and pressure to study down rather than up (Nader 1972). For instance, unlike the late Nigerian-born educational anthropologist John Ogbu (1978), who studied schools in which racial minorities predominated, Ntarangwi has not adhered to the convention of studying exotics or social problems in U.S. society—such as ghettos, communes, and deviants. He directs his lens at middle class, largely European-descended American anthropologists who, for the most part, study ethnographic others in Africa and other far-off places. In these exotic settings they, perhaps inadvertently, perpetuate the “nativization” of their research subjects (Appadurai 1986).

Hopefully, the discipline is now open to Ntarangwi’s and others’ “reversed gazes.” However, two decades ago, there was a strong backlash against the role reversal that Christine Obbo (1990) attempted in her research. Her white American colleagues were resistant to the idea of her applying the anthropological method to studying middle-class Euro-Americans like them. As



I have claimed elsewhere, “[i]n their eyes, her [research agenda] represented a quintessential status incongruity for which they were not yet emotionally or intellectually prepared” (Harrison 2011: 106).

The expansion and consolidation of the anthropology of North America, both intellectually and organizationally (e.g., in the establishment of the Society for the Anthropology of North American [SANA]), have elevated the status of doing ethnographic research on all aspects of U.S. society. Ntarangwi has gained from the momentum of recent trends in this area, with increasing numbers of American anthropologists working at home, sometimes due to financial or geopolitical necessity but also increasingly because of intellectual interest in a newly promulgated research agenda. The investigation of North America and other parts of the West is a logical direction for research if the comparative science of human similarities and differences is no longer restricted to so-called primitive peoples and lesser civilizations. It is also warranted if anthropology’s agenda includes interrogating the sociocultural and political-economic landscapes of metropolitan modernity and the epicenter of contemporary imperialism. New trends of ethnographic investigation have emerged around interests in the State, elites, middle classes, laboratory science, and new computer-mediated technologies in communications and health. Ntarangwi takes the shift in anthropological research a step further, following a logical direction for 21st century anthropology.

Southern anthropologists typically study their own societies or societies in the same general “culture area.” Within these contexts, they commonly study down rather than up the sociocultural hierarchy (Nader 1972). In this respect, they are comparable to most anthropologists who have done ethnographic research in Anglo-North America and Europe. In spite of the reconfiguration of research landscapes everywhere, the majority of southern anthropologists may, nonetheless, maintain a commitment to doing research in their home countries because of their chosen priorities, which often revolve around basic and applied research on problems related to national development, environmental preservation, poverty, ethnic and religious pluralism, and so forth. Their choices are often

constrained by the structured access to resources in environments where ‘research [is often] driven by local or international donors,’ which restrict what and where research is done and also the extent

to which these anthropologists can ‘produce... contributions to ethnography... [and] comparative theory’ (Ntarangwi, Babiker, and Mills 2006: 37). This is a good part of the reason why anthropologists [living and] working in peripheral zones are rarely recognized as leading theorists or even innovative methodologists (Harrison 2011:107).

Despite such difficult conditions, northern anthropologists have the responsibility to understand the diverse forms that theorizing assumes. Even with the effects of a structurally-sustained division of labor between metropolitan zones of theorizing and peripheral zones of “data mining and descriptive analysis,” the south is not impoverished by an absence of theory if we learn to discern and respectfully engage it (ibid.).

### **Promoting intercultural dialogues in world anthropologies**

The politics of anthropology within the global context is being addressed in conversations concerning “world anthropologies” (Ribeiro and Escobar 2006), associated with *Red Antropologías del Mundo* or the World Anthropologies Network (RAN/WAN) and, at the level of national and regional anthropological associations, the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA). Also, to some extent, there have been comparable or complementary discussions in some of the research commissions within the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), which predates WAN and WCAA by many years.

The emphasis on anthropology’s plural trajectories (Harrison 2008: 27) signals that the dominant North Atlantic expressions of the field are not the only significant discursive and institutional settings within which anthropological knowledge is produced. The invocation of “anthropologies” may also reflect the “post-modernist and poststructuralist scepticism about totalizing narratives and discursive regimes” (Harrison 2011:108). The pluralist language, in my view, highlights the empirical reality of the differential development of the discipline over a global terrain upon which multiple varieties of inquiry and professionalization have emerged and consolidated in diverse national and regional contexts.

Ntarangwi, however, offers a caveat that merits consideration. There is a risk of overstating the distinctiveness of national anthropologies. Especially under the intensified time-space-

compression conditions of globalization, ideas, cultures, societies and nations are not and, in fact, have never been separated by impermeable boundaries (Ntarangwi, personal communication 2008). Acknowledging salient differences should not preclude recognizing and building epistemological alliances based on what is shared in common. The danger of disciplinary fragmentation is something about which many American anthropologists are concerned. In some quarters, the four-field professionalization of the discipline in the U.S. is under threat. Competing theoretical and methodological inclinations, informed in part by the impact of the postmodern turn, have positioned some anthropologists into polarizing camps of “scientists” and “anti-scientists,” or so it is sometimes perceived. This antinomy oversimplifies complex issues and reduces the terms of the debate into two erroneously homogenized categories. In view of these tensions, any further fragmentation or proliferation of difference may appear to contribute to the discipline’s disintegration.

World anthropologies’ proponents place emphasis on the importance of forging inclusive, intercultural spaces for dialogue, debate, and creating new knowledge from cross-pollinations situated on a democratically reconfigured playing field. Under such conditions, the anthropologies of the North Atlantic would undergo decentering, and the related dispersal of authority and sharing of power can take effect both within and among the various anthropologies. Admittedly, this is much easier said than done, but “it is a constructive exercise to imagine a more levelled playing field that can potentially be conducive to more equal exchanges and coalitions of knowledges, including those initiated through South-South interactions without the mediation of Northern actors and institutions” (Harrison 2011: 109). The decentering of northern anthropologies does not prevent their participation alongside their counterparts from the south and elsewhere in the world. In the diversalist model that Ribeiro and Escobar advocate (2006: 5), inclusiveness is imperative as a matter of principle.

Since the 1930s and 1940s, the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) and the once-separate International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (ICAES) have been important fora for the international exchange of anthropological knowledge. The present-day IUAES (which merged with the ICAES in 1968) offers us a chance to claim the spaces of its constituent commissions, congresses and inter-congresses for undertaking the collaborative work of building new relationships and coalitions of knowledge. As a result,

diverse anthropologies can interact and weave productive “webs of connection” (Haraway 1988) for a world anthropology built on shared common ground. For a united front to develop, the discipline’s pluralities would need to be remapped in ways that are no longer translatable in terms of center-periphery dichotomies (Harrison 2008: 27). Both intellectual and organizational work—what I have called professional activism—are required to achieve this end. Moreover, for this agenda to achieve legitimacy within communities of anthropologists and well beyond them, we must engage the urgent issues affecting our publics around the world.

### **Reworking anthropology**

It is important to understand that anthropology’s margins are not only in the geographical south. There are peripheries in the north just as there are centers, often organized around transnational elites aligned with the north, in the global south. This alignment provides circuits of communication, transaction, and mobility much less accessible in institutions in the south’s south. In view of these complexities, it is important to emphasize the following point:

*The center-periphery nexus must be understood as a relation of power and structural disparities that exist at different levels and in different modalities across anthropological landscapes. Accordingly, in order to undertake a cartography of centers and peripheries, we must locate or situate them within a complex matrix of intersecting and fluid hierarchies of regions, nations, universities, peoples, genders, classes, races, castes, and cultures (Harrison 2011: 109-110).*

Some of my colleagues and I have devoted a considerable portion of our careers to undertaking some of this mapping and remapping, particularly as they concern the intellectual life and history of anthropology in the Afro-Atlantic world (Baker 1998; Harrison 2008; Yelvington 2006). This is an exercise that makes visible what has been rendered unseen and un-see-able through conventional lenses. Remapping requires “building a repertoire of conceptual, theoretical, methodological tools from what would otherwise remain unseen, unknown, and unexplored” (ibid.: 110).

I characterize the project I have pursued over the years as “weaving and producing new syntheses from the most useful

elements that can be drawn from both the canon and knowledge that has been excluded from it” (ibid.; also see Harrison 2008:2). I was being prepared for this work long before I realized its importance. I belong to and have learned a great deal from a heterogeneous intergenerational “intellectual social formation” (Yelvington 2006: 67) comprising teachers, students, and colleagues. They have made me profoundly aware that anthropology should not be reduced to its most hegemonic expressions and institutions. Intellectual labor outside the mainstream is often a source of creative knowledge worthy of being critically engaged and reworked.

My understanding of *reworking* anthropology and undertaking projects of anthropological weaving has evolved over the course of my career. As an undergraduate student I learned that I would not be exposed to the work, for instance, of African American or other African diasporic anthropologists through the formal curriculum, even in departments receptive to some degree of domestic and international diversity. I gained exposure to some authors and ideas that had been erased from anthropology’s core (e.g. Zora Neale Hurston’s books of fiction, folklore, and ethnography) in a Black studies program founded only a few years earlier as the university’s response to the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Their impact on students prompted them to occupy university buildings and public spaces to demand that, among other things, the curriculum be more cognizant of difference, especially race. (A bit later, a different group of students, mainly white females politicized by the earlier struggles of the period, protested and pressed administrations to revise the curriculum in light of gender.)

When I was a graduate student, I was exposed to a rich fund of heterodox knowledge through a few courses but primarily through extracurricular activities in an interdisciplinary group of faculty and graduate students. One of the most influential persons I encountered during that formative period was St. Clair Drake (1980, 1987, 1990), whose seminal writings on the history of anthropology as it relates to the Pan-African World made an indelible impression on me. From both his erudite scholarship and griot-style of *counter-storytelling*, a pedagogical and consciousness raising technique central to the later formation of critical race theory, I learned invaluable lessons, many of which were unavailable in books at that time. Most relevant here are the lessons Drake taught about anthropological histories that appropriated from, while building up their own momentum apart from, the knowledge of the metropolitan center. Today,

many decades later, the audience of scholars interested in these kinds of histories and their contemporary legacies has grown (e.g., Yelvington 2006). Today we can better understand that canonical figures such as Franz Boas and Melville Herskovits in the U.S. belonged to networks of unequal exchange with American Indian, African American, Cuban, Haitian, Brazilian, African, and other ethnologists, whose scholarship was peripheralized within the prevailing structures of academic and wider social inequality (Baker 1998, Yelvington 2006). Recent research recuperating these latter figures has made it possible for more of our colleagues and students to become acquainted with and remap anthropology's historically-contingent peripheral zones.

My earliest attempt at remapping examined the politics of peripheralization within U.S. urban anthropology (Harrison 1988). This field of specialization had neglected prominent African American and African Caribbean social scientists who had made important contributions to urban studies. Sociologists W.E.B. Du Bois and Oliver Cromwell Cox and, within anthropology, Allison Davis and his protégé St. Clair Drake, were the initial focus of my reclamation work. After I better understood the extent of Du Bois' influence on Davis, Drake, and other early antiracist and anticolonial anthropologists, I investigated Du Bois' interlocutor role in anthropology, especially with respect to Boasian antiracism. I learned that many of the early 20th century Black anthropologists in the U.S. were influenced as much by Du Bois as by the "Father of U.S. Anthropology," Franz Boas. The Du Boisian legacy has become a new focus of attention in the history of U.S. anthropology, thanks to a handful of authors (Harrison 1992; Baker 1998; Carbonella and Kasmir 2008).

The next step for me was to venture across a broader terrain to formulate the parameters for *decolonizing anthropology* (Harrison 2010 [1991, 1997]). At this point, I was not only concerned with the study of the African diaspora or "Black folk here and there" (drawn from the title of Drake's [1987, 1990] two-volume book). My approach to anthropology's decolonization problematized the reification of Otherness and the dichotomy between basic and applied research. It called on more ethnographers to move beyond their preoccupations with textual strategies for "writing culture" (Clifford and Marcus 1986) toward translating the tropes of dialogue and multivocality into concrete actions of ethically responsible field research. Another problem I underscored in my introductory essay in *Decolonizing Anthropology* related to the dangers of the epistemic scepticism and explanatory agnosticism

found in the most radically relativist tendency within postmodernism (Harrison 2008: 27; Shaw 1995).

A final issue highlighted in my conceptual essay (although, disappointingly, it did not generate discussion at the time) pertained to the importance of theory formulated from epistemic perspectives and lived experiences within peripheral zones. Closely related to this was the point I made concerning the need to foster dialogues and reconciliations between “First and Third World” intellectuals. I assumed that

through reconciliation, cross-fertilization and intercultural convergence could potentially engender new forms of knowledge or intellectual ‘creolization.’ I was aware that reconciliation was easier said than done, and pointed out that: ‘[t]he political authority structure and the political economy of professional anthropology must be seriously dealt with and changed before conditions can exist [so that]... Western and non-Western anthropologists can truly work together as partners with equalized access to institutional resources and power’ (Harrison 2010 [1991]:10, quoted in Harrison 2011:112).

Originally, my critique of dominant conventions in anthropology was largely focused on finding a way out of the hierarchies and power dynamics inhibiting the democratization of discursive spaces in U.S. anthropology. Eventually, my purview shifted to a wider terrain. My activities in the IUAES, especially at the commission level, are in many respects responsible for my expanded view. I have begun to articulate this cumulative vision in more recent work (Harrison 2008) in which I present a framework for critically reworking what I see as the best elements and practices within the field. By collectively working to meet several interrelated objectives, anthropologists are likely to achieve a more inclusive anthropology. I think that “[i]deally, [the outcome] would be an anthropology in which the dominance of North Atlantic epistemologies and organizational power would erode as more anthropologists rise to the challenge of transcending the limits of prevailing racial, gender, class, and national hierarchies” (Harrison 2011:112).

In *Outsider Within: Reworking Anthropology in the Global Age* (Harrison 2008), I delineate several interrelated objectives that I argue can contribute to the discipline’s reconfiguration. Among them are: rehistoricizing anthropology, those who do research

and those researched; rethinking theory, what it involves, who produces it with or without formal authorization, and which formulations are acknowledged and applied; making optimal use of the cross-fertilizing potential of *intradisciplinarity* (dialogues across subfield boundaries) and *interdisciplinarity*; promoting greater cultural and epistemic diversity within the field and deepening the democratization of participation and decision-making through professional activism; finding more effective ways to link academic pursuits to urgent issues of public engagement; and developing a commitment to decentering hegemonic epistemologies and to promoting genuinely pluri-cultural and *intercultural* dialogues.

This strategic plan for reworking anthropology is informed by my experiences as a racially-marked woman socially situated to see anthropology and the world that we study from a particular set of angles. I attempt to overcome the limits of my standpoint by placing my work in what Donna Haraway (1988) characterizes as a “web of connection” that potentially bridges a multiplicity of “partial perspectives,” leading to a comprehensive, multifocal understanding of ourselves and others in the world. Nearly two decades of working in the IUAES Commission on the Anthropology of Women has enabled me to build an international network that has expanded the terms of my self-definition as an intellectual. The trajectory of my thinking has been propelled by

the complex social facts that condition my struggle to ‘live in the West with ‘other-than-Western eyes’;’ as American feminist political theorist Zillah Eisenstein (2004: 115) has characterized the double (and, I would say, sometimes multiple) consciousness that W.E.B. Du Bois (1961) formulated in his 1903 *Souls of Black Folk*. For more than a century, the notion of double consciousness has resonated deeply with thinkers and politicians working within peripheral zones of theory and practice. Feminists have been among them, especially those who have become cognizant of how enormously ‘racialized and gendered bodies matter’ and how interlocking inequalities of gender, class, race, nation, and transnational positioning operate at the very heart of the global system (Harrison 2010: 3; 2011:113).

The more we are able to understand the interlocking dimensions of difference, inequality, and power that influence who we are



—and who we continue to become— as anthropologists belonging to wider intellectual social formations, often transnational in scope (Yelvington 2006: 67), the greater the inclusiveness we can bring into our theory and practice (Harrison 2011: 113). I would like to think that significant “re-visionings” and decolonizing practices can be accomplished through the activities of the IUAES, the WCAA, WAN, and other organizations and coalitions committed to the principles and goals of world anthropologies. This assumes that we can effectively rework anthropology by, among other strategies, troubling and eventually dismantling the boundaries of its peripheries *and its centers*, wherever they may be. It is important that we sustain an optimistic long-range view. Another anthropological knowledge is possible (Santos 2008).

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## A MIDWINTER AFTERNOON'S DREAM THE UTOPIA OF A COSMOPOLITAN ANTHROPOLOGY

Alcida Ramos

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a comedy by William Shakespeare. It portrays the events surrounding the marriage of the Duke of Athens, Theseus, and the *Queen of the Amazons*, Hippolyta. These include the adventures of four young Athenian lovers and a group of amateur actors, who are manipulated by the fairies who inhabit *the forest in which most of the play is set*. (From Wikipedia, March 15, 2011).

### Prelude

The theme of the anthropological universe divided into different zones of power seems to grow to gigantic proportions when regarded from the center. The Center-versus-Periphery dichotomy takes on bright primary colors when observed against the white and apparently frozen landscape of the Metropolis. What follows is a brief exercise in fantasizing about what that landscape might be if the power game was different.<sup>1</sup> Creating a fiction of academic democracy, like in a caricature, can help us highlight the most salient features of this problematic with no claim to realism.

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1 This short essay has the shape of a fable, a mythical narrative, or, more soberly, a utopia. It came to me unexpectedly on a clear, freezing day of February in the Midwest of the United States during my 2005 sojourn at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. This may be why it seems somewhat volatile, fanciful, perhaps unreal without, however, losing its analytical commitment and intellectual seriousness. Shakespeare's play of a dream involving the mythical Amazonas enacted in the forest – the Amazon? – was an obvious inspiration. The paper was presented at the Round Table "Antropologias Mundiais" organized by Susana Narotzky and Gustavo Lins Ribeiro for the First Congress of Latin American Anthropology, Rosario, Argentina, 2005.



Utopias are ‘good to dream’. Their horizons, although unreachable – and perhaps for this very reason – bring dynamism and, most importantly, doubts about the academic canons and *topoi* that are imposed upon us by political inertia rather than intellectual persuasion. It goes without saying that the anthropological hegemony that so disturbs us, especially if we are beyond the Metropolitan pale, is not an isolated product but the reflection of a much wider and deeper phenomenon, namely, the global division of labor and its attendant unequal exchange between peoples and nations. Why then not dream of what might be in another political-historical dimension? Why not emulate the teachings contained in ethnic wisdom about diversity and how to live with it? Why, for once, don’t we let ourselves be guided by indigenous experience, when our own explanatory devices are painfully inadequate to grapple with present-day conditions, when agonistic feelings impregnate our professional discourses and are pushing us into a blind alley?

### Utopia

Once upon a time, there was a utopia named *Cosmanthropolis*,<sup>2</sup> a word certainly as unexpected as its concept. In designing Cosmanthropolis, its founding fathers sought inspiration in the wise multilingual inhabitants of the Vaupés river valley in Northwest Amazon. These people have a rule of language exogamy according to which speakers of many different languages live in the same communal house under the leadership of its headman. Theirs is a multiple voiced community, a kind of organized and organic Babel. All members share idioms, ideas, solutions, and proposals while at the same time keeping their identity and local color that are preserved as symbolic capital for the community’s benefit.

Following this model, Cosmanthropolis prospered and became the most lively and creative thinking community in the social sciences landscape. Publications abounded for an audience of writers and readers without frontiers. Far from imitating the alienating assembly line of western industry, seminars took as long as it was necessary for all participants to fully express their ideas

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2 I am inspired by the important work by Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (2005. See also Ribeiro and Escobar 2006). In his laudable effort of renovation, Ribeiro argues for the creation of a *cosmopolitical* space that would contemplate a true world anthropology in which national anthropologies would have equal opportunities of expression and influence.

and have them properly discussed. Thus, ideas flowed unfettered by time or space constraints. Research funding was not limited to reinforcing dominant trends, but mostly awarded bold intellectual experimentation, wherever it came from. As a rule, text editors fined authors who undeservedly pretended their ideas were original and those who omitted due and just credit to colleagues in countries where they carried out fieldwork. Just as the wise natives of the Vaupés and elsewhere, the founders of Cosmanthopolis turned a critical eye to the cult of personality, for they suspected that behind a sudden and often hyperbolic success there are usually hidden agendas praising the individual at the expense of the collectivity. For this reason, they discouraged the tendency toward the proliferation of those intellectual hybrids that in vulgar parlance are qualified as “ethnic chic.”<sup>3</sup> These distinguished professors who thrive in fancy Metropolis universities brought from the Periphery great contributions that triggered off and kept alive polemics that are mostly useful to break the sleepy routine typical of Kuhnian normal science. However, most of them did precious little to bring recognition to the original traditions that inspired them.<sup>4</sup> Anyway, Cosmanthopolis pursued its course of small transgressions amidst a well looked-after social tranquility and intellectual justice, when major forces began to act (once

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3 Some thinkers, such as Ahmad (1992), do not conceal their deep discomfort with the pattern according to which intellectuals that migrate to Metropolis take on the role of spokespersons for their countries, thus gagging those who stayed to live the realities the migrants left behind.

4 To publish in English may bring recognition to authors, but hardly ever to their national anthropology. In my own case, like a black cat on a snow field (as in the luminous image of Brazilian novelist Érico Veríssimo during a trip to the United States), I have been given some credit for work that in fact does not result from a solitary and individual effort, but is rather the outcome of belonging to a specific national anthropological tradition. My individual production and my national tradition together make up a unique combination of both inner and outer influences without losing specificity. Students from the Metropolis, or others in similar situations who read my texts and are struck by certain unfamiliar descriptions and postures, have no way of reaching the imperceptible framework that gives me support and coherence. Nevertheless, not being seen does not mean it does not exist, as with the “peoples without history” who do not show their history because western scholars have no means to assess it. What passes as absence in some, unfortunately, is often the product of the ignorance of others.

more, we are inspired by indigenous ethnography). One day the Demiurge gathered the elected people and presented them with the dilemma of choosing. He (always a he) displayed a series of objects and invited them to choose whatever they wanted. There was the whole set of traditional items and also a large number of unintelligible novelties. The elected people chose at will and discarded the rest. They took bows and arrows, canoes, clay pots, hammocks, and all the objects that made sense in their universe. Somewhat surprised, the Demiurge warned that the stuff they had rejected would be offered to the strangers, the white men who were yet to be part of the elected people's world. Engines, airplanes, radios, shotguns, clothes, and all sorts of unidentified objects ended up in the foreigners' hands. Inexorably, as time went by, the new generations were assaulted by strangers who came upon them out of the clear blue sky in their flying machines, wrapped up in artificial skins, and carrying fire-spitting tubes. Without request or excuses, they took over the land and turned the elected people into an oppressed if not vanquished lot. Adding insult to injury, in came the missionaries who, in Don Quixote fashion, charged upon Satan's illusive windmills in their attempt to save indigenous souls. In the process, they imposed on the latter the humiliating dominion of one of the local languages as well as, naturally, that of the whites in detriment of all the others. In retrospect, the new generations lamented the fact that their ancestors had made such a bad choice. But one thing was certain and a source of pride: the present-day power of the whites, for better or worse, is the result of the Indians' own agency. Because *they* made the wrong choice the whites got to be what they are now, that is, the product of a fatal error, nevertheless, an *indigenous* one. The Indians lost precious goods, lives, land, and autonomy in most cases, but they maintain their self-esteem and the conviction that once they had their destiny in their own hands. If they did it in the past, surely, they can do it again in the present or in the future.

So, it came to be that Cosmanthropolis too was suddenly colonized by a flood of smart technologies and entrepreneurial knowledge that destabilized its horizontal world of equality in difference, and planted the seed of verticality of power in the system of production, distribution, and consumption of anthropological goods. Its members, too, suffered the imposition of the humiliating dominion of one language over all others. National references that lent organic and cosmopolitan flavor to the profession were lost. The concentration of wealth that rendered obsolete the mechanisms controlling inequality was that

great! Recognition of the advantages and legitimacy of other kinds of knowledge lost its structural importance. Cosmanthropolis collapsed and was replaced with the growing hegemony of Metropolis, while the rest, fragmented and impotent, came to be known as Periphery and succumbed to self-commiseration and the lament for history's unfairness.

### **The punch line**

What then would be the central issues that prevent the blooming of a genuinely cosmopolitan anthropology? We have seen some: the strong linguistic hegemony, the inequality of the editorial market, the intransitivity of ideas from Periphery to Metropolis (or worse, the latter's unwillingness to acknowledge inspiration coming from the former), and even the studied ignorance about what is produced outside the Metropolis. All of this greatly contributes to the invisibility of that which is not Metropolitan. Let us see some examples.

In the 1990s, Metropolitan anthropologists became aware of something many Latin American anthropologies had long known, namely, the need to bring the indigenous issue to the wider political context. Some (for instance, Thomas 1991) promoted an act of contrition for Metropolitan naiveté or guilt for having created a culturally exotic and politically isolated Other. Apparently, it had never occurred to them to gaze beyond their professional navel, to look for anthropological alternatives and find out whether their malaise came from anthropology as a universal discipline, or from their specific way of practicing it. This amounts to an ethnocentric or myopic vision of the discipline, which, after all, as a field of knowledge, is much more than the mere sum of its professionals, regardless of where they happen to work. Moreover, to abandon the quest for cultural diversity with the argument that cultivating it diminishes the natives with anachronistic exoticism and contributes to the domination of the weak is to miss the political point of what difference really means. It is precisely the insistence on the value of diversity that can act as an antidote against the West's arrogance in its certainty about its own power and the impotence of the Rest. Indeed, it is this very difference that can destabilize the imperturbable self-satisfaction of the Metropolis and stimulate Metropolitanans to do ethnography at home. However, when they try to do what they call "repatriation of anthropology" (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 111-136; Marcus 1998: 247, 252), they collide with the lack of that political *savoir faire* that distinguishes Latin American anthropologists, for whom

anthropology-at-home is as old as anthropology itself. When Metropolitans discover that anthropology does not live by primitives alone, they simply propose turning their backs on them and embrace the study of the Center and of the gigantic power web that entraps peoples in the Periphery. This syndrome seems to elicit a nearly matricidal reaction regarding the discipline. Accused, for example, of transforming the concept of culture into an instrument of domination (Abu-Lugod 1991), anthropology is also taken to task for reinforcing the imbalance of world power that these scholars seem to have just discovered. After decades of studying abroad, they realize that power, more than anything else, screams out for anthropological attention. We might call this syndrome nostalgia of the Center.

Thus, to go on studying “primitives” takes on a politically incorrect quality if not done in the mode of denunciations of oppression and historical injustice. In other words, in the eyes of these political Adventists, anthropological work is legitimate in so far as it inquires about the ways of western domination over marginalized peoples. In and of themselves, these peoples would be of no interest apart from sources of exoticism. It is as though they depended on anthropologists to make their “agonies of oppression” (Herzfeld 1997: 23) politically visible and relevant. In fact, some authors seem to reproach anthropology for having dedicated too much time “to the study of abstruse customs of out-of-the-way tribes” (MacClancy 2002: 1).

Let us imagine the rise of a “reverse anthropology” à la Wagner and Kirsch. In a passing remark in *The invention of culture* (1981), Roy Wagner speculated about the possibility of turning anthropology around and having indigenous peoples do what academic anthropologists are accustomed to do among indigenous peoples, i.e., “literalize” the metaphors of modern Western society. Wagner did not follow up this idea, but in *Reverse Anthropology* (2006), Stuart Kirsch expands Wagner’s flitting idea and has inspired me to see reverse anthropology as a much more promising notion for the future of anthropology than simple mirror images of distanced mutual gazing. To my mind, in Kirsch’s version, the tiny crack opened by Wagner widened into an open door. He realized that the rites and narratives in which he participated in New Guinea were no more nor less than the manifestations of Yonggom “theoretical consciousness.” It is a fine and complex system he deems comparable to the anthropological analysis of their myths. I take this ‘comparable’ in the sense of intelligibility rather than profundity because, no matter how meticulous an anthropological study can be, it hardly reaches the depths and

nuances of meaning of a native analysis.<sup>5</sup> This is in part what Huron historian Georges Sioui (1995) laments when he expresses his frustration at the difficulty “whites” have in understanding what the Indians try to explain. Reverse anthropology is fine, but we would be wise not to entertain too high a hope of injecting a modicum of humility in the West. An effective change in this direction might only come as a result of the Center’s own internal contradictions and institutional exhaustion affecting its political and economic core.

Kirsch’s ethical-ethnographic considerations allow us to reflect upon symmetries and intercultural dialogues. If a reverse anthropology is possible, what can an “indigenous anthropology” be? To mention the Brazilian case, now that an increasing number of Indians have access to higher education, one expects that, once equipped with the anthropological instruments of analysis, some will engage in “auto-ethnographies” (Ramos 2008). In his recent doctoral dissertation, anthropologist Gersem Luciano, a Baniwa Indian from Northwest Amazon in Brazil, expresses the same opinion:

This new political scenario of indigenous rights has brought about new challenges to anthropology’s disciplinary trajectory regarding research among indigenous peoples. The first issue is the change in hegemony in ethnographic research. Instead of a white subject studying indigenous subjects as objects of knowledge, allowing him (her) to claim a pretended objectivity and epistemic neutrality, there is a new situation of indigenous subjects studying themselves as thinking and knowledge producing subjects, and soon there will also be indigenous subjects researching and studying whites, including anthropologists (Luciano 2011: 105).

In the next few years, this process is likely to thrive. However, we should bear in mind the risks of overestimating the benefits of formal education in detriment of traditional modes of learning

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5 In his ethnography, Kirsch describes a Yonggom epistemological system that explains their universe with great sophistication. This epistemological apparatus provides those people with the intellectual means to understand and act upon the troubles caused by the invasion of their territory, whether by powerful mining companies with their unrelenting environmental devastation, or by the brutal dictatorial regime imposed by Indonesia upon the western part of New Guinea.

carried on by oral transmission for which a different cognitive apparatus greatly based on imitation and repetition is required. Just as formal schooling opens new horizons it can also potentially erase or dim systems of knowledge that are central to indigenous intellectual traditions.

In sum, I propose to bring back the disquiet that led Fabian (1983) to take anthropologists to task for denying coevalness to non-Western peoples. It is also worthwhile to heed Jack Goody's (2008) critical position regarding the way Westerners have stolen the History of the Chinese, the Muslims, etc., by ignoring their inventions in order to promote them as their own. As Fabian contends, anthropologists have already a significant measure of responsibility for stealing History from indigenous peoples, so, let us not also contribute to the theft of their theories.

All this is to show that a truly ecumenical anthropology would have to contemplate not only peripheral academic anthropologies, as Hannerz (2008) proposes, but also indigenous theoretical production. My own discomfort relates to the apparent distaste of ethnographers for acknowledging native epistemologies – be they central or peripheral – for what they are rather than masking them under tired rubrics such as myths, cosmologies, and beliefs (Ramos 2011: 110-113). With precious few exceptions (Evans-Pritchard's study of Zande witchcraft is a brilliant counter-example), the most theoretically ambitious anthropologists have risen above the crowd due to their shrewd use of native concepts as raw material to build up grand schemes on a macro scale. Local theories have been transformed into something larger than life, thus relegating native theories to the anonymity of "ethnographic data." When taken for what they really are, native epistemological contributions would further enrich that discussion of anthropological ecumene by adding one more turn to the spiral of world anthropologies.

Let us return to the Center versus Periphery debate. If Metropolitan anthropologists left Metropolis just for a moment and examined what anthropology looks like in the Periphery, they would see that contextualizing the local in a wider political perspective is the bread and butter of Mexican, Argentine or Brazilian anthropologies, to limit ourselves to the Latin American circuit. Their easily detectable canon is based on interethnic relations rather than on unitary monographic studies. Hence, for those who grew up professionally with the perception that to do anthropology is a political act (Ramos 1999/2000), which, by definition, favors the contextualization of social transactions within and between peoples, those issues that of late have disturbed

our Metropolitan colleagues seem to us a little like inventing gunpowder anew. To suppose that suppressing the ethnographic canon in and of itself might eliminate the pernicious effects of exoticism is to distort the issue, for anthropological work never happens in a vacuum, whether in the field or in the office. Moreover, anthropologists have no full control of their products, for they become part of the huge market of symbolic exchanges with its own rules and consequences. Depending on the sociopolitical context, the reading public, a major factor in anthropological production, may ultimately neutralize a potentially fecund idea. I hope someday, somehow, we can pierce through the Metropolis shell and inseminate it with the virus of self-doubt. True, all societies have defense mechanisms against possible attacks on their integrity, but we seldom find as strong a capacity as that of the Metropolis to phagocytize differences, be these internal or external, converting them in an easily digestible pulp.

On the one hand, the voracious appetite of the dissemination centers of cultural goods is quite evident. On the other, there is always a dialectical movement underlying processual history that unfolds in silence, most often imperceptibly, but with the power to change the course of events. It is very likely that the rising tide of globalization contains in itself the blueprint of its own confines and the possibility of a new era. Even taking into account the negligible power of anthropological discourse to change hearts and minds in this vast world, we have reason to believe that not everything is lost in the smog of globalization.

Closing the circle, let us go back to the anthropological utopia. We can see, on the horizon, the growing shape of an entity that may well transform the political scenario of world anthropology. It is called WAN for short (World Anthropologies Network) and is said to be a collective movement for the pluralization of the modes of anthropological practice in a context where Anglo-Saxon discourses about difference are still hegemonic (Ribeiro 2005). WAN was created by anthropologists from various countries, mostly peripheral, with the purpose of gazing critically at the discipline's international dissemination, enlarging its plural landscape, and engaging professionals in the construction of a polycentric anthropological field (Ribeiro 2005; Ribeiro and Escobar 2006), or, better still, of diverse but politically and academically equivalent differences. This seed needs to be nourished with great care if we want it to bear the fruit it promises.

The lessons coming from both Peripheral and Native wisdom ultimately show us that cosmopolitanism does not, after all, reside



in the Metropolis, which, with honorable exceptions, tends to be satisfied with the tedious exercise of self-referencing. Anthropological cosmopolitics (Ribeiro 2011) is out there, in a space where we can read in various languages, and where we welcome ideas from abroad free from acritical and sterile allegiances. It is a space where one recognizes that the agency of guileless ancestors has the strength and drive to overcome the status quo. It is where, in the politically incorrect saying of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, the nineteenth-century Argentine writer and strategist, “*las cosas hay que hacerlas. Bien o mal, hay que hacerlas*” (Things have to be done. For better or worse, one has to do them)!

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