



Beyond Public Anthropology: Approaching Zero

Keynote address by Maximilian C. Forte delivered by video to the 8th Annual Public Anthropology Conference, “(Re)Defining Power: Paradigms of Praxis,” American University, Washington, DC, 14-16 October, 2011.

I offer my very warm thanks to the conference organizers for inviting me to make this presentation, for which I am extremely honoured. I also wish to especially thank Binnie Katti for her patience and guidance in helping to organize this presentation.

Let me begin by saying that I do not consider or call myself a “Public Anthropologist,” in large part due to what I perceive as a series of deliberate ambiguities and intended shortcomings with the ways it has been conceptualized, and that is the position that I am starting with here. Let me begin by saying that I do not consider or call myself a “Public Anthropologist,” in large part due to what I perceive as a series of deliberate ambiguities and intended shortcomings with the ways it has been conceptualized, and that is the position that I am starting with here. I should also begin by briefly identifying the kinds of advocacy and activism which I have practiced, and these are: 1) challenging the political and scholarly genocide that keeps Indigenous Peoples in the Caribbean marginal if not invisible; 2) analyzing and denouncing the militarization and imperialization of academic Anthropology; 3) helping to organize Anthropologists for Justice and Peace. Much of my work uses new media technologies, as well as old media, such as teaching.

Encountering Public Anthropology

Public Anthropology, such a peculiar label, is something I first came to understand intuitively from the way colleagues applied the phrase when describing certain of my own practices and products. In other words, I did not follow a rigorous regimen of background readings in Public Anthropology, before beginning my own advocacy and public communication practices as a graduate student.

For example, I initially had no idea that developing ethnographic websites that communicated my research about the Caribs of Trinidad, and that networking with Caribbean Indigenous persons online and collaborating in producing web-based directories, publications, and information resources would be called Public Anthropology by some. Public Anthropology came to mean for me a practice defined by communicating with a public beyond the academy, in arenas outside of the academic setting, and conveying knowledge that is somehow constructed as anthropological,

and that at least some viewed it as a sideline activity, off the normal and expected course for academics.

Public or Applied?

Before encountering the “Public Anthropology” label as it was applied by some to my work, people in other social science disciplines referred to it as a participatory action research. Some colleagues in Anthropology, usually members of a generation that joined the professoriate in the 1960s, referred to it as Applied Anthropology. I was told that in past times, any Anthropologist communicating their work by public means, to a wider public, and addressing specific social problems, was an applied anthropologist, that is, until corporate and developmentalist anthropologists appropriated the term for their much narrower, and often much less broadly public activities, or, as some would have it, until some anthropologists wished to distinguish themselves from these types of applied activities and chose to call themselves Public Anthropologists.¹ I do not know which of these two versions of history is the more accurate one, and I am not convinced this question should even matter to me.

Public vs. Private Anthropology: Is There a “Really Public Anthropology”?

With reference to a volume I edited, *Indigenous Resurgence in the Contemporary Caribbean*, in which I co-wrote a chapter with the chief of Trinidad’s Caribs, a colleague in the U.S. scanned the contents, saw my chapter, and chapters by Indigenous activists, most of the material written for a general readership, and he sent me a message saying: “Interesting, and how very Public Anthropology of you”. The phrase did not sit well with me at all, because it implied that there was a *private* anthropology, and that was the *normal* thing we did, whereas Public Anthropology was somehow the more *abnormal* activity, and the less valuable one.

It also did not sit well with my understanding of the fundamental nature of anthropology as a public practice—anthropology cannot be about the world and then suddenly manage to remain separate from that world. In my understanding, the practice of being an anthropologist always meant *being out there in the world*—whether it was the so-called armchair anthropology of the late 1800s, which required that one at least entertain working relationships with members of the public (such as missionaries, travelers, and colonial officials); whether it was mounting exhibits at world fairs or in museums, as was also done in the 1800s; or whether it is spending months and years as a guest in some small community away from one’s home, what we call ethnographic fieldwork—all of these are *public* activities, as far as I can ascertain the meaning of “public”.²

¹ See Barbara Rylko-Bauer, Merrill Singer, and John Van Willigen, “Reclaiming Applied Anthropology: Its Past, Present, and Future,” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 108, No. 1, 2006, pp. 178-190.

² After reading any collection of articles on the subject of “Public Anthropology,” one may get the uneasy feeling that “public” means *everything* outside an academic’s classrooms, conferences, and regular publication venues. If so, this can conflate *civil society*, or the “the public sphere” as in Habermas’ theory, with the state, which already then works to shape the praxis of “Public Anthropology” by not differentiating which “public” it seeks to serve. See: Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text*, No. 25/26 (1990), p. 56. As Fraser argues (p. 60), this

Indeed, I think we could make the case that the very origins of institutionalized Anthropology stem from a prior, public practice and campaign to market it as a distinct area of knowledge production.

The second instance where it became clear that our daily, routine, practice of *teaching* is itself a Public Anthropology, came in a comment from a librarian here at Concordia. I was ordering a film to be shown in class, and she mentioned that the real cost would not just be the usual \$400 U.S. charged by academic distributors (which is why I won't use them for my films), but an additional \$600 for "public performance rights" (which is why I will place all my films on the Web). I queried why the university had to pay for these so-called "public performance rights". "I am not running some movie theatre here, and I am not selling tickets. How is this a public performance when it happens in my classroom?" That librarian replied with a wink: "Imagine how much weirder it would be to think of what you do as a *private performance*" which of course, in a campus neighbourhood inhabited by a few massage parlours and strip clubs, is an idea that brings the wrong images to mind. The point here is in the realm of law and the market, what we do is defined as a public practice, and indeed the most routine way in which all professors are public anthropologists is by teaching.

All universities in Canada (except maybe one that is very new) are officially public institutions. Our research is publicly funded, and there is now finally considerable emphasis placed on "mobilizing knowledge," "community outreach," and making the results of our research accessible to the public that paid for it in the first place. Thus once again it becomes impossible to dissociate our daily practice from the public, however the public may be conceived.

So when we teach we are practicing as public anthropologists already. Yet, we have a field of activity that is itself labeled Public Anthropology, as if this were something that was *really, really public*.

Then what is this supposedly really, really public anthropology? Presumably it is a self-conscious, deliberate practice that *might* involve advocacy and social activism,³ or it could be much broader and seemingly more inert in political terms.⁴ The target audience would of course be *the public*

question is not just theoretical, but has practical political consequences, especially vis-à-vis the state and the market.

³ This might not be much more than a rebranded iteration of "Public Anthropology," and perhaps it is just one that tries to mend the divide between "Public" and "Applied," but "Engaged Anthropology" seems to go a little further beyond merely communicating Anthropology to "the public"—it includes "(1) sharing and support, (2) teaching and public education, (3) social critique, (4) collaboration, (5) advocacy, and (6) activism" (see for example this introductory article to a special supplement of *Current Anthropology*: Setha M. Low and Sally Engle Merry, "Engaged Anthropology: Diversity and Dilemmas: An Introduction to Supplement 2," *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 51, No. S2, Engaged Anthropology: Diversity and Dilemmas (October 2010), p. S203).

⁴ Presumably, I write, because there seems to be some unresolved tensions in the writing on the topic of "Public Anthropology". Even in cases where authors are aware of a bureaucratic, self-interested, institutional Anthropology interested mainly in shoring up its privileges and prestige, versus an activist "out

beyond the *academic public*, that is, beyond one's nearest, daily constituency of colleagues and students.⁵

The *Anthropology* in Public Anthropology

Thus far, in speaking about Public Anthropology, we have already encountered a few contending notions, of public versus private, of the built-in “public-ness” of the anthropological endeavour, of working in public universities, of publics both academic and beyond. I also mentioned that there is a sense that something called Public Anthropology (or *Really* Public Anthropology) is usually a self-conscious practice that involves communicating with an audience beyond the academic one.⁶

What are they communicating? It is not difficult to find professional Anthropologists who assert that the purpose of Public Anthropology is to communicate Anthropological insights to the wider, generally non-academic public, to show how Anthropology can be interesting to that public, and thus boasting of our invaluable and unquestionable expertise as specialists. All of this suggests that all of the thinking that needs to be done, has already been done (by us). What remains is simply to connect our already existing knowledge with a potential audience. Social events become potential opportunities—opportunities for what? For making ourselves heard, to gain respect for our discipline. Like we teach students in classrooms, now we will teach readers of Op-Eds. Anthropology's house is in order, and the public's house is not—we have expert insights as to why the latter is the case. We supposedly challenge taken-for-granted ideas about the world, but we do not challenge the taken-for-granted idea that Anthropology should exist as a professional discipline

there” Anthropology seeking to improve the welfare of mankind, those authors nonetheless seem to ignore how Public Anthropology is designed to also, if not primarily, be of service to that same bureaucratic Anthropology from which it emerges. As an example, see Luke Lassiter, “Collaborative Ethnography and Public Anthropology,” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Feb., 2005), pp. 83-84.

⁵ Of course there has been and there will continue to be some disagreement around how one should define “Public Anthropology”. In one recent attempt, where different levels and forms of anthropology as a public practice (as it always has been) are generally overlooked, and where the definition is made to suit one specific social context, we have: “Public anthropology: Socially relevant, theoretically informed, and politically engaged ethnographic scholarship” (Carole McGranahan, “Introduction: Public Anthropology,” *India Review*, vol. 5, nos. 3-4, July/October, 2006, p. 256). As is the custom, we take the familiar for granted, so that students in university classrooms are already divorced from “the public domain” in such definitions. In addition, not all of what has been called “Public Anthropology” has been “politically engaged” in any deliberate and ostensible sense, and being “socially relevant” is a bit amorphous and weak, as there will always be *something* that is relevant to *someone* in a society. Being “theoretically informed” is almost inescapable, and therefore not a remarkable feature worth including in this definition. The question might be what do they do with that theory? Do they share it, explain it, argue it, or do they hide it? How does theory differ from the politics of one's engagement? What I am reaching for here is recognition that *all* of our social and cultural theories either have a direct political focus, or have clear political implications, or maintain striking silences within them that speak to the conditioning of politics (see fn. 33).

⁶ I capitalize Anthropology when speaking of the institutionalized, professional, disciplinary variant. When speaking of multiple other anthropologies, informal, non-disciplinary, or non-academic, I often choose to write that as (a)nthropology for emphasis.

in that world—that discussion is virtually forbidden, and off the table altogether. Moreover, we are not even sure what defines Anthropology.⁷

Immediately I see problems with the words we use in our language. It would be more exact to say that Public Anthropology is another way of publishing anthropology—it should be called *publicated* Anthropology, and what we otherwise do (publish in journals, for example) could just be called *published* Anthropology. For now, we have to do with common understandings of “Public Anthropology” as being the dissemination of Anthropology to so-called non-anthropological audiences—which of course reinforces another problem, that being the conflation of institutional, disciplinary Anthropology with the many (a)nthropologies that exist out there (see fn. 8).

Public Anthropology, conceived in the way it has been described, is really disturbing for arguably not being *anthropology* at all. It is not intended as a practice that builds on encounter, that depends upon immersion, reciprocal teaching, mutual learning, and reshaping one’s knowledge and ideas based on reflection from practice. No, instead it is rather static, conservative, hierarchical, and status-seeking: here is *the Anthropological Knowledge*, there is *the public*, now bring some of the former over to the latter. It is thus not anthropology *as such*, it is Anthropology *for itself*.⁸ It can amount to little more than a sales gimmick. It also reflects what we often *do to* undergraduates in the name of “pedagogy”: we try to win their support for anthropology, and thus we teach them *anthropology*, when what they really want to know about is the world, and not just talk about the vehicle for getting to know that world.

In this mode of Public Anthropology, we hear people typically asking questions such as these: “What does Anthropology have to say about Issue X?” (As if anthropology could speak.) “How can

⁷ One of my favourite quotes on this topic: “Anthropologists seek no less than an understanding of the nature of humankind, yet they are suspicious of any generalization at all. They idealize a holistic view; yet, by the very complexity of the systems they confront, they are forced to isolate small subsystems. They demand precise classification, yet may argue that typologies distort more than they clarify. In sum, anthropologists are torn between diametrically opposed demands: to be true to the intense particularity of their field experience, and to give meaning to that experience by generalizing it to the world at large” (from Ted C. Lewellen, *Political Anthropology: An Introduction* [Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1992], p. 5.)

⁸ This was a candidly stated position put forth by Harvard Anthropologist Evon Vogt in the early 1950s: “the extent to which the general public develops sympathetic understanding of the work of the discipline is necessarily a matter of serious concern to the professionals.” See Evon Z. Vogt, “Anthropology in the Public Consciousness,” *Yearbook of Anthropology*, (1955), p. 357. At this point it seems increasingly difficult to separate “Public Anthropology” from *publicity for Anthropology*. I should also point out that Vogt’s article is at least one of the first (if not the first) to do a study of the penetration and representation of Anthropology via the mass media, providing a detailed basis for substantiating his article which, incidentally, found the American public to be very well informed about “the whole range of our professional activities” (p. 357), and had gone beyond asking “What is Anthropology, anyway?” This suggests that some of the Anthropological angst for public recognition was: a) unfounded, and, b) a trumpet call to move Anthropologists to constantly seek more public recognition for their discipline. For two prominent examples, see the *TIME Magazine* covers and special features promoting the work of Franz Boas at <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,756045,00.html> and David Riesman at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,820312,00.html>.

Anthropologists enter Debate Y?” Or, “Isn’t this something that should interest Anthropologists?”⁹ Again the Anthropology in question is static and in place already. The blinkers are put on: we are instructed to “think Anthropologically”—instead of being critical free thinkers who would never be straitjacketed by an artificial and arbitrary political construction like “Anthropology” (as institutionalized in universities). There is no debate about among Anthropologists about when one should *not* “think Anthropologically” and that is a serious problem when it comes to what is, after all, just one discipline among many.

Another troubling assumption is that Anthropologists should ready themselves for those opportunities when a public event arises that closely touches on their “research expertise”. Given the narrowness of the expertise we are routinely trained to nurture, this would appear to be a recipe for being permanently mute in most cases—as indeed, are most of those Anthropologists present in social media sites, who opt for talking among themselves, in public. As a human being, as a citizen, and one afforded the privilege of lots of time and resources to investigate and think, to hone one’s skills in communicating, the opportunities to speak out should in fact seem endless, not rare. The opportunity to develop contacts and relationships beyond the academy are also endless, which can only mean that Anthropologists sticking close to other Anthropologists and academics in social networking sites is a deliberate choice, somewhat resembling a closely bound group of timid tourists in a new city. Our knowledge capability should be broad, it should be what is encompassed by the spirit of *anthropology* as a broad arena of human inquiry and engagement, which in practice has come to be severely reduced to *ethnography*.

⁹ While not criticizing the writing or the contents of the interesting article by Melissa Checker, one can see a clear example of this concern for professional organizing a roster of “prominent” controversies, and thus opportunities, for Anthropologists to engage publicly, questions that, as she says, “require anthropological attention and insight” (but without discussion of *why that is so*, and how would the situation be worse if left in the hands of, say, Sociologists). Checker says that we should engage these issues—and I agree, we should—if we are to move *beyond* “business as usual”. However, the manner in which she schedules and rationalizes this engagement, emphasizing opportunity for the discipline is, I am afraid, *very much business as usual*. See Melissa Checker, “Anthropology in the Public Sphere, 2008: Emerging Trends and Significant Impacts,” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 111, No. 2 (June 2009), pp. 162-169.

Ethnography is not anthropology. Anthropology is not ethnography.¹⁰ We had better really learn this, because unless you intend to do ethnography in trenches filled with blood and human entrails (only to give, at best, a partial account of one side of a battle, valid if at all for only a short period of time), the expectation will be that you should be silent instead of criticizing war. If you have not done an ethnographic study of, what, all of Afghanistan, then you as an Anthropologist should be silenced and not permit yourself to criticize this ongoing quagmire. No such expectations are attached to the national security policy wonks. If Anthropology were really the study of humanity, with old preferences for holism, then it would contain each and every possible way of encountering humanity and understanding reality. If I am to advocate any role for Anthropology, it is as a body of knowledge, best used in conjunction with other disciplines, and useful for some of its past analytical contributions, and some of its vocabulary.¹¹

¹⁰ This point can matter a great deal for how “Public Anthropology” is conceived (also see fn. 6 below). For those who would argue that “Public anthropology is an ethnographic research endeavor that is...anthropologically significant and interesting” (see: McGranahan, “Introduction: Public Anthropology,” p. 256). Here we see reinforcement of the arguably recent trend to make Anthropology more distinctive (this is academic politics) by conflating it with ethnography, which it claims to own—this is ironic, because neither historically, and certainly not at present, is ethnography the sole property of Anthropology. McGranahan does not identify what constitutes “anthropological significance,” who constitutes it as significant, and significant to what. Interesting is an even more amorphous notion that will certainly defeat any attempt to even begin to gain consensus on what is “interesting Anthropology”. When anthropology is instead conceived as a philosophy of the human condition (and where the point is not, as Marx said, just to understand the world but to change it), we open ourselves up to much broader engagements, including with non-academics and therefore a different praxis. For more on these points, see Tim Ingold, “Anthropology is Not Ethnography,” *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 154, 2008, pp. 69-92; on the presence of “anthropologies” outside of Anthropology, see the article and discussion under Daniel Lende’s “Anthropologies” at <http://neuroanthropology.net/2008/10/30/anthropologies/> and see another example in use, “Liberation Theology - 3, Gutierrez’s flawed anthropology” at <http://civicsgeeks.blogspot.com/2008/09/liberation-theology-3-gutierrezs-flawed.html>, and one anthropology versus “World Anthropologies” see my “Anthropology’s Many Deaths and the Birth of World Anthropologies” at <http://zeroanthropology.net/2008/11/04/anthropologys-many-deaths-and-the-birth-of-world-anthropologies/>. On “important ideas” in Anthropology, I like to quote the words of Edmund Carpenter: “The difference between ‘important ideas’ and ideas important in anthropology is often considerable”—from Edmund Carpenter, “Assassins and Cannibals or I Got Me a Small Mind and I Means to Use It,” *Society for Visual Anthropology Newsletter*, Vol. 5, No. 1, (Mar. 1989), p. 12.

¹¹ Like Gledhill, I am not convinced that the real value of Anthropology lies in ethnography: “Anthropology’s distinctive contribution to the social sciences is often defined in terms of its favoured *methodology*, the direct study of human life ‘on the ground’ through ethnographic fieldwork. Anthropologists live for an extended period with the people they study, observing the details of their behaviour as it happens and conducting an extended dialogue with them about their beliefs and practices. The fieldwork method is not, however, peculiar to anthropology, and I would prefer to stress the importance of anthropology’s *theoretical* contribution as a social science that attempts to examine social realities in a cross-cultural frame of reference. In striving to transcend a view of the world based solely on the premises of European culture and history, anthropologists are also encouraged to look beneath the world of taken-for-granted assumptions in social life in general. This should help us pursue critical analyses of ideologies and power relations in all societies, including those of the West.” (John Gledhill, *Power and Its Disguises*, London: Pluto Press, 1994, p. 7).

Why are they communicating? This is where I have other serious problems with the idea of Public Anthropology, in part because it appears that the emphasis is on promoting Anthropology—as if that were the goal itself, for which Public Anthropology serves as a kind of recruitment effort ultimately meant to win praise and support for institutionalized, professional Anthropology, thus yet another exercise in validating a discipline. We lament and complain that our many ideas do not get the attention that we think they deserve.¹² We find ourselves in an unrelenting quest, therefore, for greater public visibility; we cry out for new celebrity anthropologists; and public anthropology really becomes a kind of expression of collective narcissism—ultimately, it is *all about us*, and not about the world about which we claimed to be interested.

There is also a political dimension to this, where we find some consideration (secondary to the goal of validating Anthropology) of hoping to bring about what in effect is some itsy-bitsy piecemeal reforms in this or that domain of social relationships and cultural production, thereby preserving the overall dominant order as the one to be preserved. If they could get away with just winning support for anthropology, without commenting on questions of political conflict and social change, they probably would. Public Anthropology, as conceived thus far, appears to be a liberal reformist project, that still trusts the authorities running the system to do “the right thing”.¹³

Public Anthropology, conceived as making public the insights of Anthropology, speaks of a perennially insecure creature craving recognition and rewards. Please do not think that we have not attracted the stares of other social scientists, who if you can find any honest enough will openly mock how we constantly bemoan how little attention the world pays to us, and how much we have to offer given the uniqueness of the anthropological contribution. At a conference I encountered a group of political scientists and sociologists discussing this, after getting hotly upbraided by some indignant Anthropologist, and they described this wounded, attention-seeking plea as pathetic, maybe requiring medication. And they are right. It is pathetic and it wins no respect. Anthropology, as a discipline, has no monopoly whatsoever on the truth.

¹² We do not consider, however, the possibility that we may be overvaluing our “contributions,” given the predisposition to favour our own work over others, thanks to disciplinary training.

¹³ In this respect, I need to first thank my anarchist anthropological colleague, Alex Khasnabish, for making this point. Secondly, I am reminded here of Robert Borofsky’s “personal perspective” in “Defining Public Anthropology” (at <http://www.publicanthropology.org/public-anthropology/>): “Public anthropology engages issues and audiences beyond today’s self-imposed disciplinary boundaries. The focus is on conversations with broad audiences about broad concerns. Although some anthropologists already engage today’s big questions regarding rights, health, violence, governance and justice, many refine narrow (and narrower) problems that concern few (and fewer) people outside the discipline. Public anthropology seeks to address broad critical concerns in ways that others beyond the discipline are able to understand what anthropologists can offer to the re-framing and easing—if not necessarily always resolving—of present-day dilemmas. The hope is that by invigorating public conversations with anthropological insights, public anthropology can re-frame and reinvigorate the discipline”. Big questions, broad audiences, what Anthropologists can offer: the language is politically unmarked, with hopes of a payoff for the discipline. My argument is not that this definition is “not Public Anthropology”—my argument is that it is, and that is why I want to get away from Public Anthropology.

I wish that Anthropologists would stop pleading for discipline-recognition, in a world moving fast beyond the old nineteenth-century Eurocentric compartmentalization of knowledge. I also wish that they would stop talking about the “contribution” they have to make. One makes contributions to charities. Worse yet, one makes contributions to already established social structures and political orders. Contribution, whose roots are in the concepts of both *tribe* and *to pay*, is about *adding to* an existing social formation. I think that *contribution* is the last word I would use to describe what I want to do, and it should be the least of our concerns. The exact opposite, however, is not what I am advocating—more on this later.

The *Public* of Public Anthropology

What constitutes the public to which Public Anthropology is oriented? How are anthropologists aware of that public? Do they conceive of people merely in the role of receptive audiences, and even then do they focus on cultivating specific audiences? Where is any given public audience located, so that Public Anthropologists can communicate to them? Many of these questions are not only unresolved in Public Anthropology, often they are not even asked, or not asked persistently enough.

The “public” in Public Anthropology is, in my view, a notion that can be both too broad and homogenizing, and these days associated too much with commercial marketing. To deal with the first point, “public” can imply the population as a whole (possibly of a given nation, though that is far from clear), a mass that simply exists as a public. How does it constitute itself as a public? Is it always a public? Is it everywhere, at all times?¹⁴ Aside from these questions, the *mass* approach underplays agency and differentiation, and the way publics can form contingently and situationally, and perhaps dissipate almost as quickly as they coalesced. Moreover, it is doubtful that any form of Public Anthropology can reach that mass, totalized public as a whole, even if it existed as such. On the second point, Public Anthropology often sounds to me a lot like Public Relations, and specifically like PR for the discipline, which is what I have already discussed.

A third issue has to do with the creation of publics. Much of what is called Public Anthropology seems to assume, as I mentioned, that there is a public waiting, available, and open to the communication from Anthropology, which may be at least partly true.¹⁵ What is missed, however, is that constituencies can be created, not just catered to. An anthropologist could serve as a coordinator building a site of shared interest, where description and analysis are conducted in a collaborative fashion, even if (as if often the case in my experience) it is situational and ephemeral.

¹⁴ With more on the distinctions drawn in theory between public life and private life, see William K. Rawlins, “Theorizing Public and Private Domains and Practices of Communication: Introductory Concerns,” *Communication Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 4, (Nov. 1998), pp. 369-380.

¹⁵ As David Mills writes, as long as we imagine “public culture” in “a thin and one-dimensional way as a passive audience for our professional wisdom, we are going to feel both disappointed and threatened.” See David Mills, “Trust Me, I’m an Anthropologist,” *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (Apr. 2006), p. 2.

A fourth issue, and one that troubles me, is the idea of a “relevant” Public Anthropology.¹⁶ Relevant to whom, and for what purposes? Prestigious status, prominence, and respectability combine to form a relevance that is valued by powerful elites, those who control the mass media, who determine public policy, and who allocate rewards and resources.¹⁷ It seems that this is the relevance, the lust for recognition, that is the root premise of Public Anthropology as a specifically liberal project. It also opens the door to the militarization of anthropology, which has indeed occurred, and is politely termed “engagement with security and intelligence communities”.¹⁸ The opposite, a “public anthropology” that works with underground communities of resistance, is sometimes dismissed by some institutional Anthropologists for lacking a civil tone, for being too radical for its own good, or, even worse, for being an enemy.¹⁹ Indeed, it is often condemned for

¹⁶ An excellent exchange was played out between Matti Bunzl, on one side, and Hugh Gusterson and Catherine Besteman, on the other side, regarding the relevance of Public Anthropology as fashioned by academics using academic means. See Matti Bunzl, “The Quest for Anthropological Relevance: Borgesian Maps and Epistemological Pitfalls,” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 110, No. 1, (Mar. 2008), pp. 53-60; Catherine Besteman and Hugh Gusterson, “A Reply to Matti Bunzl: Public Anthropology, Pragmatism, and Pundits,” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 110, No. 1, (Mar. 2008), pp. 61-63; Matti Bunzl, “A Reply to Besteman and Gusterson: Swinging the Pendulum,” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 110, No. 1, (Mar. 2008), pp. 64-65.

¹⁷ While by no means indicting the substance of Catherine Martin’s article and the excellent intentions motivating it, I could not fail to notice the argument, appearing prominently in the introduction, that linked the relevance of Anthropology in combating racism to the need to retain funding by the National Science Foundation. See Catherine E. Martin, “Educating to Combat Racism: The Civic Role of Anthropology,” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 2, (Jun., 1996), pp. 253-269. More recently, the need to promote Anthropology’s contributions has appeared in defense against the attack by Florida Governor Rick Scott, who claimed that Anthropology was essentially useless in producing employable graduates and thus not a priority for state funding. For more on this, see Scott Jaschik, “Florida GOP vs. Social Science,” *Inside Higher Ed*, October 12, 2011 at http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/10/12/florida_governor_challenges_idea_of_non_stem_degrees. Interestingly, not even a relevant, highly applied Anthropology is guaranteed a safe place. In addition, we might consider the possibility that as long as knowledge is divided up into pigeon-holes, it will be relatively easy for state authorities to pick off particular disciplines one by one, especially if they have been the source of critical opinions that go against the grain of particular regimes.

¹⁸ Some have advanced the notion of “principled engagement” with the U.S. military, apparently on the premise that some of the “locals” are indeed very bad people (such as warlords) and therefore should not be conceived as either the allies of Anthropologists or defended against harm. Note, however, how this position quietly allows for a tilt in favour of the U.S. military, not subject to an even more critical appraisal, and not conceiving of “principled engagement” with “local warlords” while advocating principled engagement with the leading global warlord. An example of this type of argument appears in Kamari M. Clarke, “Toward a Critically Engaged Ethnographic Practice,” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 51, No. S2, (October 2010), pp. S301-S312.

¹⁹ It is worth noting that, early on, there were attempts to censor the work of David H. Price in the pages of the *American Anthropologist*, with some reviewers admitting to having sought banning an article of his on the work the AAA did in helping the CIA to build a database for recruitment. Some of the reviewers felt that it was “not in anyone’s interests” to raise those issues. See Mark Allen Peterson, “Making It Public: Anthropology and the Media: The AAA 99th Annual Conference, San Francisco, 15-19 November 2000,” *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Feb.2001), p. 26.

not being Anthropology, for not being objective and impartial, or for not being “activist” in a way that can be elegantly translated into an article for a special issue of a mainline journal.²⁰

The fifth issue concerning Public Anthropology has to do with means of communication. Many of those commenting on the need for Public Anthropology seem to assume that the highest venue is to be found in the mainstream mass media, that we only have a public voice once we have a spot on CNN, or an Op-Ed in *The New York Times*.²¹ What is neglected are the independent means of communication that do not rely on the good graces of others to allow us a chance to speak, that do not create a false dependency on the media oligarchies, and the totally unnecessary frustration that results from being ignored.

Besides utilizing the new means of communication, I would encourage the use of new and different ways of communicating our analyses, that do not depend upon deliberately using anthropological terms and paying deferential respect to established figures and old agendas in Anthropology, symbolized by extensive bibliographies. One can communicate key ideas using bits and pieces of what some might call “popular culture,” remixed as building blocks for our sentences, using music videos, works of poetry, fragments of archival footage and clips from popular films, and combine them to produce a more memorable and meaningful effect than that produced by quoting either Malinowski, Mead or Marcus. One might achieve more in communicating a critique of imperialist war and the growth of the national security state by using select quotations from Orwell, and reproductions of Picasso’s *Guernica*, than by insisting on using Foucault and Agamben when speaking to diverse, non-academic partners, readers, and viewers. And this again is a fundamental part of the *anthropology* that is activist engagement: knowing and understanding your culture sufficiently enough that you know which symbols to deploy, and when, and how to make high-impact communications, that can even be experimental without requiring specialist training to decipher.

²⁰ Indeed, some in Anthropology seem bent on turning the discipline into a social project that only serves the interests of its professional practitioners. As Barbara Rose Johnston explained: “Calls for developing a fieldwork ethic that emphasizes participatory action research have been met with complaints from many anthropologists who argue that participatory approaches—especially those that involve collaborative efforts to shape research goals, methods, and outcomes—*overly emphasize the social welfare needs of the study population*. In catering to the needs of the study population, the argument goes, such research runs the risk of compromising the objectivity and integrity of anthropological research and *transforms the role of anthropologist from scientist to social worker*” (“Social Responsibility and the Anthropological Citizen,” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 51, No. S2, [October 2010], p. S235, emphases added). Two points on which I would differ from Johnston are, first, her concern for the *relevance* of Anthropology as a discipline, and second, the apparently defensive approach in writing an article that seems designed to address the concerns of the anti-advocacy professional corps—assuaging their self-interest should be neither a social nor political priority. What she adds to this discussion of ethical research is of interest: Johnston notes that the principle of “informed consent” can imply a hierarchical relationship between researcher and informant, where the former defines the nature and shape of the research project, and the latter is relegated to merely agreeing or not (see p. S243).

²¹ Some of these issues were recently addressed both in a conference and online, in a collection of posts from Anthropologists under the heading of *Anthropology and Publicity*—see: <http://antpub.wordpress.com/>

Anthropology in Public

Even if we cherish Public Anthropology, on its own terms, there is an activity that is often confused as Public Anthropology even when it is nothing more than *Anthropology in public*. You find Anthropology in public typically arises when academic Anthropologists tire (for whatever reason) of using private, subscriber-only email listservs, and opt for blogs, discussion lists in Twitter, or Facebook groups. The conversations are largely about Anthropology, by Anthropologists, for other Anthropologists, and they retain a closed-in academic quality, but performed outside of the academic setting. These are conversations in public, not with the public. Most Anthropology blogs are in fact examples of *Anthropology in Public*, and should not be classed, as Public Anthropology.

Anthropology in public, often strikes me as an overly artificial effort to create networks that matter to personal careers, by taking a variety of technological shortcuts instead of more personal and meaningful approaches needed to form research networks. Anthropology in public is largely aimless, hopping from one to another disconnected subject, with writers playing to the gallery, and commentators obsessive about curating their comments and defending them against criticism from peers. It is all rather uptight and nerdy, even when it pretends to be otherwise. Blogs have been a way for some anthropologists to charge up their disciplinary credit as stout promoters of the discipline, with some self-congratulations and high-fiving along the way. The discourse is introverted, self-referential, and thus conservative. A further problem with Anthropology in public is that it does not recognize itself as an inherently closed-access Anthropology, even as it defends the virtues of making Anthropology openly accessible to some vaguely understood “public”.

What is still sorely lacking is recognition of (a)nthropology *from* “the public,” that is, the great many other attempts to describe, understand and critique the human condition, the nature of power, and the common good, that stem from all sorts of other agents that in most cases would never dream of calling themselves “anthropologists” (in part because of the alienation caused by the professional disciplining of establishment knowledge systems), though some do, and have every right to do so.²²

Beyond Public Anthropology

The core of my argument against Public Anthropology and its various iterations has been that it is too much about institutionalized, professional, and disciplinary Anthropology, and not enough about being immersed in social struggles, collaborating, building new forms of engagement, and tackling issues of power, violence, and inequality that combine to produce increasingly miserable

²² It is useful here to note “Michael Burawoy’s nuanced call for a variety of public sociologies,” through which he “differentiates what he calls ‘traditional’ public sociology from organic public sociology. He sees the latter as academics working ‘in dialogue with a visible, thick, active, local and often counter-public’, an activity that is often invisible and separate from one’s professional life”. Speaking of the writing of Kate Fox in the UK, David Mills asks: “can one be a public anthropologist without being academically trained? Kate Fox thinks so,” and of course I agree with Fox. From David Mills, “Trust Me, I’m an Anthropologist,” *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (Apr. 2006), p. 2.

conditions of existence for most people on this planet. Too much concern is devoted to communicating Anthropology to “the public,” and not enough of the reverse. Speaking for myself, I am not here to serve “the broader interests of the discipline,” as if there was any consensus on what those interests are, as if we could speak of the discipline in unmarked, universalist terms, as if the most important goal of our efforts was one oriented toward institutions and professions. Personally, I never signed on to sacrificing my intellectual energies to upholding other people’s agendas, and that includes the agenda that is Anthropology. I argue that we should not be waiting, opportunistically, for events that neatly match our professional expertise, understood in the narrowest possible sense—public practice should be about being an intellectual, not a professional, and about caring, interest, and the need to speak out, and learning new things in the process.

Two of my favourite quotes, which encapsulate my position on the future of Anthropology are, first by Claude Lévi-Strauss who wrote: “Anthropology will survive in a changing world by allowing itself to perish in order to be born again under a new guise”.²³ Secondly, by Maurice Bloch, who wrote that, “[there are] the general questions of anthropology, which exist irrespective of anthropology departments. In fact, I would consider that all human beings are anthropologists.... It’s very possible that anthropology departments will disappear, there’s no reason why they should continue existing”.²⁴ My view is neither pessimistic nor cavalier, about getting past Anthropology as a discipline, and this is in part due to the nature of my own academic biography. I entered Anthropology from an interdisciplinary background gained at the undergraduate and graduate levels. I studied in a university where Anthropology did not exist, because the new nationalist leadership had banned it as a colonial and divisive project.²⁵ My doctoral dissertation was as much historical as it was ethnographic. I obtained my PhD in a Department that has twice ceased to exist: the first time, it was disbanded outright, and the faculty were distributed among cognate disciplines; the second time, it lost its status as a Department—so that now my PhD certificate prominently features the name of a Department that no longer exists as such.²⁶ I have never taught, as a professor, in an Anthropology Department, but always in a joint Sociology-Anthropology Department, in a country where for a long time we had a joint Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association. Many of my courses are cross-listed between the two disciplines. Not strong enough to survive on its own, Anthropology hangs on to the coattails of a bigger discipline. Thus if I sometimes seem to take a “What? Me Worry?” kind of attitude, it is because I am not worried, but hopeful. I work for a university, specifically, and for the public, broadly, and not for an Anthropology Department. In some ways I have already gone past Anthropology. Anthropology has already set an example for being perhaps the discipline that is most acutely conscious of ethical responsibilities, and of its Eurocentric colonial heritage,²⁷ that it should set an example by showing the way forward in opening the social sciences, decolonizing its social and

²³ As quoted in Diane Lewis, “Anthropology and Colonialism,” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (Dec., 1973), p. 586.

²⁴ Maurice Bloch and Maarja Kaaristo, “The Reluctant Anthropologist: An interview with Maurice Bloch.” *Virekaar*, (Jul. 29, 2007): <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2008-02-28-bloch-en.html>

²⁵ The reference here is to the University of the West Indies campus in St. Augustine, Trinidad.

²⁶ I am referring here to the Department of Anthropology at the University of Adelaide.

²⁷ In this vein, see my “Questions about Colonialism and Anthropology: Epistemology, Methodology, and Politics,” at <http://openanthropology.org/za/?p=75>

political position, and developing new forms of knowledge production in ongoing collaboration with non-academic partners, where the “target” of our investigation is not our collaborator, but the problem of power that we mutually collaborate to unveil and critique.²⁸

Public Political Activism as (a)nthropology

When it came to writing against the Human Terrain System, and more broadly the problem of the militarization of the academy, and broader still, against the wars of occupation in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the war against Libya, my motivation was a very basic one. I was not seeking recruits. I was not seeking to convert anyone. The position, as I have stated elsewhere numerous times, can be summed as “for the record”. For the record, I wanted to make sure that people would not be misled into thinking that we were all silent in the face of the incursion of HTS into our ranks. For the record, I wanted to make public the fact that some of us resolutely opposed the wars I listed. For the record, I insisted that there was no consensus around the issue of developing so-called productive engagements with the military. The only way to do that was by speaking out, compelled by the realization that I would never forgive myself if I had remained silent and complacent, and pretended that I could go about business as usual. Being neither that cold nor disinterested, my subjective position opened the way for me to pursue new questions and topics for investigation, in an objective sense that I would not describe and analyze if I had a personal stake in maintaining either the academic or the broader political-economic system. The number of times that commentators accused me of “biting the hand that feeds me” (in that classically fascist expression of submission, of work and don’t criticize), suggested that I had succeeded in establishing that critical distance. Writing as if you had no vested interest in what you are criticizing, writing as if you had nothing to lose and were not hostage to any ruling system, this for me is the essence of being objective while being subjectively engaged. Neither literally, nor figuratively, would I begin a sentence with “speaking as an Anthropologist”. I sought to speak in the public interest, as a service to a public getting ripped off at every step by corporate domination and militarist propaganda and war spending.²⁹ I have not always been polite about it either, because I owe no respect and no favours to regimes of global oppression that snuff out alternatives and punish acts of defiance.

²⁸ We should note that in the vision of collaborative ethnography as a part of Public Anthropology laid out by Luke Lassiter in “Collaborative Ethnography and Public Anthropology,” cited above, what he specifies as collaboration is the case where an Anthropologist works with a Native informant in collaborating to produce an ethnography of the Native informant’s culture. A fuller collaboration would be where the Anthropologist puts something at risk as well, that is, where the Native collaborator also produces a study of the Anthropologist’s academic profession and lays it bare and interprets it as well. But even that would not go far enough, since the problem of the power of the dominant needs to be the shared target if we are seeking anything other than temporary, or small-scale and local reforms. A more severe way of putting this is that it is troubling if Indigenous persons, or other “native” collaborators, were to be used as window dressing for rehabilitating the public political image of Anthropology.

²⁹ What I subscribe to here is a view of anthropology as described by Claude Lévi-Strauss: “Anthropology is not a dispassionate science like astronomy, which springs from the contemplation of things at a distance. It is the outcome of an historical process, which has made the larger part of mankind subservient to the other, and during which millions of innocent human beings have had their resources plundered, their institutions and beliefs destroyed while they themselves were ruthlessly killed, thrown into bondage, and contaminated

This type of engagement, for me, is among the better forms of anthropology that I can envision for now. It is an engagement that is based on being immersed in public debates and struggles over power, the power to command resources, the power to enhance certain lives at the cost of diminishing others, and the power to shape and perpetuate representations that keep us locked in an imperialist framework. If anthropology is not about seeking peaceful coexistence between diverse peoples, about dialogue across the boundaries of cultural difference, about a world big enough to permit the self-determination of multiple and divergent societies, about respecting the autonomy and self-determination of others, about questions of the contemporary human condition in a specific context of war and capitalism, and about participating with others in building an understanding of these problems—then what is anthropology about, and why should anyone care about it?

This is what leads me to the final part of this presentation.

Toward Zero

We are well past the time of bland, politically inert generalities, like Anthropology is “the study of what it means to be human”. Our concern ought not to be about “what it means to be human,” but what it means that some have the power to define a vision of humanity that facilitates exerting control over others—in other words, what it means to want to shape knowledge about what it means to be human, and what kinds of rights and responsibilities are attached to this conception of the human. In this vein, I have been examining the fundamental assumptions about what is humanity, and how societies work, as represented in the “public diplomacy” of the U.S. State Department and NATO. Getting past a Public Anthropology, to me means a critical engagement with our continued Eurocentrism, our human rights hypocrisies, and our continued subordination to the team spirit of Western dominance.

What I mean by approaching “zero” is about developing an (a)nthropology that is *about* empire, *against* empire, while preparing for new socially-embedded knowledge production that comes *after* empire. As an anti-imperialist project, it is not one that waits to be applauded by political and media elites; rather it inserts itself in public discussions, as a disruptive presence, and this is where being located in institutions of the dominant system (the universities) can be useful. In reflecting, as insiders, on our current norms and forms of knowledge production, we encounter how the dominant system reproduces itself intellectually. We can share what we learn with those working for social justice and social transformation, causing somewhat of a legitimacy crisis for the dominant elites, while helping to add analysis to and megaphoning the protests of our social partners. At the same time, we refuse to produce knowledge that is “useful” and “relevant” to corporate and military domination, and we turn our gaze on the elites, rather than making the

by diseases they were unable to resist. Anthropology is the daughter to this era of violence. Its capacity to assess more objectively the facts pertaining to the human condition reflects, on the epistemological level, a state of affairs in which one part of mankind treats the other as an object.” Claude Lévi-Strauss, “Anthropology: Its Achievements and Future,” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Apr., 1966) p. 126.

powerless legible to them (as in ethnography), and we use whatever method of gathering information that is available and appropriate (as in “wikileaks” and other forms of counter-surveillance as alternative research modes).³⁰ This is part of what I mean by making (a)nthropology toxic to power.

Here are some of the other shifts in position and purpose that such a project entails:

- ★ Moving from *contribution* to *dissent*;
- ★ Moving from *professionalization* to *social collaboration* with struggles against power;
- ★ Moving from *institutionalization* to the *decolonization* of knowledge production;
- ★ From “theorizing” as part of a conversation with academic colleagues, to *critical analysis* as part of broader, shared struggles;
- ★ From ethnographies of the dominated to turning the gaze back against the dominant classes;
- ★ Studying the imperialism of everyday life, its domestication, and how it is rendered routine;
- ★ Like a “preferential option for the poor,” an anthropology whose ethics are committed to advancing the rights and welfare of the oppressed and exploited, rather than an ethic of “do no harm” to those one studies (especially if we are to study the powerful, assuming we could do so ethnographically without compromising too much);
- ★ Focusing on the large-scale forces of imperial dominance that work to maintain transnational capitalism, by not losing ourselves in “studies of behaviour” and the many microsocial phenomena that never add up to either a coherent analytical challenge or an openness to partnership with movements that go beyond local grievances;³¹
- ★ Making complex realities easier to understand by the wider public; on the other hand, complicating the simplistic assertions voiced by the powerful; and, among other options,
- ★ An anthropology of “Anthropology” as a Western mode of consuming knowledge of the world, with the aim of generating a new anthropology that is reconstituted in dialogue with the many non-professional anthropologies that exist or have existed.

This is something that I propose as an additional way of doing anthropology, even post-anthropology, and it is not offered as an exclusive mode that seeks the deletion of all others and that prohibits the coexistence of many different, and even opposed types of anthropology. This is another way that this is a proposal that differs from others: rather than another list of dictates of where “we” should all go, it is simply a statement of where some of us would like to go. So far, to the extent that it is discernible, it seems that a cliquish, elitist, circling of the wagons and desire for

³⁰ For more along these lines, see “The Zero Anthropology Project” at <http://openanthropology.org/za/?p=22> and “The Concept” at <http://openanthropology.org/za/?p=64>

³¹ This is in contrast to Low and Merry’s “Engaged Anthropology,” p. S204, in which they state: “the special perspective of anthropology—its focus on the microsocial situation framed by macroeconomic and political forces; its examination of the way social situations are made meaningful through discourse, symbols, and language; and its analysis of the small site’s embeddedness in larger structures of power—is its unique contribution”. Once again, we see the disciplinary guardianship at play, in defending the “uniqueness” of a discipline as the primary method of shaping engagement, as Anthropologists, even when what is offered is hardly unique at all, nor sufficient.

professional regimentation is the response to this fundamentally democratic challenge of a post-Anthropological anthropology.

I mentioned ethnography at different points. As already recognized, the units of analysis and necessarily constrained scale of ethnography do not permit it to serve as a basis for understanding macrocosmic phenomena, such as world capitalism and imperialism, even though ethnography can register the local effects of these. As such, there are no ethnographic theories of colonialism in Anthropology; but there are a few theories of colonialist ethnography written by those critical of the discipline. The problem of scope relates to issues of who we conceive of as our partners and our relationships with them, and the place of the powerful in our work. If we focus our investigation on those subject to the workings of power, then we inevitably make them legible to the authorities, and we facilitate diverse forms of counterinsurgency. If we focus on the institutions and agents of power, ethnography is of limited value, in theoretical terms, and in practical terms (given restrictions to access)—hence my preference for “wikileaks” and for critical media studies.

As academics in institutions that are run by the dominant classes, we have some access to how governing political institutions are run, how the economy is shaped, how decisions are made, by subjecting us directly to corporate management, and by incorporating us in attempts to govern society. It means that we should have some experiential knowledge on the very conditions that make Anthropology possible, as any other discipline. An anthropological approach to the current conditions of Anthropology, is an anthropology of power. An anthropology of Anthropology is a critical investigation of what produces the conditions and provides the resources for the current reproduction of Anthropology, and how Anthropology abides by the rules of power.

As a tool of the powerful, Anthropology has been a consuming knowledge about Others. Hegemonic Anthropology, as practiced in the geopolitical centre of the capitalist world system, in the Anglo-American world, has been a formalized way for a largely white and Western middle class to consume the world. Nonetheless, there have been numerous participants in this system who have broken ranks, and there have been enough “renegades” among us that it is surprising no one has yet spoken of “Rogue Anthropology”.³²

Likewise, as tools of the powerful, embedded in one of the society’s dominant institutions (the university), critical academics can already begin to counteract the agenda of dominant elites by speaking out, by breaking ranks with the powerful, by serving as conscientious witnesses to the workings of power and domination, and by combating the dominant mode of rule as it applies within the very setting of the university. The social system privileges academics, and we must continue to turn that privilege against the structures of dominance, performing counter-surveillance, and speaking the truths of power as we know them to the powerless affected by them.

³² Not even George Marcus, who reflects on the emergence of a morally-driven, activist Anthropology from the 1970s onwards in the U.S. See: George E. Marcus, “Social Thought & Commentary: The Passion of Anthropology in the U.S., Circa 2004,” *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (Summer, 2005), pp. 673-695.

We need not submit to those academics who are already conditioned to maintaining a perfect silence lest their work gives rise to any discord.³³ Their primary concern is with keeping a civil tone, not denouncing injustice. Their collegiality is nothing more than deferring to power. They turn the university into a school for obedience training. The discipline is a leash. They are incapable of ever creating any real new knowledge, because they cannot even begin to envision anything that is beyond the boundary. They are data gatherers, not scholars. They are researchers, not intellectuals. They are professional academics, not free thinkers.

To make that which is familiar—such as Anthropology itself, and the patterns of domination in our own society—seem more strange means becoming *alienated*. You cannot stand outside the norm or even discover the working norms without becoming alienated, that is, distanced and critical.³⁴ Alienation is the root of revolt, and an anthropology of Anthropology is an anthropology of power, of the dominant political-economic arrangements, and is dedicated to transformation.

If we were to again talk about “what it means to be human,” it should be what it means to be human in a global system of inequality, subjected to the diffusion of social injustices, permanent war and imperial domination, and cultural colonization that work together to maintain an unsustainable system of mass consumption and an anti-democratic system of corporate domination. Anthropology, even when deeming itself innovative, should be more than just about a “rapidly changing” world, but about changing the world.

³³ As John Gledhill explained, “it is not clear that any academic knowledge can legitimately claim ‘objectivity’ and ‘detachment’ or that academics can avoid ‘taking a stance’, even if they remain silent. What was problematic about colonial anthropology was precisely its silences, the reduction of questions of power to a neutral domain of ‘administration’ kept at arm’s length in anthropological writing. We can still choose to be silent, by not dwelling on issues such as human rights violations and corruption in our ethnographies, even where they are part of the fabric of daily life” (John Gledhill, *Power and Its Disguises*, p. 215).

³⁴ Speaking in broader terms, David Mosse cogently explains that when it comes to “insider research” the real problem is not that of *entry*, but rather *exit*—with the exit being the critical mode of dislocation that provides the basis for achieving a sharper understanding the taken-for-granted and thus hidden ways in which insiders act and rationalize their roles. See David Mosse, “Anti-Social Anthropology? Objectivity, Objection, and the Ethnography of Public Policy and Professional Communities,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 12, (2006), pp. 936-937.

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