A Lively and Musing Discipline: The Public Contribution of Anthropology Through Education and Engagement

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Ich habe mich in die Lehre
versenkt wie vielleicht sonst kaum jemand,
damit die mir anvertrauten StudentInnen
mit mir den Weg des
neuartigen Erkennens der Welt gingen.

Perhaps more than almost anyone else,
I have engrossed myself in my teaching
in such a way that the students entrusted to me
have traveled with me along a path
to a new cognition of the world.

Claudia von Werlhof (2012, trans. by the authors)

1. Introduction

When we simultaneously started our positions in October 2011 at the Faculty of Education of a small and quite young university as the first full-time anthropologists on the staff, we quickly discovered that virtually none of our colleagues from other disciplines had a reasonably well-defined idea or sense of what social-cultural anthropology is all about. Although both of us have conducted our research exclusively in European countries, sometimes

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even with some of the same populations or general issues that have been of interest to our non-anthropologist colleagues, it soon became clear that very few people around us had a clue as to the peculiar approach that we, as anthropologists, bring to our research and how we actually go about doing it.[1] We found this to be true even of many of scholars close to us who regularly employ qualitative research methods in their own work. For this reason, we decided to organize a first initiative of a lecture series with the idea of making social-cultural anthropology better known, to introduce a veritable culture of knowledge to students and colleagues from other disciplines. With a similar aim, we have subsequently developed this volume out of that initial effort, in order to make anthropological thinking and the construction of knowledge from ethnography accessible to other disciplines; at the same time, we have no doubt that the contributions presented here will offer insights for other anthropologists. But quite aside from trying to explain ourselves to our non-anthropologist colleagues, another fundamental goal we have in mind is that of reaching our students: despite a wide availability of introductory textbooks, we have assembled five studies that have a particular relevance for our students in social work, education and communications, all of whose programs have a strong focus on the local society.

We have asked our authors to present work based on their original ethnographic experiences, allowing the reader an insight into the ethnographic process and providing examples of a "thick" exploration of single social issues[2]. The idea of thickness is a core concern of anthropology: it means looking behind quick data, going beyond the surface. For us, this translates into bringing to light a deeper endowment of meaning in the study of social questions and capturing the dynamics of power in specific contexts. It is a culture of knowledge that takes insiders' categories—what we anthropolo-

1 Our university's trilingual instruction framework favors an encounter of German, Italian, and English-language academic traditions. For this reason, throughout the discussion that follows we will mention relevant features and examples of social-cultural anthropology by drawing from these three broad scholarly contexts.

2 It was Clifford Geertz's landmark book *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) that popularized the notion of "thick description" as the ethnographic approach par excellence. Over forty years after its publication, this is arguably the best-known volume of anthropology among non-anthropologist scholars.

gists term "emic" perspectives—very seriously, and at the same time, it builds on a body of disciplinary work that has looked at humans across many different cultures.[3] We see this as a specific contribution we can add to reflections in other fellow disciplines that might be directly involved in working with people of various categories.

We should add a few words here about ethnography as anthropology's primary methodology, a way of going about gathering and constructing scientific knowledge. In trying to address questions of how and why in social life, the anthropologist builds her knowledge together with the people with whom she is working as they share their own lives and knowledge with her. Ethnography means being with people, experiencing their lives together and getting close to them, attempting to capture emic forms of social knowledge that are often very implicit. Indeed, there are aspects of knowledge that people cannot or will not necessarily express if we simply ask them, and ethnography is quite often as slow as it is thick, taking the time to try to let such elements emerge. We should also keep in mind that, as canonized by Bronislaw Malinowski early in the twentieth century, ethnography is a scientific endeavor that seeks to respond to scientific questions. This distinguishes it from journalism or travel writing (one thinks of authors like Bruce Chatwin or Tiziano Terzani, or in the German-speaking world, Christoph Ransmayr), where the writer may have gained some insights, albeit valuable ones, by spending a period of time hanging out with some group of people.

As a research methodology in social science, ethnography has indeed gained popularity in various disciplines outside of its original disciplinary base in anthropology. No matter who is performing it, ethnography is a means of gathering empirical data from which the scientist then works to build theory, and in this sense it features commonalities with the notion of "grounded theory." Grounded theory has come into prominence since the late 1960s, but anthropologists were already doing ethnography in the nineteenth century, with the pioneering fieldwork of Louis Henry Morgan among the Iroquois,

3 Drawing from the work of linguist Kenneth Pike (1947), anthropologists speak of "emic" and "etic" perspectives to capture a distinction that we can describe as insider (or subjective) versus outsider (or objective).

followed by Frank Cushing's work with the Zuni[4]. Even so, the anthropologist doing ethnography tends to emphasize certain features of the knowledge-building process that are not always shared by other people who carry out ethnography or other forms of qualitative research resembling it. First, engaging the emic perspective deeply and seriously also means taking on an awareness of the researcher's own position. This is what we refer to in anthropology as reflexivity. That is, it is fundamental to be aware that we as researchers are also human beings with our own perspectives, frameworks, categories and values, and these shape our perceptions and interpretations, often in subtle ways. Not to mention the fact that, whether we like it or not, we inevitably bring with us our own personal and group histories and a physical and social being that also shape our interaction with the people with whom we work, as they react to us. Especially if we are conducting our research in our own society, we need to be attuned to the possible risks of overestimating how much of our perspective is shared by those with whom we are working. But above and beyond this, we need to recognize that even what we might be shared between the researcher and the people studied is only one among the many human possibilities for experiencing, being and acting in the world. In this sense, unlike other social sciences, anthropology brings a comparative perspective to the study of cultures and societies (cf. Gingrich, 2013). Having a disciplinary tradition that has accumulated knowledge about human populations from around the world for about a century and a half, we have observed what is often recurrent, if not actually universal, in being human.[5]

4 But it was only really with Malinowski's work in the early twentieth century that ethnography developed certain conventions and gained widespread popularity.

5 Anthropologists have a perspective that considers both what is culturally specific (the "ideographic") and what is universal (the "nomothetic").

2. The place of the discipline

Social-cultural anthropology has dealt with mankind from so many different angles and with such a variety of approaches that it is understandably difficult to get a handle on what exactly an anthropologist does. Certainly, in its early years the field was associated above all with research carried out in villages in Africa, Asia, and Oceania, or among native peoples in the Americas[6]. Nowadays anthropology goes everywhere where people are acting and making sense of these actions. If any human grouping is fair game for anthropological study, this of course multiplies the possible fields and questions for study to an infinite degree. An unavoidable consequence of the growth of any discipline is that we find some fragmentation, with scholars divided according to schools, research issues, geographic areas of specialization, theoretical orientations. With all of this riotous diversity, as anthropological insiders we somehow—and not without difficulty—identify a common thread in the discipline in its status as *the* science of culture. But if we ask many people in the general public or even within the university what their image of an anthropologist is, we may well expect that their replies would refer to (archaeologists) Indiana Jones or Lara Croft, with thrilling adventures in exotic places among wild natives: at least this would be a small step closer to the truth than the reply of others who would venture that an anthropologist studies dinosaurs, confusing us with paleontologists.[7] This is probably the case for most, but perhaps not all, national traditions of the discipline, despite all of the differences in their development.[8] The fact that anthropology is not widely taught as a discipline in the standard high school curricula in most countries adds to the aura of mystery and misperception among the general public.

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6 We mean "field" here as both the discipline, but also the place where anthropological research—fieldwork—is carried out.

7 Cf. Paredes (1999) for how anthropology is represented in media and not recognized by other disciplines.

8 On the struggle to make Ethnology understandable to non-specialized audience, cf. Klocke-Daffa, 2004. In Norway, however, anthropologists have succeeded in establishing themselves as well-known public intellectuals (cf. Eriksen, 2006; Howell, 2010).

The romanticized, stereotyped image of the khaki-clad anthropologist in the tropics among the naked (perhaps even cannibalistic) "savages" is clearly due in part to the legacy of a disciplinary history in which a certain academic division of labor arose in the nineteenth century. Especially through the ethnographic method, anthropology created tools for studying and understanding the seemingly strange actions and conceptions of Other peoples—that is, non-Western ones. The study of such Others thus had an obvious objective, but the idea of applying the same tools to studying us was not so self-evident, because our way of thinking and doing was taken for granted, as we were presumably developed, advanced and rational. This ethnocentric perspective—which we may well deem "Eurocentrism"—has constituted an obstacle to extending an anthropological approach to Western society itself. But this did not mean that Western populations were not themselves an object of investigation: that was what sociology was supposed to do. As the social sciences emerged, sociology took on the role of studying the so-called complex Western societies, while social-cultural anthropology as a field primarily studied non-Western peoples, especially those who were then under Western colonial domination.[9] Sociology arose as part of Auguste Comte's post-Enlightenment project for studying ways to improve society in a period of rapid urbanization and industrialization in Europe and North America, with all of the social ills entailed in this transformation. Despite the fact that some anthropologists from very early on were actively promoting social critique and change in their own societies[10], the most common image of social-cultural anthropology has primarily been related to the study of the bizarre customs and rituals of colorful, faraway peoples (whom many people of European descent would describe as "people of color"). As Anthony Paredes (1999) has commented:

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9 We should note, however, that there have also been scholars—especially in the French tradition, such as Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, or more recent thinkers like Pierre Bourdieu—who have straddled these boundaries in their work and whose writings are fundamental reference points for both sociologists and anthropologists.

10 In the U.S., for instance, Frank Cushing and Franz Boas criticized how Native Americans were treated. But activism in anthropology has not been uncontroversial: Alfred Kroeber advised his students not to become involved with governmental issues (Steward, 1973) and E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1946) declared that any form of engagement would not be scientific (cf. Heinen, 1984, p. 79).

> What we have to say is just too far removed from Western "indigenous knowledge systems" to be acceptable, unlike the more conventional forms of unconventional wisdom pouring out on the op-end pages from economists, historians, sociologists, humanity scholars, and other mainstream pundits on everything from the myth of the 1950s' Ozzie and Harriett family to the cultural significance of Halloween. (Paredes, 1999, pp. 186f)

In the world of academic social science, then, anthropology has often seemed to take on a decorative role of adding color and spice[11], and in this sense it may have appeared to be preoccupied with trivial or irrelevant questions and situations. Italian anthropologist Ernesto de Martino offers an exemplary comment on the seeming irrelevance of such research. Discussing Spencer and Gillen's book on the Aranda of Australia, he writes: "[H]aving read the study, the Aranda themselves remain in the reader's mind as a fortuitous humanity, a monstruous item of gossip in mankind's history, whose ciphered strangeness does not compensate for their futility" (de Martino, 2005 [1961], p. 1).

It is true that much of the work of social-cultural anthropologists has been perceived by a wider public as purveying such "monstrous gossip" from one end of the global village—the one dominated by Western societies—to another, for the benefit of audiences in the West. Even so, as many scholars have pointed out, there has been a long tradition of anthropologists working "at home", even in the early days of the discipline, and they have often aimed to improve society through their work[12]. At the same time, as anthropology developed in the Anglo-American tradition, power dynamics

11 Michel-Rolph Trouillot has used the expression "the savage slot" in denouncing this view of anthropology's role in human science (Trouillot, 1991).

12 It is true that the public role of anthropology has changed only since World War II: in the pre-War period, anthropologists invested their energy in a culture war that fought against ethnocentric supremacy and against biological determinism (the belief that people's physical and mental features are shaped almost entirely by their genetic endowment; on the history of engagement in this direction, cf. Erikson, 2006). To cite only a very few examples here, de Martino himself was very taken up with North-South disparities within Italy and was also quite militant politically; in the U.S., Franz Boas was actively fighting racism in the early twentieth century, and Margaret Mead critiqued numerous aspects of U.S. society, including gender roles.

within the academy itself did not always allow for an adequate recognition of at-home research themes and engagement. Italian ethnology gradually grew out of both a colonial experience in East Africa and folkloristics at home, but the latter was not always oriented to addressing social conditions. Ernesto de Martino (1908−1965) was among the few twentieth-century ethnologists who actively addressed social problems in Italy, and much of his research dealt with the oppressive conditions of Southern Italian peasants; at the same time, however, he experienced extensive professional marginalization. Compared with the U.S., in Italy there is a much stronger tradition of academic intellectuals commenting publicly on social issues, but the voice of anthropologists is still relatively underrepresented.[13]

As for Germany, even if German ethnology has been inspired by Anglo-American public anthropology and the Scandinavian tradition (in particular Norway's) of "going public", German ethnologists are still reluctant to share anthropological knowledge with the public for reasons that range from the experience of public misuses (Antweiler, 1998), to the analytical difficulty of cultural translations due to dualistic Western categorizations (Platenkamp, 2004). Another factor has been the division between academic ethnology and museum ethnology (Schlee, 2005), in which museums have been viewed as the ideal place where anthropological knowledge could be shared with a broader audience. Finally, the public presence of anthropological thinking in Germany is also related to the fact that the market for anthropological books (academic and popular science) is very small (cf. Schönuth, 2004, p. 88).[14]

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13 Among those Italian anthropologists with a more visible public presence and who are often called upon for comments on pressing social questions, we should mention Annamaria Rivera—a regular contributor to *MicroMega* and *Manifesto*—and Amalia Signorelli.

14 The German association ESE e.V. (Ethnologie in Schule und Erwachsenenbildung) has mainly focused on creating bridges from anthropology to school and adult education, adapting the Third-Culture Perspective developed by Gudykunst, Wiseman & Hammer, (1977) in the field of intercultural communication. The Third-Culture Perspective is an approach in which learners first gain knowledge about cultures which are distant from their own; they are trained interculturally to avoid an immediate reaction based on stereotypes and/or prejudices (Bertels, Baumann, Dinkel & Hellmann, 2004; cf. also Klocke-Daffa in this volume).

In recent decades and for a number of reasons[15], more and more Western anthropologists are doing work in their own societies, thereby collectively transforming the discipline through their practice (Lamphere, 2004). Even if the Indiana Jones image still lingers, though, we can safely say that we are "exotic no more" as the title of Jeremy MacClancy's excellent edited collection emphatically proclaims (MacClancy, 2002). Anthropology's newly recognized relevance has attracted the attention of other disciplines within the academy, and in the university systems of many countries, social-cultural anthropology has played a minor but appreciated role for the contributions it can make to a very wide range of discussions. Quite often a non-anthropology degree program contains one or two anthropology courses as complementary side dishes to the main course of another discipline, and upon completing their university studies, many former students fondly remember the one anthropology course they took as a stimulating, quirky, insightful detour with little or no follow-up. In a widely-cited essay James Peacock, a former president of the American Anthropological Association, has called anthropology "the invisible discipline": despite its role in serving undergraduate education, it has remained marginal within the university. He writes:

> It is everywhere yet nowhere. Anthropology is nowhere because, unlike chemistry, literature, or history, it is still not recognized as one of the fields essential to

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15 Some of these reasons have been related to theoretical discussions and debates inside of anthropology. For a long time, doing anthropology at home was not considered as prestigious or legitimate as was working far away; in the minds of some scholars, it was not even held to be "real" anthropology. The change in anthropology since the 1980s, known as the "reflexive turn", has also contributed to making it more legitimate for us to reflect on ourselves. At the same time, an increased awareness of power relations in culture and society and calls to study elite actors have also changed the perception of studying at home. For this reason, no one is too surprised today to find colleagues studying, for example, Wall Street (Ho, 2009). But structural conditions have also played a role: many countries that became independent from their former colonial rulers made access for research more difficult, while migration worldwide and globalization have increasingly made "otherness" a visible presence within Euro-American settings. Finally, the availability of funding for research has often impacted the choice of research settings and questions, and funding agencies in many Western countries are preferring to support research that has local applicability and usefulness.

> the academy, and unlike economics, law, or medicine (or public health administration, social work, or library science), it is not known to be crucial to society. But anthropology is everywhere, implicitly and potentially, because of its scope. (Peacock, 1997, p. 10)

Peacock's observations regarding the U.S. context from some years ago resonate well with our own experience as social-cultural anthropologists in a small university that offers no degree program in anthropology. In just a few years, anthropology courses have gained popularity in virtually every degree program within the Education Faculty, and we are receiving more and more requests from other faculties for teaching and supervision of graduation thesis projects. These colleagues are also involving us as team members and consultants in research projects which are, however, fundamentally anchored in other disciplines. Our colleagues tell us that they appreciate our qualitative approach, in particular the ethnographic method, but they do not contemplate the use of a cross-cultural comparative perspective, nor are they interested in relativizing their own analytical categories.

3. Engaging critical social issues

Anthropologists are addressing critical social issues in their own societies in a number of ways: in the choice of their research themes; in the way they design and carry out their projects with research participants; in the courses they teach; in non-academic work they are performing in local communities, either professionally or on a volunteer basis; in how they make the messages developing out of their research known and accessible to different audiences (from smaller sites of diffusion to participating in conversations in the mass media). Over the last two decades in particular, there has been an increasingly palpable conversation in anthropology about the wide spectrum of activity being carried out that has been conjugated in numerous forms of advocacy, activism, policy shaping, collaboration, participation, and work for transformation in the communities researched and in society as a whole. These modes of action have received a variety of labels: from the established

and longer-standing tradition of applied anthropology, we read and hear more and more often about public anthropology, practicing anthropology, public interest anthropology, and engaged anthropology.

There have even been debates in the field in which numerous colleagues have argued the necessity of pushing the discipline even more strongly in this direction. In part, as Peacock has argued, wider structural changes in the academy are dictating a shift to research that is oriented to service (Peacock, 1997, p. 9). Additionally, with greater precariousness of the university job market in Euro-American countries, more and more people trained with M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in anthropology are finding work outside the academy in public institutions, NGOs and in other public-interest settings[16]. In advocating this shift, some colleagues have stressed ethical considerations: in their view, anthropology needs to have an "ethic of action" that goes beyond our standard ethical credo of "doing no harm" to the populations with whom we work (Rylko-Bauer, Singer & Van Willigen, 2006; cf. also Johnston, 2010 and Borofsky, 2011)[17]. Relatedly, the urgency of many questions of social justice has provoked some anthropologists to make their research more attuned to bringing about social change, and for many, this also has to do with making the nature of the research process itself more participatory and collaborative (Lamphere, 2004; Lassiter, 2005, 2008) or more directly aimed at policy making (Lamphere, 2003). Still other scholars have underlined the need to make the products of anthropological investi-

16 Alongside such publicly-oriented positions, it should be noted that a number of people with anthropological training are also finding work in the private sector, be it for internal organizational dynamics, marketing or product development. Cf. Seiser, Czarnowski, Pinkl and Gingrich (2003).

17 Following a debate over the use of anthropological work in the U.S. government's efforts during the Vietnam War, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) issued a Statement on Ethics in 1971. This statement has subsequently undergone a series of revisions (all versions are currently available on the AAA website). In the United Kingdom, the Association of Social Anthropology (ASA) has its own ethics guidelines. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Völkerkunde (DGV) in Germany worked out its own guidelines much later, including cautions about the use of anthropological work for marketing or military aims, but also the awareness of the sensitive issue of bridging research knowledge to non-specialized contexts. Professional anthropological associations in Italy have a much more recent history than in German- and English-speaking countries, but both the Associazione Italiana per le Scienze Etno-Antropologiche (AISEA) and the Associazione Nazionale Universitaria di Antropologi Culturali (ANUAC) have developed deontological codes, available through their respective websites.

gation accessible and available to ever greater numbers of people, thereby increasing the visibility of anthropological contributions to social issues (Borofsky, 2000; Checker, 2009; Checker, Vine & Wali, 2010): the accent here is on anthropology's audience (Jaarsma, 2005).
Within this overall trend, the current major players are anthropologists who identify themselves under the rubric of applied anthropology, and others who instead describe what they are doing as public anthropology. Applied anthropology embraces several domains, prominent among these being health and medicine, social services, education, museums, international development and cooperation, legal issues, the environment, and disaster relief. In the U.S., applied anthropology has an established history, and in some universities it has gained prominent institutional standing, constituting a fifth sub-discipline[18]. In Germany, Antweiler (1998) and Schönuth (2002) differentiate between applied anthropology—one based on academic research, *aus der Akademie heraus tätig werden*—and practicing anthropology oriented toward problem-solving (*problemlösungsorientiert*), in which ethnologists work as freelance consultants. Although Italy has a strong tradition of medical and museum anthropology, as well as a number of colleagues who have focused on development and education, only recently has a group of anthropologists come together to form an association dealing specifically with applied anthropology[19].
Public anthropology certainly operates in some of the same arenas as applied anthropology. One of its main promoters, Robert Borofsky, has insisted that cultural anthropology has a tremendous transformative potential, and a greater public presence can help to realize this potential: public anthropology not only addresses great social issues of the day, but also fosters broad-based public discussions that actively seek to promote social change. According to Borofsky, public anthropology differs from applied anthropology in its emphasis on trans-

18 Anthropology in U.S. universities has traditionally been characterized by what is known as the "four-field" approach, where departments include anthropologists working in the sub-disciplines of social-cultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology, physical (or biological) anthropology, and archaeology.

19 The Società Italiana di Antropologia Applicata (SIAA) was founded in December 2013.

parency, in terms of public accountability of the research conducted, as well as in its concern with big-picture understandings:

> [P]ublic anthropology is concerned with understanding the hegemonic structures that frame and restrict solutions to problems as a way of more effectively addressing these problems. Hegemonic structures are not perceived as secondary, intellectual digressions that take one away from addressing a problem. They are seen as central to addressing it.[20]

To be honest—and perhaps even run the risk of airing some disciplinary dirty laundry—some of the discussion regarding the distinctions between public and applied anthropology has appeared to be a device for staking out professional turfs. In the dualism between the two that has developed, some anthropologists who have identified their work with the long-standing tradition of applied anthropology seem to take umbrage at the pretenses of inventing a new category of public anthropology; they argue that this is actually what they have been doing all along (cf. Singer, 2000[21]). On the other hand, others like Trevor Purcell have instead suggested that public anthropology has a critical edge lacking in applied work; in Purcell's view, although applied anthropology is praxis oriented, we should not assume that this practice necessarily translates into progressive action (Purcell, 2000, p. 32). It is fair to observe, however, that a number of anthropologists who self-identify with one side or the other (or even both sides) of this dualism have also argued for an inclusive stance. Foremost among these has been Louise Lamphere (2003, 2004), who is a past president of the American Anthropological Association, but Hans Baer has also spoken inclusively of public, applied and practicing anthropology under the heading of an "engaged" anthropology, because it "...entails a critical engagement with issues of the day" (2012, p. 217). In any case, there is not a shared understanding of

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20 http://www.publicanthropology.org/public-anthropology/ [last access 22.03.2015]. For a critical reflexion on Borofsky's work, see Vine (2011).

21 See also Borofsky's response published on the Center for a Public Anthropology website: http://www.publicanthropology.org/public-anthropology/ [last access 22.03.2015]

engagement, and it is worth noting that there are anthropologists who are not engaging.

Wherever one stands on the question, the applied/public anthropology dualism softens somewhat when it is placed—like a nesting doll—within another, overarching dualism: that of a "practicing/applied/public/engaged" anthropology versus an "academic" anthropology. Here we see caricatures on both sides: members of the former camp are viewed as overly politicized and/or a-theoretical, oversimplifying what they study, beholden to their commissioning employers; the latter are instead pedantic, irrelevant academics barricaded in their Ivory Towers, publishing cryptic gibberish that only they themselves can understand. Such images are, in part, related to a certain real devaluation and marginalization of applied, public and practicing anthropology that has long held sway in the academic world (cf. Borofsky, 2011) in the U.S., Italy and Germany. The division seems to rest on other dichotomies: those of practice/praxis versus theory, and active versus passive. Catherine Bestman (2013), for example, maintains a restrictive definition of engaged anthropology: she argues against using the label of "engaged" for any ethnography simply because it deals with contemporary social issues. In her view, engagement rests on collaborative work toward social transformation. Similarly, in their introduction to an edited volume on engaged anthropology, Beck and Maida (2013) describe different forms of engagement, emphasizing the need to "participate in generating and bringing about change. We must be engaged in protecting the most vulnerable from oppression and exploitation and support the empowerment of communities to improve people's lives."

A laudable intention, indeed, but some commentators have expressed their doubts about being able to trace such a black-and-white picture in all contexts: Clarke (2010), for example, has pointed out the complexity of designating some communities/populations as the "oppressed" and "exploited", when at times they themselves become the oppressors. Analogously, Herzfeld notes the following:

> Stakeholders, bureaucrats, politicians, even speculators—all have their points of view. To try to capture the entirety of this complicated mixture as a reified "culture" or to summarize an appropriate response in terms of a fixed ethical code merely occludes the all-important detail through which we can begin to understand the situation as a process and a dynamic. (Herzfeld, 2010, p. 265)

If in previous decades the theory/practice divide was used by some academic anthropologists to degrade the status of applied/practicing forms of anthropology by arguing that it was not sufficiently based in theory, today it seems that we are seeing the opposite usage: a somewhat holier-than-thou attitude places praxis on the side of "active" (assumed to be positive), relegating theory to the devalued side of "passive" and associating it with academic anthropology. Yet a number of anthropologists, in urging the discipline to make itself more publicly relevant, have argued for promoting the integration of theory and practice in anthropological work (for example, Peacock, 1997; Borofsky, 2000). Norma González has gone a step further, most eloquently making the case that this is a false binary: she outlines how the anthropology of education, in a decades-long tradition, has united theory and practice, with both elements feeding productively and critically into one another (González, 2010). In any case we agree with Schönuth, when he writes: "The prerequisite for being engaged, however, is that ethnologists get to know local knowledge sufficiently well through their own research, in order to act competently in their intervention (Schönuth, 2002, pp. 2f)."[22] While Schönuth refers to anthropology within the field of development, we are convinced that being competent through one's own research is true for any form of anthropological engagement.

As guest editors of an important supplement to Current Anthropology, Setha Low and Sally Merry have insisted on a very inclusive definition of engagement (Low & Merry, 2010). So inclusive, in fact, that in his comment Merrill Singer raises an eyebrow and asks whether or not they were casting their net too widely. Yet even Singer's own perspective on engagement does

22 "Voraussetzung dafür ist allerdings, dass die EthnologIn durch eigene Forschung genügend vom lokalen Wissen weiß, um kompetent an den Schnittstellen zu agieren." (trans. by the authors)

not seem too prescriptive, where his cites "revealing, critiquing and confronting the unjust use of power" as the most salient features of engaged anthropology (Low & Merry, 2010, pp. 220–221). This is not so far from what Eric Wolf advocated over a decade earlier in his essay in *Transforming Academia*, when he wrote, "We need to be bolder about expanding and asserting anthropology's capacity for the analysis of power, and bring it to bear on both the theoretical issues and societal challenges before us" (Wolf, 1999, p. 37). We find ourselves in agreement with Luke Erik Lassiter, who cuts to the quick when he writes:

> Simply put, rather than worrying about which side of the argument on which you fall, or more precisely, rigidly demarcating what you do as applied, public, practicing or academic anthropology, students should be charting, as anthropologists, how best to connect with the central questions and problems of a larger anthropological project. (Lassiter, 2008, p. 73)

In this sense, we are opposed to overdrawing the distinction between "academic" and "public".

Moving beyond the disciplinary *querelles*, no matter what way we choose to categorize the ethnographic works presented here, they all draw upon the strengths of an anthropological approach and ethnographic methods. Among these strengths, we would like to draw attention to how these works connect macro and micro levels of analysis: looking at situations up-close, but considering them holistically and in context. Additionally, anthropology's gaze de-naturalizes social phenomena, especially through cross-cultural comparison, which can be particularly useful in framing social issues. In this regard, Borofsky notes that "Rather than being drawn into other people's framings, public anthropology challenges the framings that support particular definitions of a problem." (Borofsky, 2000, p. 9)

Louise Lamphere has described the anthropological contribution as follows:

> Anthropologists are uniquely suited to addressing these topics from a distinctive angle. Our qualitative methodologies and field research give us "on the ground insights". We know local languages and cultures, yet have a grasp of the larger political and economic forces that shape local situations. And we are able to unco-

> ver interactional processes within organizations and identify unintended consequences of policies that quantitative research does not reveal. (Lamphere, 2003, p. 167)

Furthermore, she points out how anthropology gives voice to its subjects. This has been both a methodological and ethical imperative in our discipline, and it is also connected to a tradition of sensitivity to relations of power. For this reason, anthropology is particularly valuable in addressing critical social questions. Thus, as Trevor Purcell suggests, the discipline can play a transformative role by making "misrecognizable forms of the real division of the social order transparent" (Purcell, 2000, p. 33).

4. Blurred boundaries in the anthropologist's engagement

The university setting in its narrowest sense—our students and our colleagues from anthropology and other disciplines—is one of our first and most crucial audiences, although not the only one. Several contributions in *Transforming Academia: Challenges and Opportunities for an Engaged Anthropology* (Basch, Wood Saunders, Scharff & Peacock, 1999) discuss important opportunities for engagement through our teaching. Brian Ferguson notes in his review of the book that this is a crucial aspect of anthropology's "public face":

> As my colleague Anne-Marie Cantwell pointed out to me, "our greatest contact with the real world is in our teaching… ." If we are to make an impact, if we want to survive, we must pay more attention to this foundation. (Ferguson, 2003, p. 866; cf. Forman, 1993)

And even within the academic world, one cannot assume that anthropology's voice is being heard effectively. This is particularly true in Italy, where anthropology is a marginal discipline and a number of academics from other disciplines (especially sociology) use our hallmark ethnographic research method. In this sense, we are producing this book as a public effort even within the academy itself. Furthermore, many of our students are preparing

to enter professions (school, communications, social work and the social sector more generally) or are already in the working world, where issues such as those discussed in this volume are directly relevant. We should not take for granted the fact that one of our first publics—that of our students—can act as multipliers of anthropologically-informed messages. Indeed, Judith Shapiro (1999) has emphasized the paramount importance of our teaching for overcoming the "social science illiteracy", as she puts it that ruefully underlies much public debate on social issues.
A fundamental basis for any engagement, in any case, is a critical anthropology (deconstruction of race, religion and ritual, gender/feminism, childhood studies, kinship/descent, family, nation-state, policy). In some cases this may take on policy-relevant connotations; in others, it may simply be publicly relevant—making people think differently—and open up possibilities for transformative action. As Michael Herzfeld has written:

> The task before us is both clear and urgent. It is to make such complexities accessible and interesting to multiple publics at a time when they are being cynically targeted for the seductive and perhaps irreversible addiction of false simplicities. (Herzfeld, 2010, p. 267)[23]

The works we are presenting in this volume are all critical analyses with implications for globalized social reality: the complex and often unintended effects of policies and procedures dealing with refugees and asylum seekers (Sorgoni, Weissensteiner); approaches in communicating and educating about faraway "others" who are also increasingly turning up at home (Klocke-Daffa), or who are others whom we think we know well, as in the case of the Gypsies, a perennial object of scandal in media representations and moral panics—not to mention the alarming rise of antiziganism in con-

23 Not everyone is comfortable with such a mirror being held up, and we run the risk of becoming, as Paredes (1999) puts it, "the skunk at the garden party": "When anthropologists break out of relativistic, emically based molds used to look at our own society's institutions, we run the risk of angering the natives, so to speak, or at best of being ignored" (Paredes, 1999, p. 186). Similar concerns have been expressed by Erikson (2006), who contemplates the possibility that there is no interest in the type of knowledge that is produced.

temporary Europe (Tesăr)[24]; consumption practices with the aim of addressing social injustice across the globe (Henrici).

The arrival of people on the southern shores of Europe, people who are fleeing their homelands in droves for various reasons, has captured the attention of the European media in recent years, either to alarm the public about "invasions" of undesired Others, or slightly more sympathetically, when the Mediterranean Sea ends up as an unwitting cemetery for unlucky boat crossings. Using ethnographic work in northeastern Italy as a basis for her analysis, Barbara Sorgoni deals in her chapter with asylum seekers and the institutional procedures for handling their applications and accommodating their presence. She uses ethnography to point to unspoken assumptions and expectations on both sides of the relationship—paying attention to the asylum seekers' point of view as well as that of social workers and other front-line operators—and giving us critical insight into how asylum policy gets implemented through various agents and how the social welfare institution of asylum seeker reception operates. Although many kindly and well-meaning social workers are involved in such a process, the anthropological thickness of the research allows us to grasp the underlying paradigms that are taken for granted in their work, leading to unintended effects in their interaction with their "clients": Sorgoni raises questions of power and inequality in the hidden dimensions of asylum procedure and reception, and the anthropological holism of her approach allows her to draw connections between the legal aspects of asylum procedure and the social-welfare ones.

Barbara has taken her anthropological work out of a strictly academic arena in order to help develop sounder policies and practices. She is a member of association Asilo in Europa (www.asiloineuropa.it), which aims at analyzing asylum norms and legal practices in Europe, promoting and disseminating the results of research on asylum rights, and fostering the creation of networks among asylum organizations throughout Europe in order to share information and good practices.

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24 The term antiziganism refers to forms of hostility and prejudice against Romany (Gypsy) populations.

Encountering people begging for money in the street is an everyday life experience in most European cities and towns, and among these beggars we often find people from Romani (Gypsy) populations. Our image of Gypsies is also formed by the reproduction of negative stereotypes we constantly receive from the mass media. Cătălina Tesăr's contribution on begging among Cortorari Gypsies offers us a surprisingly different picture by situating the practice of begging within wider social and economic practices of the Cortorari people, with whom she did ethnography in Romania. Through her cultural translation of such economic practices, we are allowed to better understand what begging actually means to the Cortorari: the very intense nature of Tesăr's research helps us to recognize the dimension of work in begging, as paradoxical as it may at first seem to us. The in-depth ethnographic view we find here helps to transform stereotypes of Europe's most stigmatized group and break down an important "us/them" barrier. To understand how this ethnic group survives—and this is no small issue of social justice—Tesăr's holistic perspective takes a broader view of transformations in Cortorari means of making a living and sees how this gets worked into a concept of begging and transnational circulation through migration to Italy.

Cătălina has provided us with an intimate and powerful statement of the relationship of her academic work to public engagement, and we cite what she wrote to us for our reflection:

> As an anthropologist working with Romani people on topics which are sensitive for the larger public (such as early age marriages, begging or the display of wealth), I have always felt uneasy about finding the most adequate voice to communicate my findings. There is a twofold trap in which one can be caught. On the one hand, one may involuntarily provoke moral harm to the people of one's research, by exhibiting their intimate life. On the other hand one continuously runs the risk of reinforcing rather than shattering stereotypes. Unless one falls into the former trap, one avoids falling into the latter. I confess that most of my attempts to speak about Romani philosophy of life, even if in the most sympathetic tone, were unsettling. The commentaries I received to articles published in the Romanian press, and to a lesser degree, those received from students whom I taught in a

Romanian University, were rather skeptical of my convictions that Gypsies are our equals and should receive an equally humane treatment. There are however at least two stories I like to tell, which keeps alive my conviction that the voice of anthropologist should be heard in the public space, and might contribute to changing prejudiced perceptions.

My father is a rigid retired military man. When he learned that I would be doing fieldwork among Gypsies, not only was he afraid that they would harm me one way or another, but he also found it debasing for him to converse with the people among whom I was to live for the coming two years. During the repeated visits my parents made me in the field, I could witness my father's changing expression when shaking hands with the Gypsy men: from reluctant in the beginning, to whole hearted in the final stages of my research. Later, on several occasions, I eavesdropped on conversations my father had entered into with his acquaintances, in which he stood up for the Gypsies as being trustful, friendly and reliable.

My second story is about the incentives and encouragement to share my knowledge about Gypsies that I received from Gypsies themselves. I once delivered a talk on begging in a conference in Romania. I was completely unaware that there were several journalists in the room, attending the conference. The next day, one of them released an article based on my presentation. The article went soon viral and was inevitably read by several of my Gypsies acquaintances, among whom I was still doing fieldwork at that time. A Gypsy friend inquisitively approached me: "You wrote about us in the news." Being afraid that he found the press article offensive, I faltered as I was explaining that I did not expect the mass media to source knowledge that was circulated at an academic meeting. Yet my friend enthusiastically consoled me: "You have gained a deep understanding of us, Cătălina. I am happy that you tell the world the truth about us." On other occasions, when the Romanian television cars arrived in the village of my research to report on different aspects of Gypsy culture, my Gypsy acquaintances agreed that I should speak on behalf of them in front of the camera. Experiences such as these have raised my awareness about the debt I owe as an anthropologist to the people of my study, to translate their culture into lay language and impart it to the public. (Cătălina Tesăr, personal communication 07.03.2015)

More and more often today, we find ourselves called to develop an awareness in our daily lives of how our consumption practices have repercussions across the global village, and one of the responses that has developed has been the burgeoning fair trade sector. In her chapter, Jane Henrici draws on over twenty years of ethnographic experience with artisans in Peru to critically investigate fair trade tourism and help move us toward a deeper consideration of such labels. Her work among Peruvian artisans who produce crafts for fair trade tourism—men and women of different ethnic backgrounds and social standings—demonstrates the need to think about complexities of consumption that are not very evident on the surface or from the buyers' end of the commodity chain. Henrici's contribution has implications for development, where projects and processes with excellent intentions may unevenly affect local populations with regard to social justice. Her ethnographic examples make it clear that we need to attend to how multiple axes of difference within groups that come together through the phenomenon of intersectionality: gender, ethnic and racialized categories, social class[25]. Central to her analysis is an attention to how power enters into the picture, often in unexpected ways.
Jane wrote a comment to us on how she views her own engagement, and it is striking how she notes that the lines between the various spheres of her activity as a researcher, an instructor and a concerned citizen are all but hard and fast:

> As an anthropologist working in a variety of the world's regions, I often have worked with professionals of different disciplines and approaches. I have found anthropology to be distinct in the level of its emphasis on seeking the perspective of a society or group from within it, as well as from outside of it. In my view, engaged anthropology then strives to take that emic emphasis further with two principal features. One feature of the anthropology I regard as engaged is that it simultaneously studies people and their concerns while attempting to use research to respond to those. Another feature of engaged anthropology is that, despite its

25 Intersectionality also includes lines of difference such as disability and sexual orientation, though these are not present in Henrici's paper.

> distinctions, it also has commonalities with other disciplines and approaches and indeed encourages boundaries to blur: among projects done for a salary or fee and those that are unpaid, the mentoring and teaching done inside and outside of the classroom, the efforts made to support political and civic activities and advocacy, and the sharing of research and information across a range of platforms. My own work is focused on gender, race/ethnicity, and economic hardship and has thus far sought ways to respond to challenges people find to their resources, rights, and opportunities as well as to the health and sustenance of their families; moreover, these efforts continue to converge whether they are public, civic, scholarly, educational, or contract activities. (Jane Henrici, personal communication 07.03.2015)

As mentioned above, a number of anthropologists today have been calling on colleagues to more boldly face the challenge of bringing anthropological knowledge to the public. While there are certainly various arenas for doing this—for example, by appearing in the news media, through blogging, by performing consulting and advocacy outside of the academy—museums remain a key site for communicating with non-anthropological audiences. In this sense, the chapter by Sabine Klocke-Daffa gives us a behind-the-scenes glimpse of what it takes to translate anthropological knowledge into accessible contents and messages. She presents a project that demonstrates the challenges of communicating and educating a young audience about the seemingly strange customs of other people. Through this concrete example of "anthropology in practice", Klocke-Daffa demonstrates how we can bring about intercultural learning.

Sabine's personal perspective on engagement dissolves the rigid distinction between theory and practice, and she sees a potential for public outreach as a means of increasing social responsibility and intercultural sensitivity in a globalized world. The paths for this are manifold, as she noted to us in a written statement:

> It can be achieved in many different ways: inside academia or in anthropological practice without academic affiliation, in public institutions, private businesses or in freelance activities. My own way led me through most of these fields: I started out as a member of the nonprofit organization "Anthropology in Schools and

> Adult Education" teaching school kids, giving talks to women's clubs, business organizations and friendly societies. As a University lecturer I was more on the teaching side but then started cooperating with migrant organizations and humanitarian aid institutions as well as organizing exhibitions and publishing for a broader public. It all merged into the New Applied Anthropology at Tuebingen University, which was initiated in 2014 as one of the major fields of action of the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology. Today, our students are working in many professions such as school teachers, intercultural trainers, development consultants and welfare workers among war refugees. (Klocke-Daffa, personal communication 20.03.2015)

Like Barbara Sorgoni's piece, Monika Weissensteiner's chapter also deals with asylum seekers and refugees, but here the focus is on issues that are fall within an intersection of medical and legal anthropology. Based on ethnographic research conducted in multiple settings in different countries, Weissensteiner moves between micro and macro levels of analysis to offer a critical deconstruction of categories and policy practices that converge to define the "worthy" asylum seeker as one who can demonstrate having been tortured. Her approach is one we may well find unsettling, but it is much needed for practitioners involved in asylum procedures (psychologists, doctors, social workers, legal staff). Like Sorgoni's chapter, Weissensteiner lays out some of the dilemmas that practitioners face, and her analysis has important implications for the medical arena, which tends to take for granted its own categories, such as "trauma" and "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder". She describes how the medical discourse intertwines with the legal sphere, where power operates to the detriment of many oppressed people.

In the reflections she sent to us, Monika mentioned her work in youth education in formal and informal settings, where she has dealt with issues of globalization, migration, human rights, refugees, (non-)violence, and conflict. With adults, she has taught professionals in the public health care sector and social workers, focusing on intercultural competencies, medical anthropology and migration. Currently she is expressing active engagement through her work monitoring the Italian-Austrian border, where asylum

seekers headed north are being turned back: in this context, she is interacting with refugees, police forces and activists, and she is conducting transnational networking and advocacy on this situation. Monika describes her work as "an entanglement between training as an anthropologist and various forms of engagement":

> I would mention on one hand [my activities in] youth and adult education, since I think education is a form of engagement, and on the other hand more directly related to the refugee topic my recent activities on the [Italian-Austrian] border, where the however always present "anthropologist in me" always tries to enter in relation with all actors, to understand the (power) dynamics and to catch their experiences and points of view. (Monika Weissensteiner, personal communication 15.03.2015)

All of the themes touched on in these contributions are themes that concern the lives of many professionals (social work, journalism, psychology, medicine, law, education). As we have seen, they are also themes that touch our everyday lives, and the work we find here connects broader macro-level forces of globalized interconnection with a fine-grained attention to micro-level interactions. They all call into question our ordinary generalizations and categorizations of social phenomenon, deconstructing everyday "certainties" through ethnographic insight. The five contributions draw our attention to how relations of power get played out; they all share a concern with issues of social justice. If we are to address these issues with the aim at finding solutions, we should bear in mind that—whether we like it or not—the social reality that anthropology observes is anything but amenable to simplistic diagnoses and cures. And in a truly panoramic view of engagement, this means remaining critically vigilant with regard to how scientific knowledge gets constructed and transmitted, inside as well as outside the academic community.

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