

“My dad has fifteen wives and eight ancestors to care for”: Conveying Anthropological Knowledge to Children and Adolescents

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Abstract

By analyzing an example from Germany of how anthropology can be put to use in a museum context, this chapter reflects on the responsibility of academic anthropology towards the public and the challenges faced in translating complex anthropological knowledge. It first treats the position of practicing anthropology, thereby situating the subsequent discussion of a pilot project at the University of Münster aimed at public outreach as well as practical training for anthropology students. The analysis focuses on one element within the wider project, an exhibition entitled “Fifteen Wives and Eight Ancestors: Life and Religion Among the Balsa of Northern Ghana.” The process of developing this exhibition challenged researchers and students to communicate anthropological knowledge to various publics, especially that of children. The project brought together established anthropological researchers, students, exhibit designers and members of the ethnic group to be represented. Among the several challenges described here, in such initiatives there is a fundamental problem of negotiating the complexity of anthropologists’ knowledge with the designers’ predilection for reducing complexity to essentials. In creating an exhibit on savannah life that dealt with topics like kinship and ancestor worship, these two approaches had collaborate to effectively communicate cultural diversity without exoticizing it. By exploring the experience of producing this exhibit, the chapter deals with how anthropology can contribute to intercultural learning and understanding outside of academia.

1. Anthropology in practice

Universities trying to put anthropology into practice usually face a number of problems. Not only is there an academic distrust towards the incorporation of seemingly “impure” practitioners from outside academia¹, but today’s programmatic orientation of anthropology as part of the humanities makes it indeed difficult to fulfill the demands of the outside world. For many, anthropology is not meant to be an applied science in the first place. This is due to the fact that it aims at understanding cultures as shared systems of meanings which are not easy to analyze nor easy to explain. The people anthropologists are dealing with are, first and foremost, partners who ought to be respected in their own specific ways of living and not be dealt with in short-term programs serving the needs of a (mostly European) public. For many good reasons resulting from experiences dating back to colonial and neo-colonial endeavors, most anthropologists refuse to engage in practice whatsoever, considering *fieldwork* as the one and only appropriate practice to be pursued (for an overview cf. Rylko-Bauer, Singer & van Willigen, 2006; Kedia & van Willigen, 2005, pp. 3–10). Any other kind of practice is simply not theirs. Even though German anthropological departments now send their students for internships to museums or other institutions for weeks or months at a time, thus giving them a chance to get some practical experience, this is generally not part of the academic courses, nor does it feed back into the curriculum.²

This leaves those who are interested in applied anthropology with no option other than to escape the academic field and develop their own way of professionalism. The result is that there are few interactions between academic

1 The distinction between the allegedly “pure” academic anthropology and “impure” anthropological practice outside of academia dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when social anthropology was established as a scientific discipline (Roberts, 2006; Pink, 2006, pp. 6–7). The distinction has only recently been overcome, though not completely. This is particularly true for German social anthropology, which for many years at most accepted museum anthropologists to become members of staff. “Practical people” hired for courses to provide special knowledge are usually employed on a part time basis.

2 When this project started in 2005, Applied Anthropology had not been established at any German University. Up to 2014, only one of them—the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Tübingen, where the author of this article is member of staff—managed to do so.

and practicing anthropology—with anthropologists neglecting what happens in the name of anthropology “out there”, and practitioners lacking time as well as the opportunity to get some fresh ideas as to the theoretical foundations of their profession. Floating careers between academic and non-academic fields are still relatively rare for European anthropologists, even though they seem to be more common in other parts of the world (Strang, 2009, p. 4).

Considering the great chances involved, this is certainly a lost opportunity. As John van Willigen (1993, p. 17) pointed out, the academic field would indeed largely profit from applied anthropology and is even “historically based on application”. On the other hand, applied anthropologists would be able to benefit enormously from incoming research results, were there some kind of institutionalized exchange between academic and practical anthropology (Pink, 2006, p. 8). But this gap still needs to be closed (anew) and would imply quite substantial adjustments as regards content and methodology in teaching as well as in research, workshops or summer schools. What is most required is training in decision making and consulting, elaborating concrete problem solutions and addressing the public. Most anthropologists have trouble with this way of taking a stand and, moreover, to be publicly exposed. It is nothing they ever learned to do or even had in view.

However, the growing need for well-trained practicing anthropologists and the demand for “going public” due to an increased awareness of cultural diversity motivated many universities to take first steps in the direction of an applied anthropology as part and parcel of their academic discipline. Quite a number of US anthropological departments (currently more than forty) have complied with the new challenges, up to the point that they opened up a new academic field³ offering degrees in applied anthropology. Their BA and MA graduates have good chances on the job market, e.g. in public administration or institutions of development aid. Alex de Waal even

3 The traditional four-field model of US anthropology includes cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, linguistic anthropology and archeology. In more than forty universities, this model has been extended with applied anthropology as the fifth field; cf. <http://www.sfaa.net/resources/education/> [last access 12.07.2015]

stated that in the United States anthropology has become “an acknowledged partner in development practice” (de Waal, 2002, p. 254). What might be true for US American anthropologists is certainly far from being real in Europe, but there are in fact rising numbers of anthropologists outside of academia, being employed precisely because of their intercultural competence and intimate knowledge of cultural diversity. There is hope indeed for a gradual incorporation of applied anthropology into European university courses, in no small part due to the Bologna Accords, which not only intended to adjust European educational standards, but also obligated universities to offer more classes in applied science. However, the big change in practical orientation has been far less successful than was intended, not the least due to the persistent differences between academically based and practicing anthropologists.

Few German anthropological departments started well in advance of Bologna to explore the possibilities of applied anthropology, whether by organizing intensive courses of practical work or making students familiar with job options in different sectors. One of the projects thus conducted by the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Münster was a pilot project titled “Anthropology in practice: Anthropological contributions to interculturality”⁴, comprised of a number of seminars from 2002–2005. Several aims were to be pursued: presenting anthropological issues to a broader public; making students familiar with professional practice; conveying extra skills and job orientation; and finding new ways in academic teaching, methodologically as well as personnel-wise, by establishing teams of scientific staff supported by experts from outside the university with an anthropological background.

Among the featured projects: public lectures under the somewhat sensational title “Sex and the Body”, presenting culture-specific concepts of body, gender and sexuality (most appreciated by the general public when it came to the history of Kama Sutra); a series of events featuring lectures, films and dances entitled “The Eternal Now”, focusing on the preservation of values

4 Carried out through a grant of the Ministry of Science and Research of the provincial government of Nordrhein-Westfalen.

and rituals worldwide⁵; and an exhibition titled “Fifteen Wives and Eight Ancestors: Life and Religion Among the Balsa of Northern Ghana”, which will be dealt with in more detail below.

2. Applied anthropology in the public space: some experiences

To make my point clear: this article is not meant to give an overview of latest museological theories or new approaches to historical collections, of exciting scenographic offers, ethical issues or post-modern maxims for exhibiting the “other”—all this needs to be considered by museum anthropologists and is part of museology courses. Nor does it contain a comparison of the exhibit described here with other ethnographic exhibitions. Instead, it presents and reflects upon what it means for academic anthropologists when they are asked to convey their scientific knowledge to the public—in particular to a young audience. To accomplish this goal there was a little help from outside specialists and a museum as public *space* for the presentation to be organized⁶. The paper thus changes the perspective: rather than reconsidering the responsibilities and duties of contemporary museums, a topic which has been discussed at length (e.g. Rein, 2013), it addresses the responsibility of academic anthropology towards the public and the challenge to put anthropology to use as part of academic studies. The presentation eventually realized does not claim to reveal an exceptional new approach, and the way of presenting material objects, pictures and life histories might not be very thrilling to those whose daily business is exactly this. But it was exceptional to those who had to do the job being confronted with questions like “How can I (as a student or teacher of cultural anthropology) explain to adults and adolescents of my own society what other people do and how they make

5 The initial title was “Das Ewige Jetzt. Über die Vergangenheit in der Gegenwart verschiedener Kulturen”.

6 Museums are indeed public spaces which are much more frequented by the public than other spaces and certainly more than universities. One of the arguments for carrying out the student project in a public museum as described in this article was that it would bring anthropology closer to the public.

their lives meaningful?" "How can we make anthropology popular?" "And how does a public space serve to achieve this?"

The exhibit was part of the aforementioned pilot project which intended to examine the possibilities and limitations of integrating applied science into the regular curriculum. A theoretical discussion of the transfer of anthropological and indigenous knowledge to the public was not intended and will therefore be left aside in this paper. What the project did was to provide ample insights into the interactions between scientists and the public, scholars and teachers, students and their interviewees whose "culture" was to be presented. It also elucidated the value of intercultural learning. All participants were well aware of the fact that culture is not a container forcing its residents into a predetermined way of life, but an ongoing process of negotiating shared ways of life. However, *discussing* these issues in theory and *applying* them in public are two strands that need to be brought together in applied anthropology as opposed to academic anthropology. It was part of the project to accomplish this task.

These are my experiences, and the results might help those who undertake similar ventures.

3. The exhibition "Fifteen Wives and Eight Ancestors"— conception, challenges, and problems

Looking at this exhibit in hindsight, it was a tremendous challenge and daring effort to realize it as a student project with only minimal financial support and expertise. What was there when it started out was a rag-bag of around 800 objects from Northern Ghana, collected by the Münster anthropologist Franz Kröger over a period of thirty years (fig. 1-2).⁷ The idea to bring to light a collection of this kind which so far had led an almost unnoticed existence in an under-utilized departmental room was at first greeted

7 The history of this particular collection has not yet been written and was not part of the project. It certainly would be an interesting approach to compare and reevaluate this private collection in comparison to others which have been accommodated at anthropological departments.

with hilarity and immediately incorporated into the pilot project—only later did the project group learn about the enormous workload connected to it. In the end, a group of twenty-five students from anthropology and design studies, together with a team of four university staff members and three outside experts (one being the owner of the collection and an excellent expert of Northern Ghana, the other one a media anthropologist, and the third being experienced in museum education) managed to realize the project and, in my view, did a great job (Klocke-Daffa & Grabenheinrich, 2005, Klocke-Daffa 2007).⁸

What made it particularly difficult was the fact that the exhibition venue was the Museum of Natural History of the City of Münster (which lacked an anthropological museum), one of the well-frequented museums in town, with more than 60% of all visitors being children and adolescents.



Figs. 1–2 – Ethnographic collection showcases at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Münster/Germany, provided by anthropologist Franz Kröger (Photos Sabine Klocke-Daffa, Miriam Grabenheinrich)

8 I am particularly grateful to Miriam Grabenheinrich, who was the initiator of this project. As an anthropologist and professional television journalist, she was a member of the teaching staff and produced several of the videos on life in Northern Ghana presented during the exhibition.

This fact obliged the organizers to figure out a presentation concept directed to adults as well as to adolescents and incorporate an extra *kid's guide* to address young visitors.

3.1 The exhibition concept

The concept for presenting the exhibit was based on three guiding principles: it focused on *content* as well as on *design* and—as part of this concept—it intended to integrate some *voices* of the exhibited group. One of the main challenges was to let students develop their own exhibition concept rather than confronting them with ready-made solutions. This led to a situation in which interdisciplinary meetings were dominated by lengthy discussions, as anthropologists at first glance were not too interested in what they perceived as “unscientific” aspects like wall paper color, lighting systems or minimalistic presentation concepts; whereas designers had a hard time following all the ethnographic details singled out to be presented.

Content

The exhibit aimed at providing insights into the life of a particular ethnic group, making alternative ways of living and believing an object of discussion, addressing certain themes (at the expense of others) that were familiar to every visitor—such as kinship, education or religion—and presenting the unusual without exoticizing it. Focusing on kinship structures as the title indicates (“My dad has fifteen wives and eight ancestors to care for”), the idea was to present *one family* (the family of Anamogsi, head of compound) and take this as a starting point to explain to visitors—adults as well as adolescents—what it means to grow up in polygynous families, live with the ancestors as the “living dead”, and make a living in an adverse environment providing few options to the individual.

Students also decided to give a *voice* to those whose life was to be presented, being well aware of the fact that “culture” is never a closed box and might be experienced by individuals quite differently. One of the ways to do that was by arranging four videos within the exhibit: these were produced by one of the organizers who managed to interview Balsa in Ghana, and then they were shown next to the objects presented. Also, she was able to interview

some *Bulsa* who migrated to Germany many years ago and asked them what their cultural heritage meant to them. Three of them were invited to participate as writers or have their biographies presented in the exhibition catalogue, which they did (Akankyalabey, 2006; Ayaric, 2006; Rimmert, 2006).

Design

The exhibition put special emphasis on a colorful presentation and aimed at confining explanatory texts to a maximum of 800 characters (what a challenge for scientists!), reducing the number of objects to a minimum while increasing the number of photographs and videos to give it a vivid appearance and appeal to all the senses—thus allowing kids to touch, smell and handle objects whenever possible rather than locking all the objects into showcases. To carry out this proposal, a number of objects (not being part of the collection) were bought in local markets in Ghana and later integrated into the exhibit so that visitors could touch them: household utensils like pots, dishes and clothes, agricultural equipment like hoes and baskets, children's school books and handmade toys. The section "local markets" contained different spices, fruits and vegetables (not purchased in Ghana). Additionally, students reconstructed several architectural particularities to be presented, such as a shrine for the ancestors, a small granary used by *Bulsa* kids for writing exercises and a model of a *Bulsa* rural compound. This model in particular inspired small visiting kids as it showed houses, play grounds, storage devices and cattle sheds all in one compound, thus presenting an alternative form of living with respect to the one with which most of them were familiar.



Fig. 3 – Small-scale Bursa compound made of clay presented inside the exhibit (Photo Sabine Klocke-Daffa)

3.2 Challenges

The project faced a number of challenges that are unknown in regular academic routine and are not even dealt with in curricular requirements or regulations.

Get organized

Cross-cultural training started right from the beginning because of the interdisciplinary approach: anthropologists meeting designers in class turned out to be a special kind of a “clash of cultures”, each adhering to their own values, needs and claims. It took more than six months until the different expectations could be overcome and melt into a new way of co-presentation. So instead of “cultures are complex wholes and need to be presented in a complex way” (anthropologists) versus “complex issues need to be reduced to the essentials” (designers) the motto of the exhibition became “large issues presented in small examples” shown in a materially reduced, but not minimal, presentation.

Appeal to non-professionals

As an anthropological exhibition, it had to be conceptualized for a non-anthropologically trained public—as could be expected in a Museum of

Natural History. So the basics of anthropological training—such as kinship terms, socio-cosmological structures or economics systems—could not be taken for granted and needed explanation.

Be exciting

The public had to be addressed in a way that was attractive enough to make the exhibition interesting. In the end, we decided to focus on polygyny as one of many possible forms of marriage and animism as a religious concept to deal with the supernatural.

Make it short

Nobody actually wants to read long explanatory texts. This turned out to be one of the really hard tasks.

Inspire

Inspire children and adolescents with interesting stories such as the role of ancestors, sacrifices at a shrine, growing up with several dozens of sisters and brothers.



Fig. 4 – Site of the exhibit: Sacrifice at a shrine for the ancestors (reconstructed) (Photo Romy Seidler)

The final concept was quite ambitious to realize for the group—all except one being unfamiliar with the organization of exhibitions. It included: a 600 square-meter presentation showing material objects and photographs as well

as new videos; a catalogue comprising detailed information for the media; and a kids' tour questionnaire. Special offers were made for school classes of different grades and an inauguration gala had to be organized. All this would not have been possible without public and private sponsoring, which had to be secured.



Fig. 5 – Market stall with original items (Photo Romy Seidler)

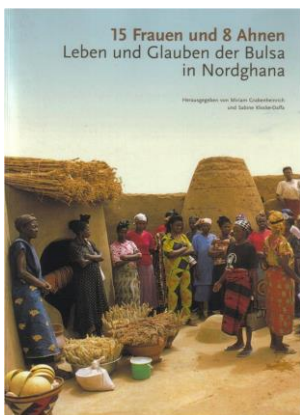


Fig. 6 – Cover of exhibition catalogue (Photo Miriam Grabenheinrich, Design Aufdemkamp)

Each of these items was elaborated by a special student task force supervised by staff members as well as external experts. It was agreed that not more than four aspects of Balsa culture would be presented, featuring traditional

as well as modern life: life in a Ghanaian savanna compound; agriculture and handcrafts as basic economic activities; social life and religion; markets, migration and social change.

3.3 Issues for discussion and special offers

The project tackled a number of questions using anthropological data to exemplify what it means to live under social, religious, economic and environmental conditions which are quite different from our own. It also intended to initiate discussions about alternative concepts of social life and religious beliefs, trying to make them understandable rather than boosting stereotypes of the exotic “other”. It was further to be stressed that the Balsa are a contemporary society facing modernity and technical changes, just as other societies. As many of them are living as migrants outside of Ghana or even outside of Africa, the biographies of two persons who lived in Germany were taped and presented by audio processors within the exhibition. Last but not least, it was to be explained what anthropologists do by tracing back research among the Balsa over the past thirty years in which the exhibited objects had been collected. This mixture of a *general overview* of life in a savanna society and *individual stories* proved to be quite successful. It provided visitors with basic information of what life is in this part of the world, but gave it a very personal touch. Children and adolescents found it most fascinating to meet a family of almost seventy people, with only one father, many mothers and enough siblings to form about five football teams.

Among the topics thus selected where:

“Everyday life of a man” – Presenting Mr. Anamogsi, compound head and wealthy farmer with fifteen wives, about fifty children, and eight ancestors of his patrilineage to care for. The questions to be answered in this section were: How do people live in a polygynous society, and what kind of special responsibilities does this man have?



Figs. 7–8 – Mr. Anamogsi, head of compound, husband of fifteen wives, father of about fifty children and descendent in a line of eight ancestors (Photos Miriam Grabenheinrich)

“Everyday life of women” — Featuring the house of a woman and her private belongings; showing pictures of women in a polygynous marriage. The questions in this section to be answered were: How do women live in polygyny, and what do they have to say about it? Why would they prefer to be a wife among many rather than being a single wife?



Figs. 9–10 – Woman and children in a Balsa compound (Photos Miriam Grabenheinrich)

“The life of children” –Presenting pictures and videos about the compound children who grow up with one father and many mothers, living among many sisters and brothers. The questions to be answered here were: Why do the Balsa prefer to have many children? Is there a meaning to it other than economic considerations?

“Living with the dead” –Animism and ancestor worship were addressed and what it means to live with the dead as members of the community, showing sacrifices to the ancestors and the person who is qualified for this job, the diviner. The questions to be answered were: What is the significance of the deceased? Why are they considered to be part of the life of the living?

“The work of anthropologists” –Last but not least, anthropology as a profession was to be presented and what it means to do fieldwork.

“Specials for kids” –A tour guide for young children with questions about details of the exhibition was added. Answers could be found in each section as kids carefully followed the path. Two educational workshops for children were conceptualized, from grade conceptualized for: “Balsa—Savanna Life” (children grades 4–5), featuring family life in a compound; and “Calabashes and Maggi spice—Tradition and Modernity among the Balsa” (children and adolescents grades 5–7).



Figs. 11–12 – Kids' tour guide with symbol to be found inside the exhibition. Student during setup (Photos Romy Seidler)

4. Conveying anthropological knowledge

Talking about anthropology in practice and how to convey complicated scientific knowledge to the public—more precisely to children and adolescents—demands that we answer three questions: How can anthropology be put to practice dealing with children and adolescents in intercultural learning? Why is intercultural competence necessary? What does intercultural competence demands us to do?

4.1 Anthropology in practice—Intercultural learning

One possibility to bring anthropology to practice and to a broader public audience with a special focus on children and adolescents is to participate and elaborate special offers in intercultural learning. This has been defined as “the understanding of different systems of orientation and its adjustment to one’s own thinking and acting” (Thomas, 1988, p. 83), to cite only one of many definitions from the scientific literature. What makes this definition of special importance for applied anthropology is the option of agency⁹: it implies that it is not sufficient to get some information about different societies with their particular cultures—information we get through the media every day. Similarly, it is not enough to get to know persons with different cultural backgrounds or get in contact with certain objects of their culture—a situation we find in schools, neighborhoods and during vacations. In addition, intercultural learning implies understanding different ways of life, norms and value systems and *transforming this knowledge into appropriate action* when dealing with people of different cultural backgrounds. This does not mean renouncing one’s own values and accepting anything others do unquestioned, but it does demand accepting other ways of life as equal to own and changing perspectives.

⁹ *Agency* (German: *Handlungsmacht*) is defined as the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices; cf. Barker, 2005, p. 448.

4.2 What applied anthropology is good for in intercultural learning

The term *intercultural competence* seems to be a bit strained even before it has been put into effect, but this is really what we have to keep in mind and should aim at continuously: “Intercultural competence is the skill of achieving a maximum of understanding and agreement when dealing with members of different cultures, acquired in a process of learning” (Bertels & Bußmann, 2013, p. 33, translated by the author).¹⁰ Two aspects of this definition must be highlighted:

Intercultural competence requires a learning process and is nothing one could easily memorize; it aims at understanding and agreement. Many misunderstandings could be avoided if other ways of living would be comprehensible. However, this implies the willingness to understand other persons and not only to put one’s own ideas across.

Applied anthropology works at the interface of this difficult and time-consuming process of teaching and learning, precisely because it takes both sides into account. Rather than being reduced to interpreting ethnographical facts and working out models of explanations, applied anthropology must go much beyond academic teaching. It aims at putting knowledge into practical instructions and guidance. This requires careful preparation, taking different demands and needs of the public into account. Most important, it urges anthropologists to assume an unequivocal position – which is far from the normal situation of scientists keeping on neutral ground.

4.3 What intercultural competence demands us to do

There are a great many scientific approaches to intercultural learning from different disciplines. Educational theory might be well ahead of anthropology as far as its methods and aims are concerned. But whatever is considered to be the appropriate approach, intercultural learning and achieving

10 “Interkulturelle Kompetenz ist die in einem Lernprozess erreichte Fähigkeit im ... Umgang mit Mitgliedern anderer Kulturen einen möglichst hohen Grad an Verständigung und Verstehen zu erreichen.”

competence to deal with members of different cultural groups does always imply *changing perspectives*, trying to look at the world through the eyes of others. This is not an easy thing to do considering how difficult it is to even accept different points of opinion within one's own culture—even more so when dealing with different beliefs and value systems. So we are facing what might be called the *intercultural triangle*: intercultural learning aims at understanding different systems of orientation and its adjustment to one's own thinking and acting. Only if this is accomplished can intercultural competence be enacted; but both require the will to change perspectives.

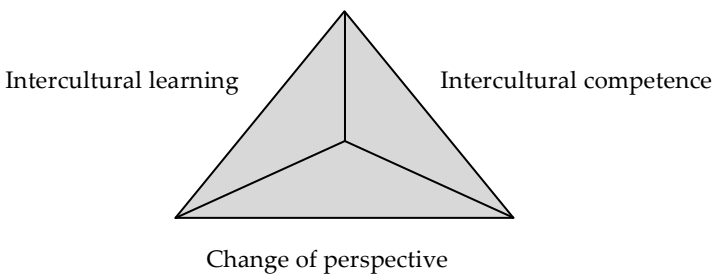


Fig. 13 – The intercultural triangle

Applied anthropology is able to accomplish these aims, but what is needed is a set of transparent, well-prepared data presented in such a way that it meets the audience where it is and not where scientists want it to be. Children and adolescents want anthropological data to be presented in fascinating stories that show them what the world has to offer and that there is more than one way of looking at it.

This is quite an arduous endeavor which might imply critical reflection of one's own positions, abandoning well-known stereotypes serving to make the world easily understandable. The opportunities, however, are manifold: intercultural competence is a necessary premise in a globally consolidating world and "sells" in many ways. Children should become aware of the fact that cultural diversity is not a menace to their future, but a sign of wealth. It necessitates giving others a chance to be different.

	Challenges	Chances
a)	Intercultural learning is arduous	Intercultural competence “sells” in a multicultural environment
b)	Critical reflection of own position queries own values	Cultural diversity signifies wealth and is not a threat to individual or collective identity
c)	Reducing stereotypes makes life more complicated	Acknowledge that others have a right to be different and need not be judged by stereotypes

5. Prospects and limits

The project “My dad has fifteen wives and eight ancestors to care for” clearly brought to light the chances and problems of an attempt to convey anthropological knowledge to children and adolescents. Incorporating this transformation process into academic teaching is certainly a special challenge and does have certain limits. One is that students and teachers must accept that they are not professionals when it comes to presentation techniques, media competence or other skills. The challenge which is much more difficult to overcome is that of bringing scientific knowledge into line with public demands. Working *in public* implies working *for the public*—not for a scientific audience.

What we should keep in mind is the fact that “the anthropological gaze” we are so familiar with and take so much effort to learn in university courses is nothing the public is used to. Anthropologists’ excitement over the worldwide wealth of cultures, over different systems of kinship, religion, economics and politics, over values and norms or hierarchy and egalitarianism might not be shared and leave non-anthropologists confused (which is not to say that the experience of diversity is never confusing to anthropologists). Making anthropology popular needs a reduction of complexity, and this might not be easy to achieve. People usually want simple answers to complicated realities—which most often we cannot provide. So whenever there is an information request from the side of the media asking to explain a culturally complex cultural pattern such as polygyny or animism—“please tell me

in five sentences” —we will have to surrender. We cannot explain a complex whole in five sentences—and we can’t always make it short.

But what we can do is to present what we have and take public needs into account. Conveying anthropological knowledge, and more precisely to a young audience, in this manner forces anthropologists to reduce large issues to small examples and make complex matters understandable. To that end it is necessary to confine the aim to what is feasible, lower expectations and meet the audience where it stands: with its own problems, interests and experiences, and invited to bring in its own views. It can be done, but it needs special training of students and the feedback of practicing anthropologists as outside specialists. What applied anthropology has to strive for and what students need to learn is to translate scientific knowledge into a language which the public understands. It might not be the only step but certainly the first one for the promotion of tolerance and the appreciation of the wealth of cultures. A publicly relevant anthropology has a lot to offer in achieving this goal, but it needs to leave the ivory tower of science and break fresh ground.

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