ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP AND EMANCIPATION

75 Years of Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies at Radboud University

Toon van Meijl & Frans Wijsen (Eds.)

RADBOUD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Introduction

Emancipation and Engagement over the Years[1]

TOON VAN MEIJL & FRANS WIJSEN

This collective volume has been compiled to celebrate that 75 years ago the foundation was laid for the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies at Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands. The contributions to this volume exemplify the evolution of the academic disciplines of anthropology and development studies at Radboud University in the course of its history. Radboud University itself celebrates its centenary in the year 2023. Originally this university was established for the emancipation of the Catholic population in the Netherlands – until 2004 its official name was the Catholic University of Nijmegen. Emancipation continues to be a distinctive feature of the university's policy, also of the scholarship as it is conducted in the department of anthropology and development studies. Needless to say, however, that the concept of emancipation has acquired a different meaning over the years; the target groups have changed, while as a goal of policies and research it is also approached from a variety of different angles. It is beyond the scope of this introduction to offer a comprehensive discussion of the different meanings of emancipation and its historical transformation, but some notes on the development of the department are necessary to provide a historical setting for this festive volume.

In 1948, the first chair in cultural anthropology, then still labelled 'ethnology', was established at the Catholic University of Nijmegen with the appointment of Bernard Vroklage. This first professor had been trained in the Anthropos Institute of the missionary congregation the Society of the Divine Word (*Societas Verbi Divini*, SVD), led by the renowned and influential priest and scholar Wilhelm Schmidt. Vroklage had done field research on Flores and Timor in Indonesia (at the time still part of the Dutch East Indies). Since he was an ordained priest, his research

1 We are very grateful to René van der Haar for his editorial assistance in compiling this collective volume.

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was interconnected with missionary activities on the understanding that "anthropology… should contribute to the pastoral task of the missions" (see Willemsen, this volume).[2] In view of his background, it may not be surprising that the first chair of cultural anthropology became part of the Institute of Mission Studies at Radboud University.

Professor Vroklage died of a tragic accident in 1951[3] and was succeeded by Richard Mohr, who held the chair in anthropology until his retirement in 1970. Mohr had also been trained in the tradition of the SVD and had previously served as priest in the diocese of Trier. He had extensive experience in Africa, both as missionary and as anthropological fieldworker. Since Indonesia had become independent, it was considered an advantage that he had special expertise in East and Central African societies, with which the Netherlands had no colonial connections (Meurkens 1998: 32).

The blurred boundary between anthropology and missionary activities in the work of Vroklage and Mohr would nowadays be considered problematic, but the similarities between the two occupations frequently intersected in the past. After all, both missionaries and anthropologists are professional strangers in foreign societies, with a shared interest in non-western culture that is grounded in a western type of rationality. In the 'field', anthropologists and missionaries sometimes operated rather independently and could treat one another with respect, but in other situations their relationship was characterized by contempt and mutual distrust. As a corollary, relations between anthropologists and missionaries have been characterized as ambiguous in an extensive debate about their resemblances (Van der Geest 1987; Bonsen, Marks and Miedema 1990; Borsboom and Kommers 2000). In a historical review of relations between anthropologists and missionaries, Pels (1990) pointed out that, with the professionalization of the discipline of cultural anthropology within the academy, their relationships have become more detached. This insight also applies to the evolution of cultural anthropology at Radboud University.

Throughout most of the 1950s, Professor Mohr was the only member of staff in the discipline of cultural anthropology. In 1956, his chair was converted from 'ethnology and religion studies' into cultural anthropology, although he continued to be part of the Institute of Mission Studies until a separate Institute of Cultural Anthropology was set up in 1958 (Meurkens 2002: 497). In 1959, a new member of

2 See also: https://www.ru.nl/ftr/actueel/ftr-100-verhaLen/@1308989/1948-missie-alphons-mulders/. Interestingly, oral tradition has it that his missionary background had hampered an appointment as professor at Leiden university (see also Meurkens 2002: 497).

3 See: https://www.ru.nl/ftr/@1340581/1951-doodsmak-kwakkenberg/.

staff was appointed: Leo Triebels, the first graduate in anthropology of Radboud University. He became the first non-clerical member of staff. It was the beginning of a new era, which gathered some momentum with the establishment of a Faculty of Social Sciences in 1963. The Institute of Cultural Anthropology was transferred to this faculty and expanded with two positions, a 'lector'[4] in social anthropology (Albert Trouwborst) and a 'lector' in folk law and legal development in non-western societies (Geert van den Steenhoven). Soon they were accompanied by professor Elisabeth Allard, who since 1958 held an extraordinary chair in non-western sociology in the Faculty of Arts, but who also transferred to the new Faculty of Social Sciences, in which her chair was converted into an ordinary chair. The total of five staff members exceeded the number of students until 1966, when student numbers suddenly increased from four in 1965 to seventeen in 1966 (interview with Ad Borsboom, 2023). The various types of expertise among the professors and lectores generated a debate about the shared focus in the Institute of Cultural Anthropology, which was rebranded in 1966 with the awkward label of United Institutes of Cultural Anthropology and Non-Western Sociology (Triebels 1979, 33).

The subdiscipline of non-western sociology might be regarded as an early precursor of development studies in the Netherlands, focusing on the development and modernization of formerly colonized societies (Schenk-Sandbergen 2002). It emerged in the 1950s at a number of universities in the country, including Radboud University. Here it was initially also intertwined with the missionary goals of the first chair, Professor Allard, who was a member of the Catholic congregation Women of Bethany (Meurkens 1998: 41). The lack of attention in this field for inequality and injustice in development processes, however, became a cause of concern among the growing student population at Radboud University in the late 1960s. Rising student numbers coincided with widespread opposition against the central pillars of society after the Second World War, particularly churches (Janssen and Voestermans 1978). At Radboud University, a radical student movement emerged, taking inspiration from Marxist epistemology and demanding the democratization of teaching and research. A recent study argues compellingly that this transition may be considered as a conversion from the predominance of Catholic orthodoxy to the dogma of Marxism (Willemsen 2022).

In this context, the curriculum of cultural anthropology and non-western sociology was soon also considered to be overly conservative. Resistance against

4 The position of 'lector' no longer exists at Dutch Universities. They were the equivalent of Reader (in the United Kingdom) or Associate Professor (in the USA). In 1980, all 'lectores' became full professor.

cultural anthropology was part of the rising awareness that the discipline had emerged during the colonial era, which required reflection on its assumptions and aims in postcolonial times (Asad 1973; Thomas 1994). Apart from struggles within the department and its repeated occupation by students advocating for radical change, this movement also led to the establishment of the Third World Centre in 1973 – 50 years ago in the year 2023! The founding father of this centre, Gerrit Huizer, had conducted extensive fieldwork in Latin America, where he had been inspired by liberation theology. Against that background, he criticized anthropology for collaborating with colonialism and argued that scholars should demonstrate more solidarity with the poor and the oppressed in the Third World (Huizer 1975). It may also explain why his collaboration with the Department of Mission Studies at the university was so close. At the time, Mission Studies had emancipated itself from the paradigm of conversion and mainly studied theologians in the Third World who were advocating for the liberation of the 'poor' and a dialogue with the 'Others'. Initially, the Third World Centre was located off-campus, but over the years its position on the periphery changed. It was increasingly accepted as an important part of the university, which began with recognition of its main course ("Processes of change in the Third World") as an elective, that subsequently was extended to a minor and later also a major.

In the meantime, the department of anthropology also expanded and changed under the influence of time. Student numbers skyrocketed in the 1970s, paralleled by an enormous increase in staff. Non-western sociology was incorporated in the curriculum of anthropology after the retirement of Professor Allard in 1969, when the institute also changed its name into Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology. Professor Mohr retired in 1970. The main figureheads in the years to come were Professor Trouwborst (social anthropology), whose 'lectoraat' was changed into a professorship in 1971, and Professor Blok (cultural anthropology), who was appointed in 1973. For many years, the department was divided into two sub-sections: social anthropology, predominantly inspired by the British tradition, with a focus on the study of symbols and social organization; and cultural anthropology, that introduced historicizing anthropology and figurational sociology as articulated by Norbert Elias into the curriculum, and also the regional specialization of European anthropology, the Mediterranean area in particular. Students continued to struggle towards adaptation of the teaching program that was considered apolitical, if not colonial. At the same time, the emergence of the second wave of feminism in the 1970s inspired female students to advocate for the appointment of a female staff member and the inclusion of 'women's studies' in the curriculum (see Jansen, this volume). In the early 1980s, Marxist anthropology

was incorporated in the curriculum, while the specialization of economic anthropology was added to the department with the appointment of Willem Wolters to a chair in that field in 1985.

Since in this brief introduction we cannot reconstruct the history of the department in more detail, we may synopsize that in the mid-1980s the situation became more stable in terms of student numbers and staff composition. However, Blok moved to Amsterdam in 1986, while Trouwborst retired in 1989 (Trouwborst 1999). The different chairs of social anthropology and cultural anthropology were combined into a new chair of cultural and social anthropology, to which Frans Hüsken was appointed in 1990. Hüsken had studied non-western sociology at Radboud University, where he wrote a master's thesis on the student movement in postcolonial Indonesia in 1971. After his graduation he had been employed at the University of Amsterdam, where he also completed his doctorate on social differentiation in a peasant community on Java, Indonesia (Hüsken 1988). His doctoral dissertation testified to the 'anthropologization' of non-western sociology over the years (cf. Schenk-Sandbergen 2002), which appeared not only from his approach but also from his focus on poverty and inequality. This background may have contributed to the development of cooperative relations between the Institute of Cultural and Social Anthropology and the Third World Centre in the course of the 1990s.

The final decade of the previous century may also be characterized as the heydays of the anthropology of Oceania at Radboud University. This regional specialization began in 1975, when the first austerity programme in higher education requested anthropology departments in the Netherlands to focus on particular thematic and regional specializations. In addition to the thematic specialization of economic anthropology, Nijmegen was allocated the region of Australia and Oceania, later to be called the Pacific. Initially a small centre for the study of Australia and Oceania was set up, which was renovated and rebranded in 1992 as Centre for Pacific Studies on the occasion of its organization of the First European Colloquium on Pacific Studies. This large international conference resulted in the establishment of the European Society for Oceanists and put Nijmegen on the map (Van Meijl 2018). In the 1990s, three scholars (Otto, Van Meijl and Venbrux) were awarded a prestigious research fellowship by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, while Borsboom was appointed professor of anthropology of Oceania in 1997. It created some critical mass in the anthropology of Oceania for several years to come, with numerous MA and doctoral students conducting research in the region (see, e.g., Borsboom et al. in this volume).

In 1999, the Faculty of Social Sciences decided to merge anthropology and development studies into one program. Initially, however, this only implied a joint first semester during the first year, after which students chose to continue in either one of the disciplines (Meurkens 2002: 509). The distinction between anthropology and development studies remained institutionalized for some time. In 1999, for example, Leo de Haan was appointed to the chair of development studies, and rebranded the Third World Centre into the Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen (CIDIN) during his inaugural address (De Haan 2000). Cooperation gradually advanced over the years, e.g. when a joint bachelor program was developed with the introduction of the Bachelor/Master structure in 2004. The integration of the disciplines of anthropology and development studies was finally completed in 2016, when distinct trajectories also disappeared in the master's program. Since then, anthropology and development have been fully integrated in teaching and research. The first joint research program, developed over the past decade, focuses on the question of how diversity and various forms of inequality influence and perhaps reinforce each other. During the most recent research assessment in 2020 this program was assessed as 'very good'.

In 2023, then, we celebrate that the foundation for the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies was laid 75 years ago, and that we have a history of 75 years of anthropology and 50 years of development studies at Radboud University. In view of this anniversary, we reflected on the common denominator in both disciplines over the years at this university in Nijmegen. Indeed, emancipation was a key concept in the mission of the university at its establishment a century ago, which was also embraced by the first generation of anthropologists at Radboud University. At a later stage, Catholicism and religious emancipation were disconnected from the professional "purpose of anthropology… to make the world safe for human differences" (Ruth Benedict). From the late 1960s and early 1970s, emancipation was translated in terms of sympathy for the underdog or disenfranchised groups in societies in which scholars in the fields of both anthropology and development studies conduct their research. Indeed, it is in this tradition that anthropology and development studies are collaborating at Radboud University: we share a concern for the dignity and rights of all humans, we aim at changing livelihood conditions in order to create more social justice and we are committed to mobilizing the results of our research for constructive interventions into politics (e.g. Gardner and Lewis 2015; Kirsch 2018). As such, emancipation and engagement are key concepts in the disciplines of anthropology and development studies at Radboud University. For that reason, too, we have elected to focus in this anniversary volume on the various meanings of the concepts of emancipation and

engagement in the practices of anthropology and development studies at Radboud University since its inception in 1948.[5]

We invited all colleagues in the department and all former professors who are still alive and kicking to contribute an essay on the meaning of engaged scholarship in their own work, especially in relation to emancipatory issues.[6] We also encouraged them to collaborate with former colleagues, including PhD students or postdoctoral fellows. In addition, we encouraged them to reflect on changes in approaches of emancipation and engagement over the years, and to do so in a style that makes this volume accessible to a wider readership. The outcome is a rich variety of contributions centering on a clear focus: the tension between engagement and scholarship in the disciplines of anthropology and development studies.

We start this volume with three historical narratives about disciplinary developments in Nijmegen: a biographical essay on the first professor of anthropology about whom very little was known to date (by Willemsen), an account of the emergence of gender studies and its ongoing struggle (Jansen) and a brief history of Australian Aboriginal Studies in Nijmegen (Borsboom et al.). Next, a series of essays are included that describe personal journeys in the disciplines of anthropology and development studies, reflecting on the authors' development in relation to scholarship and engagement (Davids and Guadeloupe, Hoebink, Mutsaers, Van Teijlingen and Wolters). Koster, Van Meijl and Widlok also contribute an essay in this genre, in which they reflect explicitly on the methodological and theoretical implications of the dilemmas entailed by engagement in field research. Last but not least, some essays are presenting and discussing case-studies, with some based primarily on empirical research (Beuving, Van Kempen et al., Wijsen), while others add conceptual reflections (Vollebergh and Van Stapele) or discuss also shifting paradigms in anthropology and developments studies over the years (Kamanzi et al., Ruben et al.). With their different points of departure and styles, the various contributions provide a clear and colourful picture of the development and contemporary state of the art in anthropology and development studies at Radboud University in Nijmegen.

We should like to finish by pointing out that this volume is part of a publication series that emerged under the auspices of the Nijmegen Interdisciplinary

5 Incidentally, both concepts were also prominent in the valedictory lecture of the founding father of development studies at Nijmegen (Huizer 1999). See also the Festschrift that was offered to him on that occasion (Hoebink, Haude, and Van der Velden 1999).

6 In addition, we invited Marie-Antoinette Willemsen, a graduate of the former Institute for Cultural and Social Anthropology, to contribute a paper on Vroklage because of her expertise in this field of research.

Centre for Development and Cultural Change (NICCOS – 'Nijmegen Instituut voor Comparatieve Cultuur- en Ontwikkelingsstudies'). This institute was established in 1989 to advance interfaculty cooperation between anthropology, development studies, mission studies and other disciplines with an interest in the Global South. It also launched a publication series that has existed for more than 30 years, with more than 50 books and volumes, although under the imprint of several publishers. This volume, co-edited by the present authors who are currently also editors of the NICCOS series,[7] is the first that is published by the newly established Radboud University Press.

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7 Apart from the fact that the second author is also editor of the NICCOS series, it should also be mentioned that for many years he served as head of the Institute of Mission Studies, which provided a home to the first professor of 'ethnology' between 1948 and 1958.

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Vroklage, Founding Father of the Institute of Anthropology

MARIE-ANTOINETTE WILLEMSEN

In 1948, Bernard Vroklage (1897–1951), a member of the missionary congregation *Societas Verbi Divini* (SVD), was invited by the then Catholic University of Nijmegen to accept the chair of ethnology at the Missiological Institute. He was also appointed extraordinary professor in ethnography in the Department of Literature and Philosophy. In this essay, I will reflect on the controversial relationship between missionaries and anthropologists. How did this relationship evolve from cooperation to opposition, and vice versa? With a portrait of this missionary and founding father of the Dept. of Anthropology in Nijmegen, I will try to shed some light on the subject.

Right from the start in 1923, the university had a strong preference to initiate missiology as a permanent part of the Faculty of Theology, but it took years before it was put into effect. On 3 October 1930, the saint's day of Theresia of Lisieux, patroness of all missions, the chair in missiology was finally introduced and Dr. Alphons Mulders was appointed director and lecturer.

In the early 1920s, Mulders had attended the University of Fribourg, where he learned about the missionary congregation SVD and the ideas of one of its most prominent members, Wilhelm Schmidt. In those days, Schmidt was already a well-known scholar who, in 1906, had founded the *Anthropos* journal, an international scientific review of ethnology and linguistics. Over time, it inspired Mulders to add general linguistics and ethnology to the standard courses of the mission institute. When missionaries could not go abroad during the Second World War, some of them were allowed to study at the Catholic University of Nijmegen. According to the anthropologist Leo Triebels, Mulders took the opportunity to recommend Bernard Vroklage as professor of ethnology. Furthermore, he asked Father Gregorius OFM Cap., 'a fervent follower of the Vienna School' of Wilhelm Schmidt, to teach comparative science of religion, while he added the linguist Jo Wils to the team (Triebels 1979). 'There the missionaries learned a bit of anthropology', the

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future professor of anthropology Matthew Schoffeleers remembered (Meyer and Reis 2005: 25).

After the war it became possible to found an independent Institute of Mission Studies, the main purpose of which was to train missionaries academically so that they could be nominated by their congregations for managerial positions, in mission areas as well as in their homeland.[1] It was at this point that Bernard Vroklage started his official career at Nijmegen.

The Long Educational Path of Bernard Vroklage

Bernardus Arnoldus Gerardus Vroklage was born in the village of Oldemarkt, in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands, on 28 December 1897 as the eldest son of Johannes Vroklage and Geertruida Agatha Polman. Seven brothers and sisters followed, two of whom passed away at an early age (Stamboom Froklage et al. n.d.).

The young Vroklage attended primary school and was 'a quick and smart altar boy' (Mulder 1912). Almost every year a missionary came over to inform the children about his work among indigenous people in faraway countries. These visits triggered the young boy to develop a desire to become a missionary himself. Telling his parents about his intent, they made it clear that they had insufficient means to send him to a minor seminary. After a series of temporary jobs his interest had not decreased. With the help of a local parish priest he succeeded in collecting the required funds and wrote a letter to the principal of the minor seminary at Uden, in which he explained his motivation as follows: 'I want to offer my life to God which will hopefully lead me to heaven' (Vroklage 1912). On 7 September 1912, at fifteen years old, Vroklage was admitted to the seminary of the *Societas Verbi Divini* where he turned out to be a brilliant student. Twelve years later, in 1924, he was ordained as priest.

Not long afterwards, he was appointed teacher at the newly opened novitiate *Sint Lambertus* in Helvoirt, where he started to teach ethics and the history of religion. In 1930 he received permission to study theology at the *Collegium Pontificium Internationale Angelicum* in Rome (Vroklage 1934–1935). He finished his PhD in 1931, a theoretical study on 'redemption' in Christianity as well as in Buddhism. Appar-

1 Vgl. Hoofdstuk 10. Het Missiologisch Instituut. In Gids van het studiejaar 1949–1950 van de R.K. Universiteit Nijmegen. Bron: Universiteitsarchief Radboud Universiteit, Bestuursarchief Theologie 1940–2010, inv. no. 191.

ently his superiors had great expectations of him since they sent him to Vienna to study ethnology at the recently founded Anthropos Institute led by Wilhelm Schmidt. In 1935 he completed another PhD, this time entitled *Die Sozialen Verhältnisse Borneos: Eine Kulturhistorische Untersuchung*. After returning to the Netherlands he was in the race for a professorship at Leiden University, but was passed by J.P.B. de Josselin-de-Jong (Meurkens 1998a; Willemsen 2010). Subsequently, recommended by Wilhelm Schmidt, he received a commission to do ethnographic research. After studying the records of the universities of Leiden and Amsterdam for about two years, he left for the Sunda Archipelago in Eastern Indonesia, at that time the most successful mission area of the Dutch branch of the SVD.[2]

Ethnological Research

In the fall of 1936 Vroklage again left his homeland by the *MS Baloeran* to spend two years in Indonesia.[3] After a short stay at Batavia (now Jakarta), he travelled to Muntilan on the South Coast of Java where he delivered some lectures at the *Xaverius College*. The core of these lectures was typical of the Viennese Anthropos assumptions of Wilhelm Schmidt.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Wilhelm Schmidt took a stance against the evolutionary idea that religion had evolved from polytheism to monotheism. According to the Christian faith as propagated by Schmidt it was the other way round. Isolated ethnic groups would have a notion of a Supreme Being, a phase in their development he called 'primordial monotheism'. Only later on had religion degraded into polytheism. To confirm his premise he invited several scholars to do research among pygmies, who, in his view, lived closest to prehistoric man.

Another aspect of the Vienna School was its specific cultural historical research method, named *Die Kulturkreislehre*. Following the ideas of Fritz Graebner, Schmidt and his colleagues initiated the idea of cultural circles of which elements could be taken over by other circles to diffuse into a new composition (*Kulturkreis*). In this way cultures evolved from primitive to primary, and further on from secondary to tertiary. In contrast with his view on religion, he adopted an evolutionary position in this scheme. 'The succession of "grades" is nothing less than the familiar

2 After his theoretical study at both the universities of Leiden and Amsterdam he published Vroklage, 1936a. See Bornemann 1953.

3 Vroklage wrote an article about the passengers on board of the Baloeran (Vroklage 1937a). In the same year he published almost every month an article on Java, Timor and Bali in Katholieke Missiën.

sequence of "stages" leading from hunting and gathering types of sociocultural systems through horticultural and pastoral types and on to complex stratified civilizations', the American anthropologist Marvin Harris wrote about Schmidt's circles (1969: 385).

Vroklage, in his lectures and later in his ethnographic research on Timor, Flores and some smaller islands, applied the method and insights of his Austrian professors. In his teaching at the *Xaverius College* he pointed to the various cultural influences in Indonesia, originating from the mainland of China. Especially the proa-motif, derived from the Tonkin people who called themselves 'men of one proa', taken over by Indonesian ethnic groups such as the Toradja on Celebes (now Sulawesi) and the Batak on Sumatra.[4] According to Vroklage they had, through age-long contact, adopted these cultural characteristics and incorporated them into their own cultural habits (Anonymus 1936). Until today, this motif can still be recognized in the burial rituals of the Toradja and the specific roof building of the Minangkabau and the Batak.

A second topic concerned the Tuala, an ethnic group living in the South-western corner of Celebes who, according to Schmidt, belonged to the pygmy tribes. Vroklage discussed their successive development stages, each representing different cultural influences derived from a wider area that resulted in the current cultural circle.

After his stay in Muntilan, he travelled to Timor where he settled near the border between the Dutch western and Portuguese eastern part of the island. The central theme of his research concerned the religious life of the Belu, an isolated ethnic group living in this border region.[5] Here he found clear remains of a totemistic culture.[6] Although some elder Belu had a vague notion of a Supreme Being, they never made any sacrifice to Him after committing a sin (Vroklage 1950: 95). Incapable of speaking *Tetum*, the local language, he made use of a few Catholic teachers as interpreters. This diminished the trust of some elderly people, all the more since he lived in the local rectory and committed himself to missionary activities on a daily basis. Later, his fellow missionaries spread the rumour that his informants cheated him and only told stories they assumed he wanted to hear (compare

4 After returning home he would write a three-part serial of articles (Vroklage 1940). It was a supplement on Vroklage 1936b, in which he described in general terms the proa-motif in South Eastern Asia, Indonesia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

5 In 1937–1938 Vroklage published several articles about special events in his research area, like the refusal of a forced marriage, headhunting practices, myths and legends, mission history and other stories (Vroklage 1937–1938).

6 "Ethnologisch onderzoek op Timor. Het werd de Hoogste Tijd, want spoedig zal van de oude Cultuurgoederen niet veel meer over zijn."

Willemsen 2010: 151). Vroklage later affirmed this rumour in his inaugural speech of 1948, when he referred to the habit of the Belu that 'they would never hesitate to give a likeable answer just to please me. Doing so the truth is for them less important' (Vroklage 1950: 94).

Father Vroklage in conversation with an adat expert from Timor.
Source: *Katholieke Missiën*, April 1938, Vol. 64/6, p. 109.

During his stay he also performed physical-anthropological research on the racial characteristics of the Belu[7] and discovered 'some pygmoid traits' (Our Batavian Co-worker, 1938). He collected a large number of ethnographic objects, which he later donated to the Leiden Ethnographic Museum (De Jonge 2005: 182, 186). To compare and confirm his data, he went to the island of Alor and subsequently to the Western part of Flores, where the missionary Jilis Verheijen SVD (1908–1997) undertook linguistic and ethnographic research among the Manggarai people. Since his arrival in 1935, Verheijen was engaged in collecting numerous totemistic stories. When Vroklage visited his parish in 1938, Verheijen, remarkably enough, avoided meeting him. He later informed me that he did not intend to share his

7 He collected 5000 blood samples, 300 hand- and fingerprints and measured the length of 2700 people (Our Bataviasche Co-worker 1938). Prof. dr. Barge of the University of Leiden would elaborate on these racial data. See 'Missiologisch Instituut 1947–1970', Appendix 1, page 5, Universiteitsarchief Radboud Universiteit, Archief College van Bestuur, Cb13367 / cvb01052.

laboriously collected data about totemism with his academically trained fellow brother. He himself wanted to publish about various aspects of the Manggarai language and culture (Willemsen 2006: 106).

After Vroklage left Flores, he made a few trips to the islands of Sumba, Lombok and Bali and finally headed for Sumatra in order to collect additional data among the inhabitants of the Pasemah-area (Anonymus 1938). From Belawan, a harbour north of Medan, he left Indonesia by the same *M.S. Baloeran*.

Back in the Netherlands, he started to work on his collected materials. Apart from a sizeable book on the Belu he intended to publish a number of articles on cultural phenomena concerning the smaller islands. His list of publications is impressive. He became a member of the editorial staff of *Het Missiewerk* and published quite regularly in *Anthropos*. He was also frequently invited to give lectures (with additional slides) all over the country and received positive reviews in the newspapers (see for instance *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 1939). In the early 1940s, he was appointed professor at the *Sint Franciscus Xaverius* seminary in Teteringen to teach ethnology and religious studies (Vroklage 1948). Apart from all these activities, he gave lectures twice a month to major seminarians from various congregations on the cultural historical research method.[8] One of his students, Herman Sombroek MSF, remembered Vroklage stimulating his trainees to make a profound study of the 'native' culture of their future mission area.[9] During the years of war, Vroklage taught, as pointed out above, at the Missiological Institute and also set up a 16 volume serial named *The Religions of Mankind* of which he wrote the first part: *The Religion of Primitive People* (Vroklage 1949). After the war, in 1947, he took part in the foundation of a Mission School for young women together with Father Gregorius OFM Cap. He instructed them in ethnology and the various religions of Indonesia. Due to all these responsibilities, Vroklage did not succeed in finishing his manuscript on the Belu. It was only published after his sudden death in 1951 (Vroklage 1952).

Missionaries and Anthropologists

The history of anthropology is intertwined with colonization and in its slipstream the Christianization of the indigenous people in various countries. Due to their long

8 KMM interview with father Herman Sombroek msf at Catholic Documentation Centre, Nijmegen. Archive no. NL-NmKDC_KMM_75_724.

9 Idem.

stay in certain areas, colonial officers and mission workers did acquire an intimate knowledge of the local language and culture. A number of them succeeded in publishing books and papers on local customs, collected numerous artefacts and sent them to ethnographic museums. When, in the twentieth century, anthropology gradually became an independent discipline, it was not surprising that priests and former administrators were invited to fulfil lectureships.[10] In the late 1940s, most students of the Faculty of Indology at the universities of Leiden and Utrecht, who were trained to become civil servants in the East Indies, became anthropologists after Indonesia obtained independence (Trouwborst 1990: 33). The director of the Mission Institute, Alphons Mulders, was a priest like Vroklage. Jeremy Boissevain, who worked for a welfare organization, was inspired to study Anthropology after he 'visited the Wisers, who had written a famous book called *Behind Mud Walls* about life in an Indian village. They were missionaries' (Van Ginkel and Stengs 2005: 49). He was appointed Professor at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) in 1966. Something similar occurred to André Köbben, who was inspired by a book written by H.A. Junod, a missionary and 'keen observer' and decided then and there that he would be an ethnographer himself (Strating and Verrips 2005: 10).[11] A decade later Matthew Schoffeleers and Johannes Fabian, who were appointed professors of anthropology at, respectively, the Vrije Universiteit (1976, VU) and the University of Amsterdam (1980) were also both priests (Meyer and Reis 2005). Fabian was, like Vroklage, a member of the *Societas Verbi Divini* and had been trained in Bonn, Vienna and Munich.[12] All of these scholars were acquainted with Schmidt's theoretical framework, approved by some, rejected by others.

The way anthropologists collected data by staying in a certain area for one or two years did not differ much from the way mission workers obtained knowledge of ethnic groups. Both of them focused on local stories, myths and legends, asked questions in order to explain certain cultural phenomena and, where possible, attended local ceremonies. They noted down their observations and used them as starting points for new questions, thus gradually obtaining insights into the life of the local people. By definition missionaries were particularly interested in religious affairs, but anthropologists worked with preconceived research aims and objectives as well. Unconsciously both parties were more or less convinced that

10 In Leiden, Ethnology started in the late 19th century, Amsterdam and Utrecht followed in the Interbellum and Amsterdam, Nijmegen and Groningen started after the Second World War.

11 The book of Henri A. Junod is entitled *Life of a South African Tribe, Vol. 1. The Social Life and Vol. 2. The Psychic Life*. Neuchâtel: Attinger Frères, 1913–1914.

12 Both Munich (1930) and Vienna (1933) had a Missiological Institute. See Mulders (1963) and Van de Port and De Rooij (2005).

their own religion and culture were superior. What differed was that missionaries were eager to learn about local religion in order to modify it according to the Christian faith or, as Vroklage noted, 'anthropology or ethnology should contribute to the pastoral task of the missions' (Trouwborst 1990: 37).

From a Controversial Relationship to Mutual Respect

From the time anthropology became an independent discipline, anthropologists more and more felt the necessity to distinguish themselves from missionaries. They started to criticize mission workers and accused them of distorting the original culture by imposing the Christian faith on the people. In their view, missionary publications were all biased by Catholic motives. When Vroklage returned from the field in 1938 he already had to deal with this kind of criticism. Anthropologists from the universities of Leiden and Utrecht rejected the scientific premises of Wilhelm Schmidt and the Vienna School. Some of them thought the ideas were outdated, strongly anti-evolutionary and too much in favour of the Catholic doctrine that God was the initiator of 'primordial monotheism'. In short, they argued that Vroklage's research was biased by the Christian faith. He himself remained an adept of the Vienna School, although he minimized the theoretical cultural historical approach in later work. After his sudden death in 1951 none of his students continued to do research in accordance with the theoretical framework of Wilhelm Schmidt (Meurkens 1998b). In due course, they also rejected the belief in primordial monotheism. An example is given by Father Sombroek MSF. He was sent to Borneo (the part now Kalimantan, Indonesia) in the early fifties. From the start he was convinced that Vroklage was right about the notion of a Supreme Being among the Dayak and began to use their local term of God in his preaching. A few years later he concluded that he had misunderstood the Dayak who in fact did not recognise a Supreme Being but instead addressed themselves exclusively to their ancestors.[13]

By the same token, missionaries were sceptical about research done by anthropologists. They criticized their relatively short stay in the field, their often inability to speak the local language, their leaning on missionary information and use of mission facilities, but most of all their intellectual disdain towards them. An example from Jilis Verheijen's life illustrates this attitude. After many years

13 KMM interview with father Herman Sombroek msf at Catholic Documentation Centre, Nijmegen. Archive no. NL-NmKDC_KMM_75_724.

of extensive research in the eastern Manggarai districts of Flores, an American anthropologist arrived. Verheijen allowed her to use his dictionaries and published texts in the local language and to live in his home for a few months. And yet, in a report sent to her supervisor, she dared to write: 'The whole eastern part of Manggarai has received little attention by administrators, priests interested in anthropological work, and anthropologists' (Willemsen 2006: 301). This offended Father Verheijen. In a letter to the British anthropologist Rodney Needham he wrote: '…the damage was done. Although we remained on friendly terms, yet I could not get it over my heart to give a lot of anthropological material concerning Rembong, which at first I planned to hand over to her. Maybe you don't expect such an attitude of a missionary, but you will understand it' (Willemsen 2006: 302).

Over time the friction between the two professional groups dwindled. Decolonization diminished the influence of both missionaries and anthropologists. Ethnic groups began emphasizing their own unique identities (Bonsen, Marks and Miedema 1990: 6). At the same time, missionaries came to the realization that they had to incorporate indigenous concepts of belief in their Christian message or leave their message out altogether. Younger missionaries started to support the local people in economic and social welfare programs and propagated the so-called 'liberation theology', Anthropologists, on the other hand, recognised their own theoretical biases. They focused their research more and more on injustice, land ownership, the oppression of women, poverty, the lack of education and health care and the miserable situation of marginalized minorities. In this way, both professional groups grew towards each other which resulted in increasing mutual respect.

Indeed, missionaries became anthropologists, a tendency Peter Nissen named 'the conversion of the missionary' (Nissen 2022). Anthropologists, on the other hand, started to get interested in the doings and writings of missionaries. In May 1988 this resulted in a workshop at the Department of Anthropology in Nijmegen and the subsequent publication edited by Roland Bonsen, Hans Marks and Jelle Miedema: *The Ambiguity of Rapprochement. Reflections of anthropologists on their controversial relationship with missionaries*. In various contributions, the common history of both professional groups was acknowledged, but the essential differences in approach and purpose were also emphasized (compare Lagerwaard 1988). Was it mere coincidence that this seminar was organized forty years after Bernard Vroklage started his career as professor of ethnology?

A couple of years later I was introduced to the mission congregation SVD and became acquainted with Father Jilis Verheijen. He had recently returned from Flores after almost sixty years and brought his still unpublished ethnographic,

linguistic and other scientific manuscripts with him. My yearlong talks with him, his fellow missionaries and family resulted in a scholarly biography of his life and achievements. In doing research I also stumbled upon a sizeable collection of private letters written by his fellow missionary and future Bishop Willem van Bekkum and was allowed to publish them (Willemsen 2005). In subsequent publications I concentrated on other members of the SVD, wrote various articles about specific missionary topics and a series of portraits based on the KMM (*KomMissie-Memoires)* interviews collected by the Catholic Documentary Centre of Nijmegen University (Willemsen 2014).[14] In doing so I reversed roles. Not the Indonesian people, but the missionaries and their activities became my 'exotic' research topic (see for instance Van der Geest 2006). In that way, I contributed to the completion of the circle that Vroklage had opened in 1948.

When he died in a car accident in October 1951, the Dutch branch of the SVD lost one of its most prominent members. Not only had he laid the academic foundation for a group of Dutch missionaries, he was also the founding father of anthropology at the University of Nijmegen (Mulders, 1951). In 1958, the discipline of cultural anthropology was transferred from the Missiological Institute to an independent institute (Meurkens 1998: 36). Six years later it was integrated into the newly founded Faculty of Social Sciences (Triebels 1979: 22; Nissen 2015: 148). Vroklage's supervisor Wilhelm Schmidt survived him two years as did his own father (Stamboom Froklage et al. n.d).

Nowadays the Dutch province of the SVD has dramatically declined. Only eight members are still alive, most of whom live at the central mission home in Teteringen. New missionaries from Flores and other Asian countries have come to the Netherlands to take part in what is called 'reversed mission'. They live in communities and support vulnerable groups in our Western society. The Institute of Mission Studies supports these foreign mission workers in various ways. As such, Vroklage's original mission has come full circle as well.

14 The KMM interviews, a rich collection of oral history, can be consulted at the Catholic Documentation Centre (KDC) in Nijmegen, Erasmuslaan 36.

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The Long Road to Inclusion

From Women to Gender to Diversity to...?

WILLY JANSEN

Introduction

The foundation of Radboud University in 1923 as the Catholic University of Nijmegen had as important aim the emancipation of the Dutch Catholics. But not everyone agreed wholeheartedly that this emancipatory goal included women. The Catholic norm that woman's foremost duty was to be a good mother and housewife was shared by many of the clerics and other men governing and teaching at the university. Although about 20% of the students in the first decades were women, few pursued a scholarly career afterwards. They either stopped working when they married, they remained unmarried or were nuns. Only very few women stayed on to work at the university. It took until 1961 before the Catholic University appointed the first female full professor. The internationally famous Professor Christine Mohrmann had already devoted 28 years of her life to the university, but only as an unpaid assistant and since 1952 as an extraordinary professor of Old-Christian Greek and Latin. 'Extraordinary' sounds very respectable, but in practice it means that one does not receive an ordinary salary. During that long period of volunteer work for the university before finally getting a full professorship, Mohrmann made her living by teaching at a secondary school and appointments at the universities of Utrecht and Amsterdam. What do we know about the presence of women among the staff in the history of anthropology in Nijmegen, and about the attention for women's issues in the curriculum? Did anthropology differ from the university at large in extending the emancipatory goal from Catholics to other categories?

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Engaged, But Not with Women

In the early years of its existence, the Anthropology Institute followed this line of emancipation of Catholics rather than that of women or other less powerful groups. One of the roots of anthropology in Nijmegen was the Roman Catholic mission ethnology (1948–1958) headed by two professors, Vroklage and Mohr, who were men and priests (Meurkens 2002: 495–499). The other root started to grow when the Committee for Social and Political Sciences asked to set up a field of study in non-Western sociology. The candidate was found in Djakarta, and it was a woman! Elisabeth M.A.A.J. Allard (1904–1991) had obtained her doctorate in Nijmegen in grammatical research on the prose of Hadewych and completed a dissertation at the University of London in 1941 on animistic beliefs in Malaya. In 1958 she started as a lecturer and in 1963 as a professor teaching non-Western sociology. But, like her male colleagues, she seems to have been more engaged with the Catholic faith than women's emancipation. She remained unmarried and was a member of the Catholic religious congregation Women of Bethany. The story goes that she tested the religious knowledge of her students by asking during exams about the Ten Commandments.[1] As to Allard's concern with women, it can be said to her advantage that she was in contact with the first Dutch feminist anthropologist *avant la lettre* Cora Vreede-de Stuers who wrote a contribution for her *liber amicorum*, and that she brought back the voice of Raden Adjeng Kartini (1879–1904), the pioneer for women's rights in the Dutch East Indies/Indonesia, by re-editing and introducing the fifth edition of Kartini's letters (Kartini et al. 1976). In 1964 Allard's non-Western sociology branched off from anthropology to become in 1973 the Third World Centre. Allard gave her farewell lecture in October 1969. Two years later, when I started studying anthropology, the anthropology staff was all male.

Student Activism – Inclusive Strategies

In the 1970s, student numbers increased significantly, as did students' impact on the curriculum. Anthropology students set up Project Groups to study topics and literature they thought interesting and politically relevant. One of these was the Project Group 'Feminism and Anthropology'. In 1975 its tasks were formulated as follows: "to study the problematic aspects of women's place in scientific theories and in the literature; to undertake activities in the field of education and research;

1 https://www.huisvandenijmeegsegeschiedenis.nl/info/Instituut_Sociologie (1 August 2022).

to critically evaluate existing theories; [and] to create new opportunities in connection with the problem area" (Postel-Coster and Van Santen 2002: 872).

Note that this demand for a revision of anthropological theories was already far more extensive and inclusive than just the demand for equal rights for women. And it comprised a mixed group, which included male students from the beginning. They set up a reading list of relevant literature, asked Ad Borsboom to supervise them, and put in a proposal for the hiring of new staff with knowledge of the problem area.

At that time, I was abroad doing fieldwork in Algeria on the effects of the land reform program on women, writing my thesis and preparing for the last exams while participating in my partner's anthropological research in Spain. Upon my return I gave two talks to the Project Group Feminist Anthropology, on Algerian women and on doing anthropological research as a woman. The thesis was finished just in time to compete for the new post created at the students' demand, with half time teaching in women's studies and half time researching for and writing a PhD.

Inclusion in the Personnel Formation

My appointment as a junior researcher/teacher led to an anchoring of women's studies in the anthropology curriculum in Nijmegen. Apart from co-teaching in general introductions to Women's Studies, I was asked to design courses on Women in Socialist Countries and Women in the Arab World, to supervise the Feminist Anthropology Project Group and later to teach courses on gender theory. Another junior researcher, Britt Fontaine, taught a course on women's labor and change. In 1973, Development Studies was institutionalized in the independent Third World Centre (DWC) where Marion den Uyl, appointed in 1981, claimed attention for women and development. She was later succeeded by Francien van Driel and Tine Davids. Yet, the initial establishment was only temporary, and mostly dependent on the personal interests of the researcher. Our appointments, and thus also the teaching of women's studies, would stop as soon as we would finish our PhDs.

Several other women at the university found themselves in the same situation: defending a new and heavily contested field in their discipline from a very precarious, temporary and powerless position as junior researchers. They therefore organized themselves in the MIN (Medewerksters in Nijmegen) and worked closely together with the Emancipation Committee installed in 1980. Aims were: to reinforce attention to women's issues in the curricula, to increase the number of women in more structural staff positions, to support female researchers and

research on women, and to counter problematic sexism in academia. In practice this meant that whenever a position became available, a committee was formed, a research program was written, or funds were made available, then we acted to defend our case. In fact, we worked double shifts as many students wanted to learn about this new field, while at the same time we had to defend and create space for women. And this was an arduous and never ending self-imposed task.

Nothing was self-evident. For instance when, at our instigation, the first Emancipation Committee was installed in 1980, we had to rectify the automatic move of the board of the Social Faculty to put a male rather than a female representative forward. When university funds became available for education improvement we applied in different disciplines for projects to raise teachers' attention to women's issues in both new and existing courses. As a result, in anthropology, José van Santen and Thea Campagne were hired to do so in 1983. They interviewed and advised all staff members on how best to include women in their specific subjects and wrote a supportive article and annotated bibliography (Campagne and Van Santen 1985). Moreover, we sought to increase the research power of women. At that time, in the early eighties, research was being concentrated into programs, and the question was whether to integrate research on women into disciplinary programs or whether to develop an autonomous interdisciplinary research program on women's studies. It was decided to do both, and not only on the local but also on the national level. So the 'double track policy' evolved. Within the disciplines, PhD positions were acquired by women and some of them did their research on women's issues. For the other, the autonomous interdisciplinary track, Eva Weber took the lead in proposing a multidisciplinary Centre for Women's Studies, for both teaching and research and with relevance for society.

And with success. In 1985 the board of the university decided to provide funds for a professor and a research and teaching group in interdisciplinary women's studies. First because the university did not want to be left behind after seeing that other universities had already been more successful in obtaining a significant share of the funds made available for emancipation and women's studies by the Ministry of Education in 1980.[2] Secondly because it would soften the effects of staff reduction on the basis of 'last in, first out' due to budget cuts. As those 'last in' were mostly women who had finally managed to start a university career, creating the Centre for Women's Studies would enable the saving of some of these female scholars who would otherwise have been laid off. When my temporary contract

2 Tweede Kamer, zitting 1979–1980, 16006, 1–2. https://repository.overheid.nl/frbr/sgd/19791980/0000172241/1/pdf/SGD_19791980_0006322.pdf

in anthropology ended because my PhD was finished, I could apply for one of the positions created in the Centre for Women's Studies. As each staff member was attached to a certain discipline, I continued teaching gender studies in anthropology all through my career with the Centre, but without ever being considered part of the staff of anthropology.

Inclusion in Research

As a large part of all research was, and still is, funded by NWO (the Netherlands Organization of Scientific Research, then still called ZWO) it was crucial for feminist scholars to become active on the national level, both to increase the presence of women in the different disciplinary boards and committees as well as to defend interdisciplinary women's studies (and later gender studies) as a valid and relevant field of research. Since 1976, the Steering Group Emancipation Research discussed with ZWO the possibilities of financing emancipation research/women's studies. After much negotiation with the board of ZWO, funds were set apart for the WVEO (Werkgemeenschap Vrouwenstudies en Emancipatie Onderzoek; 'Research Association Women's Studies and Emancipation Research') to subsidize the writing of proposals for individual disciplinary research as well as for interdisciplinary programmatic research in the new field of women and emancipation studies. So here again the double track was followed. Several young anthropologists from Nijmegen were successful in obtaining funds for writing proposals, doing PhD research or participating as post-docs in interdisciplinary national research programs.

Getting a new research field accepted and settled meant not only developing the theoretical domain that needed to be taught and researched, but also establishing professional organizations and professional journals. Anthropologists in Amsterdam and Leiden took the initiative in 1978 to found the LOVA Network for women's studies in anthropology, currently with Tine Davids from Nijmegen on the board, and with its own journal *LOVA: Journal of Gender Studies and Feminist Anthropology,* a blog, a prize for the best MA thesis and regular Summer Schools, some of them organized in Nijmegen. Moreover, we participated in the interdisciplinary *Journal of Gender Studies* and later the Netherlands Research School of Gender Studies.

Inclusion in the Curriculum

Introducing women's studies into the teaching of anthropology made for a highly exciting and intellectually stimulating time, with the introduction of new topics and new and critical ideas. In the mid-1970s a wave of critical studies appeared in England and the United States on the subject matter that challenged conventional thinking. Gayle Rubin (1975) tickled our brains by showing how the theories of Marcel Mauss on gift exchange or the theories of Lévi-Strauss on the elementary forms of kinship could be made relevant to understand women's plight, if you took a gender perspective. And the volume in which it appeared (Reiter 1975) contained other interesting articles that challenged the Man the Hunter paradigm, the scholarly neglect of women's role in African politics, or the common ideas on female pollution. A decade later we were challenged to understand the non-Western gender perspective after Chandra Talpade Mohanty wrote her critical essay on the Western tendency to reduce all women of the third world into a single, homogeneous, and collective other.

Anthropology was not the most difficult discipline in which to instill an interest in women's issues. From evolutionary ethnologists to later anthropologists the question of the origins of sexual hierarchy had already been a topic of interest. And as early as 1935 Margaret Mead became famous for her case study of how not only women but also men were culturally 'made rather than born', to paraphrase the later Simone de Beauvoir. Women doing field research were far from absent. Yet, anthropology also suffered from a gender blindness. Students tend to remember far fewer famous female anthropologists than male anthropologists. Moreover, even famous female anthropologists had far greater difficulty in obtaining a university position or a promotion compared to their male colleagues, as the (auto)biographies of Margaret Mead or Ruth Benedict show. Not only anthropological foremothers but also the studies they wrote were easily forgotten; many of the topics and theories on women, sexuality or gender relations were not part of the general introduction to anthropology. Topics related to women often lacked status in social science research. Political organization, economic inequality, migration, etc. were all considered far more important to study. A local sociologist once dismissed my study of golden wedding gifts in Algeria as utterly irrelevant because it was 'just jewellery'. Yet in my view, any sociologist who ignores the exchange of wealth at marriages will never properly understand economic and cultural power hierarchies between spouses, families and social groups.

Soon the focus shifted from women to gender, because describing women's activities and their role was not sufficient to understand the power differences

between women and men. And wasn't it exactly the inequalities, their origins and potential solutions that we searched for? For that, it was necessary to include men, compare women with men and look at masculinity across diverse cultures. Moreover, the diversities within the genders became interesting, as there are different femininities and masculinities. Students were interested in and eager to explore previously untouched topics in their research projects, such as lesbian motherhood, gay communities in Egypt or Brazil, or the experience of gender transition. And senior researchers noticed a move from women and development to gender and globalization (Davids and Van Driel 2001: 84, 2005).

As women form half of the population everywhere and gender is relevant in any domain studied in anthropology, be it politics, archaeology, kinship, economics, migration, development or religion, it was relatively easy to mainstream gender in the anthropology curriculum. But mainstreaming gender also tends to lead to its fading away and being taken less seriously. There are several disappearing acts at work. First, because gender is reduced to just another factor to take into account rather than an element that merits exploration for itself. Let me explain: After decades of feminist critique on standard methodologies, most researchers nowadays accept that it is elementary and necessary to differentiate between men and women when studying topics like salaries, religious gestures, migration patterns or the effect of vaccines. It is an enormous improvement that they now add gender to the range of diversities (next to age, class, ethnicity etc.) that need to be taken into account. But finding similarities or differences does not yet explain them. For that, a more profound gender perspective has to be taken, for which other and more research is needed, a follow up that is not always provided. Moreover, what we call 'the intersection of the different axes of inequality' leads to an interwoven complex that tends to be reduced and relegated to separate domains. Gender is set apart, instead of questioning why for instance political party affiliation, racist expressions or religious beliefs are so often expressed in gender or sexuality terms.

A second disappearing act concerns the weak anchoring of gender theory in anthropology as a basic theme comparable to kinship, social inequality, or religion. A fading away of this theoretical sub-field can be seen in the reduction of course hours whenever the curriculum is rewritten or in making it an elective rather than a compulsory part of the curriculum. It can also be seen in the mind-set that considers it a topic for women or gay men rather than elementary training for all students, or sees gender only as a concern for feminists rather than as an analytical concept that needs to be deconstructed and decentered because it functions centrally but differently in each culture studied, or that gets tired of the words 'women' and 'gender' because they turn up perfunctorily in every course without being explored in depth.

A third disappearing act occurs with the changes in staff. As the attention on gender is not yet fully integrated in the basic curriculum of anthropology, everything depends on the enthusiasm and dedication of specific staff members. Luckily there are far more women among the staff then when I started studying anthropology, but these are not necessarily gender specialists. Of the 7 female teaching staff on the current website of CAOS, only three explicitly mention gender as an interest and only one names it in a course title; none of the 9 male teaching staff mentions gender as an interest. When the gender specialists retire, take on another job or are given other teaching tasks, the field disappears or is relegated to the margins of more general courses. Over time most gender specialists have disappeared at Dutch anthropology units (Van Santen et al. 2016: 195). In Nijmegen, the retirement of two gender specialists working in anthropology has not led to their replacement, a fact still somewhat hidden because of the continuing investments of Tine Davids, the cooperation with the Gender and Diversity section, and the personal interests of two other female anthropologists. It should not be necessary to fight for inclusion and respect for the field as soon as a staff member leaves or a research or teaching program is rewritten. As long as that is the case, the original emancipatory goal is not reached.

Anthropology in Nijmegen has over the last 75 years come a long way in opening up research on gender and gender inequality, in training women to be anthropologists, in hiring female staff and in teaching about gender issues in different courses. Over the years many students have walked with us this long road towards inclusion. It is now up to them to counter the forces that want to pull them off this road and to continue to show the value of a gender lens for an inclusive anthropology.

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A Historiography of Australian Aboriginal Studies in Nijmegen

AD BORSBOOM, MARIANNE RIPHAGEN, ANKE TONNAER & ERIC VENBRUX

Introduction

Nijmegen, the oldest town of The Netherlands, has known a sustained anthropological interest in Aboriginal Australia for over half a century. In their review of the discipline in The Netherlands, Blok and Boissevain (1984: 338) write that "it is fair to say that regional orientation predominates over thematic interests. Dutch anthropologists therefore tend to organize on a regional basis." The anthropology of Aboriginal Australia happened to be mainly concentrated in Nijmegen, notably Radboud University and the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics. The key focus throughout the history of Australian Aboriginal Studies in Nijmegen has been on emancipation and social engagement, thus aligning well with the inaugural mission of the Radboud University, which was established a century ago. In this chapter, we examine how Nijmegen became the center for such sustained and engaged scholarship on Indigenous Australia, taking note of the scientific contributions that have been made to this field of study, the dissemination of knowledge to the wider public and the societal impact that flowed from that steady academic output. This historiography will thus show, furthermore, that in all the facets of Aboriginal studies in Nijmegen a staunch tradition of engaged scholarship developed, and in so doing was primed to counteract the often damaging administration and stereotypical representation of Aboriginal people in Australian society.

In what follows, we start by discussing the origin of Western interest in Aboriginal people. They have, from early on, figured prominently in Western academic work, beginning with the theory of evolution in which Aboriginal people were seen as the primitive pendant of civilization (Borsboom 1988). From there we move on to the start and development of Aboriginal studies in Nijmegen, which took off in earnest when Australian policy towards its Indigenous population changed from so-called assimilation to self-determination. The cultural renaissance and (re-)

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appreciation of Aboriginal cultures this policy change further facilitated, inspired several generations of Nijmegen-based scholars to focus on Indigenous Australia, which became visible in both research output and the educational curriculum.

Indeed, in the late 90s and early 2000s the Pacific Studies curriculum formed a strong regional core in the design of many courses. Staff members such as Ad Borsboom, who was appointed full professor of Pacific Studies in 1997 (to be succeeded by Thomas Widlok in 2009, see Widlok, 2009), Ton Otto, Toon van Meijl and Eric Venbrux introduced students to Pacific societies and cultures. Their teachings were on Aboriginal art and religion, on debates about the (re)invention of tradition and the supposed tensions between tradition and modernity, on the history and legacies of colonization, as well as on the economic and political position of Pacific peoples and Indigenous Australians. We show that rather than seeing Aboriginal people as 'remnants' of a distant past, the scholarly emphasis came to lie on the interrelations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, going beyond the imagined dichotomy between tradition and modernity, thus inspiring several generations of students.[1]

Moreover, the thriving academic community that Aboriginal studies in Nijmegen generated from the 1970s onwards spilled over beyond the walls of the university in the exchange of material culture and the strengthening of museal ties, culminating in the close involvement of Nijmegen scholars in the activities of the Aboriginal Art Museum in Utrecht. Finally, we demonstrate how Australian Aboriginal studies in Nijmegen became an important node in multiple research networks in Europe and beyond.

The Onset of Australian Aboriginal Studies in Nijmegen: From Armchair Anthropology to Modern Fieldwork

In the 19th and early 20th century the theory of evolutionism led to a worldwide interest in Australian Aborigines. They had the dubious honor of posing as the central characters in some of the most influential origin myths. L.H. Morgan used

1 This inspiration materialized in at least 30 MA theses, 10 PhD theses and numerous publications following from these studies. To name but a few master's projects: Jolien Harmsen (1993), Simone Keuken (1995), Carolien Karman (1999), Martine Geelen (2000), Maarten Delwel (2003), Mayke Kranenbarg (2004) and Lotte Ghielen (2006); they all did a stint of fieldwork in Australia. Other ones, including Miranda van Holland (2000) and Marijn de Vries (2003), worked on museum collections in The Netherlands or as Lara Hogeland (2006) did on Aboriginal literature.

Fison and Howitt's work on the Kamilaroi and Kurnai to illustrate the 'lowest level of kinship'; James Frazer used Baldwin Spencer's work for his theory on the most primitive form of religion and magic; Sigmund Freud took the primal horde exemplified in Australia as evidence for his theory in *Totem and Tabu*; and Durkheim discovered elementary forms of religion in the works of Spencer and Gillen and of Strehlow (cf. Hiatt 1996). Aborigines had become everything which the Europeans were not, the 'Primitive Other' against whom Europeans measured themselves (Borsboom 1988).

This persisted until well in the twentieth century when anthropologists like Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown (who both were involved in Australian Aboriginal Studies) laid the groundwork for modern ethnographic fieldwork and with it abandoned Victorian evolutionary constructs and 'armchair' anthropology. A period of intensive fieldwork followed. In the early 1930s, Lloyd Warner and Donald Thomson carried out long-term fieldwork in Arnhem Land and published groundbreaking studies on the social, economic, and religious fabric of still-functioning Indigenous societies. After World War II, Australian anthropologists followed in their footsteps. Profound studies of kinship and religious systems dominated Aboriginal anthropology in the sixties.

It was this approach that inspired a Dutch anthropologist from Leiden University, Lex van der Leeden, to also start fieldwork in Australia. He spent a year among the Nunggubuyu in Numbulwar (then Rose River Mission, Northern Territory) in 1964–1965 (Van der Leeden 1973). In 1969 he moved to Nijmegen, where he successfully motivated students and generated interest in Aboriginal Australia and the necessity of fieldwork. One may safely say that Aboriginal studies at Nijmegen University took off through his commitment and enthusiasm.

As the interest in studying Indigenous Australian societies and cultures took off in Nijmegen, some students, like Jean Kommers (1972) and Rumuold van Geffen (1974), wrote their master's theses based on literature. Others, however, such as Ad Borsboom and Hans Dagmar, prepared for fieldwork in Aboriginal Australia. Borsboom was to conduct fieldwork in Arnhem Land, northern Australia, from 1972–1974 on the transformation and cosmological context of the intricate Maradjiri ritual. Dagmar carried out research in the West Australian town of Carnarvon from 1972–1973 and again in 1975. He investigated how Aborigines organized in their struggle to improve their deplorable socio-economic position. Both defended their theses successfully in 1978 (Borsboom 1978; Dagmar 1978).

The growing focus of researchers in Nijmegen on Australian Aboriginal studies coincided with the emergence of an ever-stronger Aboriginal emancipatory movement. In 1966, Aboriginal stockmen and their families at a Northern Territory

cattle station went on strike, not only for a better socio-economic position but also to claim the land as their own. The next year, a nationwide referendum bestowed de facto civil rights on Australia's Indigenous population. Meanwhile, Aboriginal people in major urban centers marched in the streets to protest discrimination, and to demand socio-economic improvements and land rights. This culminated in the establishment of the (still existing) Tent Embassy in front of the Federal Parliament in Canberra, a successful rallying point to reinforce these demands (Borsboom 2011). As the Aboriginal emancipatory movement gained strength, and relationships between the Australian nation-state and its Indigenous peoples began to change, the interests of Nijmegen-based researchers also further developed, engaging with the impact that these changes had on the Aboriginal life worlds.

From Assimilation to Self-Determination

When Borsboom and Dagmar first departed to conduct fieldwork in Australia, the official government policy was one of assimilation, meaning that Indigenous peoples had to abolish their traditional way of living and worldview. During the 1970s, assimilation was replaced by self-determination. Research by Borsboom and Dagmar documented how Aboriginal people induced major changes in their (legal) position and lived their lives during an era of transformation.

When Borsboom commenced fieldwork in 1972, Aboriginal people had been living at mission stations and government-controlled townships since the 1930s. Notwithstanding the government's focus on assimilation, Borsboom witnessed how much time and effort people spent on religious activities. Out of sight of the non-Aboriginal staff, Djinang people continued to connect with country and maintain relationships with Arnhem Land communities through song, dance, and mythology. In his PhD on the Maradjiri ritual, Borsboom (1978) showed how people lay the groundwork for a renaissance of Aboriginal self-determination. This happened right under the eyes of the non-Aboriginal population of mission and government settlements who were, at that time, still convinced of the benefits of assimilation (Borsboom 2005).

In 1976, the passing of land rights legislation for the Northern Territory gave rise to the outstation movement in Central and Northern Australia and marked the end of the assimilation policy. Ownership of the land of so-called Aboriginal reserves was immediately regained and people started to reoccupy their traditional lands to establish 'outstations' or 'homeland centers' as they are called today. During this time, Nijmegen-based researchers made important contributions to

the topics of self-determination and land rights. In 1980, Borsboom returned to the Djinang in Arnhem Land to gain insight into their life during a time of remarkable change. Borsboom's former supervisor Kenneth Maddock (Macquarie University, Sydney) spent a year in Nijmegen. During that same year he worked on an important book on Aboriginal land rights at the Institute for Folk Law (Maddock 1980, 1983). In Western Australia, Hans Dagmar supported an Aboriginal land claim with his research (Dagmar 1984).

The first land rights act turned out to be a prelude to an even bigger success of the Aboriginal land rights movement. In 1992, following years of legal proceedings by Torres Strait Islander man Eddie Mabo, the Australian High Court recognized that Australia was not 'empty' (*terra nullius*) at the time of colonization by the British. Instead, Indigenous Australians had lived in the country for thousands of years and, according to the Court, enjoyed rights to their land according to their own laws and customs. The so-called Mabo case paved the way for the Native Title Act 1993, which in turn led Aboriginal people to file land claims to Native Title Courts – often with success.

Beyond the Dichotomy Between Tradition and Modernity

As Australia moved from assimilation to self-determination, its Aboriginal peoples continued to give shape to their traditions, beliefs, practices and identities in contact with settler society. The interrelations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, and the question of what it means to be Aboriginal in today's world, long preoccupied researchers in Nijmegen (e.g., Dagmar 1978, 1984; Borsboom 1986; Riphagen 2008; Tonnaer 2008; Venbrux 2006). Their work also refuted claims that contact with settler society would lead to the end of so-called traditional Aboriginal life (Borsboom 1986), or that modernity would result in 'watered down' forms of Aboriginal identity (Riphagen 2011). During the 1980s and 1990s, Ad Borsboom and Eric Venbrux both conducted ethnographic fieldwork in remote Aboriginal communities, although their foci differed. Borsboom witnessed how the arrival of satellite disks and the internet rapidly brought the so-called modern world into the furthest corner of Arnhem Land. People often perceived as 'traditional' Aborigines became citizens of the modern, global world. Rather than witnessing the end of traditional life, Borsboom encountered and documented the resilience of Aboriginal language, social fabric, life cycle rituals, mixed economy, and above all attachment to country – both cognitive, religious, and emotional. This led him to argue that whilst tradition changes as it always does – faster today than

in pre-colonial times – the persistent dichotomy between tradition and modernity in Western social thought is a false one. Instead, Djinang attitudes towards and perceptions of modernity kept being shaped by their cultural institutions, which in turn remained the building blocks of contemporary, fluid Aboriginal identity (Borsboom 1986). In her PhD research Elizabeth den Boer focused on the dreams of Aboriginal women in comparison to those of Indigenous women in Suriname (Mohkamsing-den Boer 2005).

In the Tiwi Islands, off the Australian north coast, Venbrux conducted fieldwork during several periods between 1988 and 2006. His monograph, *A Death in the Tiwi Islands* (Venbrux 1995), formed an extended case study of the social and legal ramifications of a homicide in a Tiwi community. The study also provided an elaborate ethnography of Tiwi social relations, funeral and post-funeral rituals, seasonal rituals, and the political and social aspects of ceremony. It represented a main example of creativity in Aboriginal culture (Layton 1998: 57–59). Besides providing an analysis of Tiwi culture, *A Death in the Tiwi Islands* (Venbrux 1995) also focused on its interaction with the state's criminal justice system. Interaction between Tiwi and the world surrounding them also marked Venbrux's subsequent work. In 1991, he introduced the Tiwi Land Council to descriptions of their ancestors by an expedition of the Dutch East India Company, dating from 1705. These first descriptions of a single Aboriginal tribe and interactions with the European crew for several months were important for the land council to obtain political leverage and secure a place for the Tiwi, engaging with Europeans long before Captain Cook, in national history. The Tiwi subsequently staged re-enactments of the 1705 coming of the Dutch, in 1995 and 2005, and created an award-winning documentary, entitled *The Tiwi and the Dutch* (Venbrux 2003, 2015).

The interest in how Aboriginal people engaged in intercultural exchanges and shaped their contemporary lifeworld by interacting with non-Aboriginal practices, beliefs, identities, and cultural forms continued to flourish in Nijmegen after the turn of the 21st century. However, this interest materialized through a choice of new research topics. In 2002, encouraged by Borsboom and Venbrux, Anke Tonnaer travelled as a master's student to Borroloola in the Northern Territory. Tonnaer turned her attention to the impact of Indigenous cultural tourism on the economic position of Indigenous Australians, as well as on their socio-cultural empowerment in contemporary Australia. At the time, tourism was only beginning to receive recognition as a topic worthy of anthropological interest and, aside from outstanding work by Jon Altman (e.g. 1988, 1989), few substantial studies into tourism on Indigenous lands had been conducted.

Tonnaer (2002), who stayed in the remote Gulf of Carpentaria for two months, studied interactions between tourists and Aboriginal people during a festival. This festival also enabled her to examine the performative politics surrounding the revival of the so-called 'Aeroplane Dance'. The dance narrated a local event of the Second World War, as seen and experienced by Aboriginal people, but had gained a strongly gendered innovation during the festival (Tonnaer 2011). After her ethnographic study in Borroloola, Tonnaer returned to Australia in 2004 to delve deeper in the intercultural dealings that Indigenous tourism increasingly generated. Based at Aarhus University, but in a cotutelle-arrangement with the CAOS department, in particular with her co-promotor Eric Venbrux, she wrote a dissertation on the performative encounter culture that the touristic meeting between Aborigines and tourists shaped (Tonnaer 2008).

As Tonnaer studied intercultural exchange within the domain of tourism, other Nijmegen-based students and researchers moved their attention to Australia's urban areas (e.g. Hulsker 2002; Riphagen 2008, 2013). This new approach to researching the dynamics of Indigenous livelihoods in postcolonial settler Australia was informed by debates about representation and Aboriginality that had taken place in Australia from especially the 1970s onwards. Aboriginal people living in the (outskirts of) metropolitan areas increasingly vocally criticized a variety of stereotypes about what supposedly real Aborigines looked like, how they lived, and where they lived. In the cities, Aboriginal people's calls against discrimination, for social justice, and for recognition of their unique identities grew more prominent. A new moment emerged that merged politics, art, activism and culture to create positive changes for people who had long been made invisible.

This increased visibility and recognition of Aboriginal people in the country's urban areas gave a new impetus to research in Nijmegen. For example, in 2002, Janneke Hulsker completed her doctoral research on the creation of a corporate Aboriginal identity by Aboriginal organizations in Redfern, a neighborhood in Sydney. In 2012, student Mascha Friderichs chose the city of Darwin to carry out research for her research master's in Social and Cultural Science on the use of sexual health services by Aboriginal adolescents in Darwin. Riphagen (2008, 2011, 2013), in turn, researched the photo-based art practices of four contemporary, urban-based Aboriginal artists. Her doctoral dissertation followed these artists as they traversed both Australian and international art worlds and examined how they engaged with subjects like identity, representation, discrimination, and art world politics. Riphagen's focus on Indigenous art was inspired not just by the aforementioned interest of Nijmegen-based researchers in interrelations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, ideas, practices, and beliefs, but also by her

supervisors' passion for art. Indeed, in Nijmegen, Indigenous material culture had long been a central research theme.

Aboriginal Material Culture Exchange and Museal Connections

Aboriginal material culture and, more specifically, art, form an important thread in the long history of colonial and postcolonial contact between the Netherlands and Australia. In the so-called museum period, from 1880 till 1920, cultural objects (such as spears, shields, and boomerangs) and photographs of Indigenous Australians were employed to demonstrate their status as the primitive 'Other' in the evolutionary schemes of the day. Photographs, emphasizing this by picturing the Aboriginal subjects undressed (Venbrux and Jones 2002), and clubs, spears, and similar type of objects (Venbrux 2003), formed valued acquisitions of the National Ethnographic Museum in Leiden at the time. During the twentieth century, however, the stunning visual art related to Indigenous cosmology and ritual would become an important vehicle for increasing the visibility of Australian Aborigines. It was an important means for Indigenous Australians to express and maintain their identity, to get others interested in their worldview, and for their emancipation in wider society. When major art institutions began to show Aboriginal art too, first in 1958 but even more so from 1988 onwards, their emancipation in this respect was undeniable. In the public eye they had made the leap from 'primitive' to 'civilized'. Aboriginal artists from remote and urban areas, including ones with art-school training, rose to prominence, nationally and occasionally on the global stage. In line with the Nijmegen tradition of engaged scholarship, these emancipatory aspects of Aboriginal art production captured the interest of several researchers in Nijmegen.

In the 1950s, Van der Leeden became a curator in Leiden. During the 1960s, he collected cultural objects in Arnhem Land and made a collection of photographs of contemporary cultural life. Moreover, he put together a collection of bark paintings produced by artists such as Yirawala, who later became known as the 'Picasso' of Arnhem Land. This important early collection of Aboriginal art (see Van Holland 2000) is also testament to a change in the appreciation of Aboriginal cultural objects. From 1969 onwards, Van der Leeden instilled an interest in the cultural dimension of Aboriginal life in his students.

In Nijmegen, the Ethnological Museum, linked to the anthropology department, staged several exhibitions on Aboriginal Australia – made possible by curator Fer

Hoekstra. In 1982, an exhibition entitled *Tradition with a Future* displayed photographs and texts from Ad Borsboom's fieldwork. On the eve of the bicentennial of the European invasion in Australia, the museum hosted the exhibition *The First Australians* (1987–1988). It showed a collection from the Australian Aboriginal Arts Board (that subsequently would be the core of the blockbuster exhibition *Aratjara* in Düsseldorf, Germany). The Tiwi were at the heart of not one but two exhibitions in Nijmegen. In 1993, Venbrux and master's student Dorothé Broeren helped create an exhibit with photographs and findings from fieldwork in the Tiwi Islands. A decade later, the Ethnological Museum hosted the touring exhibition *Kiripuranji: Contemporary Art from the Tiwi Islands*.

The Ethnological Museum in Nijmegen was not the only institution in the Netherlands that focused on Indigenous art. Indeed, one of the key locations for the display of such art was the Museum for Contemporary Aboriginal Art (AAMU) in Utrecht. This privately funded museum was established in 2000 (Venbrux was on the foundational board) and existed until 2017. For almost two decades, the AAMU exhibited different forms of Indigenous art to a mostly European audience and attracted Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australian artists, curators, art writers, and collectors to its openings and events. The AAMU formed a hub for exchange between the Dutch and Australian art worlds and facilitated relations between several CAOS researchers – most notably Borsboom, Venbrux, and Riphagen – and Aboriginal artists and art professionals. Venbrux (2001, 2002, 2006, 2017), who had turned his attention to the history of Tiwi art as it developed in interaction with the wider world, saw his efforts in the field of the globalization of Indigenous art intersect with the AAMU's work. Riphagen, who saw the artists central to her research travel to the Netherlands to exhibit in the AAMU, made this museum and its framing of Indigenous art central to her dissertation (Riphagen 2011). These connections between Nijmegen-based researchers and a Dutch cultural institution exemplify both a broader interest in Aboriginal Australia (on the part of the general public) and a commitment to build networks with partners outside of the department.

Exchanging Knowledge, Building Networks

As a hub for scholarship on Aboriginal Australia, Nijmegen hosted different initiatives and events to facilitate exchange between scholars. In the early 1970s, Van der Leeden already established the *Australian Aboriginal Studies Working Group* for anthropology students (Meurkens 1998: 97, 166). The Working Group reported on

its activities to the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies* (AIATSIS) (Van der Leeden 1971). During the 1980s, Nijmegen became home to the *Centre for Studies of Oceania and Australia*, which coordinated the regional interest and published a newsletter. The appointment of Ton Otto and Toon van Meijl in Nijmegen – who had both obtained their PhD at the Australian National University, Canberra – further strengthened the international academic quality of the Centre. After a landmark Nijmegen conference of *European Oceanists* (ESfO), in 1992, this transformed into the *Centre for Pacific and Asian Studies* (CPAS). Since 2007, CPAS has published the Oceania newsletter, edited by René van der Haar.

The *Centre for Pacific and Asian Studies* engaged not just researchers based in the anthropology department but also scholars from departments across the University in Nijmegen and at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, located on campus. At the Max Planck Institute, Stephen Levinson and John Haviland conducted anthropolinguistic research and demonstrated the absolute orientation in spatial description in the Australian Aboriginal language Guugu Yimithirr (Queensland) versus the relative orientation in the Dutch language (Levinson 1997; Haviland 1992, 1998). In addition, anthropologists David Wilkins (1993) and Thomas Widlok (1997) conducted research among the Arrernte in Central Australia and at Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia respectively.

As researchers across different departments and institutes in Nijmegen stimulated each other through a shared interest in Australian Aboriginal studies, long-standing relations between Nijmegen and Australian institutes also provided a source of motivation and dialogue. A special bond developed particularly between several generations of Nijmegen-based anthropologists and Prof. Jon Altman, who founded the *Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research* (CAEPR) at the Australian National University and spent most of his career conducting research with Aboriginal Australians in Arnhem Land. It was Altman who welcomed students from Nijmegen who travelled to Australia to work on their theses and provided them with advice and connections. At CAEPR, several PhD researchers from Nijmegen became embedded as visiting scholars and received the opportunity to engage in academic conversations with Australia's leading scholars in Aboriginal studies. Altman, in turn, also visited the Netherlands where he presented seminars about his latest research (on the intersection of anthropology and economics), took part in PhD defenses, and provided constructive feedback on research findings by CAOS scholars.

The links between Nijmegen and Australian universities also led some Dutch students to pursue careers in Australia. Kim de Rijke, who completed a graduate degree in anthropology in Nijmegen, became a lecturer at the University

of Queensland. With Australian colleagues, De Rijke (e.g. De Rijke et al. 2016) currently pursues topics in Australian Aboriginal studies that have also been of concern in the Nijmegen tradition. Former student Mascha Friderichs is now a lecturer in public health at Charles Darwin University. The cross-fertilization between researchers in both countries with a dedication to understanding and explicating Indigenous traditions, identities, beliefs, and practices has thus been a productive one.

Conclusion

The University of Nijmegen has prided itself as an emancipatory university. It was established a century ago for the suppressed Catholic population in the Netherlands. Even today the majority of students are first-generation students. But the urge to be not only scientifically relevant but also socially relevant has become its mission. When we look back at some fifty years of Australian Aboriginal Studies in Nijmegen, we see that this twofold mission of emancipation and engaged scholarship was embraced right from the beginning and has been remarkably consistent over the years.

Since the first observations by the Dutch East India Company of what came to be known as Arnhem Land up until now, there has been a strong interest in and sustained connection between the Netherlands and Australia. Over the course of the past fifty years these ties were particularly developed academically in Nijmegen, regarding the life worlds of Australian Aborigines. Much committed work has been done to help change the image of Indigenous Australians from being as (Ig)Noble Savages, sitting lowest on the social-evolutionary ladder, to being socio-culturally resilient and globally recognized First Nations peoples. In the past decade, the strong regional focus on Australia has been let go in Nijmegen in both teaching and research. However, against the background of the mounting ecological crises there is a growing re-appreciation of Indigenous epistemologies on how to live with the more-than-human world. Furthermore, Aboriginal long-term relations and nourishing of the ancestral realm, honoring connections to both past and future, may once more attest to the impact of Australian Aboriginal life-ways on how we in the West think and act. A new chapter to this historiography might perhaps be waiting to be written.

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Categorically Unfriendly Towards Essentialism

An Intersectional Approach and a Supplement

TINE DAVIDS & FRANCIO GUADELOUPE

An anniversary intrinsically invites one to look back and inwards, and so that is also the purpose of this short essay. Not to navel-gaze or look back in nostalgia, but to reflect on the approaches and conceptualizations that were developed over the years on gender, subjectivity, intersectionality and change, at what is now called the Department of Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies (CAOS), and what these produced in terms of contributing to problematizing the colonialities of 'gender' and 'race'.

These conceptualizations were the outcome of research and teaching by Tine Davids and Francien van Driel but developed in conjunction with other teacher-researchers in and outside the department such as, among others,[1] Karin Willemse at the Erasmus University, Bibi Straatman at the Minerva Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Marianne Marchand at the Universidad de las Americas, Mexico, and student-mentees who later became colleagues such as the co-author of this piece, Francio Guadeloupe. If part of decoloniality is about sharing without ownership, with the goal of transforming the world in a way in which it will be indescribably better than it currently is, it is important to recognize others outside Nijmegen with whom we, the authors of this essay, continue to develop concepts that seek to undo coloniality.

1 We cannot do justice to all the ones who inspired us and on whose input we have built our ideas, but we do want to mention here also LOVA (Netherlands Association for Gender Studies and Feminist Ethnography), as a support network. All of those who inspired us directly or indirectly implicitly form part of this essay.

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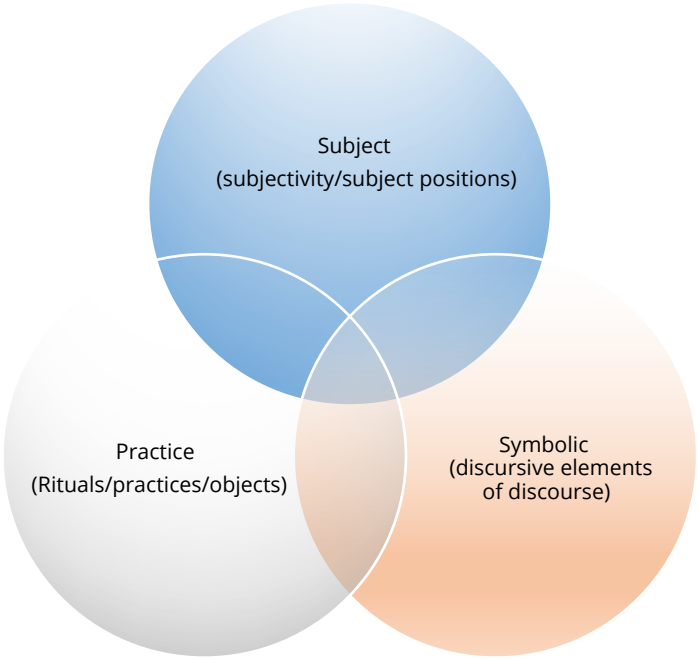
Looking back at the early 1990s, when Tine Davids started the course on feminist ethnography, Radboud University used to be known as the Catholic University of Nijmegen [Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen (KUN)]. Anthropology and development studies were still separate sections or departments at that time. Interesting to know in that respect is that, while universities are positioned at the top or center of the academic knowledge power structure, up until recently the history of Catholics and Catholic institutions in the Netherlands was one of working in the margins and of marginalization (Van Rooden 1995). No wonder, then, that the university placed a high value on emancipation and liberation as part of its mission statement. Liberation, which etymologically stems from the 15th century French term 'liberation', and further back the Latin *liberationem*, referring to the "act of setting free from restraint or confinement," or "a setting or becoming free" was also what we as the aforementioned teacher-researchers were after. Not that Tine Davids in anthropology and Francien van Driel in development studies were working at setting others free, or training gullible minds primarily with 'pink skins' to do so. Enacting a White Savior complex (Bandyopadhyay 2019) or being social philosophers with their unenlightened poor (Rancière 2004) was not what they, and later Francio Guadeloupe who taught courses with them, were about. What we did search for with Francien van Driel was to undo hierarchical research relations and the integration of a gender and 'race' perspective as part of a quest for feminist research and education.

Although Marion den Uyl, Thea Campagne and José van Santen came before us at the KUN, for us, the authors of this essay, it all started with a course, taught by Tine Davids, for which the initiative was taken by Tchambuli, then a very active group of students that rallied to get attention for gender and an intersectional gender analysis into the curriculum of anthropology. In this course, theorizing gender was connected to epistemological questions on how to be a feminist researcher and how to consequently do fieldwork, but also in relation to the representation of the ones who participated in the research, in our writings. Paradigmatic change was in the air (see also Davids and Van Driel 2002). Kimberley Crenshaw (1989), one of our inspirators, had just coined the term intersectionality. Feminist-inspired scholarship was here to stay, and so too in Nijmegen. As such, it did not stop at this one course though. Soon after, Tine Davids started working at the Department of Development Studies where she developed and taught together with Francien van Driel courses on gender, power and representation. And also, in particular after the merger of the two departments, courses on gender studies became part of the compulsory curriculum, also taught by Prof. Willy Jansen (see also the essay by Jansen in this volume).

Despite the fact that both anthropology and development studies had and have their separate debates and literature regarding the study of gender, they also share a common focus on gender as part of power relations and ideals on feminist ethnography. From this focus, and as an outcome of research and educational experiences a multidimensional approach on gender was developed, which was coined as the gender lens, that serves as an analytical tool or approach to conceptualize the multidimensional power dynamics of gender (e.g. Davids 2011; Davids and Van Driel 2005, 2009).

The gender lens approach departs from the idea that gender is a shifting signifier that only acquires meaning in a particular context, and encompasses simultaneously the subjectivity and embodiment as well as the representations of femininity and masculinity, when enacted and 'performed' (Butler 1990) by people in particular practices or in social reality. Although these dimensions coexist and are simultaneously at work in reality – without prioritizing one of these – in order to explore one's room to maneuver and agency *vis-à-vis* different discourses, these dimensions can be taken apart analytically to obtain insight into the articulation of the more structural aspects as well as the subjective aspects – as depicted graphically below.



This is not meant as a rigid methodology or 'tool', but to be used 'loosely' and adapted analytically to different ends, types of research and contexts. This may result in a kind of open-endedness, since how these dimensions interact depends on the specific contexts. At the same time, this open-endedness or vagueness and ambiguity can be interpreted, rather than as 'bad theory', as a strength, much as Kathy Davis (2008) interpreted the relative vagueness of the concept of intersectionality, to avoid ethnocentric and pre-given interpretations of gender.

At a minimum, the gender lens can function as a strong and stubborn reminder[2] that gender encompasses both the body, and thus also sex and sexuality, as well as representations, regulations and practices; both structure as well as agency and subjectivity. It is also a reminder that we are all carriers of power structures and relations, which work on and through the subject. Change is best conceptualized as slow change (Davids et al. 2014) in the sense that it does not take place outside of power relations but in and through them, and so change cannot take place outside the subject; rather, we have to work through it. It is the messiness of everyday life – where dimensions simultaneously work on each other – that discourses get deconstructed.

Moreover, the gender lens is also meant to facilitate not only the exploration of research subjects, but also, as part of feminist ethnography, how the agency of the researched is at stake. Agency is not just knowledge in and of itself that should be represented, but is part of the intersubjective relation between researcher and researched (see also Davids and Willemse 2014). What was sought also with this approach to gender was to undo as much as possible the authoritarian relationships that characterize academic research.

Of course, gender is not only a shifting signifier because of its situated character, but also because it cannot be separated from other ascriptive identity markers and corresponding power relations. Therefore, this approach also forms a stubborn reminder that gender is radically intersectional. Not in a way that different identities are piled up in endless etcetera's, but as intrinsically linked. As in the way in which one says, "I am a 'pinked skinned' woman, or a 'Black' man", and of which it is impossible to say what comes first, or to say the one without the other, while it depends on the context and the person, of course, how this acquires a particular 'performativity'. A radical intersectionality that is categorially unfriendly to essentialism and, as such, invites students to radically rethink our human condition.

The rethinking of our human condition was of course not exclusive for gender studies, or 'kept' exclusively for and within intersectional gender studies courses,

2 With thanks to Cesar Merlin Escorza.

but also informed the teaching in other courses, such as the course on *Culture, Development and Globalization*, originally designed by the late Prof. Frans Hüsken and Tine Davids, and later also taught by us, the authors of this essay. In these courses, we centered not only the de-essentialization of gender but also that of ethnicity and race. If decoloniality is about problematizing and substituting the colonialities of 'race', 'gender', 'land', and political economy, for an eco-engaged humanism integral to and positively integrating with the multiple 'becoming' of the world, then what we taught at that time was, with hindsight, a start to that end, as the term was being coined by Latin American thinkers.

A common ground was formed for what Guadeloupe later made intelligible in his book, *Black Man in the Netherlands: An Afro-Antillean Anthropology* (2022), that it is in particular instances of conviviality where the essentialism of race gets undone. And from a radical intersectional point of view, we would like to add also gender. The messiness and ambiguity of everyday life that Davids and Van Driel pointed at in relation to gender does come close to the conviviality to which Guadeloupe refers in his recent book. Even more so if we take 'performativity' into account, as Judith Butler's theory based on the observation of travesties performing 'traditional femininity' and thus crossing and destabilizing gender norms. Guadeloupe shows in his book how youngsters in those convivial spaces can 'perform' cultural stereotypes of each other's background in a playful manner, thus destabilizing these stereotypes. It is in these border crossings that racialized cultural differences are de-essentialized. It is the 'iterability' of gender and race that enables the process of destabilizing these very categories. This de-essentializing is our goal and, as such, an integral part of our academic practice. Implying not only undoing/decolonizing categories of gender and race, but also for instance black and white, migrants and sedentary people (see also Dahinden 2016, on demigranticization).

Decoloniality is often referred to as theorizing from the South. As important as this displacing of the geopolitics of knowledge is, it runs the risk of reinforcing the ideationally hegemonic North-South, East-West, and West versus the Rest divide, which cannot be part of the outernational project of decolonizing the planet. By outernationality we are referring to those counter-reactionary place-making activities in peripheries outside and inside centers of power in the so-called North and South that connect and make common cause. They have to do so, if in other words they think as Maria Lugones (2007) thought us to think coalitionally, because too many people across the globe cannot breathe, eat, and become in a dignified way.

The old West versus non-West divide will not do, for as Anibal Quijano (2007: 168) long ago averred, Western Imperialism is not Eurocentered colonialism.

> *A relation of direct, political, social and cultural domination was established by the Europeans over the conquered of all continents. This domination is known as a specific Eurocentered colonialism. In its political, above all the formal and explicit aspect, this colonial domination has been defeated in the large majority of the cases. America was the first stage of that defeat, and afterwards, since the Second World War, Asia and Africa. Thus, the Eurocentered colonialism, in the sense of a formal system of political domination by Western European societies over others seems a question of the past. Its successor, Western imperialism, is an association of social interests between the dominant groups ('social classes' and/or 'ethnies') of countries with unequally articulated power, rather than an imposition from the outside.*

Such an analysis that foregrounds the multidimensionality of powers calls for a supplement to intersectionality; a politics of transfiguration that critically reinvigorates feminist-informed politics of fulfillment grounded in lived realities.

> *[A] politics of fulfillment envisages that the society of the future attains more adequately what present society has left unaccomplished. It is the culmination of the implicit logic of the present. [A] politics of transfiguration emphasizes the emergence of qualitatively new needs, social relations, and modes of association, which burst open the utopian potential within the old (Benhabib 1986: 13).*

A politics of transfiguration warrants speculation and the possibility of fully departing from the structures of Enlightenment Man and counter-Enlightenment richly-fleshed, nonracial *humans.* The latter is arguably the ground of intersectionality and writerly style. The remainder of the essay speaks to our post-Enlightenment forays, whereby instead of speaking about humans we solely recognize that some phenomena *human* (Guadeloupe and Granger 2021). Humans as a noun connotes species specificity, while *human-ing* as a verb signifies multi-durational microphysical, biological, inorganic, symbolic and other semiotic processes and performances as constitutive of the richness of any human subjectivity. In other words, *human-ing* conceptually puts species-specificity under permanent erasure. *Human-ing,* as a picture of how we become with others, enables the articulation of what philosophers term the manifest and scientific image of existence (Sellars 1963). The manifest image refers to the observable ways in which we who *human* habitually experience the world and ourselves: as wholes with social identities clearly discerning specific species, places, things and happenings we reason about in collectives. This is the world where we who *human* consider ourselves

free, or ideally strive to found freedom, justice, and equity in common. The work of teaching-researching is about finding out with those we study the reasons for their actions and the reasons for the acts done to them. The scientific image by contrast is the world that is not observable by the naked eye. It is the world of microphysics, particles, atoms, viruses, unwilled transactions between so-called species, but also of the unconscious, ideological power structures, disciplinary discourses and the likes. Here the work of teaching-researching is about uncovering the causes for actions of those we study, and what caused particular actions to befall them. Our conception of *human-ing* recognizes the importance of both the manifest and scientific image – and the specific teaching-researching endeavors they entail.

It goes without saying, given the first half of this essay, that we emphatically insist on keeping a trace of counter-Enlightenment subjectivities, intersectionally-constituted by observable social identities. We also affirm that conception-signaling multiplex subjectivities are in line with the world of selves that, in our conception of *human-ing,* we integrate with a scientific appreciation of we who *human* as a complex of cells. We therefore coined the compound term '*cell(ves)*' to denote that we who *human* – on the manifest level as selves – are societies of cells which, in actuality, consist of a multitude of molecular compositions in concert with microbial and other becomings. A continual prehension of processes with differing durations, thinking with Isabel Stengers (2011), whereby hospitality is integral to the human condition; the willed and what we termed above the unwilled transactions between so-called species.

To become, *cell(ves)* must commune internally and externally in manifold ways. So-called internal communing is done through emergent operations known as sub-, un-, or full consciousness within *cell(ves).* These operations of awareness are structured like a language and come into being through semiotics. Here is where the idea of having a self or consisting of multiple selves comes in.

But there is also an outside. Kristeva (1982: 95) already stated the obvious when she averred for "a theory of the subject that does not reduce the subject to one of understanding, but instead opens up within the subject this other scene of pre-symbolic functions".

Taking her cues, we acknowledge as stated above that *cell(ves)* do not live by words and signs alone nor solely among those who *human* too. Attention has to be given to what Donna Haraway terms our companion species, meaning a recognition that we co-appear with others who *animal* in manifold ways, more specifically those we domesticated. In addition, our becoming cyborgs, i.e. thinking ourselves in conjunction with the technical-scientific and other inorganic processes, also

has to be taken on board. *Cell(ves)* in this case are cyborgs and in an inextricable appearing with several termed, in Enlightenment-speak, species.

> *Cyborgs and companion species each bring together the human and non-human, the organic and technological, carbon and silicon, freedom and structure, history and myth, the rich and the poor, the state and the subject, diversity and depletion, modernity and postmodernity, and nature and culture in unexpected ways… neither a cyborg nor a companion animal pleases the pure of heart who long for better protected species boundaries and sterilization of category deviants (Harraway 2003: 5).*

All of this seems far removed from the coloniality of 'race' and 'gender', or rather, intersectionality. Again, it is not, but rather a supplement; a thinking beyond while recognizing that we still need to mourn, as Wendy Brown (2005), the end of counter-Enlightenment subjectivities. Brown's insistence ties into those inspired by a preferential option for the poor, such as Lisa Isherwood's feminist liberation theology (2004) or Vandana Shiva's ecofeminism (1989); we would be remiss if we forgot of those whose oppression indirectly enables cyborgs to philosophize while sipping wine in suburbia.

Looking back at how intersectionality was introduced and further elaborated upon in Nijmegen as a decolonial practice in Dutch academia, we recognize that our work continues. The further theoretical-practical deepening of intersectionality as a critical mode of inhabiting or appearing with others remains a matter of consequence for all.

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In and Out

Reflections on Engaged Scholarship in Development Cooperation

PAUL HOEBINK

In often-cited publications on engaged scholarship, Ernest L. Boyer (1990, 1996) indicated not only that it is important to lower the walls between departments at universities and between academia and society, but also that "faculty who do spend time with so-called applied projects frequently jeopardize their careers". On the other hand, scholars who do spend time on 'applied projects' for policies and advice for European institutions, national governments or NGOs will have to accept that the conclusions of their research are often not followed at all or at best only partly by the organizations involved. Being 'out' in both situations can thus be a normal situation for an 'engaged scholar'.

Although in the USA, 'engaged scholarship' is mostly seen as doing 'community service' (Beaulieu et al. 2018) (later also in health sciences), this chapter sums up and tries to categorize more than 40 years of experience doing (non-) commissioned research, teaching and engagement in public debates on European and Dutch development cooperation. A first observation might be that in teaching, taking part in seminars and attending public meetings it is usually easier to be 'in', than by doing critical research for different types of development organizations.

During more than 40 years, always at the same university, I have been involved in engaged scholarship around development cooperation in a broad sense. My activities gained much momentum after the publication of my dissertation *Geven is nemen: De Nederlandse ontwikkelingshulp aan Tanzania en Sri Lanka* ['Giving is Taking: Dutch Development Assistance to Tanzania and Sri Lanka'], which received wide media attention. I was appointed to the National Advisory Council for Development Cooperation (NAR), became a member of the Steering Group which led the evaluation of the Dutch Co-financing Programme and, following that, of the Project Commission of Oxfam-Novib. The Minister for Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk, asked me to write a report on the effectiveness of aid and to participate in discussions around the preparation of his major white paper *Een*

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wereld van verschil ['A World of Difference']. For the NAR, I wrote the advice on the reverification of Dutch development cooperation policy and several papers on European development policy and the Treaty of Maastricht. Later, the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) commissioned me for articles and a special about Dutch development cooperation. For the European Commission, I was asked to do evaluations, in particular on policy coherence. In terms of memberships and invitations you could call me 'in'; I was an active participant in policy debates (also on invitation of the Dutch Parliament), an engaged scholar in international development cooperation.

Being 'Out'

An engaged scholar can be 'out' in several ways. In their attempt to bridge the gap between knowledge and application, most of their research is rather practical, trying to offer steps to arrive at better results. It is then important to really 'hear' and 'understand' the questions of the stakeholders. This means not so much literally 'hearing' the questions – they will be in most cases translated in the research itself – but to understand what is behind the questions, what the scope of change might be, how 'deep' possible changes could go. Political structures, policies and compromises, however, might place an 'engaged scholar' also in an 'out' position. The adoption of specific policies, often as a difficult compromise between political parties, make that these are carved in marble, not amenable for change, even longer than the coalition of political parties is held together.

For Oxfam-Novib, I did an evaluation of their evaluations of the year 2000 (Hoebink 2001). The conclusion was that these evaluations were quite heterogenous in quality. Those from Latin America contained many words and few empirical data, those from India were sobering and those from Eastern Europe by external consultants of very low quality. What was amazing is that even if there was, according to the Terms of Reference (ToR), ample time for field research, it was rarely used. A serious improvement to the evaluations was necessary; this was the conclusion. It was recommended, among other measures, to install an evaluation committee with external experts, which would come together a few times a year not only to discuss evaluations but also the ToRs. Most probably it was because the organization was amidst several organizational changes that none of the recommendations was implemented.

In 1997, together with Fons van der Velden, on behalf of the Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the

technical assistance organisations Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (SNV) and Personele Samenwerking Ontwikkelingslanden (PSO), I wrote two reports on the evaluation of technical assistance. One of the conclusions was that 'gap filling', sending experts to places where there was an absolute shortage of expertise, received a strong legitimacy in international cooperation (Hoebink and Van der Velden 1997a and b). Around three years later, Labour Minister Eveline Herfkens, then Minister for Development Cooperation, came back from a field visit in Mozambique, complaining that Dutch doctors were running hospitals with big salaries and living in luxurious staff houses with swimming pools. This caricature (as Dutch doctors in reality work for local salaries and live in local, simple staff houses) caused a big stir and the minister had to come to parliament, make excuses, explain twice what her policy was and send our report to parliament.[1] It did not hinder the minister in calling an end to the technical assistance programme (although private aid organisations could still send out experts with a subsidy from the Ministry).

But the story doesn't end here. In 2020 the "long time partner in life and work" of Eveline Herfkens, Constantine Michalopoulos, published a book on the short lived alliance of four Ministers for Development Cooperation under the label the 'Utstein Four', named after the abbey in Norway where they came together for the first time. Here Herfkens came back as a heroine having ended "technical cooperation that hitherto provided expensive employment for Dutch doctors in Africa", thus ending 'tied aid' (aid that is tied to purchase of good and services in the donor country) (Michalopoulos 2020: 152). Michalopoulos did not only present the wrong example here, but Dutch aid was already largely untied when Eveline Herfkens arrived in power (Hoebink 2020).

Thus, it is always more than logical that engaged scholarship is embedded in political compromises and structures. Liliane Ploumen arrived at the Ministry in November 2012 as part of a Liberals-Labour Cabinet, directly confronted with a budget cut of €1.4 billion and a new proposal for a Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF). The name of the fund sounds, of course, very 'Dunglish' [Dutch-English], but the minister directly declared this DGGF to be an investment fund for small and medium enterprises from developing countries as well as from the Netherlands. That being said, she was directly called back to Cabinet, where the Minister of Economic Affairs also wanted to use the DGGF for export promotion. Apart from

1 Interdepartementaal beleidsonderzoek: uitzending personeel ontwikkelingssamenwerking. Brief van de minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking. Tweede Kamer, vergaderjaar 2000–2001, 26 958, No. 3, 9 oktober 2000.

the budget cuts, the Ministry was able to spend €700 million plus €70 million on technical assistance in this revolving fund. In a parliamentary hearing, I directly warned (Hoebink 2013; Tweede Kamer 2013) that this fund would not be a success. Minister Ploumen, however, promised thousands (130,000) of new jobs and a big reduction of illegal migration. My hesitation came not so much from the fact that this fund had to be administered by three different agencies, but because over the past fifty years Dutch companies, being small and medium enterprises, never showed any great interest in this type of fund promoting Dutch investments in developing countries. An evaluation seven years later (ITAD 2020) showed that I was right: of the €700 million only 56% was used, of which €65 million was for export financing; only around 10,000 jobs were created (maybe even crowding out other jobs), migrants were not stopped, and the expansion of production capacity was limited. There was no synergy between the three elements of the fund. The limited use of the DGGF also makes it very expensive, with high overheads for the administrators. It might then be amazing that after such a negative evaluation the DGGF is still seen as an important cornerstone in the aid and trade agenda of the newly appointed Minister for Development Cooperation, Liesje Schreinemacher, according to her new white paper published recently (Hoebink 2022).[2]

Being 'In'

Evaluating with Barbara Adams of the UN NGO-liaison office the organisation NGO-Net, we had a small clash at the end of the second day with Roberto Bissio, director of the Centro del Tercer Mundo in Montevideo, which founded and hosted NGO-Net. It was the beginning of the internet-revolution and NGO-Net tried to prepare for international conferences to send around disks with documents in Latin America. We had asked all kinds of questions on the number of disks sent around, which organisations were involved, etc.. Bissio then, slightly angry, asked why we needed all these figures, because being with an influential person in an office at the right time, he might have more influence than being in touch with

2 In 1990, I had been in a similar position when the employers federation wanted a financial guarantee instrument for Private Development and Participation Societies (Particuliere Ontwikkelings en Participatie Maatschappij, POPM) and the NAR was asked for an advice on it. I had to come with a minority advice arguing that Dutch companies would not use it. Pronk still instituted this POPM-scheme. Only one firm ever applied for it, although it stood for years in the development cooperation budget.

so-and-so many organisations. I riposted that building on his relations with NGOs he might have gained the reputation that brought him in that office.

In 2000, I was voted the most influential development cooperation scientist by a panel of development researchers. In the more general classification of the most influential and powerful people in Dutch development cooperation, by a panel of people in key-positions in development cooperation organizations in the Netherlands, I came in at second place in 1998, dropping to the fourth in 2004 and to the 10th place in 2008, remaining in that position through to 2011. This might have been the right position, because as one of the publications put it, I had no budget, little formal influence, but only a little bit of fame and strong, well-founded opinions. In Radboud University's Fons Duynstee contest for members of staff who appeared most in the national media (radio, television, newspapers) in a year, I arrived in the first two years (2004 and 2005) at the third and second place, later overrun by economists and cyberspecialists, but always in the top ten. Political scientists will tell you that the 'reputation method' is not the best instrument to measure political influence and power. At least it should be combined with the 'position method', looking at most influential organisations in a specific field and positions held by people in it.

In March 2008, I was in a similar situation to that which Roberto Bissio described. It happened on a Friday afternoon, being invited by the Minister for Development Cooperation, Bert Koenders, to discuss recent developments around his portfolio. At the end he asked me to have a look at the new co-financing scheme for private aid organisations. It was to be published within the next week and he had to respond to the proposal after the weekend. I spent half the weekend reading and commenting on it. Around that time, I was looking at complaints procedures within private aid agencies, which would later culminate in a report on an ombudsman for development cooperation for the minister (Hoebink and Schrijver 2009). Among other outcomes, it resulted in stronger complaints procedures. Most probably this was the moment in my career of 40 years that I had most direct influence.

My work on and for the EU and on poverty reduction with the Overseas Development Institute in London led to an invitation to be the external expert in the commission for the EC-Poverty Reduction Effectiveness Programme, a research programme for British researchers funded by the Department for International Development (DFID). The commission had also money to fund its own projects and I was asked to formulate a research project on policy coherence, which I did with an emphasis on country's views on incoherent European policies. I landed in a researcher's paradise, because my visits to Morocco and Senegal were organised by the European Delegation, with the former director of the EU's evaluation unit,

for which I worked earlier, as head of the Delegation. In the Ministries and other agencies the heads of the departments were ready to welcome me and be interviewed, intelligent men and women with a vision, of which many were *énarque*, having received their diplomas from the École Nationale d'Administration. In the very complex ways in which European institutions and policies are structured it is not very clear where our conclusions and few recommendation finally landed, after comments from Commission staff (Hoebink 2005, 2008).

Reflection

When a journal editor is "wondering whether journal publishing adds up to anything more than lots of words" and continues by asking "how much of what we publish would be missed by citizens, policymakers or practitioners?" (Campbell 2012: 249), the "publish or perish" paradigm that still seems to rule in academia is seriously questioned (again). She continues: "Because, a narrow conception of scholarship severely constraints the intellectual tools available to tackle society's grand challenges" – I would add especially in the social sciences. In their overview of 20 years of engaged scholarship, Beaulieu et al. (2018) found 484 articles on 'engaged scholarship', nearly all from the US, not one of them in the field of international relations or development studies. More important is that the value of social justice and principles of high quality scholarship and boundary-crossing (multi-inter-transdisciplinary) approaches were seen as important in nearly all the articles found. The engaged-scholarship discussion comes primarily from the US, as also Rawls' 'social justice' transformed to 'global social justice' with its roots mainly in the US, in particular in the works of Thomas Pogge. In Europe, we would define it most probably more in terms of 'solidarity' or 'international solidarity', with longer historical roots, at least going back to the 1960s.

In the Third World Centre, founded in 1973 after students' actions (in which I took part), this international solidarity was present from the beginning. Naturally it changed over time, presenting several faces during the last decades, but the deep inner motivation remained largely unchanged. With the foundation of the Third World Centre my personal engagement in university itself started. It began with solidarity actions around Southern Africa, informing and collecting money, and information campaigns around Third World problems. It later evolved into my work on development cooperation and for development organisations. To be sincere, I am really not able to measure success or failure of all these activities, be it informing the public in op-eds, columns, blogs or in fora or and public lectures,

be it in making reports for all kinds of organisations, be it by publishing articles and books. The conclusion might be that, having evaluated many projects and programmes, it is rather difficult to evaluate my own actions and activities.

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The Risks of Engagement

Criminal Justice Ethnography in the Crossfire

PAUL MUTSAERS

In an old work first published in 1977, the Polish-British sociologist and Marxist Ralph Miliband contrasted two views on political conflicts. From a liberal viewpoint, he argued, they exist in terms of problems that need to be 'managed' or 'solved'. The root assumption of a liberal take on such conflicts is that they do not run very deep and can even be functional, in the sense that they are a stabilizing rather than disruptive force. Conflicts clear the air and remind people of the social order they want to keep in place and the harmony they cherish and wish to preserve. From a Marxist perspective, however, political conflicts are cracks in the systems of domination that offer a window on the possibilities of change. Conflicts have revolutionary seeds and may awaken people to the grounded idea that stability is often not a matter of reason but of coercion or persuasion, frequently happening to the disadvantage of those who are stuck in society's lowest ranks.

In the 15 years or so in which I have been engaged in criminal justice research, we have seen a groundswell of opposition to criminal justice agencies almost unequalled in history, leaving little space to doubt the nature of the bulk of crime as well as its repression, that is, as different sides of a political conflict. In a downward spiral, new generations of disadvantaged youth give expression to their discontent in their very own juvenile and sometimes lawbreaking way, arousing more punitive responses from agents of the law, which in turn give rise to youth's 'weapons of the weak' (Scott, 1985): micro-aggressions against authorities, hooliganism, unauthorized and occasionally escalating protests, petty property crimes, and so on. In my experience, these transgressions form the majority of offenses and usurp most of street cops' time, reminding us of the long-forgotten theories about the politics of crime and crime control (e.g. Quinney 1970). In this short essay it suffices to mention the first proposition in Quinney's theoretical framework: 'Crime is a definition of human conduct that is created by authorized agents in a politically organized society' (ibid.: 15). A few years before, Howard Becker had

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already conjured a vivid image of what such a statement actually means. Tongue in cheek he had written that 'no one proposes that addicts should make and enforce laws for policemen' (1967: 241).

My own experiences with political conflicts in the context of criminal justice have been of an ethnographic nature and can be divided along three research lines. Firstly, five years of fieldwork focused on the Dutch police between 2008 and 2013 as well as a more recent project on big data policing have created the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the socially divisive effects of police profiling (Mutsaers 2019a; Mutsaers and Van Nuenen 2023). I have come to agree with Herbert that state actors such as the police 'employ certain grids of legibility upon the input they receive from the citizenry' and increasingly, we may add, from data warehouses (2006: 72). This input is sorted into categories and reacted to via particular routines that are typical within the agency and often detrimental to underprivileged classes of (non)citizens (see Mutsaers 2014, for example, for the effects on undocumented migrants). These routines render communities sensible through a particular state epistemology, says Herbert, privileging some people but leaving others underserviced and overpoliced.

The countless protests that have erupted in the last decade to combat the injustice *caused by* police departments around the world, make it clear that such social fissures do not remain unanswered. Powerful slogans such as 'No Justice, No Peace' have gone viral to expose the fragility of social order and the ephemerality of harmony. In a second line of research I focused on these anti-police protests, in particular those organized by the Chicago chapter of the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States (Mutsaers 2019b; Mutsaers and Van Nuenen 2018). I was very much interested in the struggle that was (and still is) going on to gain recognition for victimhood. While police officers claimed to be overwhelmed by 'Black crime', African American citizens built a case for 'Black victimhood'. Even more, with the archival power (Trouillot 1995) of metadata such as hashtags at their fingertips (literally), they digitally compiled death-by-cop cases to argue that this was a matter of structural violence amounting to state crime. In a legal system that finds it very hard to reason beyond individual culpability, people felt they were left no other choice than proposing radical transformation: the complete abolition of retributive state agencies that do more harm than good.

The third research line consists of three recent projects all taking place at the deep end of the criminal justice system: in or after prison. On the Caribbean island of Curaçao we collected counterstories from the island's youth detention center in an attempt to decolonize youth justice. Here, too, we saw the facility's obsession with individual risk and culpability – often accompanied by Euro-centric ideas

about parents' failure to raise their children properly and offer security – clashing with the detained youth's own stories about structural violence and inequality as a result of a racialized society and world system. Across the Atlantic, we are currently giving an artistic twist to the study of such counterstories by looking at their development in drillrap songs and how this hip hop style influences youth in Dutch detention centers. While the authorities tend to condemn drillrap as a criminogenic genre full of hyperbolic representations and encouragements of gang violence, adopting a more forgiving and understanding pedagogy may open our eyes to the possibility that many of the lyrics are actually a classic *cri de coeur*. They chronicle lives of poverty, racism and exclusion and communicate an important message: "if society is turned against me, then screw it". Finally, we ask how such deep divides can be bridged and how broken bridges can be repaired. We take inspiration from the immensely rich history of *restorative* justice that characterizes the Maroons of Suriname. These formerly enslaved runaways had escaped from one of the cruelest retributive justice systems humankind has ever known, i.e. the American plantation system, in which they lacked almost all rights and were even denied legal personhood. Freedom regained, they developed their own justice systems based on principles of equality, participation, reconciliation and restoration. The current project investigates formal and informal traces of this history and explores, together with ex-detained youth, the possibilities to install restorative (youth) justice in contemporary Surinamese society, as addition to or even replacement of the retributive criminal justice system that still exists as Europe's legacy.

All three research lines have in common that they draw attention to the conflicted contours of criminal justice. They position criminal justice agencies at the forefront of political conflict, where society's direction is determined and the interests and needs of different groups of people are weighed. Burning questions tell us that much is at stake: Do we really want to imprison minors? Are we ready to finally outlaw illicit forms of profiling and to take anti-police protests seriously rather than consider them a disturbance of public order? Do we keep prioritizing individual culpability over social justice? Will we stay deaf to youthful expressions of discontent? Do we prefer an oppressing pedagogy or are we ready to embrace pedagogies of the oppressed?

Coming back to Miliband, I increasingly think that the liberal response to these political conflicts is inadequate and leaves them to fester. Coming up with a diversity training here or a legal amendment there appears to me to be band aids on wounds too large to heal. Piecemeal reform to help an existing system move forward makes no sense if that system is deeply unfair, utterly dehumanizing, and widely contested. Honesty requires me to admit that for years I thought otherwise.

Not that I didn't see the system's shortcomings, but I held on to reformist ideas of gradual improvement and progress. As recently as 2019 I developed a checks-and-balances argument in my book *Police Unlimited*. As long as we would succeed to curb the outer bounds of police power and delimit police discretion in its human and technological forms, we could still repair the system. Going against the grain, I argued for more instead of less bureaucracy within the police to improve accountability structures, restrict the police mandate, establish a clear boundary between public and private spheres and thus to encourage a form of policing *without* regard to person (i.e. identitarian-free policing).

More recently I have come to think of such reformism as a failing strategy, that is, if we genuinely want to build more open and inclusive societies. The transformation was caused by a moment of personal crisis, Gramsci-style, in the sense that I found myself in a mental interregnum in which old ideas lingered in the end of their days while new ones had not yet fully seen the light of dawn. The crisis occurred after fieldwork, in what Didier Fassin (2015) would call the public *afterlife* of ethnography.

'The field' in which ethnographers work nowadays is often not only a multi-sided but also a multi-temporal phenomenon. In my case: I have worked with various police departments across the Netherlands and with some but not others I maintained a working relationship long after my fieldwork had officially ended. This 'time difference' made sure that I became further embedded in some social relationships but drifted away from others; a difference, by the way, that occurred both between and within departments. For example, my connection to the police station in my hometown was particularly strong, but I especially worked together with rank-and-file officers. The short description of this collaboration (and its mediatization) that follows, is an abridged version of a book chapter in the *Routledge International Handbook of Police Ethnography* (Mutsaers 2022).

About 18 months after my fieldwork had officially ended, I was still working with this police station to translate the outcomes of my ethnography into practical solutions to counter police discrimination. My spirits were lifted, because I was glad to live in a country where such sensitive issues could be openly addressed – or so it seemed. With a group of four street cops I formed a taskforce to work on a tool to improve oversight of stop-and-search activities and to detect possible signs of ethnic profiling in a structured manner. These signs had been clearly visible within the police team, we all agreed, so we expected to deliver some impactful outcomes. We worked on a format that was borrowed from the San Diego Police Department, and to preempt complaints about paperwork we planned to build a digital application. The stop-and-search data would be used for basic quantitative

analysis in order to (a) be able to detect disproportionate police scrutiny of minority groups, (b) study its effects in terms of 'successful' criminal cases, and (c) write tailored summaries on each team member to provide the station chief with insights on officers' stop-and-search behavior. These could subsequently be used in job evaluation interviews.

In an atmosphere of congenial excitement we decided to give some publicity to our plans, as these coincided with the final preparations for the public defense of my PhD thesis, in which I made a case for a public anthropology of policing. Because of our mediagenic topic – colloquially known as 'stop forms' – the press release in which our initiative was mentioned travelled far and wide. I gave one of my first interviews to the *NRC Handelsblad*, a high-quality Dutch newspaper. The reporter was particularly interested in our application as he knew that it would raise some eyebrows due to its 'policing the police' qualities (Rowe 2020). Inspired by the courage of the four officers I was working with, I gave the reporter a frank account of our intentions: we hoped to institute the first local system in the country to monitor law enforcement practices with the intention to detect possible illicit profiling and to scale up nationally if our endeavor were to prove successful.

Matching our ambitions, the newspaper editors decided to put our story on the front page and combined it with statements by the Chief of National Police and a senior policy advisor working for the Dutch branch of Amnesty International. The events that followed confronted us with a question that W.E.B. Du Bois had made world famous and which many of the profiled minority youth we had encountered in the streets must have thought about time and again: *How does it feel to be a problem*? Suddenly, our taskforce had become a public relations problem due to the fact that headquarters in The Hague was not amused about our local initiative and tried to quarantine it. In an early morning press release, the national police had stated that the organization was willing to explore the usefulness and feasibility of the app. As if there were no such thing as the digital archive, the press release was changed a few hours later to the unhedged assertion that the police team in question was not going to work with the app, nor had it ever planned to do so.

Faced with contradicting views, the *NRC* reporter approached another taskforce member (a Turkish-Dutch senior constable) to confirm the existence of our project. This constable had agreed to cooperate before but wanted to stay anonymous because he knew very well that our work entailed career risks. Now, however, the reporter used his real name, rank, and station (without consent!) in order to assure his readers that he had used a reliable source. This unexpected and objectionable course of events put our colleague at the center of a political forcefield, which took him years to recover from. Our stop form project was the first one in a long row to

end prematurely; many others stranded in city councils where progressive parties had submitted plans similar to ours. This sobering experience had made me aware of the *risks* of engagement in the absence of a clear idea about the *rules* of engagement.

In addition, it made me doubt the reformist agenda that I thought I was contributing to. Apparently, problems – in this case ethnic tensions between police and policed – were not even managed or solved; they were simple left unaddressed. Even worse, while our attempts to increase police oversight and counter ethnic profiling were blocked, new technologies popped up that further entrenched ethnic profiling within the organization. Advanced forms of predictive policing by means of algorithms were being developed, tested and rolled out nationally with the speed of light, which meant bad news for the ethnic groups of citizens we considered to be in dire need of being protected – not by the police but against (certain elements of) it. From an open society perspective, such developments can be seen as counterreforms that frustrate positive revision for the sake of diversity and equality. They expose a *conflict* instead of *consensus* model of law enforcement that sheds light on the unevenness of police protection and surveillance.

Returning to Miliband once more and coming to a conclusion, I must say that I came out of my personal Gramscian crisis more receptive to a Marxist view of political conflict than I was before. This is something different than claiming to be *a Marxist* altogether. Besides, Miliband himself argued that too many *Marxisms* are around to attach any meaning to such a claim. Like many others before and after him, he wrote in jest that Marx for one never proclaimed to be a Marxist. What it does mean, however, is that I have started to see the political conflicts encountered in my studies as system-wrecking possibilities that tell us something about *how to change the world,* to speak in concert with Eric Hobsbawm's so-titled book (2011) – the last book he wrote before passing away at the age of 95. To me, this is the essence of engaged scholarship: observing people's struggles against inequality and suffering, and delivering the analytical tools to help them further their cause. A very Marxian understanding indeed.

Evidently, my disillusionment with criminal justice reforms was not only caused by that single idiosyncratic experience in the media, nor by its ugly aftermath. In my experience, simply too many reforms have failed across criminal justice systems worldwide and numerous good proposals have never even been put on the agenda in the first place. As a result, problems keep piling up: ethnic disparity endures in criminal justice systems from arrest through prosecution and sentencing to incarceration; prisons remain the criminogenic environments they have always been; young offenders are still muted and deprived of their childhoods; low confidence

in the system increasingly leads to forms of self-help security and excessive vigilance; protests become more subversive in nature; and, perhaps most fundamentally, people keep being robbed of the opportunity to deal with their own conflicts.

The observant reader may notice that this final issue brings us back to the aforementioned alternative to retributive justice. One of the main charges of the *restorative* justice movement against criminal law is that it theoretically positions the state as the victim of crime. Not only does such a move make it very difficult to think about the state as a harmful agent in its own right, despite all the counterevidence that has been gathered; it also sidelines victims of crime and takes conflict away from its 'rightful owners'. With its army of legal professionals (police officers, judges, lawyers, prison guards, probation workers, etc.) the criminal justice system deskills people in handling their own conflicts (cf. Christie 1977). But if political conflicts are indeed cracks in the systems of domination that offer a window on the possibilities of change, we may be looking at numerous instances of system-wrecking by people who want to have a fighting chance to win back the right to deal with conflict in a more sovereign and respectful way.

For example, most BLM activists simply want to see their communities healed and relationships restored. Rather than conceiving of provocative drill songs as pre-criminal acts, it may help to see young *drillers* as kids who are actually screaming at the top of their lungs that they want to have some autonomy and support in dealing with the tensions of life. The counterstories that we collected in youth detention centers more generally teach us that years of childhood adversity have made most detainees more resilient in the face of setbacks than their more privileged peers. Rather than stifling such resiliency in correctional programs, an example should be taken from it.

Based on the restorative principle of making good rather than adding pain, many things have been set in motion across the world, both within and outside criminal justice systems. In all of our projects, we keep a close watch on them.

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Coming-Of-Age as an Engaged Scholar Within the Neoliberal University

KAROLIEN VAN TEIJLINGEN

It is 30 September 2015, and the crowd in the packed Teatro Nacional in Quito bursts into a wild applause. The man on the stage is Rafael Correa, the charismatic economist and President of Ecuador at the time. He is halfway through his speech at the *Encuentro Latinoamericano Progresista*, a meeting of heads of state, political leaders and youth movements from countries considered part of Latin America's 'Pink Tide.' In the first part of his speech, he told the crowd how his progressive government adopted a series of revolutionary reforms to recover the country from decades of neoliberal and neocolonial plunder and lift millions of Ecuadorians out of poverty. "We took back the power, for the common good", he asserted – hence the cheering. Then, he raises his hand to silence the crowd and share his main message: "Because dear Comrades, I insist, development is basically a question of power, of who rules in a society: the elites or the large majorities; capital or human beings; the market or society?"

As Correa speaks these words, I find myself hundreds of kilometers away in my guestroom in Tundayme, puzzling over quite similar questions of rule. I was living in this village in the Ecuadorian Amazon to conduct fieldwork on the conflictive expansion of mining promoted by the Correa administration. That day, I had witnessed the forced eviction of San Marcos, a small peasant community located in an area where a Chinese company is building a copper mine. Early that morning, the peasants had been woken up by the sound of police forces surrounding their house. When I arrived on the scene, bulldozers had just started to tear down their houses and bury the rubble. Some hours later, all that was left were piles of sand, barbed wire fences and baffled men, women and children standing by the roadside. After years of struggle to prevent their displacement, these peasants had been overruled and overrun by the development policies so eagerly advocated by President Correa.

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In retrospect, that day in September 2015 marked the start of my ongoing 'coming-of-age' as an engaged, activist scholar. Until then, I had approached the field much more as an 'observer' who sought to analyze the plethora of voices in the conflicts around mining-led development. I did not do so uncritically, for I highlighted the power relations and forms of marginalization that pervaded these conflicts in my writings. But in the field, I abstained from taking an overt position. That day, after having seen how peasants were violently dispossessed of basically everything they had, I realized that this position was no longer tenable (if it ever was). Development, as Correa said on that stage in Quito, is indeed a question of power, and I could no longer stay at the sidelines of the power struggle that unfolded right in front of me. So I decided to engage, and this marked the start of a journey into the (for me) unchartered territory of engaged scholarship.

This essay is a personal reflection on this ongoing journey and on what it taught me so far about engaged scholarship. Based on my experiences working with grassroots movements in Ecuador and the *Colectivo de Geografía Crítica del Ecuador*, I will argue that a praxis of engaged scholarship ideally involves building decolonial, collective, affective, and long-term relations. Such ideal relations are hard to achieve in practice, though, especially in an academic climate of increased individuality, competition, efficiency and precarity. That is, within what has become known as the "neoliberal university" (Berg et al. 2016). Drawing on anecdotal examples from my attempts to carve out a position as an engaged scholar while being early-career academic on a temporary contract, this essay also explores the (im)possibilities for an engaged scholarship within the neoliberal university.

From 'I' to 'el Colectivo': My Journey Into Engaged Scholarship

My first attempts to take my critical approach "beyond the text" (Kirsch 2018) and towards a praxis of engaged scholarship felt insecure and distressing. In the year prior to the evictions, I had joined the assemblies and *mingas* of the local peasant organization that tried to resist the dispossession. So there was a basic relation of trust, but how to act now that people actually got evicted? Publishing yet another critical analysis of the power relations at play at the mining frontier in some foreign academic outlet felt useless, offensive even. I figured out the best thing I could do was to just ask the organized peasants what they needed. "Resources and evidence", they told me straightforwardly. So I organized a crowdfunding, and when dust had settled I offered my capacities as a human geographer to support

their second demand: evidence. Together with some of the peasants, I organized participatory mapping workshops to document their collective memory of the place prior to the mine's arrival and of the process of dispossession experienced by the peasants. After the workshop, I digitized the data and made various maps which were shared with the peasants for feedback. Then, my fieldwork came to an end and I saw no other option than handing over the maps to the peasant organization and flying back home.

Back home, I continued to feel insecure, distressed and increasingly self-critical about these engagements. Were the peasants served by my action, and was it even legitimate to think I could be of help as a naïve, individual PhD student without any political leverage? Did I challenge power relations through my efforts, or did I only further reinscribe my position as privileged researcher with a 'white saviour' complex? As my attempts to continue supporting the peasants from abroad failed, wasn't I just doing another self-interested and extractive 'helicopter research' project? My self-critique also swung to the other side, though. Plagued by the rigid ideas about 'objectivity' that were central to my education, I also worried whether my engagements would affect my analysis, and whether I could still be critical of the very same peasants with whom I collaborated.

While figuring out possible answers to these questions, I was approached by members of the *Colectivo de Geografía Crítica del Ecuador* (hereafter *el Colectivo*), a group of activist researchers using critical geography and countermapping to resist the extractive industries and racist and patriarchal power relations (Bayón Jiménez and Torres 2019). They were working on a report on the forced displacements with the peasants from Tundayme (CIAP 2017), and wanted to include the maps we drew during the workshops. This collaboration led to the publication of a map of the process of dispossession experienced by the peasants (Figure 1). One thing led to another, and when I moved to Ecuador in the last phase of my PhD I joined *el Colectivo*.

Through my work with *el Colectivo*, I experienced that a wholly different form of engagement was possible. Here, there were no questions about objectivity: an explicit (epistemological and political) positioning as anti-extractivist, anti-capitalist, anti-racist and anti-patriarchal forms the very basis of the collective's existence and legitimacy (Bayón and Zaragocin 2019). Most of the action research carried out by *el Colectivo* is developed in collaboration with grassroot actors and activists, and is designed to serve their concrete territorial, political and legal struggles for emancipation. At the same time, *el Colectivo* is known as a reliable source of critical research among parliamentarians, government officials and jour-

nalists, for which its members also have the connections to influence political debates and decision-making processes (Bayón Jiménez and Torres 2019).

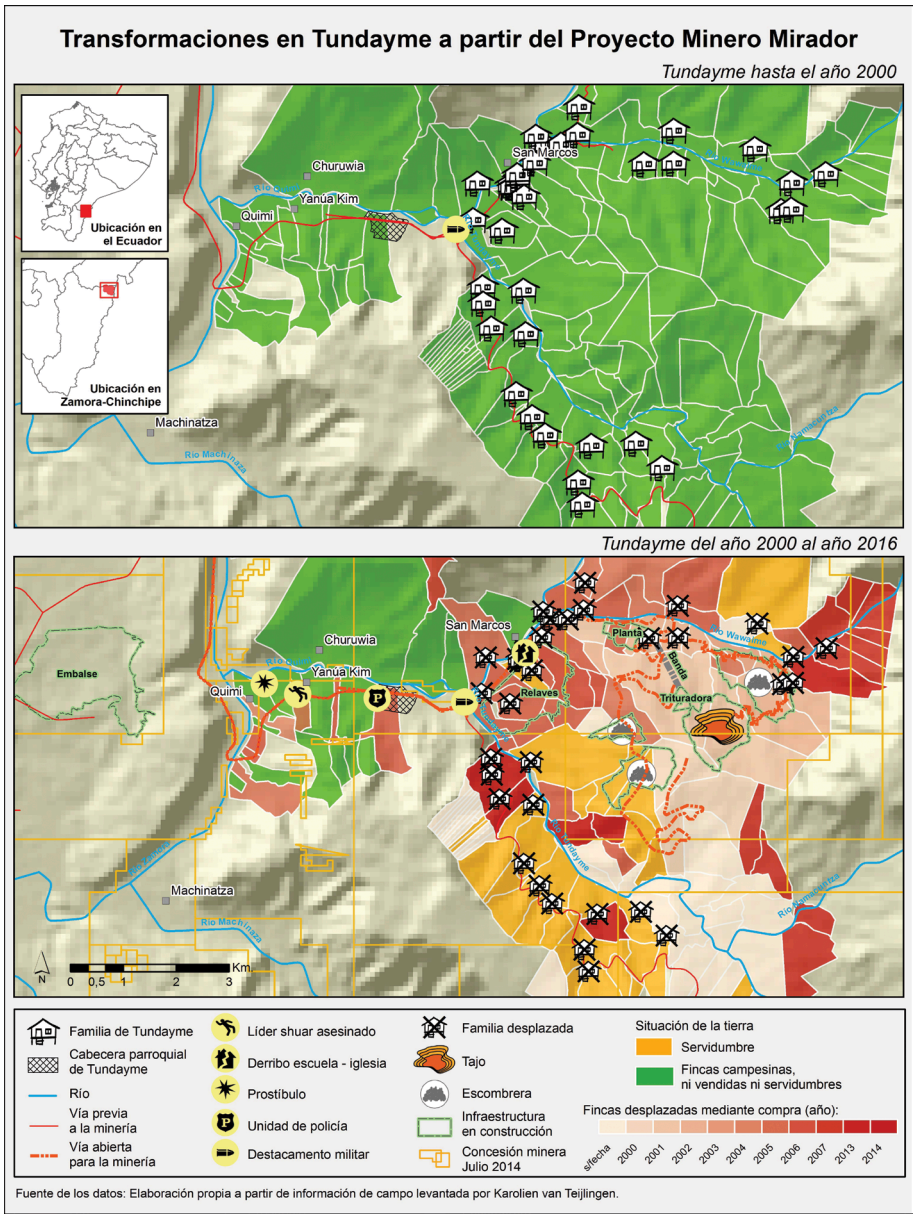

Figure 1. Dispossession and displacement around the Mirador copper mine, Ecuador. Source: CIAP (2017).

An example of such an action/research project in which I participated concerned the expansion of oil and mining operations in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Through a series of counter-mappings with grassroot groups, we showed the socio-environmental impacts of paradigmatic oil and mining projects. We developed a social media campaign, including infographics in various indigenous languages (Figure 2) and short movies. We also participated as expert witnesses in court cases started by these organizations, and lobbied ombudsman officials and parliamentarians.

In the years that followed, the research yielded concrete results. The maps contributed to a historical court ruling that forced all oil companies operating in Ecuador to stop the intoxicating flaring of gas (Reuters 2022) and to the withdrawal of the license for an oil block (GK 2022). At the same time, we translated our experiences into contributions to academic debates on, for instance, the intersections of political ecology and mobility studies (Bayón Jiménez et al. 2021), the gendered criminalization of environmental defenders (Moreano Venegas and Van Teijlingen 2021) or Latin American ecologist thought (Moreano Venegas et al. 2023).

These action/research projects also led me to travel back to Tundayme to collaborate again with the displaced peasants. As the Mirador mine had started extracting copper by that time, we set out to map water contamination and deforestation caused by its operation (Figure 2). The results of these mappings and those undertaken during my PhD research were presented at the Constitutional Court of Ecuador, in support of a lawsuit presented by indigenous groups demanding the closure of the project. The plaintiffs did not win the case, but these collaborations strengthened the alliance between *el Colectivo* and the peasants from Tundayme. This prompted us to undertake joint lobbying activities, and to set-up a project in which young people from the Ecuadorian Amazon were trained in making counter-maps.

So what had started as some hesitant and uncomfortable actions of support as an individual PhD student, eventually led to a much more meaningful and sustained form of engagement in the emancipatory struggles at the extractive frontier of Ecuador. While this journey has only just started, it has enabled me to explore what I consider key-ingredients of an engaged or activist scholarship. The first ingredient – a commitment to the struggle against multiple forms of oppression – should not be of any surprise. Taking a clear political position in power struggles like the one that unfolded in the Tundayme has been – and continues to be – the hallmark of engaged scholarship (Hale 2008). Yet, such positioning requires more than engaging with critical theories and 'speaking truth to power' in one's writing (Naylor 2018). Following decolonial scholars from Latin America

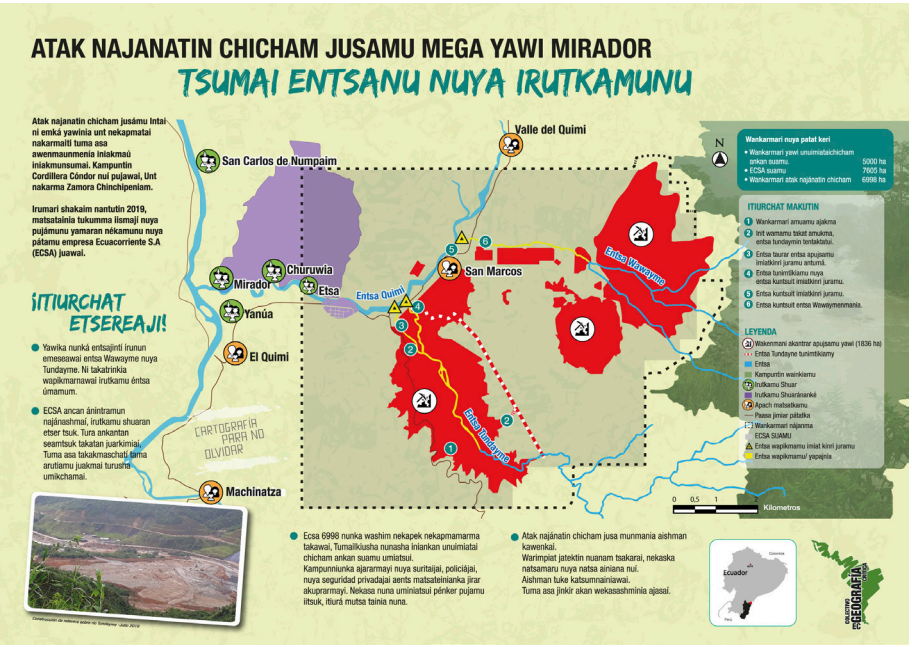

Figure 2. Water contamination and deforestation around the Mirador mine, infographic in Shuar Chicham, the indigenous language of the region.
Source: https://geografiacriticaecuador.org/2020/11/15/infografias-amazonicas-en-kichwa-wao-tededo-y-shuar/.

(Cusicanqui 2012; Cabnal 2019), such commitment extends to the very practices and relations through which knowledge is produced. It involves recognizing the geopolitics of knowledge, colonial differences, forms of extractivism and the (epistemic) injustices that are enacted in academic research – and acting against them (Van den Hout 2022). In practice, a commitment to social justice and decolonization requires a wholly different approach to conceiving of, carrying out and publishing research (Solano and Speed 2008).

A second ingredient is the very collective character of engaged scholarship (CGCE 2022). Evidently, the action/research efforts I described before would not have been possible without *el Colectivo* as a space of "collective embodiment".[1] That is, a space for collective outrage, (un)learning, political positioning and action, including all the frictions and negotiations this may entail. In such space,

1 I take this notion from the Mayan feminist Lorena Cabnal who describes *acuerpamiento* or collective embodiment as the collective action of our bodies that are outraged about the injustices experienced by other bodies. See https://suds.cat/experiencies/857-2/.

the rather paralyzing self-questioning I experienced earlier makes place for collective reflections on the relations of power that traverse our action/research and on ways to recognize and transform them. On a practical note, forming a collective subject also expands the scope of the engagement to which one can commit, of one's political leverage, and of the presence in the networks sustaining emancipatory struggles. A collective can furthermore represent a space of refuge, companionship and care when the political struggles become dense or even dangerous (Liboiron 2016; Moreano Venegas and Van Teijlingen 2021).

This leads me to a third key-characteristic of engaged scholarship: affect. Collaborations with grassroots actors in the realm of socio-environmental justice struggles generally move beyond researcher-subject relations. They are affective relations between humans based on (feminist) ethics of care, reciprocity and trust (Liboiron 2016; Hout 2022). Building such relations of affect also warrants attention to the ways in which your action/research may affect these actors, their bodies, their territories, their futures. Engaged scholarship thus also requires practicing forms of relational accountability (Naylor et al. 2018). Building affective relations or generating concrete impacts cannot be fast-tracked (Costas Batlle and Carr 2021). A fourth and related dimension of engaged scholarship is thus the importance of long-term engagements with grassroots actors and networks (Mason 2021).

So as it stands for me now, practices of engaged scholarship involve building decolonial, collective, affective, and long-term relations. I realize this is quite an idealized understanding of what engaged scholarship may look like. In practice, achieving such relations is hard and fraught with contradictions (Solano and Speed 2008). And, as I noticed when I started a job as an early-career scholar in the Netherlands, it is an even more daunting task to pursue this form of engaged scholarship within the contours of the neoliberal university. It is to this challenge I turn in the next section.

Carving Out Spaces for Engagement Within the Neoliberal University

When I moved back to the Netherlands and started a job as postdoctoral researcher at Radboud University in 2020, my journey into engaged scholarship took a turn. Trying to give new substance to my commitment to emancipatory struggles in Ecuador, my participation in *el Colectivo* transformed into a combination of online meetings and lengthy yearly stays in Ecuador. However, as I carve out this new form of engaged scholarship while kickstarting my career in Dutch academia,

I stumble upon various constraints. Many of these can be related to the "neoliberal university" (Richter et al. 2020; Rasch et al. 2022). This term refers to the university governance structures and academic culture in which neoliberal traits of productivity, competition, efficiency and measurability become guiding principles. In the vast literature on the topic, the neoliberalisation of the university has been associated with increased individualization, precarity, a publish-or-perish culture, and fierce competition for funding and tenured positions – conditions that particularly affect female, racialized or low-class scholars (Richter et al. 2020). Despite attempts to curve this trend and value academics in more diverse ways, it seems that these neoliberal values have taken strong root in Dutch academia (Berg et al. 2016).

So there have been numerous occasions in which my attempts to maintain and cultivate the type of relations I described earlier were at odds with the neoliberal university. A decolonial research practice, for example, would ideally mean that research agendas are crafted in collaboration with grassroots allies (Solano and Speed 2008). However, this is difficult to combine with the competitive funding schemes available to early-career scholars in the Netherlands. Such projects have a low probability of being funded (as low as 6%), rendering it troublesome to ask allies to invest time in preparing them. Many funding schemes, moreover, do not allow collaborators to receive funding. The Dutch Research Agenda (NWA) scheme, for example, requires the participation of societal partners but does not finance their activities. This clearly frustrates collaborations involving marginalized grassroots organizations, and reinforces their position as providers of cheap raw data to privileged (Western) academics (Cusicanqui 2012). Such conditions, furthermore, make it hard to take decolonization of research beyond the level of metaphor (Tuck and Yang 2012).

Similar complexities may arise in the face of the metric-oriented audit culture, where the quality of a researcher is defined by publications and journal rankings. This creates a 'straitjacket' into which early-career scholars should fit in order to be hired, get tenured or obtain funding – that is, to continue in academia. The publication list of an engaged scholar, with typically more co-authored outputs in non-English and non-Q1 journals catering for non-Western and non-academic audiences, does not fit seamlessly into this straitjacket. During a recent grant application, for example, my application was not selected since my profile did not show the required scholarly excellence. According to the reviewers, particularly my publication list was considered "less academic" since "the choice to publish in rather specialized journals affects the scientific impact".

The neoliberal and neocolonial notions of what makes a 'good academic' that pervade these statements, encourage many non-tenured early-career scholars like me to be more 'productive' and 'time-efficient'. This often occurs to the detriment of affective, caring relationships, since they require engagement in 'reproductive' rather than 'productive' labor (Rasch et al. 2022). I have spent countless hours participating in assemblies, mediating internal conflicts, and organizing acts of resistance or solidarity when allies got in trouble – all to nurture relations of interpersonal reciprocity. Assuming these activities are not part of my university job as they do not produce measurable outputs, I undertake them at night or in weekends. Silly but true: even *then* I sometimes feel like I am wasting time (Costas Batlle and Carr, 2021), since these hours could be used more efficiently to write articles for Q1 journals and wrestle myself into the straightjacket.

Finally, the mobility, versatility and broad geographic scope that is often seen as an asset within the neoliberal university promotes 'helicopter research' and 'quick wins' over place-based and long-term engagements (Mason 2021). During a recent interview for a tenured position, I got the remark that there was "a lot of Ecuador" on my CV, followed by the question to what extent I considered this a limitation. In another interview, I was asked if I would be willing to change my focus "to Africa" in order to diversify the geographic coverage of my work – something I refused. Obviously, I did not get the jobs.

Concluding Remarks: The (Im)possibilities of Engaged Scholarship

That night in Tundayme, back in 2015, I probably did not realize that the evictions of the peasants of San Marcos formed the beginning of an ongoing journey towards an engagement in the power struggles at the Ecuadorian mining frontier. Yet, they were precisely that. In this essay I reflected on this journey and what it has taught me so far about engaged scholarship. Based on my experiences working with the *Colectivo de Geografía Crítica del Ecuador*, I outlined the type of relations I consider important for engaged scholarship: decolonial, collective, affective and long-term relations. And while this envisioning of engaged scholarship admittedly comes with a dose of utopianism, I still prefer this to guide my decisions – and not the push and pull factors provided by the neoliberal university.

This is not easy, though. Through a series of personal anecdotes, I showed how it is precisely this type of relations that are under increased pressure within the neoliberal university. Although these anecdotes may read as just another lament

of a millennial struggling with rejection in academia, I hope they provide for more than that. Not the least because my account echoes the experiences of others as it comes to the difficulties (if not impossibilities) of building this type of relationships within the neoliberal university (Mason 2021; Rasch et al. 2022; Bell and Lewis 2022). I therefore hope this reflection is also read as an incitement towards a new "collective embodiment" (after Lorena Cabnal) among academics, that provides us with the courage to resist the neoliberal university and reimagine one in which utopic visions may well become real possibilities.

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From Fieldwork Notes to Comparative Anthropological Perspectives and Back

Reflections on Money-Making Transactions in an Asian Setting

WILLEM G. WOLTERS

From Village Study to Historical Research

This is a story about a discovery, or rather the gradual realization of certain social-historical connections and relations. This realization was brought about by shifting from a local level fieldwork setting to a macro-historical perspective, and then to a comparison with a neighboring country. This took me several years.

During my study at the University of Amsterdam in the 1960s I had specialized in Southeast Asian studies and I had an ambition to do research in that part of the world. In the 1970s, I got the opportunity to realize that ambition. Following the good old social-scientific research tradition I started with local-level fieldwork. In 1971–1972 I was able to carry out research in Central Luzon, the Philippines, on social stratification and political processes. This work was the basis for my dissertation, which I defended in 1975.

In 1978–1979 I had the privilege to be stationed at the agricultural University in Bogor, Indonesia, for one and a half years, as part of a staff exchange project. I was attached to the department of Rural Sociology, directed by Prof. dr. Sajogyo. My task was to give courses on research methods and techniques for students. Prof. Sajogyo asked me to supervise the actual fieldwork of four M.A. students for an extended period. As a research location, the Karangkobar district in the upland

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area of Central Java was chosen. Within that framework I could carry out research in one of the villages, *desa* Watulawang, while the students stayed in neighboring villages and we frequently met for discussions. For a year I commuted between Bogor and the village, giving an intensive course for a few weeks in the Department, and then back for three or four weeks to the village.

Field Work in Desa Watulawang

The northern, upland portion of the *kabupaten* (regency) Banjarnegara in Central Java, in which the *kecamatan* (sub-district) Karangkobar is located, is a gradually upward sloping region, rising from about 200 meters above sea level (the Serayu Valley) to about 2100 meters (the Dieng Plateau). The region is extremely hilly, characterized by steep inclines and is cut by rivers which in some places carve deep gorges into the landscape. In general, the land is not especially fertile. For the most part it consists of dry fields, in which corn and cassava is planted, usually in a mixed cropping pattern, together with root crops, beans and other vegetables. As draught animals and plows cannot be used on these sloping fields, humans have to do the work, using hoes and pickaxes. In some locations in the lower hills, terraces have been constructed, to make irrigation and wet field (*sawah*) rice cultivation possible.

The village (*kelurahan, desa*) Watulawang is located on the mountain slopes at an altitude of between 700 and 1100 meters. The village is subdivided into five distinct settlements (*dukuh*, hamlets). Four hamlets only have dry fields. A fourth hamlet, Watukumpul, located lower along the mountain slope at about 700 meters above sea level, has the right agro-climatic conditions for rice growing. The main hamlet, also called Watulawang, was the place where the village head (*lurah)* lived and held office. At the end of 1978, the village had a population of 1,373 inhabitants, living in 284 households. The houses were constructed from wood and bamboo, mostly with the soil as floor, while the better-off families had concrete floors. The *lurah* offered me board and lodging, a small room with a bed and a table.

The central theme in my fieldwork was the question of which social processes most strongly determined the growing socio-economic inequality in rural areas: population growth leading to fragmentation of land, the use of transfer and acquisition mechanisms by the village elite, or other means of self-enrichment and exclusion of poor strata of villagers. To find answers to these questions, I undertook three activities, viz., interviewing older villagers about the history of the area; looking at the village documentation still in the possession of the *lurah*; and under-

taking a household survey, with the help of three schoolteachers from the village who were willing to act as paid assistants. In addition, I explored trading activities, such as the raising of goats to be sold to outside traders in the local cattle market, and the activities of woman-traders.

The village had been founded and the area initially opened up around 1840. The pattern of landholding had been a mixture of private possession and communal tenure. During the nineteenth century, the Javanese farming households had been burdened with heavy corvée labor: obligatory services for the government, for the desa, and for the village officials. The labor services made great demands on the villagers' time, requiring something like 150–200 labor days per household per year. When the burden of these services was diminished between the 1890s and 1916, all the land came into individual possession and, as the villagers had more labou time at their disposal, they were able to open up more forest land for agriculture.

In the 1890s, the colonial government started to undertake a survey of land possession in the whole of Java, mainly to increase the land tax. This was not a full-fledged modern land registration, with a cadaster and legally recognized property titles, but a limited local survey, the results of which would still be kept in the desa administration. The farmers would still have no more than use rights and rights of possession, not nationally recognized and legally accepted property rights. In 1937 the survey had reached desa Watulawang. The survey was carried out by Indonesian employees, using the triangulation method for the calculation of surfaces. The village head still had the original land registration, the *buku tanah desa*, as well as the successive registers for the annual changes until the present time. This land registration served as the basis for the imposition of the land tax on farming families (see Table 1).

The table shows that socio-economic inequality has increased in the course of time. The landowning-categories are meant to distinguish between relatively larger and smaller farmers, but in Java most landownership is small-scale. The only person in the category of "very large landowners" was the *lurah* who owned 13 hectares; in 1937 his father had owned 9 hectares. Both the father and the present *lurah* had been able to accumulate land by taking over the payment of the land tax from villagers who did not have enough money, and then forcing them to forfeit the land. During my research I was very much aware of the fact that the *lurah*, a courteous Javanese gentleman, with a vast knowledge about local history, had at the same time been an oppressive figure to his villagers. One of the conclusions of my study was that the increasing inequality in land ownership was not only the result of population growth, but also of land acquisition practices of the village elite.

Table 1. Distribution of landownership in Desa Watulawang in 1937 and 1978

Size of holding	Number of households in 1937	Number of households in 1978
1. Very large landowners (more than 10 ha)	--	1
2. Large landowners (5–10 ha)	10	2
3. Better-off farmers (2–5 ha)	34	20
4. Middle farmers (1–2 ha)	28	61
5. Small and poor farmers (0.5–1 ha)	19	68
Marginal farmers (less than 0.5 ha)	3	86
Landless	1	46
Total	95	284

Sources: Figures for 1937 have been taken from the land registration in that year (*buku tanah desa*) preserved in the village; figures for 1978 from my village survey in that year.

In the 1978 column there are 22 households which managed to hold on to land surfaces between 2 and 5 hectares. Twenty-one of these households lived in the hamlet Watukumpul, all owners of wet rice fields, which have twice the production of dry fields (Wolters 1991). But there was another reason why they had been able to resist the tendency towards fragmentation, viz., by practicing endogamy between the relatively wealthier families, in order to keep the land among themselves. There were first cousin and second cousin marriages, a type of union which is, in fact, forbidden by Javanese customary law (*adat).* The strategy of social closure is an adaptation of people to the problem of population growth, which causes them harm, but which they cannot solve in any other way.

Looking through the extensive land registers in the desa for the period between 1937 and 1978 I was struck by the frequent notation of the word *diberi* (gift, gifting, donation), as the reason for a land transfer between persons. At that time, I took the word in its literary meaning. I thought that I knew the practice. A schoolteacher and his wife in the village had an elderly man in their house whom they cared for. The man had had no children, and he had donated his piece of land to the couple. I thought that this was a clear case of *diberi.* But there was more to it, as I realized much later, and as I will explain in the rest of this essay.

Land- and Credit Transactions in Comparative Perspective

In the 1990s my research interests shifted to a more long-term ecological-evolutionary perspective. I became interested in the history of money and finance. I had long wondered why social scientists had left those topics to the economists, and I found it challenging to link up with the growing body of socio-economic and economic anthropological studies on money systems. I decided to focus on money matters in the Spanish Philippines during the nineteenth century.

In this long-term research a central puzzle has directed my attention. Mainstream economists depict and analyze the development and successes of the Western capitalist world as having been caused by the presence of adequate institutions, such as property rights, the availability of credit systems, a cadastral system for land registration, proper land titles which could be used as collateral and mortgaged, and a well-functioning legal system. And reversing the argument, one could put the blame for underdevelopment on the absence of these institutions.

However, in countries like Indonesia and the Philippines, with long histories as colonies and prolonged difficulties after political independence, most of these institutions were not provided by the colonial rulers and the government after independence. Still, there has been economic activity in these colonies and, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a significant measure of economic growth and development. The question then is: how did economic actors manage to conduct their business in the absence of these 'essential' institutions? The general answer to that question seems to be: if the government fails to provide the needed facilities, the people themselves attempt to create their own informal arrangements, as substitutes for formal institutions.

Sometime ago, Dutch economic historians Van Zanden and Marks used the mainstream economic argument in their study of long-term changes in Indonesia (Van Zanden and Marks 2012: 88, 111). Referring to the situation in the Dutch colonial period, they argued that "fuzzy" property rights did not provide the "right" incentives for peasants to enhance their output and productivity on this land, as they could not use land as collateral for loans. The colonial government was unable or unwilling to institute a system of property rights to land, based on proper geodetical surveys, cadastral registration and the issuance of official land titles. The land registration which was carried out only led to "native rights of possession". Van Zanden and Marks argued that in the absence of property rights, active land markets were absent in Java and farmers only had access to credit at usury rates.

Recently the economic historians Yutaka Arimoto and Pierre van der Eng (2018), challenging this conclusion of Van Zanden and Marks, have shown that in fact there were active land markets in the 1920s and 1930s. They referred to the annual reports of the land tax service, which have aggregated statistical data on land transactions. These data show that there was indeed a substantial number of land sales (see Table 2).

Table 2. Reasons for Recorded Mutations in the Land Tax Registers in Java, 1926

	Number of transactions	Percentage of total
Sale and purchase	385,510	30.6%
Death/inheritance	262,331	20.8%
Gifting (Dutch schenking)	355,936	28.2%
Other reasons	256,862	20.4%
Total	1,260,639	100%
Land holders registered for land tax	5,816,370	-
Mutations as % of land holders	21.7%	-

Source: Arimoto and Van der Eng, 2018, quoting the colonial reports 1925–1927, 88–89.

My attention was drawn to the large number of mutations recorded as "gifting". This is the "*diberi*" category which I had also found in the Watulawang land tax books. In my mind, the hypothesis came up that this gifting was probably the end result of *jual gadé* contracts, in the adat law literature translated as "pawning". In this transaction the landowner receives a loan and transfers the land to the creditor, calling it a sale with provision for repurchase.

The Dutch adat law specialist Ter Haar, who attempted to insert elements of adat law into the official legal system of the Dutch colony, strongly criticized this type of contract, as a corruption of the old adat law arrangements (Ter Haar 1948). He argued that, according to original adat law notions, the two transactions, sale (*menjual*) and pledging (*gadé*) were fundamentally different legal conceptions which should be kept separate. However, Dutch prohibitions of *jual gadé* could not eradicate the practice.

The *pledging* or pawning contract is different from a mortgage contract. The difference between the two contract forms can be explained as follows. In both cases the contract is between a financier (A) and a land-owning or land-possessing farmer (B), but the contracts are different.

In a mortgage contract we see the following transactions: (1) A lends money to B; (2) B transfers the ownership title of the land to A (a formal claim on the property); however, B continues to work on the land, having full control over the operations and the harvest (or to live in the house under mortgage); (3) B pays an annual interest over the loan to A; (4) When B has repaid the loan, A returns the title to B; if B does not repay the loan, A can claim legal ownership of the land. A mortgage system is the legal arrangement under a strong state with an established legal system and property rights.

The 'land pledging' contract is applied when a system of property rights and land titling is lacking. Under this arrangement: (1) The financier A lends money to land-possessing farmer B; (2) B transfers the use right of the land to A with the pledge that A will acquire full possession if the loan is not repaid (because there is no title which can be transferred, B transfers the land itself to A): (3) A starts using the land; in practice A can take B as sharecropper to do the farming; B gets 50% of the harvest for his work, or another percentage; the other 50% is the interest which A receives for lending the money; (4) the contract is presented as a sale, B having the right of repurchase by repaying the loan.

The last type of contract could also be found in the Philippines in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, called in Spanish: *pacto de retroventa* or a sale with the right of repurchase or land pledging with a period of redemption. The Spanish colonial government considered this informal arrangement illegal and repeatedly issued decrees prohibiting the practice, though without any effect. The same type of contracts can be found under different names throughout much of Asia, as there are references to its use in Malaysia under the British colonial administration, in Vietnam and in China (Hooker 1978: 122–123).

Desa Watulawang in Asian Perspective

This shift to a comparative framework allowed me to see my village study in the 1970s in a different perspective. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Asian colonies were drawn into the world market, commercial agriculture was not restricted to the "Western" sector, but also spread among the indigenous population, especially when the burden of labor services was relieved and farmers acquired more control over their own time, freeing entrepreneurial activity. The use of money increased, including in traditional rural areas, and in many areas farmers started experimenting with commercial crops, such as tobacco.

The result was a large demand for credit among the rural population. This demand could not be satisfied by government programs aimed at uplifting the people or freeing farming families from usury, not only because these programs were limited in scope but also because the absence of property rights in land made credit institutions reluctant to spend much money on uncovered loans.

In the absence of formal credit programs, people created their own informal credit arrangements in the form of the "sale with the repurchase provision". These contracts were widely used among the rural population in all Asian colonies and independent countries. The contract was not an old customary arrangement, but a relatively modern invention, an adaptation to the growing commercialization; it was not only a way for creditors to accumulate land, it was also a source of credit for small farmers and a way to increase their income-generating activities. It is clear that the indigenous population in Asia should not be seen as passive spectators of Western economic successes in the world, the proverbial "silent masses", but as active entrepreneurs within limiting and oppressive conditions.

Realizing this, I started to see the *diberi*-transaction in a different light: the use of this term in the land registration in Javanese villages in the 1920s and 1930s, was (and still is) probably a euphemism, to camouflage the transfer of land as the outcome of a *jual gadé* or "sale with the right of repurchase" contract, which was prohibited and strongly rejected by the Dutch colonial government, and at the same time not allowed in Islamic Law. The *desa* officials, especially the *lurah*, exerted supervision over those transactions, while they themselves also participated in them, and did not want to be criticized by Dutch colonial officials. The Dutch officials probably tolerated the practice and accepted the euphemism "schenking" (gift), without investigating the background of this practice, in order not to offend Javanese officials. Using this euphemism may also have been a way to escape criticism from strict (*santri*) Islamic scholars.

In retrospect, I realize that I should have done more research on the *diberi*-transactions when I stayed in *desa* Watulawang in 1978–1979. The *lurah* had shown me not only the 1937 land registration book, but also all the land registers since then, in which he and his father had noted all the changes in land possession, viz., inheritance, transfers, sale, etc. It was a huge pile of documents. I remember looking at the pile, but at that time I could not think of a useful way of studying them. Afterwards I realize that I should have counted how often the term *diberi* had been used over the years. It would have given a clearer picture of money-land transactions over the course of time.

As the issue of social and political engagement is one of the themes of this volume, it is fitting to finish this article with a clarification of this issue. In my

view, engagement can only be expressed in the choice of the research theme, but research methods and procedures should strictly follow scientific protocols. When I conducted field research, Indonesia was under the military dictatorship of President Suharto. It was not possible to criticize his regime directly, although I tried to do so indirectly. In the village I played, to some extent, a double role: on the one hand, maintaining a friendly relationship with the *lurah*, on the other hand, listening to and sympathizing with villagers who told me stories about the extorting practices used by this 'gentleman' (and others). In this article, I have tried to show how I have become more aware of the crucial role which money and credit play at the local level in Asian societies and have played during the nineteenth century, as an attempt by farmers to defend themselves against the absence of formal institutions. If one looks for political engagement, in my case it was embedded in my research and implicit in its results.

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Engaged Scholarship and Its Pitfalls

Biases Towards Collective Action and Resistance

MARTIJN KOSTER

Introduction

Many researchers in the field of anthropology and development studies refer to themselves as 'engaged scholars' – and I count myself among them. We conduct research among marginalised populations and focus on their practices and perspectives, especially in dealing with the state and other governance actors and their policies, programmes, and projects. We often study grassroots organisations, popular participation, social movements, and covert and overt protests against neoliberal, capitalist, and other exploitative forms of domination. While I laud engaged scholarship, in this essay I will outline two of its pitfalls, one empirical and one analytical. First, engaged scholarship gives rise to an empirical bias if it implies that researchers are primarily looking for *collective* action, in the shape of social movements, mass protests, or widespread popular participation. This risks turning a blind eye to the more individual and fragmented practices of marginalised residents. Second, engaged scholarship seems to analyse many practices of disenfranchised populations as a form of *resistance* to the state, capitalism, or neoliberalism. While not ignoring resistance, I argue that many of people's practices are compliant or even complicit with state policies, capitalist politics, and neoliberalist regimes. In this essay, I advocate for engaged scholarship, while also emphasising the importance of empirical openness and analytical attention to the less collective and more fragmented nature of many practices and their inherent intertwining of defiance, indifference, and compliance. In doing so, in my concluding remarks I will take heed of Asef Bayat's (2000, 2010) study of 'the quiet encroachment of the ordinary'.

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A Naïve Engaged Scholar

Nearly twenty years ago, I began my fieldwork on how residents of low-income neighbourhoods in the north of Recife, Brazil, were coping with the then-recently-introduced Participatory Budgeting programme and a related large-scale urban upgrading project. In preparation for this research, as usual, I had read many academic and journalistic publications on Brazil. This reading gave me the impression that, once in Brazil, I would stumble upon social movements and progressive forms of citizen participation. I was looking forward to studying how collective popular politics and organised resistance to neoliberalism were enacted in the urban periphery. Researchers had studied rural social movements such as the Landless Workers' Movement MST (Houtzager 2000; Wolford 2003), urban social movements such as the Homeless Workers' Movement MTST (Assies 1999), and progressive forms of citizen participation such as the critically acclaimed Participatory Budgeting programme in Porto Alegre and Recife (Baiocchi 2001; Leal 2003). They discussed how these social movements and participatory programmes had contributed significantly to the deepening of democracy in Brazil and beyond, in the region of Latin America (Dagnino 2003; Alvarez et al. 1998). Much research later also focused on overt protests, social movements, and large-scale grassroots organizations, both in Brazil (Feltran 2010; Caldeira 2015) and other countries in the region (Lazar 2017; Pérez 2022).

In 2003, Lula da Silva – leader of the Workers' Party PT[1] and former leader of social movements – became president of Brazil and would serve two terms until 2011. His presidency ushered in an era of left-leaning, pro-poor politics in the country. It was part of the Pink Tide, the turn toward 'left-of-centre' governments in Latin American democracies that diverged from the neoliberal economic model in the early 21st century. In Recife, the PT had already assumed power in 2001 and soon introduced their far-reaching Participatory Budgeting programme, which became the largest participatory budgeting programme in the world (De Vries 2016).

When I started my fieldwork in Recife's urban margins, I expected to see much of the above reflected in the daily life of its residents. However, as one can imagine, this was hardly the case. Apart from the regularly organised and well-attended Participatory Budgeting meetings – in which residents could vote for public works to be carried out in their neighbourhood – I found little involvement in collective progressive and participatory politics, not to mention social activism, among the

1 Partido dos Trabalhadores.

residents whose daily lives I studied. Most of them were busy making a living, raising their children, and dealing with the rampant violence that resulted from drug trafficking and discriminatory police presence in the neighbourhood (Koster 2014).

One could call me naïve – and I agree I was to a certain extent. Yet it is remarkable how the literature has so often presented – and continues to display – a particular picture of politics and society that puts collective action and resistance at the forefront, in the form of social activism and popular politics. To take this further, many progressive scholars in Brazil and beyond, especially after the publication of James Holston's (2008) influential book *Insurgent Citizenship*, have begun to observe and analyse forms of collective resistance such as insurgent, transgressive, or contentious citizenship (Butcher and Apsan Frediani 2014; Earle 2017; Pérez 2022). Of course, if you look for these forms of insurgence, you will find them. I did too. At the Participatory Budgeting meetings, or at meetings on urban planning with bureaucrats and representatives of social movements, expressions of collective action and progressive, leftist politics were easy to find. In 2014, during the Occupy Estelita (*Ocupe Estelita*) protests in Recife, many activists, including David Harvey who visited the city in November of that year, joined the protest for the right to the city and opposed a new waterfront development project on Estelita's wharf.[2] However, these protests found little resonance with everyday life in the low-income neighbourhoods. Not a single resident I knew participated.

A Not-So-Collective Land Occupation

In the first months of my fieldwork in Recife I discovered that a land occupation had taken place just 100 metres from where I was renting a floor. One night, a group of residents had entered a private walled property whose alleged owner lived far away. They had broken down parts of the wall and built about twenty shacks on the lot. They hoisted the flag of the MTST, the Homeless Workers' Movement. I was excited; this would be a great opportunity to study the process of collective *autoconstrução* (self-built housing) (Holston 1991) and engage with one of the most important urban social movements in Brazil.

2 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-joF1eks_s and http://davidharvey.org/2014/12/video-david-harvey-political-economy-urbanization-recife/ (both accessed on 1 November 2022).

Over the following days I spent a lot of time with the residents. One person always had to be present at the shack in case the authorities came by to check, so there were always people around – which made the occupation a perfect place for fieldwork. The residents showed me their newly built shacks, mostly made of plywood, scrap metal and plastic sheeting. I was interested in how they organized the occupation and especially how the MTST coordinated it. However, it proved difficult to retrieve information on these topics. Aside from building the shacks on the first night, the occupation seemed to have very little collective organisation. Instead, the group seemed very fragmented, as residents did not trust each other and frequently accused each other of stealing building materials. After a few days I found out that the land occupation was 'independent', as they called it. Somebody had indeed raised the MTST flag, but after a week an MTST representative had visited the site and demanded that they remove it, as the occupation was not supported by the movement. There was no central coordination or organisation. The residents appeared to have seized the opportunity after a car broke through the wall of the plot a few days earlier. A drunk driver had crashed into the wall, leaving a large hole. A few residents had entered through the wall and started to build shacks, modelled on the MTST and MST occupations they had seen on television. When others heard what was going on, they too decided to try their own luck and joined that same night. Although it had seemed like a collectively coordinated action where people built shacks at the same time, there was no collectivity in the sense of joint organisation between different individuals – any more than there is between separate people who decide to go shopping during the Black Friday sale.

Although the land occupation was not part of an organised collective effort to claim the right to the city, I continued to follow it. It turned out that the owner was having trouble legally proving that the land belonged to him. Apparently, as was the case with many lots in the area, he had also once occupied it and built the wall. After a few months he ceased trying to get the land back. Now, almost twenty years later, some of the first residents still live there, but most have sold their shacks and moved. All houses are now brick and concrete. They all have two storeys and some even three. Some residents have merged two shacks into one larger house. People's self-building practices were dispersed and fragmented – they built and modified their dwellings to suit family size and budget. No one has property rights, but tenure security is quite high as the neighbourhood is part of a municipal governance program that guarantees shelter in the absence of titles.[3]

3 This programme is called Prezeis (Leite 2007).

Over the years I have studied several processes of *autoconstrução* and most of them were not related to social movements, nor were the residents involved in other forms of organised collective action (see, e.g., Koster 2020). Indeed, if we wish to understand what is really going on in processes like these, where people occupy a piece of land and build a house, we need to look beyond collective action and adopt a more open stance that also takes into account all kinds of individual and fragmented practices.

No Resistance

Apart from their emphasis on collective action, engaged scholars tend to view the practices of the marginalised residents they study as a form of resistance. Numerous studies have shown how these practices indeed resist local and national authorities and their neoliberal or authoritarian policies, or challenge global capitalist forces. In Latin America, the broad-brush picture holds that the poor express their needs either through popular participation channels or through radical social movements and protests (Collier and Handlin 2009; Montambault 2015). Across the world, many studies discuss Lefebvre's (1991) notion of the right to the city and its appeal to marginalised urban populations (Harvey 2003; Lelandais 2014; Souza 2018; Banerjee-Guha 2010). These studies draw on Marxist or Gramscian readings of hegemony and counter-hegemony, or use Foucauldian notions of governmentality and counter-governmentality (see, e.g., Appadurai 2001). Other studies have zoomed in on more covert transcripts of resistance, in which the excluded express their discontent through grumbling, jesting, slander, and false compliance (e.g. Scott 1985).

I agree that marginalised people may take part in both public and covert acts of resistance that even coalesce into collective claims and forms of activism, such as the residents who do engage in MTST or MST land occupations. I wish to emphasise, however, that many of those who live in the margins never – or only rarely – participate in contentious acts. Moreover, their diverse practices are often indifferent towards – or even compliant and compatible with – regimes and their policies, and their needs and aspirations often result in a tendency to champion neoliberalism and capitalism. Regarding the latter, the common consumerist aspirations of residents of low-income neighbourhoods in cities across the globe are telling (see, e.g. Kolling 2016 on Salvador da Bahia, Brazil). Indeed, and logically so, residents of the urban periphery often do not oppose capitalist desires – they also want a flatscreen television, a car, and the latest mobile phone.

Returning to the land occupation, various practices of the residents can indeed be considered acts of resistance, perhaps even an expression of insurgent citizenship. Residents who had been living in low-quality, small and cramped housing, had transgressed the law by occupying a piece of land and building a new house. At the same time, other residents told me how they occupied the land to sell it as soon as there was some certainty of being allowed to stay. They wanted to use the money to buy a motorcycle or a car. These aspirations are not part of what is usually analysed as an act of resistance, an expression of insurgent citizenship, or a claim of a right to the city. Yet they were part of what was going on and what was at stake for those involved.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have discussed two pitfalls of engaged scholarship: an empirical bias towards collective action and an analytical bias towards resistance. For a more balanced, engaged analysis of the practices of marginalised populations, I argue that a good starting point is what Asef Bayat (2010: 45), in his work on the Middle East, calls 'the quiet encroachment of the ordinary.' He refers to this as the unassuming, non-collective and persistent practices of dispersed low-income and marginalised actors to acquire the basic necessities of their lives, such as shelter, public services, an income, and access to public space. While some of the practices described by Bayat (2000, 2010) can be understood as acts of resistance – e.g., street vendors flouting regulations that prohibit them to sell their products in the city centre – he approaches them as a 'social nonmovement' with atomised actors who often lack a shared political ideology, leadership, and organization.

I recognise the unassuming and quiet fashion of these practices. In the urban upgrading projects I studied, many residents were very critical of the plans and their implementation. Over the years, however, I witnessed only one collective resident protest, where people drew media attention by burning tyres on the road and obstructing traffic. When TV and newspaper reporters visited the area, some of the residents told their stories and complained about the authorities. I have not encountered any other incidents of public resistance by the residents. People told me that they did not have time for this – because of work or a busy family life – or that they just simply did not like to contribute to this kind of upheaval because they considered it inappropriate or even uncivilised.

I propose that engaged scholars should keep an eye on the non-contentious, compliant and even submissive practices in which people in the margins so often

engage (see, e.g. Mahmood, 2005). Being open to the more complex entanglements of reproducing and countering power relations that their practices often entail will help us engage with disenfranchised populations and understand what is at stake for them; also, when what they do is mostly non-collective and in line with the regimes and policies they face in their daily lives.

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Engaged Anthropology

Tightrope Walking between Involvement and Detachment

TOON VAN MEIJL

Introduction

The practice of anthropological scholarship invariably involves tension between involvement and detachment, which is an inherent part of the methodological strategy of participant observation. When doing field research, anthropologists are confronted with the challenge to strike a balance between participation and observation. We aspire to become involved in social practices to obtain insight into emic perspectives on the world, but at the same time professional distance is required in order to weigh and balance the various views that are shared by our interlocutors. This quandary becomes even more complicated when anthropologists are operating in highly politicized circumstances, characterized by heated discussions about political strategies and goals. In such contexts, the role of anthropologists is often also controversial. They are frequently distrusted as presumed collaborators in the colonial project, while a disbelief in their capacities to make a difference on the ground is also widespread. In these situations, anthropologists might seek to demonstrate their credentials in order to become involved and make a contribution, but in the end they also aspire to be more than mere advocates of political campaigns. Usually, they also seek to present a more contextual analysis of the complexity of politicized circumstances, with consideration for the entire range of political viewpoints and visions. Since such an analysis can only be accomplished from a more detached position, this is obviously rather difficult to explain to our informants who do not have a choice to opt out of their struggles. In this essay, I will reflect on this dilemma on the basis of my own experience of involvement in a Māori community over the past forty years. I will do so with reference to the labels of advocacy, action and/or applied anthropology, and the more recent concept of engaged anthropology. My argument will be that advocacy and action anthropology must be combined with engaged anthropology.

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Development in a Māori Community

In October 1982, I was privileged to be invited to a distinguished Māori community in New Zealand to conduct a period of ethnographic field research as part of my master's programme at Radboud University. We had been trained as critical anthropologists, steeped in structuralist and Marxist theory, and eager to contribute to changing inequality between the haves and the have-nots. I was adopted into a Māori community, but mainly on the understanding that I would become an ambassador of Māori development. Needless to say, however, it took some time to become familiar with the ongoing ramifications of the colonial history of dispossession and marginalization of the indigenous population of New Zealand, before it became possible to participate in political campaigns for the return of confiscated lands, the introduction of community development projects, and the revaluation of Māori culture, language and identity.

Four years later, I was fortunate to be able to return for doctoral field research under the auspices of the Australian National University. Shortly after I had settled into the community again, I began operating as a consultant for Māori tribal organizations, mainly in the fields of education, health, economic development and, last but not least, the long-standing battle for the return of their lost lands. The circumstances in the field had become so politicized since the late 1960s that it would have been impossible not to participate in one or more struggles. Since Māori people had become so marginalized in their own country as a consequence of colonization, it was not difficult to make the decision to become involved in political practices.

Becoming a so-called advocate of Māori claims and interests also offered me the opportunity to obtain an insider's perspective on the social and political organization of the local tribe and its royal family. Māori tribes had elected one chief to become King in 1858 in order to set up a united front in opposition to the increasing number of British settlers, but the tribe from which the king was elected was punished for its resistance with the confiscation of its entire territory. My residence in the community of the Māori Queen, the fifth descendant of the first King, offered me a unique opportunity to examine Māori politics from within the center of tribal networks. For the work I was doing as a consultant, as well as a doctoral student of anthropology, I received the necessary support from the adoptive brother of the queen, who also had a degree in anthropology and who was one of the main initiators of the Māori renaissance that gathered momentum in the late 1980s. This person acted, in other words, as the 'sponsor' of my field research (cf. Whyte 1955).

Although my sponsor was aware of all my activities and had had access to all my field reports in which I reflected on my experiences as a development consultant in light of the thesis I was planning to write, a misunderstanding emerged when I finished my doctoral dissertation. My main argument focused on the revaluation of cultural practices and the role they played in the legitimization of demands for political change in New Zealand. This strategy restricted the debate about structural inequality between Māori and non-Māori to a lack of recognition of 'culture', colloquially branded as 'traditional culture', from which large sections of Māori youth growing up in urban environments had been alienated. My frank analysis of different opinions about the revaluation of cultural practices corroborating the demand for change in New Zealand reignited old discussions, but this time also in relation to the question of whether my thesis could be distributed outside the community. Although key members of the local community in which I had conducted my fieldwork supported most of my analysis, the leadership of the tribe was reluctant to grant permission to publish my dissertation as a book. They were genuinely concerned that it might subvert the political goal of the tribe to put up a united front behind their massive land claim.

Interestingly, a discussion also emerged about my various roles in the community, ranging from consultant to researcher, but also as *tangata whenua*, a so-called 'person of the land'. In practice, these positions had sometimes caused a confusion of categories, with some people confiding personal information to me as a 'local', that they did not wish to share with me as an academic researcher. In any case, it was not supposed to be included in writings of any kind so that other people could read it. It raised the question regarding informed consent to conduct anthropological research. Although I had received official permission of the *marae komiti*, the community council, to do my research, most people assumed that the main goal of my residence in the community was to facilitate the development programme of the tribe and to support the preparations of their land claim. Indeed, different understandings of the concept of research were implied in this discussion. Let me unpack the various meanings of 'research' and reflect on the differences, both 'at the flaxroots', as they say in New Zealand, and in the academy.

The Meaning of 'Research' in the Field

During my fieldwork, my most visible role to most community members was the position of 'advocate'. I spent considerable time writing submissions, objections, grant applications and other papers addressing local and regional authorities,

advocating for programmes "to close the gap" between Māori and non-Māori. I was consistently introduced to those authorities, however, as a consultant. Advocacy and consultancy may have different meanings in different contexts, but in Māori communities in New Zealand both concepts are used interchangeably. An important difference between the two is probably that the term advocacy evokes the connotation of political activism (Paine 1985; Hastrup 1993; Hastrup and Elsass 1990 Hastrup 1993; Huizer 1996; Nagengast and Vélez-Ibáñez 2004; Turner 2004; Zilberg 2016), whereas consultants are supposed to be more neutral, partly also because they are usually paid for the work they do. Since the remuneration of consultancies entails all kinds of other problems (Morris and Bastin 2004; Stewart and Strathern 2005), it goes without saying that I consistently refused to be paid for the work I was doing as an advocate/consultant.

In academic circles, a distinction is made between consultancies and action or applied research. At the Centre for Māori Studies and Research (CMSR) to which I was affiliated, the difference between the two, however, was also merely contextual. Projects that were conducted at the request of Māori tribal organisations were often paid for, transforming the researchers into consultants, but the findings were often also disseminated in academic networks where they were described as action or applied research. At the CMSR, research was primarily understood as action research or applied research, with the difference between the two being mainly analytical. Action research is meant to solve immediate problems or issues, whereas applied research is the academic term for research aimed towards generating knowledge to resolve social problems. As such, the concepts of action research and applied research are interchangeable for many (Bennett, 1996). Fundamental research was not included in the centre's repertoire. Its slogan was that no action was to be undertaken without research, but at the same time it was announced that all research should always also lead to action.

The implications of this motto caused confusion about the results of my doctoral research. There was no discussion about my engagement as a researcher through applied practice during my ethnographic fieldwork, but the question was raised regarding the publication of the academic analysis in my doctoral dissertation. The leadership of the tribe withheld its permission to publish it as a book, while many community members failed to understand the motivation behind that stance since in their view it did contain trustworthy and adequate descriptions. Since the latter had had no training in anthropology it may be questioned whether they fully grasped the scope of the theoretical argument and its potential impact, I complied with the request of the leadership not to publish it in the form of a book.

After I completed my doctoral degree, I returned to the Netherlands and was unemployed for a while. I was unable to visit New Zealand, which caused this discussion to linger on for too long, partly also because we communicated by 'snail mail.' In 1994, I was finally able to return, which contributed to talking out this misunderstanding on the spot. It was appreciated that I had come back, something which not all anthropologists seem to do, while the leadership was relieved that I was happy to abide by their request not to proceed with the publication of my thesis in the form of a book. At the same time, it is important to avoid the impression that my anthropological reflections were top priority in the community. On the contrary, the political tide in New Zealand had turned over the years, which enabled Māori tribal organisations to negotiate settlements of their outstanding land claims. Almost 130 years after the confiscations had taken place, the tribe was about to receive justice, at least to some extent…

The Land Settlement

In 1995, the British Queen Elizabeth II visited New Zealand to personally sign the act that passed into law the land settlement with the tribe upholding the Māori monarchy. As part of this act, she also delivered an apology from the British Crown to the Māori Queen and her people, acknowledging the injustices that had been done to the monarchy and its supporters. In addition, the settlement provided for the return of 14,165 ha (about 35,000 acres) of Crown land, amounting to about 3% of the land originally confiscated. The value of the lands restored was estimated at approximately NZ$170 million, while at the time the annual proceeds from the rents and leases of the lands was expected to amount to between NZ$7 and 14 million per annum (Van Meijl 1999).

The settlement of this major land claim was, naturally, a turning point in the history of the tribe and the associated monarchy, but it did not immediately resolve all problems resulting from a colonial history of dispossession and marginalization. Over the years, my research has focused mainly on the impact of the settlement on the living standards of the tribe's 76,000 beneficiaries, especially because their initial enthusiasm has subsided since they have come to realize that it will not significantly contribute to changing their livelihood. The settlement has virtually no impact on the many social problems that are associated with their disadvantaged conditions: too many do not finish school, too many are unemployed, too many are short of money, too many are eating, drinking and smoking too much, too many have mental health problems and the high levels of domestic violence are

simply embarrassing (Ministry of Social Development 2016). The growing awareness that social justice does not immediately seem to result from the compensation agreement raises many important questions about the implementation of the settlement.

In this context, I should also explain that over the years my relationship with the tribe and the people in the community has changed considerably. Since I joined the staff of the Department of Anthropology at Radboud University, I only managed to visit New Zealand once every two years for about a month. As it has become virtually impossible to spend significant periods of time in the field, I have necessarily had to adjust my involvement in short-term projects. Whenever I am in New Zealand, however, community members still call upon me for support of ongoing activities to which I am able to make a contribution, e.g. the promotion of bilingual education, preventative health programmes, and the relationship with the local power station and its impact on the Waikato River, which is considered an ancestor in the Māori worldview (Van Meijl 2015). The environmental consequences of the plant's operations and their implications for Māori relationships with the river were consistently ignored since the construction of the power station some four decades ago (Van Meijl 2019), which explains why I continued to be able to participate in negotiations for compensation during short stints of fieldwork. Thus, advocacy work has always remained an important part of my involvement, while action and applied anthropology became more difficult from a distance. As a corollary, the focus of my work shifted gradually to a form of what I would label engaged anthropology, with a specific focus on the implementation of the land settlement.

Engaged Anthropology

As already indicated, the land settlement did not immediately resolve all problems that are associated with a legacy of colonial marginalization. Instead, it generated a debate about governance, management, traditional hierarchy, distribution, and entitlements. It is beyond the scope of this article to illustrate discussions within the tribe in any detail, but the core of the problem revolves around the decision of the leadership of the tribe to outsource the returned assets to a commercial company in order to maximize commercial revenues through property management and property development, as well as through financial investments. The maximization of profits serves the long-term goal to grow the tribal estate for future generations. The flipside of this decision, however, is that the return of land to the tribe does not

directly lead to the development of a tribal economy that is run by and for Māori people so that it may improve their livelihood. On the contrary, inequality within the tribe has increased and social problems among many community members have exacerbated (Van Meijl, forthcoming). Indeed, it is paradoxical that the leadership of the tribe seems not to be interested in enhancing the well-being of its beneficiaries, for which it delegates the main responsibility to the government.

For more detailed analyses of the implementation of the settlement I refer to a number of previous publications about internal controversies and contestations (see especially Van Meijl, 1999, 2003, and 2013). Here I wish to highlight my position as an anthropologist in this debate, which is fundamentally different from the role in the preparation and submission of the historic land claim. Participation in political campaigns that aim towards terminating colonial dispossession and postcolonial dominance is founded upon different principles than involvement in internal struggles for power and authority, that for scholarly reasons also requires detachment. During the early stages of my research, I attempted to combine advocacy work and action or applied anthropology with the position of a critical anthropologists who also reflected on the implications of tribal political strategies, but over the years this balance has shifted more towards a form of what I would like to describe as a form of engaged anthropology.

Engaged anthropology is a concept that was not yet commonly used during the debate about the publication of my doctoral dissertation, but it has become more popular in recent years (see Low and Merry 2010; Kirsch 2018; Ortner 2019). Low and Merry (ibid.: S204) have defined engaged anthropology as an "anthropological practice that respects the dignity and rights of all humans and has a beneficent effect on the promotion of social justice". As such, it consciously attempts to turn around the classic dictum 'to do no harm' into the goal 'to do good' (see also Borofsky 2011). Indeed, we want our work to make a difference at the flax-roots. Contributing to social justice for the underprivileged may be done in various ways, however, which leads Low and Merry to acknowledge a broad spectrum of practices and approaches under the heading of engaged anthropology, including activism and advocacy, as well as collaboration and social critique. Distinctions between these forms are, of course, fuzzy, while they may also be combined fruitfully in different contexts and situations. As I have argued before (Van Meijl 2005), the position of an anthropologist as advocate does not necessarily preclude a more critical analysis of internal politics. And it is this combination that matches contemporary definitions of engaged anthropology that encompass approaches ranging from advocacy and applied or action anthropology to a form of critical ethnography (cf. Carucci and Dominy 2005; Foley and Valenzuela 2005). Combining the

different approaches of advocacy with critical ethnography, is not an easy way out of the fundamental tension between participation and observation in ethnographic practices. It appeals to the skills of anthropologists to operate as a tightrope walker by negotiating a shifting balance between involvement and detachment.

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Emancipation and Encroachment

THOMAS WIDLOK

Introduction

Engaged scholarship seeks proximity to the subjects of one's research, and sometimes even does so competitively. The Nijmegen Department for Anthropology and Development Studies in no exception in this. The socio-cultural anthropologists often pride themselves on their close rapport with "local people" – attained through long-term participant observation – which others lack who engage in survey or short-term applied work. Conversely, anthropological work has sometimes been criticized from the development world for being too aloof, ignoring the pressing needs of people while trying to stay clear of interference. What is ultimately at stake here is the appropriate relationship between distance and proximity. The method of participatory observation is a perpetual oscillation between reducing distance through participation and creating distance through observation (see Breidenstein et al. 2015). But over the last 75 years the subjects of research are increasingly influencing this proximity by keeping (others) at a distance. Indigenous Australians frequently resist when researchers seek to be close, for instance when they seek temporary residence in an Aboriginal community. In recent decades several PhD students from Nijmegen had to abandon their planned research in Australia for this reason and other researchers, like myself, have shifted their main region of research elsewhere. But there is no escaping the underlying tensions. Over the last decades I had may opportunities for applied anthropology while doing research in Africa (see Widlok 2022 for more details). At the same time, this work became an opportunity to reflect on the dilemmas of distance and proximity on which I focus in this contribution.

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Working in the Field During Fieldwork

When in the field we spend much of our day-to-day ethnographic field research in seeking closeness through participation trying to understand the relevancies and motivations that make our counterparts do what they do. At the same time, usually in the evenings, we bend over our notes. This writing at the end of the day creates the necessary distance that allows us to reflect on what we have experienced in order to plan the next step in our research. In the course of this daily research routine, there are always "diagnostic events" (Moore 1987) in which the relationship of anthropology to practice and engagement is revealed in all its sharpness, i.e. individual situations that, like a burning glass, bring the complex relationship of anthropology to engaged practice to the point.

If you trace /Gomais, my first fieldwork site in northern Namibia, on current satellite photographs and maps you will be able to distinguish the settlements of the ≠Akhoe Hai//om San and their neighbours. You will see a characteristic large open space in the middle of the Mangetti forest that provides the staple food of the San in this region. As a legacy of apartheid, this open field marks a zone of separation between the comparatively luxurious houses of the white farm managers, the "single quarters" (simple brick communal dwellings) of seasonal labourers from the communal areas in the north, and an area where the San build their dwellings of grass, wood and corrugated iron among the trees. The field in the middle is now mainly used as a football pitch for the primary school that was built nearby 15 years ago. Originally, however, the field was cleared of trees and bushes to create a field for commercial farming. Similar fields exist in just about all places where San have been "concentrated" into settlements. This is true in Ekoka and Okongo, where first Finnish missionaries and then local church pastors of the neighbouring Owambo ethnic group wanted to create arable land for the San, as well as on the farms Ondera and "Ombili", which were run by German settlers as development projects, and last but not least for the many government "resettlement farms" (see Widlok 1999).

However, it is also characteristic that after the withdrawal of development aid, the fields were no longer used for agriculture. What we often find instead is a discourse among the San, who on the one hand point out how much they have profited from these fields in the past, but who on the other hand were now waiting for food to be distributed by the state and by NGOs, because these local fields were no longer cultivated. Although most of the San continued to work in agriculture from time to time, they always did so as day labourers in the fields of neighbouring ethnic groups. Despite the fact that they had quite good knowledge of the neces-

sary procedures of field cultivation, and sometimes worked very hard, they did this as dependent labourers and not as independent farmers. In my field research, I collected countless statements in which San explained this situation and provided reasons why the fields that had originally been set up for them were no longer under cultivation: The tractors had become inoperable, for instance, and there were no spare parts or money for maintenance. Then there was a lack of seeds and other tools. These statements underline how unsustainable these development projects had been from the start.

What they did not explain was why there was so little initiative on the part of the San to resume cultivation. In this situation, I benefitted from the proximity to an NGO for which my wife had started working. It allowed me insights into the largely unsuccessful gardening projects in the region. It also offered the opportunity for what turned out to be a field experiment as part of my field research. Through our NGO contacts, we received first-class new seeds for millet from the Mahenene research station which was freely distributed to the San. Through good contacts with the farmers, there was also the possibility of being provided with a tractor. It seemed that thereby the "excuses" that the San of /Gomais had used against farming the large field were thereby no longer valid. Much like other expatriates that Ferguson (2013) talks about in his article "Declaration of Dependence", we were initially of the opinion that here the San could emancipate themselves by producing food in accordance with aspirations for autarchy and independence, instead of waiting for support from the state or serving as dependent labourers receiving meagre wages in other people's fields.

The "field experiment" that developed from this constellation was one of the important eye-openers of my field research. The San, who had previously lamented the lack of seeds, tractor and other tools, got what they needed from the NGO (through us) and – nothing happened, at least initially. In hindsight it became clear that there was obviously a lack of the necessary social infrastructure to work this rather large field collectively. There was no "foreman" and no authority who could have given the go-ahead, who had the power to divide up and organise the necessary work and even oblige the others to work or to give orders. The men who were able to drive the tractor did not see why they should work for a vague communal whole. Similarly, all others, who would have had to do the sowing and later the hoeing and weeding in the large field, doubted whether they would ever get a return for this work, and they certainly had other things to do, such as cultivating their own small garden, collecting nuts and crops and hoping for wage labour. The widespread notion that hunter-gatherers (together with other subsistence communities) were practising a kind of "primitive communism", a primitive

communality of property and of earned goods, as if they were an agricultural production cooperative of game-keepers, was shattered. Evidently, their social life lacked the very social institutions that constitute communist or socialist systems, namely a centralised authority, a set of sanctioned rules that compels individuals to participate in public works, and a strong sense of community effort. Far from the ideas and practices of a corporate commune, their individual autonomy was very pronounced and mutual support was organised quite differently, not through communal work but through decentralised waves of sharing (see Widlok 2017).

In the end, the field in /Gomais was in fact cultivated, but only for exactly one season. This was only possible because the farm managers intervened by assigning a worker to plough and by putting a lot of pressure on all participants to sow and hoe from time to time. Despite the exceptionally good seeds, there was no collective harvesting and distribution in the end. Rather, the large field was worked in the same way as the small individual gardens were kept: People spent a few hours harvesting decentrally and individually, literally cob by cob and plant by plant. In my account (see Widlok 1999), this was like "gathering" domesticated plants, just as they would gather wild plants. Being confronted with a field that was ready for cultivation but with people reluctant to work in it, it would have been easy for me as an outsider to take the position of foreman, and to organise the work in the field, and perhaps some had even expected me to do so. I decided against this option and the remainder of this contribution is why I still think that keeping a distance was an appropriate response to the situation.

Getting as Close as Possible?

When it comes to unwanted or forced proximity, many people today think of the abuses that can occur in many contexts due to very unequal distribution of power. Of course, such cases also exist in Namibia. There are particularly frequent reports of teachers taking advantage of their position and leaving pregnant students behind, who are then often expelled from school (while the teacher usually goes unchallenged). But there are also other forms of unwanted proximity, many of which I recorded in my field notes, that make the ambivalence of closeness clear. What is remarkable is that they are often related to what we commonly call "applied engagement". I think of the Owambo evangelist who virtually dragged an elderly, frail San man out of his hut to wash him in full view of everyone and who asked to be photographed performing this "merciful" act. The surrounding neighbours were visibly embarrassed. I also think of visits by government officials

and tourists who took advantage of the San's weak resistance by inspecting their huts and possessions without being asked. The state-empowered distributors of "drought relief food" arbitrarily determined how the San would have to build their houses in the future so that they would qualify for receiving this food. Finally, the many neighbouring Owambo who used their dominant economic and political position as teachers, foremen or church representatives to sit at San hearths and fireplaces without being asked, and who readily interfered in their family affairs, child rearing practices, marriages, economic practices, and even in ritual acts such as the medicine dance. In other words, many acts of interference that were aimed at emancipation constituted rather blunt acts of encroachment.

When approaching a foreign dwelling place, it is customary among the dominant neighbours of the San, African and European agropastoralists alike, to call attention to themselves with loud shouts, to take a seat at the central place of welcome for guests, and to demand hospitality or at least attention from those who are being visited. Among the San, by contrast, greetings are quite different (see also Widlok 1999). The newly arrived sit down quietly somewhere in the shade and wait patiently to be greeted by the inhabitants individually and in a quiet voice. A sometimes long greeting ceremony evolves until everyone has greeted everyone else individually. Even relatives who have not seen each other for a very long time act with restrained tact. Intensive physical contact also does not take place openly (except with very young children). Although conflicts can also lead to loud shouting and violence, the "normal" way of dealing with each other is rather reserved, almost awkward to the outside observer, or positively speaking "tactful". It is at least partly due to these "gentle" manners that the image of the San as "harmless people" (Marshall Thomas 1959) has been consolidated. It therefore maybe not surprising that field researchers who have spent long periods of time with San decide, for good reasons, against taking on the role of "foreman" or "engaged organiser". Accepting such an "emancipating" function in the context of established development cooperation would inevitably necessitate to violate local norms.

However, there is more to it. To decide against such a kind of proximity is not necessarily an expression of being distant and of not caring, but it can be seen as a "commitment that does not bind", as Helmuth Plessner (1980: 106, 107) has put it. In my view, it is no coincidence that a social order like that of the San, in which there are no written rules and no central force of implementation of behavioural norms, depends very much on what Plessner has called "tact relations between natural persons" (Plessner 1980: 109). I am inclined to assert that this is more generally true for many situations in which fieldworkers find themselves who work

in "small communities" (long seen as synonymous with typical ethnographic fieldwork). There is a widespread but false impression that these groups are necessarily tightly integrated collectives in which the individual self is given up – and that the goal of ethnography would be to merge with the target group as it were. With Plessner I think it is important to point at the "limits of the community" in this context. The small groups in which ethnographers often find themselves are not undifferentiated collectives, the antithesis of our individualist society in every respect. Rather, in these contexts, too, we encounter the "bitter necessity" of tact (Plessner 1980: 105), tact as a "means of making sociable intercourse possible and pleasant, because it never lets us get too close nor too far away" (1980: 107). Here, and not only in large complex societies, we find the sociable "sophistication of allusion" and a "culture of conduct" that makes use of various "means of distance" (1980: 106). In his critical assessment of Elias's process of civilisation, Hans-Peter Duerr (2005) has pointed out in great comparative breadth that the indirectness and distancing in human coexistence did not arise only through the emergence of bourgeois society in Europe. It also characterizes the small groups and the milieus in which anthropologists prefer to conduct their research.

Conclusion

After decades of successful anthropological research it may be time to move away from the mantra that we must excessively seek proximity and exclusively "embed" ourselves as much as possible, according to the motto "the closer, the better". To be sure, in some situations the insistence on participation and involvement is still necessary, especially where there is a tendency to do research "from a distance", remote sensing, mediated entirely by the media, filtered through translators (Widlok 2020) and precisely *not* oriented towards the relevances set by local actors. But it is equally important to emphasise forms of distance and tact, not only methodologically in the act of reflective writing, but also with a view to social interaction, which also includes the relationship between researchers and researched.

Accordingly, anthropology's attitude to proximity and distance needs to emancipate itself from a natural-science type of opposition between near and far. Helmuth Plessner formulated this very aptly almost a hundred years ago: "In nature, everything is mutually distant or close; the intermediate realm of the distance luring us towards proximity, of the proximity driving us into the distance, of an unresolved distant proximity, is known only to the psychic world" (1980: 69). For Plessner's philosophical anthropology, it was about describing the special situ-

ation of humans in comparison to other organisms, but the basic point is still valid: Human phenomena, the positionality of actors, cannot adequately be described one-dimensionally on a line between near and far, because people themselves are reflective about this and continually (re)position themselves. Humans can perceive "closeness and distance" either as problematic, experienced as "narrowness and distance", or as liberating, experienced in terms of "familiarity and expanse". Their reflections and reactions on proximity and distance vary accordingly. Plessner (1980) summarises this in the concept of the "eccentric positionality" of people. Occasionally, other disciplines at the university, but also the public at large, think that anthropology in its field research practice is a rather "eccentric" affair. In line with Plessner's thinking and against the backdrop of rich ethnographic evidence we may come to think of this "eccentricism" as a compliment.

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Lake Victoria Export Fishermen

Global Capitalist Precariat or Emancipated African Adulthood?

JOOST BEUVING

1. Introduction: Lake Victoria Export Fisheries

This chapter briefly discusses questions of adulthood in the context of the global economic frontier of fresh fish exports from Lake Victoria, Uganda. With my discussion I hope to unveil an aspect of the lived reality of local fishermen usually receiving little scholarly attention: that many consider Lake Victoria a space for personal autonomy, bringing the promise of accelerated upward mobility. This optimistic estimation is difficult to realise in practice due to the precariousness of export fishing, yet it presents an important reason for large groups of East African men, especially the young, to venture into export fishing. Some observers argue that the optimistic image is the construct of a global capitalist precariat's false consciousness that reproduces poverty at the tail end of a global commodity chain (Pearson 2013), evocatively peddled in the popular documentary film *Darwin's Nightmare*. Grounded in a survey exploring the social lives of fishermen, I subscribe to a rival interpretation that points towards emancipatory forces, those pertaining to adulthood especially, which occur in a part of the world that is exposed to global forces compounding rapid social change wherein what it means to be young is no longer self-evident (Van Meijl 2013).

First, a short introduction into the world of export fishing from Lake Victoria. Lake Victoria has a long history of fishing for regional consumption and trade, yet this changed during the 1990s when in a large-scale export fishery emerged rapidly, connecting the lake to overseas consumer markets (Pringle 2005). Unlike export fisheries reported elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, a small-scale commercial fishery was at the heart of this export boom, whereby African fishermen catch

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two dominant fish species, Nile perch (*Lates niloticus*) and tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*), with outboard engine-and paddle powered, wooden canoes using a combination of artisanal and modern fishing techniques, gill-netting and long-lining in particular. In the booming frontier economy that surrounds the lake, hundreds of thousands of mainly young Africans make a living from catching, processing, and trading export fish. This economic activity is organized through fishing networks, connecting local fishermen, boat owners, and those working in the service industry (fish processing, mending nets, building canoes), clustered around landing sites with well-developed connections to road infrastructure, needed to transport the perishable fish to the national airports (processed fish is airlifted).

We now turn to a closer examination of one such fishing network: Lambu-Kalangala in central Uganda. This particular network was selected because it sheds light on an important riddle which suggested itself during research: how does social order emerge in a dynamic global frontier that appears to be in constant flux? Then follows a short presentation of the results of a social survey, designed to capture fishermen's spatial mobility, which appears to be an important proxy to understand fishermen's social practices. Construing fishermen's lifestyles as spatially mobile initially made sense, as movement appears ingrained in the floating lifestyles of the Lake Victoria frontier, a view that resonates in the African studies literature (Roitman 2005). The survey findings yielded a surprise finding, however: constant movement does not explain the social world of Lake Victoria fishermen. My subsequent ethnographic work focused on explaining this paradox, showing that multi-ethnic, non-kin friendship networks are important for the fishermen in a social world wherein kinship ties normally prevail. This led me to a new interpretation of the survey material: engaging with export fishing revolves around ideals of self-actualisation in a world wherein being young usually works against this, which I briefly discuss towards the end of the chapter.

2. Social Life in the Lambu-Kalangala Export Fishing Network

Seven fishing landing sites constitute the backbone of the Lambu-Kalangala fishing network: Nile perch and tilapia are landed here in large numbers, processed into exportable fish fillets in factories, and then transported to the Entebbe International Airport (Figure 1). Landing sites are mostly new settlements that emerged

alongside the expanding fish export market, and they brought new types of social organisation. In summarised form:

(a) Linkages between landings are shaped by flows of people and things (canoes, fishing equipment and fish), including the various arrangements tying them together. These flows are highly patterned: it is for instance common to encounter the same crewmen or boat owners (together: fishermen) in different landings within a short time period. Particular business arrangements in part explain the pattern. For instance, a boat owner based at Kyagalangi landing recruits his crew from another landing, Kanaanas, and sells the fish to a trader located on a third landing, Lambu. The trader, in turn, purchases the fish from several boat owners, resulting in a concentration in the trade network. Such arrangements hence tie together, often geographically separated, locations along and in Lake Victoria.

(b) The network is informal and administratively invisible: few village landings are displayed on government maps, and the population census does not mention landings as a separate settlement category. Landing dwellers are mostly migrants who rarely possess land in the landings (administrative identity in Africa is usually fixed to land), and fish is taxed by the fishing authorities; registration is associated with tax collection and therefore evaded by landing dwellers. Further, specialised businessmen organise transport between major landings, yet there are usually no fixed sailing schedules; travelling between landings by canoe depends on asking around for trip information. And fishermen get jobs through these contacts, just as boat owners rely on contacts with traders to mobilise capital for fishing trips. In order to understand spatial movements of fishing crews and boat owners, one has to appreciate their network of social contacts, therefore.

(c) The network of landings shows different degrees of structural complexity. Smaller landings function as 'stubs': end nodes that have no linkages with other landings, often integrated into the export fish market through ambulant fish traders in spot-transactions. The integration of larger and well-established landings (e.g. Lambu) is shaped through multi-stranded (e.g. friendship ties form across locations), more intense (centrality promotes more frequent interaction), and diverse relations. To better appreciate the last type, I focus on the commercial fishing network that centres at Lambu, a prominent landing site that emerged in the wake of the Nile perch boom (the group of islands opposite Lambu is administratively known as Kalangala, hence the name of the network). Recognising its strategic place in regional trade networks, the British transformed Lambu into a small port (Beuving 2015); for a long time, it was an island, but with the lake's water table dropping in the 1990s, Lambu is nowadays part of the mainland, connecting to the national road grid.

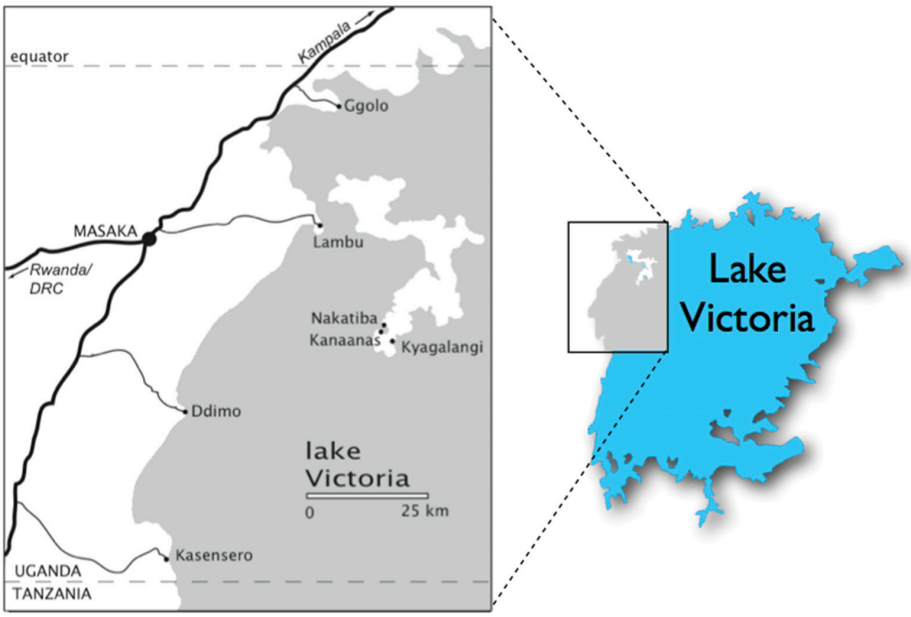

Figure 1. Lambu-Kalangala Fishing Network, Uganda's Central Region.
Source: author.

3. The Social Survey

In 2010-1, with the help of research assistant Javira, we carried out a social survey among 534 fishing crews and the boat owners they work for in the network's seven village landings. The idea for a survey emerged during ethnographic fieldwork which I conducted during twelve months in the 2009–2012 period. The survey faced several challenges (e.g. several forms were filled out only partially, which explains the range of N-figures), which are further discussed in a forthcoming publication. The important outcome is that the survey results corroborates various observations I made during the fieldwork, chief of which is that around 80% (431 of 534) of the fishermen originate from places further afield; they are migrants. The material suggests a split roughly halfway; around 50% come from a village or town located in the coastal zone of Lake Victoria, whereas the other half originates from places at least a day's travel away from the lake. Several interesting differences lurk beneath this first, crude image, to which I will turn now by discussing five statistical tables summarising survey findings.

When considering age, we found that the fishermen are 31 years old on average, clustered in the 26–45 age bracket (65%), and that the men had stayed where

we surveyed them for six years on average ('current'), pointing at considerable stability of residence (Table 1). A further breakdown shows that many were in their mid-20s when they first came to the landing ('at arrival'). This is relevant because it suggests some professional trajectory preceding their arrival at the lake; few were born into fishing families.

Table 1. Migrant age distribution (N = 431)

age category (yr)	current (%)	at arrival (%)
<25	0.26	0.59
26–35	0.45	0.28
36–45	0.20	0.13
>46	0.09	0.01
average (yr)	31	24

Source: author's social survey.

A strong relation appears between their arrival at the landing ('residence') and the overall duration of their occupation as a fisherman ('occupation'), which is consistent across age categories (Table 2). This shows that the men arrived without prior experience in fishing, and that they stayed on once they had settled there, reinforcing an image of sedentarity. It is noteworthy that a further breakdown per village landing (not listed in the table) reveals little differentiation; the pattern replicates itself throughout the Lambu-Kalangala network.

Table 2. Occupation and residence of fishermen (N = 394)

age category (yr)	occupation (yr)	residence (yr)
<25	5.4	4.4
26–35	5.7	5.7
36–45	7.4	7.3
>46	8.2	7.7
average	6.1	5.7

Source: author's social survey.

Taken together, these tables are suggestive of community; men in their mid-20s arriving at a particular landing site, staying together for several years in a more or

less integrated social network. The tables validates what can be observed; once I had developed a circle of trusted research participants, I was able to retrace them, which is important considering the several-month intervals between various fieldwork episodes, and considering that mobile phone coverage in the region is patchy and not available to all fishermen.

That fishermen tend to stay for several years in the same landing does not mean they do not travel. Two types of travel may be discerned: fishing trips that are central to their professional lives, and for which they are paid by the boat owners, and trips in connection with religious festivities and family functions which are celebrated in their place of origin, called 'the village'. Table 3 breaks down trips to the village, suggesting that a minority of 25% rarely travel (last trip more than a year ago); whereas the remaining 75% does. This is surprising since, in order to travel, some money is needed; petrol prices in Uganda are high (they have increased since the fieldwork ended) and travel expenditure is, therefore, significant. Even more important is that almost none of the surveyed fishermen did not return after their travels; this pattern is consistent with findings collected during a round of open interviews with fifteen trusted crewmen and five boat owners that were conducted in the wake of the social survey, suggesting that the fishermen consider the landing sites their home.

Table 3. Interval in trips to the village (N = 515)

trip interval (months)	percentage
<3	0.55
4–11	0.30
>12	0.25
average (months):	7.2

Source: author's social survey.

The image of fishermen with some money to spend on social travel is corroborated by their educational levels. Table 4 shows that most fishermen completed (state sponsored) primary education, but that 43% have had some form of secondary education (S4), for which money needs to be paid (it is not state-sponsored). This figure compares favourably to Uganda's national statistic at the time of the survey; around 26% of the population enrolled in secondary education (World Bank 2022). This suggests that the fishermen's parents must have succeeded in sending them to school for a good number of years, being able to pay for that; therefore they rank

from income brackets above the so-called ultra-poor. That said, tertiary education, which in Uganda presents a secure pathway into white-collar salaried positions, is reserved for only a very small minority.

Table 4. Educational attainment of fishermen (N = 534)

schooling (years)	percentage
<6	0.55
7–10	0.43
>11	0.02
average:	5.5

Source: author's social survey.

Family life presents a further indication of material attainment. Marriage in central Uganda comes with bride price payment obligations, and in order to nurture children, money must be spent on food, clothing and school fees. Table 5 shows that, with the exception of younger fishermen, the vast majority of the fishermen reported to be married with children. Wives and children were not necessarily present in the surveyed village landing, but the statistic suggests they were present as a financial commitment.

Table 5. Migrant family situation (N = 431)

age category (yr)	married (%)	children (%)
<25	0.48	0.48
26–35	0.72	0.79
36–45	0.86	0.94
>46	0.97	0.95
average	0.69	0.74

Source: author's social survey.

The relative material attainment of the fishermen further emerges from the observation that, in the occasion of a windfall profit or gain, few fishermen are seen to leave the village landing. Instead, a tendency could be observed to invest unexpected gains in status goods, such as mobile phones, and in status consumption,

such as eating meat and drinking international beer brands, both featuring in a local prestige economy (Beuving 2010).

4. Interpretation: Export Fishing as Social Aspiration

The survey material suggests an image of men in their mid-twenties with above-average educational qualifications who trek to the lake where they create a life for themselves in a new home. To further interpret this pattern, there are material realities to consider. Whereas export fishing comes with considerable risks (fish stocks are difficult to predict, rejection rates at the fish processing factory gates are high) which translates into erratic wages, and village landing life is expensive (fishermen depend on local shops for daily groceries; they do not farm themselves), many fishermen report decent incomes, and a considerable number are even able to (occasionally) send money to their villages of origin. Moreover, many report that incomes from fishing are higher (though also more erratic) than the incomes accrued by their rural peers; rural incomes in this part of Africa are under considerable pressure with the decline of agriculture, contributing to chronic poverty.

Social realities are further important. Even a passing visit to larger village landings reveals that fishermen are often in the company of friends. It is common that multi-stranded and multi-ethnic ties develop between them, typically originating in occupational relations forged during shared fishing trips as crews, quickly spilling over into spending leisure time together. Larger landing sites are vibrant places with a night life that rivals regional towns and cities, contributing to a frontier culture. Interviews suggest this is the outcome of intent; kinship ties, though paramount in the rural localities where the fishermen hail from, are not taken for granted in the landing sites. Fishermen frequently allude to the authoritarian nature of the affinal and/or consanguinal rural relations they were born into, especially with members of their patrikin: older brothers, fathers and uncles in particular – a troubled side of African kinship (Platteau 2000).

Hence, the migration of young Africans to the lake is inspired by a negative sentiment associating social life in the village with impossibility. Dissociating themselves from the pull of their patrikin takes time, as the survey suggests: the normal pattern is one of men moving to the landing sites roughly a decade after they stopped attending school. Once they succeed in making it to the lake, and gain a foothold in the village landing economy, and once their migration solidifies into a more or less sedentary existence, this parallels changing perceptions of kinship. Kinship then recedes into the background and becomes part of a much

broader pallet of social experiences and practices that structure everyday life. In that pallet, ethnic ties come to acquire new social meanings too. Traditional African society projects an image of ethnic inclusion, expressed in ritual practices, group languages and affinal practices (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012). Social life at landing sites throws into question such special claims. Ethnic stereotypes may prevail in daily conversation (as they do elsewhere on the continent), yet everyday inter-ethnic mixing is considered largely unproblematic and is practiced as a matter of course.

The above interpretation suggests that the social aspiration young Africans look for in the Lake Victoria frontier finds an expression in dynamic networks of multi-ethnic relations and in the strategic manoeuvring of kinship ties. The fishermen I interviewed for this study usually emphasized how they see social aspiration in terms of becoming an adult, considered as the symbolically opposite of being young. 'Young' in this part of Africa has various meanings, though often revolving around liminality in the sense of remaining in the lower reaches of a social hierarchy that esteems seniority, with the village as the symbolic locus (Barratt et al. 2012). In central Ugandan villages one may encounter men in their forties still being called young, in the sense that they are unmarried, lacking a following and property in the form of land or real estate. Fishermen emphasise how remaining in the village therefore keeps them young. Making a living in export fishing, however difficult it may be in terms of achieving a secure economic livelihood, also brings new social experience, promoting a repositioning in an imaginary esteeming self-actualisation that is associated with adulthood.

5. Conclusion

Further research is needed to grasp how the ongoing interpenetration of a globalising capitalism in sub-Saharan Africa produces new understandings of the self. In the melting pot of the Lake Victoria global frontier, we may be witnessing the rise of a new African adulthood. This new African adulthood associates being young with greater personal autonomy combined with an aspiration for self-advancement. It denotes an emancipatory ideal, therefore, and this rubs against conventional social lifecycle markers in sub-Saharan Africa, those of ethnic affiliation and deference to seniority in particular. Clearly, the precise confines of this emancipatory ideal remains to be further identified and clarified. It remains to be seen, for instance, how new points of authority and prestige that emerge in Africa's global economic frontiers can bring the new adulthood ideals within the reach of

particular individuals and groups. In other words, whether frontier life privileges particular groups, possibly at the cost of others, is not a foregone discussion. This chapter suggests that the road ahead begins by foregoing entrenched understandings of global frontiers as sites of capitalist exploitations geared towards the reproduction of a global precariat. Certainly, the Lake Victoria case shows that making a material life in global frontiers comes with many real challenges that often compromise a positive outcome. At the same time, the presented material underscores the benefits of understanding how the global frontier features in the imaginaries of the young adults that are drawn into it, including the paradoxes and contradictions that go along with them.

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Engaged Scholarship in a 'Minefield'

On the Challenges of Studying Resistance to Resource Extraction in Kenya

LUUK VAN KEMPEN, MAAIKE MATELSKI & MARJA SPIERENBURG

1. Introduction

A recent leak exposes that First Quantum Minerals, a Canadian mining company, had contracted a UK-based political lobbying firm to covertly influence the 2011 presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where First Quantum was embroiled in a dispute with the government over its concession to mine copper and cobalt in Katanga province (Waterson and Davies 2022). Local communities and NGOs that were fighting First Quantum's actions at the time were undoubtedly oblivious of such high-level tactics being pursued by their adversary. This leak illustrates the scale of the challenge that civil society faces in holding mining corporations to account. By extension, these challenges also affect the work of engaged scholars who try to understand the power dynamics in resource extraction conflicts in solidarity with local communities whose rights to land and livelihood are at risk of being trampled upon (Kirsch 2018).

In this contribution we highlight three complications in studying civil society resistance in relation to resource grabs in Sub-Saharan Africa. Each of these concern confusion about the identity of the actors that operate in and around these contested spaces, often involving their interlinkages. We draw on our (field) experience in coastal Kenya (2018–ongoing), where we study three controversial mining cases (coal, titanium, and salt) as part of a research project commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to critically review the assumptions underlying

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its civil society support framework.[1] Each case is briefly described in Section 2, before turning to the complications that we have come across in Section 3. A first complication, which particularly afflicts the coal mining case, is the opacity around the ownership structure of the mining actors involved. The actual decision-making loci of these prime advocacy targets are difficult to pinpoint, which compromises the effectiveness of civil society advocacy efforts. A second challenge consists in the intimate but often concealed relation between the business and political elite in Kenya. Where commercial and political interests coalesce, targeting a business actor may trigger a counter-tactic in the political domain, or vice versa, which adds to the unpredictability in advocacy success.

A third and final identity-related issue, which we stumbled upon in each of the cases, is posed by a set of hybrid organizations that have emerged between communities, corporates, and state authorities. While it is difficult to capture these by a collective label, given their diversity in set-up, role and mandate, these are perhaps most akin to 'boundary organizations' (cf. O'Mahony and Bechky 2008). Boundary organizations are special collaborative outfits between unusual allies that "can accommodate the varying interests of parties by providing a mechanism that reinforces convergent interests while allowing divergent ones to persist" (ibid.: 426). Cast in a positive light, these entities "deliberately blur boundaries between two or more distinct social worlds to allow all sides of the boundary to present their discussions in a way most favourable to their own perspectives and constituencies whilst leading to more productive policy making" (Franks 2010: 286). The initiative to set up such go-between organizations varies across our cases. Following the terminology used in the civil society literature, these qualify as quasi-autonomous NGO (QUANGO) or government-organized NGO (GONGO) if instigated by the government, or, alternatively, as business interest NGO (BINGO) or business-organized NGO (BONGO) if the initiative emanates from the private sector (Cumming 2010). In both cases the loyalty of these organizations is often unclear or contested, which adds further ambiguity to the constellation of actors in the mining landscape.

1 More information on the project team and partners is available at https://includeplatform.net/theme/ land-rights-advocacy-kenya/. We are grateful to all collaborators on the project in both Kenya and the Netherlands, and acknowledge funding from WOTRO Science for Global Development (grant no.: W08.311.108). We are especially indebted to Selma Zijlstra, PhD candidate at the department, who collected part of the data that informs this contribution. Research permission was obtained from Kenya's National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (P18/11005/23680).

Finally, in Section 4, we briefly reflect on how scholars can be equipped adequately to deal with these complications in a bid to offer effective accompaniment to marginalized populations facing powerful adversaries in resource-rich areas.

2. Profiles of Resource Extraction Conflicts under Study in Eastern Kenya

Coal (Kitui County)

In Kitui County, coal was discovered in the early 2000s, and mining plans in the Mui Basin were formally announced between 2010–2015. The largely rural population is already economically marginalized, due to increasing droughts and lack of infrastructure to market their products, but nevertheless feels strongly connected to its ancestral lands. The county government has repeatedly threatened the population with eviction to a proposed area that is even drier and in close proximity to other populations. The Mui inhabitants therefore fear loss of livelihoods, community disruptions, and potential conflict with host communities, apart from concerns about environmental destruction. The government has initiated a process of land titling in view of possible compensation, which community members claim is done too slowly and inaccurately. A court case initiated by community members and Kenyan human rights organizations ruled in favor of the mining proponents in 2015, but set conditions on public consultation and compensation of affected community members, which have not yet seen any follow-up. The investors, a combination of Kenyan and foreign entities detailed below, have not been seen on the ground, and mining activities have not been initiated at the time of writing. The local communities, assisted by a range of NGOs, remain in limbo as to their future in or outside the Mui Basin, but continue to resist the mining plans.

Titanium (Kwale County)

The exploration for titanium in Kwale's mineral sands started in the early 2000s with a Canadian company (Tiomin), which sold its project assets to a relatively inexperienced Australian mining company (Base Titanium Limited, henceforth BTL) in 2010. Actual extraction only took off in 2013. According to the company website, BTL currently employs about 1,100 people, claimed to be 97% Kenyan, and generates 65% of Kenya's total mineral output value. Resettlement of households has taken place in various waves, both by Tiomin and BTL. Although Resettlement Action Plans were in place, the implementation, which was mainly left to the

Activists protesting in the streets of Nairobi against a planned coal mining investment by a Kenyan-Chinese consortium.
Photo: Maaike Matelski, June 2019.

government, was fraught with irregularities. Moreover, conflicts ensued between relocated households and their host communities, among other reasons because of erratic issuance of title deeds, where relocated people found people already living on the plot of land they had been allocated. Others were assigned plots in swampy areas. Meanwhile, there are people left behind in areas just outside of the mining lease area, who have witnessed their village disintegrate and still await relocation.

Salt (Kilifi County)

Along a 40–50 mile coastal strip, salt is mined by five Indian/Kenyan-owned companies. They started operations mostly in the 1980s on a government lease. Although the government and the salt companies tend to downplay the number of original inhabitants occupying the area designed for salt mining during that time, people had been living there for decades and consider it ancestral land. Since most lack title deeds, however, they were deemed "squatters" and numerous households have been evicted, sometimes by force. They were not compensated for their land as such, only for standing crops and structures, but human rights groups claim

that this gesture was grossly inadequate. Moreover, in some cases, compensation has not been paid out even today. Communities also complain about the salination of fresh water wells, soil fertility loss, health problems, and sea water pollution and mangrove forest degradation, affecting fishing activities.

3. A Game of Guess Who?

Opaque Corporate Governance Structures

An illustrative case of opacity in ownership can be found in the Mui Basin, where the Kenyan government has given out two concessions for coal mining. The northern Blocks C and D were awarded to Fenxi Mui Mining Co. in 2011, while the southern blocks A and B were granted to the HCIG-Liketh consortium four years later. However, it took investigative journalists painstaking efforts to reveal the multi-layered ownership behind each of the concessions to the Kenyan public (see Figure 1 for authors' reconstruction). The ownership profiles feature striking differences as well as similarities. An important difference is that Fenxi Mui Mining is a public-private partnership, as the Kenyan government holds a (minority) stake, while HCIG-Liketh is a purely private consortium. A parallel exists in that both consortia involve a Chinese partner; Shanxi Fenxi Mining and Hebei Construction and Investment Group (HCIG), respectively. In the first concession a third company is involved whose role is unclear, but which is reportedly majority-owned by a Kenyan national. The second concession lacks such a Kenyan connection and involves South African miners instead (Liketh). Regarding the Chinese involvement, it is important to note that both Fenxi and HCIG are part of large conglomerates owned by the governments of Shanxi province (Fenxi) and Hebei province (HCIG). Hence, the overall ownership assemblage is complex, involving three public entities, if we add the Kenyan State, and two private ones, one of which being foreign with a parent-subsidiary structure (Liketh). This implies that the locus of governance is distributed across at least five geographical nodes; Nairobi, Middelburg (South Africa), and Jiexiu (Shanxi), Taiyuan (Shanxi) and Shijazhuang (Hebei) in China.

For transnational advocacy purposes the China and South Africa connections are problematic. If the ownership trail ran to a Dutch company, for instance, Kenyan civil society could make use of a 'boomerang' strategy, where it would engage a Dutch civil society counterpart to confront the Dutch owners within its own jurisdiction (Shipton and Dauvergne 2021). However, opportunities for such transnational advocacy partnering are slim in China and South Africa, as

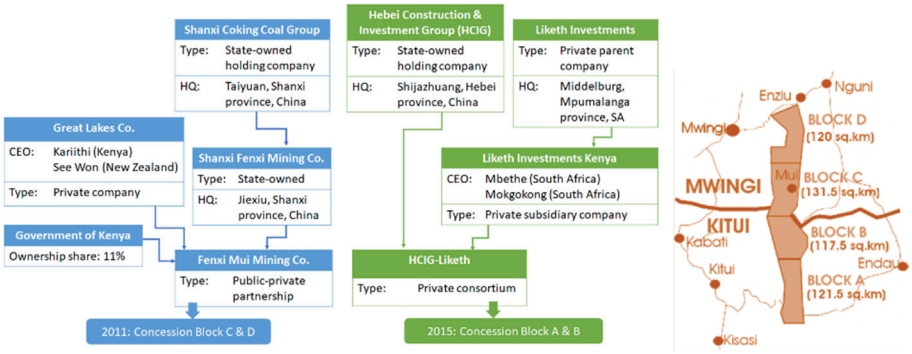

Figure 1. Concession ownership structure in Mui Coal Basin; authors' reconstruction from official press releases and investigative media reports.
Source: Investment Prospectus 2013-2016, Ministry of Energy & Petroleum, Republic of Kenya.

civil society organizations in emerging economies might operate under too many restrictions or be too absorbed in domestic rights violations to take on a foreign case (ibid.). Also, in the case of Chinese actors, advocacy aimed at arm-twisting corporates into legal compliance would be futile, as the code of conduct that the Chinese government has formulated for overseas operations has no legal status and thus remains a voluntary guideline (ibid.). Academic work by scholars from emerging economies may nevertheless prove helpful in understanding the transnational chain of corporate governance. For example, Shi and Hoebink (2020) trace how business ventures overseen by provincial governments in China, carried out under a veil of South-South cooperation, work out on the ground in Uganda.

We suspect that the obscurity around corporate ownership can partly explain our observation that civil society organizations in Kitui often target local and national government bodies rather than the mining companies directly. It is a common strategy to remind public powerholders of their duty to protect citizens and to mobilize these bodies to mount pressure on corporate actors to behave more responsibly. However, this indirect strategy carries a particular risk, to which we turn next.

Business-Government Proximity and Neo-Patrimonialism

A recent study into corporate governance and accountability practices in Kenya offers a damning account of Kenya's state of affairs (Kimani et al. 2021). The researchers explain this dismal performance by pointing at a vigorous neo-patrimonial regime, where they understand neo-patrimonialism as

> […] a broader phenomenon encompassing relationships of loyalty and dependency that are embedded in formal political and administrative systems, and as a result, *the divide between private and public interests becomes an intentionally blurred one.* One important feature of neo-patrimonial systems is the continued display and pretence (a façade) of legal-bureaucratic norms and structures (to maintain legitimacy) which co-exists with relations of authority based on interpersonal rather than impersonal interactions (ibid.: 6, italics added).

This builds on earlier work by Kelsall (2011) drawing attention to the prevalence of 'parallelization' and 'obscurantization' of political and economic activity in African contexts. Based on interviews with 14 senior corporate executives and 12 members of regulatory boards, Kimani et al. (2021) contend that "tribalism and powerful networks of patronage and clientelism interfere with board appointment processes" (ibid.: 15), which feeds into a widespread culture of rent-seeking. Likewise, Ayhan and Jacob (2022) conduct key informant interviews in Kenya's coal mining sector and conclude that "[r]ent-seeking dominates and energy deals are awarded based on connections to political elites" (ibid.: 180).

Our cases also contain hints of potential conflation of political and corporate influence. For example, the Australian-based (and UK-listed) titanium mining company in Kwale (Base Titanium Limited) appointed three new members to its Board of Directors in 2018. One of these – the new chairman – had earlier acted as one of the lawyers in defense of ex-President Uhuru Kenyatta (2013–2022) when he was charged by the International Criminal Court in The Hague for his role in orchestrating the post-election violence in 2007–08 (Mwita 2018). This new appointee is listed in the top-20 richest Kenyans with a net worth of $2.4 million (Billionaires Africa 2021). A second member, in the role of non-executive director, also wields strong political connections, having a long track record on the boards of various of Kenya's parastatals (e.g. chair of the government-owned Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation). He is also described in the media as Kenyatta's "Mr. Fix It" (The Standard 2022).

In this light it is interesting that BTL has committed to the reporting guidelines of the global Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The company's general manager of external affairs expresses the following on the EITI website: "Although Kenya is not currently classified as a candidate country, BTL encourages the Government of Kenya to adopt the EITI Standard and it advocates at every opportunity that Kenya applies for membership." Heeding this call

would imply that the Kenyan government needs to step up its accountability with respect to the resource rents it collects.

The 'too close for comfort' relationship between the political and business elite in Kenya can interact toxically with the opacity of governance structures in global mining, as observed by Schilling et al. (2021) in resource extraction cases in Bolivia, Peru, and Kenya. They explain how "local, national and global scales [..] interpenetrate and co-constitute each other" (ibid.: 10) and, as a result, "state entities and corporations, in many cases together with local pro-extraction actors, form resource assemblages that create downward pressure on communities and on actors who are critical of extraction" (ibid.: 10). The next sub-section zooms in on the 'boundary organizations' that form part of these resource assemblages and discusses their role in shaping relations with the affected communities.

Hybrid Organizations and Handshakes

In each of the three cases *liaison committees* (LCs) have been established, either at community and/or sub-county level. These serve as interface between (groups of) communities and companies and, as such, form the first line of the grievance handling mechanism. The set-up of LCs is typically initiated by the mining company or, in the salt case, by the employers association on behalf of multiple extractive businesses active in the area. Members of community liaison committees are recruited and appointed via village elections. In the case of sub-county committees, spots are reserved for area community leaders representing different marginal groups (women, youth, and disabled persons), political leaders, religious leaders, and county government representatives (Kerecha et al. 2019). LCs may be 'special purpose', addressing specific grievances, such as dealing with the issue of access roads around mining sites or mangrove forest conservation.

Another category of boundary organization is up and running in the titanium case: *community development agreement committees* (CDACs). Drawing up a community development agreement (CDA) is mandatory for extractive companies under the Kenyan Mining Act 2016, and a multi-stakeholder committee needs to be set up for oversight of the community projects that are part of the agreement, as per the Mining Regulations 2017. A CDAC consists of 11 members and features a wider range of stakeholders than LCs, including three company representatives, the governor and commissioner of the county, a county assembly member, a representative of a civil society organization, and community members representing different vulnerable groups (Kerecha et al. 2019). While its mandate is not clearly delineated, the main task of a CDAC concerns co-implementation and monitoring of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects, such as scholarship programs

or health service provision, but it also acts as second-line dispute settlement mechanism on issues stretching beyond the CSR domain.

Our conversations with villagers in a large set of affected communities reveal that LCs and CDACs are a divisive issue. The election process of LC members is a recurring flashpoint. In the titanium mining zone, each village appears rife with rumors that the LC elections were staged by the company, pushing carefully groomed 'pawns.' Also, LCs are oftentimes accused of unduly appropriating company information and conducting backroom deals with corporate representatives. The perks available to LC members attract particular suspicion. In the coal mining zone, LC members have been taken on 'exposure trips', including a visit to China. Interestingly, one of the participants was unable to recall during an interview whether this trip had been arranged by Fenxi or the Kenyan government. A community member from Mui Basin commented that the government, the LC and Fenxi appeared to be "one and the same thing", and suspected that the community members in the LC had been given money to support the mining plans. A final observation on LC members is that not all of them are strongly embedded in the community they represent. While born in the village, some have spent most of their lives in urban centers like Nairobi or Mombasa instead.

Opinions on the CDAC installed in the Kwale mineral sands area are equally disconcerting. Since the committee exercises control over company funds for charitable projects, allegations of corruption frequently surface in the narrative of the communities. CDACs feature a relatively large contingent of politicians who are, arguably, more embedded in the neo-patrimonial culture of greasing palms, more commonly referred to as 'handshakes' in Kenya. In the salt mining belt, an ardent loyalty issue played out when a locally rooted and strongly anti-mining civil society organization took the initiative to set up a multi-stakeholder CSR committee in absence of a CDAC. When the CSR committee decided to join hands with the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM), which also represents the interests of the salt mining companies, the civil society organization considered them 'compromised.' Under the assumption that they had become a mere extension of the salt companies, it took its hands off this multi-stakeholder platform.

Despite occasional praise for delivering concrete results, the overall impression is that the proliferation of boundary organizations feeds mistrust and thereby strains social relations, especially within communities themselves. People waste energy trying to find out other people's allegiances, which may switch overnight if courted or bribed. The presence of hybrid go-betweens thus puts an extra layer of ambiguity onto a landscape already beset by muddled identities. This also has repercussions for scholars exploring this minefield. For example, people sought

out clues as to our own loyalty, even trying to figure out, on the basis of the direction from which we arrived at the village, whether we had passed through the company gate or the human rights defenders' office.

4. Anticipating Complexity When Studying Resource Extraction

In the face of the aforementioned complications around the identity of corporate – and increasingly also hybrid – actors in resource extraction, engaged scholars have no choice but to anticipate, plan for, and accommodate the uncertainty that this complexity entails. Perhaps we should even embrace it. Yet, it also requires us to take a step back from the resource conflict dynamic itself, and reflect on the (change in) legitimacy of the individual actors, especially the ones that emerge on the scene in the process. Are they reasonably 'fit for purpose'? If not, smokescreen tactics may be at work. This is not a straightforward exercise, however, as legitimacy ultimately is in the eye of the beholder and carries multiple interlinked dimensions (Matelski et al. 2022). The task of actor identification is also a stark reminder of the importance of 'studying up.' In this light, the "shift in anthropological scholarship from studies of the impacts of corporate extraction on people in extractive zones to studies of the practices of extractive corporations themselves" (Shever 2022) can only be encouraged, although these accounts ultimately need to be connected.

We see specific room for improvement in the preparation of the next generation of engaged scholars. First, curricula built around the intersection of Anthropology and Development Studies (ADS) should impart thematic knowledge that helps to understand the (im)moral economy behind corporate practices. Topics such as rent-seeking, global production networks, ethical investment, and tax justice urgently deserve more airtime. Skill-wise, students would benefit from more exposure to the basic principles of investigative journalism, not necessarily to (all) join the ranks of "Follow the Money" watchdogs, but to be able to weigh up the evidence that journalists uncover on the basis of ethical conventions around publication, attribution, and fact-checking (Tate 2020: 90). Catering for such needs helps to sustain the relevance of ADS programs, as the transition to a 'green economy' will not slow down the rush for resources, but may merely change the type of mineral resources coveted and the faces of the key players involved.

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Reduce or Refuse Plastic?

The Contribution of *Pesantren* in Pasuruan

FRANS WIJSEN

In 2012, researchers at Radboud University co-founded the Alliance for Water, Health and Development, including scholars from a variety of disciplines such as cultural anthropology, development studies, international economy, medical sciences and religious studies. In 2018, this Alliance merged with Living Lab Indonesia, a network of entrepreneurs, government officials, civil society groups and knowledge institutes from The Netherlands and Indonesia collaborating in co-creation of knowledge (Wijsen, 2021). The living lab in which some of my PhD candidates and I are involved deals with water and waste management. People in the past depended on natural water sources (in rural areas) or metered piped water (in urban areas), whereas they now tend to go for bottled water. An example of this is Surabaya City where the use of (branded and refillable) bottled water increased from 6.4% in 1998 to 79.3% in 2014, whereas the consumption of piped water as main source of drinking water reduced from 90.7% to 20.5% in the same period (Komarulzamen 2017: 30–31). The main reason for this is that bottled water is considered to be healthier.

While quality control of piped water might be poorer than that of bottled water, and bottled water healthier than piped water, there is another issue related to bottled water: plastic waste. The use of plastic in Indonesia has increased enormously, making it the second biggest contributor to plastic waste in the world (World Bank 2021). The Indonesian government promised to reduce plastic waste by 70% by 2025, and asked civil society organisations, including faith-based organisations, to help reach the goal. The major faith-based organisations have committed themselves to do so, and have issued fatwas that discourage the use and littering of plastic. On the one hand, these organisations can mobilise masses

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as their leaders are trusted, more than those of the government. On the other hand, there are various constraints, such as the gap between norms and practices in Islam (Bagir and Martiam 2016), and bureaucracy and legalism in Islamic organisations (Fikri and Colombijn 2021).

As a case study, our living lab studies the production of mineral water and its distribution in plastic bottles and cups by Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Pasuruan Regency, East Java. Together these *pesantren* produce and sell almost a million plastic bottles and cups containing mineral water per day. On the one hand, the production and distribution of mineral water is their income-generating project, necessary to sustain themselves. On the other hand, it goes against their commitment to reduce plastic waste.

The Issue

Indonesia has a population growth of 1.5%, an urbanization growth of 4.1% and an economic growth of 6% annually, making it Asia's 'third Giant' (Jotzo 2012). Sixty percent of Indonesia's population now lives in cities. Indonesia produces 200,000 tons of waste per day, and urban solid waste per person per day grew from 0.8 kg to 2.1 kg over the past ten years, but waste management did not grow accordingly (Setianto 2021; Sidabalok 2023). Indonesia's main rivers are heavily polluted by micro-plastics, chemicals, metals, and anti-biotics, creating health problems. Indonesia lost 80% of its rain forests (Badan Pusat Statistik 2017).

To make the issue of water and waste management more concrete, we focus on plastic. Seventeen percent of Indonesia's waste is plastic, making Indonesia the second largest producer of plastic waste after China (World Bank 2021). Moreover, Indonesia imports plastic waste from European countries. Seventy percent of its plastic waste, an estimated 4.8 million tons per year, is openly burned or dumped causing floods and diseases. Plastic bags and bottles pile up and clog the watercourses. The water fills up the drains and spills over onto the streets thereby causing floods. Burning plastic releases toxic gases that threaten health. It also releases black carbon, which contributes to air pollution and climate change. Decomposition of plastic takes twenty to five hundred years, depending on its type, but micro-plastics remain in the water and the soil.

At the United Nations Ocean Conference in New York in 2017, the Indonesian government promised to reduce plastic waste by 70% by the year 2025, and it asked faith-based organisations such as Nadhlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah to mobilize its members in order to reach the target. These organisations committed

themselves to do so. They considered plastic waste to be undesirable (*makruh*) and committed themselves to reducing plastic waste.

During the Nadhlatul Ulama's National Conference of Religious Scholars in Banjar, 2019, one of the committees, namely the committee that discusses actual religious issues, addressed topics related to the ecological crisis triggered by the irresponsible disposal of plastic waste in Indonesian rivers, which is a major factor contributing to the pollution of the world's oceans; the environmental impact of the bottled water industry, and especially the depletion of neighbouring wells and fresh springs. It condemned plastic waste littering in rivers.

In line with Islamic jurisprudence, the committee distinguished different attitudes towards plastic waste. First, plastic waste is prohibited (*haram*) if its impact is harmful to health or the environment. Second, the use of plastic is not prohibited, but discouraged (*makruh*) when the impact on health and environment is small or not visible. Third, it is obligatory (*fardhu*) to obey the ban on plastic if the government has published a law on this. As a result of their deliberations, the religious leaders recommend the second attitude. The use of plastic is to be discouraged (*makruh*).

The fact is, however, that many Islamic organisations, such as schools, produce mineral water and distribute it in plastic bottles and cups as an income generating project. Drinking water is a daily need of the 280 million people in Indonesia and selling it is profitable. Islamic organisations make use of this market opportunity by selling their own brands of mineral water. Thus, in terms of Bagir and Martiam (2016), there is a clear inconsistency between norms and practices in Indonesian Muslims' attitudes towards environmental issues.

Being concerned about environmental degradation and identifying ourselves as engaged scholars of religion, our questions are: how do religious leaders come to the conclusion that plastic is not really harmful to the environment and to health? Are they aware of the fact that there are microplastics in the water that may endanger our health, and that 70% of the plastic waste in Indonesia is burned, which releases toxic gases that cause climate change? Are industrial designers able to develop eco-friendly bottles that are completely degradable in a relatively short time? Would the religious leaders propagate the use of these alternatives, even if it makes the distribution of the water slightly more expensive? Would the chief executive officers be able and willing to compete with the commercial water companies, because the water coming from an Islamic boarding school brings more blessing than that from a commercial company?

The Approach

On an explorative list of 58 Islamic organizations that have their own brand of mineral water in Indonesia, there are 7 Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) that are located in Pasuruan Regency in East Java (Hilya 2020). We focus our study on this regency. On 9 March 2020, during the state visit by Dutch King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima, the Netherlands Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management and the Indonesian Minister of Environment signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen collaboration in waste management, circular economy, water quality and climate change. One of the projects agreed on was a project conducted by the East Java Provincial Water Resources Agency on the reduction of plastic waste. Our living lab was invited to study if and under what conditions *pesantren* could be involved in this. We investigated the research questions by conducting a comparative case-study in two Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) that are on the list. Pasuruan Regency (Kabupaten Pasuruan) has many water springs, mainly located on the slopes of Mount Arjuna and other mountains. The water there is of superior quality and is among the best in the world. The population in this regency consists of pious Muslims (*santri*), many of whom studied in Islamic boarding schools. They prefer buying mineral water that comes from the Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) and has the blessing (*berkah*) of its religious leader (*kyai*).

The Islamic boarding schools that we selected for a comparative case-study are Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri and Pondok Pesentren Al-Yasini. The former is considered a traditional *pesantren* and operates relatively independently from the government. The latter is considered to be a modern *pesantren* and has a close relationship to the government, its religious leader (*kyai*) being the vice-regent of the regency. We expected that the modern *pesantren* would be open to green and clean technologies that could reduce plastic waste, and that the traditional *pesantren* would be reluctant to change.

Santri mineral water brand is the pioneer of *pesantren*-based mineral water. The company that produces Santri mineral water is one of the strategic business units established by Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri in 2007. The success of this *pesantren* was then followed by other *pesantren* in Pasuruan, such as Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah (its brand of mineral water is called Dalwa) and Pondok Pesantren Al-Yasini (its brand of mineral water is called Al-Yasini), because it was considered successful in generating income to make the *pesantren* self-reliant. *Pesantren* want to prove that they can be financially independent and compete with well-known brands, such as Aqua, owned by the Danone company.

Moreover, most of the consumers of mineral water in Pasuruan and its surroundings are devout Muslims with Nadhlatul Ulama and 'santri' backgrounds. They are traditional Muslims who tend to be obedient to religious figures such as *kyai*. This has contributed to a huge market for *pesantren*-based mineral water brands. Of course, in comparison to market leaders, such as Danone and Coca-Cola, the market share of *pesantren*-based mineral water brands is small percentage-wise, but it is growing. For traditional consumers affiliated with Nadhlatul Ulama, using 'Islamic' brands of mineral water is better because they are blessed (*berkah*) by prayers (*doa*) of the clerics (*kyai*).

During the year 2022, two doctoral candidates and I conducted (group) interviews in January and July with the leaders of the Islamic boarding schools and the chief executive officers of the cooperatives that sell *pesantren*-based mineral water. In each of the *pesantren* we spoke to about ten teachers and clerics, using open (group) interviews. Basically we discussed two questions: why is plastic not forbidden (*haram*) but discouraged (*makruh*), and if littering and the use of plastic is discouraged, why don't they opt for bio-degradable bottles for their mineral water?

Pondok Pesantren Al Yasini

Pondok Pesantren Al-Yasini is relatively young. It started in 1940. It has about 6000 students. Its religious leader is the vice-regent of Pasuruan Regency, thus religious and political authority are united. The mineral water Al Yasini is produced by Kooperasi Konsumen Pondok Pesantren Al-Yasini. It produces an estimated 3,000 bottles and some 300,000 cups of mineral water per day.

Asked why plastic is not forbidden but discouraged, the religious leaders said that the government has no law against plastic. If the government would have a ban on plastic it would be obligatory (*fardhu*) for Muslims to obey the law. Elaborating on this, we asked if the government does not take action, why do not religious leaders take the lead? The answer was that the religious leaders only have a moral authority, but no legal authority. A fatwa is an advisory, not a law. And *haram* is the strongest advice. Religious leaders cannot use it too often otherwise it becomes diluted. Moreover, there is no scientific evidence that plastic waste is harmful for health or nature. This is required for making something *haram*.

Asked why they do not go for bio-degradable bottles, if the use of plastic is discouraged, they said that the price of bio-degradable bottles is higher and that they are too small to take the lead. At least, they cannot do it alone. Asked if the fact that most bio-degradable bottles are not transparent is an obstacle, because

consumers cannot see if the water is clear, as is requested by Islamic jurisprudence, the religious leaders said that it is not. If the biodegradable bottles are halal, it is okay. They made a distinction between *Halalan* and *Toyyiban*. Not only the product itself must be *halal*, but also its conditions, such as transportation and packaging. For example, a hamburger is halal if the beef that is used is slaughtered in a ritual way. But, fast food is not healthy, thus discouraged. The same could apply to plastic packaging (bottles, cups) of mineral water. But the mindset of the consumers may be a reason for them not to buy water in packages that are not transparent. The Islamic rule that water must be clear applies only to ablution water, but maybe people think that this applies to all water. This could be a reason why the consumers prefer transparent bottles.

Last but not least they said that poor people collect plastic bottles for recycling as source of income. Thus, if the *pesantren* do away with plastic bottles, they must find a another source of income for these people.

Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri

Out of the list of brands of mineral water produced by Islamic organisations, three are produced by the Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri (Santri, Sidogiri, Giri Way). This is the oldest *pesantren* in East Java, established in 1745, and is located in the Kraton Subdistrict of Pasuruan Regency. With 20,000 students it is the largest Islamic Boarding School in East Java Province, and it is relatively rich. For its income generating projects it has the Kooperasi Pondok Pesantren which has three companies. The Santri mineral water is produced and distributed by one of them, PT. Main Mandiri Sidogiri. It produces around 360,000 bottles per day.

Asked why plastic is discouraged (*makruh*) but not forbidden (*haram*) the religious leaders said that for making plastic forbidden (*haram*) they need scientific evidence that plastic is harmful for health or environment, and this evidence is lacking. They made a distinction between essentially *haram*, and *haram* by analogy. The result is the same (*haram*), but the procedure is different. Something is essentially forbidden if it is literally mentioned in the Koran or Hadith. For example, smoking is not mentioned in the Koran nor the Hadith. It is forbidden (in Muhammadiyah) or discouraged (in Nadhlatul Ulama) by analogy. The same reasoning could apply to plastic. But, the risks must be real and visible *(dhororun bayyin)*. The argument that health risks are expected or at least cannot be excluded is not enough to make plastic *haram*. The leader of the cooperative said that he personally

was convinced that plastic harms people's health, but without scientific proof there is little he could do to change the policy of the cooperative.

Asked why they do not go for biodegradable bottles, if plastic is discouraged (*makruh*), the chief executive officer of the cooperative said that they already shifted their packaging from single-use bottles to bottles that can be re-used. The cooperative has 250 supermarkets (called *Basmalah*). Some of them are in Bali, and the regional government of Bali already banned single-use plastic. Re-usable bottles are 30% more expensive than the single use ones, but marketability is not the main issue. People in Indonesia are very concerned about their health, and if they know that the presence of micro-plastics in water is unhealthy, they change their consumer behavior and pay a higher price.

Discussion and Conclusions

The case-studies confirm that there is a gap between theory and practice of plastic waste management in Islam, and that closing the gap requires complicated jurisprudence and re-interpretation. Contrary to our expectation that the modern boarding school would be open to new technologies and that the traditional boarding school would be reluctant to change, we found the opposite. The traditional *pesantren* was open to innovation, and the modern one was reluctant. An explanation could be that the traditional *pesantren* is much bigger and much richer, thus changing the packaging of mineral water is less risky for them. The large scale reduces the price. Another explanation could be that the religious leader of the modern *pesantren* was close to the political power, being the vice-regent and potential candidate to be elected as regent. Raising the price of bottled water would make him unpopular.

What the *pesantren* are waiting for is scientific evidence that plastic is harmful, and government laws that ban plastic. Although the Indonesian Government and the East Java Provincial Water Resources Agency attempt to involve Islamic organisations in integrated waste management, and they themselves want to be involved, our study confirms this is not so easy, due to various constraints.

As an engaged scholar of religion, I wish to collaborate with the religious leaders to close the gap between theory and practice of waste management, based on the principle of co-creation of knowledge. Purity is a core value of Islam, and purification not only concerns faith, but also the environment. Based on the mission and vision of Islam, I expect religious leaders to take the lead in this, and even go a step further: not to reduce, but refuse plastic.

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Experiments in Empowerment

Research as Clearing

ANICK VOLLEBERGH & NAOMI VAN STAPELE

Anthropologists and the Will to Empower

Empowerment has become a hegemonic moral horizon and key modality of governance across the global South and the global North. Whether in the realm of development or in that of welfare and urban governance, a broad range of actors, from local NGOs to social professionals and international donors, now envision the empowerment of local communities as a crucial condition and means for achieving good governance and social justice (Cruikshank 1999; Rose 1996). Anthropologists and development scholars – including ourselves – often find themselves ambivalently positioned in relation to such projects of empowerment. As Barbara Cruikshank has argued, empowerment does not so much liberate people from relations of power as it is itself a mode of governance, one that addresses social problems by seeking to turn 'those who are held to exhibit some specified lack' (1999, 3) into active and self-governing subjects. Turning a critical eye onto the entwinement of empowerment and neoliberal governance, anthropologists and development scholars have played a crucial role in tracing the establishment of empowerment as a terrain of expertise and bureaucratic measurement and how this circumscribes the political relations and subjectivities produced in empowerment's name (Green 2000; Newman and Tonkens 2011; Sharma 2006). At the same time, anthropologists and development scholars – again, ourselves included – also are invested in the promises, held by empowerment, of democratization and just political relations.

In this essay, we turn to the hesitancies and experimental practices of our research interlocuters in two urban settings saturated by a 'will to empower' (Cruikshank 1999). During ten months in the year 2017, Anick followed the everyday practices of family workers in three community centers and neighborhood associations in the northeast of Paris, who were tasked to help working-class and migrant-background

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parents regain confidence and agency *vis-à-vis* state institutions. Like the parents with whom they worked, many of these family workers hailed from the banlieue themselves and were of migrant backgrounds. Anick participated in the activities they organized for parents and families (discussion groups, parenting programs, lectures, outings, neighborhood feasts), as well as joining team meetings and local professional network meetings,[1] complemented by semi-structured interviews with over 40 parenting-support social workers and policy makers. As part of a broader participatory action-research, Naomi worked with 15 male former gang leaders in Mombasa (Kenya) who sought to reform themselves to escape police violence. Naomi's interlocutors were between 16 and 28 years old and worked closely with their friend Hasso during 2019 and 2022. In this period, Naomi conducted eight months of ethnographic fieldwork with these young men and with Hasso, during which she observed their weekly meetings and the individual lives of several group members, and she conducted life history interviews with five of them.

These two cases thus figure actors who were differently positioned in relation to the will to empower. Whereas community organizers in Paris were agents of a broader governance will to empower marginalized urban populations, former gang members tried to resist the will to empower of NGOs by carving out their own space for reform. In both cases, however, our research participants were critical of the normative form and direction of the empowerment projects and regimes of which they were part. They aspired to something more fundamental: an opening up of a more just social and political order, a reinvention of the self. Moreover, they came to tentatively understand empowerment in this more radical sense as requiring the undoing or destabilizing of given, violent forms of authority. In this essay we think through these cases together to tease out what it takes to recapture empowerment as a transformative force from the will to empower. As we will show, empowerment as the undoing of given forms of authority takes the shape of a clearing of sorts; a symbolic space where the given is (temporarily) suspended and the habitual within oneself is critically engaged, and where experimentation can take place, in the imagining and crafting of what-is-not-yet. In what follows, we first compare the different forms and (authoritative) relations that experimental undoing and redoing of authority takes in the two sites. We end by reflecting on how anthropologists may contribute to such local efforts to create experimental clearings within the will to empower.

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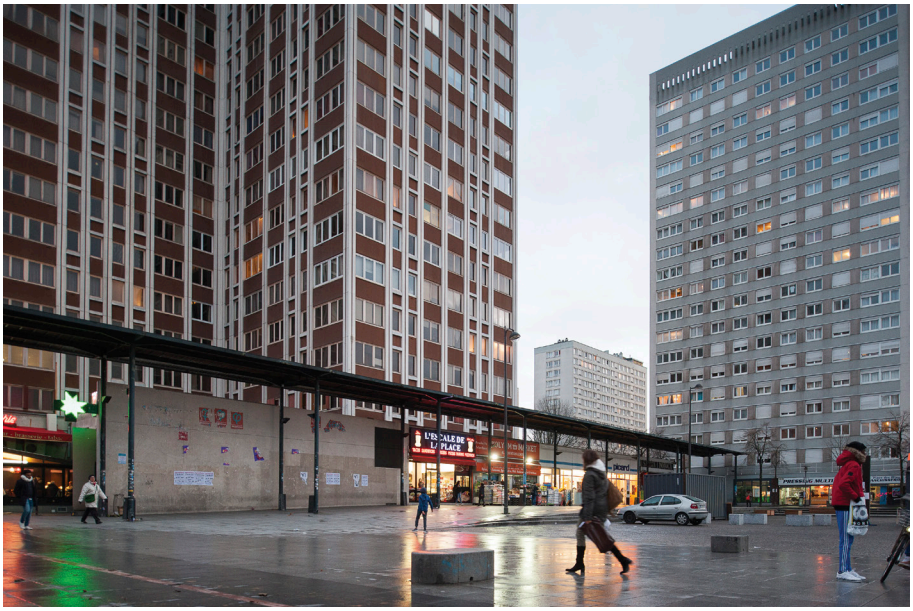
Paris: Poaching Expert Models for Institutional Critique

In the marginalized and ethno-racially diverse neighborhoods of northeast Paris, a dense landscape of municipal programs, urban policy initiatives, and associations exists. These seek to redress social problems – youth delinquency, school failure, poverty and inequality – through a participative approach aimed at social cohesion and reconnecting residents and institutions. The local community organizers and neighborhood officials with whom Anick worked infused their work with a critical understanding of the effect on working-class and migrant parents' sense of self of institutions' hierarchical, normative, and often discriminatory posture towards them. The collective activities offered by community centers were precisely meant as spaces where parents' capacities would be 'valorized', and where they could regain self-esteem and a sense of agency (see also Vollebergh 2022). From 2015 onwards, several community centers also started to offer workshops for parents on a specific parenting method, namely the classic 1970s American self-help method 'How2talk2kids'. The premise of *éducation bienveillante* as this method was often called is that familial relations can become more harmonious by replacing hierarchical parental disciplining by a new mode of authority that is grounded in acknowledging emotions and fostering horizontal cooperation. This method, so community center managers reasoned, would be an appropriate response to the sense of incapacity that many parents' expressed in relation to their own parental authority, while also broadening parents' pedagogical horizons.

The workshops in which Anick participated alongside parents and community center staff revolved around learning and practicing concrete techniques of attentive listening and scripted talk by way of cartoons, role play and other exercises. The workshop material and teacher consistently presented these more 'benevolent' techniques as a solution to the unintended negative effects that common, routinized parental responses were said to have on children's sense of self. In response to parents' and staff's struggle with techniques, the teacher regularly emphasized that changing given habits within oneself is hard work. The workshop was presented as a moment in which the push and pull of everyday parenting life was momentarily suspended, opening up a space where parents could take a step back and together examine their habitual responses. The exercises and role playing allowed parents to experiment with other, alternative responses, try them out, experience their logic and effects. It was such practicing of scripted techniques over and over, first in the clearing provided by the workshop and then in everyday life, that was to allow new sensibilities to slowly take hold.



A square in northeast Paris featuring modernist social housing blocks that are characteristic of the ethno-racially diverse neighborhoods in which community centers are commonly housed.
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On the surface then, this seems like a clear-cut example of the reformative impulse in top-down empowerment projects: governance actors and professionals bringing in expert knowledge and technologies through which a population defined as deficient in some respect is to work on itself (Cruikshank 1999). Things were, however, not that simple. First of all, the community organizers who worked directly with parents were hesitant about the normative nature of the method and the way it responsibilized parents. Moreover, the discussions that were evoked by the workshop material often did not focus on parenting problems per se, but on the 'violent' ways in which local institutions treated working-class children and parents. Parents and community organizers often arrived at the conclusion that, actually, teachers and other institutional professionals were the ones who needed to learn how to be more *bienveillant*. Indeed, a diverse set of actors, who had become increasingly uncomfortable with offering the method to marginalized parents, started instead to organize *éducation bienveillante* trainings for interested local professionals, teachers and volunteers, in the hope that this might be a way to trigger institutional change. Drawing on the expert moral language and techniques of *this* parenting method to reimagine what a more human institutional

authority could look like, they thus sought to redirect the reformative impulse of empowerment away from parents and onto the French state, critically uncovering the state itself as morally deficient and in need of transformation.

Mombasa: Staying With Uncertainty to Reform the Self

Whereas in this Parisian case it was governance actors who initiated an empowerment project for others, the field setting in Mombasa, Kenya, figures local residents who urgently wanted to transform themselves. An infamous gang called Kali, in a ghetto in the northern part of Mombasa, had been known for its use of violence when robbing people, houses and cars since its inception in 2006. In more recent years, it also had developed ties with Al Shabaab and other violent extremist groups, adding to its notoriety. The latter move backfired as many neighborhood residents turned against them and teamed up with police to have them killed (see also Van Stapele 2019). Impelled by the rampant extra-judicial killings of their members by police, the group made the decision in 2019 to leave crime, cut their ties to violent extremist groups and become a youth group of peace builders. This plunged them headfirst into a domain of peace initiatives organized around a neoliberal notion of reform and youth empowerment and led by a powerful arrangement of local and international NGOs. Soon they saw a few of their more charismatic members elevated to hero-status while the quiet and less well-spoken ones were left behind. The uneven distribution of stipends and other opportunities tore their group apart, but a friend stepped in. Hasso, a former gang member and Al Shabaab affiliate and now a reformed community worker knew the dangers of NGOization (Choudry and Kapoor, 2013; Gardner and Lewis, 2015). He too had been elevated to hero-status as a reformed member of Al Shabaab, only to be discarded after what he termed 'his sell-by date'. He began to work with Kali on a community-led research and action (CLRA) project as part of his work with an international research organization that Naomi worked with as well. Through this project, Hasso, supported by Naomi, was able to reduce the pull from the NGOs. The CLRA project made a clearing in the dense and entangled hold NGOs had on youth development work in Mombasa by offering Kali members a small stipend and providing them with the space and guidance to explore their own terms of reform. For 18 months, Kali members decided on their own priority issues, and the overall aim was to achieve locally relevant and meaningful actions through research and action, and 'research as action' (Woensdregt et al. 2022).

This desired transformation was instigated by what they dubbed 'getting focused.' Interestingly, their newly gained focus was not so much geared towards a specified goal other than exploring alternative positions of masculine authority in their local communities through unlearning violence and criminality. In their search for new meanings of manhood and community, they asked support from Hasso and Naomi in negotiating their working relationships with NGOs in line with their local ambitions to transform from community control to community service. Given that working with NGOs denoted access to money and other opportunities, they did not want to break ties. However, their collective journey depended on their cohesion as a group, giving each other support and engaging in a discipline of 'undoing anger' to gradually open up possibilities for new modes of masculine authority. Reform on their own terms turned out to be an ongoing effort for them to stay with uncertainty. Uncertainty to Kali members had at least three interlocking dimensions. First, letting go of their old ideas of 'a good life' without clearly circumscribed ideas of alternative ways to live up to masculine ideals, such as providership, had direct social and economic implications. Their ability to provide plummeted immediately and with it their social status. Fear of social death was only surpassed by their fear of physical death, which spurred them on to continue to stay 'focused' on reform. Second, 'undoing anger' turned out to be an ongoing process of removing habituated mind sets and bodily practices without immediately knowing what else to think and do. Trying out various actions such as community service and reimagining their connections to NGOs allowed them to grow more confident over time. Third, not knowing when their reform would be completed, especially in the eyes of the community, rendered the young men to remain in a state of what they termed *rada* ('alert' in Swahili).

Empowerment as Clearing and Experiment

What do these two cases tell us about the possibilities and limits of empowerment in contexts defined by the will to empower? In their efforts to set in motion a deeper kind of change, community organizers and former gang members alike tentatively linked empowerment to the destabilization of given modes of authority that they came to consider destructive. They sought to open up a space, a clearing, where they could work on themselves to undo habituated dispositions within themselves and new ways of doing authority could be experimented with. This work of unlearning and creative experimentation took different forms in Mombasa and in Paris, the former more experimental, the latter more modular. In the case of Kali

members, unlearning engrained embodiments of a violent masculine authority took the form of a conscious move away from authoritative models of reform put forward by NGOs and donors. Instead, Kali members sought to stay with uncertainty, exposing themselves to new environments and exploring new practices. In Paris, community organizers and officials turned precisely to an established, expert pedagogical model of 'benevolent' authority, but this led them to work on their own habituated dispositions and to critically discuss institutional authority with and alongside parents. Here, the experimentation lies in the way they re-oriented this expert model to apply it as a hands-on tool for reimagining and reshaping, from the outside and in baby-steps, institutional authority.

Both processes have their vulnerabilities. In Mombasa, transformation as an open-ended process of reinvention and becoming was constantly at risk of being pulled into the fixed templates and interests of NGOs' will to empower. As the work of Hasso demonstrates, experimentation needed a clearing from the norms and power of NGOs. Ironically, this keeping at bay of the will to empower, including its financial rewards, requires actors with the means and authority to do so. In Paris, community organizers struggled with a different risk: namely that an experimentally applied model might still slip into a normative template, one that closes down possibilities rather than opens up. The ongoing hesitation and worries of community organizers about the 'responsibilizing' character of *éducation bienveillante* points to their awareness of this risk.

The notion of a 'clearing' offers new inroads for thinking about the possible role of engaged scholarship in relation to empowerment. Both of us came to understand engaged scholarship as contributing to our interlocutors' efforts to craft a clearing in everyday routines for reflection and rethinking actions. In Anick's case, community organizers frequently used their informal conversations with her to discuss their hesitancies and doubts. Building on these relationalities, she crafted interviews and focus groups explicitly as a space in which routine practices and assumptions could be suspended and reflected upon. Hence, fieldwork relations became part of the research not only as ways to collect data but as part of the transformations the professionals aspired to as well. In Naomi's case engaged scholarship entailed several efforts. First, it meant intensive labor to protect the clearing the young men tried to carve out for themselves from the empowering regimes of NGOs. Second, it involved continuous (weekly) attention from her to Hasso and the group to encourage them in their own research and actions. Third, it required from her constant feedback on their activities to help them realize what they learned through research as action. Research became an important part of

their reform actions through the space it provided for reflections and regaining focus and mutual support to remain open for new possibilities.

Our interlocutors' understanding of empowerment, as only ever transformative if linked to the undoing or unlearning of previous forms of authority, brings into view the creative effort that goes into making space for new moral orders. The will to empower envisions empowerment as the filling up of a lack: adding new capacities, new skills, new forms of agency. Our interlocutors point out that empowerment in a more radical, transformative sense is something else; it is the undoing and the clearing of the given and making space for a not-yet-known new.

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To Do Livelihoods Research Now Is to Recognize Coloniality and to Decolonize

ADALBERTUS KAMANZI, ALFRED LAKWO & LEO DE HAAN

1. Introduction

During one of the workshops on decolonizing livelihoods research, one MA student in Development Studies at the University of Namibia aired her view:

> *I have used the sustainable livelihoods framework for my research. What I understand is that it seems that I am using the wrong framework. Now, should I leave it? I do not understand anything anymore.*

She was not the only participant who felt lost and desperate after the introductory lecture and having read seminal texts on decoloniality. Despite the mixed feelings among these students, we will argue in favor of decolonializing livelihoods research, encouraged by our Ugandan case on the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA), as a decolonized alternative financial space of livelihoods support. One villager in the Nebbi district explained:

> *Banks are for literate people who can read and write. Once you walk into them, there are so many papers that you are presented with to sign here and sign there, even when you hardly understand what they want you to sign. Nevertheless, in our VSLA, even members who do not know how to read and write cannot be cheated because all transactions are conducted in public and under the eyes of every member…*

To show the need for decolonized livelihoods research, this paper begins by examining the progression of livelihoods research *from* its introduction into Nijmegen

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development studies around 2000 (section 2) *into* a critical perspective on how marginalized people organize their livelihoods in order to understand their social exclusion (section 3), *to* the current debate on decoloniality and decolonizing methodologies (section 4). The paper explores further the outlines of decolonized methodologies and practices for livelihoods research *now* through the analysis of two cases briefly mentioned above (section 5).

2. From

Livelihoods research was introduced in Development Studies at Radboud University around the turn of the millennium, coinciding with a change in leadership from Gerrit Huizer to Leo de Haan and the rebranding of the Third World Centre (DWC) into the Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen (CIDIN).[1] Perceived by some as a clean break with the critical and neo-Marxist roots of DWC and the impasse that brought down on development studies since the 1980s (Booth 1985), it was instead an attempt to balance the structuralist perspective that dominated DWC from its establishment in 1973 with an actor-oriented perspective focusing on poor people's world of lived experience. Moreover, such an actor-oriented perspective would bring development studies in Nijmegen closer to anthropology, sharing with development studies the teaching program. Huizer (1979), himself an anthropologist by training, set the tone for that divide by chastising anthropologists for their blind spot regarding the oppressive effects of their work on indigenous peoples, arguing instead for a revolutionary view from below and pleading for liberation anthropology – pretentiously with hindsight – similar to Latin American liberation theology of the 1970s.

Livelihoods as research approach, then defined following Chambers (1995) as how people make themselves a living using their capabilities and their tangible and intangible assets, was also inspired by the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework developed by the Department for International Development (DFID), the British state development agency, as part of an attempt by the Blair administration to profile itself. "The pro-active, self-help image of the poor in livelihoods thinking fitted very well with the image the Blair administration wanted to demonstrate …. as builder of the 'Third Way' between the rusted labour ideology of the past

1 See De Haan (2000), the published version of the inaugural lecture in 1999. "Issues" in CIDIN was a deliberate choice instead of the customary "Studies", stressing the Centre's continued strive for societal relevance and public engagement.

and the neo-liberal ideology of the preceding conservative administration" (De Haan 2012: 346). The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework became the blueprint for DFID's poverty alleviation development projects. Indeed, poverty rather than marginalization was the focus of livelihoods research at that time.

First, the livelihoods perspective brought about heated debates, framed as *frambozen-bessen* discussions,[2] at CIDIN's research program seminars. Then gradually, livelihoods research seized its place in the Centre's research program, not in the least thanks to a new generation of PhD researchers – operating under the sobriquet Young CIDIN – enthusiastically exploring livelihoods and other actor-oriented research perspectives and looking for additional inspiration at anthropology, geography, sociology and gender studies.[3]

3. Into

Soon, livelihoods research became criticized for its carelessness towards power relations and for risking falling into the neo-liberal trap (Scoones 2009). But De Haan and Zoomers (2005) showed in detail how livelihoods research had been able to come to grips with power relations and institutions. As a result, the core of livelihoods research gradually shifted from poverty to marginalization and social exclusion and strategizing for social inclusion.

Inspiration came from different directions. To examine livelihoods strategies in situations of asymmetrical power relations, Kamanzi (2007) used Bierschenk's (1988) "political arenas" (concrete confrontation and interaction between social actors) and Long's (1989) "interface" (for negotiations or struggles over strategies) to understand the power dynamics of the development cooperation program between the Netherlands and Tanzania. Moreover, inspiration was drawn from the way gender studies conceptualized power relations. Lakwo (2006) used Rowland's (1997) operationalization of Foucault's theory of power into four interconnected power levels to analyze livelihoods strategies in micro-finance schemes in rural communities in Uganda. Still, social exclusion and its embeddedness in power and institutions only became fully apparent when Yuval-Davis (2006) introduced the

2 Raspberry-bilberry: different berries but a tasteful mix result and still red. After the amazing marketing success of the first mixed fruit juice in the Netherlands following years of marketing single-fruit juices only.

3 Particularly – in order of their PhD defence – Hein de Haas (2003), Alfred Lakwo (2007), Anouka van Eerdewijk (2007), Adalbertus Kamanzi (2007), Edwin de Jong (2008), Diana van Dijk (2008), Theophile Djedjebi (2009), Marisha Maas (2011) and Willem Elbers (2012).

concept of intersectionality, arguing that the practice of social exclusion depends on an individual's background in terms of class, age, gender, race, culture, disability, and other specific characteristics resulting in intersecting social divisions. In livelihoods research, intersectionality led to a layered analysis of social exclusion: examining in the first layer access to livelihood resources and opportunities, then in the second layer, scrutinizing power relations and power struggles, and ultimately, in the third layer unravelling impeding underlying and intersecting structures (De Haan 2016).

4. To

With decoloniality criticizing the universality of knowledge, livelihoods research also questions its foundations as it seeks for decoloniality, i.e., "a practice of resistance and intentional undoing – unlearning and dismantling unjust practices, assumptions, and institutions – as well as persistent positive action to create and build alternative spaces, networks, and ways of knowing" (Kessi et al. 2020: 271) as well as "returning agency in thinking and doing to indigenous peoples, local practices and contextual epistemologies" (Foley 2019: 6). Decoloniality comes to us through the Latin America-Africa-Asia axis, typically the regions that endured coloniality. While in Latin America, decoloniality aims at disposing of Eurocentric knowledge production, criticizing the supposed universality of those viewpoints and the knowledge it produces (Quijano 2007), in Africa it is framed as "deprovincializing Africa" and "provincializing Europe" to gain epistemic freedom (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). In Asia, Said (1978) already contested "Othering" two decades earlier.

To decolonize livelihoods research means struggling to reach epistemic freedom, debunking the idea of Europe as the teacher of the world and the idea of Africa as a pupil, dismantling power hierarchies in knowledge production, unlearning the colonial designs and relearning by learning from those who have been excluded in education, the state, and in public policy, i.e., communities of excluded people: the very communities at the core of livelihoods research. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018: 33, 6; Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012: 16, 22–23).

"Rethink thinking" and "unlearn to learn" mean a metanoia for the livelihoods research community: researchers, students, and practitioners alike. Initiated into the cartesian *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), which in fact hides what could be regarded as coloniality (others do not think/know) and thus the foundation of distorted knowledges and methodologies (Maldonado-Torres 2007:

251–252), the livelihoods research community must try to break away from its initiation. Following Kessi et al. (2020), we argue that moving towards decoloniality in livelihoods research demands, first, a personal engagement to decolonize knowledge, i.e., to admit that others know (metanoia) and to encounter others' knowledge. After such admission, participatory engagement in the form of an interactive alliance between the researchers and the communities can happen, leading to decolonized knowledge. And thirdly, with the decolonized knowledge, actions of resistance, intentional undoing, and the building of alternative spaces are fueled. In the following section, two attempts in livelihoods research to break away from coloniality are discussed following these three steps.

5. Now

A short course entitled "Livelihoods and Development" was conducted with MA students in Development Studies at Oshakati Campus, University of Namibia, in May 2022. Towards the end, the course (taught by AK and LdH)[4] criticized livelihoods research as western-centric, calling for an ethos of deconstruction by unlearning what was learned by means of "provincializing Europe" and "deprovincializing Africa". One of the course lecturers, LdH, had spent much of his life as a professor promoting livelihood research in Africa. In the last lecture of the course, his personal engagement to decolonize knowledge became apparent when he admitted:

> *So here I am, an old white and European professor, having directed major centres in Europe of scholarly work on developing countries and Africa: influential centres, which in many instances have set the tone in development studies and African Studies and possibly – if not undoubtedly – impregnated with the colonial matrix.*

Having done livelihoods research on the conflicts over land between livestock keepers and farmers in Benin, the professor criticized himself for failing at the time to explore historical and colonial backgrounds, internal power relations, or the formation of ethnic identities. This was a moment of metanoia, a moment of admitting the pregnancy of the colonial gaze. Nevertheless, he did not stop on self-criti-

4 AK is Adalbertus Kamanzi, LdH is Leo de Haan, and in the VSLA case ahead, AL is Alfred Lakwo.

cism but moved ahead by inviting students to participate in knowledge generation that would render each one free, i.e. searching for an interactive alliance between students and teachers aiming for decolonized knowledge:

> *Therefore, lecturing should stop here, and a searching conversation between us should take over in an attempt to unlearn and relearn and achieve epistemic freedom.*

In view of unlearning and relearning for epistemic freedom, the students were asked to go through their notes of the assignments of previous lectures and to reflect upon possible instances of coloniality in livelihoods research or practice. That was the moment the student quoted in the introduction sighed:

> *… What I understand is that it seems that I am using the wrong framework. Now, should I leave it? I do not understand anything anymore.*

As indicated, some students did not see the need to overhaul their development premises, and others kept silent in contrast to the usual animated discussions. Despite the confusion – or perhaps incited by it, two students set out on a mutual intuitive conversation about their moment of metanoia, trying to put into words their personal process of unlearning and relearning during their engagement as development practitioners (at different points in time) with communities of San people, one of the most excluded groups in Namibia. The students asked themselves how close they were to these San communities regarding personal engagement and unlearning to learn about the San's livelihoods aspirations. Learning about the San's livelihood aspirations involved little unlearning: the students felt a significant degree of epistemic common ground between the basic needs discourse (in terms of food, shelter, and human security) from their development studies training and the livelihoods aspirations of the San communities.

This first case only offers a glimpse of decoloniality in academic knowledge production on livelihoods. We only noticed some instances of personal engagement, while we have to acknowledge a broadly shared feeling of discomfort among students with the endeavor of decoloniality.

Youth participating in Village Savings and Loans Associations project (VSLA) in Uganda.
Photo: Alfred Lakwo, 2021.

In contrast, our second case from development practice of the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), starting in Nebbi district, Uganda, and soon spreading across the entire West Nile Region, offers wider insights into decolonized livelihoods research. During his doctoral research at Radboud University, one of us (AL) concluded that microfinance had no meaningful economic impact on the lives of rural women. Rural communities felt that the liberalized commercial financial sector would not support them in achieving their livelihoods needs. One farmer explained:

> *Banks are for town people. They are located in urban areas and prefer to work with urban elites. We, villagers who sometimes only go to the big towns once a year, are licensed to no access to their services. Just imagine that! ….*

Consequently, very few people in rural areas saved, accessed credit or accessed insurance from these banks. The development practitioner (AL) concluded that

microfinance institutions used formal financial practices that left borrowers poorer:

> *For instance, their outreach to rural areas was limited, interest rates were exorbitantly high, and the profits generated benefited shareholders only. From such learning, I embarked on promoting solidarity alternative financing mechanisms.*

Thus, as a first step, a deep personal engagement with rural communities gave way to a genuine lived-through understanding of their livelihoods' values. Then, as a second step, an interactive quest for alternative counter-initiatives took off, as illustrated by the villager quoted in the introduction. Another villager added:

> *While we are constantly persuaded to work with formal financial institutions, who owns them?…… In our VSLA, we are the owners. We share any accumulated profit earned at the end of the year. This eventually increases the saving we have made in the year and gives us a boost of lump sum income with which we can improve our livelihoods.*

So, demonstrating the third step, colonized knowledge gave way to decolonized knowledge starting from livelihood values of cooperation, mutual support, and autonomy. The interactive alliance of the second step resulted in the establishment of VSLAs in the third step as decolonized alternative financial spaces of livelihoods support. At first sight, terms such as interest rates and profits still being used do not suggest a profound decolonized imagining of the village economy. On second thought, however, rather than these financial labels, it is the underlying intrinsic values of the solidarity economy that matter from a perspective of decolonizing livelihoods research. Analogue to what Esteves (2014) found in Latin America, the solidarity-based financial economy of the West Nile Region deepens the Western Enlightenment notion of social justice and equity by adding solidarity and reciprocity based on a cosmic conception of community (Esteves 2014: 6). As a result, villagers are no longer passive recipients but become active agents of decolonized livelihoods through reciprocal solidarity-based practices of help.

6. Conclusion

The debate on decoloniality is as disruptive for social sciences as liberation theology,[5] *dependencia* and neo-Marxism were in the 1960s and 70s. Decoloniality raises fundamental questions about the foundations of scholarship in Development Studies and its socio-political engagement. We have demonstrated how livelihoods research matured from a practical actor-oriented approach to alleviating poverty to a layered analysis of social exclusion; a first layer of access to livelihood resources and opportunities, a second layer of scrutinizing power relations and power struggles and a third layer unravelling impeding underlying and intersecting structures. However, the decoloniality turn points at a prior layer or prerequisite exercise, i.e. identifying underlying premises grounded in coloniality. This prior layer signals a struggle to dismantle power hierarchies in knowledge production and learn from those excluded in knowledge production.

We have argued that dismantling coloniality means personally engaging as a researcher, honoring that "others know", embracing knowledge of the excluded, producing knowledge through participatory interactive alliances, fueling resistance actions, and building alternative spaces. From the discomfort among students with the search for decoloniality in our first case, we learned that "Othering Europe" because of countering "Othering Africa" is not an option. From our second case on VSLAs, we learned that alternative spaces of livelihoods support could indeed be built.

5 We purposefully include liberation theology because its popularity in some corners of the Radboud University community contributed to establishing DWC. However, unlike *dependencia* and neo-Marxist theories, liberation theology did not define scholarship at DWC. Exemplarily, in a debate on academic colonialism versus engaged scholarship, Huizer (1971) refers to Camillo Torres, pioneer of liberation theology who died as *guerrillero* in 1966, as a "sociologist" rather than a theologist or a priest. Alternatively, Willemsen (2022) offers a compelling explanation as to why neo-Marxism found fertile terrain at the still Catholic but secularizing 'Catholic University of Nijmegen' [KUN]: both are doctrines of salvation and share a sense of community and social justice. Only in the twilight of his academic career did Huizer turn to religion and spirituality in development (Van der Velden and Hoebink 1999). With hindsight, themes he raised, like folk spirituality as a primal force of resistance and survival strategies of the excluded, and complicity in fundamental inequalities, would fit very well into the contemporary decoloniality debate.

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From Peasant Resistance to Agri-Food System Transformation

RUERD RUBEN, LAU SCHULPEN & WILLEM ELBERS

1. Introduction

Development studies is a multidisciplinary field of study that investigates the evolution of the Global South (and its relations to the North) from political, social, economic, cultural, geographical and technological perspectives (Sumner and Tribe 2008). It started immediately after the Second World War out of previous colonial studies, influenced by the Marshall Plan idea of economic recovery. From the 1960s onwards, it integrated more social and political sciences and recognised the importance of global dependency relationships and local governance (Currie-Alder 2016). Much of development studies is inspired by direct engagement by scholars with political activists and practitioners. During the last decades, development studies evolved into a multi- and transdisciplinary field of study, involving multiple scientific disciplines and a wide diversity of methodological approaches.

Development studies became a separate scientific area shaped by contributions from committed scholars in Western universities (such as Paul Baran, Alexander Gerschenkron, Dudley Seers, Karl Polanyi, Paul Streeten, Hans Singer and others) and scholars from the South (such as W. Arthur Lewis, Arturo Escobar, Raul Prebisch, Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen). Much attention was initially devoted to analysing the causes of internal dualism and the exploitation mechanisms of 'Third World' countries in international relationships.

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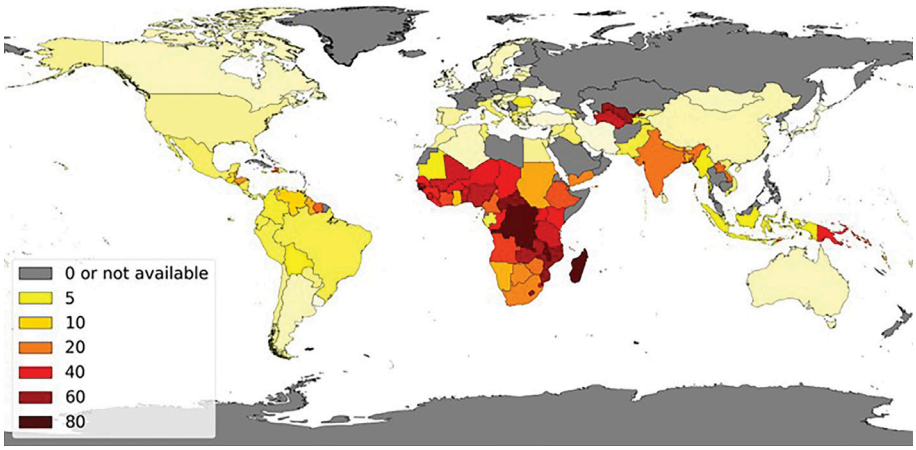

Figure 1. Population below the Poverty Line (in %).
Source: World Bank, 2018.

An essential part of research and teaching in development studies centred around rural and agricultural development issues. Major attention was given to rural poverty, inequality in land rights, the role of the peasantry, coping with natural resource shocks, intra-household bargaining and village exchange networks. Three reasons explain this dominant focus in development studies on rural and agricultural development. First, agricultural development is vital to guarantee food security for subsequent economic growth (Timmer 2002). Second, 70–80% of the people suffering from poverty still live in rural areas and depend on agricultural employment (see Figure 1). Third, agricultural growth is estimated to be two to three times as effective in reducing poverty as growth in other sectors of society and benefits mainly the poorest in society (Christiaensen and Martin 2018).

A large part of development efforts have been directed towards (peri-)urban settings, strengthening the economic structure (primarily through investments in infrastructure and diversification of production) and upgrading social service provision (especially basic education, health care and drinking water and sanitation). The share of international resources devoted to agriculture and rural development became reduced to 8–10% of total Official Development Assistance (ODA). Most African countries scarcely reach the Malabo commitment to allocate at least 10% of national public expenditure to agriculture.

While most rural development strategies are designed to promote growth and reduce rural poverty, few aim explicitly to target poor people and reduce inequality. Initially, significant attention was given to opportunities for improving crop yields and land use practices, making use of more advanced technical means for agri-

cultural production. In response to the growing commercialisation of agri-food production, large investments in roads, storage facilities and market infrastructure were made. In order to improve returns to rural labour, people increasingly engage in wage- and self-employment for non-farm activities that provide more stable income. Strategies towards further 'formalisation' to unlock the potential of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) tend to become rather oppressive, but opportunities for promoting decent work and living income conditions receive major support. In addition, collective action (cooperatives) and women's empowerment are critical components of inclusive rural development.

This contribution will briefly discuss three dominant discourses used in Nijmegen-based development studies over the last fifty years (1973–2023). We, therefore, rely on the idea of paradigm shifts (as developed by Thomas Kuhn) to assess changes in the broader conceptual framework that include basic assumptions, key concepts, and methodology for the analysis of rural and agrarian development (see Table 1 for a brief overview). We will analyse for each paradigm three structuring aspects: (a) changes in context and key challenges, (b) changes in leading questions and main problems, and (c) adjustments in methods and analytical approaches. Ultimately, we argue that the current attention to system transformation represents a welcome opportunity to simultaneously use major contributions from each paradigm to understand better the requirements for structurally reducing poverty and giving voice to rural populations.

Table 1. Successive Paradigms in Development Studies at Radboud University Nijmegen

Paradigm	Authors	Approach	Analytical methods	Driving forces	Policy strategy
Peasant resistance	Chris Kay, Bruce Mannheim, Norman Long, Gerrit Huizer.	Structural approach (*dependencia*)	Ethnography; actor-oriented; participatory action research	Collective action; leadership and alliances	Land reform; Farmer organisation; cooperatives
Rural livelihoods	Frank Ellis, Ian Scones, Robert Chambers, Leo de Haan.	Participatory approach	Life histories and comparative case studies	Access to resources; coping strategies	Community-led organisation; agroecology resilience
Agrarian institutions	Oliver Williamson, Chris Barrett, Esther Duflo, Ruerd Ruben.	Institutional approach	Robust impact analysis	Governance; bargaining; contracts	Value chain integration; Fairtrade; real pricing.

2. Peasant Resistance

From the beginning, development studies looked at change processes and supported the emancipation of poor and oppressed groups, notably peasants, women and indigenous people. 'Third World' poverty is considered to be caused by historically-created dependency relationships initiated with colonialism and perpetuated through imperialism.

Early research on the causes and effects of dependency and poverty focused on the highly unequal distribution of land (dominated by foreign-owned large-scale plantations and haciendas) and the subordinate position of the landless peasantry. The alienation of peasants from 'mother earth' (*patcha mama* in Spanish) as the origin of life is embedded in a culture of repression and distrust that can only be overcome with fundamental changes in ownership rights (Huizer 1973). Indeed, large-scale land reforms were initiated in Southeast Asia ('land to the tiller' programmes) and Latin America ('Alliance for Progress'). Peasant ownership and the creation of rural cooperatives were to enable the inclusion of the rural poor in formal legal and economic systems, increase their access to credit and information, and contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction (Kay 2019).

In this context, primary attention was given to the role of strong and charismatic leadership, the importance of establishing independent peasant organisations and the requirements of solid alliances with urban and international political constituencies. Understanding poverty as rooted in socio-economic inequality and cultural subordination implies that many areas need simultaneous changes. Change will only come 'from below' when people join forces and can break down the vicious cycles that maintain their subordinated position. This implies that development studies should focus on the political conditions for overcoming barriers to change by actively supporting local leadership and establishing broader solidarity linkages (Hoebink and Van der Velden 1999).

This viewpoint has considerable implications for the methodological approaches used in development studies. Instead of neutral observations, researchers are encouraged to engage in change processes actively. This marks the beginning of 'participatory action research' (PAR), where ordinary people become partners in the enquiry process. Their knowledge, views and capabilities are valued for analysing their situation and problems. Many participatory research processes also have an action component, which involves the participants in successive cycles of analysis, reflection and action (Gianotten and De Wit 1985). The latter approach also proved to be particularly effective in addressing sustainable natural resource management issues.

3. Rural Livelihoods

The discourse of rural livelihoods initially emerged in development research on poverty alleviation in Sub-Sahara Africa. It became increasingly clear that global development policies (embodied in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers – PRSPs) did not adequately match the diverse and flexible local realities (Ellis and Freeman 2005). Consequently, the livelihood approach focussed on the wide diversity of household strategies for making a living, mixing farm and home processing activities with engagement in off-farm and non-farm work, migration and reciprocal exchange networks. Decentralisation, market transparency, institutional innovation and democratisation are key elements for improving rural service delivery and enabling pathways out of rural poverty.

The livelihood framework can be considered a response to the growing awareness of chronic and persistent poverty, especially in Sub-Sahara Africa and Southeast Asia. Enabling rural households to escape such spatial and institutional poverty traps requires an integrated approach to overcoming critical poverty thresholds. Development donors place high trust in so-called Integrated Rural Development (IRD) programmes that simultaneously address infrastructure constraints, help build local assets and support the diffusion of innovations (Jacobs 2018).

In line with the livelihood approach, priorities for rural development research shifted to issues of rural non-farm activities, informal markets and risk-coping strategies. The idea of multidimensional poverty gained ground and stimulated further research on the relationships between resource deprivation, power and network linkages (Alkire and Santos 2013). In addition, post-conflict rehabilitation strategies and displaced people's integration received increasing interest. Insights into the gender division of labour and bargaining frameworks for women's empowerment substantially improved (Kabeer 2009).

The further operationalisation of sustainable rural livelihood (SRL) analysis relies on various analytical tools and methods. Much attention is usually given to in-depth life histories and systematic comparative case studies. In addition, spatial village transects ('gestion de terroir') and the participatory reconstruction of village historical trajectories are frequently used (Pouw et al. 2016). Mixed methods with quantitative field surveys and selective qualitative case studies become highly valued to enhance external validity and support more general conclusions.

Livelihood studies thus gained a respected place in development studies but did not stay without criticism. Despite the words 'sustainable livelihoods', relatively little attention is paid to integrating resilience into development strategies.

The framework must also be 'unpacked' to operationalise other critical dimensions of power, gender, markets and the private sector. Finally, some confusion remains about the causal relationship between sustainable livelihoods and poverty elimination (Ashly and Carney 1999).

4. Agrarian Institutions

Inspired by the recognition of widespread failures of Structural Adjustment policies (growth without poverty reduction), attention shifted to the failure of markets and institutions to combat poverty and inequity. Further analysis of the structure and behaviour of agrarian institutions provided new insights into the fundamental causes of poverty. In addition to scarce asset ownership and constrained access to livelihood opportunities, poverty is increasingly recognised as rooted in dismal institutions, governance structures and capacities that hold away rights from poor people and thus lead to prohibitive transaction costs and high levels of risk and uncertainty (De Janvry and Sadoulet 2010).

In this context, strategies towards rural poverty reduction focussed on the reform of institutions, such as land registration, credit provision and market information. Primary attention is given to activities for bridging communal divides, strengthening intra-household bargaining, improving social networks and improving trust with traders (Barrett 2005). Changing these social norms, rules, and conventions is a fundamental requirement to improve interactions and support proactive behaviour that enables poor people to take advantage of these opportunities.

In practice, institutional approaches to rural development were particularly interested in strategies for providing preferential market access to poor farmers, such as fair trade, living wages and real pricing (Ruben et al. 2009). Attention is also given to strategies for linking farmers to supermarkets (e.g. contract farming, procurement arrangements) and to support local and regional mutual exchange networks (e.g. village banks, community storage). Therefore, knowledge exchange and innovation networks (using Farmer Field Schools) are promoted as devices for information sharing and contract enforcement.

Field research on the suitable institutional framework for poverty reduction became strongly evidence-based, paying due attention to robust procedures to control for endogeneity and selection bias and to identify attribution ('real' causality). Empirical surveys for large-scale data collection were combined with lab-in-the-field experiments to generate reliable information for policymakers on

the responses of poor people to incentives and the likely impact of different types of interventions (Banerjee and Duflo 2011).

Institutional approaches also meet their criticism because little explicit attention is given to analysing power dynamics. Moreover, the interactions between institutional structure and human agency remain largely unexplained. In its extreme form, (new) institutionalism has become instrumentalised in 'public choice' theory as a managerial approach for simply improving service provision. This is a classical reversal of the institutionalist view on development that puts institutional change as the starting point for change and not as an endogenous outcome.

5. Towards System Transformation

While extreme poverty has decreased substantially during the last few decades, many poor people still suffer from exclusion, and hunger and malnutrition are rising again. In the current discussion about pathways for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is increasingly recognised that higher income and assets ownership are necessary but insufficient conditions for ending poverty. Access to social services (food, water, education and health care) and (political and psychological) empowerment are considered critical components for inclusive and sustainable development. Ending poverty and zero hunger requires a complete system transformation that goes beyond simple fixes and asks for fundamental changes in the interactions among (public, private and civic) stakeholders.

The political dimensions of such system changes become increasingly important. While the 'resistance' framework of development studies was based directly on engagement with peasant movements and base-level organizations, in the subsequent period commitments were broadened to wider groups, such as urban dwellers, indigenous people and women. The institutional approach marked the emergence of systems thinking and established a wider alignment with the public and private sector organizations.

While the character of poverty and hunger may have changed during the last fifty years, there are several components of the analysis of poverty alleviation strategies that remain valid during all periods. We can summarise three recurrent lessons from the past:

- Effective pro-poor strategies can only be identified through participatory action research that directly involves stakeholders and provides insights into their responses;

- Resource deprivation and market fragmentation lead to chronic poverty that is perpetuated into behavioural constraints of high-risk aversion and low resilience; and
- Fundamental changes in the governance of institutions are vital for poverty alleviation and provide conditions for changing power relationships and bargaining frameworks.

Notwithstanding these continuities, several emerging challenges exist for adequately linking development studies to poverty alleviation strategies. The current interest in system transformation processes provides a new rationale for better understanding the interactions between resistance, livelihoods and institutions (see Figure 2). While popular resistance creates bottom-up pressure for the democratisation of markets and institutions, institutional reforms offer top-down opportunities for improving governance and strengthening livelihoods. In addition, more resilient livelihoods enable engagements in social organisations and collective action that create broader political pressure towards institutional change.

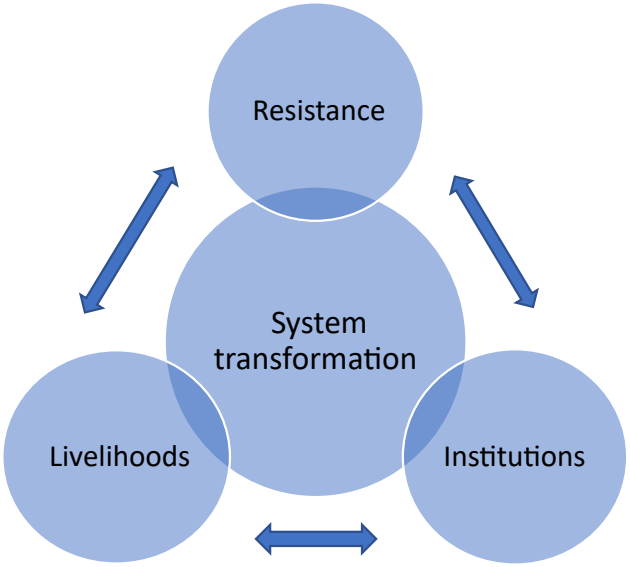

Figure 2. Interactions between Development Studies Approaches.

In addition to the stronger interaction between different analytical approaches for development studies, it is essential to reinforce their methodological complementarities and strengthen their societal impact. The role of scientific analysis is shifting

from 'understanding change' to 'reaching impact', thus asking for better synergies between underlying paradigms.

Considering the rich history and the vast array of scientific, policy and practical challenges, we can identify three major challenges for shaping the aim, approach and methods for future development studies at Radboud University Nijmegen:

a. Embrace Systems Transformation Perspective

Development studies face multiple – albeit mutually related – problems, such as poverty, inequality, conflicts, resilience, and potential trade-offs (or synergies) that can only be adequately addressed using systems analysis. Effectively combatting poverty requires simultaneous changes at multiple levels, ranging from global political institutions to local socio-economic networks. Such an approach must involve scientists with diverse backgrounds in a teamwork activity based on inter-disciplinary exchange and cooperation.

The systems transformation paradigm for Nijmegen-based development studies takes the best from three worlds. It is inspired by concrete actions at the bottom of the pyramid, involves a broader constituency of change agents and engages in concrete transition processes. This requires a professional commitment to focus on concrete transition processes and an intellectual interest to engage in debates between local agencies and global governance.

b. Enforce Cooperation for Change

System transformation asks for interactions between macro-level policies, meso-level incentives and micro-level behaviour to guarantee the scaling and anchoring of successful interventions. Changing the behaviour and performance of complex systems that support the development potential of poor people is usually not a smooth process as it tends to be accompanied by regular crises and conflicts, as well as intensive struggles.

Knowledge and insights into the dynamics of such system transformation processes are usually created by people working at the borderline between macro policies and micro priorities. Whereas local initiatives are vital to support inclusive development programmes, broader political alliances and cooperative networks are required for institutional anchoring and to guarantee coherent governance structures.

c. Exploit Interactions at the Interface

Fundamental changes in development dynamics can only be reached at the interface between bottom-up participatory processes with top-down structural

transformation programmes. This requires professional capacities for building interfaces and operational strategies that enable engagements at both ends of the development spectrum.

The traditional development interface was mainly focused on post-colonial North-South dependency relationships, whereas current interests cover a wider range of interactions beyond trade and aid, including governance, gender, climate, citizenship and culture. Shifting the power and the ownership of system transformation is a process of searching, learning and experimentation. The most impact can be expected from development interventions that simultaneously engage opposing stakeholders and develop effective interfaces for change.

Taking these principles seriously and recognising the importance of systems transformation for poverty reduction has always been the trademark of Nijmegen-based development studies. They inspire insights into long-term perspectives and guarantee short-term results for accelerating change. While problems of poverty and hunger persist, there are vast opportunities and great necessities for studying and supporting system transformation processes.

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