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PUBLIC POLICY AND WORLD ANTHROPOLOGIES

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Anthropology has long been involved with public policy, both in its formulation and its implementation, though often we have ignored our direct and indirect involvement. The historiography of anthropology and power has focused mainly on three core nations, Great Britain, France, and the United States (see Asad 1973, Hymes 1972, and Vincent 1990). Other parts of the world appear in these accounts as colonial possessions, or not at all. Attention is now turning to the many, diverse national traditions in anthropology, including both scholarly and applied anthropology (Baba and Hill 1997, Hill and Baba 2006, Ribeiro and Escobar 2006). This special set of papers in *Practicing Anthropology* is a modest contribution in this direction, examining the interactions of anthropology and public policy in three national settings: Peru, the Philippines, and Mexico.

An important theme of these papers is that regional and national formations matter, in terms of ideologies and political relationships. This, of course, should hardly surprise anthropologists, but it is very important that we think about it in developing public policy interests and skills among practicing anthropologists. It is valuable at this time to make a point about the many kinds of public policy engagement in which anthropologists might engage.

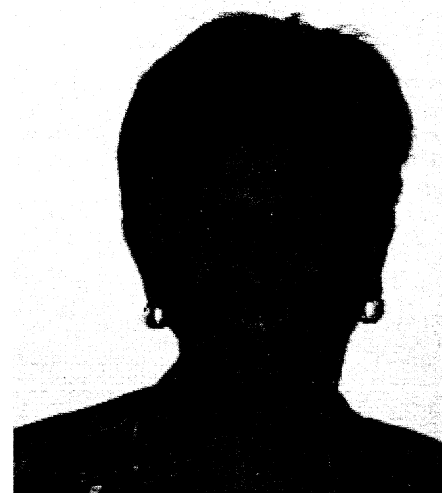
In considering policy, we readily think of influencing national legislation, and this is at times important. However, policy decisions occur at all scales, including municipalities and other local entities, states and regions, nations, and various transnational organizations. Furthermore, our policy relevance is wider than just influencing the final text of legislation.



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It includes influencing the terms of debate, working on agenda-setting and coalition-building, shaping the implementation and evaluation of policies, exposing policy gaps and failures, and so forth. To be effective, then, we need to understand the social relations and cultural frameworks at the appropriate scale in which we are trying to influence policy, as well as the specific roles in the policy process in which we are involved. And we need to do this with a deep understanding of settings that differ considerably from Washington, D.C., London, Paris, or Geneva.

Our first case study is Mexico, the home to one of the world's longest-lived and richest national anthropologies. Indeed, Mexican anthropology's policy relevance comes from its intimate relationship with the central state, both in its ideological formation and its practical activities. This closeness to the state is highly contested, as Gabriela Vargas-Cetina shows, ranging from support of assimilationist policies, through selective cultural diversity approaches, to quite stringent critiques of authoritarianism and support for bottom-up social movements. In other words,



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gaining policy relevance for anthropology is neither an unambiguously good or bad goal, but rather a set of practices that can be used for various ends. Thus we must think both of the practical requirements and the ends to which we direct them. Vargas-Cetina's summary of the Mexican scene also raises the importance of the social structure of the field (as well as our much cherished ideas).

The following case studies, from Peru and the Philippines, differ in being more focused on specific policy issues rather than being a national overview, as with Mexico. However, even for specific cases it is important

to recognize and act on the underlying national political structures and cultures. Richard Chase Smith narrates the struggle for land and self-governance by the Amuesha and other peoples from the Amazon-Andes margin, but the ebbs and flows of the immediate struggle are shaped by the evolving place of indigenous peoples as citizens in Peru, and that in turn is shaped by challenges to the post-colonial cultural hierarchy of civilized and savage in the Andean region. In this way, Smith shows how his intellectual training in Andeanist anthropology, providing the ability to diagnose how deep cultural assumptions might be challenged and changed, proved to be a crucial part of his effectiveness as a participant, collaborator, and planner in the nitty-gritty policy process.

Evelyn Caballero collaborated with traditional small-scale gold miners in the Philippines to shape the implementation of legislation that could well have damaged, even destroyed their finely tuned social structure involving the sharing of work and income. As is so often the case, policy effectiveness involves implementation at least as much as the language of the formal legislation. Her work was particularly effective in two regards: first, the anthropologist as expert, gathering and summarizing key knowledge needed to demonstrate the distinctive characteristics of traditional small scale miners in a policy arena that was otherwise blind to their presence (this involved not only fieldwork with traditional miners but also fieldwork on the cultural assumptions of technical experts and bureaucrats); second, the anthropologist as broker in the political process, notifying communities of key public hearings and helping them to understand how provisions of law and policy within the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Mines would impact their culture as indigenous miners.

Caballero closes her essay with a rich set of reflections on policy relevant anthropology, including valuable points about the roles of communications

and information dissemination in all directions, networking and partnerships, and above all, assisting communities in developing policy effectiveness themselves. Rather than summarize them, we simply recommend that readers carefully study them, with a mind to how they can be made relevant to their own national and regional contexts of practice.

Indeed, it is exactly self-education in policy effectiveness that motivates us. This special section of *Practicing Anthropology* is a project of the Public Policy Committee of the Society for Applied Anthropology. It embodies our goal of helping applied anthropologists and other social scientists gain tools of public policy effectiveness that can be transferred and adapted from one situation to another, given the immense diversity of issues and settings we face—and in this case, the diversity of national anthropologies. The Committee's goals can be found on the SfAA website: <<http://www.sfaa.net/committees/policy/policygoals.pdf>>. We hope the readers of this special section collaborate with the Public Policy Committee, and contribute to *Practicing Anthropology* their own experiences with policy issues on a worldwide basis.

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