The Uses of Professional Networking in the Emerging Methodology for an Anthropology of Public Policy

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ABSTRACT: By considering multiple perspectives on the problem of networking and networks in public policy circles, as well as the wider professional world, this article aims to both draw out and blur boundaries and definitions among multiple levels of networking as an analytic concept, a fieldwork method and a practice observed among policymakers. In making this distinction and explaining it in relation to theorisations of fieldwork rapport and 'complicity,' the article attempts to show that the distance and collegiality that defines professional networking is a viable and potentially quite insightful mode, means and method for conducting fieldwork, particularly for multi-sited anthropology of public policy projects. To that end, this article offers both conceptual ideas, as well as practical advice for conceiving and conducting fieldwork for an anthropology of public policy project.

KEYWORDS: Anthropology of public policy, multi-sited ethnography, professional networking, Poland, rapport

Most of what I have learnt about professional networking was not discovered while I was searching for jobs before I started my anthropological field work in Warsaw or after I finished my dissertation and found employment as a consultant in Los Angeles, but rather unexpectedly while I conducted anthropological fieldwork in Poland on the emergence and proliferation of anti-corruption policy and that country's Freedom of Information (FOI) law. By necessity, I slowly established a network of contacts in Warsaw who largely required that I treat them with a certain respectful distance, a sentiment that I obliged as part of an unwritten and unspoken cultural code. Later, when I entered the realm of non-academic professional anthropology following my graduate studies, I encountered a fascinating convergence between my field-

work experiences and a number of relatively simple how-to books on career networking (not a skill that most academic advisors tend to focus on). These insights, from both fieldwork and the how-to books, carried over into my own professional networking experiences. From one perspective, the benefit of these straightforward how-to guides ironically felt much clearer than most anthropological methodologies. At the same time, the lessons learnt from professional career networking likely comes as no surprise to many anthropologists, especially those studying public policy. Making the connection between professional practice and fieldwork methods explicit, however, will hopefully provide some illumination, or at least generate productive discussion and further elaboration.

By considering multiple perspectives on the problem of networking and networks in public policy circles, as well as the wider professional world, this article aims to both draw out and blur boundaries and definitions among multiple levels of networking as an analytic concept, a fieldwork method and a practice observed among policymakers. In making this distinction and explaining it in relation to theorisations of fieldwork rapport and 'complicity,' I want to show that the distance and collegiality that define professional networking is not somehow inferior to more traditional ethnographic relationship forms, but actually a viable and potentially quite insightful mode, means and method for conducting fieldwork—and this is particularly the case for multi-sited ethnographic projects and an anthropology of public policy. To that end, this article offers both conceptual ideas, as well as practical advice for conceiving and conducting fieldwork for an anthropology of public policy project. In the end, I suggest that pursuing networking as not just a methodology, but a form of fieldwork relationship might help re-frame or bring forth new possibilities for anthropological critique.

Networking in Poland

I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork in Warsaw, Poland from May of 2003 to May of 2004. There, I studied the production and deployment of knowledge about corruption in the realms of public policy, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and journalism. It is a multi-sited ethnographic project, which moves from international-minded sites, such as lending institutions like The World Bank that have recently adopted anti-corruption policies, to international NGOs like Transparency International with a branch office in Warsaw. My project also tries to understand local contexts in which ideas about anti-corruption policy, transparency, and journalism emerged, some-

times independently of international forces. During my fieldwork, I never worked for an NGO or a newspaper, nor did I spend a great deal of time peering over the shoulders of investigative journalists as they typed their stories or watching anti-corruption NGO employees compile the voluminous stacks of documents that they were so proud of. This group of people did not go out for drinks on Tuesday night, nor did they hang out at each other's house. If they knew one another, it was largely through professional networking circumstances. To be certain, some of them had known each other for a long time and they had their friendships, but their professional standing in this group did not require or even necessarily suggest anything more than collegiality. My relationship with them was no different.

During and after my fieldwork, when anthropologists asked me about my fieldwork experience, they inevitably questioned where I had to hang out to capture my story. And inevitably, I would feel an anxiety. I would get rather defensive because the question implied that if I did not hang out, if I did not establish a kind of rapport or perhaps fall into a situation of complicity—which Marcus (1997) refers to as a deeper level of involvement (though complicity can mean many different things, as it is heavily and negatively loaded)—then maybe I was not really doing anthropological fieldwork. Did I get beyond the public relations face and inside the bureaucracy or a certain NGO? Well, no, I did not. I was actually searching for the public relations face because my ethnography originally intended to examine the emergent transformation of the public-private divide in Poland, a country with a long history of distrust of the public face (e.g. see Milosz 1953). I talked with a lot of public relations people. That 'face' was most often, at base, the motivating factor for their present action because, for them, it was simply true. After all, in an environment of increasing transparency among anti-corruption groups, silence or even inaction would be smarter than blatant

misrepresentation—if they willfully deceived the public, then the press would call them on it in the newspaper. At the same time, because the memory of communist-era government censorship and public relations falsehoods were still fairly fresh in most journalists' minds, a sense of distrust with the public relations face still fuelled a great deal of scepticism in the information flow relationships. Therefore, those sites of surface-level information access, however disjointed, impersonal and lacking in possible familiarisation, were exactly the types of places I sought.

By convention and necessity, my fieldwork data were formally collected through interviews. Some were taped, more often they were not. Some were more official than others. There was no fieldwork to be done on weekends and weeknights. There were a lot of scheduling problems, waiting rooms, and secretaries bringing coffee or tea. There were no invitations to private homes and very few drinks at the bar. There were no anti-corruption parties. It was not exactly fun. And it is not a particularly pleasant subject. Sometimes, it made my stomach turn.

So rather than jealously envy those earlier anthropologists with the skill and luck to become visible members of the inner sanctum of another culture, I thought it was wise to identify myself as similar to those investigative journalists that I often interviewed. This was not just an intuitive hunch, but a conceptual extension of a multi-sited ethnographic project. In conducting fieldwork in this way, I found that, rather than a proxy for 'real' fieldwork, I could actually discover and become submerged in a more relevant context in which to situate my ethnographic findings. Without even my willing attempts, I found that the majority of people I spoke with treated me like a journalist, most simply because I contacted them in a manner similar to journalists—through phone calls requesting meeting appointments. And similar to a journalist's interview, those people preferred that I not stay

to hang out in their offices. They wanted to get back to work and had often devoted much more time and effort to our interview than the typically brief journalistic interview.

During my fieldwork, I developed a particularly productive collegial relationship with a senior academic who both studied corruption and played an important role in the world of anti-corruption policy. We will call him Andrzej: a professor at the Academy of Sciences, a government-employed 'expert' and a member or ex-member of a large number of powerful NGOs, think tanks and advocacy groups. He was also my first official fieldwork interview and he made the prospect of fieldwork look easy. After asking a couple of background questions, I explained the purpose of my project, which at that time was to simply account for the history of the passage of the Polish Freedom of Information Law from 2001. 'That law was my idea,' he told me.

This fieldwork thing, I thought, this is easy—until Andrzej began to hint at two intervening factors. For one, the history of the law's passage was thorny and complex. Second, he pointed out the law's close ties to ongoing anti-corruption initiatives, something I knew little about at the time.

Beyond those points, Andrzej's references remained obscure. He gave me the phone numbers of a lawyer who authored the successful bill and the president of the Journalist's society. He told me to tell them that Andrzej sent me, a crucial reference. And before he departed, he accepted my request for an affiliation at the Academy. Not only was this crucial for my temporary residence permit, but it would also formally establish a degree of collegiality for my future encounters in the field. Technically, he was my sponsor faculty and over the course of the year, he taught me a great deal about how the anti-corruption policy scene operates. He also helped confirm some pieces of the history of the passage of the FOI law. At the same time, I became an important source of information to him for two

reasons. First, he was at the core of the coalition of anti-corruption NGOs that had eventually got the FOI law passed, but had been in conflict with another coalition of anti-corruption NGOs, as well as other political party interests. From his partial perspective, he had not been able to see the wider picture of how the law got passed. Perhaps because of his proximity to the maelstrom and also because members of the opposing coalition refused to talk openly with his coalition, he remained uninformed of the fuller story. The second reason he found the history I collected important was because he is a social scientist who studies political elites. The passage of this law was a case study for him. Even more ironic, one of his better-known co-authored articles described the itinerant figures that inhabit the networks of the post-communist world of political elites. Essentially, he and his fellow anti-corruption advocates were similarly itinerant figures, constantly shifting organisations and temporarily filling institutional positions without ever attaching themselves to one place. Such nomadic behaviour made the documentation of this law's history particularly challenging.

As my fieldwork year went on, I would go to the Institute several times a week and run into Andrzej every two or three weeks. We did not discuss my project as a whole, but simply my progress on the history of this one law. He was not even interested in the implementation or success of the law, only its history. I would explain the history as it unfolded to me through my mostly formal interviews and he would listen intently, sometimes quietly affirming, other times vocally refuting the stories that other people told. I would only tell him who the informant was if it was a colleague that he had directed me to, so as to keep my sources anonymous. Eventually, Andrzej would point me to people who were part of the opposing coalition, clearly curious about their perspective of the story, but equally unable to speak with those people openly. 'But don't tell him I sent you!' he would say. He

started calling me, 'The Investigator'. I later learned that these were not Andrzej's enemies, but occasional collaborators with Andrzej who might be members of an Andrzej-led coalition on certain occasions. After some time, it became apparent that getting at the 'true' or 'deeper' identity of Andrzej or any of the other actors in this history was irrelevant. So why was Andrzej interested in the history? Were people's current reflections about that historical issue telling him about their present disposition towards current issues? All actors were shifting their identities at opportune moments to the point that they were even obscure to one another. Rather, Andrzej's interest in collecting this history was to capture a brief moment in time when these individuals worked together, to understand their purposes and to recognise how an opposing coalition almost thwarted their efforts. But there were no hard and fast boundaries—neither politically left nor right, nor personally or personality-wise—that prevented them from working together. To be certain, they all wanted personal achievement accolades. But if the political stakes were heightened in the realm of transparency, it was not a result of any coalition inside the Polish anti-corruption world. Rather, it was external national or international trends towards the increasing importance of anti-corruption policy as a social and increasingly political phenomenon that generated the stakes.

Establish Networking

Most networking conversations start with small talk, and for a good reason. Small talk establishes rapport, and without that, the conversation does not move along. Small talk also begins to establish common ground. Your chat about the community, the mutual friend who brought you together, or the café or office where you meet sets others at ease. It gives you a chance to display enthusiasm for the meeting, and provides openings for the business conversation. For example: 'It was good of Evan to introduce us. He's an outstanding coach. I notice he never loses his temper, even

when a kid is giving him a hard time. That must be a strength of his at work' (Taylor and Hardy 2006).

The founder of *monster.com*, Jeff Taylor, wrote this paragraph as part of a how-to book on networking for a professional audience, mainly of businesspeople. In this section, Taylor refers to rapport in a similar way as anthropologists have: a relationship designated by accord, shared affinity and ultimately, friendship. I do not want to use this quote to mock the way in which anthropology has been hijacked or been terribly misunderstood by non-anthropologists, but to say something about how our ethnographic methods are not always so different from some of the things other professional networks do.

While anthropologists have recognised the importance of rapport, the relationship of trust built up over time between an ethnographer and her subjects (Bernard 2006: 368–370), for building solid fieldwork relationships for a long time, the de-localisation, expansion and globalisation of professional business networks has led to increased emphasis on rapport-building skills in networking since the 1990s. Almost at the same time, anthropologists began to write about ethnographic relationships in a post-rapport fieldwork world, focusing on ethical binds (Fortun 2001), complicity and advocacy (e.g. Hastrup and Elsass 1990). In studying new ethnographic objects where informants are not exotic others, but more counterparts to the academic anthropologist (Holmes and Marcus 2006), this sense of rapport-inspired friendship has, at times, become problematic when ethnographic analysis may collide, dispute or contradict the published expert analysis of an informant. As a result, anthropologists have related to their informants in different ways, especially when they work in powerful institutions. One new way to relate to informants, described by Marcus (1997), has been complicit relationships (not in the criminal sense) defined by a

deeper participation inside the organisation being studied.

More than just an ironic cross current, professional networking can actually play an important role in understanding and generating fieldwork relationships for anthropologists studying public policy realms throughout the world. What I want to highlight is that while networking nominally refers to a sense of rapport, in practice it emphasises professional relationships marked by a measured distance and respect among colleagues. This is especially important to policy worlds because, after all, policy making happens among professionals: academics, businesspeople, government experts and similar others. Understanding how professional networking works can lend valuable insights into anthropological encounters with professional policy experts. In fact, professionalism as a style and collegiality as a mode of relationship building are central modes for addressing fieldwork for anthropologists of public policy. More than being just a form of survival, professional networking and its globalised social code have implications for the emergent nature of anthropological critique and insight.

The Misuses of the Uses of Complicity

'It's not what you know, but who you know,' says the old adage. But increasingly for network-builders, it is not who you know, but who they know. And what does it mean to know another person? Ethnographic fieldwork operates from the general assumption that we need to know our informants in great depth (Geertz 1973), but what happens when this depth, for whatever reasons, is somehow unattainable? In professional networking, as in anthropology, the question of knowing someone and building a fruitful and mutually respectful relationship hinges on what each side gets out of the relationship. Surprising as it may sound at times, anthropologists do

not want to exploit their fieldwork relationships any more than professionals do. At the same time, networking is not necessarily about knowing another person in great depth. In fact, Granovetter (1973, 1974) has found that many of the strongest, most far-reaching networks, particularly in politics and business, are created by softer connections with less depth.

Before we pick apart professional networking as a practice, anthropological method or analytic concept, it is important to understand some historical context. Professional networks have changed and relationships are today more important to more people than ever before. As a corollary of contemporary free market capitalism in the U.S., employers may hire and fire professional workers at will. Taylor (Hardy and Taylor 2006) tells his readers that they must approach their careers with a 'free agent mentality', offering statistical evidence: in mid-20th century America, the average job tenure was 23.5 years, but as of 1996, the average tenure had dropped to 3.5 years. With constant re-structuring of an economy dominated by fast-moving services, layoffs and firings are a common, if not expected, aspect of professional life throughout the world. But concomitant with these negative trends, younger professionals in America can look forward to the retirement of the baby-boom generation and the increasing lack of stigma attached to frequent job turnover. So, professionals have some advantages too, at least for now. It all adds up to an increased emphasis on building a vast network of colleagues who can help when the pink slip, a notice of dismissal, comes in. In the past, professional networks revolved around the single company or local industry where professionals worked for the long haul. Today, younger professionals must figure out ways to build their own network across organisational, geographical and industry or occupational boundaries. Their long-term success depends on it.

Based on my fieldwork in Warsaw and in Washington DC with FOI experts and anti-corruption NGOs, as well as the work of many other anthropologists (e.g. Wedel 2001, Riles 2000), we know that networking plays an important role in how professional policy worlds operate. And we also know that an ethnographic study of policy requires highly tactical fieldwork strategies to get our way inside of these networks where policy making happens (see also Nader 1972). This raises the problem of how anthropologists should proceed. There are a range of possibilities, from working alongside or in complete cooperation and participation with our informants to consistently maintaining a measured distance between us and them. In either case, we need to consider much more complex instances of data gathering than simply breaking into the network and soaking up knowledge.

Without offering a thorough analysis or characterisation of the methodological literature on rapport or contemporary problems in fieldwork relationships here, I want to focus on just a few recent works that have problematised the traditional sense of rapport-building by examining complicity. In 'The Uses of Complicity in the Changing Mise-en-Scène of Anthropological Fieldwork', George Marcus (1997) offers a new model for fieldwork relationships in the era following the problematisation of traditional anthropology. By directly engaging with the looming father figure of that tradition, Clifford Geertz, Marcus picks apart the famous 'Balinese Cockfight' article introduction and then proceeds to use a more obscure Geertz article to point out how complicity may exist inside or perhaps even be inherent in Geertz's figure of rapport. The cockfight anecdote represents, 'an uncomplicated complicity that "breaks the ice" and provides the anthropologist the coveted fictional acceptance that will allow him to create the counter-"mesmerism" of rapport whereby he is no longer invisible' (Marcus 1997: 109). But in the more complex, 'Thinking as a Moral Act,' 'Geertz calls this key rapport-defining act of complicity an "anthropological irony"

of fictions that each side accepts' (Marcus 1997: 110).

Perhaps in some sympathy with Geertz's declared intention to combine engagement and analytic thought with the scientific methodological attitude of detachment or disinterestedness, Marcus does not critique Geertz for any kind of ethical failure—though many other critics have made such accusations at scientists who claim any degree of detachment from their subject of study (e.g. Haraway 1991). Instead, he points to critiques of traditional rapport carried out by James Clifford (1988) and Renato Rosaldo (1989), but finds that these critiques fail to realistically address the changing environment of anthropological fieldwork. For Marcus, the problem with rapport is not ethical or political, but theoretical and methodological; not representational, but conceptual:

> Until recently, much of this discussion has assumed the essential desirability and achievability of rapport—it remains the favoured condensed view and disciplinary emblem of the ideal condition of fieldwork—even while the path to rapport seems always to have been fraught with difficulties, uncertainties, happenstance, ethical ambiguity, fear, and self-doubt. However, there are now signs of the displacement of this foundational commonplace of fieldwork, given the changing mis-en-scène in which anthropological research is now frequently being constituted (Marcus 1997: 106).

So, what succeeds rapport and why? In his introduction, Marcus carefully observes that, 'no replacement figure…is emerging to take rapport's place' (107). He then suggests that we consider complicity as one possible form, among others, to replace rapport, but adds, 'in no way am I promoting complicity as a candidate for a new shorthand or commonplace of disciplinary practice' (107).

Unfortunately, the article is easily misconstrued as suggesting complicity as rapport's successor. As a result, we have the misuses of 'The Uses of Complicity'. In the latter half

of the article, for example, Marcus traces 'the transformation of complicity…from its place in the shadows of the more positive and less ethically ambiguous notion of rapport to its emergence as a primary figure in the ideology of fieldwork' (117). As the conditions of fieldwork have changed—referring to the emergence of and the necessity for multi-sited ethnography—'it is the figure of complicity that focuses this change' (117). If Geertz represents the limits of anthropological fieldwork and critics like Clifford and Rosaldo (e.g. their respective articles in Clifford and Marcus 1986) represent attempts to expel ethical ambiguity from the fieldwork relationship by carefully describing and reflexively analysing the fieldwork context, then complicity is either an oddly optimistic prospect for the future or some sort of post-apocalyptic reality for fieldwork in the twenty-first century, sacrificing the present for a possible future.

Some key elements of our contemporary mis-en-scéne that Marcus alludes to include globalisation, professional networks and public policy. Both in lieu of and as a result of the changing character of networks today, anthropologists have multiple options for how to conduct a research project that reflects on, better understands and perhaps critiques elements of globalisation, including the formation, circulation and proliferation of public policy. While other social theorists, such as Manuel Castells (1996, 1997, 1998), have provided us with frames to understand our present 'network society' from a 30,000 foot view, it is the tendency of anthropologists to research, analyse and interpret all practices, no matter how local or global, from an essentially local perspective. This seems to be both the benefit and potential downfall of an ethnographic methodology.

If we cannot simply accept and plug in a network theory for how globalisation works, this of course would mean that anthropologists have to study forces of globalisation on the ground. Two options exist, though there

are likely others, for a project such as my own in Poland on anti-corruption policy. The first would be to gain entrance to a single site, such as an important anti-corruption NGO in Warsaw. From that single vantage point, I could have built deeper connections to and developed a rapport with the individuals in that group, the goal being a thicker interpretation of the anti-corruption scene. But as a result, I also would have made myself complicit, to a certain degree, with that NGO's worldview and political situatedness as a result of my personal obligations. Another option, which I pursued, was to circulate among all actors and organisations, always an outsider and never truly an insider—yet, oddly enough, finding myself becoming a 'colleague' with others who were equally reticent.

What is unique about my fieldwork situation is not just about politics and the political uses or abuses of ethnography—there is no question, dilemma or intended judgment here of whether an anthropologist who advocates for social justice causes is doing the right thing. Instead, what this project shows is that while the well-situated ethnographer would likely fall into some situation of complicity, the multi-sited ethnographer needs to embrace professional networking as a core fieldwork practice and methodological trope. Not only is networking a necessity in such a situation, but it is productive as a generator for future and sustainable connections, which allows the multi-sited form of ethnography to grow continually. And, in the best cases at least, this growth, proliferation and expansion creates a certain explanatory and interpretive thickness (however thin, ironically) that is both different and similar to the traditional anthropological sense of thick description. While in one sense, this conceptual base shares its foundation with actor-network theory (e.g. Latour 1987, Callon 1986, Law 1987), what is unique is how much more self-aware these actors are of their networks and network-building, particularly

in public policy circles. There is no question of the social reality of these networks and their perceived impact.

Fieldwork complicity may find its biggest obstacle when a project is truly multi-sited and the ethnographer is required to follow a story. Attempting to move from one arena to the next, anthropologists may have similar access issues that the organisation the ethnographer is embedded in similarly faces. For example, Fortun's research with a Bhopal NGO that advocated for victims of the city's environmental disaster (2001) impacted her attempts to follow the ethnographic story into a Union Carbide boardroom and their annual stockholders' meetings, sites shrouded in great secrecy and exclusivity. While in that case, networking was arguably unlikely to gain her access into the boardroom, more generally, something about the public face of the internal workings of a giant organisation usually rings false to outside groups who are in conflict with that large organisation.

We often tend to think of public affairs and information access points as places for large organisations, whether corporate or state, to put a spin on the truth. These messages are carefully constructed and crafted by a professional communications staff. In such an environment, 'professional' is not always a term for expertise or a standard marker of quality. It is often a disparaging remark, not unlike 'professional student' or 'professional leech'. We might add, in certain contexts, 'professional anthropologist', which seems to imply a lack of critical thought. But in the context of following a multi-sited anthropological project that attempts to ethnographically capture a highly complex public policy problem, perhaps this 'professional' approach is precisely where we need to be.

Professional Networking Worlds

This article attempts to build on the 'Uses of Complicity' essay: not to refine the concept

of complicity or replace it, but to rewind the essay back to its introduction and re-stress the multiplicity of forms engendered by the changing mis-en-scène of anthropological fieldwork.

For the sake of an emerging methodology for an anthropology of public policy, and through the lens of my own fieldwork experiences while studying public policy, I want to suggest professionalism that facilitates networking as a mode of fieldwork and—here grasping for the right terms—collegiality as a fieldwork relationship. Collegiality differs from complicity in its sense of voluntary distance agreed upon by both or all sides. One etymological source for collegiality is found in ecclesiastical policy where a collegial church is a purely voluntary association formed by mutual contract, a sharing of power. Another source is college, made up of a mass partnership, literally a body of colleagues. As opposed to a complicit accomplice or direct association with the affairs or interests of another, the collegial relationship is a common element in professional relationships that may bring together people from separate realms or disciplines. Collegiality differs from straightforward adjacency because that term implies simply lying near or somehow parallel. It remains ambiguous on the subject of volition, as well as interaction.

To a lot of people, and even some anthropologists, the very idea of networking your way to a new job or business opportunity can feel slimy, somehow unethical or simply corrupt. It is the perception that, you pat my back and I will pat yours; networking creates old boy networks. While it is certainly true that networks such as this exist throughout the world, the existence of corrupt networks does not make all professional networks corrupt. Throughout Eastern Europe, for example, Janine Wedel has documented the existence of corrupt elite networks that funnelled foreign aid to the communist bloc after 1989 (2001) and her present research examines the ubiquity of these illicit, underground networks. At the same time,

my own fieldwork in Poland demonstrated that elements of the anti-corruption network shared features of the corrupt networks that the anti-corruption people wanted to fight. As a result of negative experiences with networks of corrupt professionals in most parts of the world, and especially in the developing world, we can expect corruption to inflect perceptions of many professional networks, particularly those dealing with public funds in any manner. Based on my interviews, analysis of popular media sources and data taken from popular opinion polls, it seemed that most Polish people, for instance, felt weary of any political elite network.

Despite this perception, most professional networks rely on more transparent grounds where referrals to others serve as gifts. Individual nodes in professional networks do not necessarily make decisions or powerfully get things done, but may simply help others by providing references to those in need and pass them along a web of connections. For example, in the consulting world, a job applicant with a solid resume is good, one with solid references better, but best of all is when the hirer receives a reference call from a professional colleague she can trust. However, professionals do not network only by getting jobs for one another, but also through more mundane gifting, such as delivering references or simply providing personal contact information. In that way, when the recipient must repay the gift, the professional does not necessarily have to find his colleague a new job, but perhaps merely point his colleague in the proper direction, give names and numbers or make a personal reference call or email. This might sound familiar, in some ways, to many readers who are part of academic networking.

Networkers must juggle, always staying in motion—this represents a new problem for ethnographic methodology. In ethnographic research in professional policy contexts, as in the professional business world, nothing is more hopeless than the cold call. For Geertz

in Bali, establishing rapport and becoming a visible being happened after he ran from the police who broke up a cockfight. Geertz leaped across an invisible divide to firmly establish rapport. But anthropologists at public policy-making institutions more often slowly build a network to cross this bridge. That's an important difference between rapport and professionalism. These policy institutions create a much more rigid, official and formalised divisions between members and non-members. Therefore, we are talking about a much bigger, more impersonal world. A cold call, abrupt introduction or serendipitous encounter may help start a bridge, but field workers must always look ahead to the next step of networking. If the field worker fails to keep the network in motion, she runs the risk of stagnation. In many or most fieldwork contexts, public policy experts do not have the time to talk or engage with anthropologists on a regular schedule. So if the anthropologist takes up too much of the official's time or focuses too much on gaining an in-depth portrait of that person, she may miss the opportunity of situating that official in terms of their network. Best to keep meetings and encounters brief and develop relationships over the course of time.

I learnt in my own fieldwork—and many other anthropologists studying public policy I have spoken with concur—that time and timing represent perhaps our biggest obstacles. For example, it took me over six months to finally arrange a meeting with one anti-corruption investigative reporter. The meeting, when it finally happened, was enormously successful and important to my research, opening exciting new avenues of inquiry, as well as key contacts. But it quite nearly did not happen. Months of emails and cold calls finally resulted in a chance opportunity when a receptionist happened to find the reporter in the office. 'How did you find me?' he asked. 'I'm never at my office.' Impressed by my persistence, he granted the interview. 'You should try becoming an investigative reporter,' he

flattered me, 'you are very persistent'. In the process of tracking down my informants, I developed networking skills similar to those of my informants and within the same context. Networking, for me, became a form of participant observation.

Following the social rules and informal codes laid out by professional network builders can help guide field workers through alien territory. For example, always follow up with references and thank them, preferably with a handwritten note. Keep in touch, calling or emailing old contacts every couple months, but not too often. Drop names and see who knows whom. While it is certainly true that the founder of *monster.com* cannot explain how professional networking operates across all cultures—despite what might be considered increasingly homogenised professional cultures globally—learning the differences between professional networks in one's own country compared to other sites is a fruitful way to generate valuable fieldwork data. And remember that the process of learning how to network in a public policy field is itself part of the ethnographic fieldwork process.

All of these insights may seem obvious or simple. They are. But as I learnt in the course of my fieldwork experience, the problem of getting things done in policy worlds is oftentimes a matter of building bridges, having them fall apart and simply puzzling together non-obvious networks. From simple connections, larger patterns may emerge. Having a sense of who knows who, what is important where and other sense-making practices is, functionally speaking, what these networks are all about.

Conclusion: Multi-Sited Critique

New ethnographic objects require new methods of study and subsequently, can craft new forms of anthropological critique and analysis. Of course, none of these things are entirely new,

but rather derived from or suggested by earlier anthropology. What is novel about this case is that anthropologists of public policy can utilise insights from their professional lives to inform anthropological methods (and *vice versa*). As Riles (2004) points out, ethnographic analysis is often aided by comparing or juxtaposing parallel systems of meaning and interpreting fieldwork through the lens of another, related experience. In doing so, we can find ways to re-frame our analysis outside of the current tools of political critique—a form of critique that, as Riles explains, our subjects often know about, anticipate and even react against—and suggest more subtle and powerful new forms of critique.

In my case, this method suggested a form of anthropological critique that was not grounded within my field site, but rather through my field site (Reinhold 1994) and between sites (Marcus 1995). Networking is about movement and being transitory. In engaging my field site by moving through my field site, I came to understand how the people who composed that field site must also puzzle, muddle and connect their way through policy realms. They are not nefarious power-driven technocrats that wield immense power by hoarding secrets, but rather mobile actors engaged in power-sharing compromise and coalition building in a constantly shifting and oftentimes murky field of practice.

From the outside, I might have chosen to study the citizens who suffer from excessive secrecy and government corruption while the anti-corruption groups bicker, fail to act promptly or neglect implementation of policies already in place. This inevitably leads to one form of political critique. But from the inside, the policy world looks much different. Inside this world is an intricate game of tactics and strategy that embodies any policy, knowledge or idea form. This does not make policy neutral—as Shore and Wright (1997) point out, policy often cloaks itself in such a manner—but provides us a way to imagine and understand how power operates in various policy realms—through a politics of compromise, mobility and shifting terrains. If anthropologists can employ networking as a method, then we may interpret networking styles as an embodiment of these highly entangled and problematic forms of politics and power.

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