

Epilogue

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While the present volume might appear to the non-specialist reader as resulting from accidental mixing, the opposite becomes evident after thorough reading. In hindsight, a series of debates helped to push people forward in their thinking, at the Verona conference as much as ever since. The underlying logic went well beyond the truth in the popular slogan ‘Think global, act local’. With ‘Putting People First’, the conference conveners encouraged anthropologists to read the slogan backwards, as through a mirror. Only from knowing how people think locally can we learn how they act globally. To act responsibly requires us to reflect on our own doing. Thus, turning the anthropological perspective around by 180 degrees means to query first the authors, and then, through them, to ask readers some uncomfortable questions. Good intentions are not good enough. Andrew Moutu is quite right in reminding anthropologists that they need first of all to ask themselves.

The texts assembled here stress the agency of people, their power to find ways to act according to their own ideas and needs, to innovate— notwithstanding the deadlock situations described in anthropological theories based on incomplete analysis. The authors provide us with some answers by demonstrating what anthropologists could achieve by ‘Putting People First’, that is, before their own discipline. These answers, as tentative as they may be, should help us to redefine the potential of our discipline in a forward perspective. Let us try to trace some lines of reflecting upon the texts as a help for a deeper appreciation of where we stand at present. In the following, I shall concentrate on issues I want to highlight, which does not mean that the contributions or ideas that I do not cite explicitly were of a lesser importance. Others shall read the texts differently as anthropology is evolving.

Perhaps surprisingly for conference-goers, the most immediate response to Moutu's appeal took the form of being asked whether indeed we knew who we were by way of questioning our eating (and drinking) habits. Do we really know what we are eating and thus who we are? How we relate ourselves to what we eat locally provides, literally, food for thought on how to act globally. At the closing event in Verona slow food offered from local sources in the Veneto combined with an input by the Kanak delegation challenged traditional views about the conference dinner as a social event. The food helped us in our search for an update to our identity as anthropologists, very much as the texts still do. Reflecting on people's evaluation of their own foodscape—that is the food they produce or obtain, the ways they prepare it or have it prepared by others, and the gusto with which they eat and share it—might prove a very basic and hands-on approach to local agency. It will immediately also provide a test field for anthropologists, allowing them to position themselves in relation to the people with whom they intend to work. If you abhor sago grubs, you might never fully grasp what sago means. But there is more to it.

Re-thinking anthropological questions and mind-sets in manifold social and therefore diverse cultural contexts is challenging. Yet, applying anthropological approaches to the width and depth of biodiversity will probably test our endurance to its limits. What seems so simple in its basics, that is to relate each society under study, including our own, to its natural environment, animated by a characteristic mix of live species and dead rocks, becomes quickly a site for entanglement. Is the idea to achieve symbiotic changes in society, cultural behaviour and the natural settings viable at all? Or, the other way around, are there ways to reduce the rate of disappearance of natural species, especially when and where the latter represent the environmental potential for future generations? If the grandparents of those who suffer most from the loss in biodiversity were among those who introduced changes to fishing or hunting or cultivating techniques in order to obtain higher returns, how to implement a protective strategy, and in whose people's name? Nancy Pollock shows how foodscapes, even when remaining bound by traditions, adapt quite speedily to changes in techniques of production and distribution. Where researchers are rehearsing the evidence for locally induced changes, Pacific Islanders appear to have been animated by their own curiosity to try new methods and to make choices in favour of adapting and integrating the new. They are practitioners, not scientists. A gap is widening. And when it comes to the extraction of minerals, locals

(and with them also anthropologists) become dwarfs, too tiny to be taken seriously by Big Business and Governments alike (see e.g. Golub 2014; Rumsey and Weiner 2004; and Teaiwa 2014).

What foreigners have brought to peoples in the Pacific, for a few centuries across the sea, were often received as a welcome addition to the local life. Ever since the arrival of the first airplane in New Guinea almost 100 years ago, the way of entrance shifted radically from over the sea to across the sky. Why and how the foreign has often been appropriated through transformation, this we can learn from Marshall Sahlins's text. He puts the mark really high up by asking questions we had forgotten to ask. His 2008 Raymond Firth lecture, much easier to read than to listen to, is certainly the most radical appeal to reinvigorate informed anthropological debating about societies of wider Oceania by putting a concept basically on its head. By showing how in many Austronesian societies otherness or alterity was again and again defined as playing an integrative part in constituting chiefly or royal authority, we are getting ready to clean some old lenses or to even replace them.

Sahlins makes his point from a thorough analysis of local thinking in historically defined contexts. He provides some unexpected answers to the basic question of how to reconcile the need to validate a princely chief's or king's power in a way that people subjected to the acts of the very same authority do indeed accept their fate. For a social order to be set up as well as to get recognised from the bottom-up, the Austronesian model works in a double-step. First a stranger has to be accepted as a member of a given society, and in a second step that member needs to become these people's chief or king. Raymond Firth provides Sahlins with a guiding insight, based on local thinking: chiefs and kings are marked for becoming chiefs because they are said to be descended from foreigners who had arrived across the water or down from heaven—which on an isolated island surrounded by a reef almost look the same. These foreigners often married an important woman whose child would later become the new leader. On the other hand, the land and many basic rituals would remain under the control of the people native to the land. Sahlins underlines the aspect that this foreign origin of authority sparked again and again a local quest for things as well as for manifestations associated with the ultimate and always foreign source of power over the locals.

In a brilliant sidestep, we learn to read the reverence given among the Toradja of Sulawesi, or the Ifugao of Luzon or the Iban of Borneo to a head brought back from a headhunting trip as parallel to the reverence reserved for the chief of external origin. The head coming from an outsider becomes part of the group's own pride, and thus becomes an acknowledgement of how important external sources of life are for the well-being of a group. Hence the intense welcome for the returning successful headhunter by his mother. But the two segments remain in constant competition. Of course, here, Gregory Bateson is just around the corner. His analytical insights came from a non-Austronesian society without chiefs, however. Sahlins points to Bateson's model of Schismogenesis (Bateson 1958: 171–97, 265–98) as the most convincing way to analyse and unravel the underlying competition between conflicting positions. Schismogenesis helps to describe opposing poles of thinking that may consciously or subconsciously assist people in structuring their acts. Even ideals of behaviour or of orientation that seem to be mutually exclusive may thus lead to coherent acting whenever people either want to achieve power over people or sovereignty from other people, says Sahlins. For sure, not all stranger kings or chiefs of whom we know basic parts of their history fit exactly Sahlins's pattern of resolving an internal conflict, even if he can provide telling examples of congenial adaptations, such as the merger of the Islamic topos of Iksander (or Alexander the Great) with the Austronesian model of the stranger king for the princely houses of sultans on the island of Borneo and beyond. Sahlins's text makes inspiring reading because we can add new aspects from our own experiences and reading, thus formulating test cases for applying a formula such as 'Putting the Other' first in order to understand who the People are. To understand why and how consistently legitimating strangers as the source of authority and power, as much political as religious, is such a successful strategy in Austronesian societies of different eras makes a stunning contribution to our understanding of innovations in historical time. Because the Other, in life praxis the stranger, had for generations already provided the recognised source of legitimate power and even of wealth, Austronesian social order could not be implemented without strangers.

Let us assume that Marshall Sahlins's analysis explains a fundamental aspect of how in Pacific societies at large insiders deal with what outsiders have provided materially and immaterially, then local agency can only be appreciated, described or analysed in its relation to the agency of outsiders. This relationship may be seen as one of cooperation or of rejection, or most

likely of cool interpretation—by which I mean a combination of overtly shown disinterest or even critique and of determined incorporation. The study and discussion of values under different aspects so prominent in this volume provide us ample evidence. It is very telling that the idea of parents having to pay a school fee for each child, an idea introduced by colonial powers betraying their democratic ideal that basic education would only reach everyone as long as it was for free, made a woman name her pig after this obligation, Skulfi in Dobuan (but also in Tok Pisin). From Susanne Kuehling's text we learn to appreciate how this mother booked her naming on the assumption that the agency of an outsider would lead to the result she intended, that is to provide her children with a chance for education without having to rely on traditional family bonds. On the other hand, the anthropologist acting in response to her local family's expectations would become the anticipated partner to the owner of the pig when buying the pig for money. In this case a symmetrical pattern of agency between the local and the foreign prevailed.

The problem with agency is that anticipating when and how the other is going to act becomes hazardous. Even with the best of intentions, the balance between local agency and outside input is hard to strike in anticipation. Not every test can be successful. Margaret Jolly tells the story, well described and analysed, of how the well-intended project of exhibiting the Forster collection from the voyages of James Cook located at the Göttingen Anthropological Institute (literally the Institut für Ethnologie) at venues closer to the Pacific Islands and Pacific Islanders developed its own dynamic. From what we read, the immediate agency of the objects that were shown at different sites was not strong enough to calm down local debates and to overcome sentiments of rejection (by Hawaiians) or of indifference (by the Australian audience). This clearly shows that the agency inherent in objects of historical importance as well as in art works, to which European museum-goers are geared and thus quite open, is different from the agency these same objects might be credited with by an audience that is socially or geographically closer to the people who originally made and used the objects shown.

At the Canberra venue the project was ideally meant to help open up mind-sets from past visions of European impact to a new model of looking with priority at the effective and efficient cooperation between local populations and the strangers from Europe. Surprisingly, though, the non-result arrived despite the effort of the exhibition organisers to stress the cooperative model in the texts and in the presentation of the

objects. While the objects were moving, too many minds were staying put. Somehow, perhaps, the effort was not radical enough in form and content. Margaret Jolly's thoughtful presentation should be read widely in order to learn from it. Changing the public audience's perceptions through an exhibition requires more than just telling the basic story of observation and collecting as research methods. We should add here that the exhibition project on James Cook and the expedition scientists, with a series of three interconnected exhibitions held from 2009 to 2011 in Bonn, Vienna and Berne respectively, partly ran up against the same obstacles. Only its last version, the show in Berne, brought the visitors closer to a perspective wherein Pacific Islanders if not put first, were at least positioned very prominently. Using Tupaia's observations as an observer's (and museum visitor's) intellectual keyhole, so to speak, helped to display the objects made and used by Pacific Islanders in meaningful contexts, with an excellent response from the public. Tupaia's historically documented agency as successful mediator between the Europeans and local populations, especially Māori groups visited in New Zealand, opened a way to show Tupaia on an equal footing in contributing to the success of the voyage of the *Endeavour*.

Let's move our perspective over to the other side. Can local actors better anticipate the effects of their agency? The answer is probably yes and no. Yes, if they perform a series of formalised or ritualised acts for which the result is roughly predictable; no, whenever other actors and contingent situations come into play that in turn may either induce people to come up with new solutions or end in fatal conflict. Finding new ways might become visible or at least traceable in the form of new images, new words, new messages, new attitudes, new practices. Anthropology has entered this field, which is wide open, from different points of access. Not always has an orientation prevailed that privileged a view that, focusing on the agency of local actors or participants, was essential for obtaining results worth the effort of investigating. Only by 'Putting People First' can anthropology join in with a contribution that might help to open a window through which local actors could gain a view onto the consequences of their own doing for their own people.

Marc Tabani's essay is a step in this direction. It shows, hopefully not the least to the actors themselves, how well-intended innovations or adaptations can produce effects harming the foundations of one's own life. For Europeans, at least for those still familiar with their own history, including the history of tourism as well as of folklore, this does not come

as a surprise. The examples from two regions of Vanuatu showing the side effects of a growing tourism trade announce in one respect an even more serious problematic: whenever the alienation of land comes into play conflicts are sure to arise, and there seems no easy way out. To reconcile social and economic drives that aim at goals that are incompatible and therefore lead to a clash of interests asks for an effort to coordinate the agency of insiders with that of the Other, the outsider. As long as tourists are guided by their curiosity and performers of a ceremony use the presence of the Outsider to accomplish their performance, symmetry of insider and outsider agency seems warranted. However, as soon as both—the travel agent drawing the tourist to the event and the performer—want to earn money for their input, a basic imbalance of agencies is established. Who will be able to redress the balance? The locals or the outsiders?

Local initiatives for protecting vital natural resources are hard up in competing against commercial strategies propagated both by local peers and by external experts at home in economical disciplines. The strategies of the latter are oriented towards high yield, that is in the domains of ore mining, agricultural mass production, ocean-wide fishing, and, of course, international trade. The supra-national actors all claim abidance by rules of international law. These rules basically stem from a delicate balance between European philosophical values developed since the age of Enlightenment and the practise of ex-colonial powers in dealing with each other as well as with smaller nations and their citizens abroad. Only slowly does the codification of internationally recognised law take place. Moving from European intellectual concepts to local concepts as they are being developed and discussed nowadays can be challenging indeed. How to reconcile local notions of ownership—or rather custodianship—with guidelines that should become valid globally? An interesting case is made by Guido Carlo Pigliasco, showing for Fiji to what extent a combined input is needed where reflecting on local ideas is based on a disinterested anthropological approach. There can be no doubt that dealing with the material as well as intangible cultural heritage in the context of nation states in the Pacific is a very serious matter. The confrontation over questions of rights in rituals once led easily to war, well before the arrival of the envoys of European colonial powers. Mutual recognition of intellectual property rights, that is formalising local concepts of how intangible heritage can be defined, by whom it is thought to be looked after or, within limits, owned, and who could be authorised to represent it, may help to resolve at least some of the conflicts.

Conflicting ideas are being voiced when it comes to marketing salient aspects of cultural heritage for tourism or even to consumers of local products. Intangible property rights may often have a very tangible aspect, too; they are often linked to land rights in a detailed way by referring to elements of worldview. Landownership in the Pacific and beyond always has a spiritual connotation, even more so today, as the authority of well-endorsed chiefs and kings is challenged by other powers. Not an easy lesson to learn for the drivers of economic forces. It may be equally worrying for those who wake up hearing that their national government has decided to assume a say on artistic or intellectual ownership on their behalf, as a way of protecting a national good; this could well stretch their belief in the good faith of Government tutorship to the outmost. Striking a balance between the agencies of local actors, of external and often anonymous actors, and of Government initiatives will continue to be a serious task, not only for law makers.

From an anthropological view point, of particular interest is what and how members of the scientific community from and on Pacific Islands think about these issues, and also how local agency does further evolve among themselves. With the text of the late Marie-Claire Beboko-Beccalossi as a guide, we get the feeling for just how much intellectual energy and social responsibility it took, over the years, for Kanak women to earn again an appropriate voice and place in contemporary society, a place as respected or even more so than in a distant past. Marie-Claire's and her network's long battle reflects indirectly, and perhaps not surprisingly, the extent to which traditional gender roles were completely transformed by the early generations of teachers, colonial administrators and missionaries who all came from male-dominated sections of European society. Their dominance took away from women a lot of the potential of social agency.

For Kanak women, the *robe mission* has become a key element in claiming their own identity, as much as individuals as when acting in a peer group. By analysing this model case of materiality, Anna Paini illustrates how difficult the reading of local agency can get depending on the perspective chosen. Europeans, even anthropologists would easily misread the old-fashioned European-style garments so popular among Kanak women as proof of the colonial power's efficient transformation of the locals' identity, whereas the opposite is the case. It is striking that in this development no marked difference between an urban background and communities in more remote island situations appears. Paini shows how at present both contexts merge into one, thus allowing tradition and traditional forms

to gain a dynamic potential. In putting peoples first we need to question again and again our own discipline's viewing habits in the light of what people and peoples have to tell us.

Another aspect of materiality is illustrated by the case of the bamboo tubes engraved by Kanak storytellers and artists. Kanak society, especially on the Grande Terre of New Caledonia, where France installed in 1853 a penitentiary regime was much earlier exposed to forced colonisation with a numerically strong European presence. Local agency soon found a way to record pictures of the interaction between the traditional lifestyle and visiting colonial personnel by drawing on bamboo tubes. Roberta Colombo Dougoud took engraved bamboos, the focus of an exhibition in Geneva, back to Nouméa. This offered an opportunity to contrast the engraved bamboos of the nineteenth century with the work of a contemporary Kanak artist, Micheline Néporon, who reinvented the drawing on bamboo tubes with the aim of addressing a Kanak audience of today, confronting it with glimpses of problematic behaviour such as the abuse of alcohol leading to an incredibly high number of fatal car accidents. Here contemporary local agency responds to what outsiders had once contributed by collecting the old engraved bamboo tubes as well as by studying them, albeit under a hypothesis that aimed in the wrong direction. We would like to hear more about how Kanak society and their fellow inhabitants on the islands react to what artists of Micheline's generation have to tell them.

May the tide of innovations bring forth a rising force of fruitful contributions to help peoples of the Pacific maintain their potential to flourish. By 'Putting People First', anthropology could surely assist by developing its own potential of reflecting on how to match agencies, especially those that risk constraining each other. It's high time for cooperative efforts to aim beyond the limits of any separate discipline. In order to get there, scientists, social leaders, economists, politicians, food producers, cooks and—why not—artists need to share their forces, in the Pacific as much as elsewhere.

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