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Why don't we say we need them?

Academe without Society, and the North-South Asymmetry

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Résumé

L'article examine la problématique du détachement du milieu universitaire de la société en général, montrant du doigt la politisation qui a toujours cours dans les universités. Il émet le postulat que le milieu universitaire contribue à l'écart grandissant entre les élites mondiales et les pauvres de la planète.

Au sein du monde universitaire, on proclame souvent sa volonté de promouvoir l'égalité des chances, l'échange de connaissances et une plus grande équité entre les sociétés du Nord et du Sud. L'auteure a voulu pratiquer une « anthropologie partagée », c'est-à-dire l'anthropologie fondée sur des rapports mutuels cherchant à développer ensemble le savoir sur le terrain et dans le cadre de projets de collaboration universitaires. Pourtant, elle a constamment dû affronter la résistance du milieu, et ce, tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur de l'université, dans les pays du Nord comme dans ceux du Sud. Lisbet Holtedahl partage ici ses expériences personnelles et plusieurs exemples tirés de ses 45 années de pratique universitaire à titre d'anthropologue et de cinéaste au Niger, au Cameroun, au Mali et dans le Nord de la Norvège.

Early morning, on a foggy autumn day of 2011 in Paris, I went to the cinema with a close friend of mine to see the documentary "Inside Job" (Ferguson, 2010). The film documents the international financial crisis of 2008. The narrative starts in Iceland. After initial images of idyllic landscapes and villages, we hear that ordinary people in Iceland lost their money and jobs because of financial politics and manipulations by a few people on Wall Street. I vividly remember the interviews with several professors from well-known American universities. They were asked if they felt they had contributed to the financial crisis through their consultancy reports, and whether they saw any conflict of interests between their role in academia and their extracurricular activities, including their

membership on the boards of some banks. All those who were brave enough to answer in front of the camera said there was no conflict of interests, that their consultancy and directorships should not be of interest to the wider public. The most terrible thing for me, however, was to see some of the academic economists act in front of the camera as if they had completely lost touch with the world, with real people on the street, and in the villages. Detached from the lives of ordinary people, hidden behind the walls of financial institutions and universities, they produced dreams and numbers without, it seemed, thinking or harbouring any feelings about the consequence of their actions on other human beings. Oblivious and unconcerned, they kept on writing books and giving lectures to students at the same time (Joly, 2003, 2007).

The film made a very strong impression on me. We were witnessing the abuse of academic knowledge, which had devastating effects on the lives of millions of ordinary people around the world. For centuries, people have lived in a hierarchical world of winners and losers, masters and slaves, colonialists and colonized. Yet the production and dissemination of written academic knowledge has contributed to the reduction of the worst inequalities. It would therefore seem reasonable to expect modern universities and their researchers to be agents of positive change – not vectors of economic crises (Chomsky, 2010; Morin, 2008; Strathern, 2000).

It might appear naive to ask how much academics actually care about the consequences of their work. However, I think that it is important to focus on the relationship between the academic world and the wider society, because this relationship affects the production and dissemination of knowledge and the global distribution of wealth (de Gaulejac, 2012: 61). It is also important because academics simply depend on the wider society, although they may not always be aware of that fact.

In 1992, Fredrik Barth wrote that the role of universities should be:

> "to liberate people to play an appropriate role in articulating their own aspirations, creating their own visions of the Good Life, and thus define their own priorities in a development which does not lead them as latecomers to where others already are, but as pioneers to where they themselves wish to go" (Barth, 1992).

Although academic institutions are constantly asserting the aims and objectives of knowledge production, larger dynamics sometime lead them to pursue very different objectives from the ones they claim to seek. It is especially hurtful to see that, despite some areas of improvement, the general moral concerns of the academe seem to have deteriorated. Universities appear to be drifting away from their initial promise, their core mission, and the development of their avowed internal aims (Meneley & Young, 2012; Holtedahl et al., 1999).

I started my academic career at the end of the 1960s, at a time when students revolted and many universities started professing higher ideals. I

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was young and wanted to learn about life, by involving myself with others. I believed that in order to understand other people, you needed direct experience and empathy. Later on, I sought to turn this truth into my professional life, as an anthropologist. I wanted to use the respectability of the academic world to build bridges, empower others, and offer a critical analysis of life and society around me. I thought that the academe should enhance all those ideals, and that it should serve cultural critique (Marcus & Fischer, 1986), rather than be a blind servant to the financial world. Universities should reach out to people, rather than lose sight of them.

After 45 years of engaged anthropological research practice as a university scholar and social anthropologist in the marginal north – Northern Norway – and in the Global South – the Sahel region in Francophone Africa – my own practices and experiences now offer much empirical material for studying the interface between the academe and society. In this article, I want to recall some of these experiences, from the early 1970s to the mid 2010s, and try to identify dynamics that hamper academics' concerns for people, keep them unaware of their own membership in, and dependence on, society (Fabian, 2007; Herzfeld, 1992; Strathern, 2000).

Although some examples from the past may seem outdated, it is exactly my point to show that many of today's problems related to academic indifference are caused by very similar attitudes and mechanisms as those of the past. Despite our belief that new and better strategies are now helping to enhance our concern for society, the question remains: are we not in fact reproducing similar mechanisms of social indifference, only now of a much more sophisticated kind?

Academe without Society I: Struggling with Cross-Cultural Translations

I will start in West Africa, not with my own work but with that of French anthropologist and filmmaker Jean Rouch, who put great efforts into the use of film and anthropological knowledge as tools for cross-cultural dialogue. Rouch is especially important for the study of the relationship between the academe and the wider society because he was a "public anthropologist" and a pioneer of "engaged anthropology" (Besteman, 2013). He crossed the boundaries between social sciences and art, as he moved between Africa and Europe. Rouch was always ready to provoke, to question the existing stereotypes. In his work, he used an experimental method of dramatization[2] to approach his partners in Africa,

2. When anthropologists dramatize, they try to behave like their partners in the field to show that they are learning their behaviours. Rouch often dramatized the behaviours of "the other" in provocative ways.

as well as audiences in France. The birth of these new models of knowledge acquisition, of the new anthropology, was painful. I want to start with the controversy around Rouch's work because, as will become obvious, he influenced my own work as an anthropologist. I met him for the first time in 1965, in the Cinémathèque at Palais de Chaillot. I was 19 at the time, and worked as a "femme de chambre" in a nearby hotel. Rouch regularly presented his own and other people's films about Africa in the "magic cabinets" of the Musée de l'Homme. I remember paying 100 French francs to see his film 'Les Maîtres fous' (Rouch, 1955)[3]. I later had a cup of coffee with him at the Museum's restaurant. Little did I know at the time that I would meet him again a few years later, in the same Musée de l'Homme, as he would strongly encourage me to go do field-work in Niger. Little did I know that I would also join his struggle to fight the widespread stereotypes and prejudices about Africa. Little did I know, also, how difficult it would be to take on and succeed in that task [see Fig. XX: Rouch and Lisbet].

Les Maîtres fous generated a lot of controversy, one that survives to this day. I want to use the debate around the film to illustrate how internal academic interests and political correctness (or incorrectness) may lead us, as anthropologists and academics, to lose sight of our main protagonists.

Rouch shot the film in 1955 in Accra, the then capital of the Gold Coast. It shows the Hauka ritual practised by migrants from Niger. In the film, after an initiation rite and some sacrifice, we see how Hauka spirits are summoned and the mediums go into trance. In his book "The Adventure of the Real", Paul Henley summarizes what happens afterwards in the following way:

> "While in this state, they assume a series of identities associated with the colonial world, mostly political or military: Governor, General, Major, Corporal of the guard, and so on, putting on pith helmets and red sashes, blowing a whistle and parading up and down with wooden models of guns. In these variant forms, the mediums dance about, foam at the mouth, and run flaming straw torches over their torsos. At the culminating moment, they sacrifice a dog and throw themselves forward with an animalistic frenzy to drink its blood. They then put it on to boil and plunge their hands into the pot to extract pieces of meat, seemingly impervious to the pain" (Henley, 2009). [see Fig. XX: from film].

The film created a lot of excitement, anger, and blame. At the first screening of the film, at the Musée de l'Homme in 1955, Western and African anthropologists, intellectuals, authorities and many others in the general audience condemned the film for encouraging racist prejudice. Rouch's supervisor, Marcel Griaule, urged him to destroy the film. Autho-

3. English title: The Crazy Masters.

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rities in Africa were also angry, claiming the film expressed Rouch's colonial perspective on Africans (Henley, 2009).

Rouch was torn between his own understanding of his African partners' point of view and his respect for the people in France who strongly criticized the film. It was evident that the anthropologists and intellectuals wanted to put forward an anti-racist image of themselves, and refused to look beyond the mere political correctness. Some felt that France's image as a "correct" colonial power was ridiculed. Realizing the ethnocentric interpretations of his audiences, Rouch adopted various editorial strategies to help the audience read the film in what he considered a more appropriate way. In order to achieve that, he put posters up informing viewers that the film was shot upon the request of the protagonists. He warned them against the violence and cruelty that they would see. He assured them that the objectives of the film were merely sociological, aiming to provide an uncompromising view of one of the 'new religions' developed by young African migrants, as a reaction to their hurtful encounter with 'the mechanical civilization' of the cities. He closed the introductory intertext by saying that the "violent game" that people were about to see "is only the reflection of our own civilization." (Rouch, 1955; Henley, 2009) He also used voiceover comments, in which he explained what goes on in front of the camera, offering the viewer his "translation" of the ritual. Finally, wrapped in voiceovers and introductory subtitles, he put the film into circulation.

For many years, anthropologists widely commented the film in the anthropological literature. According to most interpretations, the appropriation of Western objects and identities seen in the ritual was an expression of the Hauka's wish to acquire and possess Western power, a way to manifest their wish to become like the French colonial rulers. (Henley, 2009; Ferguson, 2006)

Rouch himself has changed his interpretations of the ritual, from seeing it as a self-therapeutic act to an anti-colonial one, later interpreting it as a collective uprising against the European rulers. (Henley, 2009).

My point here is that all those interpretations reveal more about our tendencies to project our own theories and beliefs onto others, and say more about Western audiences, intellectuals and academics, than they say about the very people in the film. The Hauka who were the protagonists of the film were completely lost from sight, and we can only wonder what their reasons were for performing the ritual, their own understanding of it. Interestingly, even Jean Rouch, after all the criticisms of his film, and despite his best intentions to defend its protagonists, engaged in wrapping the film up in his own interpretations[4].

4. Evidently, one cannot expect a Western audience to read one single African event in a way that matches the protagonists' understanding. The problem here is that our efforts to translate often fail to build bridges.

Eventually, across all these different readings of the film, the Hauka migrants from Niger who were the main protagonists of the film became completely invisible. The film became a tool for generating Western discourse. It said more about Western audiences than it said about the main characters (Altern & Holtedahl, 1995; Fabian, 1990; Geschiere, 2009).

Some 50 years after the initial screening of the film at the Musée de l'homme, the American anthropologist James Ferguson proposed yet another reading of what went on in front of Rouch's camera when he recorded Les Maîtres fous. As opposed to Rouch and other anthropologists, he proposed that the Hauka simply wanted to be seen (by each other, by Rouch, by Western audiences and intellectuals) as respectable members of the wider (and new to them) globalized society. They did not mock the whites, they did not manipulate the objects of the whites to appropriate their power; they didn't create entirely new African rituals and magic not connected to the outer world; they didn't even ideologically oppose colonialism. They simply wanted to become visible, to become members of the global society, and they wanted the world to respect them. Ferguson says that we, as anthropologists and Africanists, continue to characterize 'the other's' practices in ways that create distance between 'the other' and ourselves. We produce 'the other' as 'different' (Ferguson, 2006; Strathern, 1987; Fabian, 1990; Mbembe, 2010; Nyamnjoh, 2014).

I see the above analysis by James Ferguson, as a possible first step in answering the question, "Why don't we say we need them?" As academics, we are very often blinded by our own purpose, and do not notice other peoples' yearning to be seen. We also easily forget how much the other contributes to our own work, and how much we depend on the other. Although it is important that we try to search for meaning and provide explanations for other people's actions, we should be careful not to lose sight of them, as was the case with the protagonists of Les Maîtres fous.

Academe without Society II: How Do We Teach Cross-Cultural Understanding?

My first efforts to disseminate knowledge about Africa date back to the early 1970s. After completing my first anthropological fieldwork in Eastern Niger in 1970, I came to Tromsø, Northern Norway, in 1971 and started to work as curator at the Department of Sami Ethnography at the Museum of Tromsø. The University of Tromsø was founded in 1968, with the Museum becoming part of it soon after. Local academics shared many radical ideals being debated at the time. The declared ambition of the University was to be a tool for regional development, in a region regarded as marginal. Knowledge production and teaching were to serve local

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people and empower them (cf. Hersoug, Maïkoréma, and Balsvik in this volume).

As curator at the Department of Sami Ethnography, I was responsible for school visits, guided tours for tourists, and the maintenance and use of ethnographic collections from Northern Norway, and non-European societies. My first lectures and exhibitions[5] about women and men in Niger were fraught with problems. The audience read my stories, images, and films of Africans as examples of poverty, and expressed their pity for "the poor African women" (Fuglesang, 1983; Holtedahl, 1975, 1990, 1993).

I found myself in situations similar to Jean Rouch's, when his depiction of the Hauka ritual was interpreted based on people's stereotypes. I did not want to leave my Nigerian protagonists behind, through my own interpretations adapted to Norwegian audiences. Full of optimism, I applied for funding to invite some of my partners from Niger to come to Norway. I strongly believed that this would help establish a more sustainable bridge between my partners, the audiences, and me. However, the application was rejected.

As a result, the translation problems motivated me to make a film about ethnocentrism. I thought that if I put efforts into presenting my own difficulties and failures in understanding "the other" as well as my host Norwegian[6] society, they would stop reading a black woman as "a poor woman". I searched for ways to confront Norwegian audiences with their own prejudices, and make them aware of their own tendencies to project their ethnocentric knowledge onto photos.

In my film "Niger-Norway; women, ethnocentrism and development" (Holtedahl, 1975a on DVD), I juxtaposed images from Niger and Norway with my seemingly neutral voiceover, speaking about the organization of households in Tromsø and in Maïné-Soroa. Presenting the village in Niger, I related how parents have to "give away their children to adoption", how married men paid their wives for sex and how older women were highly respected. In the sections about life in Tromsø, I exposed how Norwegian children go to kindergarten, and how older people are sent to retirement homes.

As another didactic strategy, I presented myself in different outfits: I dressed up in a mink coat and silk hat, curlers and apron, smart sunglasses and audacious hairdo. I hoped to make the audience laugh unwittingly, but also to elicit their confusion when they would see me as a bourgeois woman with a stiff facial expression in one picture, and as a tired working class mother of small children with curlers in the other [see Fig. XX]. I expected that this would help the audience question their own preconceptions about me, and make them aware of their own culturally determined

5. The exhibition 'Maïné-Soroa, a village in Niger', was shown in Oslo at the Museum of Ethnography in 1971, at Tromsø Museum in 1972 and at the National Museum in Copenhagen, in 1975.

6. I was born in Copenhagen, Denmark.

interpretations of other women in the film. Using this dramaturgical film narrative, I tried to problematize the well-established stereotypes about living conditions of Nigerien and Norwegian women. (Goffman, 1979). I also tried to transform my own prejudices and difficulties understanding life in Niger and in Norway (Fabian, 1990; Nyamjoh, 2014).

My film provoked Norwegian audiences. They felt that it presented a negative image of Norwegian women. They defended the Norwegian female roles and stressed that Norway does not treat older women badly. Their anger with my caricature descriptions of Norwegian women's lives allowed me to question their interpretations of images from Africa. These confrontations with audiences gradually helped me discover my own tacit interpretations behind my presentations, i.e. how I myself was prone to alienate my protagonists. I asked many times for funds to translate the film and the book I wrote about women in Niger so that people would get access to my work, but the applications were always rejected. I found that the Norwegian authorities' implicit attitude to the South at the time was based on the donor paradigm. For many years, the National Film Centre[7] distributed the film, while schools and universities used it as a tool for teaching some of the mechanisms of social differentiation. Ever since, my anthropological project has been to experiment with the establishment of cross-cultural understanding, and to examine the absence of this understanding.

Academe without Society III: Empowering Underprivileged Groups

Objectification of Norwegian language politics

I thought that I was progressively becoming a good anthropologist, whose ambition was to understand the other and give voice to underprivileged groups. However, I was astonished to see that those ideals were not always of primary importance to my University (cf. Hersoug, Diakité, Zakari, Balsvik in this volume).

As curator at Tromsø University Museum, I once proposed to university authorities a comparative exhibit about language politics in the northern county of Finnmark[8], and in Eastern Niger. During my stay in

7. Statens Fimsentral, Oslo.

8. Finnmark is a county in the extreme northeastern part of Norway. It is part of the Sápmi region, which spans four countries, as well as the Barents Region, and is the largest and least populated county of Norway. In Norse times the name was referring to any places where Sámi people were living (also parts of South Norway). Since 2002, it has had two official names: Finnmark (Norwegian) and Finnmárku (Sami language).

Niger, I had learned that the authorities ordered children at the local school in Mainé-Soroa to speak French. They did not allow children to be educated in their local languages: Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri. Unfortunately, the Norwegian language policy towards Sami and Kven populations at the time was quite similar to the policy in Niger. Local indigenous people in Finnmark felt especially oppressed because they were forced to speak the national language in most public contexts (Eidheim, 1969; Hagège, 2012; Mamdani, 1993). I wanted to point to the universal problem of language politics, how it affects many indigenous and minority populations around the world. I wanted to stress the impact that such policies had on people's self-esteem and dignity (Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012; Somby, 1999)

The proposal was rejected by the university administration, which expressed concern that the comparative exhibit about language politics in Norway and Niger would make people think Norway resembled a country in Africa. To be compared with Africa was considered humiliating. It hurt the local pride.

Excellence as a barrier to equity

My problems with ensuring the visibility of marginalized groups within the academic world continued. During the first decade of its existence, the University of Tromsø had great problems recruiting girls from rural areas as well as students from the Sami communities in inner Finnmark. As leader of the "University Committee for Equity between the Sexes"[9], I found that the University's material for recruiting students was biased towards males. All the pictures in the information brochures were those of men: men seen teaching, men seen working in the laboratories, and men seen doing research in fishing boats, etc.

At the 10th anniversary celebrations at the University of Tromsø, in 1978, I got the chance to make a travelling anthropological exhibit about gender and ethnicity at the University. The aim of the exhibition was to stimulate interest in higher education among Sami and Norwegian youth, girls especially, in Northern Norway. Knowing that local populations felt marginalized by the prestigious institutions of the South, I proposed to students at the University that they use various art forms such as images, drawings, poetry to express the joys and challenges of life at the university. The plan was to present their work to young school pupils in the Northern regions. In the collected works, female students criticized a male dominated university and some Sami students complained about the lack of a Sami speaking kindergarten [see Fig. XX: from exposition].

The opening of the exhibition at the Museum of Tromsø was solemn. After a couple of days, however, university authorities closed the exhibit,

9. Likestillingskomiteen in Norwegian.

arguing that instead of presenting students' complaints in public, it would be better to present influential research results and the excellence of the university's teaching programs to regional audiences.

I thought that the University had pushed society out of sight again, and that much of its claim that it cared about social issues and local populations was less important than promoting the reputation and prestige of the University. After the event, I wanted to raise a debate within the university about what had happened. I wanted to promote a critical reflection about the evident contradictions between the University's declared objectives and its insistence on putting up an image of excellence that I knew would be read as 'superiority' by regional populations. When local people look at what the University has to offer, they not only read what is written and said, they also learn that it produces another kind of 'superior' people (Bateson, 1973; Kane, 1962; Hannerz, 2010). Were the authorities expecting that a presentation of the University of Tromsø's many excellent university publications and renowned professors would make young people in the rural areas "identify" with their regional university? Would this image convince them of the university's real interest in the students' perspectives? Were the authorities conscious of how their own self-perception and protective attitudes could affect young people in the region? (Cf. Maïkoréma in this volume, where he proposes the university in Niger teach know-how or 'savoir-faire').

Academe without Society IV: Women as invisible actors of social change

In the 1970s, I did fieldwork in a fishing village, Ersfjordbotn on Kvaløya, in Northern Norway. I lived in the village for 13 years with my husband, who was the first medical doctor to settle on the island, and our three children. I wanted to study transformations in gender relations, ethnicity and the changing relations between the community and the wider society. I used pictures and film as tools in research and tried to practice reflexivity, what Jean Rouch called 'shared' anthropology (Feld, 2003).

At that time, Norway was undergoing a process of rapid centralization. Local fishermen left small-scale fisheries to enter the transportation and construction sectors. They engaged in regional and national political party politics and began to organize and participate in football activities. Development planners and bureaucrats focused on the economic activities of men. I could see how the local women had problems adjusting to the rapidly changing environment, and how they progressively became marginalized. The change affected especially hard the elderly and middle-aged women. Their knowledge became "outdated", and their influence, locally and nationally, decreased significantly (Rudie, 1994, 2009; Holtedahl,

1986, 1987). Important regional and national mission organizations, headed by women and where many were active, gradually disappeared. New local sewing clubs managed by younger women emerged, and replaced religious and humanitarian societies. Younger women started seasonal work at the neighbouring fishery plant, and in the industrial sector in Tromsø.

Because I lived in the village with my entire family, my role as an anthropologist was only one of many. I was also a neighbour, the doctor's wife, a mother. I focused on the women's living environments, and included myself as an informant in that process. I analyzed not only their internal negotiations, but also my own negotiations with them as a woman. For them, I was the personification of modern society. Their thoughts about me and their comments on my behaviour offered insights into what they thought of modern society. Each among three generations of women had different views about what it meant to be a woman, and how to address societal change. Being directly involved in the life of the village helped me learn about the living environments of each generation, and the roles each generation wanted me to 'play'. I documented not only what the women did and said between themselves, but also how they constantly wanted to teach me a lesson about how to be a good woman in their environment. They also told me how they experienced my activities and behaviours as comments upon their own way of being a woman.

Over the years, our dialogues and negotiations, confrontations and collaborations generated intimacy and trust. This time, I appreciated the possibility of getting feedback on my descriptions and analyses of life in the community. People's comments on my regular screenings of films and pictures at the prayer house and at school gatherings made my research become a kind of public theatre, played jointly by main characters and audiences. In that way, we produced knowledge that was the result of a transformation of their knowledge as well as of mine, a shared knowledge.

The authorities accuse local women of abusing welfare funds

During my time in Ersfjordbotn, the rumours of villagers' bad morals received much attention from tax authorities, political parties, health services, and urban citizens. The reason for this was that the women, who only found temporary jobs in the fishing plant, had received welfare support during their months of temporary unemployment. Before that time, only people who were permanently without a job (not temporarily out of work) had formal rights to ask for welfare funds. Now, accusations of abuse of the welfare system by local women came from the administrative authorities and the wider society (see Olivier de Sardan about practical and public norms, in this volume).

When I was writing my book about Ersfjordbotn (Holtedahl, 1986), I tried to contextualize women's strategies and to offer a critical analysis of

the social system, which showed that local women were being deprived by the authorities. I thought their demand for social welfare was absolutely justified[10]. Contrary to women living in the city, they did not have access to kindergartens, and retirement homes and health centres were distant. The women themselves said that, obviously, they should receive welfare support when unemployed, so that they could take care of the small children and the old people.

Before publishing the book, some of my colleagues expressed a worry that I would have difficulties protecting people's identities. Because everybody in the area would know that I was living with my family in Ersfjordbotn, they would also know who was who in the text. I felt, however, that it was the point itself that everybody would know about whom I was writing. According to my research approach, an anthropologist's work is not about idiosyncratic characteristics of people in local communities. It is about the social aspects of life in communities and about promoting their visibility within new arenas (Grønhaug, 1975; Ferguson, 2006). The women from the village read and commented the manuscript before publication and said that they learned a lot from the discussions they had among themselves. They were proud when the book was published.

The Plastic Flower syndrome

In the 1980s, I made a film on the relations between three generations of women in Ersfjordbotn. I was lucky to be able to dialogue with my "characters", who collaborated with Knut Erik Jensen and me in directing the film. Once again, I stumbled upon the protective attitudes of academic colleagues on behalf of my protagonists. This time it had something do with one of my protagonists' love of plastic flowers, coupled with the academics' "judgment of (her) taste" (Bourdieu, 1969, 1990).

Nelly was a middle-aged woman who lived next to a waterfall in Ersfjordbotn. I remember her rare, sensual and baroque way to decorate and frame her life with plastic flowers. China flowers, crystal flowers, small cards with flowers all stood or were hung around the room. The room radiated with her very special creativity, her joy of life and her sense of colour. In this room, I saw and sensed the love and gratefulness for life that Nelly never failed to mention to me. I also sensed the poverty and the pain she had experienced as a child, all of which she still carried while talking to the camera. Through her thirty years of marriage, she said, she

10. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu often said that sociology (and social sciences in general) should be seen as martial arts, a discipline that counteracts the reproduction of inequalities through offering a critical analysis of social processes. His engaged public activities were presented in the documentary: « La Sociologie est un sport de combat » /"Sociology is a martial art", 2001.

never saw her fisherman husband except for Christmas, Easter and summer holidays. Her history and her little house taught us something about the change that had taken place in this little fishing village. In this case, plastic flowers symbolically told stories of Nelly and many other women with a similar life history: her attitude, her gratitude, her values, her thankfulness, her trust in her children and her pride [see Fig. XX: image from Nelly's sitting room, see Nelly's clip on the DVD].

After Norwegian television screened the film, I received letters from women living in many coastal fishing communities expressing their gratefulness that the Norwegian broadcaster had shown a film about their kind of experience. People from neighbouring villages asked me to write a book and make a film about them too. Nelly was very happy with the reception. Women in Ersfordbotn organized a celebration with coffee and cakes to tell us how our documentary felt empowering to them. They became visible among women at the national level. Soon after, the municipality of Tromsø asked me to act as an advisor in regional development programs related to gender issues.

I was happy too with the general reception of the film. Sadly, however, I did not succeed in bringing my academic colleagues to identify with Nelly. After I screened the film at the University, some fellow social scientists blamed me for having exposed Nelly on television, to the Norwegian public, by showing pictures of her sitting in her living room. They pitied her. They did not understand Nelly's pride in her own room. In their view, I did not offer enough contextualization for the audience to be able to understand her. They said that, as a social scientist, I ought to understand that by showing her room decorated with plastic flowers I showed her poor taste and thus, her poverty. I was met with a barrage of criticism similar to the one Jean Rouch had received for his depiction of the Hauka in Les Maîtres fous. According to my fellow academics, the ordinary audience would not be able to read the film, i.e. the plastic flowers, in the correct way, unless I offered a much more detailed contextualization.

Could I have contextualized more? Would it have been possible for me to crack the codes of my critical colleagues? I wanted to make sure that the protagonists got some power of definition in society (Bourdieu, 1979). I wished to offer a space for expression to a part of our society, which at the time was marginalized: women in small communities in Northern Norway. Was I really too close to the women in Ersfjorden? Did I 'go bush' in this fishing village of Northern Norway? Alternatively, did the academics "go bush" in their academic milieu? Did they forget to conduct their own reflexive analysis in a thorough manner? (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Bourdieu, 1990; Strathern, 1987; Nyamjoh, 2014)

As I recall the experience, I want to attract people's attention to the possible consequences of my colleagues' blame. As I see it, my anthropological enterprise was also about making my fellow academics realize how they unwillingly stigmatized other people, people who lived in a fishing village a mere 20 km outside Tromsø. I wanted to ask if their

protective attitudes and political correctness were justified. Did they bring any good to Nelly and the other women presented in the film? Maybe their "moral concern" about hurting poor village people by making their "bad taste" publicly visible only reinforced their own social differentiation. The delicate balance to strike here concerns our responsibility to "protect" people from other people's judgment, to be their advocates – at the risk of our throwing the baby out with the bathwater, i.e. making them invisible based on our intent to protect them (Cowlishaw, 2013).

This story is not only about the consequences that flow from the prejudice of "innocent" academics in Tromsø when we, often unwillingly and with good intentions, draw new barriers between ourselves and other Norwegians.

When we can see our own blindness, we are better equipped to see the blind spots in others, which then helps us better contribute to other people's well-being. In that sense, this story is of actual relevance to very violent stuff, including the elimination of populations, slavery, the oppression of women, or the UNs and France's possible role in the genocide in Rwanda.

My students called my dissemination failures, "the plastic flower syndrome". That is why they offered me a basket full of pink plastic flowers on my 50th birthday. The entire story has only reinforced my belief that anthropology is about making people identify with others who think differently. Although identification with others is often difficult to achieve, the task is of the utmost importance.

Academe without Society V: Empathy with an African Sultan; Studying Up and Building Bridges

After studying local village communities in Niger, Northern Norway and Northern Cameroon (Holtedahl, 1993), I wanted to look at the powerful side of Africa. I initiated a "study-up"[11] film project focused on the emergence of a multi-party system in Cameroon. My research partner was the Sultan of Adamaoua Province, Lamido Issa Maigari. The Sultan had four wives, many concubines, children, and servants. From his palace, he presided over the traditional Islamic court in Ngaoundéré. The growth of the state apparatus, which had been occurring in Cameroon in the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, was marginalizing his traditional power position. Taxes and free labour constituted the basis of the power of traditional sultans in the past. At this point, he had lost the right to collect taxes from the local population, and was instead receiving a fixed salary. People were no longer obliged to work in his fields.

11. To "study up" means to focus on the culture of the rich and powerful (Nader, 1972).

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Working on my film entitled 'The Sultan's Burden' (Holtedahl, 1993, on the DVD), I knew that the problem of cultural translation would be even more challenging than in my previous work in the Norwegian fishing village. African ways of life were still practically unknown in Norway. Few people in the West know how Western politics and economics are articulated around politics in Africa, or how local African politics interface with ethnicity, religion or the formal and informal economies. Furthermore, little is known about how all of this feeds into socio-political development processes in Africa. Thus, it is easy for Western media to contribute to the production and confirmation of people's simplistic stereotypes of African societies, including Africans' lack of education, lack of manners, African corruption, Africans' cruelty, unbridled dictatorships, etc. (Gullestad, 2007; Mbembe, 2010).

Sultan Issa Maigari was interested in the film project because he hoped that it would help people learn about his social role. Seeing the difficult moments in his everyday life would help people understand him better. I tried to focus on the Sultan's perspective and offered him a co-director role. The Sultan allowed us to stay very close and film him during all his meetings [see Fig. XX]. We also got permission to film his intimate and delicate negotiations with different conflicting partners. In that way, we gathered film material about the Sultan's problems and hoped future audiences would learn about African politics from an inside perspective (Holtedahl, 1995).

The judgmental attitude

In the beginning of our filming, some members of the film crew felt morally provoked by the number of servants that had to attend to the sultan in his spectacular palace. They did not understand how I could think of making a film about a person like that. Nevertheless, by witnessing the Sultan's mediations with the different ethnic fractions among the local populations who were on the edge of starting a civil war, their sympathy increased. When they witnessed aggressive attacks by praise singers and his servants for not receiving gifts and compensations from the Sultan, as in former times[12], they started pitying him. In addition, the President put the Sultan in prison for a while, for getting involved in party politics. All that generated empathy within the film crew. I was optimistic that it would also be the case for future audiences.

12. By then, the Sultan was receiving 350 000 CFA (1,000 dollars) as a monthly salary from the state, which was not enough to accommodate everyone at the palace.

The commercial attitude

However, the BBC producers from "Under the Sun" did not appreciate our and the Sultan's editorial ideas. They wanted to impose their own editorial strategies, which I felt would ridicule him. They wanted to include camera angles that would give a false impression of his personality. They insisted on presenting close-ups of the Sultan's gold sandals, his scratching his ear, his yearnings. They also wanted him to appear much more authoritarian than he was, by choosing aggressive criticisms from the praise singers over scenes where the Sultan invited everybody to discuss the problem of their salary being insufficient in relation to their expectations. It was a tough fight for me to try to protect the Sultan's dignity against the network's wish to entertain TV audiences. I did not win all the fights and there are sequences in the film I wish I had not included. The Sultan, however, was satisfied and happy about the wide distribution of the story of his challenging reign. Besides the BBC, the film was shown on Scandinavian television channels. From the reviews it garnered in national newspapers in England, Denmark and Norway, it seemed that 'The Sultan's Burden' did not evoke or consolidate stereotypes about African leaders. Journalists raised interesting questions about the current political challenges in Africa.

The Sultan's contribution to knowledge building with Norwegian authorities

The film allowed the Sultan to travel to Norway and Europe, which in itself impressed the local Cameroonian population. He was happy for the attention he received and felt that the research and film project strengthened his dignity as a person, and as a Sultan in Cameroon. During film screenings at the Universities of Oslo and Tromsø, he lectured and discussed political developments in Cameroon with Norwegian and European historians, political scientists, development sociologists, bureaucrats, politicians and missionaries. He also visited the Norwegian Research Council. He was especially interested in the number of Cameroonians living in Norway, and their living conditions. He criticized Norwegian authorities' immigration policy against the backdrop of the hospitality that he himself and his ancestors had shown towards Norwegian missionaries, researchers and students (Holtedahl, 1998, 2010; Djingui, 2008; Holtedahl & Djingui, 1999) [see Fig. XX: Sultan teaches in Oslo, and in the Research Council].

We were all very satisfied with the outcome of the project. The film enabled cross-cultural dialogue and led to the building of shared knowledge in face-to-face meetings. Additionally, the Sultan's visit contributed to gaining financial support for the Visual Cultural Studies M.A. program at the University of Tromsø (described in the last chapter). I looked upon the financial contribution from the Ministry as an expres-

sion of their recognition of the importance of "the other" and of the North-South dialogue.

Academe without Society VI: Can an African Oligarch Also Deserve Empathy?

In the 1990s, I initiated another study up research film project "A Castle in Africa: A portrait of Al Hajji Ousmanou Mouhamadou Abbo" (Holtedahl, 2010, 2011; Djingui, 2008). Al Hajji is an African oligarch from Ngaoundéré, in Cameroon. He is tremendously wealthy and holds an important political position in Northern Cameroon. He is the first person in West Africa to head a multinational agro-industrial company and consortium. From 1997 to 2007, Al Hajji built a spectacular hilltop palace on the outskirts of Ngaoundéré. For Abbo, this palace is not only a place for him to live with his family, but also a status symbol and a message to others; it signifies his talents, his dignity, and his importance to Cameroon and Africa. For me as a researcher, the palace also conveys symbolic meaning. Looking at the palace makes me think of the global dynamics that undergird its creation. The story of Al Hajji Abbo and his palace offers many insights into relations between the North and the South, the rich and the poor, Europeans and Africans, the processes behind corrupting, corruption and accusations of corruption (Tett, 2009, 2012).

In over a decade of construction work, I witnessed his relationships, negotiations and quarrels with European partners and local people. I saw his emotions, listened to his perspectives and observed his sensitivities. It allowed me to see how global political, social and economic dynamics impact daily events in Abbo's palace. I came to understand how global dynamics transform local (political) power structures in Cameroon, and how the principles of a capitalist economy penetrate Cameroonian society. I also learned why former rules of access to power do not always count in Northern Cameroon.

While we judge, we do not learn

Many of my friends did not understand how I could make a film about such a controversial figure as Al Hajji Abbo. But I think that in order to understand power relations, one should also look at such relations from the perspective of those who are rich and powerful; try to understand how they think and what makes them behave the way they behave; try to see them as human beings (Nader, 1972).

In this respect the "study up" project about Al Hajji Abbo had essentially the same purpose as my "study up" project about the Sultan and my

"bottom-up" project about women in Ersfjordbotn. I wanted to contextualize the life of my protagonists so that future audiences/readers could see their actions in a larger, global context. In this way, I wanted to show the connections between people, show that no matter where we stand, there are links between our life and the lives of others, and that therefore, we should learn before we judge.

Abbo is not only rich and powerful. Being a key player in Cameroon politics also makes him vulnerable to outcomes on the political and economic scenes. For years, he profited from export and import monopolies and other privileges. In turn, he gave the president his support throughout his political career (Cf. Fah, in this volume). He did so by using his powerful position in the region, and negotiating on his carpet with members of the opposition party. He also took over the ancient role of the Sultan as a mediator between herders and peasants. Because of the strong interdependence between Abbo and the President, a potential electoral defeat of the leading political party and of the President constantly threatens his position.

I decided to include 'my Western colleague' and one of Abbo's most important European partner, his Serb architect Peter Cvedic, as an informant and partner in my research and film work. I think of Peter as representative of the future audience of my film. Besides Peter, many other European technicians, artisans and artists from Italy, France, Portugal, Spain, Greece and Ex-Yugoslavia worked on the construction of the palace. They are visible when I am filming and following Al Hajji in Africa and Europe.

Al Hajji and Peter never seem to agree about the work. Peter's comments often show his disregard for Al Hajji's taste and ideas. Al Hajji's critical comments hurt Peter's professional pride. Their fights about the design of the palace and its furniture are endless [see Fig. XX: from Fiera del Milano]. In addition, several of the white experts involved in building the palace do not give Al Hajji the respect he thinks he deserves. They interpret his questions about their work as a wish to undermine their competence. Through their comments, subtle gestures and facial expressions they display their conviction that Abbo does not have the relevant competence and knowledge to handle the objects that come from Europe, and that he behaves like a medieval baron. Al Hajji knows this, and he knows that his white employees gossip about him behind his back and that they think that he is not civilized.

For me, from a didactic point of view, the presence of Peter and the other Europeans on the research scene and in the footage helps me distinguish my African protagonists' perspectives and framing from the spectators' and my own.[13] I hope that through their identification with Peter and

13. Analytically, the relationship between the audience and my protagonist in this project is different from that between the audience back then and Nelly from Ersfjordbotn. In my Norwegian project, the audience did not get access to Nelly's interaction with

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other Europeans appearing in the film, the audience will be able to acquire knowledge and insights into cross-cultural conflicts, as agreements and negotiations take place on Al Hajji's carpet in the palace. The moment the spectator begins to empathize or side with one of the characters, be it Abbo or Peter (or any other European technician), the process of learning begins. Watching becomes learning the moment the audience starts to shift their sympathy for Peter or Abbo, depending on the scene. Abbo is very conscious of the camera as his tool for reaching out to the outer world. While being filmed, he not only addresses Peter or other protagonists, but also his future audience (Arntsen & Holtedahl, 2005). In the film, Al Hajji constantly reminds Peter, and other European and African audiences of him being "the Boss of the AMAO consortium". He especially wants to show European audiences how an African man succeeds economically. To this end, he makes several lucid commentaries that invite the audience's smiles.

The reproduction of superiority, stigma and disregard

While watching the film, it becomes evident that Abbo, although financially successful and politically powerful, lacks human regard in his confrontation with his employees, as well as in negotiations with his Western financial partners. During my research process, I could see that the subtle aspects of Abbo's communication with his Western engineers and architects resemble his negotiations with Western bankers and other financial actors. In both cases, a form of dominant/subordinate relationship is visible, and the image of Abbo as an underprivileged African is repeatedly reproduced in spite of his material wealth. Each time I visited Europe with Abbo, I realized that he never felt successful in attaining an equal footing with the Europeans. They always react to him as an upstart. They think he wants to become "white", but does not know how to achieve the status. They do not appear willing to integrate Abbo's category in their Western repertoire. They therefore do not allow him to build acceptance for his own idioms as a modern African industrialist. They read his idioms and expressions of economic and human competence as expressions of his "lack of culture". His many servants, his spectacular palace, his many cars, his many wives, speak to them about his being a corrupt African[14]. His acts of insistence on his cultural background, so different from Western ones, through the way he dresses, eats or argues, his distinctive taste are often met with signs of irony, mockery or, in many cases, an awkward silence (cf. Ferguson, 2006, about the Hauka's wish to be seen).

bureaucrats or other 'elite' people. In this project, the discussion between 'elite' and 'ordinary people' has been moved into the film.

14. Compare the accusations from the authorities in Northern Norway that the women abused public money, and Olivier de Sardan's definition of "corruption".

This top-down attitude confirms a gap between Europeans and Abbo. In addition, he has to fight constantly with the near universal prejudice faced by Africans in the West, because of the mere fact that he is an African[15].

Understanding "corrupting" and "corruption"

The film's strategy helps the audience avoid using simplistic categorizations, reading Al Hajji Abbo as either a hero, a victim or just another 'corrupt' African businessperson. Instead, far more subtle and complex socio-economic mechanisms become visible. We see the mechanisms that create and reproduce a new social hierarchy in Cameroon, with new forms of asymmetry between the North and the South. In light of the material collected, Abbo's actions appear a struggle to defend his dignity and to create an image of himself as a successful African entrepreneur and clever businessperson in the West as well as in the South. It becomes progressively evident that he takes very much care of his local, close, and much poorer friends in Ngaoundéré; that he is very concerned by his local people's perspectives. We also learn by following him around, why he wants to build a little hospital, a cinema and a big mosque in his palace, why he feels he needs a swimming pool next to his dining room, why he installs crystal chandeliers, puts down hand-knitted Chinese carpets, adds golden armature to his bathroom, and why he has different reception halls for people of different rank. Al Hajji thinks that the enormous palace must be big enough to allow him to receive numerous guests, presidents from the North and the South, the way that traditional, local sultans did.

After ten years of construction work, Al Hajji moves in the palace with his whole family and organizes a spectacular feast. He uses the opportunity to invite all the Western board members of his consortiums to attend meetings in his palace in Ngaoundéré and not, as usual, in Paris or Douala. Shortly after these board meetings, rumours suggest his Western partners offered him a lot of money to step down from chairing the boards of those international industries (Cf. Joly and Vigtel, in this volume and Joly, 2003).

If there is something to the rumours, how should one interpret this move? I think that it could be an expression of their fear that Al Hajji's spectacular palace in Ngaoundéré would attract visitors' and future audience's attention to the corrupting aspect of the multinational consortiums. Although we may read the reaction of his business partners as acts of self-protection, the consequence of their attempts, as seen from Abbo's perspective, are once again the same: he feels marginalized, excluded and

15. In one of the scenes in the film, we see Abbo making a phone call to order two large, 'grands espaces' taxis and how the receptionist, hearing his African voice, becomes skeptical of his ability to pay. She refuses to send the taxis unless he gives his credit card number over the phone.

denied the right to self-definition. From an African perspective, Abbo feels not only the right but an obligation to display his wealth and power in an ostentatious way. In this way, he defends the image of himself and of the clever African industrialist, and with it the image of Africa.

Not only did the enormous palace start to make people feel "uneasy". In addition, my film about Al Hajji Abbo became "dangerous" to some people. First, some people in Ngaoundéré felt uncomfortable about my future dissemination of the daily events that took place on Al Hajji's carpet. They did not agree with Abbo's enthusiasm about the film, and felt the risk of ridicule. Later on, while in an advanced stage of the filming process, a European ambassador tried to stop me from making the film. People tried to convince me that the film I was about to make would not be interesting because, as they said, the protagonist was not very interesting. One person even offered me money to stop filming. I continued, but after 5 years of filming, Abbo asked me to renegotiate our initial contract. From that time on, I only had the right to show it to students at the University of Tromsø. A few years ago, Abbo changed the contract again and allowed me to screen the film in Scandinavia.

I think that Al Hajji Abbo has much to "teach" students and the academe. The judgmental and protective reactions to my project about Abbo only confirmed to me the importance of studying the financial and political arena in North-South relations (Tett, 2012).[16]

To me, there are parallels to be drawn between the widespread social judgment of Abbo as a corrupt African industrialist and the accusations levelled against women from Ersfjordbotn for abusing the welfare system. In both cases, people condemn too quickly the other, instead of trying to understand the entire social context in which Abbo and the women in Ersfjordbotn operate. We – academics, bureaucrats, politicians and many others – too often take a top-down approach to others, pointing to individual "corrupt" actors, and not recognizing that they are a part of a larger system in which corrupting and corruption take place. I tried to develop an academic approach to corruption where it would be important to contextualize. Universities can promote open and critical thinking about the abuse of power. Different authors in this book have put forward different perspectives on corruption. (Joly, Fah, Ba, Diakité, Olivier de Sardan).

16. My stance here is different from Oliver de Sardan's, who considers it nearly impossible to study corruption at the macro level (see his contribution in this book).

Academe without Society VII: The collaborative inter-university program Ngaoundéré Anthropos

In the previous sections, I have described the development of a research model that stresses the importance of a continued dialogue between researcher, partners, audiences (readers) for the building of "knowledge as shared understanding of societal mechanisms."

I will now describe concrete efforts made to implement our ideas and strategies for collaboration and dialogue in research and knowledge building. I now turn to the Anthropos program with the University of Ngaoundéré in Cameroon. The academic practice of the Anthropos program had its roots in the accumulated understanding – in Tromsø and in Cameroon – of the difference between "knowledge as legitimation" and "knowledge as shared understanding of societal mechanisms".

North-South collaboration in competence development

In 1980, I applied for a research permit in Northern Cameroon. Professor Paul Nkwi, anthropologist and director at the Ministry of Higher Education and Research in Cameroon, posed as a condition for my research permit that I not only produce reports on my research, but also contribute to the local development of academic competence. Based on my experiences in Tromsø, I found the demand highly understandable and adequate. However, I had difficulties fulfilling the task, because I could not find a single student from the North whom I could invite to participate in the project. As had been the case in Northern Norway, Northern Cameroon also suffered from its remote distance from the capital. As colonizers arrived from the sea, they settled much earlier in the south of Cameroon than in the North. As a result, the infrastructure and school systems in Cameroon were far more developed in the South than in the North (Cf. Gullestad, 2007; Djesa, 2002a and 2002 b on the DVD in this volume)[17]. The populations in the South were well educated, whereas literacy levels in the North were very low. In addition, the establishment of Muslim Fulani hegemony in the North after the Jihad has not been favourable to modern Western education (Burnham, 1989). Likewise, Norway faced similar problems of asymmetrical development between its North and Southern parts: sparsely populated areas, long distances, and Northern Norway's long and complex history of contact with neighbouring coun-

17. Norwegian missionaries established a Norwegian mission in Ngaoundéré in 1924. Rachel Issa Djesa made the film "Missionaries and Power" 78 years after the Norwegian Mission was established. The film is a portrait of the first protestant catechist in Ngaoundéré and renders the humiliation he felt when he realized that his understandings of his own mothertongue was not taken seriously by the white missionaries.

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tries – Russia, Northern Finland and Northern Sweden – rather than with the regions of the South.

I also found that none of the published articles and books on Northern Cameroon were available in the region, and that none of them were written by people originating from Northern Cameroon. Besides, very few out of the 20 Western researchers who had made their PhD dissertation on issues concerning Northern Cameroon in the 1980s had ever been back in Cameroon to present their work (Altern & Holtedahl, 1995)[18]. In my reports to, and discussions with, Professor Paul Nkwi, I related my growing concerns about the problems of higher education in Northern Cameroon to my experiences in Northern Norway. Little by little, I got in touch with the very few "Northerners" who were actually trying to initiate research education in the humanities and social sciences.[19]

The birth of a collaborative inter-university program

When the Cameroonian authorities decided to establish a university in Ngaoundéré, they appointed Rector Domgang as vice-chancellor. With his and Professor Mohammadou Eldridge's support, I wrote an application to NUFU[20] for funding of a collaborative social scientific and humanistic program, Ngaoundéré – Anthropos. In our application, we stressed the

18. In a recent book, Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (2012) discuss the dominance of the North within the development of theory in the social sciences.

19. My English colleague, Philip Burnham, introduced me to priest/sociologist Père Bocquené, who was then at the Oblats de Marie-Immaculée mission in Ngaoundéré. Through him, I made the acquaintance of professor Roger Labatut, who had been teaching at the Lycée in Garoua for many years. He personally knew all the first generation of young people who had finished high school in Northern Cameroon. A few of them, including one woman, were involved in university studies in Paris. Aliou Mohammadou and Hamadjoda Gabriel studied with Labatut at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales. They became very close collaborators for me during many years. They introduced me to Mahmoudou Djingui, who followed them in Paris and who later on completed his Master's and PhD in Anthropology at the University of Tromsø. I paid visits for several years to Mohammadou Eldridge, Cameroonian scholar, director at IRSH (Institut des Recherches en Sciences Humaines), Garoua, who for years worked as an administrator in Southern Cameroon. He was educated in History and at École Normale d'Administration in France. He did a tremendous job making texts written by French, German and English explorers about the Northern parts of Cameroon accessible to people in Northern Cameroon. He translated German books into French. He made a series of broadcasts on the history of Northern Cameroon in Fulani on the Siwtu Lingiila Radio station. He also did a lot of research himself and published his works mainly in Japan with our colleague Paul Egushi. Eldridge worried that nearly all the literature that had been written about the societies of Northern Cameroon by Western researchers remained more or less inaccessible to local populations in the North. Local researchers Aliou, Hamadjoda, and Eldridge were involved in my research with film projects, including "The Sultan's Burden".

20. Nasjonalt program for utvikling, forskning og utdanning, The National Program for Development Studies and Education.

importance of collaboration between scholars from the peripheral universities in the North and the South. We hoped that the new knowledge produced would be not only intelligible to local populations, but also valuable for the academic institutions in the metropolitan areas, which constitute the core of the hegemonic academic system.

With funding from NUFU, an exciting process got started[21]. In order to implement the strategies of shared knowledge and assure its intelligibility to local populations, various committees such as the Committee for Women's Affairs, the Committee for Resources and Documentation, and the Research Committee, were established. As had been the case at the University of Tromsø with its special policy towards the inclusion of the Sami populations, the University of Ngaoundéré also developed strategies to ensure the recruitment of representatives from diverse groups in the Northern Region, including women.

Although SIU's[22] criteria for funding initially required that scholarships be given only to students who had already earned a Master's degree and wanted to continue towards a PhD level[23], we managed to change the rules and to offer scholarships to the students at the Bachelor and Master's levels. Quotas for the distribution of funds for scholarships were established. There was money earmarked for women and different ethnic groups. Over the years, the program managed to recruit many young women, Muslim and Christian, as well as members of various local ethnic groups, such as Mbum, Gbaya, Dii, Hausa, Kanuri, Fulani, who up until then had never had a chance to get a university education.

An important aspect of our philosophy was the implementation of plural ways of thinking in the research. Every year, students and researchers who had received funds presented their research in open seminars. In those seminars, members of various ethnic groups discussed each other's work. At the level of academic knowledge production, the "Ateliers scientifiques" played a key role [see Fig. XX: Anastasie, Rachel, Lisbet from Norwegian students' fieldwork in Ngaoundéré]. Teachers, members of the board and students exchanged and analyzed the research work together during three intensive days every semester. To many participants, especially from the North, these seminars offered their first opportunity to talk and discuss with people from other ethnic groups. The collective seminars produced good results and generated a shared experience that was much appreciated. It was exciting to see that our participatory strate-

21. The Vice-chancellor of the University of Nagaoundéré became the chairperson of the Anthropos board. In addition, the members of academic and administrative staff as well as students and provincial delegates representing various sectors such as agriculture, herding, culture, social affairs, were invited to be members of the board.

22. Senter for internasjonalisering av utdanning (Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education).

23. However, in the case of Cameroon, such policy implied that nearly all eligible students were Bamiliké from the West of the country. The Bamiliké are widely known for being the dominant group within academic and financial circles in Cameroon.

gies brought positive results. Significant input from local informants with different cultural backgrounds also showed the students and researchers how much they needed and depended on each other.

Bachelor's and Master's theses, books, articles and regular radio broadcasts presented Anthropos research to the public [see Fig. XX: from Radio emission/book celebration]. We also started the Anthropos Journal, which became the first journal of social science and humanities in Cameroon.

Joint promotion of the win-win culture

Leaders at the University of Tromsø were ensured the academic benefits of close collaborations, and they acknowledged the merits of the program[24]. The staff and students from the South visited our institution. They participated in conferences and seminars and enrolled in international study programs [see Fig. XX: partners teaching in Tromsø, Rachel, Njeuma]. The Norwegian Quota Scholarship Program for students from the South made it possible to strengthen the shared Anthropos activities. Students from Northern Cameroon got scholarships and collaborated with Tromsø researchers as part of research projects on North Cameroonian societies (Holtedahl et al., 1999).

Interesting conferences about collaborative research activities were organized with participants from the North and the South at the Universities of Oslo[25], Bergen and Trondheim. Norway's "transfer of knowledge" perspective was no longer the only way of thinking. Members of the Board of directors of SIU and of the NUFU program considered the outcome of the Anthropos program successful.

Obstacles

Despite these successes, the Anthropos collaboration faced a number of factors and dynamics that constantly challenged the implementation of our participatory approach to scientific research and teaching. Those dynamics were linked to the historically developed asymmetries between the North and the South.

Western institutions have always dominated the global academic system, although this dominance has been constantly challenged. This is especially the case for institutions from the former colonial countries.

24. The Center for Environment and Development headed by Jens Revold hosted the economic administration of the Anthropos program. Rachel Djesa Issa from Cameroon who studied anthropology and visual anthropology worked as managing secretary for the program at the Department of Sami studies/Social anthropology.

25. One of the students from the University of Oslo was Ketil Fred Hansen, author of the article "Oil for Education in Chad" in this volume.

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Although aimed at a relationship of equality, Anthropos could not free itself from division into the dominant donor side and the subordinated recipient side. This concerned both the dissemination of knowledge, and the distribution of money.

When the board of professors at the University of Tromsø would not accept African scholars as temporary associate professors within the Department of Social Anthropology, it became apparent how much the hegemonic academic system was in conflict with the shared knowledge production policy of Anthropos. The idea was rejected because the professors were not trained in the Anglo-American anthropological tradition. Once again, the dynamics we experienced in Norway reflected the reproduction of a self-image as a donor. In this model, "transfer of Western knowledge" has priority over "shared production of knowledge"[26].

Furthermore, we got into administrative problems in Tromsø. According to the initial guidelines and contract between Norwegian authorities, the Foreign Ministry, UiT, and University of Ngaoundéré, around 80% of the money was supposed to be transferred to the South. The rest was meant to cover administrative and travel expenses in the North. This meant that the budget could not possibly cover all the expenses of Norwegian researchers' involvement in the program. Despite being fond of its role as a "coordinating" institution, the University of Tromsø did not meet the expectations of the Foreign Ministry in terms of input, economic and otherwise, to support the coordination and management of the Anthropos activities. The program therefore continued to depend on ardent souls. My colleagues from VCS, from various departments and faculties and I invested our time, meant for our own private research, to keep the program running.[27]

We also struggled with the asymmetries between the North and the South in Ngaoundéré.

Project money from the North covered the seminars and all the facilities, such as scientific resources in the form of books, films and audiovisual equipment. For many scholars in Cameroon, where the salaries were low and infrastructure poor, this was a sign of forthcoming affluence. Conscious of the Western colonial and neo-colonial activities in the global South, some members of the Cameroonian academic milieu kept pointing to the many shortages and needs of their institutions and stressed their own dignity to get maximal profit from the project. Besides, some scholars on the Cameroonian side questioned our expenses in Tromsø, arguing that the entire budget should be spent on activities in Ngaoundéré.

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26. It is important to stress here that the salaries of the professors could had been covered by the Anthropos budget.

27. It is painful to some of my colleagues and I, from today's perspective, to realize that the collaborative activities that we developed, and which cost us a lot of time and engagement, did not even count as academic merit. The evaluation of academic activities has favoured scholars who publish academic articles, disregarding those who produced films or ran projects such as Anthropos.

Suddenly, after the program had been running for 12 years, all the project money strangely disappeared in Cameroon. Unfortunately, the authorities at the University of Tromsø spent weeks without taking any steps. Once again, a protective strategy was chosen and saving "the good name" was prioritized. It was only after the authorities from NORAD ordered an international audit and judicial investigation to solve the case in Cameroon that the authorities at UiT started to take action. After many months of investigation, it was proven that signatures were falsified and that strict and well-known rules for drawing money were violated. With the mismanagement of funds, weaknesses were revealed within the two institutions.

Although the program came to an end, those 12 years of hard work are still visible in Cameroon and in our cross-cultural and inter-academic relations. In 2008, when the Extreme North of Cameroon was at the edge of a civil war, the president managed to calm down the population by establishing a new university in the Northern town of Maroua. No fewer than 80 scholars who had been trained through the Anthropos program were recruited by the Vice-chancellor of Maroua University as academic staff to the new university. The Vice-Chancellor travelled to the University of Tromsø to express recognition of the importance of the collaboration. In 2009, the Visual Cultural Studies program at UiT signed a collaboration agreement with the University of Maroua and has been hosting Cameroonian students in Tromsø since then.[28]

Academe without Society VIII: Visual Cultural Studies (VCS)

Following the visit of Sultan Issa Maigari at the Norwegian Research Council, we secured funding for the establishment of an international Master's Degree program in Visual Anthropology at the University of Tromsø. It should be stressed that the merits of the Anthropos program played an important role in acquiring funds from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After the Anthropos program was closed, VCS remained the only remaining opportunity to maintain a sustainable cross-cultural program, one that could generate and disseminate shared knowledge to the wider public.

VCS is a practice-oriented program with a unique philosophy, one that distinguishes it from an ordinary social anthropology program, media program or a documentary film school. Drawing on the principles of shared anthropology as developed by Jean Rouch, we want our students to create stories, which can enable future audiences to empathize with the

28. In 2009, the program also established a collaboration with the University of Bamako in Mali.

people they meet in the films. Since film is a sensory medium, it offers wider possibilities for dissemination and negotiation of knowledge than the written text. It is a great tool for the practice of "shared" and "public" anthropology. The focus on storytelling, however, does not exclude the stronger analytical and theoretical part. In the VCS program, film is understood as a complementary medium to text[29], in which the collected material is further analyzed and various theories from social science are applied.

Since its creation in 1997, more than 140 students from all over the world have had a chance to conduct research with a camera, and make their first film. It is important to stress that most of these students had no experience with a camera. Many of the films have been screened at festivals worldwide, winning awards and promoting the University of Tromsø [see Fig. XX]. Norwegian public television, NRK, also screened the films. However, what is most important to my colleagues and myself is that those films build bridges between people, and contribute to cross-cultural knowledge and understanding. Wherever the films from VCS are screened, they also generate cultural critique. They are examples of "public anthropology" (Hylland & Eriksen, 2006), which serves all kinds of people. Let me share one example from recent history.

In 2012, anthropologist Penny Johnson from Australian National University in Canberra told us about an experience with one of VCS' films during her fieldwork in Papua New Guinea. Penny brought the film "Djeneba: Minyanka Woman of Western Mali» made by Bata Diallo at VCS (Diallo 2011, on the DVD) to the people of Bimadbn, a village in western Papua New Guinea. The film depicted the daily life and struggles of Djeneba and other women in rural Mali. Penny wrote us the following e-mail:

"The people of Bimadbn are extremely poor and isolated and intelligent. It takes four days walk to reach their village from the–there are no roads, no cars, no shops, no cash economy, no outsiders, no hospital or Health Services, no material culture beyond bush materials, no electricity. When they saw Bata's film on my laptop, they were profoundly affected. "We did not know that there are other black people in this world. We thought that we were the only ones like this". "We did not know that other people live like us, with bare feet and sticks to dig their gardens – we thought the rest of the world was airplanes and supermarkets." Even the blind man loved the film, "they have a religion like ours. Part Christian, part old ways. That old man is about to die and I am about to die. We will meet each other in our next life and talk to each other about our villages". And at the point in the film when Djeneba said, "If I had had the opportunity to go to school and get an education I would have gone far. I know

29. The different characteristics of written and visual languages has been described by David Macdougall in his essay "Transcultural Cinema" in the book by the same title. (Macdougall, 1998).

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that I would have gone far". I had to stop the film as people started crying and wailing – "that is our story", "that is my fate", "her story of the man leaving with the children, of her struggle with the land and with a lazy daughter and with her knowing that she has a good brain but no chance at schooling, is my story. She is my sister and I love her." The crying lasted over half an hour".

The above account is proof to us that ethnographic film and our program is fulfilling its social role in ways we could not possibly imagine. However, the head of Department at the UiT unexpectedly came with the proposal to close the program in 2013, arguing that it was too expensive and unprofitable for the University. Most of the arguments were closely linked to the neoliberal agenda, which has recently become more and more visible inside the academe. One tried to quantify what is impossible to quantify (de Gaulejac, 2012). Thanks to a "Save VCS initiative" on Facebook supported by VCS alumni, international anthropology professors and a strong mobilization by VCS students at UiT, the board rejected the initiative of the Head of Department and the closure of VCS was not implemented. In spite of the successful use of the dialogic model and film in the teaching and practice of social anthropology; in spite of VCS' popularity and outreach, some conservative forces[30] were about to make us lose our protagonists, partners, society, and collaborations with the Global South, the East and the West.

Conclusion

I have been engaged in building knowledge with local communities where new universities were established. I have also practised wide dissemination of academic knowledge – to the very societies concerned by the knowledge being produced. I have also had the privilege of participating in a collaborative inter-university program between the North and the South aimed at enhancing new and radically different scientific principles for knowledge building.

My main aims were to engage with the wider public (section II), to empower and give voice to marginalized groups (sections III and IV), to study up (sections V and VI) and build shared knowledge in the academe (sections VII and VIII).

For me, using audio-visual methods and engaging in dialogic knowledge building processes with my informants, students and audiences,

30. Nicolaus Cristakis says in his 'Let's Shake up the Social Sciences' (2013) that such conservative forces reproduce the 100-year old disciplinary organization of the social sciences–and prevent them from generating creativity, innovation and adaption to the globalizing world.

has always been the best tool to reach out to other people. My experiences in Northern Norway when disseminating knowledge about Africa and later when trying to empower marginalized women from Ersfjordbotn has taught me about the importance of "being seen" for ordinary audiences in local environments. My subsequent "study up" projects conducted in Cameroon have shown the power of film to provide insights into very complex encounters, arenas and global economic and political dynamics, as well as to generate cross-cultural dialogue. The Anthropos and VCS programs have shown that it is possible to change academic practices when we do say "we need you", building towards more reciprocal relationships and a possible shared ownership of knowledge. The great challenge is sustainability.

Unfortunately, throughout my academic career I have encountered many obstacles linked to the internal dynamics of the academe. I have experienced how the preoccupation with one's own reputation and self-image, as well as attempts at political correctness hamper social engagement from the academe. In addition, the academic system itself does not favour engagement with other people in the participatory, dialogic way described here. The proof of that lies in the criteria for the evaluation of academic knowledge and competence. Most other reasons for academics' detachment from society seem to flow from that fact.

For example, according to the current (CRISTIN[31]) criteria for the evaluation of academic work, points are given only for written publications, published by the internationally recognized publishers. Points are the unique means of obtaining funds for research and research dissemination. The criteria do not consider films or time spent building cross-cultural collaborations, such as was the case with my colleagues and I, through our years building the Anthropos collaborations in Ngaoundéré and in Bamako. The criteria also do not consider the social relevance of the knowledge produced, nor its impact on people's lives (Strathern, 2000; de Gaulejac, 2012).

As a result, academics too often produce knowledge whose primary purpose is to acquire the necessary credits. To that end, they publish their insights couched in sophisticated academic language aimed at academic colleagues, far removed from ordinary readers (Meneley & Young, 2005). Because of that, they often frame their own evaluations of the knowledge they produce in collaboration with their partners strictly within the terms of reference and opinions ot their academic colleagues. Debates and evaluations of scientific material take place behind university walls, often without inviting the people involved to take part in the negotiations. As a result and similar to the economists portrayed in "Inside Job", the knowledge that social scientists produce does not make them "vulnerable" outside the academe. Instead, they are "vulnerable" only to the insider criteria for scientific excellence, the opinions of their academic collea-

31. Current Research Information System In Norway.

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gues, and the new internal forms of accountability (Strathern, 2000). This "dependence" easily makes them overlook important aspects of their relationships with their partners and the wider society. In such cases, research partners are of importance only so far as they serve the academic's purpose of data production. Academics do not consider their partners capable of teaching, expanding or changing the academics' own framework (Cf. the Sultan's lectures at the University of Oslo). As a result, the relationship between academics and members of society is not reciprocal, but hierarchical (Mamdani, 1993). Instead of supporting the people, the academe reproduces itself as an ethnocentric actor, and fails to analyze critically its role in the shaping of social life (Barth, 1992; Østerud, 2013; Foucault, 1972; Bourdieu 1979).

The only possibility, as I see it, is to raise the responsibility of academics in exposing their work more directly to the judgments and opinions of the society that they are supposed to serve. In order to achieve that, more socially approachable mediums, such as films or news media have to be used. In order to encourage academics to "go public" a change of criteria for the evaluation of academic work is needed. Unless and until new criteria for academic excellence are developed, one will continue to produce academic work primarily for the credits, and while losing sight of the larger society. In this case, the academe also loses out. It loses its chance to get at the essential and critical contribution that society itself and the Global South have to offer to knowledge building.

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