

Exchanging Anthropological Knowledge. A University Partnership Program between Madang and Heidelberg

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Abstract

An exchange project between the Institute of Anthropology at Heidelberg University and the Department of Papua New Guinea Studies at Divine Word University was established under an MOA between the two institutions in 2005. Anthropological knowledge was taught to a young generation of students coming from different parts of Papua New Guinea, enabling them to prepare fieldwork in their own as well as in other locales. Importantly, with regard to the overcoming of a 'hegemonic' and 'colonial attitude,' Lecturers from DWU also went to teach students at Heidelberg. The paper may also be read as an invitation to enable more of these exchange projects between anthropologists and the people and places encountered on the way to or during fieldwork.

Key words: Anthropology, academic exchange, culture, kastom, tertiary education.

Introduction

Important and much debated current topics in Pacific anthropology are the various forms and different levels of a reciprocal exchange of anthropological material with the people we study, the imparting of knowledge for the civil society, both in the host and in our own country, and the new responsibilities and roles of anthropologists.

Anthropologists in the Pacific today are faced with diverse tasks and demands that require taking on different roles. As someone who values indigenous knowledge, as a documentarist and local historian, he or she actively supports the reawakened interest in cultural traditions which are appreciated by the peoples of the Pacific as an expression of their distinct cultural identities and can be taken as their response to the experienced levelling process in a globalized world (Keck 2014). Other new challenges include working as a consultant or lawyer regarding copyright and land issues or the role of the anthropologist as a teacher in Oceanic educational institutions, which is the topic of this contribution. One of the more recent tasks of anthropologists' concerns the reciprocal exchange of knowledge and more specifically of anthropological knowledge. The question of how we can give back ethnographic material or knowledge to people we lived with for some time, we worked with, people who might have adopted us into their kinship group, this question has become more and more important during the last ten years. On a more general level, we have to reflect on how we can develop reciprocal forms of communication. This was also the topic of the 8th Conference of the European Society for Oceanists (ESfO) in St Andrews, Scotland, in 2010: 'Exchanging Knowledge in Oceania'. In the internal

description of the conference topic, it was written: ‘Oceanic peoples and Oceanist academics share a contemporary dilemma: how to re-describe and transfer knowledge and so make their cultural resources useful, effective and resilient in the contemporary world. But what kinds of ‘knowledge’ are at stake? ... What kinds of new social relations might we create between Oceania and European-based universities in the twenty-first century?’ (Crook 2010).

One of the rare studies on the theme of reciprocity of ethnographic material is Sjoerd Jaarsma’s edited volume *Handle with Care: Ownership and Control of Ethnographic Material* (2002), where a number of well-known scholars working in the Pacific address the complex questions of property and the returning of field material and publications. Despite all the different positions, the authors agree that this process of returning knowledge has to be handled in a well thought out way, and that the chances and risks inherent in it have to be carefully balanced. A more recent contribution *Relations and Products: Dilemmas of Reciprocity in Fieldwork* has been compiled by Glowczewski et al. (2013), wherein the authors, anthropologists, historians and linguists reflect on the ‘products’ of their field research and the consequences of this exchange. It takes place on different levels, between the researcher, the local host community, the civil society and academia and, accordingly, differing demands are raised and various evaluations are made.

In this contribution I focus on yet another, related form of reciprocity – not the returning of tangible field data such as publications or photographs to the local community (‘the village’), but a university partnership exchange program in anthropology between the Divine Word University in Madang, Papua New Guinea, and the Institute of Anthropology at Heidelberg University. It represented a different way of ‘giving back’ anthropological knowledge and insights that have been shared with the anthropologists Jürg Wassmann and myself, by two Papua New Guinean societies, the Nyaura (West Iatmul) people in the Sepik region, East Sepik Province, where Jürg Wassmann has been doing field research since the 1970s, and the Yupno people in the Finisterre Range, Madang and Morobe Provinces (where Jürg and I have repeatedly done fieldwork since 1986). This fieldwork material from the Sepik and the Yupno (cf. Keck 2005; Wassmann 2016) was decisive for our academic anthropological career, and to now train Papua New Guinean students in Pacific anthropology seemed to be a logical step and a viable way of demonstrating reciprocity and exchange of knowledge.

Background

The beginnings of this partnership project lay with a number of research traditions, facts, and fortunate circumstances and go back a number of years. Being trained in anthropology in the 1970s and 1980s at the Institute of Anthropology at Basel University under the auspices of Meinhard Schuster had meant a fieldwork-oriented, ethnographic education with a regional focus on Oceania and, more precisely, Papua New Guinea. In addition, at the Institute at this time, a number of colleagues were working on a long-term project, the *Historical Atlas of Ethnic and Linguistic Groups*

in Papua New Guinea. The aim was to establish an overview of the increase of knowledge about ethnic and linguistic groups in the various regions of Papua New Guinea, such as Madang, Sepik and Highlands, islands such as New Britain, New Ireland and Bougainville and other regions. On a temporal scale, the Atlas was structured into five periods, beginning in 1873 (the year of Captain John Moresby's landing) and ending in 1975 with Papua New Guinea's independence. All published sources and information were compiled according to the five temporal periods (cf. Keck 1995; Schuster 1995; Wassmann 1995).

I was working on the Madang section, and through this work of compiling sources and data I became quite familiar with the research situation, the enormous cultural and linguistic diversity and the anthropological knowledge available on these local societies in the Madang region. It became evident that, compared to Sepik river cultures ('over-researched', as a senior anthropologist in Port Moresby remarked) or Highland societies, anthropological research about the Adelbert Range and the Ramu River societies were rather scarce.

Added to this is the historic situation: at or around the time of the German colonial occupation of New Guinea in 1884, the first German missionaries arrived, and since these years, volumes of historical and anthropological studies were written in German containing rich historical descriptions. A larger collection of these manuscripts, written by missionaries from the Society of the Divine Word who worked along the North-East Coast of New Guinea, are preserved in the Noser Library of the Divine Word University in Madang but, because they are written in German, they are inaccessible to non-German speaking students and researchers. (It should become an important part of the students' internship in our project to catalogue these sources).

Since the beginning of the then-founded Institute of Anthropology at Heidelberg University in 1995 under the directorship of Jürg Wassmann, the regional focus was Oceania and, more precisely, Papua New Guinea.

All these facts, the regional Oceania focus, scarcity of anthropological knowledge about parts of the Madang province together with scientific curiosity, the desire to learn more about these societies and interesting historical sources led to a research project in 2003 called 'Person, Space and Memory in the Contemporary Pacific',² that was generously sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation and provided grants for eight doctoral students, three of whom conducted fieldwork in three different Ramu-River societies (A.T. von Poser (2014) among the Kayan, A. von Poser (2013) among the Bosmun, Herbst (2016) among the Giri people, see also Meinerzag (2015), who did research among the Hinihon).

Because of its location and size, Madang was an ideal 'base camp' for our own field research among the Yupno people in the late 1980s, our 'outside world', a place for getting away from the village, a place with shops and a pharmacy, an ideal location for buying supplies, for relaxing for a few days and enjoying a cold beer by the sea, for scrutinizing data and rethinking topics, and, in the following years, a place with access to the internet. The infrastructure and local knowledge kindly provided and shared by

Divine Word University colleagues in Madang and the hospitality of Diane Cassell of the Madang Lodge made Madang a very pleasant base station for Heidelberg anthropologists working in the rural regions of the north-east coast.



Figure 1. Entrance gate of the Divine Word University (2008).

Repeated visits for fieldwork among the Yupno as well as exploration trips within the Madang province to find suitable fieldwork locations for the doctoral students led to an increasing intensification of contacts with colleagues from the Divine Word University (DWU)³ in Madang. Mark Solon, then Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Pat Gesch, Head of the Papua New Guinea Studies Department were very open-minded towards anthropology and invited us to give lectures.

In 1996 the Catholic Divine Word University was granted university status and, with Australian support, in the following years new buildings, the 'Friendship Library,' many computer labs and lecture halls were built. During the last twenty years the university expanded rapidly.

Today, with its five faculties (arts, business, health, education, theology) and approx. 3000 students, it is one of the leading academic institutions of Papua New Guinea.

Closer contact was also established with the University of Papua New Guinea Branch in Madang and its Head Greg Murphy⁴ and, thanks to and together with him, numerous joint exploratory trips to Mikarew, Giri, Kayan, Bosmun and to other regions became possible.

As the first step in a planned closer cooperation between DWU and Heidelberg, in 2005 DWU and the Heidelberg Institute entered into a Memorandum of Agreement 'to share educational, cultural, human resource and research expertise' between the

institutions (Solon 2006: 2). Building on this Memorandum of Agreement, a concrete joint project was established and funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). The DAAD offered an exchange program between German universities and universities in developing countries,⁵ a program that was really customized for this purpose, and the project was funded from 2008 to 2011.



Figure 2. DWU students under the banyan tree (2008).

In these four years, a curriculum for anthropology was jointly developed and implemented as a Bachelor strand at the Papua New Guinea Studies Department at the Divine Word University. Another ambitious subsequent goal, the introduction of a Master of Arts in Anthropology and the establishment of a department of anthropology, however, could not be realized. In these four years, lecturers from Heidelberg regularly taught courses in Madang, and vice versa, lecturers from DWU came and taught in Heidelberg.

Why anthropology?

Forty years after independence, Papua New Guinea today is confronted with a variety of problems. They include the turning of the societies traditionally characterized by a subsistence economy into a globalized monetary economy, the slow dissolution of traditional communities of solidarity into, under 'Western' influence, increasingly individualized two-class societies with many 'losers' who, in some cases violently, express their dissatisfaction, the migration of large parts of the population into towns, and the difficult approach of the political elite to power and money. Another factor is

a kind of health transition with new health issues. All these problems and their possible solutions confront the education system with major challenges. Papua New Guinea is also subject to rapid cultural change. In past decades, many Papua New Guineans – also under the influence of missionary work but, even more, under the influence of Christian fundamentalist denominations – have turned away from their own cultural past. Yet, at the same time, against the background of global processes and as a consequence of the general insecurity regarding goals in life and job opportunities, a return to identity-establishing traditions is taking place and there was and is associated with this a stronger interest in social or cultural anthropology.

Anthropology presents a chance to local people to understand and appreciate the cultural diversities of their country and apply them to social development strategies (Solon 2006: 1).

In our opinion, however, anthropology should not only investigate and document the uniqueness of the extremely different local cultures and, through teaching and learning, thus create awareness of the richness of indigenous knowledge systems in the Pacific but, by comparing them, also include other, Pacific and non-Pacific cultures. Topics such as globalization and migration, legal and medical pluralism, environmental pollution (climate change and the rising sea level, a threat to viability on numerous islands in the Pacific), mining and logging should also be considered. As a result, one's own positioning in an increasingly more interconnected world should become easier. To quote Mark Solon:

Students entering DWU come from various parts of PNG [Papua New Guinea]; they will, after graduation, become intellectual leaders, research initiators, change agents in nation building. Their abilities to design, implement change and lead research projects will raise awareness and confidence for the nation and its leaders when taking decisions and designing policies (2006: 4).

Anthropological training, the first goal alongside the academic education with its theoretical concepts, should promote appreciation of one's own cultural identity and traditions – with its over 800 different cultures and languages, Papua New Guinea possesses an enormous cultural diversity and many different world views. A number of languages are about to disappear and many cultures today face rapid transformations and many aspects of indigenous knowledge are going to be lost – forgotten, no longer shared, no longer regarded as a valuable resource, or abandoned in favour of modern, 'Western' knowledge. At the same time, a process that is known as *kastom*⁶ can be observed in today's Pacific region. This reorientation towards *kastom* can, as the recently awakened interest in one's own language (see, for example Hawaiian, Maori or Chamorro people) shows, be seen as a clear attempt toward heterogeneity in a world that is becoming more and more globalized and homogenized. This *kastom* practice also allows a more conscious realization or strengthening of one's own cultural identity. Examples of such a *kastom* or of a revival of a form of knowledge that had almost been forgotten and that, especially when confronted with modern knowledge, has been regarded as inferior, are the knowledge of traditional healers and their herbal medicine, and traditional navigation as it occurs in Micronesia and other parts of the Pacific (Keck 2014). The two most recent examples of the latter are the Hōkūle'a, a

replica of a traditional Hawaiian voyaging canoe that embarked on a three-year circumnavigation of the globe (Parker 2015) and the revival of large-scale outrigger canoes in Lihir, New Ireland documented in the film *Kabelbel* (Batty 2015).

Rates of local transformation have increased tremendously under post-colonial regimes: the forces of globalization, which rapidly distribute commodities, images, political and moral concepts across the region, have presented Pacific populations with an unprecedented need and opportunity to fashion new and expanded understanding of their cultural and individual identities. Although much important research on these processes has been done already and philosophies of building bridges between cultural traditions and modern ways of life have been conceptualized by various Pacific scholars such as – just to mention two prominent Papua New Guinean writers and scholars – the late Bernard Narokobi (and his ‘Melanesian Way’) or Steven Winduo (in his numerous essays and poems), crucial questions have remained unanswered, questions that should be reflected on and responded to by Pacific scholars themselves. Local voices and reflections on these ongoing transformations and the place of cultural traditions within these global changes should be heard and acknowledged.

Anthropological training should empower people to appreciate and pass on this local, indigenous knowledge. Many Papua New Guineans, old and young, villagers, urban dwellers, educated and uneducated people, are aware of and express their unease regarding the loss of their own cultural identity. This identity has albeit never been a static or homogeneous entity, has been profoundly shaped by one’s own cultural traditions and practices, values, language and knowledge, and has given orientation in life and a sense of belonging.⁷ Connected with this, a further goal is the development of tolerance towards other, alien or unfamiliar traditions, i.e. the promotion of transcultural competence and cultural sensitivity to alternative worldviews. The frequently characteristic local ethno-centrism should be eliminated: ‘Anthropological understanding will reduce prevalent cultural stereotypes by creating a sensibility for ethnic and cultural values and diversities’ (Solon 2006: 4).

Globalization and standardization have not only resulted in a certain uniformity but – and to the surprise of many – also in heterogeneity and new forms of cultural difference. ‘Ethnic and cultural fragmentation and modernist homogenization are not two arguments, two opposing views of what is happening in the world today, but two constitutive trends of global reality’ (Friedman 1994: 102). Anthropology has much to offer here, since it not only concentrates on and documents the richness and diversity of traditional cultures, but engages itself in the contemporary changes as well. In short: anthropology is not limited at all to *tumbuna samting*, to ‘things of our ancestors’ – an often heard assumption – but, as a dynamic, broad discipline, is especially suited for interdisciplinary work, and for addressing many issues that are relevant worldwide, for Pacific and other societies alike.

Indigenous anthropology and Divine Word University students' comments

Over the last decades, anthropologists have become more sensitive concerning their role as researchers and the expectations regarding the research results, their exchanges and the practical relevance for the people that they studied. Today, the voices of many indigenous Pacific scholars are becoming louder in their demand that western anthropologists should acknowledge the obligations and responsibilities arising from research-specific relations with people in Oceania.

Indigenous people observe that the anthropological material collected over many years by anthropologists is rarely returned to them, and they postulate the right to gain access to the recorded descriptions and analyses (Głowczewski 2005: 145).

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, herself a Maori and a professor in education as well as the director of the International Research Institute for Maori and Indigenous Education at the University of Auckland, very clearly expresses this in her book *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous people* (1999). Critical and sceptical vis-à-vis the participation, the usefulness and the benefit of many 'Western' projects and as a way to keep control over indigenous knowledge, many indigenous people today want to actively participate in defining research topics and conditions – a fact anthropologists have to acknowledge and to deal with.

To train young Papua New Guinea students to become 'indigenous anthropologists' was therefore seen as a valuable way of reciprocity and a way towards sustainability. It is, too, a longstanding demand made decades ago by Louise Morauta, who was teaching at the University of Papua New Guinea at the time (Morauta 1979, see the comments by Sullivan 2014).

In many statements by the students, their actual situation of 'finding themselves between two worlds' becomes plainly apparent. Tradition is seen as a 'backbone', culture as something one can be proud of, but a strongly developed national identity as young Papua New Guineans is also expressed (Becker 2010a).

Gaius, a DWU student, states:

I think culture are the social norms, rules and laws, it brings about the conduct of you in the society, and traditions, I call them basically the (...) physical practice of culture, that is like singing, dancing, the *bilas*, the attire they use during dances or songs, meetings. I believe it is very important because (...) as a proud Papua New Guinean I would say it is (...) our backbone. Without culture, there would not be any partnership within a society, all societies are bound together because of culture, it is a belief, tradition, practice, that has been passed on, and so I would say it is very important. Of course I will pass it on. But it will depend on how much of the changes that are coming about, the westernized changes and other changes that are going on. We have to change in order to live. If we are not changing, we won't go anywhere. So I believe as I pass my culture and traditions on to my children, it will not be the original one, but it will be a bit changed, modified (...).

And asked: ‘Are you proud of your culture?’, he answered, ‘Yes of course, I am proud to be an Eastern Highlander,’ and Jimmy, another DWU student, adds: ‘I am very proud of my culture, it makes me identify myself as an individual and makes me into an element of what this society, the overall Melanesian society, demands!’.



Figure 3. Cultural Day at the Divine Word University, a student in her traditional *bilas* (decoration) (2009).

Sarah remarked (Becker 2010a):

For me tradition means a lot of things, it could mean the way of life, or the way we are here, the way we have grown up doing things, our traditional dresses and the way, you know, social activities we take part in, things like marriage ceremonies and mourning sessions, and a lot of social activities in our village could mean my tradition. It could mean the type of food that I eat, or the kind of attitude that I have, it could also mean my traditions, something that has been part of me, and it is installed in me, it has been passed on from generation to generation, the way of life! Ruth shared this opinion: Culture gives me a place of belonging because I grew up in the city, it is like people identify you not by who you are but where you are from, like they see me and think ‘Oh, she is from the islands.’ So for me to maintain my culture is a very important thing. So if I don’t know my culture, I am (...) how would I say, I am [in Tok Pisin] *mipela tok olsem em i man nating o em i meri nating*. I am just someone, I do not have a background or anything like that. So yeah, my culture is very important, not only for myself but like for me to pass on and to teach like to my nieces or my nephews or my own children. For me personally, my tradition and culture, it shapes me, it shapes my attitude or my personality, so like wherever I go, I conduct myself, it goes back to my cultural roots or how my parents have told me according to cultural values.

As these statements make clear, culture is understood by the students more as a 'stable package' and definitely 'territorialized' and not as 'fluid or unbounded' and thus in no way corresponds to a contemporary anthropological concept of culture. A concept discussed by the students and held to be positive is the 'Melanesian Way' developed by Papua New Guinean philosopher, writer and politician Bernard Narokobi, a philosophy that invites one to build a bridge between indigenous, cultural traditions and modern ways of life.

University training is critically reflected, together with the wish for a qualified education; a good professional position is also expected by the parents as a 'return on investment.' But the value of one's own culture is also discussed, as is the missed chance of getting to know the local 'traditional' village life, which parents often judge in a derogatory manner.

The difficult balance between modernization and global influences as well as the preservation of autonomous cultural traditions which are definitely seen as valuable, meaningful and identity-constructing, is described by Lawinia, who describes her situation as follows (in Becker 2010a):

We are caught between two worlds and I think it had a lot of influence on our traditions that we seem to be forgetting our traditions, which some traditions are very good and we should uphold, and soon we realize that it is too late (...).

The Divine Word University students had their own opinion on anthropology and its value for them.⁸ When asked which topic the students would like to learn more about, an often heard answer was 'Cultural or Social Anthropology'.

I would like to learn more about Social Anthropology especially in regard to changes that are taking place – cultural shifts.

I like to learn more about indigenous anthropology and how it is influenced by Western academics.

I am from a village in a rural area, therefore I feel that learning anthropology is very important to me. I would like to suggest that anthropology must be a field of its own! DWU should have a department of anthropology in the future.

Any topics of anthropology that are of relevance to the contemporary PNG and Pacific societies should be taught to students, and should be given enough time because the pool of knowledge about our society is [more] present in anthropology than any other discipline.

Personally I would like to learn more about methods of decolonizing and the recovery of many traditions. In addition, to learn how indigenous people can represent and talk about their own culture rather than having Western representation.

Because I come from a country which consists of diverse cultures, languages, beliefs etc., I'd rather want to learn more about Cultural Anthropology.

And:

I liked this course, it helped me a lot in reflecting my own culture and traditions back home (...).

I would like to learn more about the different cultures and how they influence our politics/politics of the world.

I learned about many different views on the ways of living in different societies all around the world. It is very interesting to learn about different cultures and compare them with my own.

Or, very short:

All in all, this course was the BOMB!!!

And on the ‘Globalization in the Pacific’-course students commented:

I enjoyed studying this unit. (...) I’ve learned that culture is a process and that there is constant change. I see that globalization may be helping in some way but in the end, it will take away our culture and traditions and destroy the link we have with our ancestors, our way of life and our sole identities as indigenous people and as Papua New Guineans.

This unit ‘Globalization in the Pacific,’ I believe will be useful in decision-making on socio-economic developments because if the understanding of a people, culture and society is clearer, then better choices and decisions can be made to benefit all.

The program: topics and experiences

The first aim of this academic exchange has been the implementation of an anthropology curriculum within the already existing Bachelor of Arts (BA) program of the Papua New Guinea Studies Department, Faculty of Arts. It was addressed to all students, from year one to year four, and integrated or complemented already existing courses such as ‘Gender Issues,’ ‘Comparative History of Indigenous People’ and ‘Melanesian Religion.’

The course topics, the system of assessment and practicalities such as visa, accommodation, office space, literature, technical infrastructure (photocopies, access to Internet, Moodle – an open-source learning platform, data projector and so on) had been discussed in Madang during previous visits, and following these talks and also based on our own teaching experiences, we developed teaching courses with topics such as ‘Introduction to Cultural Anthropology,’ ‘History and Theories of Anthropology,’ ‘Interpreting Cultures,’ ‘Research Methods in Anthropology,’ reading courses of classical and contemporary ethnographies, scientific report writing, ‘Globalization in the Pacific,’ a medical anthropological lecture series about aspects of the ongoing ‘Health Transition’ in the Pacific, and a film series with the topic

‘People and Land.’ The teaching material and the movies were given to colleagues in Madang. The teaching language was English, sometimes Tok Pisin.

Teaching experiences by Madang colleagues in Heidelberg and vice versa were central aspects of this exchange program in these four years, 2008 to 2011.



Figure 4. Reading Malinowski’s *Argonauts* with students at Divine Word University (2008).



Figure 5. ‘Interpreting Cultures’-course, Divine Word University 2008 (with Pat Gesch as guest auditor).

Mark Solon was the first Papua New Guinean lecturer in this reciprocal exchange and taught a course in Heidelberg with the title ‘Melanesian World View of Land and Development,’ a central theme in understanding the very close social, spiritual and cosmological relationship of people with their land and their place of living. Anastasia Sai from DWU offered a course on gender constructs in the contemporary Pacific. Heidelberg students therefore had the chance to learn about Papua New Guinea, the Pacific and its current issues from Pacific scholars who presented based on first-hand subjective experiences and with insights that were different from those non-Pacific scholars could give. The Pacific scholars looked at how sex and gender shaped gender relations between women and men in the different Pacific societies. Anastasia Sai commented on this exchange and on broadening perspectives: ‘Having a different perspective contributes to quality. The Papua New Guinea way is not the only way, we have to learn there is a bigger world out there and we are in this big world’ (Becker 2010b).



Figure 6. Staff meeting, Divine Word University 2008. From left to right: Anastasia Sai, Mark Solon, Anita von Poser, Pat Gesch, Jürg Wassmann, and Alexis von Poser (from behind).

In addition, a number of Heidelberg students⁹ were involved in this program. In the form of internships, they had different tasks and gained diverse experiences as being tutors, working in the archives of the Noser library, cataloguing German manuscripts, designing an inventory file and establishing an inventory in the local museum, *haus tumbuna*, in Madang as well as participating in film projects. The time in Madang also gave students the chance to conduct their own research for their MA theses and eventually to return to Papua New Guinea for a doctoral thesis. What could not be accomplished was sending Papua New Guinean BA students to Heidelberg – the

exchange of students was, on the one hand, not sponsored by this program, and even if we had found the means for this, on the other hand, due to language barriers (since almost all courses on a BA level in Heidelberg were and are taught in German) postgraduate (MA) students would benefit considerably more from such a study trip to Heidelberg. They would more likely then possess the qualifications required for admission to begin studying at a German university.

For the Heidelberg anthropologists taking part in this exchange program, the teaching at Divine Word University was a challenging experience that really questioned their own professional self-conception.

It was a great chance to try to inspire the students coming from so many different regions with differing biographies and to make them enthusiastic about anthropological topics. And we learned that what seems for us here in Europe an important part of anthropological teaching – reading books by the famous Bronislaw Malinowski, the founder of British social anthropology, or discussing important texts such as Clifford Geertz’s seminal article about the Balinese cockfight, are for Papua New Guinea students of medium interest at best. We tried to include material that they could identify with – work by Pacific scholars, texts or modern Pacific ethnographies and many films that turned out to be very good and popular didactic tools. Among these films, the 12 twenty-minute episodes of *Elsewhere* (2002), directed by Nikolaus Geyrhalter, presented people from very different cultural and geographical backgrounds, Sami, Tuareg, Himba, Korowai, Rei Matau (from Woleai in the Central Caroline Islands), Ladakhis, Sardinians and others. Recent productions were the Marshallese movie *Morning Comes So Soon* (Condon and Cruz 2008), a story about a Marshallese boy and a Chinese girl who fell in love and became outsiders – the story ending with a suicide; the movie *Sun Come Up* (directed by Jennifer Redfearn 2010) about the relocation of Carteret Islanders, or *Crater Mountain Story* (2008), directed by Papua New Guinea filmmaker Martin Maden.

Given Papua New Guinea’s rapid socio-cultural transformation and confronted with a number of social, ecological, and medical problems, some of these topics should be addressed in the respective Master units.

The topics include the high rate of crime and violence especially in towns, or (locally often connected to *sanguma* [sorcery] accusations) the increasing number of HIV/AIDS infections, and new and large mining and fishery projects with long-lasting, huge socio-ecological impacts, such as Ramu Nickel, the planned Frieda River mine, the PNG LNG project or the Pacific Marine Industrial Zone. These Master units had been developed in 2010, but to date an MA in anthropology could not be realized, and the units exist only on paper. These MA units have close ties to indigenous knowledge systems and, at the same time, most of them are strongly oriented towards applying the knowledge, i.e. allowing the students to find jobs. They cover topics that colleagues in Madang think are relevant and important for Papua New Guinea today. The topics included ‘Global Processes and Local Identities in the Pacific,’ ‘Issues of Indigeneity: a Comparative Perspective,’ ‘Selected Readings in Anthropology,’ ‘Anthropology of

Museum and Tourism,' 'Medical Anthropology,' and the following three that should be presented in somewhat more detail.

Media Anthropology

Media anthropology is a recent and growing sub-discipline of anthropology, and its emergence is closely related to the on-going global expansions of the media and the processes in which flows of new technologies such as mobile phones, telecommunication, information technology, and the Internet distribute and propel news, images, new values and meanings around the globe at high speed and intensity. The field of media anthropology covers a broad range of topics: media participation, the cultural and social aspects of mass media, its usage and its active reception by various audiences, the representation of others and selves, culture and gender in the context of the media (questions of the perpetuation of stereotypes, of indigenous ways of presenting selves etc.), and the manifold influences that film and media have on cultural worlds.

Besides the critical understanding and knowledge of media (the side oriented towards theory), the unit aims to provide students with practical knowledge of visual and media anthropology. Especially in the Pacific region with its traditionally oral cultures, documentary and ethnographic film and other visual and auditory means are useful, creative tools for documenting traditional and new cultural forms in contexts undergoing transformation. They are also tools that allow for an active indigenous, local participation and the development of a community-based production of documentaries ('indigenous filmmaking'). As we realized in the Bachelor courses, where we used a number of films to delve into various topics we discussed, they provoked most interesting discussions among the students. For example, Martin Maden's movie *Kantri Bilong Yumi* (2002) is a film about his own family in New Britain and their very different approaches to life, a portrait of three generations and the impact of historic events such as the white colonial world and the country's independence. This screening resulted in discussions that were much more engaged and lively than reading a text could provoke.

Another example to illustrate the relevance of media anthropology is a project that creatively uses new media. Barbara Glowczewski developed a CD-Rom with an interactive multimedia program, *Dream Trackers: Yapa Art and Knowledge of the Australian Desert* (2000/2001) for the Warlpiri in Central Australia. She writes: 'Today, multimedia technology and the internet offer a fantastic way to promote and transmit oral cultures both for the benefit of the Indigenous peoples concerned, as well as to demonstrate the importance of local knowledge in the global system' (Glowczewski 2005: 145). On this CD she compiles a network of 'dreamings' that are especially meaningful for Warlpiri people and arranges them as autonomous modules, containing texts, sounds and images that could be connected to each other and that transpose the cognitive map of this society (the way that people organize their relation to space and knowledge). Her aim was twofold: The project should allow an intergenerational transfer of indigenous knowledge as part of a bilingual, Warlpiri-English school program, and it should introduce non-Aboriginal people to the cultural

and spiritual richness of local knowledge and the complexity of Warlpiri society (Glowczewski 2005: 146-148).

Anthropology of mining

Over the last decades, the mining sector and other forms of resource extraction have been the dominating economic force in Papua New Guinea and have influenced the politics in many ways. With huge new mining projects being started (such as the Ramu Nickel) or planned (Frieda River) and two of the country's largest mining projects, Porgera and Ok Tedi, the lives of many people in the vicinity of these mining sites have changed dramatically. While, on the one hand, local landowners have benefitted from the economic development related to the resource extraction, on the other hand the social, cultural and ecological risks and impacts of mining on local communities are tremendous and generally not what these communities or planners had expected; community responses to mining are accordingly highly diverse. Traditional indigenous cosmologies and cultural Melanesian identities have often been anchored in landscapes that were destroyed in the mining process. Many ideas about 'promises of modernity' in often remote rural regions include access to medical care, education, jobs, roads and commodities such as store goods (Filer and Macintyre 2008); these perceptions of development and various local hopes and images for a bright future are entangled in this mining discourse. The issue of minerals extraction in other Pacific countries (New Caledonia, Australia) and similarities and differences will provide a broader perspective. The perspective of the local people and others such as mining companies, developers, the government, environmentalists, groups which claim a stake in mining issues, and the role of anthropologists as consultants and advocates will be discussed.

Fieldwork and linguistic anthropology

The on-going loss of various cultural traditions and indigenous world views is accompanied by a loss of the diversity of languages in the Pacific, which is especially noticeable in Papua New Guinea, probably the most linguistically diverse nation in the modern world. The shift to the dominant languages English and Tok Pisin is underway and many local languages are severely endangered. Although Sapir-Whorf's famous hypothesis about the correlation of language and thought has been debated and modified in the last decade, it still holds that cultural world views are expressed in indigenous languages, and when a language dies, a part of the cultural diversity of our world dies as well.

The scholar Steven Winduo writes:

The world of the indigenous people is viewed through their language (...) Our language diversity is closely linked to our biodiversity that without attending to the specific demands for protection, development, and sustainability we can lose cultures, knowledge, and people in this tide of modern changes ... (Winduo 2010a).

He continues with the observation by linguist Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2004: 2) that 'linguistic diversity and biodiversity are correlational' (...) and that knowledge about

‘how to maintain biodiversity is encoded in small local languages. Their speakers live in the world’s biologically and often also linguistically most diverse areas. Through killing these languages (or letting them die), we thus kill many of the prerequisites for maintaining biodiversity’ (Skutnabb-Kangas 2004: 2).

With this unit we wanted to train students in doing fieldwork, the central empirical method of anthropology, in order to document aspects of their (or another) local culture, and to conduct a linguistic survey (collecting word lists, creating an indigenous language dictionary, recording and preserving oral traditions and histories), and therefore help to promote and revive traditional knowledge and skills for the benefit of future generations.

This echoes Winduo’s (2010b) plea to encourage the documentation of cultural knowledge systems in any form. In a similar effort, he had asked students from the University of Papua New Guinea to write down stories and cultural knowledge from their area. Lyne Kuraiba, one of these students, whose father comes from the East Coast of New Ireland, writes about the culture-specific practice of tying up a *tanget*. ‘When a *tanget* leaf [*cordyline terminalis*] is being tied up by someone, then this normally means danger or that something has gone wrong’, and she gave the example of a son who had left home after a dispute with this father.

‘After some time the father discovers that a *tanget* near the house is tied up. This is read as a message that the son has vowed never to return to his family. (...) To reconcile the differences and unite the father and son, the father must kill a pig and have a feast to bring his son back into the family’ (Winduo 2010b: 5)

Concluding remarks

Peter, a Divine Word University student, should have the last word:

I came here, and I was starting some of the courses offered by Papua New Guinea studies, and I realized that culture was so important in our societies, and when I looked around the campus I usually see students expressing themselves in different ways, mostly the westernized ways.

And I really see that we are moving so fast and we are adopting new cultures where we shouldn’t be, because for my case, I see that it is a danger without really knowing what that culture is bringing to our society. We then tend to adopt this culture. One clear example that I would give is that when I came to this university I realized people hugging. When I go to my society, I would not do that because my society does not allow like just hugging with women or women hugging with men.

And if you do that, then you are going to violate the customs, the tradition of a society, and you might come into conflict with the society's values. That is why I thought that it is very important that you know your culture. And some of the studies we are taking in these three years I tend to neglect what I used to do when I was in the village. I did not take notice of some of the traditions practiced and some people died and for myself I neglected that. I would have adopted some of the things what my elders were doing in the society. For me, they would have knowledge of wisdom from a perspective that I was studying, because I realized that those traditions which were practiced by my elders had some meaning in life.

Notes

- ¹ This paper was previously published as Chapter 13 of Alexis von Poser and Anita von Poser (eds) *Facets of fieldwork. Essays in Honor of Jürg Wassmann*, Universitätsverlag Winter, Heidelberg, 2017. Permission to re-publish here was kindly given by Dr. Andreas Barth, Editor of Universitätsverlag Winter GmbH. The author gives sincere thanks to all who have contributed, participated and assisted in many ways and during a number of years so that this partnership could be realized, namely Mark Solon, Pat Gesch, Anastasia Sai, Jerry Semos, Anita and Alexis von Poser, Franziska Herbst, Michèle Ducommun, Christiane Falck, Fabienne Becker, Frauke Meeuw, Lea Stephan, Karin Hermes, Lena Borlinghaus and Paul Bruch. To them and to all others who are not mentioned by name here: *bigpela tenkyu tru*.
- ² The same name had been chosen for an anthropological book series, originally started in 2004 and published by Berghahn Publishers, see A. von Poser (2013) and Herbst (2016).
- ³ It developed from the Divine Word Institute founded in 1980.
- ⁴ The intended partnership with the state University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) in Port Moresby was made difficult by the unstable security situation in Port Moresby; with the change of the Open Campus of the UPNG Branch in Madang into a distance-learning university, more intense cooperation and an academic exchange with this institution became impossible as well.
- ⁵ An additional form of a mutual exchange of research results is represented by the Tandem Research Program initiated by J. Schlehe together with students of Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia. Anthropology students of both universities jointly conduct training fieldwork while annually alternating between Indonesia and Germany (Schlehe 2013).
- ⁶ In some Melanesian societies, today the concept of *kalja* (or *kalsa*, 'culture'), is preferred with a significance differing from *kastom*. *Kalja* practices are seen as a resource to which each individual of the respective group has access and as a chance of earning money (e.g. in tourism) (Dalsgaard and Otto 2011: 142-144). On the occasion of performing a dance imported from a different region of Papua New Guinea in 2007 in the Yupno village of Gua, the performers, some of them from other regions and working as teachers in the Yupno region, also talked about *kalja* and were hoping for advice how to market their dance on a national and an international level – an example of how the concepts *kastom* and now *kalja* are spreading and now being given a new local significance. What is clear is that the

two concepts *kastom* and *kalja* can be understood in different ways not only in the anthropological discussion but in the respective local context.

- ⁷ While, in current anthropology, the ‘preservation of identity’ is criticized as an outdated, static concept, whereas anthropologists are talking about a person’s multiple identities and see identity as constructed, as a constantly changing cultural process, many Divine Word University students understand cultural identity as something clearly more fixed, static and permanent.
- ⁸ These and the following statements were given when the different anthropology courses were evaluated.
- ⁹ These Heidelberg students, although participating actively in the exchange program, were funded separately by individual grants provided by the DAAD. The University Partnership program supplied the means for the exchange of lecturers, but not for students.

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