

Selon les auteurs, il est fort possible que ce soit par le biais d'une certaine « atemporalité » (*untimeliness*) que l'anthropologie assure la continuité interne à son projet. Alors qu'une posture épistémologique davantage traditionnelle amène l'anthropologue à se concentrer sur les « gens ordinaires » (par l'entremise d'une présence prolongée dans un espace relativement défini), les équipements de l'anthropologue du contemporain impliquent également des réseaux d'experts et les lieux de production de leur savoir. C'est sur les bases d'une telle mobilité que se dresse l'entreprise anthropologique : dans la capacité à étudier l'événement en tant que phénomène, en maintenant le mouvement entre un terrain aux sites multiples et un travail analytique permettant la mise en place d'un dialogue critique avec les objets étudiés. C'est donc une certaine posture dans le temps, une lenteur, une disposition à tisser des collaborations épistémiques, des partenariats mais aussi à s'en distancer à travers l'acte de création d'un savoir qui constituent l'originalité de la discipline. Les auteurs insistent également sur l'aspect pédagogique de leur projet : il faut apprendre à accompagner les étudiants différemment dans le choix des contextes, des engagements avec différents « partenaires épistémiques » à la base de la recherche de connections formant l'essence de l'enquête ethnographique contemporaine.

Lintrospection soutenue sur les fondements épistémologiques de l'anthropologie, mais aussi les formes prises par ceux-ci dans le milieu académique (direction des étudiants, production de la thèse, etc.), font de *Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary* un livre aussi pertinent pour les étudiants que pour les professeurs et les chercheurs. Il s'agit d'une lecture tonifiante, avec le potentiel de stimuler la pensée, d'offrir de nouvelles perspectives de recherche au-delà de la seule posture esthétique et vertueuse de la réflexivité. Cet ouvrage constitue un remarquable plaidoyer pour une discipline vivante, un espace de création marqué par une sensibilité en perpétuel mouvement.

Référence

Clifford, James, et Georges E. Marcus, dirs.
1986 *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tania Murray Li, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2007, 392 pages.

Reviewer: *Shubhra Gururani*
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In *The Will to Improve*, Tania Li presents an exceptionally thorough and insightful study of governmental rationality at play in the highlands of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. In a lucid and engaging writing style, Li brings together a wide range of historical and ethnographic commentaries of governmental

power at different conjunctures of place and time and makes a critical contribution to the already impressive body of studies of governmentality. But, *The Will to Improve* is much more than a study of governmentality and development; it is a sophisticated analysis and fine-grained ethnography that lays bare the complex machinations of power and compromise which have made and remade the highlands of Central Sulawesi over a period of more than 200 years. Instead of providing an analysis of governmentality and development practices that coheres easily around neat targets, peoples, resources and particular sites, Li masterfully weaves historical detail with rich ethnographic account, forces our attention to the historically embedded relations of power and “messy actualities,” and shows how “powers that are multiple cannot be totalizing and seamless” (p. 25). Drawing on her long engagement with Indonesia and deep knowledge of the region, Li presents a rigorous analysis that is “not a narrative of governmentality rising” (p. 31), but a thoughtful exploration of “why [power] takes on these forms, how it works positively to create new conditions and how it is in turn shaped by the ‘strategies of struggle’ with which it is engaged in permanent relation of provocation and reversal” (p. 192). Central to her nuanced study of the highlands of Central Sulawesi is her attention to the multiple contradictions and compromises that are embedded in the will to improve. In tracking the exercise of power through Dutch colonial rule to contemporary times, *The Will to Improve* presents a persuasive account of governmental power which is caring and responsible yet untrustworthy; a power that aims to cultivate subjects, populations, territories and resources but is limited in its reach and impact.

In order to understand why a place like the highlands of Central Sulawesi, unlike other sites in Indonesia, strikingly becomes the target of repeated governmental intervention, Li takes us through a layered landscape in which the histories and everyday lives of swidden farmers, new and old settlers, migrants, traders, development officials, NGOs and activists are intertwined and historically sedimented in colonialism, capitalist expansion, agrarian political economy, development and *reformasi*. Taking us through different regimes of rule in practice, Li uses a critical Foucauldian analytics of governmentality to track the “benevolent and stubborn” will to improve the lives of those who are deemed to be in need of welfare. The objective of governmental power, as Foucault argued, is not disciplinary, but is to secure the “welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc” (p. 6). Li builds on this insight and identifies two key related practices of “problematization,” that is, “identifying deficiencies that need to be rectified” and of “rendering technical,” as central to the workings of governmentality. Rendering “a set of processes technical and improvable [means that] an arena of intervention must be bounded, mapped, characterized, and documented; the relevant forces and relations must be identified; and a narrative must be devised connecting the proposed intervention to the problem it will solve” (p. 126). While Li systematically takes the

reader through the “multiform tactics” which render the problems of Central Sulawesi technical and repeatedly exclude the questions of political economy, landlessness and structural relations of law that support inequality, what makes Li’s volume stand apart from other studies of governmentality are two important departures. In inflecting Foucauldian governmentality through a Gramscian lens, Li takes the question of agency—of humans and non-humans—seriously, and painstakingly describes when and how “situated subjects mobilize to contest their oppression.” In this careful exposition of governmentality in action, the subjects of improvement appear not as mere targets of governmental rationality but as critical actors who negotiate, accept, incorporate, reject and resist the governmental interventions aimed to improve their lives, livelihoods and landscapes. She argues that “engaging with the ‘messy actualities’ of rule in practice is not merely an adjunct to the study of government—it is intrinsic to it” (p. 283) and this is where the “critical potential of an *ethnography of government*” lies (p. 282).

Second, the brilliance of the volume lies not only in tracking the workings of the will to improve but in Li’s insistence and ethnographic attentiveness to the question of “what happens” on the ground when governmental schemes and projects of improvement become entangled with the processes and practices they would govern and improve. Ethnographically, in order to map what happens to governmental schemes in practice, Li diligently goes “beyond the plan, the map, and the administrative apparatus, into conjunctures where attempts to achieve the ‘right disposition of things’ encounter—and produce—a witches’ brew of processes, practices, and struggles that exceed their scope” (p. 28). It is in critically exploring the “witches’ brew” that Li is able to highlight the intended and unintended effects of governmental schemes and expose the limits and contradictions of governmentality. Not only is there an “ever-present possibility that a governmental intervention will be challenged by critics rejecting its diagnoses and prescriptions” (p. 17), but according to her, governmentality is limited in its reach by two additional factors. First, “is the limit posed by the target of the government: population, . . . and second is the limit posed by the available forms of knowledge and technique” (p. 18). Governmental power, as she deftly demonstrates, is always compromised.

After a thoughtful and critical discussion of governmentality and its limits in the Introduction, chapters 1 and 2 present the historical context that underlay and guided the cultural politics of power and social difference in the New Order regime. Chapter 1 presents a “form of a history of government” (p. 31) and shows how a mixed sense of official responsibility, duty, paternalism and guilt worked to inform the project of improvement in the late 19th century. Located somewhere in the complex dynamics of global political-economic change, internal developments in the Netherlands, state-sponsored capitalism and the rise of secular socialism, the concern for the natives took a particular turn in the ethical period—“it took on a far more focused and technical charac-

ter. It became the subject of increasingly specialized expertise” (p. 42). It is at this political, economic and ethical juncture, Li argues, that racial difference and categorization came to be constituted and maintained through set of administrative practices. Chapter 2 builds further the historical context of governmental improvement and systematically describes a series of interventions made by missionaries, scientists and officials of the colonial and New Order regime. Here, Li describes the overlapping effort of the different agents of reform who sought governmental strategies to improve the lives and livelihoods of the natives through resettlement of villagers, elimination of swidden agriculture, conversion to the Christian faith, and importantly, making land a source of revenue and prosperity. These interventions often relied on the use of force and violence. But as Li, by drawing on the account of Papa Eli, an elderly man from Kulawi Valley, critically shows, the improvements programs did not unfold as planned and had consequential effects with long-lasting impacts in which they “altered the conditions under which the highlanders lived their lives” (p. 94). Remarkably, the strategies of power, reform, control and change were never easy or straightforward; there were compromises made by the officials “creating room for maneuver and contestation” (p. 271).

Chapter 3 brilliantly describes how the two processes of formation of capital, linked to agrarian differentiation, and the formation of identities came to be articulated together in the highlands, reverberations of which were felt in the late 20th century. As land was turned into private property and villagers into wage labourers, distinctions between “migrants and locals, Muslims and Christians, haves and have-nots” also emerged (p. 97). Interestingly, cocoa, as Li shows, played a significant role in configuring the cultural politics of capital and difference but more importantly, the interventions designed to bring about changes in one context produced “effects that were contingent and diverse” (p. 272).

In chapter 4, Li turns her attention to a new set of improvement programs labelled “integrated conservation and development programs” that undertook the project of biodiversity protection in the Lore Lindu National Park. By focusing on how new areas of interventions were identified and classified and “problems” that were left out, this chapter documents the multiple gaps and omissions which persist in the exercise of governmentality. While increasing landlessness, impoverishment, debt and migration were identified as “problems,” they were left out of the realm of action or intervention, yielding outcomes which were not only unplanned but also unexpected. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the occupation of the Dongi-Dongi Valley inside the Lore Lindu National Park and highlight the messy and highly contentious terrain of ethnic, indigenous and activist politics, which the members of the Free Farmers Forum, NGOs and land-rights activists confront. In bringing to light the discourses as well as practices of the various parties involved, Li describes the awkward alliances, dilemmas, contradictions and compromises that informed the charged politics of claim, entitlement, rights and identity.

Chapter 6 presents a very rich and situated account of not only how subjects are produced at particular historical, political, ecological and economic conjunctures, but emphasizes the agency of the subjects to resist, negotiate and change the terms of their own improvement. Chapter 7 takes the interrogation of governmental rationality a step further and explores the rationale, calculations and tactics adopted by the World Bank in its program entitled "Social Development." These interventions, which present a striking resemblance to colonial interventions, work through the rubric that Nikolas Rose identified as "government through community." Community in these interventions is paradoxically considered to be natural, authentic and desirable yet in need of transformation and improvement.

In a critical dialogue with debates in development studies, political economy, political ecology, Marxism, cultural studies, poststructural and postcolonial theory, Tania Li has written an exemplary ethnography which attends both to the discourses and micropractices of governmental power and exposes the complex and dynamic nature of governmentality, sovereignty, identity and politics. In overcoming the lapses of earlier works about the mechanical actions of development projects, Li's profound contribution is highlighting the practices and provocations of the subjects and agents of improvement, and insistence on the unintended and unexpected consequences of governmental interventions. With its admirable and nuanced grasp of cultural politics of development, *The Will to Improve* will not only be of immense relevance to a wide range of readers interested in questions of improvement, development, sovereignty and livelihood struggles, but by pushing the terms of the debate further, it is bound to have an impact that will endure.

Anne Raulin, *Anthropologie urbaine*, Paris : Armand Colin (Collection Cursus, 2^e édition), 2007, 215 pages.

Recenseur : *Bernard Bernier*
Université de Montréal

Dans ce livre relativement court, destiné surtout à un public d'étudiants universitaires et aux intervenants en milieu urbain, Anne Raulin traite de divers aspects de la ville en se concentrant surtout sur la France, mais en incluant des éléments comparatifs avec l'Angleterre et les États-Unis. L'auteure met en relief plusieurs démarches théoriques et différents résultats des études en anthropologie et sociologie urbaines, analysant, par exemple, les études de l'École de Chicago ou celles de l'Université de Manchester. Les sujets traités sont nombreux : tout d'abord l'émergence des modèles urbains européens (première partie), qui couvre la période antique et le Moyen-Âge; ensuite les définitions de la ville (deuxième partie), qui comporte un chapitre portant un regard spécifique sur la ville, un autre sur les concepts et un troisième sur l'urbain aujourd'hui;

enfin les milieux sociaux urbains (troisième partie), couvrant les cultures de classes, les minorités et les ghettos, les « sub-cultures » et la violence urbaine, la relation du citoyen à sa ville et, finalement, le théâtre urbain. Chaque sujet est traité en détail, montrant les différentes composantes d'un problème. De ce point de vue, l'auteure a réussi un tour de force en analysant de multiples questions reliées à la ville en si peu de pages.

Il est vrai que le livre se limite à trois pays occidentaux, c'est-à-dire la France, l'Angleterre et les États-Unis. C'est là un parti pris de l'auteure, expliqué en introduction, en mentionnant que l'Occident a développé une expansion urbaine particulière. Il serait certes intéressant d'élargir la comparaison, par exemple en incluant d'autres villes européennes, mais surtout ces villes d'Asie qui ont, comme Paris ou Londres, un passé multiséculaire, mais qui ont évolué différemment, du moins jusqu'à récemment. C'est peut-être là une tâche impossible, mais il me semble qu'une véritable anthropologie urbaine devra un jour ou l'autre ajouter à ses exemples Tokyo, Beijing ou Mumbai, ou bien encore Lagos et Mexico. L'ajout de ces villes donnerait une profondeur à l'analyse qui fait défaut si l'on s'en tient à l'Occident. Malgré tout, cet écrit d'Anne Raulin, dans une langue claire et élégante, fondée sur des connaissances de première main des villes françaises et américaines, constitue une excellente introduction à toutes les questions essentielles de l'anthropologie urbaine en milieu occidental et pourrait servir de manuel pour des cours dans ce domaine.

Éric Canobbio, *Géopolitique d'une ambition inuite. Le Québec face à son destin nordique*, Québec : Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2009, 365 pages.

Recenseuse : *Caroline Hervé*
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Le principal défi qui s'impose à un anthropologue à la lecture d'un ouvrage de géopolitique est de faire l'effort de se décentrer un instant de sa discipline afin d'apprécier à sa juste valeur le travail de l'autre et de s'enrichir de l'expérience d'une nouvelle lecture des événements. C'est dans cet élan qu'il devient possible de saisir tout l'intérêt d'une démarche géopolitique, en tant que science qui étudie les conséquences politiques de la géographie et qui invite à analyser la façon dont les normes et les représentations fabriquent les espaces. Ce regard en surplomb offert par la géopolitique, loin de l'étude des pratiques quotidiennes des acteurs, ouvre néanmoins la possibilité de saisir les enjeux politiques et sociaux dans lesquels les actions sont prises. L'ouvrage d'Éric Canobbio, *Géopolitique d'une ambition inuite. Le Québec face à son destin nordique* permet cela. L'auteur, maître de conférences au département de géographie de l'Université Paris 8 Vincennes et chercheur au laboratoire « Dynamiques sociales et recomposition des espaces » (LADYSS), propose, à travers cet ouvrage, une étude des