Thematic Section

Time and the Expert: Temporalities and the Social Life of Expertise

Alexandra Widmer *York University*

This issue is concerned with bringing together particular aspects of the practice of politics and subject formation: how the production and circulation of expert knowledge takes place by mobilizing or naturalizing experiences of time. In short, the articles explore how expert knowledge compels people to orient themselves in time in particular ways. The articles scrutinize expert knowledge as it purports to form the basis for policy, planning, governance and the identities of populations, as well as the livelihood and working environments of professional knowledge producers and brokers, such as academic anthropologists, missionaries, government administrators and teachers.

More than 30 years ago, in his well-known treatise "Time and the Other," Fabian resolutely critiqued anthropologists' disciplinary practices, which delineated populations as research objects by constructing temporal distances between them and the researcher's society. His argument, that the research practices resulted in "the denial of co-evalness" (1983), was a condemnation levelled at anthropological methods that produced others based on their relationship to traditional modes of living. That anthropological knowledge about particular populations has been central in the production of identities as "traditional" or "modern" is thus well-known. The theme articles in this issue examine the social circulation and production of anthropological knowledge alongside other kinds of expert knowledge, such as religious expertise and social science knowledge in public policy and governance models. The authors are fascinated by the production of various forms of expert knowledge and also by how they circulate and are performed. At the heart of this issue is a concern for understanding the practices, places, objects and forms of affect that link knowledge and power.

Writing on the taken-for-granted aspects (and thus the importance of anthropological analysis) of the social making of "place," Geertz quipped, "It is difficult to see what is always there. Whoever discovered water, it was not a fish" (1996:259). Indeed, as lives are lived in time

and space, anthropologists have been demonstrating the social and historical dimensions of what is taken for granted in these domains. This issue takes on time in the space/time dyad. Anthropologists have had a sustained interest in highlighting the temporal dimensions of human sociality but, given the pervasive aspects of time in human experience, time has formerly been a secondary analytical focus[1] because it is part of so many other social features; for example, "political structure, descent, ritual, work, history, narrative and cosmology etc. as well as, at another level, general theories of anthropological discourse with which it is inextricably bound up" (Munn 1992:93). Munn summarizes, "In short, the topic of time frequently fragments into all the other dimensions and topics anthropologists deal with in the social world" (1992:93). The articles in this issue take up the challenge of denaturalizing the place of time in the way that knowledge becomes expertise and part of the practice of politics.

When considering the nature of expert knowledge, scientific forms loom large. Indeed, the study of expertise with methods from social science and the humanities has focused on science and technology in recent years. Such scholarship, summarized by Evans and Collins, demonstrates the social and performative dimensions of expertise, that expertise resides with individuals and communities, and that its production entails "boundary work" to denote the difference between expert and lay knowledge (2008:609–610). The knowledge claims of the life sciences are particularly worthy of scrutiny, as they profess to be so pivotal to what it means to be human in this post genomic age. Time has been shown to be a central variable in methodologies and practices of human population genetics[2] (see Kowal, Radin and Reardon 2013), for example, in the collection and freezing of a broad sampling of human tissue in the International Biological Program (a predecessor of the Human Genome Diversity Project) for analysis in the future (Radin 2013). Time is used as a variable in the production of the narratives of the genetic histories of humankind writ large as well as particular populations, tenuously connecting contemporary social and political populations to biological ancestors (Lipphardt 2010, 2012).

Notions of the past and future are also part of the popularization of genomic knowledge (e.g., Schramm et al. 2012). Narratives in genetic histories can rewrite collective memory and social identities (Wailoo et al. 2012) in unexpected ways: in the case of the descendants of slaves in the United States, for example, DNA narratives are used to reconcile past injustices (Nelson 2012). The future possibilities of Icelanders' genomic knowledge (Fortun 2008) were crucial to their appeal for venture capital, an example of what Born calls the "temporal politics" inherent to the performance of success on corporate markets (2007).[3]

This issue unpacks the temporal dimensions of the making and circulation of expert knowledge, scientific and otherwise, in ethnographic ways. The specific cultural and historical nature of expertise has been a longstanding anthropological concern (Carr 2010), but the interest in science studies and in "how legal, medical and other professional knowledge in both colonial and post-colonial settings were used and contested" (Brada 2009:1) has boosted recent anthropological interest in experts, expertise and expert communities. In this respect, the political environments and social institutions of experts and expert knowledge have increasingly come under anthropological scrutiny through ethnographic work (Cooper and Packard 1997). Anthropologists have highlighted how specific forms of expertise play a crucial part in contemporary political social forms, for example in bureaucracies of virtue (Jacob and Riles 2007), planning (Abram and Weszkalnys 2011), transparency (Ballestero 2012; Hetherington 2008) and audits (Hetherington 2011; Strathern 2000). Studying the production and circulation of expertise that takes place through the material presence of specific objects such as envelopes, legal dockets, forms and reports (e.g., Barrera 2008; Reed 2006; Riles 2006) has been an important focus in this respect. Mosse demonstrates how forms of expertise in international development frameworks and policies

> are never free from social context. They begin in social relations in institutions and expert communities, travel with undisclosed baggage and get unraveled as they are translated into the different interests of social/institutional worlds and local politics in ways that generate complex and unintended effects. [Mosse 2011:3]

These effects take place in spite of the fact that the expert knowledge is configured to occupy a "transcendent realm" where technical solutions fit all local conditions and implicitly relies on a "globalized present that compresses historical time" (2011:3).

The production of expertise is in no small way shaped by contemporary relationships among academic institutions, industry and national and local governments. This constellation creates possibilities and precludes others for knowledge production and affects the livelihoods of professional knowledge producers. The capitalist organization of work and management of time has been an important topic for anthropologists and social historians, perhaps most famously in the work of venerable labour historian E. P. Thompson (1967). While Thompson

resigned from the University of Warwick in 1971 in protest of the commercialisation of the academy (1971), Udo Krautwurst (in this issue) calls for anthropologists to "do damage" with ethnographies of knowledge production and working conditions in the contemporary academy.

Krautwurst demonstrates how academic working conditions at contemporary universities have been produced by government policies and industry priorities. The ensuing limits placed on the production of anthropological knowledge and the social and political context of academic anthropology figures large in Krautwurst's article. Analyzing this context by observing how time is invoked, he demonstrates that the ubiquitous audits—the "econometricization" of knowledge that demarcates productivity—employ a standardization of time to create commensurabilities between, for example, a neuroscientist and a socio-cultural anthropologist. This econometricization works

> in part by a reduction of their different research rhythms to an empty homogenous time. Faculty evaluations or employment offers not only are measured in terms of the number of conference papers presented or journal articles published, *but also within a (very) standardized time frame*, typically a fiscal or calendar year.

Krautwurst argues that ethnographies of science policy and university knowledge-making practices should call "attention to the *necessary* temporal multiplicities of our campuses" to "challenge the homogenizing, neoliberalizing forces acting in the spread of audit cultures, bureaucracies of virtue and campaigns for 'excellence.'" Such ethnographies would prove crucial to understanding how post-secondary education is transforming globally.

Expert knowledge has been crucial for governance through the naming of population segments that subsequently become the objects of particular policies. There are temporal dimensions to the circulation of such knowledge. In her contribution, Nicola Mooney looks at the multiple dimensions of expert knowledge to show that "discrepant temporalities of diverse expert knowledges both buttress and destabilize the legacies of colonialism." The British ethnographic classification—with administrative consequences—distinguished between Jats as a "martial race" and Jat Sikhs as "noble peasants," establishing "temporal hierarchies among Indians so that some Indians were closer to the colonial present—as well as its places—than others." Elegantly combining historical and ethnographic analysis, Mooney writes that, on the one hand, there is considerable agreement between the British colonial knowledge describing Jat culture and those cultural identities held by Jats today. On the other hand, the social and political positioning of Jats within post-colonial India—partially the result of their categorization in British India—prevents them from being farmers. Focusing on the temporal dimensions of British knowledge and administration, Mooney analyzes the contemporary consequences resulting from "reordering of peoples in history as an outcome of colonial ethnography."

Expertise is entangled with the recalibration of the meaning of objects. When they are part of a mission's conversion projects, objects have moral and political consequences for how people are compelled to orient themselves in time. In her article, Jean Mitchell analyzes how religious and cultural objects signal possibilities for conversion. Conversion experiences profoundly structure life narratives in temporal ways (Klaver and van de Kamp 2011). Anthropologists of Christianity have debated how conversion shapes collective experiences in tropes of continuity or rupture. Mitchell argues that focusing on the multiple meanings of objects and being cognisant of material conditions (like those leading to epidemics) reveals the temporal ambiguities of conversion experiences. The Presbyterians were, Mitchell demonstrates, a group of experts working in global networks who knew that acquiring local knowledge was essential to the performance of their own expertise. Without doubt they encountered people in Vanuatu who knew that the value of expertise depended as much on protecting knowledge as on facilitating its circulation (Lindstrom 1990).

Expert knowledge is foundational to the making of policy and planning social projects, a dimension of expertise taken up by Rita Henderson and Alexandra Widmer in their respective articles in this issue. Taking policy as an anthropological object has garnered interest and multiple analytical strategies (Shore and Wright 1997). The place of experts and knowledge is critical in this respect for,

> as much as an anthropology of policy examines power, it examines knowledge and knowledge production. It examines knowledge production in an essential context, institutional settings where knowledge holds special weight because this is where it is put into action by the experts and bureaucrats who formulate, theorise and extrapolate that knowledge. [Schwegler and Powell 2008:9]

As Li (2011) and others (e.g., Ferguson 1990; Mitchell 2002; Wallman 1992) have argued, such experts render aspects of society into technical objects suitable for intervention and implementation. Expertise in planning, then, comes to bear on governmental attempts to order time and space (Abram and Weszkalnys 2011). Identifying

the expert knowledge that is the basis for future plans demands anthropological attention—it is knowledge chosen while others are overlooked.

Henderson's article covers the fascinating terrain of the making and consequences of education policy in Chile, demonstrating how education policy is a crucible for the contestation of futures. To the vibrant scholarship on Latin American popular and political cultures of memory (e.g. DuBois 2000, 2005; Gordillo 2002, 2011), Henderson adds the layer of expert knowledge and education policy, which attempts to bureaucratically erase other pasts and narrations of more politicized versions of history. Henderson provides an ethnographic account of the impact of neoliberal policies that have pervaded the education system. Summed up starkly, if nostalgically, by a teacher she interviewed who had trained before the Pinochet dictatorship: "When I was trained to be a teacher, they prepared us to teach politics. They said to us: 'You are responsible for a society'. Today nobody says this to kids. Instead, they say: 'You need to go out and earn money.'" The result, he said, is that young people fear both the past and future. Such are the poignant achievements of a decentralized and increasingly privatized education system that "discourages children from imagining themselves as active participants in history." Henderson situates this view of the next generation in the context of massive student protests.

Expert knowledge for planning the future is also at issue in Widmer's article, which examines the social life of demographic knowledge in and of Vanuatu. Vanuatu is a Pacific island nation with a rapid urban population growth rate and rapidly changing patterns of land use and de facto ownership, where formal youth and population policies are in the making. Other scholars of the history of demography and population science have found demographic knowledge to have biopolitical effects (Connelly 2008) that focus on sexuality, family size and population control or geopolitical effects in migration or agricultural policies (Bashford 2007, 2008). Widmer found that in Vanuatu, demographic knowledge has had modest effects in these spaces with respect to government policies and NGO programs and practice. Most salient is the temporal dimension of demographic knowledge that articulates with ni-Vanuatu social categories and politics of gender and generation to accentuate the ways that young mothers should orient themselves in time. Widmer analyzes the effects of anxieties about how population growth and accelerated integration into market economies will affect social reproduction. At this moment in time, unmarried young mothers are in the difficult position of being visible and vulnerable examples of people who are deemed selfish and reckless and, less often, pitied.

The temporal and affective dimensions of contemporary governance are lucidly outlined by Adams and colleagues: "The present is governed, almost every scale, as though the future is what mattered most. Anticipatory modes enable the production of possible futures that are *lived and felt* as though inevitable in the present, rendering hope and fear as important political vectors" (2009:48). Indeed, expert knowledge, be it epidemiological or genomic, is central to the creation of "global economies of fear" (Ahmed 2004:128) or the "political economy of hope" (Novas 2006). Analyzing the experiential terrain where projects of governance are accomplished, as the contributors to this issue do, means being attentive to Boyer's suggestion "that we treat experts not solely as rational(ist) creatures of expertise but rather as desiring, relating, doubting, anxious, contentious, affective—in other words, as human-subjects" (2008:38). Such experts, with their well-intentioned plans and social projects, in no small way contribute to the temporality of "cruel optimism," to the desires for progressively better lives and societies that, Berlant argues (2011), liberal capitalist societies can no longer fulfill. The contributions here show how forms of knowledge intended for planning the future mobilize anxiety through what might be if action is not taken. This often means silencing or selectively remembering the past.

It is no accident that the kinds of expertise analyzed in this issue—from anthropology (colonial and contemporary), Christianity, education and demography—are all types of knowledge about populations that could be mobilized for "improving" populations. Foucault's oft cited passage on population (and hence knowledge of it) and the practice of politics bears repeating here:

> It is the population itself on which government will act either directly, through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly, through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, and so on. [1991:100]

Individuals participate in these governmental processes through the "conduct of conduct," which entails "educating desires and configuring habits, aspirations and beliefs" (Li 2007:275). Taken together, these articles show the degree to which the governance and "the conduct of conduct" of individuals are held together by the narratives of the future and past, which are bolstered by the knowledge of experts. Future policies and projects are made through opting to choose certain kinds of knowledge and not others (such as making a long-form census questionnaire optional, for example). Close to the hearts of many

Anthropologica readers will be the future anxieties propelling students to make instrumental choices and changing commitments to learning and teaching in university management strategies. Notably, as every contribution in this issue shows, when considered with ethnographic sensibility, expert knowledge is never produced or circulated without contest but achieves profound effects nevertheless, reminding us that, "while the will to govern is expansive, there is nothing determinate about the outcomes" (Li 2007:280). It is the taken for granted dimensions of the futures and pasts bound up with expert knowledge that anthropological sensibilities are well-suited to unpack as part of the way the political processes unfold.

Alexandra Widmer, Department of Anthropology, York University, Vari Hall 2054, 4700 Keele St. Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3, Canada. E-mail: alexandrawidmer@gmail.com.

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Notes

1 Notable exceptions include James and Mills (2005); Hodges (2008); Nielsen (2011); and Coleman (2011).
2 It is also part of other life sciences, especially human reproductive biology (e.g., Schlünder 2012).
3 For more on the relationship between temporality and knowledge formation on the stock market see Miyazaki (2003).

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