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Author(s): Julia Paley

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TOWARD AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF DEMOCRACY

Julia Paley
*University of Pennsylvania, Department of Anthropology, 323 University Museum,
33rd and Spruce Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-6398;
email: jpaley@ssc.upenn.edu*

■ **Abstract** Anthropologists, through their ethnographic method, relationships with people outside of formal and elite political institutions, and attention to alternative worldviews, bring to the study of democracy an examination of local meanings, circulating discourses, multiple contestations, and changing forms of power that is rare in the scholarly literature on democratic transitions, which has largely focused on political institutions and formal regime shifts. This review brings together the writings of ethnographers working in a wide variety of settings to generate lines of inquiry and analysis for developing an anthropology of democracy.

INTRODUCTION

Much ebullience greeted news of transitions to democracy worldwide in the 1970s and 1980s; yet in the wake of the celebrations, cynical phrases such as "low intensity democracy" (Gills et al. 1993) and "democracy lite" circulated widely, betraying a residual skepticism about the positive nature of political shifts. In academic literature, what had been hailed as "the third wave of democracy" (Huntington 1991) later came under critical scrutiny, as scholars aimed to understand different types and intensities of regime changes, their endurance ("consolidation"), and more recently still their "quality" ("deepening democracy").

By and large, these studies of democracy were conducted by political scientists whose concerns with political institutions, formal regime shifts, and comparative country studies shaped the questions and set the agendas for debate (see, e.g., O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986, Linz & Stepan 1996, Diamond et al. 1997, and the *Journal of Democracy*, published in part by the National Endowment for Democracy. But cf. Carothers 2002 as a critique of the transition paradigm, Putnam 1993 as an example of a widely read single country study, Yashar 1997 for an historical account, and Schaffer 1998 for an examination of democracy in cultural terms). Yet as anthropologists doing fieldwork in Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere have witnessed regime transitions in the places they study, democracy has emerged as a salient theme. Anthropologists' ethnographic method, their relationships with people outside of formal and elite political institutions, and

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their attention to alternative worldviews have led them to look beyond official political transitions to the local meanings, circulating discourses, multiple contestations, and changing forms of power accompanying the installation of new political regimes.[1]

More often than not, anthropological observations on democracy are couched in other frameworks and embedded in other discussions. These have included social movements, human rights, law, citizenship, bureaucracy, violence, militaries, postcolonialism, the state, globalization, power, nongovernmental organizations, and civil society, to name just a few. Indeed at the 2001 American Anthropological Association meetings, an informal survey of presentations listed in the conference program and books on display revealed little work on the topic of democracy specifically (exceptions included Schirmer 1998, Paley 2001, Adams 1998; see also Gutmann 2002). The theme is nonetheless on the minds of many anthropologists, as I found when I wrote to over 70 scholars (mainly political anthropologists) to solicit their views. Over 50 replied, many with long and thoughtful commentaries detailing recommended reading, new areas of study, and ideas for analysis. Such a response indicates a dynamic field of study with the potential to deepen understanding, reconfigure frameworks, and rewrite the terms of debate.

The critical and ethnographic perspectives anthropologists are developing on regime transitions beg the question of whether similar processes could be studied in places whose governmental systems have not been subject to massive change. Such analytic approaches put democracy under an ethnographic lens not only in countries like the United States where political democracy is characterized by low voter turn-out, a powerful role of money in the political system, and widespread income, gender, and racial inequality; but also in Europe, where the European Union is said to entail a "democracy deficit" due to the myriad unaccountable committees operating secretly and without public record (Shore 2000, p. 220; Bellier 2000; on the EU, see also Darian-Smith 1999); and those hybrids such as Venezuela, Peru, and Colombia in which decades of prima facie democracy have been coupled with violence, corruption, and authoritarianism. In the words of Elizabeth Povinelli (personal communication 2001), "Democratization as an ongoing failed or semi-successful or imaginary project in the middle of the arch-typical democracies [is] seldom the object of analysis. When [it is] ... we are talking about the internal limits, contradictions, and tensions in democracy as they manifest in multicultural (or postcolonial) projects of material distribution." (See e.g., Povinelli 1998, Holmes 2000; see also political theorist Brown 1998) The challenge may be to turn critical perspectives on democracy emerging from fallen hopes in newly minted or recently returned democratic political systems toward places not

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[1]Political theory (Brown 1995, Connolly 1999, Agamben 2000, Fraser 1997, Honig 2001) and political science, sociology, and other studies carried out with an anthropological or ethnographic sensibility (Jelin & Hershberg 1996, Barber & Schulz 1996, Keck & Sikkink 1998) have been stimulating resources for anthropological work. See also important cross-disciplinary collaborations (Escobar & Alvarez 1992, Alvarez et al. 1998).

undergoing overt institutional change. This interrogation of Western political ideals and institutions is especially apt given that the United States is regularly taken as an unexamined standard-bearer for the rest of the world (Gledhill 2000, pp. 7–8; political scientist Carothers 1999).

As the melange of uses in previous paragraphs suggests, both scholarly and colloquial accounts typically move all too fluidly among the terms "democracy," "democracies," "democratic," "democratizing," and "democratization," raising questions about democracy's status as an analytical category. The most straightforward assertion is that democracy is a political form, differentiable from other political forms such as monarchy and dictatorship (Borneman 1997, p. 3). Within that rubric there exist "different systems of democracy: advanced liberal democracy, parliamentary democracy, electoral democracy, socialist democracy" (Aihwa Ong, personal communication, 2001). Such an approach has the virtue of "disentangl[ing] democratic systems from the actual distribution of democratic values— equality in fundamental rights—that not even all people in advanced liberal democracies enjoy." In contrast, anthropologists who "deal only with imaginaries," who "look at how certain values associated with democracy—anti-colonialism, squatter claims, dreams of freedom, and the tensions between democratic values and cultural forms—have produced rather particular kinds of struggles or arrangements in different parts of the world" risk missing the "practical forms [such as electoral systems and other forms of government] that both deny or bring about the spread of democratic values" (defined differently in different contexts) (Aihwa Ong, personal communication). While the foregrounding of institutional concomitants to democratizing projects is fundamental, there is also a danger in setting the boundaries too clearly, for—as this essay shows—political forms are not neatly differentiable but rather complexly intertwined, and the discourses labeling certain regimes as democracies are strategically deployed by groups with strong interests in particular definitions and contested by others differently situated in relations of power. Noting the constitutive nature of those struggles, rather than establishing an a priori definition of democracy, is one of the central contributions of an anthropological approach.

This article proceeds as follows. I first give a brief historical view of anthropological studies done in the immediate postwar and postcolonial era, and I sketch out a second wave of interest accompanying the end of the Cold War. I then introduce a set of lenses anthropologists have used for viewing democracy: cultures and meanings, circulating discourses, qualities of citizenship, civil society and governmentality, and alternative democracies. Neither categories of study nor schools of thought, these headings are intended to capture entry points for anthropological analysis. Because competing modes of thought are at this stage largely emergent, this paper aims to offer questions and lines of inquiry for how one would go about constructing an anthropology of democracy. What emerges from the synthesis of the existing literature is a set of critical perspectives revealing contemporary democracies as enacting forms of power—perhaps less directly repressive than military dictatorships, but nonetheless falling short of democratic ideals. The final

sections look at social movements' projects for alternative democracies and briefly overview anthropologists' own efforts to democratize ethnographic methodology.

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

British social anthropology during the colonial period, known especially for its synchronic and structural-functional studies of African political systems, did little to interrogate the patterns and effects of colonial rule. After the countries' independence, however, synchrony and localism were no longer viable starting points given the undeniable occurrence of world-wide political change (Hart 1985, p. 250). In this context, U.S. anthropologists grouped into "The Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations," which received funding from the Carnegie Corporation in 1959, set out to examine countries that had gained independence from colonial rule in the post–World War II period. According to political scientist David Apter (1963), who wrote the preface to the group's edited volume, what united all the authors was the goal of understanding "the problem of democracy in the new states, the forces that erode it, and the factors that might establish or strengthen it" (p. vii). Participants grappled especially with how to integrate local identities—"primordial sentiments," in the words of contributor and editor Clifford Geertz (1963)—into a unified civil order and modern political system associated with democracy. The New Nations Committee's interests were not merely academic, for participants sought to educate advisors to the newly independent states and to intervene in policy matters (Apter 1963, p. vii; Owusu 1970, p. 13). Full-length ethnographies written shortly thereafter evaluated the success (or lack thereof) of democracy in the social and institutional context of various countries and within local frameworks (Owusu 1970; see also Fox 1969). These early studies were born in the hopeful if chaotic years of the early 1960s, when independence from colonialism appeared to hold great promise, modernization seemed a feasible goal, and anthropologists sought to make their work relevant to political change. In this context, democracy was a universal political form signaling progress toward modernity. A second wave of anthropological interest in democracy would not surface until the 1990s, when the spate of transitions to democracy focused observers' attention worldwide.[2]

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[2]In this article I focus on English-language publications written mainly by U.S.-based anthropologists. In contrast to them, Latin American and African anthropologists were grappling with questions of democracy in the 1970s and 1980s. Consequently, U.S.-based anthropologists may have had their interests piqued and analyses shaped not only by political transformations in their fieldsites but also by ongoing debates among those countries' intellectual communities. Their renewed attention to democracy in the 1990s may also have reflected heightened interest across the disciplines in questions of civil society and liberal democracy, and in turn stimulated the relatively recent turn by anthropologists to macro-political areas of inquiry including the state, globalization, and formal political institutions (Deborah Poole, personal communication).

CULTURES AND MEANINGS

Amid the Cold War's public discourse, democracy functioned ideologically as the antithesis to Soviet communism and was deployed in U.S. foreign policy to justify counterinsurgency efforts—as well as political transitions—in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. After the Cold War, the defeat of socialism as both actually-existing system and utopian ideal provoked a widely heralded triumphalism linking democracy with free market economics and a simultaneous disillusionment with actually-existing, if newly wrought, social, political, and economic conditions (Grant 1995, p. 31; Verdery 1996, p. 11). In both the 1980s and 1990s, democracy programs focusing most often on promoting elections and strengthening civil society and "good governance" were purveyed internationally by lending and donor agencies, with varying results.

For anthropologists, the latter part of the twentieth century brought not only changed political conditions, but also altered conventions in scholarly thought. Preceding and then intensified by the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the breakup of the Soviet Union had come a crumbling of faith in metanarratives ranging from Marxist teleologies to development paradigms. In the spirit of then-reigning modernism, characterized by "the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, the rational planning of ideal social orders, and the standardization of knowledge and production" (PRECIS 6 1987, cited in Harvey 1989, p. 9), anthropologists writing about democracy in the postwar, postcolonial era had taken democracy to be a universal political form applicable to a wide variety of settings. In the 1980s and 1990s, this gave way to a postmodern-informed analysis of democracy's circulation, constructedness, discursive nature, and implication in power relations. The sense of democracy's contingent nature expressed in contemporary anthropological writings contrasted with still-modernist narratives by agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank, which were promoting the expansion of democracy worldwide (see, e.g., USAID 2002).

It is in this context of international imports, regime transitions, and attendant dissonances between the discourse of democracy and the ways it played out in multiple locales, that anthropologists whose sights were set on other themes began to encounter democracy. Ethnographers working mainly in Africa applied to political transitions anthropology's classic task of identifying local meanings and institutions, thereby exploring how formal electoral processes and other components of Western-style democracy contrasted with, or had been interpreted and reappropriated by, culturally different native traditions. Their work demonstrates how official democratic procedures such as elections are reshaped in such idioms as sorcery in rural Mozambique (West 1998) and ritual practice among the Yoruba of Nigeria (Apter 1987). They also highlight linguistic counterparts to "democracy": words such as *Demokaraasi* (itself a concept derived from the French *démocratie*) for the Wolof in Senegal (political scientist Schaffer 1997) or *eddembe ery' obuntu* in Uganda (Karlström 1996). Such terms aggregate a range of colloquial meanings that, while at times overlapping, differ significantly from reigning conceptions of

liberal democracy. Even apparently antidemocratic beliefs are revealed to be otherwise upon closer inspection; for example, the Comaroffs argue that support for a one-party state in Botswana is not a dismissal of democracy per se, but rather a rejection of procedural democracy in favor of a substantive democracy entailing both deliberation over policy matters and accountability by those who govern (Comaroff & Comaroff 1997). Unlike studies in the postwar period, these ethnographies use observation about cultural difference to problematize not primordial identities but rather the universalist assumptions of Western democratic practices themselves. While maintaining a modernist narrative of democracy's universal applicability, international agencies, donor institutions, and nongovernmental organizations seeking to implement democracy programs around the world have not always circumvented cultural conceptions and local political institutions; instead they have at times sought to mold apparently traditional political structures to electoral reform. This is true as well for national governments. Maxwell Owusu (1995), an anthropologist who participated in writing Ghana's constitution and took part in developing a decentralized District Assembly model in that country, sees potential in the "revival and proliferation of activist development-oriented civic organizations and mutual-aid societies based on village, town, ethnic, family membership, and similar affiliations" for creating a "grassroots participatory democracy." The system he describes "builds on indigenous political traditions of local self-government which assume the existence of consensual ethical and moral values shared within a community." These are based on chieftaincy, which, "despite its inherent social inequality, embodies shared values and virtues of accountability, service, probity; the tradition of voluntarism and self-help; and a spirit that extols the committed and total involvement of all the members of a community in the formulation and implementation of policies for the community's welfare." (p. 158)

Though local traditions may provide an important resource for democratic practice, other anthropologists have observed difficulties when "traditional authorities" are employed in the service of electoral democracy. West & Kloeck-Jenson (1999), for example, describe how "[e]veryone . . . from the United Nations to the World Bank to the United States Agency for International Development to NGOs such as Ox-Fam, CARE, and Save the Children—was talking about traditional authorities and their role in a democratized Mozambique." Specifically, USAID, which in 1995 and 1996 was holding workshops under its "'Democratic Development in Mozambique' project," aimed to incorporate "traditional authorities" into electoral structures. The authors explain in detail how complex the implications of this decision were. Historically, and in different ways in the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods, tribal chiefs ("traditional authorities") had been used by dominating forces to brutalize, coerce, and exploit the populations they in theory represented. Traditional authority was therefore not entirely traditional at all—in the sense of enduring intact from a time prior to colonization—nor, by being local, was the institution necessarily democratic. Chiefs were, moreover, nested in a hierarchy of authority that the homogenized concept traditional authority obscures. Even more to the point, chiefs inherited their positions from ancestors; therefore,

in the words of one chief, "to submit ... to elections is to *undermine* the power of the chieftaincy" (emphasis added; p. 71). These and other discrepancies show the ironies and unintended consequences of international agencies' blending of conceptions of cultural difference into universalizing democracy projects.

An explanation for the tensions is rooted in colonial history and the process of decolonization. Mahmood Mamdani (1996) argues that in Africa, democratization "would have entailed the deracialization of civil power and the detribalization of customary power .... A consistent democratization would have required dismantling and reorganizing the local state, the array of Native Authorities organized around the principle of fusion of power, fortified by an administratively driven customary justice and nourished through extra-economic coercion." He concludes that "the most important institutional legacy of colonial rule ... may lie in the inherited impediments to democratization" (pp. 24–25). In this interpretation, rather than being resources for democratization, the institutions of traditional authority may work to its detriment.

CIRCULATING DISCOURSES: THE USES AND ABUSES OF "DEMOCRACY"

Different definitions of democracy can be identified not only in the meaning systems of cultural subgroups, but also in state discourses and national self-understandings as well. Using a cognitive anthropological approach, Sabloff (2001) links Mongolians' concept of democracy with their 800-year-old political culture, manifested in their knowledge of basic democratic principles codified by Genghis Khan. Aihwa Ong (1999) indicates that in parts of Asia, democracy is presented less in terms of individual rights than as the state's ability to provide collective welfare benefits to citizens. In this sense, Singapore "prides itself on being a 'home-owning democracy'" in that citizens expect the state to ensure "universal home ownership, high-quality education, and unending economic expansion" (p. 208). Similarly China identified itself as a "socialist democratic society" based on state provision of access to housing, nutrition, schooling, and other benefits, at least until recent cutbacks. The point of these definitions is not to reify an "Asian" or "Chinese" cultural essence [though some may find it in their interests to do so (Ong 1997, p. 189)], but to suggest that democracy may have alternate meanings than elections and individual liberties—in this case, state provision for collective well being.

Yet what we know about the Chinese student movement's struggle for a very different kind of democracy (Calhoun 1994, pp. 237–60) impels us to look more closely at the strategic deployment of the term democracy, its power implications, competition over its meanings, its manifestations in institutions and social arrangements, and the way attendant discourses circulate within and among countries. In this vein Katherine Verdery (1996) considers democracy, along with "Europe ... civil society, and nation as key symbolic operators, elements in ideological fields, rather than as organizational realities." (p. 105). Matthew Gutmann (2002) suggests

that "democracy's very multivalence is a key reason for the zeal with which so many people have employed the term to dramatically different ends in recent history" (p. 11). As these observations suggest, meanings of the term "democracy" are hotly contested among groups with interests in different outcomes, all of whom are linked to each other in unequal relations of power.

An example of a place where democracy took on a widely divergent set of meanings for actors differently situated in relations of power is Venezuela, which Fernando Coronil (1997) treats historically. Over time, meanings ranged from universal suffrage (ironically credited to the political party Acción Democrática, which in 1945 took power in a "violent coup against a constitutional regime that was widely acknowledged to be making steps toward democracy") (p. 132; see also Roseberry 2002, pp. 197–201) to the population's partaking in material benefits of large-scale public works projects (p. 167) while being excluded from political rights such as freedom of expression and participation in political parties under a military dictatorship (p. 176). Here military regimes, like single party states, call themselves democracies, invoking idiosyncratic meanings of the term to justify its use, and claiming the word democracy to legitimate their rule.

While military juntas may legitimate their power by labeling their dictatorship a "democracy," in other situations militaries exercise their power through procedural democracy itself, meaning that even after official regime transitions, the armed forces—and, correspondingly, violence and authoritarianism—continue to be embedded in the subsequent "democracy" (Warren 2000, Poole & Rénique 1992). The presence of the military is quite literally the case in postdictatorship Argentina, where former officers of the Dirty War have run for office and been elected to positions of political power (Taylor 1993). That phenomenon calls into question even the term "elected-civilian" regime that some analysts have used when the word "democratic" seems substantively inapplicable. Diane Nelson (1999) has warned against seeing democracy as nothing but a "mask for military rule" (p. 102) because "[s]uch an analysis of manifest (false) versus latent (true) content does little to explain either the power of the state or the many effects of contestatory practices." Seeking to "avoid the notion that the state and civil society are separate, enclosed entities (the former corrupt and repressive, the latter noble and liberatory)," she "instead . . . argue[s] that they are interpenetrated at every point." The centrality of the armed forces to the shape of democracy—and conversely the usefulness of democracy to the armed forces—is highlighted in the work of Jennifer Schirmer (1998), who shows that the repressive structures of the Guatemalan military are enacted and perpetuated through (not in spite of) civilian rule. She writes that "[a]fter decades of naked military rule, the Guatemalan military have crafted a unique Counterinsurgent Constitutional State in which *State violence has been reincarnated as democracy*" (emphasis added; p. 258). " . . . Rather than naked military rule based on emergency measures, juntas, and coups—instruments of power that have lost their legitimacy internationally—it is the appropriation of the imagery of the rule of law, of the mechanisms and procedures of electoral democracy, that is perilous to the human rights of Guatemalans" (p. 2). That is

to say, military power that is enacted through electoral and constitutional systems gains legitimacy internationally through the rubric of democracy. Such an analysis reminds us to view even such seemingly positive terms as rule of law and democracy with caution. It also indicates that while "democracy" may at times seem to be a floating signifier that can be filled with any number of meanings, it is hardly "hyperreal" in the sense of being disconnected from institutional referents (Baudrillard 1988; see also McDonald 1993, pp. 100–101). Instead, political institutions, be they electoral systems or militaries or both, are central to the ways democracy's power is enacted.

Often the continuity between military and electoral rule takes place when political democracies are shaped through negotiations, reform, and pacts that largely uphold military structures. Begoña Aretxaga (2000) considers the case of Spain, where the parliamentary democracy arose out of negotiations following the death of Franco, with the result that his state's "army ... police ... [and] bureaucracy ... remained largely unchallenged" after the transition (p. 47). Despite these continuities and complicities, the socialist party's election to power in 1982 was widely experienced as "a signifier of a *real* break with the dictatorship" (emphasis in original; p. 48). Reworking Michael Taussig's concept of state fetishism (Taussig 1992), Aretxaga calls this phenomenon "the power of democracy as fetish. It was a fetish produced by forgetting the traces that linked the Spanish democracy to the former regime (its nature as a reform of it), and its reinvention as the real Thing, democracy—an object of desire that held the promise of a new, European, modern, successful form of life. The fetishization of democracy endowed the Spanish state with a new aura and new body, a sacred one that came to replace the desacralized and profaned body of the Francoist state." She goes on, "Thus constituted as a fantasy of modern prosperity, democracy became under the socialist government the legitimizing discourse for a wide variety of authoritarian state practices" (p. 48). Her conclusion is arresting: "Perhaps state terrorism must be contemplated not as a deviation of democracy, a corruption of power or 'power gone awry,' but as an intrinsic part of contemporary practices of power" (p. 64). Such an analysis requires us to rethink the meaning and power functions of contemporary democracies, rather than assuming their benign or banal qualities.

Violence accompanying democracy may not only be the result of enduring legacies of prior military regimes. It may also be stimulated through democracy's procedures themselves. In his study of "ethnonationalist conflicts and collective violence in South Asia," Stanley Tambiah (1996) shows that in political democracy,

> the mobilization of the crowds and the wooing of their support—through election speeches, rallies, mass media propaganda, and the dispensation of favors through election machines—is the central process of persuasion and vote-getting. This reliance on crowds and mass mobilization opens the door to the invention and propagation of collective slogans and collective ideologies, to the appeal to collective entitlements for groups in terms of divisive 'substance codes' of blood and soil ... (p. 261)

largely organized around ethnicity. Given the extent to which the mobilization of crowds is integral to electoral campaigns, "'democratic' political elections," themselves become, " a major contributor to collective violence" (p. 262) and ethnic violence in particular.

These examples suggest that what comes before transitions to democracy shapes what comes after them—not only because of pacts and negotiations between former military officials and incoming democrats, but also because emotions (particularly fear; see, e.g., Green 1999), ethnic cleavages, violence, bureaucracies, institutions, and other ongoing structures endure beyond political transition. Yet what appear to be remnants of former political regimes may actually be responses to new conditions. Burawoy & Verdery (1999) write that

> we challenge those analyses that account for the confusions and shortcomings of the transition process as 'socialist legacies' or 'culture.' Repeatedly, we find that what may appear as 'restorations' of patterns familiar from socialism are something quite different: direct *responses* to the new market initiatives, produced *by* them, rather than remnants of an older mentality.... [P]eople's responses to a situation may ... appear as holdovers ... because they employ a language and symbols adapted from previous orders. (pp. 1–2; see also Lass 1999, p. 274)

The degree to which different political forms are interwoven in practice suggests not only that "political forms ... need to be related to each other in a field of contested possibilities" (Susan Gal, personal communication), but also that the very concept of transition from one system to another must be brought into question (Kideckel 2002, p. 115). Warren (2002) notes that " ... transitions from socialist and capitalist authoritarianisms to varieties of market-driven democracy are neither linear nor unilateral processes" (p. 379), and Creed (1998) holds that the word "'[t]ransition' is ... problematic because its common usage implies a temporary condition and an inevitable result. The social characteristics of transition may be quite enduring, and the outcome is certainly not predetermined.... " He goes on to note that although a "transition" may occur, " ... what follow[s is] not invariably capitalist democracy" (p. xv). Some analysts have suggested that the word "transition" so mischaracterizes the phenomenon that "transformation" would be a more appropriate term (Verdery 1996, p. 15).

Writing in a different context and engaged in an overtly strategic project, David Scott (1999) has said that the present "global moment [is one] of considerable instability and uncertainty. It is a moment when hitherto established and authoritative conceptual paradigms and political projects ... seem no longer adequate to the tasks of the present, and when, at the same time, new paradigms and projects have yet to assert themselves fully in the place of the old" (p. 10). The moment is, of course, dominated by "a resurgent liberalism that has stepped onto the stage to claim for itself a victory, to claim in fact that it constitutes our only possible future" (pp. 144–45). Refusing to accept that vision, Scott situates his strategic practice of political criticism in a "sort of Gramscian interregnum, a transitional moment that

I shall characterize as 'after postcoloniality'" (p. 10). His work raises the question of whether it would also be possible to envision the present as a moment "after liberal democracy" rather than its manifestation. Such a formulation might offer a way of breaking free of transition narratives positing a preordained outcome, envisioning political possibilities beyond actually-existing democracy, and—by taking the present as an instance of uncertainty—holding open the possibility for a range of alternatives. Ethnography would be a particularly apt research approach for such a project, in that it captures people's lived experience amid conditions of "political instability" and "dramatic political change" (Greenhouse 2002, p. 1; see also Moore 1993, p. 9), thereby revealing the complexity of conditions that might otherwise be assumed to fit predetermined teleologies (Verdery & Burawoy 1999, p. 2; Greenhouse et al. 2002).

QUALITIES OF CITIZENSHIP

The multiple meanings given to the term democracy, and the permeation of some posttransition societies by the armed forces, suggest that democracy is not a single condition that countries do or do not have, but rather a set of processes unevenly enacted over time. Holston & Caldeira (1998) note, for example, that while elements of political democracy such as elections, legislatures, and constitutions operate effectively in Brazil, the "civil component of citizenship" (exemplified by the justice system) is "ineffective" (p. 280) such that "the vast majority cannot rely on the institutions of state—particularly on the courts and the police—to respect or guarantee their individual rights, arbitrate their conflicts justly, or stem escalating violence legally" (p. 281). The authors term this uneven enactment of citizenship "disjunctive democracy," meaning that "the institutionalization, practice, and meaning of citizenship . . . are rarely uniform or homogeneous." To the contrary, "they are usually and normally unbalanced, irregular, heterogeneous, temporally and spatially arrhythmic, and even contradictory" (p. 280). Teresa Caldeira's (2000) ethnography of crime and fear in São Paulo further delineates how violence, police brutality, urban segregation, and privatized security arrangements combine to affect the quality and lived experience of democracy and citizenship in Brazil.

While liberal democracy is generally premised on equality of citizens under the law, ethnographic studies reveal the racialization and gendering of citizenship, as well as other inequalities. Anthropologists have focused, for example, on the ways in which "men and women are differently imagined as citizens" in democratizing East Central Europe (Gal & Kligman 2000a, p. 3; see also Gal & Kligman 2000b); the racialization of nationality and immigration legislation in Britain (Hall 2002); the exclusion as well as inclusion experienced by Salvadoran immigrants struggling for citizenship (Coutin 2000); the ways in which law both constitutes and naturalizes inequalities in the British Virgin Islands (Maurer 2000); the production of "sanitary citizens" and "unsanitary subjects," a distinction that helps determine "who is accorded substantive access to the civil and social rights of citizenship" amid a cholera epidemic in Venezuela (Briggs 2003, p. 28); and the formation

of "citizenship regimes,"—the "political categorization of citizens by government agencies" in post-Soviet Russia, in which a panoply of laws create a multitude of "new social categories" (Humphrey 2002, pp. 75–76). Interestingly, the discourses of multiculturalism that might seem to remedy inequalities among citizens may in fact reinforce them. In her critical examination of liberalism in "constitutional liberal democracies," Elizabeth Povinelli (2002, p. 15) seeks to understand "[h]ow a state and public leans on a multicultural imaginary to defer the problems that capital, (post)colonialism, and human diasporas pose to national identity in the late twentieth century." Her study of court cases asserting aboriginal land claims in Australia shows that state acknowledgment of past discrimination ultimately legitimates and reinforces present discriminatory rule, leading Povinelli to suggest that ". . . state, public and capital multicultural discourses, apparatuses, and imaginaries defuse struggles for liberation waged against the modern liberal state and recuperate these struggles as moments in which the future of the nation and its core institutions and values are ensured rather than shaken . . . ." These usages are not unilateral, and Povinelli also seeks to investigate how multiculturalism "open[s] up a space for critical re-imaginings of social life as indigenous subjects creatively engage the slippages, dispersions, and ambivalences of discursive and moral formations that make up their lives" (p. 30). Basing his observations on interviews with staff of powerful organizations working in Guatemala, Charles Hale (2002) similarly finds that state-endorsed, neoliberal multiculturalism presents a mixture of "opportunity and peril" (p. 7). Acknowledging that cultural-rights movements have little choice but to take advantage of the openings that multiculturalist discourses and practices produce, he simultaneously cautions about the "cumulative effect" of these endeavors, warning that they "separat[e] acceptable demands for cultural rights from inappropriate ones, recognizing the former and foreclosing the latter, and thereby creating a means to 'manage' multiculturalism while removing its radical or threatening edge" (p. 25). His study of elite strategies well complements Kay Warren's (1998) ethnographic account of Guatemalan Maya's own proposal for a "multicultural (*pluricultural*) model for participatory democracy" (emphasis in original; p. 13) and the subsequent electoral defeat of a referendum aiming to recast Guatemala as a "'multicultural, ethnically plural, and multilingual state'" following the 1996 peace accords (Warren 2002, p. 10).

One of the markers of citizenship in a democracy is voting rights, and anthropologists have found wide variability in the significance and operation of elections. In some cases, procedural democracy is so falsified as to become not legitimation but farce, as Andrew Apter (1999) powerfully demonstrates in his study of Nigeria. He traces the "condition of verisimilitude and dissimulation" through which the "electoral charade of 'pro forma democracy'" operated in Nigeria—a situation in which the head of state choreographed elections as performance without really being elected through them. Miles (1988) provides a fascinating minute-by-minute view of the infinitesimal manipulations, misunderstandings, and meanderings by individual Hausa in Yardaji during those same elections, revealing the myriad microencounters hidden behind the broad terms "voting" and "fraud." In

her work on Bengal, India, Mukulika Banerjee (1999) finds that despite the fact that they have low opinions of elected officials, illiterate and poor citizens in India are among the most committed voters and use a language of "civic duty," citizenship, and rights to explain their decisions to vote. Anthropologists have also written about election monitoring (McDonald 1997), referendums (Warren 2002), political campaigns (Herzfeld 1985, pp. 92–122; Lomnitz et al. 1993), and the gendered aspects of elections (Gutmann 2002), often viewing elections and campaigns through the classic anthropological lenses of ritual, symbol, structure, and myth (McLeod 1991, 1999; Herzog 1987; Abélès 1988; see also Borneman 1992, pp. 316–19; Borneman 2002).

In many of these cases, the nation-state is the primary reference point for citizenship: the unit of sovereignty and suffrage, and the locus for racializing identities and distributing rights. Yet anthropologists have pointed out that in an age of globalization, citizenship is not purely a national phenomenon. They have noted that just at the moment that countries experience returns to formal democracy—thereby giving citizens the right to vote in national elections—major decisions about the economy and public welfare are being made not by national governments but by international financial institutions in places as distant from "Third World" locations as International Monetary Fund (IMF) offices in Washington, DC, or the closed-door meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in their various locales. These decisions are made by specialists who take questions of resource distribution and economics to be not political issues open to public debate but rather technical and scientific questions to be determined by experts (Ferguson 1993, 1994). Such a vision directly contradicts normative theories of democracy that posit public debate, and its influence on elected legislatures, as centerpieces of democracy (Habermas 1996). Moreover, *who* performs state functions has changed, with international financial institutions contracting service provision to nongovernmental organizations and other agencies as easily as to national governments themselves (Ferguson & Gupta 2002), thereby raising questions not only about the "state effects" of such disparate processes (Trouillot 2001), but also about whom national citizens and social movements might hold accountable for material benefits and how. These phenomena raise the question of whether there can be a "cosmopolitan democracy" (Calhoun 2001). In this globalized context, citizenship must be understood as embedded in transnational processes. Aihwa Ong (1999) conceptualizes a "system of graduated sovereignty, whereby citizens in zones that are differently articulated to global production and financial circuits are subjected to different kinds of surveillance and in practice enjoy different sets of civil, political, and economic rights" (pp. 215–16). A spatial phenomenon, such differentiation among citizens, often manifests itself in ethnic and gender disparities. This system "has come about in the state eagerness to forge links with corporate interests," with the consequence that "democratic values are more available for some people than for others" (Aihwa Ong, personal communication).

Despite pervasive inequality, democracies are usually characterized by formal equality for all citizens under the law. In striking contrast is the case of the former

Yugoslavia where countries billing themselves as democratic enshrine in constitutions privileged membership for ethnic nationals, a phenomenon that Robert Hayden (1992) has called "constitutional nationalism." Not only do nonethnonationals residing in the territory have only partial citizenship rights, but ethnic nationals living abroad have, in some cases, full citizenship, thus granting these exiles and emigrants a say in further restricting citizenship rights of those living in the country (Verdery 1998, p. 296). Katherine Verdery points out that "[a]s external observers came to ratify that elections were free and fair, they failed to ask *who* 'the people' were who would be allowed into the social contract creating citizens and rights." Because in these countries "'people' connotes the sovereignty of an ethnic collectivity rather than the joint sovereignty of individual 'social contractors'[,] [t]he sovereign ... becomes the ethnic collectivity; democracy becomes ethnocracy. Constitutions and elections have traveled transnationally, then, but with unanticipated effects, producing transnational citizenships that nationalize" (p. 297). The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina presents another example of how "democratization is transnational" (Verdery 1998, p. 293), due to the central role of the "International Community" in its governance. Ironically, the (mainly European) representatives of international organizations whose assignment is to fortify the nation-state and instill democracy in Bosnia, themselves live outside the purview of Bosnian state institutions, engaging instead with "supra- or non-state institutions." This situation leads Kimberley Coles (2002) to note the paradox that "internationals may be sabotaging their own attempts at state creation through state displacement" (p. 13). The result is a variegated system in which people differently situated in national and international circuits have different citizenship experiences and relations to governing bodies.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENTALITY

In the years leading up to the breakup of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall, and amid struggles against dictatorships, apartheid, and military regimes in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, the idea of "civil society" took on political importance in the self-concept of social movements contesting repressive regimes and seeking to bring about democracy (see, e.g., Kligman 1990). While in its initial contemporary uses civil society was a social movement category applied against totalitarian states, civil society has since become a key term used by international purveyors of democracy programs. Steven Sampson's (1996) ethnography of a Danish agency seeking to strengthen civil society in Albania indicates that civil society was virtually equated with democracy. Noting that "[t]he main focus of civil society development has been to increase the number of NGOs," he explains that "'[d]emocracy' was understood quantitatively. Few NGOs meant less democracy, more NGOs meant more democracy" (p. 128; see also Sampson 2002, Fisher 1997). Significantly, civil society and democracy promotion are closely linked to the advancement of market economies and the United States' global interests by donor agencies (Mandel 2002), leaving unexamined by these agencies the ways in

which neoliberal market reform with its attendant income disparities and distancing of economic decision making might undermine rather than enforce a substantive version of democracy.

Recently anthropologists have asked "whether the discourse of 'strengthening civil society' ... is coherent, either from the point of view of actually existing historical situations or from the point of view of comparative, cross-cultural analysis ..." (John Gledhill, personal communication, referring to themes debated at the international conference "Citizenship and Political Culture in Latin America and Mexico's 'Transition to Democracy'," October 2001). Trying to explain why civil society discourse has been so ubiquitous and optimistic, others have argued that it is "civil society's" very incoherence that makes it so "good to think, to signify with, to act upon." That is, "[t]he less substance it has, the emptier its referents, the more this is so; which is why its very polyvalence, its ineluctable unfixability, is intrinsic to its power as panacea" (Comaroff & Comaroff 2000, p. 334; see also Coombe 1997, Comaroff & Comaroff 1999, Hann & Dunn 1996).

One of the attractions in international development circles of the idea of civil society—and related concepts such as "empowerment," "partnerships," "participation," and "community involvement"—is that this discourse and its attendant programs can involve poor citizens in providing (formerly public) services, thereby extending strapped budgets stretched yet thinner by structural adjustment programs, and involving people in their own self-management. Anthropological work on this subject has been informed by a multidisciplinary group of scholars who have elaborated on Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality (see, e.g., Barry et al. 1996, Burchell et al. 1991, Mitchell 1991; see also Scott 1999, p. 17, 152–53). Nikolas Rose (1996), for example, emphasizes that in contrast to analyses that see a reduced role for government within free market economies, "Neoliberalism does not abandon the 'will to govern'." Rather, it "create[s] a distance between the decisions of formal political institutions and other social actors, and conceive[s] of these new actors in new ways as subjects of responsibility, autonomy and choice, and seek[s] to act upon them though shaping and utilizing their freedom" (p. 54). In her ethnography of postdictatorship Chile, Julia Paley (2001) shows, for example, that in aiming to prevent a cholera epidemic, the Chilean Ministry of Health conducted a publicity campaign instructing the population to take preventive hygienic measures such as washing one's hands and covering the trash. Here a state, which was unable or unwilling to make expenditures in public infrastructural improvements (such as improved irrigation systems that would have avoided the use of raw human sewage) to prevent the spread of the disease, created the conditions for citizens to engage in their own self-care (*auto-cuidado*). In a related example, an elected congressional representative called upon community groups to clean fields of trash, arguing that in democracy it was not the state, but rather organized groups of citizens, that should "participate" in keeping public spaces clean (pp. 166–67). Here governing officials used terms like "democracy" and "participation" as motivating discourses to involve citizens in service provision; they thereby sparked people's own complicity in contemporary forms of power. This ethnography of

Chile further describes how for a grassroots health group, whose method of work had been initiated under a repressive military regime in the mid 1980s, developing new strategies for resisting the state's efforts to incorporate citizens and organized groups into furthering the reach of neoliberalism became a central task during political democracy (see also Hyatt 1997, 2001; Cheater 1999; James 1999; and political scientist Schild 1998).

Invoking the writings of political theorist Barbara Cruikshank (1999), Lauren Leve (2001) makes explicit the ways in which not just national governments but also international organizations like the United Nations and USAID have used terms like participation and empowerment in the service of neoliberal economics. In the case of Nepal, they transformed women's literacy programs into ways of advancing market reforms by "prepar[ing] women to accept and initiate further socioeconomic transformation" (p. 115). In recognition that such efforts may transcend, bypass, or even subcontract to the state, James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (2002) have coined the term "transnational governmentality" to refer to the "modes of government that are being set up on a global scale" (see also Gupta 1998, p. 321). They note that "[t]hese include not only new strategies of discipline and regulation, as exemplified by the WTO and the structural adjustment programs implemented by the IMF, but also transnational alliances forged by activists and grassroots organizations and the proliferation of voluntary organizations supported by complex networks of international and transnational funding and personnel" (p. 19). In this context, they are interestingly placed in relation to the processes of self-enumeration and self-surveying that Arjun Appadurai (2002), using a spacial metaphor that Ferguson and Gupta would problematize, has called "governmentality from below" or "countergovernmentality" (p. 24).

ALTERNATIVE DEMOCRACIES

For all the critiques of actually existing political systems by commentators and social movements themselves (for political commentaries expressed in performative and artistic genres, see e.g., Isbell 1998, Holland & Skinner 2001; but see Lemon 2000), democracy has been an aspiration for many who have lived within oppressive regimes. This is especially true for oppositional movements aiming to bring political democracies to their countries, be they Chinese students (sociologist Calhoun 1994), Nepali doctors (Adams 1998), or Thai demonstrators (Klima 2002). It has also been true in the immediate aftermath of regime transitions, when exhilaration and expectations run high. Nancy Scheper-Hughes tells the story of convening a conference on "Democracy and Difference" at the University of Cape Town in May 1994, just two days after Nelson Mandela had been elected president. Anthropologists flown in as speakers gave pessimistic analyses, pointing to difficulties with democracy in places around the world. In response, Albie Sachs, a former freedom fighter with the African National Congress who became a member of the South African Constitutional Court, asked "Can't we even celebrate for two days?!" South Africans wanted to dance following their victory, not begin

an immediate cycle of skepticism and despair (Nancy Scheper-Hughes, personal communication). Even in the aftermath of imperfect transitions, opportunities created by the institutions of constitutional democracy, the principles of rule of law, and the discourse of human rights have opened unique spaces for prosecuting violent perpetrators such as those organized into death squads in Brazil (Scheper-Hughes 2001).

Yet while human rights, rule of law, and democracy itself have value as both aspiration and popular victory, the meanings attributed to democracy in various contexts and struggles do not necessarily match hegemonic definitions in actually-existing systems or even normative liberal democracy ideals. Instead, social movements have often created programs and practices that call themselves democracy movements while intentionally posing alternatives to standard definitions of the term. A case in point is the Popular American Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) operating in Peru in the 1920s and 1930s, which David Nugent describes as differing from "Liberal Representative Democracy" in seeking not only a set of basic freedoms from state intervention such as freedom of the press, speech, religion, and association (p. 20), but also citizens' engagement in economic decision making; direct decision-making by historically subordinated groups (namely indigenous peasants, laborers, and the middle class); full political participation for women; and a strong state "to guarantee the health, well-being, and democratic rights of its citizens" (Nugent 1999; see also Nugent 1997). What is most interesting about this prodemocracy movement is that no memory exists of it in the contemporary period, even by participants in social movements creating their own alternative visions of democracy, leaving the anthropologist to study it through interviews with octogenarians who were once its political organizers, and through written documentation from the time.

In recognizing the uniqueness of such alternative democratic programs and practices, anthropologists have noted that they are not pristine indigenous inventions. Rather, social movements strategically and selectively appropriate and transform transnationally circulating discourses, sometimes filling foreign words with their own meanings. The Zapatistas, whose declaration sets forth a "national proposal" for "democracy, liberty, and justice" (Nash 1997, p. 267) explain that "[o]ur path was always that the will of the many be in the hearts of the men and women who command . . . . Another word came from afar . . . [and] gave the name of 'democracy' to our way that was from before words traveled" (p. 264). In their contemporary political context, their proposal embues the word democracy (as well as justice and liberty) with alternative meanings. Specifically democracy "requires 'not that all think the same, but that all thoughts or the majority of the thoughts seek and arrive at a good agreement'," an idea that June Nash interprets as a revision of "modernist ideals" for a "postmodern age" (p. 261; see also Mignolo 2000, p. 742; Stephen 2002). In thinking about the redefinition of existing terms, it is therefore important to ask: What aspects of other discourses are social movements drawing upon, what are the specific routes and networks through which discourses are accessed and dispersed, and what are the gains, losses, and transformations enacted

in the process of translation? (Gal 2002). Such questions apply equally to related discourses such as human rights (Cowan et al. 2001, Wilson 1997). In this vein, anthropologists have asked: Through what process do people come to see themselves as being "rights bearing" subjects (Merry 2003), or, concomitantly, as democratic citizens?

If the presence of democracy discourse in diverse locations is notable, equally significant are its absences, and anthropologists are wise to pay close attention to the places where it blends into other discourses, or where it surfaces only when elicited. The use of the word "democracy" occurs neither alone, nor steadily, nor completely; it is, rather, ethnographically emergent. Therefore we must ask: Whose term is it? What does its usage in any particular case signify? Where does the term arise and where not? In this context, anthropologists are writing at the edges of the discourse, sighting its limits and boundaries, its instabilities and temporal fluctuations, the places where it emerges out of another discourse, or just as fluidly is subsumed into a different one. Social movements' invoking of democracy discourse may be a tactical move, a carefully selected appropriation of dominant logics, or a less reflective reproduction of dominant tropes; in a particular context it may also be a risky choice, one that plays into and legitimates a cold war discourse of democracy and its opponents, or a post–Cold War imaginary linking political freedom to liberated market forces.

At the same time, anthropologists sometimes invoke the term democracy where social movements themselves do not, using its aspirational content to highlight deeper significance of innovative social movement practice. Arjun Appadurai (2002) uses the term "deep democracy" to conjure up a kind of "'democracy without borders'" achieved through the process of "grassroots globalization." His work takes place in Mumbai (Bombay), where an alliance among a professional NGO, a strong grassroots organization, and an organization of poor women is doing innovative work on information collection, housing, and public toilets, in ways that are deeply local and simultaneously transnational. "Deep democracy," he says, "suggests roots, anchors, intimacy, proximity, and locality." At the same time, the "lateral reach of such movements—their efforts to build international networks or coalitions of some durability with their counterparts across national boundaries—is also a part of their 'depth'" (p. 38). So too is their ability to enable poor people to engage with powerful institutions whose stated mission—if not their effective practice—is the amelioration of poverty.

Some ethnographers have researched efforts to hold democracy to its highest ideals. Maintaining that "democratic legitimacy depends above all on a system of political and personal accountability that is institutionalized in the principles of the rule of law" (p. 3), for example, John Borneman (1997) studies how bringing former strongmen to justice can prevent cycles of retributive violence. (For a fascinating website tracing the significance of the ways dictatorships end, see Borneman & Fisher 1999.) At the same time that anthropologists have linked democracy to human rights and the rule of law, however, legal anthropologists have noted that

law can be double-sided: While people use it to resist and contest power, they are also subjugated by it, a dynamic that operates in places as diverse as the United States (Yngvesson 1993), Kenya (Hirsch 1994), and the West Indies (Lazarus-Black 1994).

Other aspirational writings about democracy stem less from the practical activity of courts and social movements than from the normative theorizing of scholars. Here anthropologists have been in dialogue with political theorists, particularly those who—following Habermas (1989)—consider democracy to entail an active public sphere in which vibrant public discussions and a dynamic circulation of ideas can take place (see Calhoun 1992; for a "language-oriented perspective" on the creation of publics, see Gal & Woolard 2001). Pointing to the ways in which the emphasis on rational argument in theories of "deliberative democracy" excludes the communicative styles of women and other "socially marginalized" groups (p. 278), Rosemary Coombe (1998) offers "dialogic democracy" as an alternative normative framework. By involving "social systems of signification" open enough to provide the "cultural conditions for conversation" for a wide variety of people, dialogic democracy allows diverse groups to "express identity, community, and social aspiration in the service of imagining and constructing alternative social universes" (pp. 296–97). Coombe's formulation explicitly echoes political theorist Iris Marion Young's idea of "communicative democracy" (1996) and complements political theorist Nancy Fraser's (1994) notion of multiple subaltern counterpublics. Such ideas are explored ethnographically by Jacqueline Urla (2001) who considers the free radio of Basque radical nationalist youth to be a "partial public, a segment of a plural, rather than a singular counterpublic sphere . . .." Urla argues that by "creat[ing] spaces for alternative modes of communication and cultural life," free radios "provide a soundtrack for minority languages, values, and cultural expression"; they thereby put into practice an "ideology of radical democratic communication" (p. 143).

Centered as they are in discourse theory, the public debates and discussions of which political theorists speak need not be detached from any specific locale; to the contrary, they need locations to happen. Radical Basque youth congregate in bars, bookstore/coffeehouses, and youth houses, even as the forms of communication they use are simultaneously transnational (Urla 2001, p. 160). Ritty Lukose (2001) shows how the space of a college in Kerala is contested, as the adminstration aims to produce an apolitical "civic public" that operates as a "space of consumption" to the exclusion of political public space. Emphasizing the need to preserve locations for the proliferation of democratic discussions, Setha Low (2000) argues that "public spaces, such as the Costa Rican plaza, are one of the last democratic forums for public dissent in a civil society. They are places where disagreements can be marked symbolically and politically or personally worked out." Given the importance of places like the plaza for the flourishing of public discourse, Low argues, there is a "need to make and remake public spaces, and to struggle relentlessly for the social and political availability of public space[. This] can be seen as a precondition for any kind of democratic politics . . . " (p. 240).

DEMOCRATIZING ETHNOGRAPHY

Anthropologists concerned with questions of democracy have, not surprisingly, been politically and personally invested in struggles for human rights, the rule of law, and a mitigation of harsh income disparities. As such, their work has at times involved not only observing, but also aiming to transform relations of power (see Gledhill 2000 for an analysis of engaged anthropology, Price 1998 for its history and costs, D'Andrade 1995, Scheper-Hughes 1995 for a debate, and Mahmood 1999 for an example of anthropological intervention in human rights). Anthropological activism has historical precedents in, among others, Franz Boas's anti-racist work and Margaret Mead's famed insistence that "... a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world" (cited in Scheper-Hughes 2001). Currently, some anthropologists, including practitioners such as the medical anthropologists who founded Partners in Health, have aimed to make concrete impacts in living conditions and health, both by operating clinics in poor communities and by transforming the practices of major institutions such as the World Bank (Farmer 2001, Farmer et al. 1997, Kim et al. 2000). Others have initiated efforts to bring anthropologists' work to large audiences and illuminate issues central to public debates. Rob Borofsky describes Public Anthropology as an effort to

> make anthropology an intellectual engine for nurturing critical social trans- formations through providing the kind of thoughtful stories and analyses that make broad publics in democracies confront their own complicities in the status quo that oppresses others. Fostering democracy, fostering public an- thropology in this context means enlarging public discussions regarding how we engage—and how we might engage better—with the critical issues and dilemmas of our time beyond our own zones of comfort. (Borofsky, personal communication; see also the University of California book series Public An- thropology 2002)

Peggy Sanday sees Public Interest Anthropology as encompassing two trends: "[m]erging problem solving with theory and analysis in the interest of change motivated by a commitment to social justice, racial harmony, equality, and human rights" and "[e]ngaging in public debate on human issues to make the results of anthropological analysis accessible to a broad audience" (Sanday 1998; see also Public Interest Anthropology 2002). These efforts put into practice the idea of "ethnography as an active form of democratic participation" (Greenhouse 1998, p. 3; see also Greenhouse 2002).

The practice of involving people affected by difficult situations in a problem- solving research process has historical precedents in anthropology. The primary example is Sol Tax, who, in the 1940s–1960s, developed action anthropology as "a participative ethnography in which the informants were coinvestigators and the investigators were students of the informants" (Bennett 1996, pp. S35–37). His line of work has largely faded, but it finds echoes in contemporary action

and participatory action research (Greenwood & Levin 1998) including research on industrial democracy (Greenwood & González Santos 1992). Other efforts at participatory investigation have been carried out in conjunction with popular movements, some of whose own training in popular education inspired by Freire (2000) and Gramsci (1971) has already positioned them as popular intellectuals. Contemporary examples have included facilitating indigenous people's access to video production (Turner 1992, Ginsburg 1997) and teaching grassroots leaders to conduct ethnographic research of their own (Paley 2001, pp. 211–24). When anthropological engagement involves transforming power-knowledge relations of researcher, researched, and broader publics, anthropologists are engaging in the practice of democratizing ethnography.

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