



---

The Anthropology of Public Policy: Shifting Terrains

Author(s): Anne Francis Okongwu and Joan P. Mencher

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 29 (2000), pp. 107-124

Published by: [Annual Reviews](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/223417>

Accessed: 28/08/2012 21:55

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Annual Reviews* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Annual Review of Anthropology*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

# THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF PUBLIC POLICY: Shifting Terrains

---

Anne Francis Okongwu

*Department of Education, Queens College, City University of New York, New York,  
New York 10023-2769*

Joan P. Mencher

*Department of Anthropology, The Graduate School and University Center, City University  
of New York, New York, New York 10023-2769; e-mail: jmencher@gc.cuny.edu*

**Key Words** globalization, social welfare policy, global agriculture, environmental policy, social inequality

■ **Abstract** As we enter the twenty-first century, the terrain on which social policy is made is changing rapidly. This has resulted in anthropologists, in combination with other social scientists, giving serious attention to the impact of this new phase of globalization on changes in social and environmental policies. This review focuses on the ways in which anthropology as a field has contributed, and continues to contribute, to social policy research, practice, and advocacy in the current international context. Given the limited space allotted, we have selected the following six arenas of public policy for analysis and description: (a) links between globalization processes and policy on the national and local levels; (b) social welfare policy, including employment and family welfare survival strategies; (c) the impact of structural adjustment and economic restructuring on migration and labor force incorporation; (d) policies in the north and south related to global agriculture, social inequality, and the manipulations of some multinational corporations; (e) policies affecting sustainable agriculture; and (f) the role of anthropologists in examining the impact of political and economic hegemony on the environment.

## INTRODUCTION

Anthropology as a field has contributed, and continues to contribute, to social policy research, practice, and advocacy in a number of different ways; it has taken on increasing relevance as the world is rapidly being transformed by the process of globalization.

Since the sixteenth century, but especially in the period from 1960 to the present, the countries of the world and their people have been tied into the global economy. This has been accomplished by the increase in control of third-world nations by

countries of the West, including the United States, all of the former colonizers, and Japan. Today developing countries have 80% of the world's population, but account for less than 20% of global gross domestic product, and even within these nations, the distribution of wealth is skewed. Per capita incomes in many sub-Saharan African countries are lower than they were in 1970, yet, in 1997, 58% of foreign direct investment for everything including infrastructure (both by corporations and banks) went to industrial countries, 37% to developing countries, and 5% to the transition economies of central and eastern Europe. Today many multinational corporations now dwarf some governments in economic power and the indirect and sometimes direct political power that comes from economic power. Programs such as liberalization (which refers to opening up their markets to the forces of the West) and structural adjustment (which refers to forcing poor countries to drop their safety nets for the poorest people as a condition for receiving International Monetary Fund loans) have had the effect of lowering the living standards of the poorest of the poor even further. Yet the assets of the 200 richest people in the world are more than the combined income of 41% of the world's people (*Choices*, 2000, back cover). When we use the term "globalization," we are referring to the ways in which 99% of human beings on this planet are affected by this global economy and its social and political implications. As we enter the twenty-first century, the terrain in which social policy is made has been changing rapidly. These changes include the collapse of Eastern Europe and the increased economic power of multinational corporations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund insofar as they affect the day-to-day life of most human beings on this planet. This was not the case 50 years ago. One can also refer to this phase as the attempt by multinational corporations to corporatize the world, including health care, education, the worldwide food system, and many other aspects of people's lives. By 1998, the 10 top pesticide producers controlled 85% of a \$31 billion global market, yet industrial countries owned 97% of the patents worldwide. Millions of people have lost their jobs, in part because of the global repercussions of the East Asian financial crisis, in part because of the ways in which corporations are forcing governments and businesses to become "lean and mean" (*Choices*, 1999, p. 28, back cover).

Though anthropologists have generally had less influence than economists on public policy, there are a number of ways in which we have made our opinions known, such as by (a) documenting the conditions of the peoples we study, or other poor or disenfranchised people, and acting as their advocates—including serving as expert witnesses for the homeless (Dehavenon 1999) or testifying before Congress about American Indian land rights (e.g. Clifford 1988, pp. 317–46, in which the testimony of two anthropologists, Jack Campisi and William Sturtevant, for the Mashpee Wampanoag is presented in detail; cf also Carrillo 1996, p. 14–15, in which Campisi's years of testimony on behalf of northeastern Native Americans' rights are discussed); (b) analyzing, writing, and making public the effects of government policies and suggesting alternative policies (Okongwu 1998, Curtis & McClellan 1995, Buck 1996); (c) working with—or against—elected officials;

(*d*) attempting to influence members of aid agencies in their varied roles and/or working from within these agencies to pinpoint critical issues (Cernea 1990, 1996, 1999; Horowitz 1996); (*e*) working with migrant populations, both forced and voluntary (Basch et al 1994) in terms of both policies to deal with migrants and studies of cultural capital and its intersection with both formal and informal labor markets in the north and south (Sanjek 1999); and (*f*) studying strategies of resistance and how the work of anthropologists can inform and help indigenous people, such as homeless people in New York (Dehavenon 1999) or displaced Native Americans in Chiapas (Nash 2000a and 2000b, in press; Cohen & Deng 1998).

Anthropologists have tended to write mainly for other anthropologists, not for those who have the power to change the world. Reacting to this trend, Peacock (1997) has pointed out the importance of anthropology moving to shape public policy, to assist in formulating the critical issues of our society and all societies on this planet, to propose solutions that meet the desires and needs of local people, and to create a synergy between theory and practice. In an attempt to bridge this gap, the American Anthropological Association has been conducting sessions, planned by each of its sections, on policy matters. There has long been a theoretical and individual divide between anthropologists focusing on pure research and those focusing on the problems faced by humans, including the growth of inequality. Peacock (1997) suggests that we need to formulate positive proposals to communicate with political leaders and ordinary people.

In this chapter, we have selected only a few arenas of public policy for analysis and discussion. Many other arenas are of equal importance, but in the space allotted we have chosen to discuss these few in detail rather than treat a larger number of arenas superficially. The arenas we have selected include the following: (*a*) links between globalization processes and policy on the national and local levels; (*b*) social welfare policy, including employment and family welfare survival strategies; (*c*) the impact of structural adjustment and economic restructuring on migration and labor force incorporation; (*d*) policies in both the north and the south related to global agriculture, social inequality, the role of science, and the manipulations of some multinational corporations; (*e*) policies affecting sustainable agriculture; and (*f*) the role of anthropologists in examining the impact of political and economic hegemony on the environment.

## LINKS BETWEEN GLOBALIZATION PROCESSES AND POLICY

Various anthropologists have focused on different aspects of the globalization process and its effects, both locally and planet-wide. For example, whereas Dehavenon (1999) focuses on the impact of the globalization process on homelessness in the United States, the issues faced by these people bear a striking resemblance to the situation of many of the urban poor in the third world. Both structural adjustment in the third world and Reaganomics, along with welfare reform in the United States,

have given rise to an ever-increasing population of people lacking access to work that provides adequate pay, leading to homelessness. Comparing the United States with Namibia, Okongwu (1998) describes how the extreme inequality in each society results from policy decisions that lead to the lack of access to meaningful employment and to a high percentage of female-headed households.

No longer is social policy on the local, national, or international level shaped solely by legitimate governmental bodies; it is now necessary to take into account the role of such agencies as the World Bank, regional banks, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and such agreements under it as GATT and NAFTA, the European Union, and large multinational corporations such as Monsanto (Deacon 1995, Bakker 1994, Brodie 1994). The interrelated dimensions of the globalization process are expressed and experienced differently by varying segments of the world's population. Anthropologists have documented how the wide variation in the productive and reproductive activities in particular national contexts, combined with the intersections of structures of inequality such as race, class, caste, ethnicity, and gender, act to create radically different social, economic, political, cultural, and experiential realities for the world's population (Madeley 1996, Basch et al 1994, Thomas-Emeagwali 1995, Tidwell 1993, Dalla Costa & Dalla Costa 1995).

It is important to recognize that ideology and public policy are critically linked. Bello et al (1994) suggest that this is a complex social process in which certain often-unspoken ideologies mediate between interests and policy. The mantras of international competitiveness and corporate profitability have been adopted by national and regional entities as well as by transnational corporations, and they have penetrated the discourse of economic, political, and social discussions at all levels, where they are used in an uncritical manner, leading to the disempowerment of vast numbers of people (Barnet et al 1995). These mantras are echoed internationally in the governmental policy-making bodies of both newly industrializing countries and some third-world governments (Bowles & Wagman 1997, Bello et al 1994) and have served as the rationale for reducing social welfare funding and supporting reductions in employment and access to needed services and resources.

Today, the important changes that have taken place within and among international and regional policymaking institutions, states, and multinational quasi-governmental institutions and multinational private corporations shape the contours of much of what is called economic and social policy (Madeley 1996, Bowles & Wagman 1997). In particular, the loci of ultimate decision making have moved at least in part to these multinational corporations, which draw their shareholders primarily from the "developed" world, but also from the wealthier elites who exercise control in third-world countries. Few anthropologists have had access to the operations of these corporations, and thus their only policy role has been to decry the impact of these institutions on ordinary human beings worldwide.

The processes of economic restructuring in advanced industrialized countries are transforming international monetary and trade policies, the nature of production, and the integration of labor into local, national, and international labor

markets. These forces have combined to depress wages, particularly the wages of low-skilled workers, resulting in increased job insecurity, unemployment, underemployment, and poverty. These economic and labor-force incorporation processes have not been race or gender neutral. For example, Tidwell's review (1993) of the labor force participation rates of African-Americans in the United States reveals that there is a "bad fit" between the current distribution of the African-American workforce and the "reconfiguring industrial base," a problem that becomes most apparent through a comparative analysis of the differences in job displacement between African-American and white workers.

## ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY

Economically vulnerable families experience the most deleterious effects of economic restructuring and structural adjustment policies (Burbridge 1993, Dalla Costa & Dalla Costa 1995, Seavey 1996). Dalla Costa & Dalla Costa (1995) point out that the implementation of structural adjustment programs designed to decrease third-world debts did not produce the outcomes that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund used as rationales to adopt these programs. Internationally, there has been a decline in welfare spending as the large gap between rhetoric and practice increases. The World Bank defines its general principles as (a) achieving universal and equitable access to basic social services, including basic education, health care, reproductive health, sanitation, and safe drinking water; (b) enabling all men and women to obtain secure and sustainable livelihoods and decent working conditions; (c) monitoring systems of safety nets to protect people from adverse economic shocks; and (d) fostering social inclusion. Yet, by late 1998, even many at the World Bank had come to realize that their policies have mostly had the opposite effect of what they supposedly intended to accomplish. Criticism of these policies by third-world political leaders, often backed by detailed studies by anthropologists and economists, has shown the results to be incompatible with the stated aims of the institution [Alexander 1998, pp. 3–5; Bread for the World Institute 1998, pp. 6–9 (on Brazil); Alexander 1996; Muhia 2000; Burt 1996; World Bank 1997, pp. 22–24]. Internationally, the globalization process has been pushing for downsizing in government offices as well as in private industries—which means unemployment for many who had counted on governments as the employer of last resort.

Reviewing the situation of working African-American women in the United States, Burbridge (1993) revealed that differences between black and white women have also increased over the 1980s: After years of convergence, the wages of black women have begun to diverge from those of white women. Furthermore, black women have considerably less total income and wealth than their white counterparts, even when their earnings are similar. These differential patterns demonstrate the importance of including race, ethnicity, class, and gender in any analysis of the policy advisement role of anthropologists.

## THE IMPACT OF STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING ON MIGRATION

Rodrik (1997, p. 91) draws attention to the linkage between globalization, international trade, social insurance, national safety nets, and changing patterns of labor force incorporation in advanced industrial countries. He argues that, as corporations and capital become increasingly mobile, employers can more easily substitute workers in different nations for each other, thus creating a downward movement in the wages of the least fortunate workers in the advanced industrialized countries. In the Caribbean, the implementation of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) has led to physical decline, social and economic austerity, escalations in unemployment and underemployment, and widening economic and social disparities among the population (Harrison 1997). Women, particularly poor women, have experienced the most deleterious effects because of their disadvantaged occupational distribution and more limited access to resources. "Moreover women have always assumed a primary role in household survival strategies, securing and allocating usually meager cash and other resources to enable their families to make ends meet" (Deere et al 1990, p. 51). McAfee (1991) has reviewed the situation of Caribbean countries under the yoke of SAPs. She reports that governments have been forced to cut expenditures on health, education, agricultural extension services, and other public services. Teachers, nurses, mechanics, and technicians are being laid off in the thousands. The current economic situation in the Caribbean has led to massive emigration, despite tightening immigration restrictions in Britain and North America. Among these migrants are skilled workers and professionals, as well as many of the region's most talented scholars, teachers, and artists (McAfee 1991, pp. 5–6).

Economic restructuring in the north and SAPs in the south are two sides of the same coin. In both regions, these policies have combined to intensify the difficulties faced by families with dependent children. Although these two policies are implemented through different policy-making bodies—in the north through national, economic, trade, and social welfare policies, and in the south through such international funding agencies as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund—they contain similar elements. Anthropologists have been quick to point out the effects of these programs, but few have been in a position to influence policy.

The movement from the local to the global perspective has generated new concepts designed to capture changes in the nature of productive and reproductive activities. For example, Colen (1995) suggests the concept of stratified reproduction to capture the differentiated processes of biological and social reproduction in the "new world order" and its varied expressions in specific contexts and among different segments of national and internal populations. Prescod-Roberts (1980), Steele (1980), and Colen (1995) provide detailed discussions of the movement of Caribbean mothers to Britain and the United States to work as household or

childcare workers in order to support their children and other family members in their home communities, and the impact of this strategy on their children. Mullings (1995, p. 124) describes the disastrous impact of global economic restructuring and changing economic and social policies on families in Harlem, as they combine with racism to shape the lived experiences of family life in that community. In 1990, the rate of survival for men beyond the age of 40 was lower than in Bangladesh (Mullings 1995). Of all families with children under 18 years old, 69% were headed by women, and a large percentage of African-American women were concentrated in low-wage, low-security jobs with few benefits. The public schools in this community tend to be poor. This has important implications for the employment prospects of these children in the future (Prescod-Roberts 1980, Steele 1980, Colen 1995, Mullings 1995).

These examples capture the realities of the changing nature of household survival strategies, which need to be not only analyzed but also made known to policy makers. In situations where migration is possible, household members originally from Southern Africa, the Caribbean, and other third-world regions often spend a major part of their lives working in various national or international contexts in order to earn enough to support their home-community households (Caffentzis 1995). However, their incorporation into these employment contexts, given the rapid changes occurring, is not stable. Anthropologists have often advised local authorities about ways of helping these migrant populations. On the other hand, workers in the wealthier countries, including South Africa, Namibia, Taiwan, Korea, etc. see the multinational corporations rapidly moving from these countries to poorer countries with weaker labor unions, where a desperate need for foreign investment is acting to depress wages and employment for many marginal workers. Some anthropologists have explored the movements of people across borders and the sustained economic, political, social, and cultural linkages between family members and communities despite long distances. They have also noted the deskilling that this kind of migration entails, along with the separation of parents from their children for long periods of time. Married and unmarried Filipino women aged 20–40 years, many with advanced educational degrees, have sought employment as domestic workers in Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia. In many cases, these women leave their husbands and children behind and send large portions of their earnings home (Sanjek & Cohen 1990a, 1990b).

This international movement across borders, and integration into both the formal and informal sectors of the labor force, takes many forms (Castells 1996). For example, Sommerville (1997) links the impact of the decline in Senegal's major export crop (peanuts) and the drop in the price of peanuts in the world market to the increase in male Senegalese immigration to the United States. In the American context, most of these men are involved in the informal sector of the economy as traders. The money they earn supports their families at home (Basch et al 1994, Sommerville 1997). These intrinsically linked relationships and movements have given rise to the concept of "transnationalism" and recognition of the



internationalization of survival strategies in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy.

Anthropologists have expanded their analysis of the current context from a concentration on communities and nation states to the interrelationships between economic, cultural, social, and political dimensions of globalization. They highlight the similarities and differences in the experiences of people, and the multiple dimensions of global, economic, political, and cultural processes on productive and reproductive activities.

## **POLICIES RELATED TO GLOBAL AGRICULTURE AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY**

Anthropologists have expanded the parameters of their work to include positions in policy-making institutions (Waterston 1998), in advocacy roles at local and national levels (Dehavenon 1999, Basch et al 1994), as “expert witnesses” in court proceedings (Dehavenon 1996), in such empowerment activities as teaching research methods to direct service providers in agencies serving various populations, and in developing programs using participant observation methods to document the experiences of people in food banks and food kitchens, as well as homeless shelters, hospitals, and schools. They have used participant observation methods ranging from the experiences of documented and undocumented immigrants in hospitals, schools, and welfare offices in developed countries, to sustainable agricultural projects and environmental issues in developing countries (Johnston 1999). Although these activities are wide ranging, they are universally shaped by globalized economic policies and intricately related to fundamental productive and reproductive activities. At all levels, there has been impact by social scientists sensitive to the redirection of social policy and the consequences of these shifts as nation states respond to the competitive forces of globalization. There are four major aspects of this transformed international context.

1. The global reorganization of production is not gender neutral. The power and mobility of global corporations during the past two decades have stimulated an international reorganization of women’s work. Traditional cultural barriers are giving way, thus allowing women to enter the labor market in large numbers, but at lower pay than men and usually with fewer protections (Stichter & Parpart 1990). Simultaneously a “shadow female economy” has emerged of women working at home producing goods for the world market. These workers earn even lower wages.
2. The impact of economic restructuring and structural adjustment policies reduces the role of national governments in providing safety nets for their populations. These policies impact varying segments of national populations in different ways. In each context, the consequences of these policies differ by race, class, ethnicity, and gender. This is described

eloquently in the varied articles in Kim et al (2000), which describe in detail how the loss of safety nets had led to a significant reduction in health among the poorest people both in the United States and in developing countries.

3. Social reproduction and the development of cultural capital are stratified, thus creating radical differences in access to essential goods, services, and information among populations in both national and international contexts.
4. Shifts in the organization of production, augmented by economic policies generated by global actors, have transformed the processes involved in the reproduction of the household at national and regional levels.

Anthropologists, in combination with other social scientists, have carefully documented the impact of these policies designed to reduce social safety nets and their differentiated consequences for families of different class positions, and for women and children in varied international contexts. The discussion that follows focuses on the impact of these policies on employment situations in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy, and on survival strategies, including internal and international migration, which has become an increasingly important strategy for survival.

## POLICIES AFFECTING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Although some anthropologists worked in earlier periods on policy-related projects in agriculture (see, e.g., Goldschmidt 1978), the numbers of anthropologists in applied and policy work on the environment and in the field of agriculture have significantly increased as the multinational corporations have gained in power over governments. Anthropologists have been interested in such issues as the scale of farming, water use, use of petrochemicals and other inputs, increase in monocropping (with all of its attendant potential for future famines), and quality-of-life issues (see, e.g., Cummins 1998, Fairweather 1999, Slikkerveer 1997). A few anthropologists such as Moles have become involved with “walking the talk,” i.e. working with third-world or United States–based alternative projects, making use of a combination of the best of tradition with the best of modern science (Moles 1999). Others have been involved with issues related to the loss of biodiversity, and especially among ethnobotanists working with centers for international agricultural research to help traditional societies preserve their native species, for example in the CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) system, to help with seed preservation. Most of the anthropologists working on agricultural and related issues have “in one way or another [been] critical of the dominant institutions and trends in food systems, especially those [moving more and more] toward globalization. Many others present alternative approaches, often stressing the importance of strengthening local food systems as a way of trying to provide not only buffers, but new organizational and institutional models for more sustainable

and just food systems” (Koc & Dahlberg 1999, pp. 109–10). Other anthropologists have criticized the dominant institutions of our society and the current trends in food systems, which privilege corporate farming over family farms and totally ignore indigenous farming patterns (e.g. Cleveland & Murray 1997, Stephenson 2000, Stephenson & Lev 1999). Others often stress importance of strengthening local food systems as a way of providing new ways to bring about more sustainable food systems (Redmond 2000).

Giddens (1990, 1995) has noted that anthropology must be ready to contest unjust systems of domination, seeking to decide along the way what injustice actually is, and to bring potential controversial issues to light (Giddens 1995:277). Anthropologists working on issues of food and agriculture clearly have to deal with these issues. Anthropologists have not only studied and made public the interlinking world systems, they have also pointed to the various local adaptations to the SAPs discussed above, as well as to the tremendous growing power of the agri-business multinational corporations and how people on the ground are responding to this. Although many anthropologists have worked on agrarian issues for a long time, today, at the start of the twenty-first century, Pottier raises the question of “whether anthropology’s contribution to the study of food and agriculture . . . [can] provide guidance in a fast-changing world” (Pottier 1999, p. 9). Anthropologists have studied issues of land tenure and have often made recommendations based on their intimate knowledge of “what actually goes on” in rural areas as opposed to what is written in the records. As noted in Goldschmidt’s (1978) work, the issue of the relationship between farming systems and quality-of-life issues on the one hand and commercialization and corporate farming on the other is one with which many anthropologists have long been concerned. Many have noted how current globalizing forces (similar to the ones that are cutting into other safety nets) are also making farming less secure and taking from most farmers (except for the small number of organic farmers) any kind of self-sufficiency. Furthermore, they are creating numerous ecological and environmental issues, which have been studied by anthropologists (see, e.g., Donahue & Johnston 1998). Still others have looked at the policy implications of Cuba’s return to organic agriculture (forced by the United States embargo) and both the positives and negatives of this process. The resurgence of small-scale farming along with urban farming in Cuba nowadays is striking. The implications for better-balanced diets, with the poor gaining greater access to vegetables and fruits, have been documented.

Many anthropologists have been concerned with the issue of organic- vs multinational-derived agriculture for the present and future (e.g. Andreatta 1998, Brosius 1999, Messer 1999, Moles 1999, Lyons & Lawrence 1999), as well as water and water resources (e.g. McCully 1996, Trawick 1999). Web sites and list servers on food and agriculture have also been set up (Altieri et al 2000; Anthropology and Environmental Public Policy Committee 1999; Center for International Development 1999; Friends of the Earth 2000; Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Information Network 2000; Society for Applied Anthropology Intellectual Property Rights Topical Interest Group 2000; Working Group on Traditional Resource

Rights 2000). As such, anthropologists have been involved with policy matters in various ways, including as research scientists providing data for policy planning and evaluation; as advocates for farmers, especially third-world small farmers and organic farmers; and in exploring the biological, economic, and social implications of multinational corporations taking over the food chain. As research scientists, we have documented how people actually use fertilizers and pesticides in the field (Mencher & Loza 1997), the loss of choice for farmers in the varieties they grow, and the ways in which food is coming to be treated like any other commodity. Those who cannot pay will not eat, as noted by Lang in discussing the situation in England, where one-fifth of the population cannot afford an adequate diet because of unemployment and declining social welfare (Shiva 1996, p. 4) or, as reported in the same article, in “the eighteen months since the implementation of NAFTA, [where] the intake of food has been reduced by 29 percent, as 2.2 million Mexicans have lost jobs, and 40 million are in extreme poverty” (Shiva 1996, p. 4), the massive increases in unemployment in the agricultural sector, the manufacturing sector, and the service sector, and the ways in which most developing countries are worse off today than they were in the 1970s. It is important for anthropologists who study living neighborhoods and communities to become involved with the policies being made at higher levels that affect them. Liberalization of trade for developing countries, while developed-country markets remain closed, has hurt the developing countries and especially the poor in those countries. People in many countries, especially nongovernmental organizations (which range in size and areas of work from large ones like CARE or the International Red Cross to small grassroots organizations working at the village level, organizing local people, working to empower them, helping them to develop alternative sources of income, or protesting to demand more work from government programs), feel the deadening and homogenizing impacts of economic globalization in a world increasingly dominated by American values and lifestyles.

## THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC HEGEMONY ON THE ENVIRONMENT

More than other specialists involved with development, anthropologists pay attention to how innovations are interrelated with other development; for example, how the soil bacterium (*Burkholderia cepacia*) has been approved as an agricultural pesticide, even though it is extremely dangerous for people who have cystic fibrosis (Pennybacker 1999). Anthropologists working on these kinds of issues have tended to not only produce research that is relevant to the concerns of ordinary people, but also to function as advocates for people, as experimenters (see, e.g., Moles 1999) and as critics of policy decisions and promoters of new and different policies. Their success has varied greatly (Cernea 1997), and more often than not they have come up against powerful economic interests, as in the current debates about the dangers of genetically altered plants and the global attempts of

a few multinationals, such as Monsanto, to take over and control all agriculture by directly or indirectly taking over all seed sources, making modifications that destroy planetary biodiversity, and controlling water resources (see Horowitz et al 1993, Goldsmith & Goldsmith 1998). Anthropologists and other social scientists worldwide have taken up these issues, as well as the study of ecological movements, which have become pervasive throughout the world, and the study of other critical social movements. Currently, capitalism—especially contemporary globally integrated capitalism—presents significant barriers to achieving a world sustainable society. If sustainable societies (including economies, political systems, etc) are to be achieved, many fundamental changes will be needed, and for anthropologists there are roles as research scientists, advocates, and policy-planning aides for helping to bring this about. Sustainable societies will probably do best under democratic control. That means ordinary people uniting to fight market forces, for example, the way farmers are beginning to unite to have control over the seeds they plant and the water they use. This kind of uniting is only just starting, and it is important for anthropologists to pay attention to it and study it.

Some anthropologists have been involved with local people in developing sustainable agricultural programs for their communities or for communities where they have worked (DeLind 1999, Moles 1999), but clearly there is a need for more of this kind of work. Anthropologists, along with economists, have looked at the relationship between social differences and water resource management (Horowitz 1998) and have come up with numerous solutions to this. Anthropologists have joined with colleagues in other fields in the LEISA network, which operates out of the Netherlands Center for Research and Information on low-external-input and sustainable agriculture, experimenting within traditional farmers' worldviews (Minderhoud et al 1999). This organization seeks to influence policy.

Anthropologists can also play a role in documenting farmers' innovations that lead to recharging wells so that people can have more water and, once documented, seeing to it that information reaches audiences elsewhere. We have traditionally had the reputation of working at the grassroots level and getting to know people and their problems and issues well. We also need to serve as conduits for solutions. One of the greatest strengths of anthropologists is our ability to view systems holistically—in this case to deal not only with the theoretical issues of political economy, but also to work to influence policymakers to pay attention to the social, structural, and economic consequences of globalized agriculture on both farmers and consumers, on communities, and, taking the environment into account, on the very nature of life on this planet. [For influences on nutrition, see Pottier (1999); for the benefits of small farms, see Rosset (1999); for the effects of increased food imports on local farmers on islands such as St. Vincent, see Andreatta (1998); for rural resistance, see Rhoads (1999); for the effects of globalization on Alaska, see Thornton (1998).]

As noted above, social policy today is shaped by nation states, by international agencies, by the World Trade Organization, by NAFTA, and by large multinational corporations. However, the population at large is not taking these policies at face

value nor ignoring what they already know. The large demonstrations in Seattle, Washington, during the meeting of the World Trade Organization, made it clear that people are not prepared to accept these policies, or their effects on small farmers and others the world over. Surely there are many roles for anthropologists in documenting such protests, as well as in getting onto policy-making boards and into circles where large agency policy is formulated.

The crisis situations created by capitalism today require a real reinventing of anthropology, with anthropologists not only studying alternative policies but also working as advocates and with the people they have studied to put pressures on governments, international agencies, and multinational corporations to get them to change. As noted by Altieri (1995, p. 71): "The acceptance of the present structure of agriculture as a given condition restricts the possibility of implementing alternatives that challenge such a structure. Given the realities of capitalism, resource-conserving practices are discouraged. A more radical transformation of agriculture is needed. Change toward a more socially just, economically viable, and environmentally sound agriculture will be the result of social movements in the rural sector in alliance with urban organizations." It is important that we anthropologists not only document these movements but also do what we can to influence their course, which includes educating the general public as well as our students. In his Malinowski Award Lecture, Scudder (1999) noted that "anthropologists have topical expertise that others value." He listed a number of areas that will be increasingly important for us to study and deal with in the twenty-first century, including issues of water and water scarcity, biodiversity, poverty and community unraveling, and of course increased fundamentalism of all kinds leading to growing fanaticism. He also noted the private sector's increasing power through advertising and creation of consumption desires. He has suggested the need for anthropologists to synthesize and publicize our knowledge in order to make decision-makers and policy-makers change.

Anthropological research has shown disparate cases of people organizing to take control of local resources, from Sri Lanka, Cuba, and India, to rural and urban areas in the United States. But creating a regional food system would require enough people and organizations to take control of local resources. Food issues are clearly political and relate to social stratification and power. These are issues that are extremely well suited for the involvement of anthropology during the twenty-first century. There are numerous ways in which anthropologists in their diverse roles have inserted themselves into the "system" in order to publicize their knowledge. Along with the roles mentioned above by Scudder and others, along with public action such as "teach ins," anthropologists can reach mass audiences through articles and letters in newspapers, working with and/or for legislators, actually participating in the political process by running for office, and working with all levels of government officials. Anthropologists can also help to develop worldwide networks of people and spread information gleaned from well-documented on-the-ground studies of diverse food systems, health systems, local knowledge systems, cultural values, economic systems, educational systems, and their interactions

worldwide. We need to make clear, short statements available to policymakers, based on our in-depth knowledge, and to learn how to use the language of influence effectively. If we fail to influence policy, others with far less understanding and insight will do so to the detriment of humanity. We clearly have more than the topical knowledge that Scudder alludes to; we have knowledge of how systems work. Hopefully, more and more anthropologists will involve themselves with policy matters in the next 10 years.

**Visit the Annual Reviews home page at [www.AnnualReviews.org](http://www.AnnualReviews.org)**

### LITERATURE CITED

- Alexander N. 1996. Decision-makers discuss purpose of development. *News Not. World Bank Watch*. 14:2
- Alexander N. 1998. *Accountable to Whom? The World Bank and Its Strategic Allies. Development Bank Watchers' Project*. Washington, DC: Bread World Inst.
- Altieri M, University of California-Berkeley, University of California-Santa Cruz Research Center. 2000. *Agroecology*. <http://www.ncbi.ulm.nih>
- Altieri MA. 1995. *Agroecology: The Science of Sustainable Agriculture*. Boulder, CO: Westview
- Andreatta S. 1998. Transformation of the agro-food sector: lessons from the Caribbean. *Hum. Org.* 57(4):414-29
- Anthropology and Environmental Public Policy Committee. 1999. AEPPC-L-request @LISTSERV.UG
- Bacon D. 1998. Banana war in the Philippines. *Food First Backgr. Pap.* 5(2):1-4
- Bakker I, ed. 1994. *The Strategic Silence: Gender and Economic Policy*. London: Zed Books
- Barnet J, Cavanaugh J, Cavanaugh R. 1995. *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order*. New York: Touchstone Books
- Basch L, Schiller NG, Szanton Blanc C. 1994. *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*. Langhorne, PA: Gordon & Breach
- Bello W, Cunningham S, Rav B. 1994. *Dark Victory: The United States, Structural Adjustment, and Global Poverty*. London: Pluto
- Bowles P, Wagman B. 1997. Globalization and the welfare state: four hypotheses and some empirical evidence. *East. Econ. J.* 23(3):317-34
- Bread for the World Institute. 1998. Brazil sets precedent among borrowers: Its congress will oversee relations with multilateral financial institutions. *News Not. World Bank Watch*. 21:6-9
- Brodie J. 1994. Shifting the boundaries: gender and the politics of restructuring. See Bakker 1994, pp. 46-60
- Brosius PJ. 1999. Analyses and interventions: anthropological engagements with environmentalism. *Curr. Anthropol.* 40(3): 277-309
- Buck P. 1996. Sacrificing human rights on the altar of morality: white desperation, far right, and punitive social welfare reform. *Urban Anthropol. Stud. Cult. Syst. World Econ. Dev.* 25(2):195-210
- Burbridge L. 1993. Towards economic self sufficiency: independence without poverty. In *The State of Black America*, ed. B Tidwell, pp. 71-90. Washington, DC: Natl. Urban League
- Burt JM. 1996. Rhetoric and reality: the World Bank's new concern for the poor. *NACLA Rep. Am.* 29(6):15-43
- Caffentzis GC. 1995. The fundamental implications of the debt crisis for social reproduction

- in Africa. See Dalla Costa & Dalla Costa 1995, pp. 15–41
- Carrillo J. 1996. Identities. In *Readings in American Indian Law*, ed. J Carrillo, pp. 14–15. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press
- Castells M. 1996. The net and the self: working notes for a critical theory of informational society. *Crit. Anthropol.* 16(1):9–38
- Center for International Development. 1999. *Intellectual Property Rights and Globalization: Implications for Developing Countries*. <http://nt1.ids.ac.uk/eldis/intell.htm>
- Cernea MM. 1990. *Population displacement and water resources development: current practice, issues and policy responses*. Presented at 3rd Expert Group Workshop on River/Lake Basin Approaches to Environmentally Sound Management of Water Resources, Otsu, Japan
- Cernea MM. 1996. *Social Organization and Development Anthropology. The 1995 Malinowski Award Lecture. Environmentally Sustainable Dev. Stud. Monogr. Ser. No. 6*. Washington, DC: World Bank
- Cernea MM. 1997. *Hydropower Dams and Social Impacts: A Sociological Perspective. Soc. Policy Resettl. Div. Pap.* Washington, DC: World Bank
- Cernea MM. 1999. *The Economics of Involuntary Resettlement: Questions and Challenges*. Washington, DC: World Bank
- Cleveland DA, Murray SC. 1997. The world's crop genetic resources and the rights of indigenous farmers. *Curr. Anthropol.* 38(4):477–515
- Clifford J. 1988. Identity in Mashpee. In *Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, pp. 277–346. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press
- Cohen R, Deng M. 1998. *Masses in Flight*. Washington, DC: Brookings Inst.
- Colen S. 1995. "Like a mother to them:" stratified reproduction and West Indian childcare workers and employers in New York. See Ginsberg & Rapp 1995, pp. 78–102
- Constable N. 1997. *Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Filipina Workers*. Ithaca, NY/London: Cornell Univ. Press
- Cummins J. 1998. Organic agriculture and the threat of genetic engineering. *Third World Resurg.* 93:6–7
- Curtis K, McClellan S. 1995. Falling through the safety net: poverty, food assistance and shopping constraints in an American city. *Urban Anthropol.* 24(1–2):93–135
- Dalla Costa M, Dalla Costa GF, eds. 1995. *Paying the Price: Women and the Politics of International Economic Strategy*. London: Zed Books
- Deacon B. 1995. Global social policy actors and the shaping of East European welfare. *Int. J. Soc.* 20(1):40–80
- Deere CD, Antrobus P, et al, eds. 1990. *In the Shadows of the Sun: Caribbean Development Alternatives and U.S. Policy*. Boulder, CO: Westview
- Dehavenon A. 1996. *From Bad to Worse at the Emergency Assistance Unit: How New York City Tried to Stop Sheltering Homeless Families in 1996*. New York: Action Res. Proj. Hunger, Homelessness, Family Health
- Dehavenon A, ed. 1999. *Homeless Families: Out of Sight, Out of Mind. How New York City Created a Hidden Human Crisis at the Emergency Assistance Unit in 1998*. New York: Action Res. Proj. Hunger, Homelessness, Family Health
- DeLind LB. 1999. Close encounters with a CSA: the reflections of a bruised and somewhat wiser anthropologist. *Agric. Hum. Values* 16(1):3–9
- Donahue JM, Johnston BR, eds. 1998. *Water, Culture and Power: Local Struggles in a Global Context*. Washington, DC: Island
- Fairweather JR. 1999. Understanding how farmers choose between organic and conventional production: results from New Zealand and policy implications. *Agric. Hum. Values.* 16(1):51–63
- Friends of the Earth. 2000. *Protecting Groundwater from Pesticides: A Clean Water Action Guide, 2000*. <http://www.foe.org/safefood/groundwater>



- Giddens A. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press
- Giddens A. 1995. Epilogue: notes on the future of anthropology. In *The Future of Anthropology: Its Relevance to the Contemporary World*, ed. A Ahmed, C Shore, pp. 272–77. London: Athlone
- Goldschmidt W. 1978 (1947). *As You Sow: Three Studies in the Social Consequences of Agribusiness*. Montclair, NJ: Allanheld, Osmun
- Goldsmith E, Goldsmith Z, eds. 1998. The Monsanto files: Can we survive genetic engineering? *Ecologist* 28(5):294–318
- Harrison F. 1997. The gendered politics and violence of structural adjustment: view from Jamaica. In *Situated Lives—Gender and Culture in Everyday Life*, ed. L Lamphere, H Ragoné, P Zavella, pp. 451–68. New York: Routledge
- Horowitz MM. 1996. On not offending the borrower: (self?)-ghettoization of anthropology at the World Bank. *Dev. Anthropol.* 14(1/2):1–12
- Horowitz MM. 1998. *Contesting management of the transnational Senegal River basin*. Presented at Meet. Am. Anthropol. Assoc., Philadelphia
- Horowitz MM, Koenig D, Grimm C, Konate Y. 1993. Resettlement at Manantali, Mali: short-term success, long-term problems. In *Anthropological Approaches to Resettlement: Policy, Practice, and Theory*, eds. MM Cernea, SE Guggenheim, pp. 229–50. Boulder, CO: Westview
- Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Information Network. 2000. *The Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Information Network (IBIN)*. <http://www.ibin.org>
- International Rivers Network. 2000. *International Rivers Network (IRN)*. <http://www.irn.org>
- Johnston B. 1999. *Environmental Anthropology Project. Proj. Descr.*, p. 17. Oklahoma City, OK: Soc. Appl. Anthropol.
- Kim JY, Millen JV, Irwin A, Gershman J, eds. 2000. *Dying for Growth: Global Inequality and the Health of the Poor*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage
- Koc M, Dahlberg KA. 1999. The restructuring of food systems: trends, research and policy issues. *Agric. Hum. Values* 16(2):109–16
- Lyons K, Lawrence G. 1999. Alternative knowledges, organic agriculture, and the biotechnology debate. *Cult. Agric.* 21(2):1–12
- Madeley J. 1996. *Trade and the Poor: The Impact of International Trade on Developing Countries*. London: Intermed. Technol. 2nd ed.
- McAfee K. 1991. *Storm Signals: Structural Adjustment and Development Alternatives in the Caribbean*. Boston, MA: South End
- McCully P. 1996. *Silenced Rivers: The Ecology and Politics of Large Dams*. Hyderabad, India: Orient Longman
- Mencher JP, Loza MD. 1997. *The Killing Fields: Impact of Pesticides and Chemical Fertilizer Residues in Food Production in India*. *INSTRAW News* 26. New York: United Nations
- Messer E. 1999. *Hunger and human rights: retrospect and prospect*. Presented at Annu. Meet. Am. Anthropol. Assoc., 98th, Chicago
- Minderhoud M, Gianella T, Suresh C, Prasad KVS, eds. 1999. Finding common ground. *ILEIA Newsl.* 15(1/2):4–83
- Moles JA. 1999. *In pursuit of sustainability: the NeoSynthesis Research Centre, the protection of life, family well-being, biodiversity, analog forestry, and environmental rehabilitation*. Presented at Soc. Appl. Anthropol. Meet., April 21, Tucson, Ariz.
- Muhia CDK. 2000. UHAI, a model for sustainable livelihood. *ILEIA Newsl.* 16(1):16–18
- Mullings L. 1995. Households headed by women: the politics of race, class and gender. In *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*, ed. SD Ginsberg, R Rapp, pp. 122–39. Berkeley, CA: Univ. Calif. Press
- Nash J. 2000a. Exodus from communities and the genesis of indigenous culture in national spaces. In *Contesting Visions of Globalization: Neoliberalism and the Mayan*

- Struggle for Autonomy*. New York: Routledge. In press
- Nash J. 2000b. The militarization of civil society in crisis: the contest for 'Paz 7 Justicia.' In *Contesting Visions of Globalization: Neoliberalism and the Mayan Struggle for Autonomy*. New York: Routledge. In press
- Okongwu A. 1998. *Shifting terrains and changing social welfare policies*. Presented at 14th Int. Congr. Anthropol. Ethnol. Sci., Williamsburg, VA
- Peacock J. 1997. The future of anthropology. *Am. Anthropol.* 99(1):9-17
- Pennybacker M, ed. 1999. *Biopesticide Threatens Those with Cystic Fibrosis. Backgr. Memo. Off. Pestic. Programs, Biopestic. Pollut. Prevent.* U.S. Env. Prot. Agency, Washington, DC
- Pottier J. 1999. *Anthropology of Food: The Social Dynamics of Food Security*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Sci.
- Prescod-Roberts M. 1980. Bringing it all back home. See Prescod-Roberts & Steele 1980, pp. 13-40
- Prescod-Roberts M, Steele N, eds. 1980. *Black Women: Bringing It All Back Home*. Bristol, UK: Falling Wall
- Redmond J. 2000. *What farmers need/are doing to survive*. Presented at Conf. Soc. Appl. Anthropol.
- Rhoads R. 1999. Rural resistance to globalization and agricultural change. *Cult. Agric.* 21(1):39-43
- Rodrik D. 1997. Sense and nonsense in the globalization debate. *Foreign Policy* 107:19-37
- Rosset P. 1999. Small is bountiful. *Ecologist* 29(8):452-56
- Sanjek R. 1999. *Into the future: Is anyone listening?* Presented at Annu. Meet. Am. Anthropol. Assoc., 98th, Chicago
- Sanjek R, Cohen S, eds. 1990a. Introduction. In *At Work in Homes: Household Workers in World Perspective*. *Am. Ethnol. Soc. Monogr. Ser.* 3, pp. 1-13. Washington, DC: Am. Anthropol. Assoc.
- Sanjek R, Cohen S, eds. 1990b. Conclusions. In *At Work in Homes: Household Workers in World Perspective*. *Am. Ethnol. Soc. Monogr. Ser.* 3, pp. 189-201. Washington, DC: Am. Anthropol. Assoc.
- Scudder T. 1999. The emerging global crisis and development anthropology: Can we have an impact? *Hum. Org.* 58(4):351-64
- Seavey D. 1996. *Back to Basics: Women's Poverty and Welfare Reform*. Washington, DC: Cent. Res. Women
- Shiva V. 1996. New Delhi conference on global food security. *Int. Forum Glob. News* 1:4-5
- Slikkerveer L. 1997. Introduction. In *Intercropping and the Scientific Basis of Traditional Agriculture*, pp. vi-ix. London: Intermed. Technol. Publ.
- Society for Applied Anthropology Intellectual Property Rights Topical Interest Group. 2000. *Intellectual Property Rights Topical Interest Group*. <http://intellectual-property-project.com/sfaa>. In development
- Sommerville C. 1997. Reaction and resistance: confronting economic crisis, structural adjustment and devaluation in Dakar, Senegal. In *Globalization and Survival in the Black Diaspora: The New Urban Challenge*, ed. C Green. pp. 15-41. Albany, NY: State Univ. Press
- Steele N. 1980. We're in Britain for the money. See Prescod-Roberts & Steele 1980, pp. 8-12
- Stephenson G. 2000. *A context for local food systems*. Presented at Conf. Soc. Appl. Anthropol.
- Stephenson G, Lev L. 1999. *Local food, local farms: resisting the global trend*. Presented at Soc. Appl. Anthropol., Tuscon, Ariz. (data available at [http://smallfarms.orst.edu/common\\_support\\_for\\_local\\_agricul.htm](http://smallfarms.orst.edu/common_support_for_local_agricul.htm) and [http://smallfarms.orst.edu/analyzing\\_three\\_farmers.htm](http://smallfarms.orst.edu/analyzing_three_farmers.htm))
- Stichter S, Parpart J. 1990. Introduction. In *Women, Employment and the Family in the International Division of Labor*, ed. S Stichter, J Parpart, pp. 1-9. Philadelphia, PA: Temple Univ. Press
- Thomas-Emeagwali G. 1995. *Women Pay the Price: Structural Adjustment in Africa and the Caribbean*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World

- Thornton T, ed. 1998. Crisis in the last frontier: the Alaskan subsistence debate. *Cult. Surv. Quart.* 22(3):29–34
- Tidwell B, ed. 1993. *The State of Black America*. Washington, DC: Natl. Urban League
- Trawick P. 1999. *The moral economy of water in the Andes: a local (indigenous) alternative to World Bank reforms*. Presented at Annu. Meet. Am. Anthropol. Assoc., 98th, Chicago
- Varma A, ed. 1999. Matters of fact. *Choices Hum. Dev. Mag.* 8(2):28
- Waterston A. 1998. *The facts of the matter: consequences of welfare "reform" for poor women in the U.S.* Presented at Annu. Meet. Am. Anthropol. Assoc., Philadelphia
- Working Group on Traditional Resource Rights. 2000. *Programme for Traditional Resource Rights*. <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~wgtrr/>
- World Bank. 1997. *Annual Report*, p. 22. Washington, DC: World Bank