'Studying Through' a Globalizing World
Building Method through Aidnographies

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This paper introduces the methods I honed over a decade-long study on the impacts of Western assistance to Eastern Europe following the collapse of communism. My interest in aid issues was piqued in Poland, where in 1989-90 I was based as a visiting Fulbright professor. As the communists ceded power to Solidarity in 1989 following the first semi-free elections in the Eastern Bloc, a wave of Western consultants visited their Polish counterparts. I observed many interactions between representatives of East and West. In 1991-92, I began a systematic study of foreign aid to the region encompassing Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia -- the countries that donors initially designated as the most likely to succeed and therefore the most desired candidates for assistance. Later, in 1993-94, when the aid story moved east, first to Russia, and later to Ukraine, so did I.

Following the story to culmination involved years of back-and-forth fieldwork between the aid donors of Western countries, and Central and Eastern European recipients. It entailed hundreds of interviews in multiple locations with recipient representatives in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Russia, and Ukraine, as well as with donor representatives in Washington, Brussels,

Bonn, and London. This work resulted in a number of articles and a book, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe* (Wedel 2001), which provides the key reference for this paper.

The information I sought could best, and in many cases only, be gleaned through in-depth fieldwork and interviewing. The networks and interrelationships I explored (for example, among a group of Western consultants, a Russian clan, and certain donor officials) could be obtained only through access to and trust among a variety of informants familiar with the same set of projects. By traveling to Central and Eastern Europe at regular intervals and following up earlier interviews as much as possible, I was able to track changes in policy implementation and in responses.

The process of following the source of policies, in this case, the donors, their policy prescriptions, rhetoric, and organization of aid -- through to those affected by the policies, in this case the recipients, has been called "studying through," as anthropologists Cris Shore and Susan Wright (1997, 14) detail. Studying through entails tracing "policy connections between different organizational and everyday worlds even where actors in different sites do not know each other or share a moral universe" (ibid.).

I begin with a general overview of my fieldwork, including research that preceded my work on foreign aid but laid the groundwork for it. I turn to how I framed my research on aid, began to identify the players, and employed the "extended case study method" to follow particular cases. I then focus on a web of transnational networks, located primarily in Washington, D.C., and Moscow, which were activated as the Soviet Union was breaking apart. I describe the methods I employed as I discovered and examined these networks, which crucially shaped the ways in which foreign assistance to the new Russian nation unfolded. Finally, I show how studying through furnishes a framework for examining cases in which "macro' and "micro" are inherently interwoven and for organizing the study of policy and globalization processes.

Focus on social networks

Field research in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s in the areas of political anthropology and social organization prepared me to study foreign aid and development a decade later. A focus on social organization and social networks were among the common threads.

I began in 1980-81 as the Solidarity movement in Poland was emerging. While I was considering possible dissertation topics, Solidarity grew, until one-third of Poland's labor force had joined. The Polish communist authorities succumbed to pressure and legalized the organization in September 1980, only to outlaw it some 15 months later, on December 13, 1981. Although socialist in its orientation and goals, the very existence of the movement presented a fundamental challenge to the communist Soviet Union.

How, I wondered, could such a massive social movement -- Solidarity was much more than a labor union -- emerge virtually overnight in a "totalitarian" state where citizens were not allowed to form independent organizations? I wrote a proposal to study social networks at the community and church level and examine how these networks had shaped Solidarity's development. But, as my departure for Warsaw was imminent, Polish communist authorities declared martial law, outlawing Solidarity, imprisoning its leaders, restricting freedoms, and canceling visas for foreigners. Were I to proceed with the proposed research, I could be suspected of spying on behalf of any number of services: the CIA, the KGB, or Polish intelligence. So, when I unexpectedly received a visa only six weeks into martial law (my student Fulbright fellowship was somehow being honored) it was obvious that to pursue a study of the kind I had in mind would be utterly inadvisable.

Arriving in Warsaw under stark conditions (near-closed borders, curfews, cut phone lines), I complied with the terms of my fellowship: I participated in courses and activities at Warsaw University. Pursuing the path of an aspiring anthropologist, I lived with a family, and while keeping my eyes and ears open and mouth shut, took detailed notes of the goings-on around me. I saw that

people did not trust -- or depend on -- the official world of bureaucracy, economy, information, and officials. Under a centrally planned system in which economic decisions were determined in the political arena, and with demand always outpacing supply, Poland was a case of what the Hungarian economist Janos Kornai (1980) has called an "economy of shortage." In such an economy, how did people manage, and some of them, it seemed, so well? Whom did they trust, and what factors did they consider in establishing trust?

As these questions drew me in, I spent much of 1982-86 in Poland. What intrigued me, I discovered as I reviewed my notes after about six months of intense, changing-by-the-minute, times, was how people "worked" the system. I discovered -- in Poland -- a complex ingenious society quite different from the communist police state that was being portrayed in the Western media. I observed a society in which the state and its rules were treated more as inconveniences to be overcome than as opponents to be destroyed and in which an elaborate system of informal distribution of goods and services paralleled and often overshadowed the official economy. It was a society whose informal practices had rearranged it in profoundly un-communist directions. Out of these seeming contradictions came a dissertation on informal social and economic networks, how they enabled citizens to survive in an economy of shortage, and how they facilitated the very workings of the formal bureaucracy and economy under state socialism. My first book, *The Private Poland: An Anthropologist's Look at Everyday Life* (Wedel 1986), attempted to capture these patterns through tales of hardship, finagling, camaraderie, and humor.

When I returned to Poland in 1988, I was surprised to find people from all sides turning their political energies into economic activities. Communist Party-connected managers were stepping from political to economic influence in a development that the sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis has called the 'enfranchisement of the *nomenklatura*.'[1] Meanwhile, upon release from

[1] Under the system known as *nomenklatura*, responsible positions in all spheres of government had to be approved by the Party, creating a tangle of loyalties and favoritisms that precluded broader political and social participation. The *nomenklatura* had the power to accept or veto candidates for any state job, and asserted a final voice over responsible positions in all spheres, from police and

martial-law jails, many jobless Solidarity activists who had honed their business skills by running clandestine publishing houses in earlier years started limited liability companies to trade in computers, electronic equipment, and information. They were traveling to Singapore, buying computers, and selling them in the informal economy. Solidarity intelligentsia circles had spawned a new economic elite.

Meanwhile, *perestroika* was dawning in Mikhail Gorbachev's Soviet Union and things were loosening up. In Poland, both Party and Solidarity-affiliated circles were forming clubs and lobbies and financing them through entrepreneurial activities. In the latter 1980s, hundreds of people founded voluntary associations -- even in areas for which the socialist state claimed exclusive responsibility, including housing, pre-university education, and the environment. Such organizations were being shakily tolerated by authorities. Some citizens were trying -- and sometimes succeeding -- to acquire legal standing for their organizations by registering them with the state.

Understanding the organization of these elite, close-knit circles, undergirded by long-standing networks of mutual trust, would prove to be invaluable in grasping the dynamics of foreign assistance. These circles had provided identity, intimacy, trust; pooled resources; and served as political-economic reference groups crucial to survival under communism. They arose from, or at least against the backdrop of, well-established relationships and social organizational capacities under communism. With the advert of Western aid, many groups positioned themselves as "NGOs" (nongovernmental organizations), "foundations," and/or political parties, and -- as beneficiaries of foreign grants. (Poland, the first country in the Eastern Bloc to bring down communism and to undertake radical economic reforms, initially received nearly half the aid to the region.)

Throughout Central and Eastern Europe, much Western assistance was built on the backbone of such energized groups. They cultivated (and, in some

army posts to factory management and school principalships on the basis of Party loyalty, not ability.

cases, even incorporated) international contacts, and set up NGOs and foundations to receive Western funds. In such respects as these, fieldwork on social organization and social networks in the region prior to its becoming a venue for assistance was excellent preparation for a later ethnography of networks. It laid the cornerstone for my 'aidnography.'

Project conception

The revolutions of 1989 came on the heels of an established worldwide movement toward privatization, deregulation, and civil society, and gave impetus to this internationalized vernacular. The West set out to promote "transition" to democracy and market economy in the region. In both East and West, "democracy," "freedom," "markets," and "civil society" became the slogans of 1989 and the early 1990s.

The early years called forth an influx of visitors to Central and Eastern Europe. As "transition to democracy" came into vogue, carpetbaggers and consultants, foundations and freelancers rushed to explore, and sometimes to exploit, the postcommunist frontier. During this inflow, I was based mostly in Poland and found myself witness to many encounters between visiting foundation, government, and business representatives. What drew me in were the interactions I observed between these visitors and local people, many of them from the Solidarity intelligentsia elite who now occupied key positions in government and business.

Later, when it became clear that much of the foreign aid from donor governments would be in the form of technical assistance -- consultants and experts providing advice -- it seemed that these early East-West encounters might be indicative of what was to come. I knew that foreign aid is often seen as a transmission belt in which advice is delivered from the giver to the taker. Would that, in fact, be how it played out in Poland and other countries in the region?

As I formulated a research design, my overall question centered on the interface between the donors and the recipients. What happens when differing systems intersect -- through their representatives -- over development and assistance issues? How do actors from different systems, operating with varying constraints, interests, procedures, and power, interact and respond when brought together as part of aid efforts?

I came to conclude that the notion of aid as a transmission belt leaves little room for the roles of the many players that get involved in aid processes; it overlooks the agency of actors. Recipients are viewed as voiceless, yet their responses, agendas, and interests influence aid administration, implementation, and outcomes.[2] They can, actively or passively, frustrate, encourage, subvert, facilitate, or otherwise alter aid programs as they are conceived by the donors.

My prior knowledge of the organization of Central and Eastern European economic, political, and social relations helped me to analyze these issues. Many informal relationships, noted for their resilience, not only survived "transition," but shaped how recipients accessed and directed aid, as well as how they interacted with donor representatives. The Central and Eastern European milieu of personal ties often contrasted starkly with the formalism and bureaucratic procedures of Western donors. However, in some cases, donors were attracted to the environment of working through personal networks and enlisting the support of groups that had long worked together. Plugging into such a ready-made operation facilitated a donor's job in that contacts were easily accessible. An effect of this approach, however, was that it could enmesh donors in "corrupt" practices on the host side, limit their options, and frustrate their goals, as I later illustrate.

I came to view the aid process as a series of "chemical reactions" that begin with the donor's policies, but are transformed by the agendas, interests, and

[2] Anthropologist Michael Herzfeld (1991) has explored how the outcomes of nation-state policies are influenced by actors in semi-closed environments.

interactions of the donor and recipient representatives at each stage of implementation and interface. Each side influences the other, and the result is often qualitatively different from the original objectives.

Players in the policy and aid process

I began research on the subject by addressing this question: Who are the players -- individuals, groups, organizations, bureaucracies -- that get involved in a given foreign aid or policy process? On the donor side, there were international organizations that usually lent to the "Third World," including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; the European Union (EU); and an array of governmental donors ranging from the United States and individual European nations to Japan. In 1989, these donors turned their attention to Central Europe. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, they proceeded further east to Russia and, later, Ukraine.

With aid to the "Second World" seen as a higher priority than that to the Third World, additional organizations, such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, came into being. Existing aid agencies and efforts often were reorganized, with a much greater role given to politicians and foreign affairs ministries. Within donor entities and efforts, many players became involved on both sides. In the United States alone, some 35 governmental agencies contributed to the early aid program to Central Europe. On their own, many donor agencies lacked the resources to carry out aid agendas. Thus, assistance projects, whether sponsored by the United States, the EU, the United Kingdom, or Germany, were often contracted to "private" providers: consulting firms, NGOs, universities, and other private providers.[3]

[3]Heading the award lists tended to be accounting firms, notably the then "Big Six" -- Deloitte & Touche, Coopers& Lybrand, KPMG Peat Marwick, Arthur Andersen, Ernst and Young, and Price Waterhouse. These firms appear to have been designated by the major donors as the most suitable agents of Central and Eastern European "transition." Donors retained the Big Six for a variety of tasks, including auditing, privatizing, and setting up stock exchanges; writing tax and environmental legislation; and activities that could hardly have been further afield of such issues, such as assessing the changing position of women.

The role of civil servants, then, was to administer aid projects: They issued calls for proposals and evaluated them and managed task orders and projects.

On the recipient side were counterpart governmental bodies and officials. Those directly involved in aid programs typically included officials at the core institutions of aid coordination and often in such ministries as foreign affairs, economics, finance, privatization, industry, and environment. These bodies frequently were charged not only with general aid coordination, but also served as recipients in that they received consultants and/or funds directly. Moving away from central government, the number of players multiplied. At selected enterprises undergoing privatization, for example, players included foreign and domestic consultants, managers and representatives of trade unions and self-government organizations, as well as rank-and-file workers. Further, as the aid effort got under way and a cadre of people adept at mediating between East and West grew around it, people in the recipient countries formed consulting firms, often becoming subcontractors to Western entities.

Finally, there were all manner of political players and bodies on both donor and recipient sides, including politicians and parliamentary and congressional committees and subcommittees, as well as monitoring authorities, that could potentially become involved. Monitoring bodies responsible for tracking the budget and the disposition of taxpayer monies were of particular use in my studies. Occasionally these bodies became players in particular aid programs through their release of critical reports. On the donor side, these included such organizations as the European Court of Auditors and the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO). In the course of aid efforts to Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, both produced a number of reports evaluating assistance programs. Some recipient nations also had monitoring bodies that occasionally evaluated aid-related efforts, such as the well-respected Najwyzsza Izba Kontroli (NIK), the Polish government's auditing body.

Entering 'the field'

With so many players involved, or potentially involved, how does one embark on an aidnography without becoming overwhelmed? It makes sense to begin by casting a wide informational net to glean an overview of projects and get a sense of a donor's goals. This usually can be done by consulting web sites, brochures, and bureaucrats who can provide general program information and objectives.

For example, in examining economic assistance, it was useful to get an overview of who, what, and where. How much money was allocated, and for what kinds of projects? The fact that donors were devoting substantial outlays to the privatization of state-owned resources prompted me to ask this basic question: What did the policymakers and implementing officials and contractors envision themselves to be doing when they defined privatization as the major task of "transition?" Clearly, huge hope had been invested in privatization's ability to transform centrally planned economies into market ones.

I recommend selecting activities that a donor considers its 'model projects' for special attention. Such projects tend to illustrate the donor's policy priorities, ideologies, and even methodologies of implementation. As Shore and Wright (1997, p. 7) contend, "In many respects... policies encapsulate the entire history and culture of the society that generated them." At the very least, model projects are likely to reveal the donor's goals and ideas of what constitutes 'success.'

As a complement to orientation from the donor, it also is helpful to talk with some recipient parties to get a sense of projects and perspectives and what people see as the issues. In my work on aid to Poland, my initial sources of information were Polish ministry officials and employees and native subcontractors working for Western consulting firms. Generally speaking, the further down the chain of hierarchy in a donor's scheme, the less people feel

they have to protect and the more likely they are to reveal their experiences, especially if not entirely complimentary to the donor.

After acquiring an overview, which took some time, I identified settings in which privatization aid was being employed, including factories and ministries. I selected cases to be studied and began to follow them. Although an overview of the donor's projects and goals can serve as an excellent point of departure, an ethnographer can begin at any point in the aid or policy chain, whether with the donor, recipient, or intermediaries. The important part is that all the bases are eventually covered and that the focus is on the analyses of the connections and interactions among the relevant players.

Extended case study method

In the "extended case study method," as developed by anthropologist J. Van Velsen, the ethnographer identifies the various players in a specific set of events or "case," and then interviews and observes the players and their interactions over time. As Van Velsen (1967, p. 145) writes, the method "requires the ethnographer's close acquaintance with individuals over a lengthy period of time and a knowledge of their personal histories and their networks of relationships." The extended case study method was particularly appropriate to following individuals and groups through a series of decisions, events, and problems as the aid story unfolded and to analyzing relationships among individuals and groups representing donor and recipient sides. Although the individuals and groups involved in a particular "case" often were located in different sites, they always were connected by the policy or aid implementation process and/or by actual social networks.

In my work, I conducted many open-ended interviews and compared and assessed people's responses to the same questions over time.[4] The open-ended

[4] As anthropologist George Marcus (1995, p. 102) has put it, 'In multi-sited ethnography, comparison emerges from putting questions to an emergent object of study whose contours, sites, and relationships are not known beforehand, but are themselves a contribution of making an account that has different, complexly connected real-world sites of investigation.'

format allowed people to define their own issues and explain them in their own terms. I asked people about their activities, perspectives, and networks, as well as about those of others in their circle or organization. In following particular circles and organizations, I also talked with those outside them, but having direct experience with them.

The ethnographer's job is to gather and sort out everyone's version of the same events. In his classic ethnography, *Village on the Border*, Ronald Frankenberg (1990, 199) wrote that

> The observer has a positive duty to be open -- that his intentions are to observe, to report, and to publish an account of what he sees in print.... One does...have difficulty in persuading people that one really is writing about what one says one is and not history, local legends, or whatever they consider to be a suitable subject to write on. The temptation is, in the desire to please, to let people think that they are right about your interests.

As insightful as some informants may be, it is incumbent upon the ethnographer to arrive at his or her own account, informed by their demonstrated agency and perspectives. It is necessary to talk with many people in different positions, to assess their motives, the influences upon them, and networks connecting them -- and to return to them repeatedly.

The relationships I established with different informants and parties to a case varied, from a sense of camaraderie to one of formality. My earlier networks of friends and acquaintances served as useful entry points into the study. Prior familiarity with Poland from living there, learning the language, and knowing people in common, helped to establish instant affinity with some local informants. I came to know others simply by showing up, being granted meetings, and establishing enough rapport to be welcomed back. I did not find access to be difficult if I was persistent.

For different reasons, I also often felt affinity with foreign consultants who found themselves in an unfamiliar environment. Sometimes more guarded contacts developed with aid officials, especially with those who greeted

interviewers and researchers with suspicion because they had much to protect. Then there were the fruitful and mutually beneficial collaborations with congressional and parliamentary staff, officials involved in monitoring aid processes, and investigative journalists and criminal investigators on both the recipients and donor sides.

It was important for me to have a sense of how I was perceived by informants, as their judgments affect how they present themselves and what they say in my presence. Who am I to them? A mouthpiece? A sympathizer? A friendly face? A pleasant break? A curiosity? A possible troublemaker? A spy? Some informants might find me to be a thorn in their side; others might appreciate that someone is at last interested in their experiences and perspectives and even want to treat me to drinks.

Cases involving conflict often expose the dynamics of policy and aid processes. As illuminated series of events that have attracted attention, such cases can highlight key networks and patterns of relationships and influence. Under circumstances of conflict, people often are eager to tell their stories and blow off steam. Politicized processes such as privatization, which I observed through fieldwork at the factory level, particularly bring out contentiousness and encourage polarization. Sandwiched between ministries on the one hand, and representatives of labour on the other, managers had to try to please both sides, mediate between them, and keep their own jobs in the process. Foreign consultants, who tended to recommend reductions in staff, unintentionally added to the fray. Workers often regarded them as threats. I saw that the very presence of consultants sometimes inadvertently encouraged anti-Western, anti-market sentiments.

Near the end of an ethnographic study, after one has formulated, and come -- with some confidence – to conclusions about what is going on, high-level response from the donor may be called for before the publication of findings. The response to such airing may shed further light in a variety of ways on the story, and may be worth including in one's account. After some of my findings appeared in high-visibility venues such as the *New York Times* or the

Wall Street Journal, access to a few of my informants became more restricted. Of course, other informants came forth and contacted me to add information. As always, in using such information, it is necessary to take into account people's motives in offering their versions of events.

Ronald Frankenberg (*ibid.*) stresses the importance of maintaining distance and confidentiality with informants:

> In factories, management may suspect you of being hostile, and workers of being a management spy. Conformity with local norms and a refusal to be trapped into revealing the secrets of either side are what the fieldworker needs to deal with this problem. The keeping of personal confidences until they no longer matter is not only moral but expedient.

What do we find "underneath" the surface when we examine the processes of aid? How do donors' efforts reflect their own history and culture and, ultimately, how do they influence the societies undergoing transformation? It is only after such analyses that we can begin to understand aid efforts.

Harvard, Chubais, and economic assistance to Russia

In 1993-1994, as donors were turning their attention to Russia, I realized it would be useful to get a feel for what was happening there with regard to the reform and economic aid agenda. So I went to Moscow and started to do the same kind of work that I had undertaken in Central Europe. I found many of the same aid organizations, consulting firms, and consultants that I had encountered in Central Europe. The goals of economic assistance in the two places were much the same: to establish a market economy through privatization and the setting up of institutions such as capital markets and stock exchanges.

The Soviet Union had fallen apart at the close of 1991, and Boris Yeltsin had been elected president of the new Russia. A particular group or 'clan' had

established itself in Western aid and policy circles as the 'reformers.' Chief among them were Yegor Gaidar, the first "architect" of economic reform, and Anatoly Chubais, who was part of Gaidar's team and later would replace him as the 'economic reform czar.'

Made significant by virtue of hundreds of millions of Western dollars, Chubais was a useful figure for Yeltsin: first, beginning in November 1991, as head of Russia's new privatization agency, the State Property Committee, then additionally as first deputy prime minister in 1994. He continued as a key Yeltsin deputy through the 1990s, both in and out of government. In March 1997, Western support and political maneuvering catapulted him to first deputy prime minister and minister of finance. Although fired by Yeltsin in March 1998, Chubais was reappointed in June 1998 to be Yeltsin's special envoy in charge of Russia's relations with international lending institutions.
Chubais and his circle of associates, mostly originating from St. Petersburg, became known as the 'Chubais Clan.' This group, which occupied key positions in and out of government through the 1990s, came to manage much foreign aid and, in the process, gained the upper hand vis-à-vis other cliques in the struggle for power.

Across the Atlantic, and after Yeltsin became president, the U.S. Congress allocated considerable funding, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), to promote an economic reform agenda in Russia. A group associated with Harvard University, which already had established contact with members of the Chubais Clan, became the chief beneficiaries of U.S. economic aid to Russia. Through the influence and signatures of Harvard-connected officials in the Clinton administration, this group secured funding without the usual competitive bidding. Between 1992 and 1997, the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID), with which the group was affiliated, managed some $350 million for aid to Russia that encompassed privatization, legal reform, capital markets and the development of a Russian securities and exchange commission.

The Chubais Clan and the Harvard group developed very close links and operated in concert in a number of arenas, including foreign aid, economic reform, and business. Working together, the Harvard-Chubais partners carried out radical economic "reforms" in Russia. They presided over hundreds of millions of dollars in loans from the international financial institutions and aid from Western governments. Each side worked to enhance the stature of the other side and to provide access for it. The interests of the Harvard group and those of the Chubais Clan -- influence, prestige, and money -- appeared to become as one.

Both groups allegedly enriched themselves. As the era of reform came to a close, members of the Harvard-Chubais team faced legal problems for alleged misconduct. In the fall of 2000, the U.S. government filed a $120 million lawsuit against Harvard University, the project's two leaders, and their wives. The suit alleges that they defrauded the U.S. government and that the two principals "were using their positions, inside information and influence, as well as USAID-funded resources," to advance their business interests and investments in the Russian securities market, oil and aluminium companies, real estate, and mutual funds (US Department of Justice 2000).

Ten years hence, it seems easy to provide a quick synopsis of the case. But how did it unfold and how did I follow, and indeed help to unearth, it? To get started in my study of economic assistance to Russia, I cast a wide net, as I had in my earlier investigation of aid to Central Europe. I began by conducting interviews with people connected with the economic aid effort from a variety of organizations. I visited the organizations that received economic aid, such as the Federal Commission on Securities and Capital Markets (Russian SEC), the State Property Committee, the Russian Privatization Center, the Institute for Law-Based Economy (ILBE), and the Resource Secretariat. Those I interviewed typically gave me their organizations' statements of purpose, often nicely presented for Westerners. I asked questions such as "who runs this organization"? and "whose word counts here?" When I posed questions like, who is on the board of directors, who founded it, who runs it, who shows up, who has influence, I found that

the same set of names came up -- no matter which organization I was inquiring about. The more interviewing I did, the more I began to understand that, despite the organizations' different functions, the same people ran them.

After as few as a dozen interviews in a half dozen different organizations, I was able to piece together a rough social network chart that began to track who was connected with whom and in what capacities. Thus, despite the fact that there were several organizations, ostensibly engaged in different parts of the economic reform agenda, the same tight-knit group of interconnected individuals appeared to be in charge of those organizations, as well as of the Russian "reform" agenda and significant parts of the Russian government. They were additionally connected with each other in a variety of capacities, including business and romance.

Thus, what helped me discover the social organization that they had fashioned for themselves was that they were all interconnected in multiple ways and that the organizations were manned by a small group of people associated with Harvard's Russia project and/or the Chubais Clan. A large part of the fieldwork, then, consisted of exploring connections -- among the Chubais Clan, representatives of a Harvard Institute, aid-paid consultants, and U.S. and Russian officials. They were located in several sites -- and some of them moved around, but they always were connected by the aid process and usually additionally by networks.

The apparent interconnectedness of the actors led me to examine the network structures more systematically, according to several characteristics. I'll discuss one: The *single-stranded* versus *multiplex* quality of networks: Single-stranded means that the relationship between two people is based on only one role -- that they know each other in only one capacity. Multiplexity, on the other hand, means that they know each other in a variety of capacities and have several roles vis-a-vis one another. In the U.S.-Russia case, the networks were highly multiplex. As seen purely at the level of formal organizations -- of who is connected to whom through such organizations -- the structure looks as follows:

(1) Person A is connected to Person B[5] through the Russian SEC, because A controls the ILBE, which funds the Russian SEC, and B is *both* vice chairman of the board and executive director of the Russian SEC;
(2) A is connected to B through the RPC, because A is on its board of directors, while B is its deputy chairman;
(3) In addition, A is connected to B through the State Property Committee, because A is senior legal advisor, while B is deputy chairman.

In addition to the formal organizations, the same group was involved in an additional realm of business and other transactions, many of which entail conflicts of interest. For example:

(1) Person A is connected to B, who in two of his roles is deputy chairman of the board and managing director of the Russian SEC. B arranges for A's wife's company, -- a little known mutual fund, to be the first licensed fund in Russia -- over and above the applications of Credit Suisse First Boston and other big players
(2) B, in another of his capacities -- his role on the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, also arranges for A's wife's to be a member of a working group of the Commission.

Through a multi-year process of going back and forth among sites, I amassed and analyzed more and more information about how the same pool of people, made up of actors from both U.S. and Russian sides, not only ran the Russian economy and directed international aid, but also were connected to each other through so-called "foundations" and business activities. Although there are doubtless many gaps in my knowledge of the story (quite possibly, I saw only the tip of the iceberg), I was able to establish at least some of the social network structures.

I also observed – and analyzed – how the Harvard-Chubais players shaped social structure, and two key ways in which they exhibited shifting and

[5] 'Person A' is Jonathan Hay, on-site general director of Harvard's program in Russia, while 'Person B' is Dmitry Vasiliev, a key member of the Chubais Clan. For details see Wedel 2001, 239-44.

multiple agency. The first is in the organizations that they established with foreign aid. I call them "flex organizations" because of their chameleon-like, multipurpose character. Flex organizations switch their standing situationally -- from state to private -- so as to best access state resources and to pursue agendas that can not be pinned down as either state or private. The influence of flex organizations and the actors who empower them turns on ambiguity. Actors within them play the boundaries, skillfully blending, equivocating, mediating, and otherwise working the spheres of state and private, bureaucracy and market, and legal and illegal, while using ambiguity to their advantage. It is the ability to equivocate that affords such organizations their influence, strength and resilience.

In the U.S.-Russia case, flex organizations were the vehicles through which economic reforms were to take place. They were set up by the Russian government and Harvard University, and funded in the amount of hundreds of millions of dollars in bilateral aid and loans from the international financial institutions. The Russian Privatization Center was the donor's flagship organization. Although established by Russian presidential decree and Harvard University, legally, it was a nonprofit NGO. As an NGO, it received tens of millions of dollars from Western foundations, which like to support NGOs. As a state organization, it received hundreds of millions of dollars from the international financial institutions, which typically lend to governments. The Center negotiated with and received loans *on behalf of the Russian government*. Of course, the Russian people were then responsible for paying back the loans.

Flex organizations are effective vehicles for the actors who control them because they enable them to bypass otherwise relevant institutions, in this case governmental agencies and the democratically elected parliament. The Harvard-Chubais partners both used and supplanted organizations of their respective governments.

The second manifestation of shifting and multiple agency is in the "transidentities" displayed by the Harvard-Chubais players. This refers to the

ability of an individual, based on official (or apparently official) authorization from two or more parties, to change whom he represents, regardless of which party originally designated him as its representative.[6] I noted that some actors in this case could creatively shift at will whom they represented.
For example, Harvard's Russia project director was authorized by both the United States and, in some circumstances, Russia as its representative. He acted interchangeably as a representative of the United States (for example, in managing economic aid), of Russia (in approving or not high-level privatization decisions of the Russian government), and of his girlfriend's private business interests. It often was unclear just which role he was playing in which meeting.

The shifting and multiple representation that we see in transidentities and flex organizations enables deniability. Because actors and the organizations they empower can shift whom they represent, it is difficult, if not impossible, for any one party to monitor them. If a flex organization such as the Russian Privatization Center came under fire for its activities as a state organization, it could claim to be a private one; after all, it was an NGO. If Harvard's manager in Russia was asked by U.S. authorities to account for privatization decisions and monies, he could say that he made those decisions as a Russian, not as an American. Shifting and multiple representation was crucial to the success of the Harvard-Chubais partners. Through it, they could have much more influence than if they were stuck in just one role.

Studying through and implications for policy

"Studying through" has helped to organize my aidnography, an examination of interactions among aid discourses, actors, and institutions across place and time. Studying through builds on the concept of "studying up," a term coined by anthropologist Laura Nader. Some 30 years ago, Nader (1974, 292-3)

[6] The concept of transidentities draws on anthropologist Frederik Barth's work exploring "repertoires" of identities and how actors employ different identities depending on the situation. See Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1969.

appealed to anthropologists to 'study powerful institutions and bureaucratic organizations in the United States, for such institutions and their network systems affect our lives and also affect the lives of people that anthropologists have traditionally studied all around the world.'

My findings point to the value of studying up, studying through, and then studying through again. I followed donors' discourses, policies, and projects all the way through to recipients' responses to them, and, in turn, back to donors' responses, then back to the recipients, and so on. That is, I studied through the policy chain, proceeding in both forward and reverse directions, and then repeating the process. Studying through -- and through again -- enabled me to chart the "chemical reactions" that are produced in the interface among parties to the aid process and that shape aid outcomes. As the term "chemical reactions" implies, neither aid processes nor the fieldwork entailed in following them are linear. Working through nonlinear processes, albeit systematically and consistently, I was able to establish patterns that, in practice, would be difficult, if not impossible, to discern through more linear paths.

Studying through provides a means around the methodological and theoretical conundrum of macro versus micro, enabling the levels to be united "within a single field of analysis," as Shore and Wright have put it. By combining macro and micro in one field of investigation, "the traditional methodology of participant observation acquires new meaning," a reviewer of Shore and Wright contends (Spyridakis 1999). With their contribution, the reviewer explains (*ibid.*), the ethnographic "hot point" is no longer simply to

> follow an informant's life and [write] up notes about it, but to situate the actors among the interactive levels through which the policy process is diffused. In this way, ethnography brings together different organisational and everyday worlds across time and space. The historical background, actual power structure, intended individual strategy, official documents both contemporary and historical, thus, can be studied through and in the process of seeking the power webs and relational activities between actors.

Shore and Wright (1997, 13) add that "anthropologists are in a unique position to understand the workings of multiple, intersecting and conflicting power structures which are local but tied to non-local systems.

In the *Anthropology of Policy*, Shore and Wright call for a focus on policy, which, as they rightly point out, 'has become an increasingly central concept and instrument in the organization of contemporary societies.' (*ibid.*, 4). The study of policy deals with issues at the heart of anthropology: institutions, ideology, power, rhetoric, and discourse, the global and the local. They reason that a policy focus 'provides a new avenue for studying the localization of global processes in the contemporary world.' (*ibid.*, 13). This argues for ethnographies that capture political and economic policies and globalization processes on the level(s) where they are experienced -- whether a community, company, social network, cluster of networks, 'clan,' family, city social strata, or public opinion more generally. I suggest that such work is most illuminating when it charts interactions not only between actors on the ground (for example, donor and recipient representatives and other parties to the aid process), but also between the larger systems they represent.

I believe that anthropologists have special contributions to make in several key areas of policy. First, we can help to 'unsettle and dislodge the certainties and orthodoxies that govern the present,' as Shore and Wright (*ibid.*, 17) have suggested. This involves an exploration of 'the mobilizing metaphors and linguistic devices that cloak policy with the symbols and trappings of political legitimacy' (*ibid.*, 3). In my work, for example, I examined the powerful 'mobilizing metaphors,' including 'privatization,' 'civil society,' and 'transition to democracy' that guided and legitimized assistance to Central and Eastern Europe.

Second, anthropologists can make a crucial contribution by analyzing the role of social organization and social networks in shaping policy processes. Anthropology appears uniquely qualified to observe and study such phenomena as flex organizations, trans-identities, and other forms of organization enshrouded in ambiguity. Such analysis entails paying attention

to social networks -- to the networks underlying and connecting the institutions and organizations of government, business, and "civil society." We can not - in the abstract, or in general -- answer the question of how these entities, or slices thereof, are related to one another. Especially in a 'globalizing world,' this question requires investigation of the underlying networks of individuals and organizations. This is true whether we are sorting out the networks that undergird foreign aid, corruption or terrorism. It also applies to the networks linking Enron and Arthur Andersen to each other and to the government, as well as the networks connecting Human Rights Watch to the Ford Foundation and the United Nations.

In this regard, we must not lose sight of the "studying up" component of studying through. Thus far the anthropology of globalization has tended to focus on how global processes affect *local* communities. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's (1996) important treatment of processes of globalization from the angle of actors who are profoundly affected by global processes is a case in point. Anthropologists have devoted some attention to dissecting the aggressive promotion and discourses of globalization.[7] That is to the good. However, relatively little anthropological work has been done to explore how social organization and networks organize policy processes and players at the top. Even less work has been done that investigates the top and then studies through to explore the social organization linking *both ends of the globalization and policy chain.*

Today, given the ever greater influence of international financial and policy institutions, global elites, and globalization processes, such studies seem compelling. Now, more than ever, the community of actors at the top and how they shape global change, warrant anthropological attention. No approaches or methods appear better suited to studying these issues than ethnographic research across levels and processes entailed in studying through.

[7] See, for example, Kalb et al (2000) for insightful analysis of the discourses of and ideologies underlying globalization.

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