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Mara Benadusi, Sandrine Revet

Disaster trials: a step forward

Introduction

In recent decades, courtrooms have become a key arena for voicing claims and condemnation linked to disasters in all their possible forms: natural, technological, environmental and health disasters. The sentencing of three Chilean public officials charged with manslaughter for not sounding the tsunami alarm following an earthquake in 2010, or the trial in which 900 private citizens accused the Dutch government of disregarding the risks associated with climate change, which culminated in a guilty verdict handed down in June 2015 by the Court of First Instance – a hugely important precedent in international jurisprudence – are only a few of the most recent examples of this trend. It is difficult to count the number of legal cases in which survivors and victims' families have demanded that institutions, entrepreneurs, technical experts and even scientists pay compensation or be sentenced for damages suffered as part of a catastrophe. In view of these developments, it is no wonder that the field of disaster law has witnessed a huge surge in interest over the past few years. Building on a widespread recognition of the shortcomings of legal systems when dealing with disasters, academics have increasingly turned their attention to exploring the role of law in disasters (Farber, Faure 2010) and in particular the regulation of disaster response and determination of legal responsibility in the aftermath of disasters (Lauta 2014).

This special dossier of *Archivio Antropologico Mediterraneo*, titled *On the Witness Stand: Environmental Crises, Disasters and Social Justice*, seeks to inaugurate a space of anthropological reflection in this sphere of inquiry in order to more closely examine the symbolic, cultural and more broadly social aspects of legal disputes linked to disasters and to bring the ethnographic gaze to bear on the settings in which these cases erupt. Unlike legal experts who investigate the role of law in disasters, as anthropologists our intention is to investigate what happens with disasters when they are confronted with law, focusing on the host of legal cases we propose to term "disaster trials". Of course it is not our intention to downplay the importance of the technical and procedural aspects of these cases. We argue, however, that the most effective way of understanding what is going on in the courtroom is to analyze disaster trials from a variety of perspectives, not least of which anthropological.

The third national conference of the Italian Society of Applied Anthropology – *Società Italiana di Antropologia Applicata* (SIAA) – held in Prato from December 17 to 19 2015 provided an opportunity to initiate a discussion about disaster trials. As part of a panel entitled "On the Witness Stand: Environmental Crises, Disasters and Social Justice" like this special issue, we compared several court cases following disasters from the judicial activism that went into demanding reparations for the deaths and damage caused by the terrible 1984 chemical accident in Bhopal, India to the "long-term memory" of the trial against representatives of the Colombér power plant filed by the families of the victims after the 1963 disaster at the Vajont dam in Italy. The panel paid special attention to three main issues: the way expert knowledge compete and come into conflict in these trials, the ethical-applied implications of anthropologists' practices of activism and consultancy during the entire course of legal procedings, and the more general contribution that ethnographic investigations can offer in these settings in terms of advancing research on disasters. In comparing different ethnographic contexts and legal cases, we also explored the possible ways anthropologists might be involved in the courtroom, whether as expert consultants, victims or advocates (helping those who have suffered economic, psychological, physical, environmental or public health harm during a disaster to engage with the legal system), or in the classic role of participant observers studying specific judicial actions and examples of litigation.

Some of the papers presented at the Prato conference have been included in this publication, supplemented by later articles, thus allowing us to consider four disaster trials: the long-running case against the engineers and scientists of the commission tasked with predicting and preventing major

risks following the April 6, 2009 earthquake that leveled the city of L'Aquila in Abbruzzo (Ciccozzi and Benadusi *infra*); the pollution-focused trial launched December 2012 against thirteen executives from Enel, a multinational utility company majority owned by the Italian State that holds the Federico II coal-burning power plant in the industrial district of Brindisi in Apulia (Ravenda *infra*); the criminal trial initiated following the October 2009 flood that struck several villages in the province of Messina in Sicily, killing 37 people (Falconieri *infra*); and, finally, the court case that erupted after the storm Xynthia swept over the town of La Faute-sur-Mer, France, in February of 2010 (Revet *infra*).

Disasters of this kind have long roused anthropological interest, of course, prompting researchers to investigate how catastrophes make their mark on the social body of affected communities, delve into their root causes and contemplate their long-term effects (Oliver-Smith 1986, Revet 2007; Langumier 2008; Benadusi 2012, 2015; Ulberg 2013; Gamburd 2013; Simpson 2013 among others). However, to date little attention has been granted by anthropologists to the specific relationship that people who have suffered environmental, physical, health, economic damage as a result of disaster establish with the law. And yet the relationship between disaster survivors and the legal system is particularly complex, whether because causal links between real damage and victim status remain ambiguous or because survivors must pass through multiple levels of mediation in order to gain the status of "victim". As the articles in this special issue show, the recognition of victimhood requires political and legal wrangling that may involve a host of actors, including lawyers, consultants, groups formed to represent victims, social movements, businessmen, politicians, public officials and journalists. These figures contribute in various ways to the social construction of victimhood and mediate survivors' relationships with the law, both inside and outside the courtroom. Anthropology can aid in untangling the jumble these relationships form, and this is precisely the thematic axis that serves as a landmark for the articles presented in this special issue.

Merging two fields of anthropology: disaster and law

The anthropology of disasters has long been interested in the issue of blame and the way "natural" disasters are explained by humans (Bode 1989; Simpson 2011; Brac de la Perrière 2010; Hoffman 2002; Langumier 2008; Revet 2010). Together with other social sciences, it has significantly contributed to paying attention to the non-naturalness of disasters and their human roots and causes (Torry 1979; Oliver-Smith 1986; O'Keefe, Westgate, Wisner 1976). Once the catastrophe is no longer considered the product of solely natural hazards but rather the result of specific social, historical, economic and political factors that contribute to making societies vulnerable, humans can be held responsible for the consequences of the disaster and sued or even prosecuted. Although there have been more and more trials or legal proceedings for "natural" (in addition to "man-made") disasters in recent years, anthropologists have yet to conduct much research in the specific field of disaster-related litigation. Not only have disaster scholars largely focused on other issues, but the more consolidated branch of legal anthropology has yet to turn an analytical eye on this field.

The anthropology of law has a lengthy history that is impossible to capture in this text. Scholars such as Sally Merry Engle and Laura Nader have played an important role structuring the field. According to Merry (2012), legal anthropology has helped the study of law to evolve in three main directions. The first concerns relationships and interactions between people and the law, the role of law in everyday life and the way people mobilize legal processes in order to resolve their disputes (Sarat, Kearns 1994). This literature gave rise to various terms and phrases such as "legal culture" (Geertz 1983) or, more recently, "legal consciousness" (Merry 1990). The second contribution lies in the particular attention the anthropology of law pays to "legal pluralism", thereby revealing the co-existence of multiple forms of law and order in different societies (Weilenmann 2005; Leroy 2005). Although this phenomena has its roots in colonial and post-colonial processes, the issue of legal pluralism has become increasingly relevant with the late twentieth century globalization and its associated superposition of global, regional, national and local legal systems. The third way in which anthropology has contributed to the study of law, according to Merry, is by investigating how human rights actually function in real-life settings: «An anthropological approach to the human rights system foregrounds the social practices of law and their embedded cultural categories, emphasizing local cultural understandings of law and the importance of analysing the social contexts of legal creation and implementation» (Merry 2012: 113). More recently, this branch of inquiry has led anthropologists to explore the way international justice has been mobilized and understood at a local level in post-conflict contexts such as Rwanda, South Africa and Peru (Wilson 2001; Coxshall 2005; Dembour, Kel-

ly 2007; Clarke 2009). Finally, some recent publications are interested in examining the technical dimension of law by analysing the importance of documents (Riles 2001) and of others systems of representation and commensurability such as money or indicators (Maurer 2005; Merry 2016).

As already outlined in the introductory section, over the last few decades a vast technical literature also emerged at the intersection of disasters and law. This body of work identifies a number of challenges that impact on future efforts to design legal frameworks for major risks in Europe and beyond. In his book on *Disaster Law,* Kristian Cedervall Lauta argues that «the shift in how a disaster is spoken of and managed affects fundamental notions of duty, responsibility and justice» (Lauta 2014: 1-2) and explains how changes in our understanding of what constitutes a disaster also affect how we approach the question of legal responsibility. This field of inquiry pays particular attention to the legalities of catastrophes, investigating the ways in which compensation for such events could be provided (Farber, Faure 2010). However, since people – survivors, victims' relatives and their lawyers and advocates – have long chosen legal procedures as a preferred means of claiming reparations, the anthropology of disasters cannot ignore these technical aspects.

One of the major anthropological reference points in this sphere is Kim Fortun's book on the legal processes initiated by groups of advocates and victims after Union Carbide's plant in Bhopal exploded in 1984 (Fortun 2001). A more recent study by Diego Zenobi (2014) explores the Cromañon fire in Argentina and traces the legal trajectories of the victims. Historians have also analysed the importance of these trials, such as Sonja Schmid (2015) with respect to the Chernobyl case. It is striking, however, that most of these empirical cases involve disasters that are not intrinsically considered "natural" and in which human responsibility is therefore not a point of dispute. It is also important to underline that most of the studies documenting post-disaster legal cases through ethnographic research in the courtroom are conducted not by anthropologists but by sociologists (Barbot, Dodier 2011; Jobin 2010), while most of the time anthropologists have chosen to analyse the legal process from outside the courtroom. A good example of this tendency is Petryna's ethnographic study of the aftermath of Chernobyl and the way "Chernobyl compensation laws" in Ukraine shaped a new kind of «biological citizenship» (Petryna 2002). Yet there is no question that anthropology is perfectly positioned to study the social relationships that develop inside the courtroom. Legal anthropologists might take the theoretical and methodological skills they accrued in analyzing disputes in a variety of social systems (not only modern societies with formalized legal systems but also traditional societies), and put them to good use in developing a better understanding of disaster trials. Anthropologists studying disasters, for their part, could make available their extensive understandings of what Oliver-Smith called the «external variability and internal complexity» of disasters (Oliver Smith 1999: 19).

It is even clearer how useful an anthropological approach can be in the study of these disputes if we recall trials that provoked heated controversy in the social sciences. A striking example is the Buffalo Creek hydrological catastrophe that occurred in Logan County, West Virginia, February 26, 1972, when mining waste was dumped into a dam owned by the Buffalo Mining Company, a subsidiary of the Pittston Coal Company. The flood of polluting debris and water killed 125 people and injured more than 1,000, leaving approximately 4,000 people homeless. Inspectors with the US Geological Survey and West Virginia Department of Natural Resources had issued warnings specifying that dams might be subject to this kind of risk. The fact that the mining companies were lax in taking the necessary security measures triggered a judicial investigation that eventually concluded in 1974. The population of Buffalo Creek actually filed two suits against the coal company, one for damages to health, welfare, and property that involved 625 plaintiffs and the other focused on children' psychological trauma, with 348 people involved. The first ended with an extra-judicial agreement according to which the mining company paid $13.5 million for each individual after legal costs, an amount considerably smaller than that requested by the survivors and families of the victims; the second case ended in a $4.8 million payout, well below the $225 million requested.

The Buffalo Creek case is particularly interesting for the questions we address in this special issue. Indeed, lawyers collected over 1,300 depositions for these lawsuits and involved experts from various disciplines including sociology. This case also gave rise to news reports, novels, books and posthumous reinterpretations. The lawyer Gerald Stern, who represented the flood victims, came out of it with an essay entitled *The Buffalo Creek Disaster* in which he shows how the «survivors of one of the worst disasters in coal-mining history brought suit against the coal company» (Stern 1976). Given the contemporary relevance of this issue in a time of environmental crimes and disasters, many Civil Procedure courses in American universities continue to assign Stern's volume as required reading.

And yet perhaps the most well-known role in the affair was played by the sociologist Kay Erikson, who was called as an expert witness in the first suit to testify on behalf of those suffering from the effects of the flood. As Lynda Ann Ewen and Julia A. Lewis noted in a subsequent critical re-reading of this case (1999), apart from brief visits and additional interviews conducted on-site, «Erikson was able to read the depositions and based his legal testimony upon them» (Ewen, Lewis 1999: 24). As our readers will likely know, the book he went on to write on the basis of this case, *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* (Erikson 1978), has long been considered a masterpiece of sociology and was granted the prestigious Sorokin Award. The fame of the book is shadowed, however, by a not insignificant fact. Although the author did show the extent to which West Virginia's political and legal environment had been influenced by the presence of large coal mining companies, due to his minimal direct contact with the area he produced a stereotyped portrait of the local community and its specific relationship with the law. Despite overwhelming evidence of agency, including militant strikes, a citizen's panel of inquiry, women's quilting groups and union activities, inhabitants were stereotyped as a culture incapable of recovering, a "fatalistic" culture grounded in individualism (Ewen, Lewis 1999). The encounter between the anthropology of disasters and the anthropology of law is a very stimulating proposition that we hope can contribute to producing knowledge about disaster trials without slipping into reductionist interpretations of this kind.

Disaster trials as "dispositif" of transformation

Trials, just like disasters, are situations characterized by a high degree of confrontation in which contradictions take centre stage. As a result, they are occasions for the anthropologist to grasp what is at stake among the various protagonists involved. When held after a disaster, a trial represents an occasion for developing different representations and narratives of the disaster, for analysing – and finally determining – the responsibility of different actors, including humans and non-humans. Experts, victims, lawyers, defendants – and even the public and media, who take an active part in trials despite not being authorized to talk within the courtroom – all produce discourses. It thus makes sense for anthropologists to observe and analyse the ways people argue during a trial in order to understand how arguments are mobilized and how different visions of the world, nature, science and what constitutes a disaster all interact on the same stage. Legal procedures carried out in the pre-trial period – i.e. instruction and inquiry – likewise produce an assemblage of texts, words and thoughts that must be examined to produce an observation-based "thick description" of such court cases.

Moreover, disaster trials are *dispositif* of transformation. Indeed, they signal a passage from ordinary life to a formalized juridical frame, sending clear messages about the changing status of the main participants. They perform a function similar to that of rituals, in which specific, context-oriented framing strategies serve to draw dividing lines between this special terrain and the ongoing flow of surrounding events (Goffman 1974: 250-251). Trials as well as rituals establish «new social realities and identities for particular groups and individuals» (Nelson 2012: 19). This is not the right setting to provide a detailed survey of the anthropological literature exploring the transformational nature of rituals over the decades, from Van Gennep (1960) and Durkheim (1965) to Turner (1982) and Grimes (1982). There are far too many contributions to name them all. It is useful to keep in mind, however, that trials have often been associated with rituals precisely because they exert the same kind of transformative power. For instance, Garfinkel (1956) analyzed trials as "status degradation rituals", an idea Mara Benadusi draws on in this special issue (Benadusi *infra*). Depending on the legal institution in charge of the case, trials transform an event as widely and broadly as they are able to extend. A trial intervenes in the reality of people's stories, selecting the protagonists and defining charges and causalities. Discourses are transformed into "testimonies", documents into "legal briefs" and facts into "elements of proof". The whole legal process also contributes to redefining identities. Some inhabitants might organize as "plaintiffs" and then become "victims" after the trial; other protagonists may become "defendants" and be declared "responsible" while still others are enrolled as "experts". Trials are therefore important rituals that socially contribute to redrawing the way people think and talk about themselves and about the events they suffered, enlarging or reducing their spectrum of possibilities.

In recent years, the anthropologists interested in the truth commissions and trials aimed at reconciliation and justice after mass atrocities have played a key role in advancing our understanding of the transformative nature of legal processes. See for instance Humphrey's work on trials involving crimes against humanity, which he approaches as «rituals of political transition and individual healing» (Humphrey 2003: 171). These trials have sought to

reverse the State's tendency to produce victims and steer it toward redeeming victims instead (*ibidem*). Merging the anthropology of law and the anthropology of disasters, this issue should be considered an initial attempt to treat judicial litigation regarding disasters as a particular type of transformation ritual. The legal disputes unleashed in response to disasters and environmental crises are played out in particularly fragile moments of social life. After a disaster, people face uncertainty and the risk of losing the tangible and intangible points of reference that give meaning to their social lives; as Benadusi notes in her paper (*infra*), survivors are particularly inclined to attribute a "moral" character to what they have experienced, classifying «the various representations of the event and people involved in terms of liability and negligence, nobility and baseness, guilt and innocence» (Benadusi *infra*). It should come as no surprise if, in similar circumstances, courtrooms come to represent spaces in which actors deploy devices for changing the social status, collective identity and moral responsibility of those who are variously involved in the events. These devices may even transform the frameworks of meaning normally used to explain the disaster in a given social context.

The disaster trials analyzed in this special issue display different kinds of transformation mechanisms. In the article by Andrea Ravenda, the trial for soil pollution targeting several managers from the Enel energy company in Brindisi involves a dual mechanism of transformation: on one hand, a move to define the juridical subjectivity of victims as «credible witnesses» and, on the other hand, a move to establish the «injured party» as a metonymical identification between farmers as a specific group and the citizenry as a whole. Indeed, the "We are all the injured party" campaign acts to extend this identity of the injured party to the entire population, transforming a trial that was exclusively limited to identifying the individuals responsible for polluting local crops into a kind of «performative public ritual» for «assessing the plant's impact on the environment and citizens' health, identifying damage and assigning responsibility» (Ravenda *infra*). By continually moving back and forth between developments inside and outside the courtroom, Ravenda shows how the farmers' stories, experiences and bodies are transformed into «evidence of the environmental disaster and biological damage» (*ibidem*) caused by the energy companies operating in the area. Drawing on Petryna's work on biological citizenship (2002), the article illustrates how the farmers' specific objectives of being compensated for the damage to their land are transformed into tools for «constructing a new of citizenship which […] might give rise to new models of local development in contrast to the industrial model» (*ibidem*).

In Mara Benadusi's article on the controversial court case held after the 2009 earthquake in L'Aquila, we see how a "degradation ritual" was launched between the first and second phases of the criminal proceedings designed to lower the status of the defendants, members of the Commission for Major Risks. By turning them from authoritative representatives of science into subjects of doubtful merit and proficiency vulnerable to being scrutinized and criticized like anyone else, the first trial raised the risk that Commission members would not only be judged before the law but also condemned in relation to public morality. In the end, however, the second instance verdict (later confirmed by the Supreme Court) acquitted all the scientists, an outcome that marked the failure of the transformation device operating in the first trial and re-affirmed the undisputed respectability of these scientists as top exponents of science. As the author shows, during the different phases of the proceedings the «fluidity of the boundaries between legal and moral resulted in a continuous slippage between discourse delivered in the courtroom and mediatically amplified in the public sphere» (Benadusi *infra*). In what remains one of the most significant disaster trials of the present day, this alternation between rituals of degradation and successive rehabilitation served to first affirm and then negate the «dual tie» (*ibidem*), both scientific and political, associated with the defendants' positions as expert consultants.

In his article, Antonello Ciccozzi examines the same trial but from a different perspective, in his dual role as expert consultant for the prosecution and survivor of the earthquake. In his paper we see how the de-legitimization of his advisory role both inside and outside the courtroom took the form of an act of «excommunication» (Ciccozzi *infra*) operating on multiple levels: on one hand this attack was directed at Ciccozzi as an individual, aimed at discrediting him and his experiences and even going so far as to involve tabloid-type tones. On the other hand it was intended to discredit anthropological expert testimony (which played a crucial role in the formulation of the first guilty verdict), transforming it into a form of knowledge lacking adequate scientific reliability. What this article reveals, then, is a problematic portrait of the paradigm for establishing truth flaunted by the "hard sciences" in the courtroom which, Ciccozzi argues, acts like an «epistemological ceremony» (*ibidem*) capable of triggering and transforming into spectacle «manifestations of authority based on a positivist-type heritage, in the shadow of an absolute objectivity myth» (*ibidem*). The disaster was like-

wise transformed when it was brought inside the courtroom, giving rise to a scientific-legal clash between experts for the defense and those for the prosecution around issues of predictability, risk, prevention, alarm and reassurance, a clash in which legal truth, scientific truth and cultural truth end up mutually excluding each other (see also Benadusi *infra*).

In her piece, Irene Falconieri interprets the formal dimension of the trial held after the flood that struck the province of Messina in 2009 as a «competitive communicative interaction» that is «expressed through a highly structured ritual» (Falconieri *infra*). In her analysis, the legal process is treated as a device that not only deploys a system of tests and demonstrations in order to describe reality, but also modifies reality. Thanks to her direct involvement as one of the plaintiffs, Falconieri is able to show how the prosecution transformed "the 1st of October flood" by breaking it down into a sequence of related but distinct individual events. This breakdown helped to deconstruct the very concept of "natural" disaster, turning it from an exceptional and uncontrollable incident into the result of negligent political and technical choices. Subsequently, the experts summoned by the defendants' lawyers engaged in the opposite process, restoring the "naturalness" of the event. Scientific truth thus ended up being subject to multiple interpretations, each one conveying a different and contrasting vision of the disaster.

Sandrine Revet's article also describes the mechanisms used to transform the catastrophe caused by the 2010 cyclone Xynthia into an object that could effectively be addressed in the courtroom. A «trajectory» (Revet *infra*) emerges in the legal proceedings which, fed by pressures from the various actors involved, victims and defendants as well as legal professionals, contributes to giving the event a specific form and bringing it into the field of law as the object of «judicial rituals» (*ibidem*). In order to pass from the status of natural phenomenon to that of human or social phenomenon, and therefore potentially caused by the criminal conduct of the defendants, the storm is transformed into a set of measurable data. This transformation operates on multiple levels: on the one hand – as we have noted – it acts on the event itself, on the other hand it acts on subjectivity. Some residents of the flooded village were transformed into plaintiffs, then "victims"; others were investigated, then turned into "the defendants". At the end of the proceedings, one of these individuals was finally designated "guilty" while the others returned to their normal status as ordinary residents. Revet explains how these changes are all the result of a process in which participants gain increasingly familiarity with the law, a process that they experience as a trajectory, a veritable "journey inside the law".

Final remarks

The arguments presented above highlight a crucial point shared by all the different articles in this special issue: the fact disaster trials have a highly performative character and therefore constitute a "liminoid" phenomenon with the potential to reformulate cultural codes and, in so doing, transform social realities. Disasters appear in the courtroom as the infringement of regulatory codes (Ravenda), a violation of the rules of science (Benadusi and Ciccozzi), morality (*ibidem*), the law and even nature (Revet and Falconieri). Whatever the case, on entering the world of law the disaster produces a second crisis, a fracture that is difficult to repair. Indeeed, the process of attributing blame and responsibility gives rise to overt conflict and causes latent antagonisms to surface. People take sides and form factions, and unless the conflict can be quickly confined in a limited arena of social interaction, this rupture tends to expand and spread out beyond the tribunal itself.

To observe the social life of a disaster inside the courtroom, we must also scrutinize how these transformative *dispositifs* embody the subjectivity of the many actors involved in legal proceedings, including anthropologists. Anthropologists doing research *on* or *inside* these intensely ritualistic action settings are not only required to acquire the specific communication styles, expertise and languages necessary to interact with the figures they encounter: they are also obliged to gain a certain expertise in areas such as law, risk communication, official and popular epidemiology, medicine, engineering, construction, geology, meteorology and forensic psychology. They must critically reflect, moreover, on how to frame their own disciplinary knowledge in order to make it more effective and comprehensible to all the actors who use it for their different reasons. The case of Antonello Ciccozzi's anthropological expertise during the L'Aquila trial clearly shows how crucial this process of translation and decoding can prove to be. In addition, anthropologists are driven to question which deeper meaning can be found in their involvement in the courtroom (often alongside the victims), and to evaluate the effects that their presence in the courtroom and in the legal battles accompanying disaster trials might have on the lives of others. We are all unavoidably called on to explain and critically observe our own positioning. In such circumstances, in fact,

ethnographers may play a dual or triple role in the unfolding of events. They can use their specific disciplinary skills to critically reread legal proceedings (Benadusi), position themselves as observers right in the thick of things, taking on a classical ethnographic posture inside the courtroom (Revet), or be personally involved as expert witnesses as part of hearings (Ciccozzi); they might come into contact with the law as victims of a disaster (Ciccozzi and Falconieri), or play a supporting role for the political groups and collectives that turn to the law for justice (Ravenda), sometimes engaging in advocacy (Falconieri).

In all of these cases, the anthropologist likewise undergoes a process of transformation: Antonello Ciccozzi's encounter with the law carried him from the status of survivor to that of expert consultant and then defender of his own anthropological expertise. Irene Falconieri deployed her own position as victim and plaintiff to carve out a path of auto-ethnography. Andrea Ravenda took advantage of his own personal and political involvement with social justice movements in a highly polluted area to observe what was going on inside and outside the courtroom. As anthropologists studying disasters regardless of our direct involvement "inside the crisis", however, we feel it is key that this kind of work remain closely tied to the basic principles of anthropological methods and theory. It is true that these principles must be reformulated if we are to meet the challenges posed by the clash of expert knowledge in courtrooms and battles for social justice and public health; the essays published in this special issue, however, show that serious professional ethics and the patient pursuit of critical reflexivity are among the most useful resources that we as anthropologists can draw on.

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