

# From Fieldwork to Mutual Learning: Working with PRATEC

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## ABSTRACT

This paper places the work of a Peruvian NGO (PRATEC), with which the author collaborates, within a broad context of the theory of knowledge. The three members of PRATEC were engaged in different aspects of the development enterprise. Out of their perceived failure of that enterprise, they deprofessionalised themselves and founded this NGO. The author argues that within the professional academic disciplines it is impossible to produce a knowledge that can contribute to the procreative concerns of communities, that is, their concerns about their continuity and well-being. She does a brief historical review of the emergence of the modern University in the nineteenth century and the hidden political agenda of the new so called value-free knowledge it institutionalised. She ends up advocating a rejection of the double participation necessitated by professional academic disciplines.

## KEY WORDS

Deprofessionalisation; development; biodiversity; green revolution; peasantry; decolonisation of the mind; hybrid; hybrid variety; interculturalism; dialogue; *andinismo*; theory of knowledge.

Cortes understands relatively well the Aztec world that appears before him – certainly better than Montezuma understands the Spanish realities. And yet this superior understanding does not keep the conquistadors from destroying Mexican civilisation and society; quite the contrary, we suspect that destruction becomes possible precisely because of this understanding.

(Todorov, 1984: 127)

Prestigious places for locking things up, museums [and universities] give value to things that are outside of life: in this way they resemble cemeteries.

(Hainard & Kaer, 1986: 33 quoted in Clifford 1988: 231.)

## I. WHO AND WHAT IS PRATEC?

I first encountered PRATEC (Proyecto Andino de Tecnologías Campesinas, Andean Project of Peasant Technologies) in February 1992 at a convention in Montreal that brought together from all over the world grass-root movements resisting development. What caught my attention sharply was a phrase in Spanish, uttered by Grimaldo Rengifo, the founder and director of PRATEC. That phrase '*criar y dejarse criar*' (to nurture and let oneself be nurtured) pulled me toward the speaker and made me want to hear more and find out about him and the organisation he represented. This eventually led to an invitation from PRATEC to visit Peru in March 1994. An invitation to collaborate with PRATEC emerged from that visit and I have lectured regularly in a course they teach as well as working with them in various other ways.<sup>1</sup>

PRATEC was founded in 1987 by Grimaldo Rengifo. He immediately invited Eduardo Grillo and they later (in 1989) invited Julio Valladolid to join them. These three men had spent a lifetime working for development. Grimaldo Rengifo was the director of a large Peruvian-Dutch development project, Eduardo Grillo was the director general of the National Bureau of Agricultural Statistics and Research and Julio Valladolid was teaching plant genetics in the agrarian faculty of the University of Huamanga in Ayacucho.<sup>2</sup> Through its extension program, as well as through its research, that faculty was deeply involved in bringing the green revolution to the Peruvian countryside.

These three men are part of the first generation of Peruvians from non-elite peasant background to have access to university training. In the late 50s/early 60s the universities, especially the agrarian faculties, opened their doors to a wider class-base. Until then the universities were elite preserves. The opening was a response to the government's perceived need of more trained technicians and engineers to man the development effort.

These three men are all of native peasant background and they devoted themselves to development in the belief that this was the way to help their people.

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In the course of their professional activities they eventually came to the conclusion that development itself was the problem. This realisation did not come swiftly; it emerged slowly after a lifetime of professional activity in the service of development. At first they thought that things were not working because the methodologies that they used were faulty. They worked hard to devise better methodologies. They lived through many phases and fashions in development: community development; participatory development; appropriate technology; sustainable development; women and development. They tried everything available, always striving to capture the reality of Andean peasant agriculture and of peasant life in general. At long last they came to the conclusion that no methodology would ever deliver and that the problem lay in the very idea of development. It is at this juncture that they left their professional activities and their secure jobs and founded PRATEC, a non-governmental organisation. In other words, they deprofessionalised themselves.

They had come to the realisation that development had failed. The evidence lay scattered throughout the Peruvian landscape in what some of their colleagues have called 'the archaeology of development', namely ruined infrastructures, abandoned to the elements after the project officials had left, uncared for by the peasants for whom they were intended and left to deteriorate. The evidence also lay in their experience of repeated efforts to devise better methodologies and the final realisation that within their professional perspective and constraints it was impossible to approximate peasant reality and therefore make development relevant to their lives.

It is important to note that at some point in their professional experience, they felt that perhaps a better knowledge of peasant reality would be available outside of their immediate disciplines. They devoted themselves then to reading all they could in sociology, anthropology, history and whatever other fields examined peasant life. They emerged from that experience feeling that peasant reality was being captured from a position outside of that reality.

The realisation was not simply that development had failed, but that development consisted of a package of practices, ideas, epistemologies and ontologies that came from the modern West and were profoundly alien to the native peasantry. They had become convinced that native agriculture and culture was not only adequate to that environment but was alive and vibrant, despite the efforts of development, education and before that of a long history of extirpation of the native culture. For them, Andean culture embodies a totally different mode of being in the world, of being a person, of relating to others, both humans and non-humans, as well as different notions of time, of space and of nature. They awoke to the pregnant awareness that it is only from the perspective of development, which makes one wear modern Western lenses, that peasant agriculture and culture looked backward, stagnant and altogether lacking.

They awoke to the reality of peasant life, to the incredible richness and diversity of cultivars that are grown in this ecologically extremely variable

environment. The Andes are one of the eight world centres where agriculture first emerged, according to the famous Soviet geneticist Vavilov (Visvanathan 1996). Agriculture has almost a 10,000 year pedigree there and the peasants continue to grow an astounding variety of plants: many varieties of grains such as quinoa and amaranth, many varieties of tubers, the potato being very important with some 3,500 varieties collected mostly in the Andes (Valladolid 1998: 67) as well as about the same number of variety of maize (Ibid.). A good farmer will typically harvest more than 50 varieties of potatoes from his fields. In spite of the inroad of green revolution hybrids and packages, the peasants continue to grow their native cultivars for their own and their friends' and relatives' subsistence. The hybrids are grown for the urban market.

The members of PRATEC began to dedicate their lives to articulating these discoveries so that their personal experiences could benefit others like themselves, that is technicians and practitioners of development whose origins lay in the native peasantry. This effort at articulating agricultural/cultural peasant practices as well as the epistemologies and ontologies embedded in development practice and more generally in modern Western knowledge was undertaken not as a professional activity. It was engaged in as their contribution to what they were witnessing among the peasantry.

Since the 1950s (actually much earlier, but the movement picked up momentum at that time) the peasantry has been engaged in what Peruvian anthropologist Enrique Mayer has called a 'silent movement' (personal communication, 14 Dec. 95). They have taken over the lands of the large landed properties, the *haciendas* in direct action without forming political parties or syndicates.<sup>3</sup> With the agrarian reform of 1969 which simply made official what had been going on for a long time, namely the economic debacle of the hacienda system as well as the take over or buy over of these lands by Andean peasants, that peasant re-appropriation of lands accelerated. The government tried to replace the hacienda system by government co-operative schemes. It only took 25 years to reveal the total debacle of that state scheme. Andean peasants are re-appropriating these lands as well and organising themselves in their own way, namely by forming *ayllus*. The *ayllu* is a local group of related persons, and other non-human beings of the locality, the *pacha*. There, in their reconstituted *ayllus* they cultivate the land in their own manner, evidence of the vibrancy of native practices and culture.

The members of PRATEC saw this reaffirmation of Andean agriculture and culture happening throughout the country and they wanted to be a part of that action. For them it was totally out of the question to imagine themselves as some sort of leadership or vanguard of that historical movement. Such a posture in their eyes totally betrays the communitarian and egalitarian ethos of Andean peasants as well as embodies an uncharacteristic hubris. Furthermore they attributed the success of peasants in re-appropriating lands precisely in the manner in which they did it, through direct action, without creating formal parties or organisa-

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tions. Not being farmers themselves, they saw their own way of participating in that cultural resurgence and affirmation in efforts to pass on to others like themselves what they had learned and continued learning and hopefully thereby stem the drain of young bright Andeans towards development and modernisation. This would simultaneously weaken development efforts and strengthen Andean life. They chose to do this through direct action by creating a course in Andean agriculture and culture for professionals of development. They deliberately eschew participation in formal politics seeing that road as involving them in the official world of Peru, a world committed to development and modernisation.

The members first dedicated themselves to writing about Andean agriculture and culture contrasting it to development and modern western knowledge, since – in their view – existing literature failed to convey Andean reality from within that reality. Their purpose was also to help other professionals of rural development with origins in the Andean peasantry to realise the distorting, if not blinding, effects of seeing the Andean world through the lenses of the categories of professional knowledge. They attempt to show others that world from within itself, enabling others to enter it and become part of the collective action of making that world. PRATEC's publications attempt to show how both the categories of knowledge and the very notion of knowledge used in the academic professions carry within them the reproduction of industrial capitalism's institutions and status quo.

The members of PRATEC speak of industrial capitalism as 'the modern West' since this is how they experience it. They learned the knowledge at the university and for a long time bought its message of universality and objectivity. But they experienced it nonetheless as a foreign import. It initiated them to a world different from the one they came from. They are aware of the internal heterogeneity of 'the modern West', as they are of the internal heterogeneity of 'the Andean world'. The contrast they speak of is one that they and many like them have experienced as university-trained persons of Andean origins. But it is only through their action of deprofessionalising themselves and of acting/writing from within the Andean collectivities that they could come to know with clarity the impossibility of participating in the Andean collective actions from within the professions. This realisation brought with it an understanding of the nature of the knowledge they were taught in school and at university which, simultaneously, allowed them to see the Andean world with clarity.

They speak of this double realisation as the need to decolonise their minds in order to clearly see and participate in the Andean world. They share this double realisation with others like them in the context of a course they started teaching in 1990. The participants of the course are professionals of development working in the universities, the government, and NGOs, who are of Andean peasant origin. PRATEC has succeeded, miraculously it seems to me, in having the course accredited for the first four years at the National University of Huamanga

in Ayacucho and for the last six years at the National University of Cajamarca. This seems miraculous to me because none of the three men is a member of these two universities, although Valladolid was a member of the University of Huamanga before he resigned to join PRATEC. The participants in the course are not students at these universities, in fact many of them are professors at these universities; they all hold full time jobs. Although the course has many of the trappings of a university course – readings, lectures, exams, a concession necessary to being accredited – it differs fundamentally from normal university courses by not leading the participants into any profession. The participants will not further their careers by taking this course. The participants come to the course out of some experiential crisis with their work in development. Something is not right and they come to the PRATEC course in the hope of figuring out why.

PRATEC's desire to be linked to the university stems from its sense that the times are ripe for an opening in the universities toward a different sort of knowledge. The agrarian faculties were training experts to function in the context of haciendas and state co-operatives. Those have almost totally disappeared and now they have no choice but to relate to the peasants. The usual forms of extension work are not working and PRATEC senses that this is the time that an opening toward a different way of understanding and teaching Andean agriculture might be taking place. Things may change quickly.

By deprofessionalising themselves, the members of PRATEC freed themselves from the constraints of academic disciplines, focusing instead on the challenging task of writing on peasant agriculture and culture from an Andean point of view. For this they drew not only on their personal experience of growing up in that life but on their lifetime experience of conversations with peasants throughout the Peruvian Andes. Rengifo has had an extensive experience in the field during his years as director of a rural development project. Grillo, in his official task of gathering agricultural statistics from the whole country, used to travel 20 days out of each month. Due to his own strong identification with peasants, he would always stray beyond official duties and roam widely, striking up conversations with peasants. Valladolid's own awakening took place when he spent three years in a peasant community studying peasant agriculture in the early 80s. He discovered that the peasants had an incredible variety of cultivars and an extensive knowledge to sustain and produce such diversity. It was a revelation, for this was never taught in the agrarian faculties where the curriculum was modelled on temperate zone agriculture, European cultivars and hybrids—a training meant for running the haciendas, the plantations, and the state co-operatives.

In public lectures as well as in conversations, Grillo has pointed out how very slowly the three of them arrived at the point where they felt that development, and the knowledge underwriting it, failed in articulating with peasant life. It took them nearly a lifetime of professional activities to get to that turning point. As Grillo points out, there were no guides, no signposts, no path cleared by

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predecessors. Having worked as well as lived in India on and off for the last 25 years, I find this remarkable. In India there is a long tradition debating Western science, modernisation and western knowledge in general – one has only to evoke the name of M.K. Gandhi to realise this.<sup>4</sup> Such a tradition is simply absent in Peru. This may well be accounted for by the fact that the educated elite in that country until very recently has been Hispanic. Political decolonisation in Peru, as in the United States, did not hand over the reins of government to the native population but to the native born Hispanic population. Furthermore, MacAulay's decision in the first half of the nineteenth century to educate a native elite in India so as to produce 'brown gentlemen', who could administer a colony too vast for England's meagre demographic resources, created the conditions for a critical debate on Western science and knowledge there.

The Peruvian situation has been quite different and can best be captured by citing a well-known member of Peru's Hispanic elite, Vargas Llosa:

There is a culture over there which has been preserved, which may be archaic, but which has permitted those compatriots of ours – primitive and elemental – to survive under conditions of extreme harshness. (1990: 154)

...the very notion of progress must be difficult to conceive by the communities whose members never remember having experienced any improvement in the conditions of their lives, but rather, prolonged stasis with periods of regression. (1983: 36)

The price they [the 'Indians'] must pay for integration is high – renunciation of their culture, their language, their beliefs, their traditions and customs and the adoption of the culture of their ancient masters. (1990: 52 cited in Mayer 1992: 193–4)

For Vargas Llosa and many others of his class, there are two Perus: one official, modernised and civilised; the other Indian, backward and primitive, albeit resilient. The need for the other Peru, sometimes referred to as 'deep Peru' (Peru *profundo*), to modernise and 'enter the 21st century' is not questioned by most members of 'official Peru'. The colonising dynamic is internal in the country and it has taken many aspects.

One tendency that emerged in the 1930s is the movement called *indigenismo*, which many anthropologists joined, thereby giving it academic legitimacy. These professionals 'argued against 'preserving' native cultures. They worked hard at achieving new ways of integrating the Indians into national society and at revitalising Andean cultural patterns to make them compatible with a modern nation state' (Mayer 1992: 190–191).<sup>5</sup> This was considered a progressive liberal movement. This movement is one reason why the members of PRATEC have rejected the term 'indigenous' in their writings.

The extreme left, including Shining Path, has an attitude not very different from that of Vargas Llosa and the liberals on the issue of Andean culture.

Progress must be made and backward and feudal conditions must be overcome; the Andean peasantry must adopt western socialist ways of life and knowledge in order to achieve progress towards a higher, more egalitarian and better future. In the name of progress, for both liberals and radicals, the 'Indians' in the 'other' Peru are condemned to disappear.

PRATEC rejects these paths, arguing for a path that it names 'cultural affirmation'. They see themselves as simply supporting what the peasants are doing, their silent retaking of the lands and re-establishing there their own mode of cultivating the land and of organising themselves. Since the term 'culture' has come under severe criticism lately in anthropology for its essentialising and colonising tendencies and generally been replaced by the term 'hybrid' (Clifford, 1988; Escobar, 1993; Garcia Canclini, 1990; Hall, 1990; Said, 1993; Trinh, 1994 and others), a discussion of terms would be in order.

## II. CULTURE AND HYBRID

The criticism of the term 'culture' is a response to the essentialist manner in which culture has been depicted in most ethnographies, namely as coherent, whole, ahistorical, seamless and with no internal conflict or contradiction. Clifford's (1988: 221) matrix for the production and transformation of authority in both ethnographic museum collecting and in ethnographic culture collecting reveals such strategies as fulfilling needs in the anthropologist's society while simultaneously robbing the anthropologised of agency. Clifford's use of Levi-Strauss' Indian in the New York public library wearing a feathered head-dress and writing with a Parker pen illustrates the issue. To Levi-Strauss this Indian is an occasion for nostalgia about vanishing cultures. Such a perception reveals Levi-Strauss' 'incarceration' – to use Appadurai's (1988) word – of this Indian in a timeless, 'authentic' native culture. The anthropologist declares what is authentic, claiming his professional expertise, and simultaneously robs the Indian of agency. Clifford's re-reading of the same vignette is to see it as part of the recent movement among the Native Americans to reassert their identity on their own terms (Clifford 1988: 231).

PRATEC's rejection of anthropology derives precisely from the latter's authoritative voice, declaring what is authentically Andean on the basis of visible traits, very much in the manner of Levi-Strauss' Indian in New York's public library. As Fabian (1983) so eloquently put it, the Other has been imprisoned in the past by anthropology's use of tradition as opposed to modernity and we must find terms and ways of writing that affirm the coequality of anthropologist and anthropologised.

Another strand in this critique of culture is that it allows for the fixing of boundaries between Self and Other (Abu-Lughod 1993: 7). The generalisation inevitably implied by the use of the term culture works to make the Other seem



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more different, more self-contained, than the anthropologist. The anthropologist appears to stand apart from and outside of what he or she is describing. And that 'apartness' has always meant a privileging of the anthropologist's world. Anthropologists have responded to these critiques by experimenting with modes of representations, abandoning the analytical authoritative prose for more fictionalised genres (Narayan, 1989; McCarthy Brown, 1990; Abu-Lughod, 1993; Aggarwal, 1997). It is a welcome improvement over the weighty pronouncements of an earlier anthropology and certainly makes livelier reading. However, as Lila Abu-Lughod herself honestly recognises, the informal conversations of Awlad Ali Bedouin women she recreates are not the sorts of words these women (or their men) consider important and worth preserving. Her choice responds to the agenda set by perceptions of Arab women in general and Bedouins in particular in the US, and not to an agenda set by the Awlad Ali women themselves (Abu-Lughod, 1993: 36).

Clearly there is a place and a need for such studies but we need to be clearer about our agendas as anthropologists. There is also a need to reflect on the possible effect of pursuing our agendas on the communities we study. All representations are also political acts and it is necessary at this historical juncture to take responsibility for such actions.

To replace the term 'culture' by the term 'hybrid' is an effort to address some of the excesses perpetrated by the anthropologists who authoritatively have made pronouncements on what *the* culture of the particular group in question was all about. The term hybrid emphasises the emergent, historical nature of what people do and in that sense obviates the all too often atemporal tradition in which anthropologists trapped their subjects. It has rightly been pointed out that such textual strategies reinforce the regnant geo-political asymmetries of power.

We must, however, not forget that the shift from culture to hybrid is essentially motivated by critiques internal to anthropology and other social sciences and we must be wary of making this term another orthodoxy. PRATEC and the intellectuals involved in the Pan-Mayanist movement in Guatemala (Watanabe, 1995; Fischer, 1995; Warren, 1995) reject the term hybrid and use the term culture. We cannot read their work as we read that of anthropologists; they write about their own ways of life and are involved in cultural politics in their own respective countries. To censure their use of culture is to perpetuate a certain modern Western supervisory gaze that 'keeps alive the pastoral powers of European culture, transferring this role now onto secular social theorists' (Lattas, 1993: 259).

It seems to me that the anthropologists' predicament is similar to that faced by the members of PRATEC while they were professionals engaged in development. No matter how much one tries to develop more sensitive, more appropriate methodologies or modes of representation, the anthropologist's agenda and that of the anthropologised are not usually the same or even similar. However self-reflective, however sensitive, anthropologists' representations become, how-

ever much anthropologists try to give voice and agency to their subjects, the fact that anthropologists (and other social scientists) are located in the university means that their agenda and the agenda of the people they study cannot be the same.

The term hybrid is especially popular among those who study the new global movements which have brought members of previously localised cultures to all corners of the world. The term captures the new emergent combinations that result from those movements. The term is not dissimilar to an older term much in use in Peru to refer to native religious practices after the invasion: syncretism. It refers to such things as the presence of Christ, the Virgin Mary and many saints among the Andean native pantheon as well as to the presence of such practices as going to mass. The difficulty with both terms is that it makes visible the disparate origins of various traits and practices but makes invisible the manner in which those traits and practices are used. This is a difficulty that the term hybrid when referring to genetically altered cultivars also displays.

'Hybrid variety' refers to a new variety formed from the interbreeding of two or more distinct varieties, many of which were originally nurtured by peasants. What is happening on a global scale is that the agricultural experimental stations and the biotechnology laboratories are monopolising the credit for creating new 'improved' varieties. In order to use the geneplasm for genetic manipulation, geneplasm banks have been created by several nations and an international gene bank has been created and is housed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). It has gathered geneplasm from all over the 'Third World', much of it from cultivated plants. In this way the creativity of generations of peasants who, through open pollination, have improved seed varieties and created new ones, becomes invisible, all such geneplasm being referred to simply as 'traditional' or 'indigenous'. The International Bank for Phytogenetic Resources (IBPGR), which financially supports the collection of geneplasm in the world, reports that during its first decade (1974–1985) it collected 91% of its geneplasm from material originating in southern countries, while the US donated only 0.09%. Theoretically the IBPGR should keep one sample and send other samples to gene banks in other countries; in reality southern gene banks received 15% of such material while industrialised countries received 42% and the US 23% (Valladolid 1993: 77) This is what Julio Valladolid says about the issue:

We should not forget that the seeds from native varieties collected by scientists from International Centers in the peasants' fields and/or the peasants markets, are the final product of a sustained effort of improvement achieved by the peasants who have conserved, adapted and improved their seeds since the beginning of agriculture some 10,000 years ago. (1993: 78)

Just as the knowledge, work and inventiveness of the peasants are rendered invisible in the hybrid seed, what is rendered invisible in the use of the term 'hybrid' when talking about emerging cultural phenomena is the manner in

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which traits originating in the West are incorporated. This may not be an issue relevant to cultural studies but is extremely important to the Catholic Church in the Andes. Sociologist and Catholic missionary J. van Kessel (in a lecture delivered at the PRATEC course 8 Oct. 95) reports that the verdict of the Catholic Church is that evangelisation in the Andes has failed. The natives basically continue with their own practices and views. A tendency within the church, to which he himself belongs, advocates the creation of an 'Andean Catholicism' and mounts on that basis a new evangelisation campaign. It is clear from such a position that the church does not object to the hybrid nature of religious practice, since Andean Catholicism would clearly incorporate Andean elements. What it objects to in the current practices of Andean peasants is that they betray the central dogmas of the church. The church is sensitive to the manner in which traits are used and incorporated into the peasants' world-view and practices.

The members of PRATEC similarly view the manner in which traits originating either in Catholicism or in the modern West are incorporated as being a very important issue. Whether the trait or practice is incorporated in a context totally different from that of its origin or whether it is indicative of a fundamental transformation of the host milieu is an important discrimination blurred by the term hybrid. Whether what emerges is a new cultural phenomenon or something like modernisation is not captured by the term hybrid either. Eduardo Grillo uses a deliberately embodied language to speak of the incorporation of foreign traits by Andean peasants, saying that they 'digest' alien elements, incorporating what they can use and excreting what they do not need or want (Grillo, 1998). Including the Christian God and saints among the peasants' *huacas* (deities), raising bovine cattle instead of llamas, driving cars or listening to portable radios, going to school and learning to read and write in Spanish, and many other things, cannot necessarily be read as signs of these Andean peasants' 'modernisation' or 'hybridisation'. PRATEC argues that these are the result of conversations and mutual engagement and not the signs of a fundamental transformation. This is how Rengifo puts it:

This is not to say that we are speaking of a closed or autarchic people; the Andean way of being is that of dialogue with all cultures, and if that entails learning to read and write in a language foreign to one's own, that will be done. For a people who nurture, nothing is foreign – including school.

As with the Christian saints, Western knowledge has not been syncretised with the Andean... The saints have been incorporated as deities with whom *ayni* [reciprocity] is performed, with whom one dialogues... (Rengifo, 1998: 190)

This conversationalist or dialogical stance characterises PRATEC's view of change in the Andes. A dialogical stance vis-à-vis other cultures is inherently a pluralist stance, one that entertains the possibility that industrial or post-industrial capitalism and the global market may not be inevitable futures for everyone. A dialogical stance is not an oppositional or essentialist stance either,

rejecting whatever comes from a foreign source. Whatever has come is now part of the landscape and one simply converses with it, digesting whatever is useful and excreting the indigestible.

The language of dialogue or conversation does not erase the separate reality in which Andeans live. In contrast, the language of hybrids does not help in making visible the different notions of time, space, nature, persons, knowledge and many other differences which PRATEC is intent on making visible. One could perhaps summarise PRATEC's position in terms of understanding cultural boundaries as porous. This is a view also expressed by Ashis Nandy in the context of India, where the two processes of cultural inflow and outflow that are always at work constitute the cultural landscape at any one point in time (Nandy 1987: 153).

The charge of essentialism grows out of the habit of seeing boundaries as non-porous. This is a habit formed in the context of Western imperialism and conquest in which the conquered was seen as wholly 'other' (Todorov, 1984). PRATEC speaks of *interculturalism*, namely a conversationalist, mutual two-way flow between different collectivities. Such a flow would not result in what Rengifo calls a 'global hybrid soup', in which all difference disappears, but in the flowering of diversity – diversity nurtured and strengthened by intercultural cross-pollination.

### III. THE IMPLICATIONS OF DEPROFESSIONALISATION

It is not difficult to see why the members of PRATEC who identify themselves as Andean would reject assimilationist and evolutionist views. It is more interesting to ponder why they ultimately also felt the inadequacy of a more recent position, that of the *andinistas*. They had turned to the work of these social scientists in the hope of finding there a satisfactory approximation to Andean peasant reality. Although they learned from those readings, they saw that the andinista perspective ultimately is also an outsider's view of their culture, one capturing it in alien categories.

The label 'andinista' refers to the work of social scientists, mostly anthropologists, who set out to counter the ethnocentrism and eurocentrism dominant in official Peru. This is how a Peruvian anthropologist, member of that tendency, characterises it:

Given the anti-Andean prejudices of the two Peru argument (of which Vargas Llosa's version is but one in a long sequence in the intellectual tradition of Peru's elite), to search for, to demonstrate with ethnographic facts, and to portray a 'living' culture rather than dead 'survivals' seemed to those of my generation of fieldworkers to be a worthwhile task. Symbolism in fiestas carried out in the village of Chuschi was analysed by Billie Jean Isbell... Perhaps Andean an-

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thropologists [here he means anthropologists of the andinista tendency] erred a bit in overstating the case, in drawing the lines all too sharply, and in not being 'actor oriented' or self-reflexive enough. But the enterprise was worth it as a counterweight to the prevailing Peruvian national ideology. (1992: 195) <sup>4</sup>

I do not think that a more actor oriented or self-reflexive anthropology, what has come to be known as post-modern anthropology, would have been any more helpful for the members of PRATEC in their search for an adequate rendering of Andean peasant reality from within that reality. The issue, as PRATEC members came to realise, is not one of better methods or greater self reflexivity; it is more fundamental.

I think that the remarks of US anthropologist John Watanabe point us in the right direction. It is interesting that these remarks were written in the context of an essay on the pan-Mayanist movement in Guatemala, a movement reminiscent of what PRATEC is trying to do:

Unfortunately, this post-modern poetics fares no better than artless positivism in resolving the inherent political asymmetries in ethnography's problematic – indeed, inescapable – appropriation of its subjects' lives for purposes beyond the living of those lives ...

whatever its textual form, ethnography always diverges from the 'native's point of view', if only because anthropologists ponder worlds that other people live ...

In the end, whether post-modern or otherwise, anthropologists write authoritatively about cultural otherness... such writing still carries the authority of presumed expertise... Any attempt to deny this inescapable authoritativeness amounts to an ethically suspect evasion of accountability. (1995: 28)

I think that by probing what the 'purposes beyond the living of those lives' are for the anthropologists and other professionals who write about others' reality we will begin to gain an understanding of why Rengifo, Grillo and Valladolid felt impelled to deprofessionalise themselves in order to do what they do.

Primarily, the purposes for which anthropologists and other professional researchers do their work is to 'contribute to the knowledge of their professions', to use a trite but nevertheless serviceable formulation. Another way of putting this is to say that professional researchers live their work lives within the parameters and the paradigms framing their professions. Changing the parameters and the paradigms can sometimes happen but it is done more by pushing at the margins than by more radical reformulations (Kuhn 1962). The reason for that lies in the social organisation of the professions and of academic disciplines. To receive a PhD, then to secure a job and then keep the job and acquire legitimacy – to say nothing of prestige within the profession – one must attend to its theories, its concepts, methodologies and so on. Such attending, further-

more, must take place in strict separation from the attending to one's 'private' life. Passion and values belong to the latter whereas sobriety and attention to facts belong to the former. Thus the facts must be presented with affective detachment under penalty of being labelled 'romantic', or 'biased', labels damaging to one's professional reputation. Furthermore, as everyone knows, it is the ability to weave these facts into theory that gains one professional recognition.

As the eminent Indian anthropologist Triloki Madan commented to me, this betrays an immense gulf between the anthropologist and the anthropologised, for what are the one's 'facts' are the latter's life. Furthermore, in most anthropological field situations, this life is not separated between a public domain of work and a private, domestic domain (see Wagner 1981, Ch.1). This division, as the great scholar of the making of the English working class, E.P. Thompson, has remarked, was the product of industrialisation and the emergence of labour as a commodity. This is captured in his pithy formulation, that industrial capitalism brought about the separation of 'work and life' (Thompson 1967). Life in non-industrialised and non-commoditised collectivities is not divided into a realm where passions have no legitimate place and one where they do; the whole is suffused with passion and meaning.

It is not only in the separation between work and passion, or passion and cognition that industrial capitalism has shaped the social organisation of knowledge and with it the very nature of knowledge. With the fragmentation of the task at the point of production, the knowledge of making an object or completing a task was taken out of the worker's hands and put in the head of the specialised experts. The making of an object was broken down into many separate activities performed by different sets of workers; the famous model of this form of production is exemplified by Adam Smith in his description of the making of a pin. The justification for such fragmentation of the task is efficiency (see Marglin 1974; Apffel-Marglin 1996).

The separation between knowledge and life as well as the division of labour in fields of knowledge antedate the rise of the factory and the industrial mode of production. Until the end of the eighteenth century, though, the division between 'pure' and 'applied' science had not yet crystallised (Jacob, 1997). The modern view of knowledge that strictly separated science from its application emerged at the same time as the factory system was beginning, toward the end of the eighteenth century. With the advent of the factory this relatively new form of knowledge deployed itself widely throughout society. The theoretician of the new modern university, the autonomy of which is protected by academic freedom, was Immanuel Kant. In his work *The Conflict of the Faculties*, first published in 1798, Kant advocates the separation of those faculties that should legitimately be under the control of the state – theology, law, and medicine – and the faculty that should be autonomous and enjoy the privilege of academic freedom: that is philosophy and the sciences, what is now called the liberal arts. This is recognised as laying the foundation for the modern university which first

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took shape in Germany in the nineteenth century. It is this model of the university which was emulated in the United States at the turn of the century and the early twentieth century (Connolly 1995) and that now has spread globally.

At the very beginning of his famous work Kant invokes – rather offhandedly – the factory as the model for the university and the organisation of knowledge (*fabrikenmaessig*) with its ‘division of labour, so that for every branch of the sciences there would be a public teacher or *professor* appointed as its trustee, and all of these together would form a kind of learned community called a *university*...’ (Kant 1979: 23). The notion of academic freedom was inextricably related to that of value neutrality for Kant and in the subsequent development of the German university. Kant argued for the autonomy of the philosophy/sciences faculty because he saw its role as that of watchdog, critic and guardian of the truth, hence the title of the book (Kant 1979: 45).

In order to fulfil the role of critic of the state-controlled higher faculties and thereby control them, the philosophy faculty must be impartial, non-partisan and devoted only to the pursuit of truth – wherever it may lead. This was the argument used to convince the state to relinquish its control over what now we call the liberal arts faculty. Kant’s work also contains the germ of the idea of knowledge for knowledge’s sake, embedded in the notion of the unhindered pursuit of truth separated from state and other controls. The notion of knowledge for knowledge’s sake – or science for science’s sake, that is the pursuit of ‘pure’ science with no practical telos – did not established itself fully until the mid-nineteenth century along with the development of science (and other fields) as a professional, salaried occupation (Proctor 1991: 68). By then, the autonomy that Kant had advocated was extended to other fields of knowledge, in particular the autonomy of the natural and later the social sciences from moral or religious questions. ‘Kantian dualism also served to insulate science from political critique’ (Proctor 1991: 80). Kant’s separation of theoretical and practical reason, and his vision of the new university modelled upon the factory, provided the intellectual legitimacy for the insulation of science from politics, morality, religion and passion.

My aim here is not to critique value neutrality, a task already accomplished not only by Proctor but by many of the deconstructionists (John Connolly [1995] has a good discussion of Derrida’s critique of Kant’s *The Conflict of the Faculties*) as well as feminist critiques of science. My intent, rather, is to show the function performed by this form of knowledge in the rise and continued dominance of industrial capitalism and state power.

In his exhaustive study of the emergence of the notion of value neutrality in the context of the history of the modern German university, Robert Proctor (1991) traces how these seminal ideas of Kant eventually became institutionalised by the neo-Kantians in Germany during the nineteenth century. In the latter part of his book he focuses particularly on the rise of the notion of value neutrality in the social sciences in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Expert knowledge was freed not only from the criticism and constraints arising from morality and religion but also from the constraints that embedding work in the life of communities brings with it. The ideology of knowledge for knowledge's sake divorces it from the constraints and meanings arising from community life and its purpose of regenerating itself, that is of continuing to live. The well-being and continuity of particular communities ceases to be tied to the production of goods or of knowledge. Goods and knowledge become ends in themselves. The well-being of communities where factories or universities are located is irrelevant to these institutions. Neither the relocation of factories which destroys local communities nor the presence of prosperous universities – such as Yale and Columbia – in the midst of extreme urban poverty are any longer viewed as scandalous by most people.

The professionalisation of knowledge made knowledge a commodity as well as an individual pursuit. What is bought on the market – the academic market as well as the industrial, military and government markets – is an individual's ability to produce knowledge, and in order for this to be bought and sold on the market it must be held indivisibly by an individual, just like the labour of a person must be owned individually for it to become a commodity (Apffel Marglin 1996).

The philosopher Kathryn Pyne Addelson points out a deeper form of individualisation in professional knowledge. In the context of discussing a different way of acquiring knowledge, using the example of the direct action engaged in by the anarcho-syndicalists in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, she argues for a different manner of making knowledge: one that emerges from collective action (Addelson 1994: 26). In the collective action way of making knowledge, emotional bonding with particular others is what generates new insights and knowledge. Knowledge here is not separated from emotion. Furthermore, these others need not be only humans but any aspect of the environment that becomes part of the collective action. In Addelson's theory of knowledge, where the unit is the act, meaning and reference are released from a narrow connection with thought and language (Ibid: 146). This is a feature that is close to the world that PRATEC writes of.

The theoretical egalitarianism of 'objective' knowledge – its vaunted epistemological egalitarianism – is precisely what makes this form of knowledge a universal one and frees it from particularity and localism. But this feature hides the particular way this knowledge is embedded in the institutions of modern western industrial capitalism. Addelson's alternative view of knowledge, one based on *collective action* – which in turn means that knowledge emerges out of particular encounters and relationships in particular localities – goes a long way towards a shift from an evolutionary paradigm of knowledge to a diversity paradigm.

The autonomy of the university along with the ideal of value neutrality reassures everyone – the workers in particular – that this knowledge is the best



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available and designed neither to enslave them nor to empower the bosses. It is presented as knowledge that serves neither Mammon nor God; it serves only unsituated, transcendent and value-neutral rationality. This is how knowledge for knowledge's sake is legitimised and knowledge is disembedded from the regenerative (procreative) collective actions of local communities.

Such an individualist, passionless, factual, expert professional knowledge reproduces the existing social, political and economic orders. Adelson discusses the double participation of researchers in the laboratory or the field on the one hand and in the activities of their professions on the other. This is particularly relevant to the case of the professional anthropologist who is a 'participant/observer' in the field and a participant in the profession. Like Watanabe (1995, cited above) she underlines the difference between participation in the field and in the profession. Unlike Watanabe, she devotes a good part of her book to probing what the purposes of professionals are in appropriating their subjects' lives.

As I pointed out above, the explicit purposes are clear enough: the advancement of knowledge. Such purposes, however, take for granted the nature and legitimacy of that knowledge and of its social organisation. In the process it veils the manner in which professional expert knowledge is embedded in institutions which are instruments of governance:

The unquestioned right to know in terms of one's disciplinary concepts and methods is at the foundation of the cognitive authority of scientists and other professionals. It places them in the *local* sites of laboratory and field, not as participants but as 'judging observers' who are themselves to be unjudged. The outcomes of their work extend beyond the boundaries of their disciplines, professions, and institutions. This is because the institutions in which professionals make and transmit knowledge are instruments of governance. In the broadest sense, the double participation of scientists and other researchers is a participation in the local activity as hidden agents of governance. Except in special circumstances, whether any particular professional wills it or not, the participation is in support of the existing social, political, and economic orders – loyalty to these things is embedded in the institutional folk concepts of profession and university. (Adelson 1994: 161)

Rengifo's, Grillo's and Valladolid's deprofessionalisation meant not only that they abandoned the right to know the Andean world in terms of their disciplinary concepts and methods, and thus abandoned cognitive authority, it meant a total change in their lives. They joined the collective action of the Andean peasants engaged in retaking possession of lands and re-establishing their own forms of organisation and practices. They repossessed their Andean selves and ways of being by ceasing to practice the double participation that professional knowledge-making had required of them. They speak of the Andean world not as judging outsiders but as ones bonded to that world. They

write books and articles like professional knowledge makers do, not with the intent to add to the fund of knowledge of their professions, but as their chosen field of action. They do not publish through the usual professional channels; PRATEC publishes its own writings. They write of the Andean world not primarily as a world to *know* or study but as a world to live in, to participate in, to be a part of and to collectively make.

In order to clarify many of the issues discussed so far – the issue of the professional as a judging outsider, the professional's right to know using the concepts and tools of the profession and in general the role of the professional as a hidden agent of governance – I will take the example of the assessment of PRATEC's work made by a Peruvian anthropologist quoted above, namely Enrique Mayer. Mayer starts out by stating how important he considers the PRATEC proposal to be:

I invite consideration of the proposal of PRATEC to strengthen the *chacra* [the peasant's field] as a point of departure exceedingly interesting in the context of contemporary Peru. (1995: 513, my translation)

He then goes on to contextualise PRATEC historically and points out how a 'return to the grassroots' is eminently understandable given the failure of the government's agrarian reform of 1969, which aimed to liberate the productive forces of the country and modernise it. This failed reform has left Peru, some thirty years after its introduction, gripped by economic, political and social crises. Furthermore, the unforeseen and unwanted result of the reform has been the *campesinización* (the 'peasantisation') of almost all of rural Peru. He then proceeds to criticise PRATEC for not being scientific: 'My verdict is that, lamentably, until now there is very little in what is published by them which has any scientific value' (Ibid: 514).

Mayer goes on to detail how PRATEC's work fails to test the factual truth of what their 'informants' tells them, of not using quantitative measures, and of confusing peasants' articulation of their world-view with 'our real knowledge of ecologic processes':

The mere assertion of a postulated harmony does not demonstrate the existence of healthy or balanced ecological processes. There is a confusion in asserting without explanation or analysis informants' statements as if they were factual material results...They do not mention possible mechanisms that might be relevant in the explanation, nor are direct observations made in the field, nor quantitative measures with which one might begin to create some evaluative criteria...

To demonstrate that Andean culture (or Andean cosmovision) also supports balance adds nothing to our real knowledge about ecological processes. (Ibid: 514–515)

Mayer finds fault with PRATEC's work because it fails to use the conceptual

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and methodological tools of his profession. Most telling is his use of the anthropological term 'informant', which captures precisely the relationship between anthropologist and anthropologised. This is a term explicitly rejected by PRATEC because it reproduces the double participation which they have abandoned, not as a conceptual choice but as a life change. Mayer is clear where *real* knowledge lies; not with what peasants say but with what the professional researcher can empirically verify using his methodological and other conceptual tools. Here is a clear example of professional knowledge having cognitive authority and being a judging outsider. Mayer wants PRATEC members to be scientific professionals of an empiricist bent and judges them negatively for failing to measure up to those criteria. In the process, he is blind to the different epistemology and ontology that PRATEC tries to articulate, partly through a contrast with modern Western knowledge. The contrast is necessary precisely in order to make clear that what they are talking about is *not* a better methodology to get at the 'facts'.

Mayer also chastises PRATEC for not referring to the 'conditions of poverty, scarcity of resources, exploitation, and the damaging integration into the market' (Ibid: 516). What in fact PRATEC has tried to do is to show that the use of these categories – 'poverty', 'resources' and 'integration into the market', as well as many others – carry with them a whole way of making (and of course of perceiving) a world. PRATEC's whole effort is aimed at speaking of a world from within that world so that the knowledge, and ultimately the world in which that knowledge is embedded, namely industrial capitalism, is not reproduced.

Mayer's role as an agent of governance reveals itself most clearly in the following sentence:

The hypotheses must lead to an experimental work and a work of potential development which can be given back to the *comuneros* [members of peasant communities] in efficient and absorbable form. (Ibid: 517)

There is absolutely no doubt that Mayer has no intention of relinquishing cognitive authority to the Andean peasants. Their practices and views will be taken as hypotheses by the professionals, well chewed up methodologically and then generously given back in easily chewable and efficient development pills.

Mayer concludes his ambivalent assessment of PRATEC's work in the following way: 'To refuse, due to purist principles, to practice certain forms of our professions is to fall in sectarianism and extreme positions which are less than useful in these times of crisis' (Ibid: 517). Mayer's own inability or unwillingness to de-privilege his own professional tools and point of view, that is the privileged, unsituated, Archimedean, standpoint of empiricist social sciences, makes him blind to what PRATEC is doing. PRATEC is entering into the non-dualist Andean world, one in which organism and environment are not separate, pitted one against the other, but one in which they make each other.

## CONCLUSION

In coming to know PRATEC and in collaborating with them since 1994, I have abandoned the stance of 'studying the Other', the classical anthropological stance. I abandoned fieldwork. This collaboration has been a long conversation and a mutual learning. The impact on me has been deep. I no longer see the critique of the concepts and tools of my profession and the form of knowledge to which it pertains or self-reflexivity or the attempt to give voice to subjects as being the sole answer to the anthropological dilemma. The answer to that dilemma requires of us nothing less than the questioning of the very notion of knowledge and of the social organisation of its production. The dilemma of the anthropologist became visible with the political decolonisation of the former colonies. The anthropologised have talked back and made it clear that the one-way gaze of anthropology is not particularly to their liking. As a result of such critical assessments, the profession of anthropology has engaged in a remarkable process of self-questioning.

The dilemma of anthropology became visible and articulated because of geopolitical events. However, it is not fundamentally different from the situation in the other social sciences and even in the natural sciences. The similarity consists in this: in all the sciences – social and natural – the gaze is one-way. The knower's *ratio* is the stable centre from which everything and everyone is observed and known. The world to be known is separated from the world to be lived; knower and known are divided as are Self and Other, cognition and emotion. Knowledge is pursued for knowledge's sake so that regenerative (or procreative) concerns have no place. The non-human world is not an interlocutor, not a sentience with whom one converses, not a being (or beings) whose integrity must be respected, not a sentience to nurture and be nurtured by. Knowledge is not an activity, not a living, not a mutual interaction.

As far as anthropology is concerned we simply cannot assume a right to know, however self-reflexive and self-critical the tools to achieve that knowledge may be. To act responsibly, our engagements with people living lives different from our own must result first of all from a *mutual* desire for interaction. We must stop arriving uninvited in people's back yards. As a result of this collaboration I have negotiated a part-time appointment at my institution so as to have the time to live up to the responsibilities I have acquired. Part of these are to create the conditions where I work that will foster and strengthen this new understanding of learning and living, a task I continue to carry out in conversation with PRATEC and other affiliated organisations in the Andes in the context of the Center for Mutual Learning here at Smith.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This work has been generously supported by the MacArthur Foundation. I am deeply grateful as well as admiring of the way Dan Martin of the Foundation supported the exploration of an untested and novel idea, that of mutual learning.

<sup>2</sup> Eduardo Grillo Fernandez passed away in April 1996. He was replaced at PRATEC by Jorge Ishizawa Oba, a man trained in the US as a civil engineer, of Japanese parents, born in Peru. Jorge Ishizawa O. became the director of PRATEC in April 2002, relieving Grimaldo Rengifo of this duty.

<sup>3</sup> Two leftist Marxist parties, the Confederacion Campesina del Peru and the Confederacion Nacional Agraria, arrogated to themselves the leadership of a peasant movement with the intention of establishing communal land holding. The silent movement Mayer and PRATEC speak about refers to the direct action of Andean peasants inspired by their native culture and modes of relating to land (the re-creation of the *ayllu*). According to Danish anthropologist Søren Hvalkof (personal communication), the CCP and the CAN never succeeded in their aims. I am grateful to Søren for this information.

<sup>4</sup> In a course I co-taught with Shiv Visvanathan at Smith College in the spring of 1992 on precisely this topic, I learned a great deal about the nature of the debate and its lengthy pedigree in India. I cannot do justice here to that complex information and refer the interested reader to forthcoming publication by Shiv Visvanathan of the Centre for Developing Societies in New Delhi.

<sup>5</sup> Enrique Mayer's remarks are made in the context of debating the position of a US anthropologist, Orin Starn (1991), who has criticised *andinismo* as romanticising, not focusing on the Indians' poverty, hunger and desire for a 'better life', and thus failing to predict the rise of Shining Path.

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