

MISSION STATEMENT:

Interest Group for the Anthropology of Public Policy

Affiliated with the American Anthropological Association (2004)

Gregory Feldman and Janine R. Wedel, Co-organizers and Co-conveners

1. The Interest Group for the Anthropology of Public Policy (IGAPP) seeks to provide an institutional framework to identify and foster the work of anthropologists studying public policies as social, political, and cultural phenomena. Public policy is more important than ever before because of the increasing prevalence of complex forms of governance at and among all levels—whether involving state, international, nongovernmental, or business organizations or networks. Given its pervasive role in directing and regulating mass society, policy warrants explicit anthropological attention. IGAPP endeavors to promote the development and discussion of theories and methods that provide insight into the workings of public policies, their frequently unforeseen consequences, and the under-valued factors that often shape their outcomes. Although anthropologists have long engaged in research that implicitly dealt with these issues, IGAPP’s goal is to make these contributions more salient and to further the development of a systematic body of research in the anthropology of policy. IGAPP does not seek to “take action” on policy issues (although some of its members might be so engaged as individuals) but, rather, to strengthen the contributions of the anthropology of policy to anthropology more generally and to interdisciplinary theory on policy. The following three overall goals guide IGAPP’s activities:

- a. To support the contributions of the anthropology of policy to anthropology more generally. The study of policy deals with issues at the heart of anthropology such as institutions and power; integration and meaning; ideology, rhetoric, and discourse; the politics of culture, ethnicity, and identity; and interactions between the global and the local. Public policy—be it health, energy, environment, migration, military, welfare, language, education, cultural heritage, development, transportation, tax, cultural resource management, science, technology, or other policy—constitutes a medium that connects disparate and diverse peoples in complex relations. IGAPP provides a forum in which to discuss innovations in theories and methods to better explain and capture policy processes. IGAPP devotes attention to the following three issues:

- 1) The conceptualization of the “field” as the site of anthropological research. The study of public policy forces us to rethink the relationship between power and place because policy itself lacks geographical fixity. The study of policy makes it necessary to follow connections among policy discourses and programs and

among actors, organizations, and institutions involved in or affected by them at all levels. Policy links together people and entities—many of whom never interact personally or directly—who are dispersed among the arenas of interaction through which policy processes are diffused across place and time. The study of policy encourages us to track interactions not only between parties to a policy process on the ground, but also between the larger systems the actors represent.

- 2) Methodological innovation. Just as the study of public policy presents challenges to traditional conceptions of the “field,” ethnographic methods must be reevaluated accordingly. The changing significance of place calls for discussion of how most effectively to conduct ethnographic research across levels and processes. It calls for participant-observation to be used in new ways to understand issues that transcend particular geographic spaces. The changing significance of place also calls for greater use of additional ethnographic methods that enable the study of more fragmented “fields,” parts of which may be much more difficult to gain access to than in traditional anthropological research. The anthropology of policy presents an opportunity to enrich the ethnographic toolkit with powerful methods that compliment more established ones.
 - 3) Legitimacy of anthropologists studying policy. Although several prominent anthropologists have raised the previously mentioned issues, they have yet to fully enter into the mainstream of disciplinary practice. This is particularly restrictive for graduate students, recent PhDs, and junior scholars who wish to use the full body of anthropological theory and method but who find the anthropological validity of their work being questioned by fellow anthropologists. The institutionalization of IGAPP within the AAA should help reduce the sidelining of anthropologists who study policy and the difficulties they may encounter finding institutionally secure positions.
- b. To support anthropological contributions to public policy, “policy science,” public administration, and other relevant fields, as well as to policy debates. The anthropology of policy brings much-needed perspectives to the influential field of public policy itself. There are three areas in particular in which anthropology offers crucial and unique contributions.
- 1) The anthropology of policy takes public policy itself as an object of analysis, rather than the premise of a research agenda. Anthropologists can make clear why the serious study of policy

issues should begin by examining taken-for-granted assumptions that channel policy debates, inform the ways policy problems are identified, enable particular classifications of target groups, and legitimize certain policy solutions while marginalizing others. Anthropology is ideally suited to explore the cultural and philosophical underpinnings of policy—its discourses, mobilizing metaphors, and underlying ideologies and uses. By helping to destabilize the assumptions and conceptual metaphors that underpin the formulation of policy problems, the anthropology of policy should make valuable contributions to public policy.

- 2) Public policy is dominated by economic models, many of which grow out of private-sector experience. Yet anthropologists studying policy processes quickly learn that policy decisions and their implementation cannot be adequately mapped with variables whose value and interaction is pre-specified by an abstract model rather than situated in ethnographic context. Policy making and implementation hardly follow a linear process with a predetermined outcome. Instead, policy processes often encounter unforeseen variables, frequently combined in unforeseen ways, and with unforeseen consequences. Policy outcomes may contradict the stated intentions of policymakers. Anthropology is especially well-equipped to deal with the complexity, ambiguity, and messiness of policy processes. It is uniquely suited, for example, to examine the interactions between public policy and private interests and the mixing of state, nongovernmental, and business structures that is becoming increasingly prevalent around the world. The discipline provides a critical corrective to the simplified economic models that work impressively well in journals and textbooks but often fail to produce desired outcomes in the real world.
- c. IGAPP seeks to help connect anthropologists in different countries around policy topics of mutual research, interest, and concern. Particular attention is to be paid to policies that are promulgated widely by international organizations, supranational entities, or powerful governments. For example, anthropologists studying the impacts of international development or trade policies (or pertinent aspects of “globalization”) in Latin America may find important comparative dimensions in discussions with those working on the impacts of similar policies in Africa, Asia, or the former Soviet Union. Similarly, anthropologists studying the outsourcing of governance in the United States may find common ground with those concerned with “privatization” in other contexts. Thus IGAPP can serve as an international forum in which to link research and debate around policy

issues. The fact that many of our signatories and potential constituents are from outside the United States should help to facilitate this goal.

2. IGAPP meets an important and increasingly recognized need. AAA currently lacks an institutionalized means for anthropologists studying policy issues to meet and engage in discussion. IGAPP differ from other AAA-sponsored endeavors whose agendas may include policy, as follows:
 - a. Committee on Public Policy. Although the AAA's Committee on Public Policy (CPP) and IGAPP may have matters of mutual interest, a AAA committee, by definition, cannot fulfill the functions of a AAA interest group.
 - b. National Association for the Practice of Anthropology. Professional practitioners of anthropology have made invaluable contributions. IGAPP's role does not conflict with that of the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (NAPA). The latter concentrates on issues pertaining to professional practice, including practice in the public sector, but its primary focus is not on the scholarship of policy *per se*. Thus IGAPP complements NAPA. Some members of NAPA may find IGAPP to be a resource for their own interests and may wish to join.
3. Future conveners will be selected biannually by a vote of IGAPP members. Candidates for convener will be nominated by three other IGAPP members. A steering committee chaired by the co-conveners or other specified member(s) guides the group's work.
4. The following AAA members agreed to join IGAPP as of April 1, 2004:

Co-conveners:

Gregory Feldman, assistant professor of international migration,
University of British Columbia
1984 West Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z2
E-Mail: gfel@interchange.ubc.ca
Telephone: 604-827-5541

Janine R. Wedel, professor, School of Public Policy,
George Mason University
3401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 3B1, Arlington, Virginia 22201
E-Mail: jwedel@gmu.edu
Telephone: 703-993-3567 or 202-514-6207

Signatories:

Kevin Avruch, professor of conflict resolution and anthropology,
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University
ICAR – 4D3
George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia 22030-4444
E-Mail: kavruch@gmu.edu
Telephone: 703-993-3607/1300

Marietta Baba, professor of anthropology and dean, College of Social Science,
Michigan State University
203 Berkey Hall
East Lansing, Michigan 48824
E-Mail: mbaba@msu.edu
Telephone: 517-355-6675

Fredrik Barth, professor, Department of Anthropology, Boston University
CAS Anthropology
232 Bay State Road
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
E-Mail Contact: Janet O'Neil (oneil@bu.edu) or Kathy Kwasnica (kaek@bu.edu);
Telephone: 617-353-2195 (main office)

William Beeman, professor, Department of Anthropology and Theatre,
Department of Speech and Dance, and director, Middle East Studies, Brown
University
Box 19211, Providence, Rhode Island 02912
E-Mail: William_Beeman@Brown.edu
Telephone: 401-863-3251

Peter W. Black, professor of anthropology, George Mason University
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, B317 Robinson Hall
Fairfax, Virginia 22030
E-Mail: pblack@gmu.edu
Telephone: 703-993-1450

John Borneman, professor of anthropology, Princeton University
Department of Anthropology, 100 Aaron Burr Hall, Princeton, New Jersey 08544
E-Mail: borneman@princeton.edu
Telephone: 609-258-5535

Donald Brenneis, professor of anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz
Social Sciences 1
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, California 95064
E-Mail: brenneis@ucsc.edu
Telephone: 831-459-3855

Elizabeth Colson, professor of anthropology emerita, University of California, Berkeley
232 Kroeber Hall
Berkeley, California 94720-3710
E-Mail: colson@sscl.berkeley.edu
Telephone: 510-642-3391

Jane K. Cowan, reader and head of the Anthropology Department,
University of Sussex
Arts C124
Falmer, Brighton BN1 9SJ, United Kingdom
E-Mail: J.Cowan@sussex.ac.uk
Telephone: 44 12 73 873 109 (ext. 3109)

Arturo Escobar, Kenan distinguished professor of anthropology and director,
Institute of Latin American Studies, University of North Carolina
E-Mail: aescobar@imap.unc.edu
Telephone: 919-962-1243

James Ferguson, professor of cultural and social anthropology, Stanford University
Building 110, Main Quad
Stanford, California 94305
E-Mail: jgfergus@stanford.edu
Telephone: 650-723-3418

Susan Gal, professor of anthropology and linguistics, University of Chicago
Department of Anthropology, 1126 East 59th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637
E-Mail: s-gal@uchicago.edu
Telephone: 773-702-2551

Lynne Goldstein, professor of anthropology and chair, Department of Anthropology,
Michigan State University
354 Baker Hall
East Lansing, Michigan 48824
E-Mail: lynneg@msu.edu
Telephone: 517-353-4704

Elzbieta Gozdzia, research director, Institute for the Study of
International Migration, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University
3307 M Street, NW, Suite 302
Washington, D.C. 20007
E-Mail: emg27@georgetown.edu
Telephone: 202-687-2257

William Graves III, associate professor of humanities,
Department of English and Cultural Studies and International Studies Program,
Bryant College
Smithfield, Rhode Island 02917
E-Mail: wgraves@bryant.edu

Carol Greenhouse, professor of anthropology, Princeton University
Department of Anthropology
100 Aaron Burr Hall
Princeton, New Jersey 08544
E-Mail: cgreenho@princeton.edu
Telephone: 609-258-5535

Akhil Gupta, associate professor of cultural and social anthropology, Stanford University
Building 110, Main Quad
Stanford, California 94305
E-mail: akgupta@stanford.edu
Telephone: 650-723-3247

Hugh Gusterson, associate professor of anthropology and science studies at MIT
and professor of public policy, Georgia Institute of Technology
685 Cherry Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30332-0345
E-Mail: hugh.gusterson@pubpolicy.gatech.edu
Telephone: 404-385-6082

Ulf Hannerz, professor of social anthropology, Institute for Social Anthropology,
Stockholm University
S-106 91 Stockholm, Sweden
E-Mail: ulf.hannerz@socant.su.se
Telephone: 46 8 162000

Robert Hayden, professor of anthropology, law and public & international affairs, and
director, Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh
Department of Anthropology, 3H01Posvar Hall, University of Pittsburgh,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260
E-Mail: mhayden@ucis.pitt.edu
Telephone: 412-648-7500

Michael Herzfeld, professor of anthropology, Harvard University
Department of Anthropology
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138
E-Mail: herzfeld@wjh.harvard.edu
Telephone: 617-496-5190

Douglas R. Holmes, professor of anthropology, Binghamton University
Binghamton, New York 13902-6000
E-Mail: dholmes@binghamton.edu
Telephone 607-777-4550

Michael M. Horowitz, director, Institute for Development Anthropology, and
distinguished professor of anthropology, State University of New York at
Binghamton, Binghamton, New York 13902-600099
Collier Street, Binghamton, New York 13902-2207
E-mail: mhorowi@binghamton.edu
Telephone: 607-772-6244

Judith Justice, associate professor of medical anthropology and health policy,
Department of Anthropology, History and Social Medicine, University of
California at San Francisco
San Francisco, California 94143
E-Mail: justice@itsa.ucsf.edu
Telephone: 510-841-7404

Bruce Kapferer, professor of social anthropology, University of Bergen
Institute of Social Anthropology
Fosswinkelsgate 6
N-5007 Bergen, Norway
E-Mail: bruce.kapferer@sosantr.uib.no
Telephone: 47 555 892-47 (Bergen) 44-207 221-91-85 (London)

Marina Kurkchyan, Paul Dodyk fellow in socio-legal studies and research fellow of
Wolfson College, University of Oxford
Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, Wolfson College
Oxford OX2 6UD United Kingdom
E-Mail: mkurkchyan@hotmail.com
Telephone: 44 1865 284 224

George Marcus, professor of anthropology, Rice University
Department of Anthropology-MS 20
6100 Main St.
Houston, Texas 77005
E-Mail: marcus@rice.edu
Telephone: 713-348-3382

Emily Martin, professor, Department of Anthropology and Institute for the History of the
Production of Knowledge, New York University
25 Waverly Place
New York University
New York, New York 10003
E-Mail: em81@nyu.edu
Telephone: 212-998-3757

Barbara D. Miller, professor of anthropology and international affairs, and director,
Culture in Global Affairs Research and Policy Program, George Washington
University
Department of Anthropology
2110 G Street, N.W., Washington D.C. 20052
E-Mail: barbar@gwu.edu
Telephone: 202-994-7257

Carolyn Nordstrom, associate professor of anthropology, University of Notre Dame
623 Flanner Hall
Notre Dame, IN 46556-5611
E-Mail: cnordstr@nd.edu
Telephone: 574-631-5072

Pauline Peters, core faculty, Kennedy School of Government, and senior lecturer,
Department of Anthropology, Harvard University
Kennedy School of Government
79 JFK Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138
E-Mail: pauline_peters@harvard.edu
Telephone: 617-495-3785

Susan C. Rogers, associate professor of anthropology, New York University
Rufus D. Smith Hall
25 Waverly Place, New York, New York 10003
E-Mail: scr1@nyu.edu
Telephone: 212-988-8550

Steven Sampson, docent, Department of Social Anthropology, Institute of Sociology,
Lund University
22100 Lund, Sweden
E-mail: Sampson@Get2net.dk
Telephone: 45-3332 0251

Paul Shankman, professor of anthropology, University of Colorado at Boulder
Department of Anthropology UCB233, Boulder, Colorado 80309-0233
E-Mail: shankman@stripe.colorado.edu
Telephone: 303-492-6628

Cris Shore, professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand
E-Mail: c.shore@auckland.ac.nz
Telephone: 64 9 373 7599, ext: 88535

Jaro Stacul, Department of Social Anthropology, Cambridge University
Free School Lane
Cambridge CB2 3RF, United Kingdom
E-Mail: js10043@hermes.cam.ac.uk

Kay Warren, Tillinghast professor in international studies, professor of anthropology and
director of Culture, Politics and Identity Program, Watson Institute for
International Studies, Brown University
111 Thayer Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02912-1970
E-Mail: Kay_Warren@brown.edu

Thomas M. Wilson, professor of anthropology, Department of Anthropology,
Binghamton University, State University of New York
P.O. Box 6000
Binghamton, New York 13902-6000
E-Mail: twilson@binghamton.edu
Telephone: 607-777-2844 (direct); 607-777-2737/2738 (department)

Susan Wright, professor, Institute of Educational Anthropology,
Danish University of Education
Emdrupvej 101, 2400 Copenhagen NV, Denmark
E-Mail: suwr@dpu.dk