PART 3: ANTHROPOLOGY OF POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Seven authors reflect on Sue's contribution to developing the 'Anthropology of Policy' and its growth as a new sub-field of political anthropology since the 1990s. They show how her focus on policy brought together her earlier concerns with organisations, power and processes of social transformation with critical and reflexive perspectives on language, higher education reform and regimes of audit and accountability.

KEYWORDS

anthropology of policy and practice, audit culture, class, gender and power, institutional power of language, local government, methodology, political reflexivity, universities

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Studying local government in transition

The messiness of policy in Cleveland County's unemployment strategy

Susan B. Hyatt

On Friday, 18 March 1994, Bradford's local newspaper, *The Telegraph & Argus*, carried the front-page headline, 'Free Labour Sparks Row'. The beginning of the article read: 'Plans to use jobless people as free labour on a Bradford Council building scheme has caused a storm. Builders throughout the district said the plan would rob them of business at a time when they were struggling through a recession'. Reading through the entire article, it becomes clear that the term 'jobless *people*' actually referred only to jobless

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men. In addition, the category 'labour' encompassed solely those construction trades that are typically glossed as male.

I read that headline while I was conducting my fieldwork on a peripheral council estate in Bradford, West Yorkshire. During the early to mid-1990s, I was investigating the multiple roles played by women as they attempted to redress the deprivations beleaguering their communities resulting from Thatcher's neoliberal policies. Activities such as organising playgroups for toddlers, attending to the needs of community elders, campaigning for better living conditions and operating a local resale shop, amongst many others, were endeavours that had become absolutely essential to the survival of working-class communities in the context of drastic reductions to public services. When I saw that headline on the 1994 issue of *The Telegraph & Argus*, my immediate reaction was: 'Weren't these women also workers (and workers whose families would greatly benefit from their ability to access paid work)? And weren't their unpaid efforts also regarded as "labour"?'

Such questions often occurred to me during my fieldwork, thanks in good part to my encounter with the work of Sue Wright, who in 1991 had published three reports in which she described and analysed the shift in policy-making in a local authority in Teesside in north-eastern England. She identified this shift as a change from the old welfare-state notion of serving 'clients' to one that now emphasised the imperative to 'empower people so that they could find new solutions, themselves, for the seemingly intransigent problems of poverty and unemployment'. She also provided a much-needed gendered perspective in her work. At that time, Sue was a lecturer at Sussex University, but from January to December 1991 she was attached to Cleveland County Council's Research and Intelligence Unit, in order to evaluate the Council's unemployment strategy. Her time with Cleveland County Council proved to be remarkably productive, and the reports she produced foreshadowed a number of subsequent developments, both theoretically and methodologically, in the discipline of anthropology, as well as capturing a critical moment of transition in the reshaping of the rationalities of Western welfare states.

I first met Sue Wright personally in February 1993. A year prior to the publication of that headline in *The Telegraph & Argus*, a friend of mine sent me a note about a talk taking place at Manchester University that she thought might interest me. The talk was rather vaguely titled 'Sociology, Feminism and Anthropology', so I had no idea what it would actually focus on. It was to be my good fortune that I decided to take the train across the Pennines from Bradford to Manchester that day to hear Sue discuss her

recent work on Cleveland County's unemployment strategy. That talk, her three reports forming the 'Evaluation of the Unemployment Strategy' series (Wright 1991a, 1991b, 1991c), and my ongoing relationship with Sue and her prolific scholarship through all of these subsequent years have been instrumental in shaping both my own work and the then-nascent sub-field of the anthropology of policy.

According to my notes from her talk, Sue argued that local councils like Cleveland in Teesside had been compelled to adopt a then-new philosophy of governance described as the 'enabling state'. This orientation, replacing the welfarist notion that the role of local governments was to serve 'clients', had set up an irreconcilable conflict between the austere neoliberalism of the Thatcher era, with its emphasis on such values as enterprise and its defunding of local councils, and the enduring belief in the importance of the public sector still espoused by the Labour strongholds of the deindustrialising North. And yet, in Sue's astute analysis, recorded in three reports on her work with Cleveland County Council that she subsequently published, Labour councils were also under pressure from the left, as well as from the right, to 'move away from the unpopular Labourism associated with industrialisation and failed modernisation policies' (Wright 1991b: 2). The answer for both parties seemed to lie in this notion of the 'enabling state', which 'promised to be a strategy for empowering people "to take more control of their own lives"' (Wright 1991: 2). As Sue pointed out, debates about policies to address such social issues as poverty and unemployment were no longer firmly lodged in discussions of data or material outcomes; instead, they were situated in duelling ideological contexts, and, therefore, they could not be clearly evaluated using 'objective' criteria. Rather than being rooted in 'evidence-based solutions', as we would say later in the 2000s, 'the major strategies of the 1980s [aimed] to present a new philosophy or vision of the role of local government in achieving social change' (Wright 1991b: 1).

As Sue so clearly illustrated in her work on Cleveland, Conservative government reforms were not simply or even primarily about solving social and economic problems through direct service provision; their primary goal was to reconfigure the territory of government altogether. As Keith Joseph, one of Prime Minister Thatcher's key advisers throughout the 1980s, had stated,

> the blind, unplanned, uncoordinated wisdom of the market is overwhelmingly superior to the well-researched, rational, systematic, well-meaning, cooperative, science-based, forward-looking, statistically respectable

> plans of government, bureaucracies and international organizations.
> (cited in Barnekov et al. 1989: 143)

Furthermore, Sue noted that 'these policies, while appearing to be neutral, affected men and women differently' (Wright 1991b). Her perspectives on denaturalising the taken-for-granted aspects of policy and her emphasis on gendering ostensibly 'impartial' initiatives, like using 'community development' as a strategy for addressing inequality and deprivation, proved to be critical structuring concepts that helped me move ahead in my own fieldwork. Furthermore, they also articulated nascent insights that later became fundamental to the work she and Cris Shore would do in developing the sub-field of the anthropology of policy.

In some respects, Sue's early work, while being firmly rooted in the context of the political economy of the north-east of England, also reflected new Foucauldian approaches to understanding the ways in which institutions and policies worked to reshape our understandings of the cause of social problems and their solutions. The problem of poverty had clearly not been alleviated by the post-war social programmes of the welfare state; instead of examining the structural changes in the global economy that had resulted in massive deindustrialisation in places like the north-east of England, however, the new thinking was that post-war governmental programmes had actually exacerbated poverty by stripping people of their autonomy and initiative. The problem of poverty was thus reconfigured as an imperative to 'transform a dependency culture to an enterprise one' (Wright 1991b: 25). 'Empowerment' became a key concept that local authorities could operationalise towards the goal of mobilising people to undertake efforts on their own behalf.

This new approach not only made poor people responsible for addressing the causes of their own impoverishment: it also diminished the role of local authorities in people's lives. As Sue wrote: 'When the government talked of local autonomy, they were not referring to the relationship between central and local government, but between individuals and the government' (Wright 1991b: 14). Barbara Cruikshank, an American political scientist, offered similar observations in her own work on changing welfare systems in the United States, published three years later. As Cruikshank described it:

> 'Self-help' did not mean that autonomous selves got together to help one another. Rather, self-help meant that the government intervened to create

> relations of help between selves . . . The poor were to indicate their own needs and the causes of their impoverishment; in doing so, it was hoped they would enlist themselves in meeting those needs. (Cruikshank 1994: 44)

The parallels in these analyses illustrate how prescient Sue's work in Cleveland was in anticipating global shifts in social policy. Governments now saw as their primary duty the need to change people's natures, rather than trying to reconfigure local economies. That latter ambition seemed too out of reach, anyway, as economies were no longer really national but had become increasingly integrated across a global stage. As Sue notes, this new approach actually produced even starker axes of difference and inequality:

> It was ironic that the major improvements in welfare and standards of living that Labourism achieved came to be perceived by their beneficiaries as oppressive: as ways the state increased control of their lives. Another problem is that it was assumed that the beneficiaries would all be the 'working class'. Often, the people for whom councillors were working in this way, while called 'the working class', were represented through the mechanisms of trade unions and Labour party meetings and were predominantly male and in waged employment. (Wright 1991: 6)

These insights were key to understanding both the spread of New Right parties throughout the West and the erosion of the kind of state-sponsored assistance that had once characterised the certainties of Keynesianism.

Sue Wright's work in Cleveland was not only theoretically rich; it was also methodologically generative. The study of policy was not only or even primarily a matter of taking the prescriptions they articulated at face value and then examining their consequences; it also entailed contextualising the very emergence of such policy recommendations within a broad understanding of the historical and political contexts within which they were formulated. I took this advice to heart in my own work in the 1990s, in which I characterised changes in the government of peripheral council estates as a shift from government *of* the people to government *by* the people. Sue articulated this idea very clearly in her second Cleveland report. As she wrote:

> Rather than a notion of people being positioned differently in terms of their access to and accumulation of financial and cultural capital, individuals are seen as responsible for advancing or falling by their

> own talents. In this view, these talents should not be held down by the state either through regulation which limits entrepreneurial activity or through welfare benefits which create dependency and are disincentives to enterprise and independence. Instead, the role of the state is to create conditions for individuals to engage in enterprise and create wealth. (Wright 1991b: 15)

For me, this understanding of the volatile relationship between poor and working-class people and the state was critical to helping me comprehend the changes I was seeing in marginalised communities in Bradford. These transformations could not (and should not) properly be understood as a reflection of the *withdrawal* of the state from the lives of the poor, as many on the left (including me) had tended to do. Rather, it was a question of analysing the ways in which new social policies were just as interventionist in the lives of the poor as the old welfare state programmes had been, but now these interventions were directed at reshaping the relationship between the poor and other sectors, including the local state, the private sector and the voluntary sector. As I noted in my doctoral dissertation, written in 1995–1996: 'The territory of empowerment was not a space where power differences were erased; rather, it was the terrain upon which one group was now able to execute a new technology of governance over another'.

Sue also offered another insight which was critical to understanding poverty and policy in the 1990s, particularly in Britain; that is, that local community groups were now able to bypass their local councils entirely in seeking funding. New pathways had been created so that such organisations could now approach the burgeoning voluntary sector directly (Sue's example was the expansion of the Manpower Services Commission), or they could even go straight to central government sources for assistance. This had the effect of further marginalising local authorities, which were gradually being stripped of both access to monetary resources and direct influence on local communities. I realised that it would not really be correct to say that the council estates I was looking at had become unmoored from state structures; instead, new constellations of relationships amongst different entities were being put into play, with decidedly very mixed outcomes.

Rereading Sue's early work on Cleveland is instructive in revealing the genealogy of the ideas that came to be so fundamental to Shore and Wright's later work on the anthropology of policy. As they wrote in the introduction to their 1997 volume, *The Anthropology of Policy*: 'The study

of policy, therefore, leads straight into issues at the heart of anthropology: norms and institutions; ideology and consciousness; knowledge and power; rhetoric and discourse; meaning and interpretations; the global and the local – to mention but a few' (Shore and Wright 1997a: 4).

Whether we realise it or not (and generally we do not, as Shore and Wright acknowledge), we all exist at the intersections of a variety of programmes and policies, initiatives and inducements, disincentives and deterrents. We do not move through these overlapping fields as sovereign automatons. What the anthropology of policy shows us is the extent to which our responses, and particularly the opportunities for resistance and rebellion, can be suppressed and constrained, not so much by outright acts of overt repression (at least, in ostensibly democratic societies) but, rather, by the ways in which different regimes of governance make certain responses seem possible – or not. This idea dispenses with the notion that the poor, for example, are apathetic or that they do not understand the causes of their own disadvantage. It helps us understand and probe how different regimes of governance, as they are articulated through the medium of policy, can quell (or, conversely, enable) oppositional activism.

I would be remiss in ending this article without acknowledging the role Sue has played, for me and for many others, as an active and engaged mentor. In my 'Sue Wright' folder, which I have held on to for all these many years, I had saved not only the copies of her Cleveland reports (which may now only be available in hard copy at Sussex University) but also numerous notes she posted to me (in the days before our heavy reliance on email!), in which she commented on my ongoing work. On 10 December 1993, for example, within a year of my first having met her, she sent me three typed pages of comments on my early papers. Line by line, she went through these papers, suggesting additional readings for me, offering gentle corrections and enthusiastic responses. To offer just one example, I had sent her a paper I wrote in which I explored how women's activism on council estates disrupted our ideas about the boundaries between public and private, political and personal. One of the comments Sue wrote to me was: 'This is very interesting. You have the women saying to Mr. Major that their lives are political, but as we discussed in the restaurant, they say to the men in their own community that what they are doing is not political – otherwise, the men take it over. I'd love for you to explore all of the contradictory and complicated ways the concept of political is used – I think it is a key concept in British culture'.

At that time, Sue was (as she has been throughout her career) an active teacher, advisor, researcher and writer. And yet, she regularly took time out from her many engagements to send me, a random American whom she had encountered by chance at a lecture in Manchester, detailed and invaluable comments like these. I consider myself extraordinarily fortunate to have benefitted from Sue's unsparing generosity. When I look back at that time, when I was just starting out on my own career, now winding down as I contemplate my own retirement, I recognise that it was not only the intellectual support and guidance that Sue offered that was so important to me; it was also her affirmation that at that very early stage of my post-graduate studies I could do the hard work of ethnographic fieldwork and writing and analysis. I confess, I do not remember the specific meal in the restaurant that Sue referenced in her note to me. I hope we had a good curry! Whatever it was, I am confident that it was a meal and a conversation that nourished me mentally and physically, and I recognise it now as the beginning of what has been a long series of extraordinarily generative and generous encounters that I have enjoyed with her over the past thirty plus years.

In 1996, Britain's central government executed another round of local government reorganisations. Cleveland County Council disappeared from the landscape as an administrative unit. But the insights that Sue gleaned from her year with the Council have proven to be far more durable. As we look at the cascades of impoverishment and inequality now proliferating around the world, Sue's earliest work, to say nothing of her more recent contributions, has provided for us a clear blueprint for understanding how and why contemporary social policy became a project that privileged changing people's consciousness over that of altering their material conditions. The consequences of this strategy have become all too visible – and all too tragic. And yet, her work also shows us that through our ethnographic endeavours these developments can also be made *legible*, meaning that the potential for social justice and social change always remains present, constantly waxing and waning, as our regimes of governance continue to adapt to new political imperatives.

The powers of prattle

Don Brenneis

I want to begin this appreciation of Sue Wright's remarkable career, contributions and collegiality by considering briefly the word 'prattle'. The term figures centrally in the title of one of her earliest publications (Wright 1978), where it is juxtaposed to 'politics', contrasting what we might usually regard as idle or inconsequential talk with serious debate and decision-making. Not surprisingly, in the Iranian village of Doshman Ziari explicit politics is taken to be a matter for men, while prattle, from a male perspective, falls into women's terrain. Sue's work focussed on the complex entanglements of gender and political structure. Guided, however, by then-emergent feminist theory and her own keen attunement to the particulars of local interaction, she developed a subtle, revelatory and multi-perspectival account of local life. She insightfully teased out the contrasts between men's public politics and women's chatting, arguing that 'as opposed to the formal position of the woman . . . she can have great influence – so long as she doesn't act overtly, as that would invite attacks upon her reputation and bring her husband's ability to control her into question. This influence can even extend into the essence of the male domain: political decision-making' (1978: 108). Obliqueness was a key feature of women's commentary. As Sue noted: 'Issues concerning either the women themselves, or pertaining to the men's debates are therefore discussed in a very convoluted manner . . . [t]heir knowledge would be gleaned from sitting in a number of people's yards and, from a series of obscure comments on apparent non-issues, they would arrive at an understanding of the strains or accord developing between different men and the attitudes of different women' (1978: 108–109). Women were actively engaged in a kind of discursive hermeneutics, following allusive threads and, in their own talk, shaping oblique yet, on many occasions, decisive accounts. What may have appeared to be idle talk was, to Sue's ear, a significant tool for influencing the men's more explicit and foregrounded decision-making. Prattling clearly had its purposes as well as pleasures. This remarkable essay is complemented by Sue's other publication based on her Iranian fieldwork, a book chapter in a volume on women and space edited by Shirley Ardener (1981). Sue's analysis located particular occasions

for men's and women's talk within specific physical settings in the village, providing further examples of indirectness and allusiveness at play.

In sketching out Sue's trajectory, I next want to turn to an article based on her early policy-related research, a piece that lays out a clear picture of the anthropological sensibility she has consistently brought to applied, policy-focussed research. Her 'starting point was to unravel basic assumptions', towards which end she 'approached the project brief itself as an object for study' (1984: 10). The term 'community' played a central role in framing the study's stated goal and practice. Sue provides a sharp and detailed analysis of its multiple possible meanings and implications. Communities were expected to have distinctive and shared views on possible planning decisions; underlying assumptions concerning parish perspectives were misleading and consequential. In concluding the article, Sue argues that 'by developing an approach to the study of decision-making which is holistic, stretching from the locality to the national and micro-qualitative, looking at the conceptions and experience of residents, councillors and civil servants, it was possible to expose the notions which underlie these constraints and problems in the decision-making structure' (1984: 13). Sue deftly demonstrates that policy-making is as susceptible to and shaped by cultural assumptions and social relations as are the communities and institutions with which they are concerned – and that any account that does not take the broader field with which policy-making is entangled into account is inadequate.

'Getting the measure of academia' exemplifies three defining qualities of Sue's work. First, it is a collaboratively written paper, in this instance with Cris Shore and me, capturing as it does ongoing collegial conversations (Brenneis et al. 2005). Deeply engaged, flexible and a remarkably attentive and creative interlocutor, Sue models dialogic scholarship at its best. Certainly, her intellectual style makes for thought-provoking, open-ended and forward-looking research. A second key feature of her work from the late 1980s on is her specific focus on the complex intersections of policy, institutional practice and the academy. Here, she foregrounds a shared commitment to a 'free and frank exchange of anthropological reflections on the changing role of the university as an institution' (2005: 1). More specifically, she focusses on how anthropology itself as a discipline is shaped and reproduced, noting that 'one of the defining qualities of anthropology as a discipline is its epistemological reflexivity and its capacity to think critically

about the conditions of its own existence and, beyond this, about the way knowledge is produced' (2005: 2). Throughout her work, she has taken this challenge seriously – and modelled principled reflexivity as a powerful and consequential method for wrestling with regimes of audit, accountability and coercive commensurability in the university.

A final key feature that emerges in this article builds upon Sue's ongoing commitment to exploring how language matters. Her earlier exploration of the multiple meanings and uses of 'community' provided a lively example. Here, she complements her style of keyword analysis with a thoughtful consideration of words that take on extraordinary powers while at the same time remaining semantically vacuous. A prime example of this is her discussion of 'excellence', a word that played multiple consequential roles in the shaping – and application – of audit and assessment regimes while rarely taking on specific meanings. The institutional power of language may, as her analysis demonstrates, depend as much, if not more, on what language does than on what it means (see also Shore and Wright 2015a).

These brief comments on some of Sue's early work should make it clear that she has a well-developed and imaginative linguistic sensibility. This is not to say that she is a formally trained linguist in the usual academic sense. I'd argue, rather, that from the very beginning she has demonstrated great ears – and a remarkable capacity for exploring the social and institutional lives of language, whether in Iran or in higher education bureaucracies. This is social anthropology at its best, exemplifying how engagement with the interactional textures and timbres of situated communicative practice can enrich and strengthen an understanding of social institutions and relations.

I'd like to suggest several key analytical points emerging from the conjunction of language and social life across these papers and Sue's career more broadly. First, as her Iran work makes clear, language is not unitary; there are multiple ways of speaking, often associated with specific types of speakers and specific ways of speaking (or writing). Multiple perspectives and multiple ways of enacting them are often in play. The deeply gendered association of prattle and formal political discourse in Doshman Ziari is a good example. Different ways of speaking are associated with different forms of evaluation, whether of the political efficacy of a speech or, in academia, publication in certain journals.

The multifaceted character of language affords the possible uses of oblique reference, indirection and inexplicit meaning as core social tools. The multifarious prattle of women in Doshman Ziari and the subtle

strategies it affords provides an example here. So also, however, does the nature of committee discussion in research-funding meetings. Open-endedness leaves room for manoeuvre and for retreat or reformulation when necessary (Brenneis 1999), whether in a village or at the National Science Foundation.

A further key linguistic dimension of Sue's work has to do with the salience of translation and its possibilities and limits. Imagined translatability is central to audit regimes and the coercive commensurability that underlies them. The possibility of defining and operationalising 'value' across multiple domains is central here. The rise of new kinds of expertise such as bibliometrics represents an attempt to legitimise such comparative judgement but cannot really address the obduracy of the inherently untranslatable, as Sue and her colleagues so effectively demonstrate. Questions of translation are also central to Sue's paper with Rachel Douglas-Jones on 'integrity'. While its primary focus is on the question of how 'the idea of research integrity [has] arisen' (2017: 1), the paper demonstrates clearly how little consistency there is in what 'integrity' is taken to mean. This is a brilliant and comprehensive example of keyword analysis and a model for further research.

Sue's generous and generative commitment to collaborative research is central to her research practice and to its substance. She brings a polyphonic perspective to bear on communities and institutions in which polyphony plays a key role. Nowhere is this clearer than in 'Rethinking gender equity in the contaminated university', her remarkable article with Kirsten Locke and Rebecca W.B. Lund. The paper is framed by their dissatisfaction with 'existing forms of thinking about the ways women navigate universities' (2021: 1081). The authors have shaped a subtle and innovative methodology, one bringing together recent theoretical models from a range of domains and providing a textured and flexible sense of current higher education institutions. They then draw upon life history interviews with successful women in academia to understand how those women have managed their careers. Brilliantly thinking through and with the musical metaphor of a fugue, the authors develop a 'way of analysing the women's stories as "polyphony-in-action"' (2021: 1084), highlighting the ways in which they not only confront but also draw upon the circumstances of higher education as a resource.

Beyond its heuristic role vis-à-vis interpreting the content of the study itself, 'polyphony-in-action' also captures the contours and pleasures of the

authors' collaborative work. As they write: 'Central to the politics of this approach has been finding space and time in small cracks in the neoliberal university to learn from each other and rekindle excitement about our collective capacity for generating new ideas and new critiques' (2021: 1083). Particular spaces, times and practices afforded the women of Doshman Ziari the possibilities of oblique and publicly devalued but consequential pleasurable participation in the shaping of their social world. Similarly, the conditions of deeply collegial scholarship provide the potential for 'moments and serendipity' (2021: 1091) and the possibilities of play and critique that such moments enable. Sue's great capacity for, and commitment to, polyphonic, intentional yet spontaneous, and always engaged work has been a gift to all of us and to the analysis and transformation of the institutions that we inhabit together.

The politics of foraging

Nourishing patches of emergence in academia

Kirsten Locke and Rebecca Lund

We come to the task of writing about Sue Wright by working with what she has taught us, alongside us. When we think of Sue, we think of a force of nature: she shifts and creates worlds, and she has shifted and created our worlds. We think with Sue alongside her friend Anna Tsing in terms of articulating the university as a ruinous landscape, in which it is possible to find patches of unexpected connection and emergence. Sue has modelled her restless creativity and driving energy in her pursuit to imagine the university differently whilst upholding the highest standards of academic citizenship. We position Sue as a tireless forager in the university landscape, who uses her foraging to rewild the industrialised and homogenised order of academia.

Mushrooms: Foraging with Sue

Let us begin with a story about foraging in academia with Sue. We met, the three of us (plus a couple of extras), at the train station in Copenhagen. It was a typical misty morning at the beginning of winter, and we trundled

into the train with coffees and food for the three-hour trip to Aarhus. We were on our way to explore the fecund mind of Anna Tsing, and it was Sue's idea for us all to meet at the modern Aarhus Museum of Archeology and Ethnography. For both of us (Rebecca and Kirsten), this excursion was typical of our engagement with Sue. We were on an adventure, and Sue was excited to be initiating the gathering of us all in one place. What was the reason for our excursion to see Anna? We were collectively grappling at the time with a project about women and leadership in the university, and we were a bit stuck. We wanted to find a way of engaging with our research material, and we were wanting to explore different images and theories to help us make sense of the rich data we had collected. In the (for Kirsten) typically chic and sleekly Danish cafeteria, we met with Anna, and our little party of explorers began to talk. We told Anna about our different backgrounds (both disciplinary and geographical), and we spoke about the difficulty of trying to make sense of our research in ways that encapsulated all three of our perspectives and specialties while still being true to the women participants in our study. We were searching for something more than what was currently on offer, and Sue had suggested we flesh out our ideas with Anna. We spoke for hours, time punctuated by food and coffee and then finally by the train timetable.

Why are we calling this foraging and what qualities are we attributing to Sue in this story? This excursion, so filled with exploratory musings and deep analytical thinking is emblematic of working with Sue. It is an example of the open-ended and democratic exploration in the act of thinking. There was no 'agenda' to apply Anna Tsing's theory and approach. It was rather that Anna's way of thinking about mushrooms and ruins was an interesting image, and not necessarily where we wanted to end up. In fact, we ended up with musical forms to help us analyse our data (Locke, Lund and Wright 2021). The topic of passion was raised. Anna's observation was that passion seemed to be contained in Danish. We had found, in this excursion initiated by Sue, our particular 'form' for our research; we had discovered mushrooms in unexpected places.

Unexpected connections

Our collective writing approach as a project group has followed the forager's logic of open-ended discovery through sustained attention to what can so easily be passed over and missed. Sue has an eye for detail in even the most

inhospitable intellectual landscapes and a constant curiosity that drives her foraging ways. The unexpected 'patches of emergence' that Tsing (2015) talks about is something that can be looked for within academic ruins, where neoliberalism has scorched all that grows. People are able to make connections necessary for making change that benefits not only themselves, but others. In our writing, we are also making unexpected connections: between philosophy, sociology and anthropology; between three scholars at different stages of their careers. We take time to let things grow. In these industrial landscapes, things need to grow fast, but we adhered to an approach closer to permaculture, where ideas are allowed to flourish at their pace. Guided by Sue, we have resisted speed to ensure the moments of convergence and resonance can happen. Sue has taught us not only to observe, but also to listen.

The politics of foraging

We converged with Sue as young(ish) academics at the beginning of our careers. Kirsten was a visiting scholar wanting to learn about gender and leadership in the university under Sue's tutelage. Rebecca first met Sue as a doctoral student and was later awarded the postdoctoral position in the UNIKE project. In both our academic lives, Sue's generosity and support have been pivotal. These acts of academic stewardship towards us are emblematic of what we are identifying as Sue's politics of foraging. Sue supported us and others to understand how the neoliberal university works and then nurtured our own early ideas and academic growth so that alternatives to the current order are enfused within our work (for examples of how Sue works critically as well as reparatively, see Hyatt et al. 2017; Locke et al. 2021; Wright and Manley 2021). Sue explicitly stated to each one of us, individually and collectively, that we had to believe that we had something important to offer that could contribute to the betterment of the university, that could intervene politically so that a more participatory, inclusive and democratic form of university world-building could emerge. Sue's politics of foraging nurtured the development of ideas, so that these might play a role in rewilding the industrialised landscape of the university. Sue shifts and creates worlds through her understanding of university pedagogy and leadership, but she does this by eschewing ego and bombast and instead looks to the political power of thinking and acting collectively to instigate change. The patches of emergence relate to ideas of organising individuals'

intellectual becoming, but also on the level of how we might organise the university by forensically examining its structures and policy architectures as they are brought to life by the actions of those who live within it. These are the lessons of foraging that we have learnt from Sue.

A politically reflexive scholar – sharp, tireless and generous

Gritt B. Nielsen

One of the first texts I read, as a newly employed PhD fellow on a larger project on which Sue was the principal investigator, was an article by Sue called 'Politically reflexive practitioners' (2004). Sue must have written the article around the time when she transitioned from the United Kingdom in 2003 to become the first professor of educational anthropology at the then Danish University of Education (DPU). I started as her PhD student a few years after her arrival, and, to me, the article offered new and inspiring insights into the ways we can use anthropological fieldwork and analyses to understand and improve our own institutions and work life. Only later, when I came to know Sue better, I realised the extent to which she lives and breathes this kind of 'politically reflexive' anthropology, always being curious about the positions of others and enquiring into the larger political structures within which people's perceptions and actions take shape.

In the article, with her characteristic sensitivity to the shifting and conflicting meanings of keywords, Sue unravels the different – overlapping and competing – understandings of reflexivity and reflectivity in political, sociological and educationalist discourses, and compares them to the notion of reflexivity in anthropological fieldwork and analyses. Anthropological reflexivity, she argues, not only revolves around the researcher's shifting positionality, analytical gaze and questions of representation in academic analyses, it also involves a form of *political* reflexivity through which you analyse the wider political structures in order to act upon and potentially change them. As always, Sue explicitly connects the discursive level with people's everyday lives, activities and experiences, showing how keywords emerge from, intertwine with and influence practice – in this case, her own practice as a university tutor. Her main argument in the text is that students

and scholars can and should become more 'politically reflexive' – that is, they should cultivate reflexive awareness of power relations and political structures within their own institutions or workplaces and develop skills to critique, negotiate and change the wider political order of which they are a part.

And Sue herself? Well, she decidedly enacts and embodies her own anthropological, political and pedagogical vision. Not only has she played a central role in developing the field of the anthropology of policy (see, for example, Shore and Wright 1997b; Shore et al. 2011) and contributing important academic analyses of the transformation of universities from an international perspective (see, for example, Wright et al. 2020); as one of the most 'politically reflexive' scholars I know, she also tirelessly and generously engages in various discussions and initiatives in order to improve the conditions of students and staff members at the university, ranging from local departmental conversations to public debates over national or international policies. I cannot count how many teaching sessions, meetings and seminars I have attended where Sue in an elegant manner has offered a constructive analysis of the situation, located it within a wider set of power dynamics, and presented practical suggestions and initiatives that would enable the involved parties to act and make decisions in their own right. She has encouraged and guided all of us to become politically reflexive about our work and study situation and to engage in the development of possible changes. When supervising and helping students and younger scholars, she is exceedingly generous – with her time, knowledge, ideas – and goes to great lengths to help those within the university who are in a precarious situation or a marginalised position. Her political reflexivity goes hand in hand with a strong sense of justice and an incessant critique of neoliberal marketisation, individualisation and exploitation.

The same year as Sue arrived at the DPU, the Danish Parliament passed a new University Act, which reduced the democratic system of governance in favour of a board with a majority of external members and appointed leaders from the Rector and down to the Heads of Department. With funding from the Danish Research Council, Sue gathered a group, which included me as a PhD fellow, to study the process of reform and its consequences for DPU leaders, staff and students (see Wright et al. 2020). Sue's work on policy anthropology became an important source of inspiration in my PhD project on students' shifting forms of participation (see, for example, Nielsen 2011, 2015). In the years that followed, she persistently analysed

subsequent reforms and changes within the university, focussing, amongst other things, on gender equality, research integrity, co-operative universities and the de-internationalisation of education.

About ten years ago, with her always strong eye for political openings and high sense of political efficacy, Sue instigated a process of establishing a new English taught MA programme in Anthropology of Education and Globalisation to supplement the existing Danish programme in Educational Anthropology and build a more international study environment at DPU. Drawing on their very different educational experiences and social backgrounds, the international group of students could productively and reflexively engage with, exemplify and contest central themes and analyses presented on the programme. They quickly developed strong reflexivity by engaging with each other across difference and experimenting with various ideas about how to put their anthropological training into use in different settings. When the Danish government later decided to reduce the number of English taught programmes, and the MA programme thereafter only could enrol Danish-speaking students, Sue – after, of course, having thoroughly analysed and critiqued the decision (Wright 2022) – energetically started to look for other ways in which we could maintain and develop a form of international educational engagement. Amongst other things, Sue has experimented with new formats for co-teaching courses with scholars from other countries. And currently, she is involved in the European University Alliance Circle U, where, as yet another token of Sue's reflexive approach, she is the academic chair of their so-called 'Think and Do Tank', which engages with students and external stakeholders with the aim of influencing the policy agenda on higher education. To Sue, thinking and doing go hand in hand – you cannot have one without the other. Scholarly thinking should derive from and be relevant to practice and people's everyday lives – it should be put into 'action'.

In recent years, this incitement to make scholarly thinking useful and relevant to people's practices has not only become stronger amongst academics. Politicians have also called for research and education to be more relevant to society. Most often, however, they advocate a narrower and more utilitarian understanding of 'relevance' related to the 'employability' of students, the 'social impact' of research and the 'accountability' of universities to the taxpayers and wider society. In Denmark, like elsewhere, the climate of debate is becoming ever more polarised and researchers, who have worked to connect 'thinking' with 'doing' to create a more just

society, are now criticised by especially right-wing politicians for engaging in politically biased 'pseudo-research' and being too 'activist' in their engagement. In a situation like this, the kind of political reflexivity that Sue has developed and embodied in her life and work can be of great inspiration. We could start with context-sensitive analyses of shifting and competing meanings of keywords – like 'relevance', 'activism' or 'scientific knowledge' – in our institutions and in the public debate and analyse the underlying socio-political orders so as to act upon them and work from the bottom up to creatively imagine and develop new and less polarised spaces. This is just one important pathway that Sue has paved for the rest of us. As an extremely politically reflexive scholar she is sharp, tireless and generous. For this, I know, many of us are deeply grateful!

How to do things with words

A tribute to Sue

Jakob Krause-Jensen

I first met Sue in the aisles of my university library in 1998. This was in the last millennium, when the search for literature could not be done by a few clicks on a mouse but involved a walk to the building where the books and journals were kept. At that first meeting, Sue was just a name on the back of an edited volume, *The Anthropology of Organizations* (Wright 1994). The title was a godsend. I was planning a PhD project about how a Danish company, Bang & Olufsen, used notions of culture in their management practices. At the time, the notion of culture was hotly debated amongst anthropologists. The term was denounced (Abu-Lughod 1991) or defended (Brumann 1999), and the way 'culture' was used beyond the discipline – in anti-immigration discourse, for instance – was scrutinised and criticised (Stolcke 1995). But to my surprise, no anthropologist seemed to pay any attention to the way 'culture' was used in management discourse. Or so I thought until I discovered Sue's work.

In the introduction to the book, Sue gave an overview of previous anthropological work done in corporate settings, from anthropologists' involvement in the Hawthorne experiments in the 1930s to Manchester shop-floor studies in the 1950s and 1960s. And she took a critical look at the way

notions of 'culture' had been used in managerial discourse of 'organisational culture', a theme she also explored in a later article, 'The politicization of culture' (Wright 1998) – this was just what I was looking for.

Even if library material was still not available online, the email was, so I wrote and asked if she would become 'co-supervisor' of my thesis. To my joy and surprise – and quite characteristic of Sue – within a few hours I had a positive reply, and her 'co-supervision' turned out to be the single most important influence on my PhD work. A year later, during my PhD studies, I visited her in England and was met with not only intellectual generosity but also overwhelming hospitality as she and Carol opened their home to me. None of us knew at that point that a few years later they would move to Denmark and Sue and I would become colleagues at the Danish School of Education.

'Culture' at work

When we first met, Sue worked at the Centre for Cultural Studies in Birmingham, and her take on the culture concept was influenced by Raymond Williams (1976) and his notion of 'keywords' and W.B. Gallie's (1956) idea that culture is an 'essentially contested concept', and Sue argued that we should approach 'culture' from an anthropological perspective, from an actor's point of view. The basic trick was 'Wittgensteinian': don't ask for meaning, ask for use! That is, instead of trying to identify essential corporate cultures (as most organisational researchers-*cum*-consultants would do), the anthropological approach, she suggested, would be to look critically at the way powerful people – managers, consultants, experts, politicians – used the word to accomplish things, and to explore how other people responded to that.

As has been pointed out many times, culture is not always helpful as an analytical concept. It rarely carries us beyond common sense and often dulls our perception instead of opening our eyes. As organisational ethnographer John Weeks once put it: 'Culture may be less like a cough and more like a yawn: contagious and with the effect of putting the mind a little bit to sleep' (2004: 34). Indeed, culture is mostly put forward as a claim that people share certain experiences and perspectives. But often the consensus is assumed and exaggerated, and this is also the case in corporate contexts. For one thing, people who inhabit organisations are employees who also have lives outside their organisational commitments. Furthermore, they

have different positions in the organisation – different age, gender, ethnic background etc., and different types of work, and so their perspectives are likely to be dissimilar. So, a useful starting point for analysis would be not to take consensus for granted, but to ask what assumptions are hidden underneath the umbrella term 'culture' and how and by what means 'organisational culture' is communicated and what different participants do and think about that.

Armed with such advice, I looked at corporate culture and value-based management in Bang & Olufsen. As elsewhere, management (with help of consultants) spent considerable time and resources developing and communicating corporate culture and values to make sense of Bang & Olufsen and frame people's experiences and activities within it. I participated as a Human Resources consultant in their work and explored how 'culture' and 'value' were given strategic priority. I studied how the persuasiveness and symbolic force of these ideas of common identity were achieved through edifying narratives of corporate history and by drawing on root metaphors (sport, love, religion, etc.) that helped to form webs of significance – or in one of Sue's favoured terms, 'semantic clusters' (Shore and Wright 2000: 3) – supposed to resonate with employee experiences. Through an ethnographic investigation of these processes, it became clear that the project had unanticipated consequences. The identification of the 'basic values' and a 'corporate religion' intended to create solidarity and cohesion amongst employees instead came to accentuate a split between managerial staff and other parts of the company (Krause-Jensen 2010).

The language of public reform

Shortly after the turn of the millennium, Sue was 'headhunted' and persuaded to come to Denmark to play a key role in the development of the Department of Educational Anthropology at the newly established Danish University of Education (DPU). And in 2006, I was employed in the same department, and we have been colleagues ever since. Sue was well-placed in a department of education because since the mid-1990s she had focussed her research on the British university system. Indeed, one might suppose that it was partly the university reforms and the audit culture that had affected British universities since the 1980s that drove to her 'exile' in Denmark – only to discover the spread of similar ideas and practices in Danish universities. In Denmark, she continued her critical scrutiny of the university

system and, at the same time, together with Cris Shore, she developed an analytical framework to understand it: *The Anthropology of Policy* (1997b; see also Shore et al. 2011). This is an attempt to develop a comprehensive approach to grasp contemporary institutions and processes and modes of governance.

This approach has also been an inspiration to my own work on neoliberal public sector reform. Often, as in Sue and Cris's case and my own, a study of policy implies a study very close to 'home'. 'Home', of course, is a relative term, but arguably studying the university system is about as close as you can get – and as every anthropologist would agree, studying the 'familiar' is difficult as it is embedded in common sense and taken-for-granted practices. As Sue has put it: 'When studying at home . . . the anthropologist [is placed] at the explosive centre of a semiotic paradox – the more you think you know, the less perceptive you are' (Wright 2004: 39). So when studying policy, the challenge is to 'unsettle and dislodge the certainties and orthodoxies that govern the present' (Shore and Wright 1997a: 17).

Together with Sue and a group of colleagues, I studied public sector reform in Denmark. Sue studied the universities, and I studied New Public Management reforms amongst social workers. Over the course of a year, I followed the implementation of Lean management amongst a group of family counsellors, and to make sense of my material, I drew on insights from Sue's work on policy in general and particularly her focus on the language that frames political initiatives.

The anthropology of policy is about being attentive to words and the way they are used to powerful effect. This is necessary because 'political technologies advance by taking what is essentially a political problem, removing it from the realm of political discourse, and recasting it in the natural language of science' (Shore and Wright 1997a: 8). As it is stated on the back of David Osborne and Ted Gaebler's influential book and blueprint for neoliberal reform, *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector* (1992): '*Reinventing Government* is not a partisan book. It focuses not on what government should do, but on how government should work'. It is simply a matter of doing things more efficiently and using resources more prudently.

A key quality of policies is that, once created, they often migrate into new contexts (Shore et al. 2011: 3). Lean is a good example: originating in the Japanese car industry, it has been used extensively in Denmark and elsewhere to reform public sector institutions like hospitals and social services

(Krause-Jensen 2017). It is not surprising that neoliberal reform aiming to marketise and privatise much of the public sector takes inspiration from management concepts coming from the private sector.

Lean is about identifying and eliminating 'waste' in the production process, and who can possibly be against that? In other words, Lean was presented as a 'neutral' technology beyond political discussion. As the authors of *Lean Thinking* wrote in the introduction: 'In the pages ahead, we'll explain in detail what to do and why. Your job, therefore, is simple: just do it!' (Womack and Jones 2003: 12). Lean was part of a policy of neoliberal reform. But Lean itself was a product – a trademarked concept – developed and sold by management consultants. And management consultancy represents a genre with a particular style and particular modes of persuasion: on the one hand, Lean was presented as common sense, requiring neither a gigantic brain nor a magic wand, only determination. On the other hand, Lean was also proposed as something new and exciting, and it was draped in exotic words like *kanban*, *kaizen* and *muda*. Thus, the old and tired idea of cutting costs could indeed be relaunched as a win-win magic trick and fantasy of an eternal process of 'continuous improvement' (*kaizen*) and cutting costs without any loss of quality.

However, the charisma and initial excitement amongst the social workers quickly died out as they discovered that 'waste' was not as unambiguous and straight-forward as it was presented. Despite the prudence and pragmatism by which it was introduced, Lean carried deep implications about how the social workers should perceive the purpose of their work and their relations with clients and colleagues. As one social worker remarked, Lean seemed almost like a 'religious cult'. And this was not only because of the esoteric language, but because Lean had the air of fundamentalism: it was presented as a 'no brainer'– a flawless and simple process to eliminate 'waste'. Consequently, if anything went wrong – and it did – it could not be attributed to the 'perfect policy' but had to be explained by lack of engagement from employees or insufficient commitment from management. In the beginning, Lean was received with open arms and a hope that it would provide help and relief to hard-pressed social workers. But Lean quickly became yet another activity to draw attention away from their core task of helping vulnerable families. In fact, after a few months the initiative imploded as it became all too obvious that the mandatory weekly '*kaizen* meetings' were a 'waste' (of time) – even by Lean's own definition.

Weasel words

In her research, Sue has been attentive to the power of language to form perceptions and instigate action. She has focussed on the use of powerful keywords – 'freedom', 'responsibility', 'quality', 'community', etc. – what she calls 'mobilising metaphors' (Shore and Wright 1997a: 20), which form the ideological backbone of political discourse. The point is not that metaphors always obscure and mislead. As much poetry demonstrates, metaphor can offer sensibility and insight. The point is that metaphors shape our perception of reality in powerful ways, and we should be attentive to and try to unpack their implications and political meanings, including their dangerous ramifications. In fact, Sue uses a powerful metaphor to drive home that point herself, when she talks about 'weasel words' (Wright: 2004: 35) – that is, 'words that suck the life out of words next to them, just as a weasel sucks the egg and leaves the shell. In this way weasel words suck the meaning out of a statement while seeming to keep the meaning intact . . . invokes the meaning of a weasel being sneaky and well able to wriggle out of a tight spot' (Wright and Ørberg 2011: 293). Examples would be 'quality' in the case of the university reform or 'waste' in the case of Lean management.

Sue has been a source of theoretical inspiration, but she has also offered her help as a meticulous reader and critic. Together with Penny Welch, she runs the *LATISS* (*Learning and Teaching in the Social Sciences*) journal, and countless people – myself included – students, colleagues and prospective authors have benefitted from her careful comments and editing. Sue's handwriting has survived the arrival of the computer, and she prefers to offer her comments in a paper version. I remember that a passage in one of my drafts was marked by a small drawing of a parachutist!? – to signify that the paragraph landed on the page from out of the blue – and needed a better introduction. In other words, Sue has helped me cut clutter and sharpen my arguments. And fortunately, I once had the opportunity to return the favour. Some years ago, I helped Sue translate an article she had written about the political transformation of the Danish university system (Wright 2012). The text painted a drab picture of university life: employees competing against each other to secure funding for their research, the value of which was increasingly being defined by business interests. At the time of writing, I had two weeks without teaching, and my writing refuge was a small cottage in the mountains in Andalusia in the south of Spain. Sue's points and critique of the university system were undeniable, yet I had a

sense of cognitive dissonance as I sat there on the terrace under the lemon tree, iced tea within reach, writing about the hardships of university life.

Likewise, it strikes me that Sue represents a happy paradox. Sue has spent large parts of her academic life delivering an important and well-placed critique of audit culture and other neoliberal forms of governance, which have eroded academic freedom, compromised research quality and created a lot of misery in academia. And under her own presumptions, she could easily have been a victim of that system. It is a source of comfort to think about her own very successful career and accomplishments within it, which seem to suggest that not everything is completely haywire.

Susan Wright

Anthropologist, activist, colleague and friend

Cris Shore

When Søren suggested organising a Festschrift to celebrate Sue's work and legacy, I embraced the idea with enthusiasm. As the articles in this special issue highlight, Sue Wright is an anthropologist and scholar of extraordinary depth and breadth whose scholarly work has contributed to a wide range of important issues and disciplinary areas – from social anthropology, cultural studies and community development, to organisations, social policy and higher education. That work began in the 1970s with her first fieldwork in Doshman Ziari in the mountainous hinterlands of south-western Iran – a community with whom she has maintained a lifelong relationship of friendship, solidarity and support – and continued with her work for English local authorities examining rural community decision-making in Cleveland and Lincolnshire, two regions in the north of England. Her contributions also include the major role she has played in establishing new organisations such as the British Association for Anthropology in Policy and Practice (BASAPP), the UK Higher Education Academy's Subject Centre for Politics, Sociology and Anthropology (C-SAP), creating the anthropology of policy as a disciplinary sub-field, and co-founding a new journal (the one hosting this special issue) and two book series with Stanford University Press and Berghahn. It would be remiss to not also mention Sue's leadership role in numerous UK-, Danish- and European-funded projects exploring

various dimensions of higher education reform and analysing universities as sites for understanding the effects of neoliberalisation and globalisation and the different ways that people respond to, and engage with, these processes. Some parts of that journey we have shared together thanks to mutual interests in political processes and systems of governance and in how anthropological methods and concepts can be used to analyse the way power works to shape individuals, organisations and whole societies. These themes have provided fertile ground for our collaborative writing over many years.

I first met Sue in 1988 at a workshop at the University of Western England (UWE) on the uses of fieldwork projects in teaching undergraduate anthropology, which we were both advocates of, unlike many more established British anthropologists who seemed to hold more traditional – and elitist – views about teaching the discipline and who should be allowed to conduct ethnographic fieldwork. Sue and I began working more closely in 1990, when she was elected as the new convenor of BASAPP, an organisation that aimed to bring together academic anthropologists, students and people with anthropology PhDs working in various professions outside of the academy. At its height, BASAPP had some 450 individual members. I took on the role as editor of its newsletter, and, together with a group of very dedicated colleagues (Oonagh O'Brien, Tom Selwyn, Stuart Thompson, Christine McCourt, Kevin Meethan and others), we set about transforming it into a journal, which we named *Anthropology in Action*. The journal's main aim was to provide a platform for developing these new areas and critical perspectives that the term 'applied anthropology' did not really capture (see Wright 1995; Shore and Wright 1996). The seeds for what was later to become the anthropology of policy developed from those early workshops, seminars and discussions as we sought to develop new ways to use anthropological methodologies and perspectives to rethink the field and open up alternative spaces for analysis by 'studying up' and 'studying through' and interrogating the work and lives of policy. Sue and I have continued to work together collaboratively and sometimes in parallel. In 1992, we both left the United Kingdom to take up jobs outside the country ('refugees from Thatcherism', as Sue has sometimes described it) and used the experience of living in another country to continue developing the topics that had fuelled our interests. This included understanding 'policy' as an organising principle and the worlds of policy-makers (Shore and Wright 1997b, 2011), tracking the rise of 'audit culture' and its effects (Shore and Wright

2000, 2015a, 2015b, forthcoming), and reflecting critically and reflexively on higher education reform and the way academic capitalism is reshaping the mission and the meaning of the public university (Wright and Shore 2017; Shore and Wright 2020).

Three themes epitomise Sue's work and legacy for me. The first is her love of, and dedication to, anthropology – as a discipline, a way of seeing, an epistemic community and, perhaps more fundamentally, a disposition or habitus. Having studied history as an undergraduate, Sue only encountered anthropology as a graduate student. Discovering anthropology was, in her words, 'like slipping into a warm bath . . . it just felt so wonderful. Here were people connecting what was happening in government and what was happening amongst ordinary people. It was a whole different vocabulary and a very different way of thinking about people and events. For me, it felt like coming home. I suddenly realised, this is the discipline that I wanted to be part of' (Wright 2013: 216).

And she did. But if anthropology has given Sue her career and an Archimedean standpoint from which to change the world, Sue has given to anthropology a toolkit of useful ideas for thinking and acting upon the world. Sue's kindness and commitment towards her students is the second major theme. As the contributors to this issue illustrate, she is an outstanding mentor, generous with her time and her ideas. As a supervisor, she always goes the extra mile in supporting her students and helping them to make their own discoveries. The third theme is Sue's extraordinarily skills as an organiser. Throughout the many research projects, networks and multi-disciplinary research teams she has led, I have seldom encountered anyone so effective in bringing people together and eliciting the best from their collaborative efforts. Much of that talent developed from her ethnographic studies in Iran and Cleveland, watching and learning how communities organise themselves to solve common problems and applying those insights and techniques as instruments for 'pushing back' against oppressive systems of power. Sue brings to her practice the skills of an independent, engaged and reflexive scholar who has perfected that rare skill of scholar-driven activism. For her, anthropology has always been the 'uncomfortable discipline' in so far as it questions received wisdom and holds those in power to account. Yet it is a discipline that fits most comfortably with her own critical outlook and sensibilities. Working with such a wonderful colleague over these past thirty-five years has been an honour. It has also been richly rewarding and highly enjoyable.

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