

## **Industry Going Public**

### **Rethinking Knowledge and Administration**

*Alberto Corsín Jiménez*

Knowledge is currently undergoing some remarkable institutional re-locations. Universities are re-organizing themselves in inter-disciplinary schools (cf. Becher and Trowler, 2001); they are also signing up collaborative knowledge-transfer agreements with industry (Etzkowitz et al., 1998). Social scientists are sitting in on hospitals' ethical committees and are invited as observers and co-participants in government, industrial and scientific task forces. Anthropologists, to bring the point home, are now appointed to lectureships in the anthropology of design engineering or the anthropology of organizations; they are employed as professional industrial ethnographers and are much sought-after consultants in the advertising and marketing industries (see, for example, Gellner and Hirsch, 2001). Traditional sites of knowledge-production, like laboratories, academic departments and research centres, are opening up to new social partnerships and alliances (cf. Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). Knowledge, it would seem, is going social.

Helen Nowotny and her associates tell us that modes of producing scientific knowledge have recently undergone a Kuhnian paradigmatic transformation: science's unilateral engagement with society has turned around and the validation of knowledge as scientifically robust is no longer a matter for scientists to resolve on their own (Nowotny et al., 2001). It has become instead a larger social agenda. Today society decides what makes good science. The question of robustness is therefore crucial (Strathern, 2005). Science and society need new terms of association: new public forums (Nowotny et al. call them 'agora') where their stakes in knowledge are allowed to co-evolve: science and society as one intellectual project. The agenda comes with certain requisites for building social capital. We need, for instance, to trust our scientists; our scientists also need to be responsible (O'Neill, 2002a; O'Neill, 2002b). Trust and responsibility emerge thus as society's new idioms of self-exteriorization: what society comes to look like and how it comes to 'know' itself, in the twenty-first century. Trust and responsibility function as a shorthand for social robustness, which is in turn

an index of publicness. In this scenario, science's new institutionalization fares as society's public knowledge.

When transposed to the world of institutions, trust and responsibility look like audits. Institutions become accountable to society and hence robust, through the operation of audit. Audits turn an institution inside out for the public (Power, 1994). Now, despite its obvious linkages to the new contemporary assemblages of science and knowledge, it is intriguing how little attention the question of institutional robustness has drawn from the anthropology of science, or social studies of science at large. It is even more remarkable how little attention industry itself, as the premier site of science's 'public-ization', has attracted from scholars (cf. Miller and O'Leary, 1994). (I use the term 'industry' to capture a particular form of the institutionalization of scientific, research, academic knowledge.) What does the encounter between science and society look like when making its appearance as a protégé of industry? Why is the industrial invisible in our accounts of the flow of (scientific) knowledge? And what of industry itself: how does industry 'go public'?

In this chapter I take to the task of answering some of these questions by drawing an analytical analogy between the institutional publics of science and corporations (industry). Corporate welfare programmes make for an interesting comparison with science and society initiatives because the politics of 'public-ization' permeate both in similar ways. The question of delineating 'publics' emerges as a central concern in both agendas, as does the institutional reorganization of knowledge, which on both accounts is shuffled around between the interstices of the state and the corporate sector in novel ways. Another point of comparison appears in the form of an omission: studies of corporate welfare programmes rely copiously on information about the bureaucratic and administrative workings of corporations. Administration, on the other hand, is conspicuously absent from the social study of scientific practices.

My aim in this chapter is to provide an anthropological outline to some of the questions arising from such an analytical comparison. I turn the current concern with science and society programmes inside out in order to map out the contours of a hypothetical inquiry: what publics would an industry and society programme make appear (cf. Whyte, 1971/[1946])? Indeed, what would a so-called 'public understanding of industry' tell us about knowledge and its social constituencies? Where, in sum, would an institutional anthropology of knowledge take us?

A tentative and provisional answer has to do with administration.<sup>1</sup> Administration re-vertebrates knowledge at the institutional level and carries it forward. Administration is knowledge's first still point: the place where knowledge settles down temporarily and from where it initiates its institutional travails. Administration is, of course, also central to the operation of audit. It is the point where the organization goes public for society. Administration, in sum,

is central to the scaling-out of industry (science) into society, a major player in the realignment of the playing field of corporate and public interests. An anthropology of administration provides a privileged location from where to analyse the effective interaction of knowledge, publicness and institutional sociality. The place where knowledge becomes productively public.

## **Public Epidemiology**

Epidemiology moves in and out of society in surprising ways. In his study of pharmaceutical marketing practices in Argentina, Andrew Lakoff cites a psychiatrist, editor of a leading Argentinean journal of psychiatry, to this same effect. Lakoff's informant is commenting derisively about the shift to neuroscientific explanations in American psychiatry. He links the latter to globalization and American imperialism, and observes how such tendencies 'in the same way that they open the market to foreign products and liquidate the state, they liquidate the forms of hospital care, the training criteria, training institutions, and the public university as the centre of knowledge-production' (Lakoff, 2005: 205).

Lakoff's informant is rehearsing arguments and ideas well known to social students of science and anthropology. Science, he remarks cynically, is caught up in fuzzy political webs, where the institutions of the state, welfare and scholarship stand in ambiguous mutual tension and often undergo profound reorientations. As it turned out, however, the cynic himself was eventually caught unaware by the cynical machine. In the late 1990s, Gador, a leading pharmaceutical company, launched a marketing campaign that revolved around anxieties about globalization. The tone and approach of the campaign was well received by the Argentinean psychiatric establishment, more aligned to a type of social psychiatry that is aware and critical of power relations. This was followed up by a second campaign, which sharpened the theme of globalization by refocusing on the symptomatology of vulnerability. The campaign was launched by a symposium on stress, anxiety and depression and was convened by, amongst others, Lakoff's informant.

Gador's bold marketing campaign pre-empted the psychiatrists' critical discourse. They turned marketing into an instrument for critical diagnosis or, as Lakoff puts it, a framework that 'shows awareness of the ethos of the market' (Lakoff, 2005: 206). If the ethos is critical then marketing espouses a critical ideology too. During the late 1990s' Argentinean economic crisis, market strategists tapped into the social epidemiological model favoured by the local psychiatric establishment, using the crisis as the basis for promoting the medicalization of social suffering. Lakoff observes that despite the absence of robust evidence to support the claim, the media, the marketers and the pharmaceutical industry all agreed that 'the economic crisis was driving up psychopharmaceutical sales'

(Lakoff, 2005: 209). Lack of and concern over the permanence of jobs fuelled, they argued, the sale of antidepressants.

Marketers' 'knowledge' of the market helps them invent the market as a social object. More to the point, their technologies of knowledge in fact allow them to re-calibrate the market as a 'public' object. The data on territorial and prescription sales that pharmaceutical audit firms sell to the industry, for example, allow the latter to generate models of the market where this figures as a 'kind of living entity', something that, in the words of one of Lakoff's informants, 'evolves', 'shrinks', and 'grows' (Lakoff, 2005: 201). The ups and downs of the market are used to re-interpret society's mental health state, as when the economic crisis was invoked to explain the rise in the sale of anti-depressants – market sales read as symptoms of public health.

'Public' is not a word that Lakoff uses often.<sup>2</sup> (Although I note here in passing that 'public' is the term used by his informant, the journal's editor, to describe universities' ownership of knowledge.) He does, however, describe the marketers' knowledge as 'private': knowledge that takes a proprietary form, owned by and sold to corporations. This is information laboriously collected by sales representatives and market analysts, extracted from the 'public domain' (Lakoff, 2005: 211) and commodified for private (corporate) use. The institutional movement of social knowledge in and out of different transactional registers works to redefine the transactional spaces themselves: data on prescription sales is turned into proprietorial knowledge; sales data turned into media scares about national mental health; doctors' ideological stances turned into marketing campaigns. The new institutional routes that knowledge takes to gain hold over its own sense of robustness thus points to the way in which private knowledge is in fact gaining purchase over public definitions. We saw an example of this above: how market indicators were being employed to measure and estimate the state of public health – robust knowledge thus redefined privately as public capital (or lack thereof). The transactions and travelling of knowledge thus hold out the public as an encompassing derivative, the socialized remainder through which private relations are ethicalized. In this context, the public emerges as the social arena that legitimates the market. So long as there is a 'public' to which the market can be held accountable to, market relations remain socially robust (ethical) (Strathern, 2005).

The question of how the public is constituted in action is in fact the focus of Cori Hayden's study of bioprospecting agreements in Mexico (Hayden, 2004). Here knowledge of and claims to natural resources are expressed in a variety of idioms, articulated in terms that institutionalize calls on behalf of the 'national patrimony', communal and indigenous traditional knowledge, market entitlements, corporate intellectual property rights, even the practice of 'culture-free' bioscientific research. The 'public sphere', Hayden writes, 'is intimately tied

## *Industry Going Public*

not just to depictions of the properties in nature, but to highly charged questions about potential property in nature.’ (Hayden, 2004: 133) She describes, for instance, the project of a leading UNAM (Mexico National University) ethnobotanical team working on analysing traditional herbal medicines. The project is part of the US government’s International Cooperative Biodiversity Groups (ICBG) program, an example of the kind of multilateral agreements that came in the wake of the 1992 UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The CBD was signed to provide a framework for regulating north-south traffic in biological resources and placed a strong premium on benefit sharing and collaboration with source communities. Holding a rather maverick position within the ICBG framework, the UNAM team has for years been carrying out its prospecting in urban marketplaces, purchasing and collecting plants from market vendors. In this context, the team has redefined the ‘market’ and the information therein contained as part of the national ‘public’ domain. As one of the researchers put it to Hayden: ‘It doesn’t make sense to treat vendors as sources of knowledge who deserve compensation: when you buy the plants, you buy the information, and no further obligations are involved’ (Hayden, 2004: 125). Hayden hastens to add that the team’s aim is not to refuse benefits to source communities, but that they have instead enrolled local participants in alternative collaborative alliances (with NGOs, with artisans’ cooperatives, with groups of traditional healers) that circumvent the ‘logics of territorially-bounded, property-like claims to authorship and dominion’ (Hayden, 2004: 127). We see science here, then, opening up its own political space of action, a conduit for the travelling of both research and political knowledge.

Hayden and Lakoff’s ethnographies of science in action make for an interesting comparison. They both show how science swims in and out of politics in different registers, and how the political itself is redefined in accordance with such navigations. They also show that the politics of socializing science – of what Hayden calls the ‘public-ization’ of knowledge (Hayden, 2003) – is not simply, nor only, a situational battle in the staking out of political claims and assets. Politics is played out in different registers from different institutional heights, and there is a different remit and purchase to, say, how the pharmaceutical industry defines its market, to how a group of psychiatrists define welfare or well-being. The same applies to bioprospecting: the ICGM’s idea of a ‘market’ as mediated by, and inductive of, benefit-sharing with communities does not translate neatly onto the UNAM’s ethnobotanists’ use of urban markets, where herbal knowledge has no authors and flows through truncated, short-term depositions of information. Not all markets emplace, and are emplaced within, the same public. We may redescribe this by saying that both Lakoff and Hayden’s analyses point to the different ways in which (scientific, technical) knowledge appears ‘public’ in and to society: how and where society recognises ‘public knowledge’ as its own. For not all trades or industries ‘go public’ in the same way. Some, like pharmaceutical

firms, 'industrialize' society to keep their own self-images and self-projections stable; others, like the critical psychiatrists vision of imperialism, 'de-industrialize' society, slicing up the social in ways that make it easier to talk of redistributive justice and public ownership.

The question of where does knowledge start to become productively public, then, is not trivial. And here I would like to suggest that hidden yet animating both Lakoff and Hayden's ethnographies – sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly so – is the presence of industry. Here, in industry, is where the relational meets the institutional: where sociality holds together in the form of and for a public. In this context, industry remains latent to both Lakoff and Hayden's analyses and folds unto itself the poignant politico-economic predicament that underpins both scenarios. For industry is 'political' science in action. Technology, politics and ethics come together as a powerful institutional assemblage in industry and it is this assemblage that opens up the political spaces wherein different 'publics' take shape and become meaningful (cf. Ong and Collier, 2005). There is a further twist to this, however. For if science goes political and public in industry (if industry is science's public face), the question remains as to how industry itself goes public; that is, what in industry remains stable and recognizable as industry, when industry goes social. How, in other words, does industry fare institutionally in recognition spaces other than its own? The answer, I venture to say, is administration.

## **Administration**

Administration is industry's public. There are two ways in which this can be said to be so. One is through the operation of the institution of audit, a topic of much recent scholarly coverage (for example, Power, 1994; Shore and Wright, 1999; Strathern, 2000). Audit makes certain organizational processes explicit to themselves. It promotes organizational self-consciousness and, in this sense, it is an example of public accountability. Audit, however, evinces an administration worried about its own administrative process. It is therefore administration gone paranoid rather than public.

The second mode in which the public figures in administration has to do with administration as a process rather than an object of self-analysis. Before the days when audit worked as a surrogate for proper administration there was a time when administration was audit: where the administrative process itself was conscious of its public or social dimension. Administration, then, not as the public to industry but as industry's (self-) public. This is of course what bureaucracy itself meant for Weber: a system of administration of proportional forms; proportional, that is, to the size and workings of rationalizing modernity (Weber, 1946). Bureaucracy was to industrialism as society was to economy: a social size for a social process.

## *Industry Going Public*

The question of proportionality, of the sizes of sociality, has often gone missing in critical reviews of the work of bureaucracy. Yet it is crucial. Focus on the political economy of officialdom, or on its statist or managerial ethos, has often led scholars to lose sight of what keeps the social life of bureaucracy in place, acting as the conduit to the circulation and eventual institutionalization of its knowledge flows: administration. Administration is the social size of a certain social process, namely, institutionalized organization. It is different from management and different from bureaucracy because it pervades both yet it is not reducible to either. Analyses of the taxonomic (Douglas, 1986; Handelman, 1981), praxo-symbolic (Herzfeld, 1992) or power-laden (Heyman, 1995) effects of bureaucracy do not always make explicit that whatever bureaucracy does, as a system of knowledge it always does so through administration. (It does so in other ways too, hence the relevance of these analyses, but administration is always already there.) Administration is an industry's working notion of a social relationship: the shape that sociality takes when cut out in the format of institutionalized organization. Administration, in sum, re-sizes the structures of industry, both inside and outside industry, so that whatever industry goes on to become it will always retain, at whatever scale, a sense of self-similarity.<sup>3</sup> Administration may appear in different forms: meetings (Schwartzman, 1987), projects (Lundin and Söderholm, 1998), evaluation committees (Brenneis, 1994), interdisciplinary teams (Strathern, 2004b), audits (Miller, 2003) – yet it is the one structure that will always be mobilized to keep stable a sense of institutional robustness (Strathern, 2005: 467). No administration, no sense of institutional self.

### **Public and Institutional Robustness**

On 21 June 1928, the office of the General Manager of the Chilean headquarters of the Lautaro Nitrate Company in Santiago, sent out a letter to Francisco Simunovic, *administrador* (manager) of the Santa Luisa nitrate refinery in the northern Chilean province of Taltal. The letter acknowledges receipt of a previous correspondence and orders Mr Simunovic to 'bring the matter to a close'. The matter in question is a reported indictment against Carlos Miranda, the refinery's local school teacher, who had opposed and prevented the raising of the national flag on 21 May, the day of the commemoration of the naval battle of Iquique, a Chilean national holiday. In the letter, Mr Simunovic is prompted to travel to Taltal to meet the local governor and persuade him to drop all charges against Mr Miranda. Mr Simunovic is also alerted to the fact that the office of the general manager will shortly be getting in touch with the provincial governor, based in Antofagasta, to make sure that, should the matter reach his hands, he will not

pass it on to the Home Office. The letter concludes with an observation of a general kind, which also explains why the firm reacted with such urgency to the whole affair: 'A foreign corporation cannot be exposed to the accusation of not commemorating the country's national holidays nor the larger patriotic sentiment of its workers and school children.'<sup>4</sup>

The letter makes for an extraordinary exemplar. It locates itself firmly in a system of administration (acknowledging previous correspondences); it carries forward a set of orders and mandates that map out the corporation's bureaucratic powers and remit (from headquarters to local nitrate refineries; from municipal authorities to the Home Office) and it shows institutional sensibility of public issues (national history and patriotic sentiment). In fact, the letter shows that the corporation's awareness of its own institutional robustness depends on it taking charge of the public, seriously. Only as a public institution is the corporation robust as a capitalist organization.

The letter makes for an extraordinary exemplar in a programme of industrial 'public-ization'. It is part of the history of the Chilean saltpetre mining industry in the years of its 'industrialization', c.1917–30, when, fearing the crowding-out of Chilean saltpetre by German synthetic nitrates (as indeed eventually happened), local entrepreneurs and British and American capitalists pushed for the technological upgrade and corporatization of the industry. Corporate welfarism, nationalist rhetoric, labour and gender politics, technoscience, and turn-of-the-century aspirations for progress came together in the invention of a new industry for the Chilean public, and in renewing the public's interest in the moribund affairs of the country's most vital export industry. Crucially, turning the industry inside out for the public (for the professional classes and the political elites) was only possible through the development of another industrial achievement in its own right: the setting-up of a formidable bureaucratic and administrative machinery, an intramural institution to which the industry obligatorily became accountable.

Until the late 1920s, production in the nitrate desert was organized around small nitrate refineries, known as *oficinas*, which hired individual labourers on a piece-rate basis. As early as 1878, there were already 165 refineries operating in the desert (Durruty, 1993: 30), creating a vast network of proto-capitalist outlets in the periphery of the world's driest wilderness. Distant as they were from both the coast and the capital city, Santiago, the social organization of the mining encampments came under the governance structures of the nitrate corporations. They were administered by the corporations as company towns (Stickell, 1979; Garces Feliu, 1999; Gonzalez Miranda, 2002), which assumed all responsibility on matters of institutional organization and social welfare, such as housing, health-care, schooling, safety, educational and recreational activities. The refineries' effective status as company towns meant that administrators had to do double duty as welfare managers and mining empresarios. From the 1920s onwards, the



## *Industry Going Public*

nitrate industry employed corporate welfare policies to redefine their relationship with the Chilean state (cf. Tone, 1997; Mandell, 2002), which effectively withdrew its presence from the desert and remained very much in the background until the 1960s. In this context, statist relationships took a corporate proprietorial form, with the corporations allocating and handing over housing to workers, taking charge of schooling and the routing of youth into vocational and professional education, ‘owning’ the courts and judicial system, drafting their own calendar of holidays and so forth. Hence the care with which the General Manager noted in the letter above that the industry should not be seen to disrespect the symbols of the nation-state. The magic of the state had somehow to be made not to disappear (Taussig, 1997).

Administrating the company-towns was a complex affair. Administrators had to embrace simultaneously an ethos of public service and a corporatist mentality. Thus the double standards and the aura of secrecy. The letter above was indeed stamped as ‘reserved business’ and we know from Weber that secrecy is one of the hallmarks of bureaucratic administration. ‘Every bureaucracy’, wrote Weber, ‘seeks to increase the superiority of the professionally informed by keeping their knowledge and intentions secret. Bureaucratic administration always tends to be an administration of “secret sessions”: in so far as it can, it hides its knowledge and action from criticism’ (Weber, 1946: 233). It would certainly seem from the above that it is in the nature of bureaucracy to conceal its own openings, to distribute and make (public) knowledge travel so as to create its own communities of experts. A second set of examples will make this clearer.

### **Knowledge’s Enclosures**

The epistolary tradition gives away administration’s secretive nature. Letter writing personalizes the institutional relation; it also turns into paperwork what could have been said verbally. It humanizes and formalizes all at once. It carries the source of its own invisibility in its visible format, alerting us to the ‘public secrecy’ (Taussig, 1999) that appears to characterize industrial relations. The letter format evinces the extent to which administration re-vertebrates institutional relationships through the elusive standard of its recursive protocol. Letters both extract themselves from, and induce, other letters, setting up a moving wall and benchmark for future correspondence – and future relations. Administration re-futurizes the institution.

On 12 April 1928, five school teachers from the Oficina Chacabuco wrote to the General Inspector of Oficinas at the headquarters in Oficina José Santos Ossa. Two regional newspapers had recently quoted the Provincial Director of Education on the appalling quality of teachers at Chacabuco. The teachers, on

reading the piece, were dismayed. Their surprise was compounded by the fact that the Director of Education was only reporting what Enrique Peralta Torres, the Director of all Chacabuco schools, had previously told him. They felt offended and insulted – more so because Peralta Torres had publicly apologized to them in a previous communication. The teachers enclosed a copy of the letter, where the director explained to them that he had been mis-quoted when saying that staffing of educational centres in Chacabuco was insufficient, not incompetent. The teachers, however, made it clear they did not believe the director's mistake was genuine. At a meeting with him on 9 April, the teachers had brought up the issue of his recent behaviour, to which Peralta Torres arrogantly replied that the teachers had not been behaving properly either: they had not been adhering to school regulations. The teachers brought the matter to the attention of the General Inspector because they knew the director's ways, and they felt it was important to state in writing their position before new developments start turning things around.

The teachers were right. In an undated letter sent to the Provincial Director of Education, presumably written shortly after the publication of the newspapers' pieces, Peralta Torres reported the shock that the articles brought to the families of Chacabuco. 'The people of Chacabuco', he says, 'were shocked ... yet honoured to have in me a Director with no ambition other than the preaching of truth and knowledge ... They all acknowledge that my conduct was just and patriotic.'<sup>5</sup> In his missive the director mixed criticism of his peers with self-congratulatory passages and interspersed references to both men's friendship. He also bragged about the good spirit of companionship amongst teachers, despite their incompetence otherwise, in no small measure because of the frankness with which he dealt with and enlightened them.

Three further pieces of correspondence allow us to see the way the incident kept building up and at least one of the ways in which it was resolved. On 30 April, Peralta Torres sent a letter to the Administrator of Chacabuco. He alerted him to the fact that one of the schoolteachers, Carlos Riveros, did not go to work that day, a fault that made him eligible to being fired under Article 15 of the Law of School's Internal Regulations (*Ley de Regimen Interno de las Escuelas*). On that very same day, Peralta Torres prepared a second report on Riveros, which he also sent to the refinery's administrator. The report contained two pages of highly charged, personal vindictive statements. It opened, for instance, with the following assertion: 'I am writing to let you know that Mr Carlos Rivero, a teacher at one of our schools, is a pernicious character.' He further noted that Rivero is an 'enemy of the Educational Reform, for he always goes against the programme of progress, order and new educational tendencies that I seek to develop for the School.' The list of indictments went on: 'He does not comply with the law, nor the School's internal regulations'; 'he inflicts corporal punishment to the children'; 'he is poorly

## *Industry Going Public*

qualified, and his only ambition is to receive a salary for as little work he can do'; he was also accused of stealing tools that belong to the school and refusing to return them when found out. On 4 May the administrator of Chacabuco wrote to the General Inspector at José Santos Ossa endorsing the accusations levied against Rivero by Peralta Torres and requesting permission to suspend the teacher. On 16 May the administrator wrote again to the General Inspector asking for permission to appoint a new teacher following Rivero's resignation.

On 25 August 1931, the Chief Superintendent of Antofagasta's nitrate refineries, based in Chacabuco, wrote to the Antofagasta Region Police Commissioner. The letter was marked 'confidential' and referred to previous correspondence also stamped with that rubric.<sup>6</sup> The Superintendent wrote, he said, in anticipation of some possible developments. He had been following the recent activities of Luis Varas, director of the local public school. He was ignorant of, or preferred not to refer to, Mr Varas' actions inside the school but had good reason to believe they were like what had been made 'public'. He suspects such behaviour went 'against all principles of education, and against, also, the *oficina's* order and peace.' He was making the information available to the Commissioner in case the latter deems convenient to pass it on to the Provincial Director of Primary Education.

The Superintendent's letter was measured in the extreme, if not actually opaque in many of its passages. It was drafted in a bullet-point format and kept referring to external documents, some of which were enclosed. (The archives contained no copies of the enclosures.) He mentioned, for instance, a public speech that Varas gave on 30 July and to which he dragged his students, although it was otherwise poorly attended, and which was published in a local newspaper two days later. He enclosed a copy of the published version of the speech but provided no insight as to what it says. A second point refers to Varas sending telegraphs on behalf of a Workers' Committee (*Comité Obrero*) to a local newspaper reporting the death of a fellow worker. The dead man's widow was cited as saying she knew nothing about her husband being involved in political affairs. Copies of the telegraphs and a press clipping were also attached. Next, the Superintendent recounted Varas' self-appointment, on 21 August, to the Secretariat of the Frente Unico Civilista, Chacabuco's first ever political organization (which is disputable). The Superintendent was keen to stress the political character of the organization and to that effect enclosed copies of three flyers that were handed out to workers in the *oficina* over the past few days. Last, the Superintendent described Varas' refusal to involve his students in the celebration of the forthcoming fiestas patrias (national festivities), 17–19 September, on account of the risk of them being sunburned, when the matter came up at one of the meetings of the Committee for the preparation of the festivities. No documents were enclosed.

A letter's publics are sometimes not even public to the letter itself. The Superintendent wrote to the Commissioner so that the latter could, in turn, pass the report on to the Provincial Director of Primary Education. He referred his concern about the possible educational consequences of Varas's behaviour. He did not know much about pedagogy, but feared his behaviour inside the class might mirror what was 'publicly' known of him. Of course, what the Superintendent was really concerned about were the political activities of a potentially problematic labour activist and unionizer. The trouble was that politics made the magic of the state reappear; indeed, the police officers themselves were, or could be, re-agents in such potentially magical re-enchantment. And we know the company towns were corporately engineered to keep the state at bay. It was best, then, to fold the magic away, to hide it under, say, education. Best to 'enclose' the matter away, in copies of telegraphs, press clippings, flyers and other such items of 'public' knowledge and information. Public knowledge thrice enclosed: in education, in informational attachments, in a letter marked 'confidential'.

All too public was Peralta Torres' vicious attack on his staff, and on school teacher Carlos Rivero in particular. He told the press about it, and told the Provincial Director of Education, as well as the families of the children and, lest we thought he shied away from confrontation, told the teachers themselves at a meeting with them. The teachers retorted, of course. They wrote to the General Inspector of Oficinas, enclosing a self-inculpatory note written by Peralta Torres where he apologized for being mis-quoted. The enclosure was the teachers' claim to robust information. To little avail, unfortunately. The last we know is that the administrator of Chacabuco took the matter into his own hands and, 10 days later, Riveros resigned.

An analysis of the three cases of epistolary administration throws a number of issues into relief. Information and knowledge, for one, make their own claims to robustness through different expert and professional communities. The exchanges themselves conjure and legitimate the 'communities'. People appear and disappear in their institutional capacities at various junctures in the flow of information and every moment of institutional appearance delineates the field and definition of robust knowledge over which actors are staking out their expert claims. Robust or not, for instance, Chacabuco's administrator only took charge of the Peralta Torres' case when knowledge had reached a boiling point; he only made his appearance on stage when 'robustness', 'knowledge' and his own professional (expert) status intersected at a particular moment of 'public' recognition.

The boiling point of public recognition signals a second instance of contrast between the Varas and the Peralta Torres affairs. It concerns the other side – the hidden or secret side of that moment of public overvisibility: the moment when the question of the public itself became a secretive affair. Take the case of the enclosures. 'Not enough enclosures' is perhaps the thought that crossed the mind

## *Industry Going Public*

of Chacabuco's administrator when he looked at the teachers' correspondence and decided to endorse Peralta Torres' vindictive campaign instead. The teachers resort to 'external' evidence made for a feeble competitor against Peralta Torres' 'public' exhibitionism. Perhaps the teachers should have learned from Chacabuco's Superintendent and should have 'enclosed' their own enclosures. They should have turned the public robustness they were seeking inside out, and lightly touched their supply of information with an aura of secrecy. They should have reinvented and disguised themselves as an expert community by resorting to secrecy (cf. Cohen, 1971), exposing knowledge's self-enclosure in expertise and secrecy – and thus defending themselves.

This brings me to a third point, which is about administration's own sense of robustness. I said above that a letter's publics are sometimes not even public to the letter itself. No fetishism (of the letter) was intended. Gilbert Herdt criticizes Simmel for what he calls his 'miserly theory of secrecy' (Herdt, 1990). In this view, secrecy 'is about society, not about itself: secrecy must always refer to something other than itself, because, for Simmel, social reality is vested in society, not in the secret' (Herdt, 1990: 365). For this reason, Herdt prefers to view 'secret ideas and practices' as 'signs of themselves, not of what is outside of the secret system (i.e., "society")' (Herdt, 1990: 368). The efficacy of secrecy lies in its capacity to create its own natural kinds, in opening an ontological space for itself, that is, for the selves that inhabit it. Secrecy operates by fabricating 'an ordering of reality, a classification of persons, things and events, which must be kept separate' (Herdt, 1990: 368). It is (a new) society that lies dormant in the secret. It is secrecy that informs society, not society that animates the secret.

Secrecy's agency helps explain the letter's ignorance of its own publics. We have seen above how administration creates its own space for secrecy, a new secret order where certain categories of expert judgement, information and sociality take frontstage. Trade unionists, widows, children with sunburn, telegraphs, copies of political speeches and flyers populate the periphery of the Luis Varas affair. They extend the administrative agency of the letter into uncertain constituencies, into vague and porous publics. They open up a secret public for Luis Varas' political activities – conjured through surreptitious administrative attachments. Hence the fetishism of the letter and hence the power of the enclosure, the seduction of the attachment. The enclosure makes information robust by virtue of its very self-eclipsing, that is, by dis-placing its own claims to knowledge outside itself. It plays on the public/secrecy reversal to its own institutional advantage. Perhaps, in fact, that is the strength of administration: that it is a self-eclipsing mode of making knowledge available.<sup>7</sup> Administration allows for the nesting, indeed the 'interleaving', of knowledge (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994/[1991]: 50). It is a system of knowledge that, by definition, can only work when the knowledge itself is layered – 'admini-strated', stratified into and outside itself.<sup>8</sup> The exchanges

of letters work as the structures through which institutional relationships re-vertebrate their conceptions of public knowledge. After all, administration is administration's most robust witness.

## **Conclusion**

Marilyn Strathern has recently contrasted research and management models of knowledge and has observed that whereas the former takes knowledge's openings and bifurcations as its focus of interest, the latter is concerned with knowledge's closures and products (Strathern, 2004a). Whereas criticism is inherent to the former, it is derivative if not an obstacle to the latter. Making knowledge flow in the research mode requires very different 'organizational' skills from those deployed in the management mode. Knowledge management and the management of knowledge are not quite analogous operations.

Management, however, is central to both. Both researchers and managers need of administrative systems to put their respective visions on knowledge to work. For knowledge may not know where it is going but it needs to know where it is not going. Co-ordinating such dis-placements and dis-locations is what administration does best. Anthropology, for instance, goes nowhere without ethnography, which is our own, very special administrative toolbox: made up of fieldnotes, diaries, transcriptions of interviews, kinship diagrams, photographs, and so forth. (Not to mention the larger administrative system wherein anthropology itself moves, including the editorial process, peer reviews, book reviews, conferences, workshops and footnotes.) All anthropological analyses work as administrative systems of ethnographic knowledge. The analogy may come as an unwelcomed surprise to many academics, who are professionally sceptical of administration and dread it for the way it encroaches on their teaching and, often more importantly, on their research. No apologies are on offer, I am afraid. Administration, we have seen throughout the chapter, creates its own communities of experts. Anthropologists are no exception and they, too, may be dubbed administrative experts of a kind. We, too, preciously hold onto our administrative knowledge and have in recent times resisted the co-optation of ethnography by, for instance, cultural and media studies and sociology. No administration, no expertise.

Expert communities deploy their own tactics for 'public-ization', and these often involve redefinitions of the funds of knowledge itself. Anthropologists do this, Lakoff's pharmaceutical firms and psychiatrists do this, Hayden's ethnobotanists do it. When we look at institutions, however, expertise, knowledge and publicness have other ways of coming together. Institutions have ways about their publicness that are not strict reversals of 'private' interests: 'secrecy' might in fact do a better job here as analytical counterpoint to the notion of institutional publicness. A

## *Industry Going Public*

series of epistolary exchanges embedded in the history of corporate welfarism and state-business relations in Chile allowed us to see an example of this: how institutional public knowledge flows by, opening and closing gaps where secrecy redefines the legitimate spaces for institutional action. And administration played the trick. It was the system of administration that carried forward and embedded the institutional practice and redefinition of knowledge, professional expertise and publicness. Administration set the benchmark for the re-institutionalization of knowledge.

No doubt administration does not do this alone. Knowledge is contested and redefined in many other ways and domains. It would be absurd to claim a prerogative for administrative sociality. Indeed, it would be absurd to reify administration as a separate social domain altogether. Social relationships flow in and out of a variety of registers, of which the administrative is only one. In many respects, administration is just an emerging form of other social processes and assemblages (cf. Rabinow, 1999). However, though administration may not be a privileged, or indeed the dominant form through which knowledge is fashioned and redistributed in society, its legacy and imprint in industry today can hardly be disputed, whereas the force of industry itself in society is very much undisputable. Administration is to industry what industry is to society. Crucially, it is the institutional work that administration does that allows for the vertebral formation of knowledge across different social scales. There is more to industrial-cum-scientific knowledge than administration but, sooner or later, all scientific knowledge takes an administrative form.

Administration, then, does double duty as witness for and evidence in knowledge. Like Charon, the mythical boatman who ferried the souls of the dead to the underworld, administration's crucial role in the institutional trafficking of knowledge lies precisely in that it takes knowledge out – it carries knowledge over. It is the putting-out of knowledge that administration does best, indeed, that administration is all about. It is administration's own moment of 'public-ization'. If we think hard about how industry and its institutions take themselves out into the public realm, I think we will find that administration comes up high in our list of achievers. If secrecy works as the analytical counterpoint to institutional publicness, we may find that administration does the reversible job for institutional public knowledge.

The point on which I wish to conclude is that we – and I am thinking mostly of academics here – need to recognize the purchase of administration in the carrying forth of knowledge and do so for a number of reasons. First, administration is not going to go. We might therefore just as well make it go 'public'; that is, we might do well by starting to recognize its knowledge credentials and take stock of its productive hold over institutional life. Second, administration is a public institution: a system of knowledge capable of eclipsing itself and thus of opening up and

closing new and old constituencies. We all hate to read the small print but it is not unusual for new knowledge formations to emerge out of the over-standardized. Better to make sure that these work to our advantage by acknowledging their academic productivity. Third, recognition of administration's knowledge purchase should make us realize the futility of adding layers of administration to existing practices. More is not better. What we have already is (more than) enough – if only we knew how to put it to good use. Fourth, and of crucial importance for all research and knowledge institutions, administration should never be left in the hands of 'professional administrators' alone (Graham, 2005). All knowledge, I have argued throughout, is always and everywhere already administrated. A 'professional administrator' is therefore either someone who knows nothing except administration – which, of course, begs the question: administration of what? – or is already a disciplinary expert, an anthropologist, historian, engineer, and so forth, in which case administration needs only to be made productive. (A different question is whether in order to be made productive it needs to be made explicit too – and, if so, the kind of expertise that productive explicitness might need to mobilize.) The adage, in sum, is a simple but important one: administration is knowledge, even if knowledge is not simply administration.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Rane Willerslev for his comments on an earlier version of this paper. I am very grateful also to the editors for their close reading of the paper and their feedback. The archival research on which this paper is based was partially funded by the British Academy, to which I am thankful.

## **Notes**

1. I use the term 'administration' to denote the trafficking and systematization of knowledge in institutional contexts. Administration is different from bureaucracy and different from management yet permeates both, a point I elaborate later on in the argument.
2. 'Public' has recently emerged as new keyword of political rhetoric. My usage of the term follows Alastair Hannay's analytical unpacking: publicness as a conceptual fund wherein notions of liberal individuality, a space of intellectual and market exchanges, and new social and political audiences take form (Hannay, 2005).



## *Industry Going Public*

3. On the distribution of self-similar properties at different scales, see Strathern (1991). For an ethnographic example of administration's (in this case, accountancy) fractal qualities, see Maurer (2002).
4. Archivo Nacional de Chile, *Catalogo Invention del Salitre, Lautaro Nitrate Company*, Vol. 48, pp. 33–4.
5. All correspondence, unless otherwise noted, from Universidad Catolica del Norte, *Archivo Historico, Oficina Chacabuco*, 1928, various unclassified rolls.
6. Universidad Catolica del Norte, *Archivo Historico, Sindicatos*, unclassified roll.
7. F. G. Bailey, in his classic monograph on the folklore of academic politics, makes a similar observation about secrecy and its place in the 'backstage' of the politics of administration: 'secrecy and duplicity ... [is] a rather sophisticated strategy which is designed to allow the administrator simultaneously to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds' (Bailey, 1977: 54).
8. Hierarchy and layering are indeed part of the etymology of 'administration': from *ad-ministrare*, the action of ad-ministering or serving in office, serving as a minister: servant, subordinate, formed after the correlative *magister*, master (Oxford English Dictionary, [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)).

## **Bibliography**

- Bailey, F. G. (1977), *Morality and Expediency: the Folklore of Academic Politics*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Becher, T. Trowler, P. R. (2001), *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of Disciplines*, Buckingham and Philadelphia: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.
- Brenneis, D. (1994), 'Discourse and Discipline at the National Research Council: a Bureaucratic Bildungsroman', *Cultural Anthropology*, 9: 23–36.
- Cohen, A. (1971), 'The Politics of Ritual Secrecy', *Man*, 6: 427–448.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1994 [1991]), *What is Philosophy?* Trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Douglas, M. (1986), *How Institutions Think*, Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Durruty, A. V. (1993), *Salitre, harina de luna llena*, Antofagasta: Norprint.
- Etzkowitz, H., Webster, A. and Healey, P. (eds) (1998), *Capitalizing Knowledge: New Intersections of Industry and Academia*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Garces Feliu, E. (1999), *Las ciudades del salitre*, Santiago de Chile: Origenes.
- Gellner, D. N. and Hirsch, E. (eds) (2001), *Inside Organizations: Anthropologists at Work*, Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Gonzalez Miranda, S. (2002), *Hombres y mujeres de la pampa: Tarapaca en el ciclo de expansion del salitre*, Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones.
- Graham, G. (2005), *The Institution of Intellectual Values: Realism and Idealism in Higher Education*, Exeter: Imprint Academic.

- Handelman, D. (1981), 'Introduction: the Idea of Bureaucratic Organization', *Social Analysis*, 9: 5–23.
- Hannay, A. (2005), *On the Public*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Hayden, C. (2003), *When Nature Goes Public: the Making and Unmaking of Bioprospecting in Mexico*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- (2004), 'Prospecting's Publics', in K. Verdery and C. Humphrey (eds), *Property in Question: Value Transformation in the Global Economy*, Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Herdt, G. (1990), 'Secret Societies and Secret Collectives', *Oceania*, 60: 360–81.
- Herzfeld, M. (1992), *The Social Production of Indifference: Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Heyman, J. M. (1995), 'Putting Power in the Anthropology of Bureaucracy: the Immigration and Naturalization Service at the Mexico-United States border', *Current Anthropology*, 36: 261–87.
- Lakoff, A. (2005), 'The private life of numbers: pharmaceutical marketing in post-welfare Argentina', in A. Ong and S. J. Collier (eds), *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*, Malden, MA, Oxford, and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lundin, R. A. and Söderholm, A. (1998), 'Conceptualizing a Projectified Society: Discussion of an Eco-institutional Approach to a Theory on Temporary Organizations', in R. A. Lundin and C. Midler (eds), *Projects as Arenas for Renewal and Learning Processes*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Mandell, N. (2002), *The Corporation as Family: the Gendering of Corporate Welfare, 1890–1930*, Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press.
- Maurer, B. (2002), 'Anthropological and Accounting Knowledge in Islamic Banking and Finance: Rethinking Critical Accounts', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 8: 645–667.
- Miller, D. (2003), 'The virtual moment', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 9: 57–75.
- Miller, P. and O'Leary, T. (1994), 'The Factory as Laboratory', in M. Power (ed.), *Accounting and Science: Natural Inquiry and Commercial Reason*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nowotny, H., Scott, P. and Gibbons, M. (2001), *Rethinking Science: Knowledge and the Public in an Age of Uncertainty*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- O'Neill, O. (2002a), *Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics. The Gifford Lectures, University of Edinburgh 2001*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (2002b), *A Question of Trust. The BBC Reith Lectures 2002*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ong, A. and Collier, S. J. (eds) (2005), *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*, Malden, MA, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing.
- Power, M. (1994), *The Audit Explosion*, London: Demos.

## *Industry Going Public*

- Rabinow, P. (1999), *French DNA: Trouble in Purgatory*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Schwartzman, H. B. (1987), 'The Significance of Meetings in an American Mental Health Centre', *American Ethnologist*, 14: 271–94.
- Shore, C. and Wright, S. (1999), 'Audit Culture and Anthropology: Neo-liberalism in British Higher Education', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 5: 557–75.
- Slaughter, S. and G. Rhoades. (2004), *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education*, Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press.
- Stickell, A. L. (1979), *Migration and Mining: Labor in Northern Chile in the Nitrate Era, 1880–1930*, Unpublished PhD thesis: Indiana University.
- Strathern, M. (1991), *Partial Connections*, Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- (ed.) (2000), *Audit Cultures: Anthropological Studies in Accountability, Ethics and the Academy*, London: Routledge.
- (2004a), *A Community of Critics? Thoughts on New Knowledge*. Huxley Memorial Lecture, Wednesday 8 December, University College London.
- (2004b), 'Working Paper Two. Commons and borderlands', in M. Strathern, *Commons and Borderlands: Working Papers on Interdisciplinarity, Accountability and the Flow of Knowledge*, Wantage: Sean Kingston Publishing.
- (2005), 'Robust Knowledge and Fragile Futures', in A. Ong and S. J. Collier (eds), *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*, Malden, MA, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing.
- Taussig, M. T. (1997), *The Magic of the State*, New York and London: Routledge.
- (1999), *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labour of the Negative*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Tone, A. (1997), *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Weber, M. (1946), 'Bureaucracy', in H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (eds), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Whyte, W. F. (ed.) (1971 [1946]), *Industry and Society*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers.