

[RUNNING HEADS:

VERSO: SIMONE ABRAM

RECTO: CONTRADICTION IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL LIFE]

]t1[1 Contradiction in contemporary political life

]t2[**SIMONE ABRAM**

]t3[*Durham University*

]abs[Meetings are the apotheosis of contemporary bureaucratic life, containing dilemmas and contradictions that are at the heart of modernity. In particular, political and bureaucratic meetings (both state and civic) are ritual performances in which rules are enacted, ritual correctness is met with manipulative political game-playing, and formal transparency is intertwined with relational and informational secrecy. Meetings in bureaucratic government rely on a series of legitimating motifs, including the invoking of 'conjured contexts' to link bureaucratic practices to external action. This essay shows how meetings order political and bureaucratic life, and vice versa, and explores the materiality and embodiment of meeting practices, illustrating how a dominant global model of bureaucratic meeting is elaborated locally.

]p[Helen Schwartzman's 1989 landmark volume **on meetings** brought a new focus to the practices of meetings in bureaucratic organizations. Her detailed ethnographic attention to the everyday production of meetings helped to illustrate how far the practice of meeting defines, indeed **produces**, the organization, cementing the relationships between actors, and reproducing the effect of

Comment [J1]: Omitted as per JRAi style. Taken as implicit

Comment [J2]: Omit to avoid repetition? Sense implicit

Comment [SA3]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Yes, ok.

Comment [J4]: Could we avoid 'production ... produces ... reproducing' within this sentence? Please consider

Comment [SA5]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
ok. Delete 'indeed produces'

organization on a routine basis. Schwartzman comments that her focus on the meeting itself derived from her realization that the meetings she attended were not merely a means to understand the organization she was interested in; rather, 'meetings were the major form that provided participants in this setting with a sense of organization as well as a sense of themselves *in* the organization' (1989: 109, italics in original). Given this, her focus was on the way that meetings are framed, how they then frame the relationships between members of the organization and its clients, and the imaginary that is upheld of the enduring organization. Schwartzman offers a particular analytical perspective on the role of meetings in the self-reflection of its practitioners, with the focus primarily on the reproduction of the institution itself. In this essay, I draw attention to the role of the meeting, which also relates to the time spent on meeting protocols. Schwartzman sees these protocols as a guide to social relations of institutions, as they lay out the expectations of the institution, its members and its interlocutors, yet they are hardly straightforward, being a mélange of written, tacit, and improvised procedures. Based on ethnographic research on local government councils in the United Kingdom and Norway, I argue that the time spent in meetings discussing where and when to meet, which rules to follow, and how to behave **in meetings** is seen by participants as wasteful not merely because attention to reproduction of the institution is experienced as less important than addressing matters of concern or decisions to be made in the meeting itself, but for reasons that provide the motivation and justification of the organizations' existence.

Comment [J6]: JRAI doesn't use Ibid.

Comment [J7]: Omit?

Comment [SA8]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
No, I think maybe amend to 'in those meetings', for clarity (because it could be about how to behave elsewhere)

Participants in democratic local government councils, including elected representatives and public servants, as well as members of the public, citizens, observers, and so on, tend not to participate in debates for their own sake. A local politician in Sheffield who told me that local councillors were powerless, and he attended council because he 'liked a good debate', was doing so for shock value, precisely because this is the opposite of the usual reason put forward for participating in local government bureaucracy. Most of my ethnographic research in local government has related to planning issues, including planning for housing, forward planning, and community planning. In

these contexts, council meetings are all about places that lie beyond the council chamber. For meetings to be successful, they must therefore conjure up external contexts as the object of their purpose. These 'conjured contexts' are one way – and a particularly important way – that political and bureaucratic legitimacy can be upheld, but require all the technologies of modern government to sustain them. While the principles of what we might call 'government at a distance' (pace Law 1986) tend to be considered in relation to colonial powers, in fact all government is conducted at a distance. The distance between the council chamber and the local school already requires a set of governmental technologies that relate what happens in one to what happens in the other. In the council chamber, the school must be conjured up, imagined, and determined as an object on which action can be exerted, if the effect of 'government' is to be recognized as meaningful at all.

Meetings in government bureaucracy thus operate with a range of external correlates that must be correctly invoked for meetings to be effectual. While doing this, though, the participants also cover their tracks: that is, they underemphasize the fragilities in the links between speech and action, categorizing organizational work as (necessary) waste, and diverting attention away from the institution-building and ritual aspects of meeting practice. Instead the focus is on the action that is supposed to result from the speech performed in the meeting. Brunsson (1989) has questioned these links, highlighting the disjunction between speech and action, which can make organizations appear to be hypocritical. In government committees, however, this link is essential, since it justifies the performance of the speech itself. Speech in a planning committee, for example, is entirely focused on the plans linked to sites, even if these sites may be identified through principles of identification, only later to be tied to specific geographical locations. Speech in these contexts is clearly doing much more than defining, postulating, and passing judgements on external sites. This is to suggest not that participants deliberately or consciously mislead themselves or others about the purpose of meetings, but that the effectiveness of meetings seems to rely on this facility of distracting attention from their own bureaucratic workings towards the effects they might achieve in some other location. Another

Comment [J9]: Or just 'are a particularly important way that'?

Comment [SA10]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
I think this is in like this in response to one of the reviewers, so I think it had better stay.

Comment [J11]: Omit 'pace' in this context? You are not taking issue with Law as such.

Comment [SA12]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Agree.

Comment [SA13]: Please can you change this to 'largely'?

key element of committee speech is devoted to performing the authority of government, which is achieved by situated performances of ritualized speech. It is not only the speech itself that takes a ritual form, but the context in which the speech is delivered that is essential to its effectiveness.

[p1]In the particular context of municipal planning meetings, this plays out in relation to the indexical functions of planning documents, policies, and other references to some external place upon which regulation or government action should be exerted. Planning theorists have been very concerned with the ability of planners to enact the aims of planning, applying regulatory policies and exerting some form of rationality on the future, engaged in the symbolic construction of power as 'a means of defense against uncertainty and the self-destructive violence that always runs in a community's veins' (Mazzi 1996: 9). Many planning theorists hence focus on the activities of planners, rather than tracing how the plan itself operates in practice (see Mandelbaum, Mazza & Burchell 1996). Abram and Weszkalnys (2013) outline instead how a plan gains its authority from its invocation in appropriate contexts, that is, in certain kinds of meetings. Looking back to the philosophy of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), they argue that in order to achieve its status, a plan must be presented to the council as a formal document, and its acceptance must be noted with the appropriate, documented words, from the correct official persons (see also Riles 2006). Without the correct procedures, or where procedures are conducted without the trust and integrity that a true promise requires, plans might radically undermine the prospect of an orderly future. Indeed, as Baxstrom (2012) shows, infelicitous plans may lead those living on the ground that is 'planned-for' to feel that even the present is radically unpredictable, leading to a collapse in the horizon of the future (pace Guyer 2007). Infelicities may include a failure to conform to the rules of assembly, including the absence of key actors; failure to note decisions; failure to consult the requisite documents, regulations, or persons; or any other failure of due process related to the issue in question. All of the procedures often insulted as 'just ritual', or 'tedious bureaucracy', are those which remind the actors that they are not divinely empowered to govern others, but derive their power from a democratic

Comment [J14]: We have 'exerted' in the previous sentence. Avoid repetition here, e.g. 'exercising some form of rationality over the future'?

Comment [SA15]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Yes, that would be fine

Comment [J16]: Referring to yourself here (a little alienating), so perhaps 'In my work with Weszkalnys (Abram & Weszkalnys 2013) I outline instead ...'?

Comment [SA17]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Yes, well I'm referring more to a particular piece of work, really. I didn't want to claim it for myself, either, since it's a joint piece of work. I know it's more common in other journals to turn oneself into the 3rd person, so it's fine to change it to the more personal JRAI style if you like. But I'd prefer something more like, 'In our work on the anthropology of planning, Weszkalnys and I...'

Comment [SA18]: Would become 'we'

Comment [J19]: Again, *pace* would imply a polite disagreement with Guyer. Is this the case, or omit the word?

Comment [SA20]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Omit. I have misused 'pace' throughout, sorry.

process with checks and balances that allow for public accountability. Tedious as these procedures may be, they remain the only effective assurance of democratic practice that is widespread and relatively reliable. The fact that misuse is so frequently uncovered can be interpreted as an indication that these processes are quite a good means to maintain democratic structures.

In the essay below, I consider these two key aspects of meeting practice in local government through the relation between meetings and their documentation, and the importance of felicitous performance of speech to the legitimacy of meetings and their broader context of government.

Which meetings?

If anthropological accounts have tended to focus on the subjects of plans rather than their authors and have prioritized the politics of government meetings, in this essay I attend to the bureaucrats and municipal administrators who bear much of the responsibility for producing the material in and of plans, in order to highlight some of the temporalities and imagined sites conjured in meetings (see also Abram 2014). Amongst bureaucratic meetings, planning meetings are perhaps the archetype of modernist practice. Municipal planning meetings, state and civic, are ritual performances in which explicit rules are enacted through tacit knowledge, where ritual correctness is met with manipulative game-playing, and formal transparency is intertwined with relational and informational withholding (see Garsten & Lindh de Montoya 2008). The formal meetings of a full municipal council are usually the arena for the confirmation of conclusions of longer series of work by sub-committees, or other working groups. They are, in other words, the occasion for the most explicitly ritualized political performance, the public communication of decisions prepared before and finalized at the council vote. They are the moment when the public may see that issues of concern have been discussed, but they are not the moment when such issues are actually considered. Instead, they can be understood both as

the culmination of a long series of prior activities, as well as being a moment in the cyclical temporality of municipal life. Attention to prior activities thus informs the interpretations that are possible of a full, formal council meeting.

]p1[As an ethnographic example, I consider here one such prior activity, a two-day working seminar for senior administrators at a Norwegian municipality held in 2000 at a conference hotel near Hønefoss in southern Norwayⁱ. Norwegian conference hotels tend to be large, well-appointed hotels, with modern, well-equipped meeting rooms of different sizes, bedrooms that elsewhere would be considered most luxurious, and very high-quality dining. The invitation to participate in a ‘seminar’ at such a hotel was made attractive by the extremely comfortable accommodation, offered implicitly as compensation for giving up free or family time. Participants were invited by the Chief Executive to attend the meeting to work towards a revision of the holistic municipal plan that was due for publication in the following year. On 27 April 2000, the Chief Executive welcomed leading administrative staff to the seminar (this being both a kind of meeting and a collection of meetings in itself) to work up the new four-year plan that would later be presented as a proposal to the council. There had been some gossiping in advance among administrators about who had and had not been invited, with some key council staff pointedly not included. The municipality was concurrently going through a reorganization of its administration, a process that was proving divisive and stressful for many employees, with key figures in the administration being pushed out, and other emerging characters being promoted to senior positions. The tensions produced in working relations provide some of the background to this working party event, and the invitation in itself, as well as whether or not it extended to both days, including the overnight stay, or just one of the days, was taken as some indication of the Chief Executive’s evaluation of the importance of various members of staff.

]p1[With section leaders and other staff assembled around tables in a low-ceilinged conference room, the Chief Executive welcomed them with a kind of a pep talk emphasizing the importance of this phase of the four-year planning cycle. He outlined how the plan should be based on

a vision and priorities, and identified the most important task for the working seminar as defining a direction and identifying concrete goals. 'It's easy to fill a plan with words', he said, 'but difficult to assess which are really important'. There had been several working groups already developing aspects of the plan in the preceding weeks and months, but now it was worth spending two days all together and travelling home with the priorities in place. The Chief Executive invited the Chief Planner to speak, and he outlined the planning process, adopting a much more technocratic tone, listing the legal requirements for a plan and how the current plan would differ from previous ones, and showing PowerPoint slides of the policies agreed so far and charts and diagrams to indicate the issues that should be addressed (demographic, economic, environmental). There was a vision for the district (thus conjured up as a presence in the discussion), that it should be a good place in which to live, but there were other themes that should be brought out. These had been discussed at a leader-group meeting on 6 April (and hence we can see a tie into another meeting that set the agenda for this one).

]p1[The word passed to the Director of the Technical Department, who discussed transport issues and the dangers of identifying specific interventions rather than broad aims, since the former sound more like lobbying for particular roads rather than vision-setting. His speech both tied the words of the vision to the prospective action in the world (through the potential of the vision to curtail future possibilities) and emphasized the need to comply with correct meeting procedure (in sticking to the agenda outlined in the vision document). Thus in the subsequent discussion, various leading administrators discussed what shape the plan should take and its role as a communicative document to be read by the inhabitants, invoking the future role of the document and the relation with the physical world of the council's constitutive district. Where previous plans were dry lists of policies, they wished the new plan to be a communicative handbook to guide the council in partnership with residents. Hence an imaginary figure of 'residents' (or a 'public') outside the meeting room was generated through the meeting talk. A senior officer proposed a tripartite categorization of the

residents of the municipality organized by age (young, working, retired) according to a 'wheel of life'. Almost everyone agreed that this was a crude categorization that failed to acknowledge either cross-cutting needs (disability, unemployment, medical needs), specialist and general services (play and sports facilities, welfare services, social security, health services), or ethnic and/or national differences among the local population. Yet identifying each of these would create an unmanageable set of falsely discrete divisions, whereas the wheel was simple and all encompassing. The lack of surprise about the wheel among senior staff indicated that it had already been discussed at a higher level (i.e. in other meetings, perhaps also informally), and it found its way through the discussions, despite widespread derision of the idea, as one means to bridge the discussions, documents, the organization of municipal services, and the municipality's population.

Comment [J21]: 'about the wheel proposal'?

Comment [SA22]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
yes

Throughout the discussions, various papers were circulated that had emerged from previous meetings and processes, including reference papers from leader-group meetings, previous plans, and maps. In contrast to political meetings, where administrators largely remain silent (see Abram 2004), the participants raised issues fairly freely, and as soon as they were devolved into smaller discussion groups, they engaged in lively conversation, throwing ideas back and forth and not hesitating to criticize municipal policy or party political ideas. From the start, in the joint discussions, the Chief Planner tried to steer the discussion, repeatedly, if gently, reminding the participants of the importance of identifying goals towards an agreed vision, and identifying strategies to achieve those goals.

Comment [J23]: 2004a and/or b?
NB: If 2004b isn't cited, then it should be deleted from the Refs and 2004a will become 2004

Discussion soon turned to another preceding set of meetings known as the VOMP (Vision and Goal-Setting) planning process, which had included only the members of the council's cabinet and the administrative directors of the council. This series of meetings had been led by a consultant who had little understanding of the workings of the public sector and therefore made category errors in relation to the role of elected representatives, ignoring their role as representatives of diverse interest groups rather than autonomous individuals. He failed to abide by the ritualized aspects of

public bureaucracy, precisely the elements of public practice that appear frustrating to business representatives, for whom chains of authority are often more direct. Recognizing that the consultant did not understand their **processes**, the participants gradually abandoned the process, indicating their lack of confidence in it by withdrawing from meetings, or by going through the motions of the meetings but taking no decisions to avoid conducting politics outside the public arena (see Abram 2002). The outcome was a vision that was, to say the least, bland: that the municipality should be a good place in which to live. And now the administrators took up the criticism, saying that it could apply to any council, and such a safe slogan conjured up no emotion to motivate action. Quickly, Chief Planner Morten reminded the group that the council already had a vision, ‘the municipality of opportunity’, a vision that the municipality had used enormous resources to develop. The Chief Executive was surprisingly critical, in contrast to his public circumspection in criticizing the political arena, explaining that the council’s existing vision was best, **but that the politicians were a little sceptical since the existing vision was the administrative vision and the politicians wanted to have their own vision in the plan.** What should one do if the cabinet throw out the new version?

jp1[The Head of the Welfare Sector, **Elia**, stated that the council couldnot **have more than one vision, one for the administration and one for the politicians, and Tone** (Social Work) claimed the politicians dared not have a joint vision that muddied their individual party positions. The Chief Executive remarked that they shouldn’t be afraid of dealing with political issues, and the Head of the Technical Sector, **Lars**, pointed out that 50 per cent of what they did was political, since they were dealing with social politics all the time. The problem was **that administrators should not be seen to engage in party politics.** Their job was to bring people into focus, and take the residents seriously, as detailed in their existing visionary statement. A vision is a desired future, and **this shouldn’t change all the time** – the existing idea of a municipality of opportunity could be applied to many different things.

Comment [J24]: Avoid ‘processes ... process’, e.g. use ‘procedures’?

Comment [SA25]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
ok

Comment [J26]: ‘but that the politicians were a little sceptical since this was the administrators’ vision and they wanted their own vision incorporated in the plan’?

Comment [SA27]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Yes, ok

Comment [J28]: ‘If the cabinet was to throw out the new version, what should one do?’

Comment [SA29]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Yes ok

Comment [J30]: Do we actually need to name her here? Name is not referred to again below (also Chief Executive etc. not named.) If so, acknowledge in an acknowledgements note below if pseudonyms are used.

Comment [SA31]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
I was using name to remind the reader that they’re both officials and citizens, people. So it’s for rhetorical purposes.

Comment [J32]: Or just ‘have one vision for the administration and another for the politicians’?

Comment [SA33]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
agreed

Comment [J34]: Again, the name doesn’t seem necessary. Just ‘and the Head of Social Work’?

Comment [SA35]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
...

Comment [J36]: Is he distinct from the ‘Director of the Technical ...

Comment [J37]: Again, omit name here?

Comment [J38]: ‘to avoid the administrators being seen to engage in party politics’?

Comment [SA39]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
ok

Comment [J40]: ‘this should remain constant’?

Comment [SA41]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
...

]p1[Through this set of arguments and the logic on which it relies, the administrators convinced themselves of the legitimacy of setting the vision and goals in the plan and then offering them to the politicians. Very quickly, it was clear that the administrators intended to salvage the vision they had carved out already, and write it back into the plan, over-writing or over-riding the weak visions that had been the outcome of the unconvincing joint administrative-political process. They would do this in a circumspect fashion, however, being careful to include some of the goals and themes in the VOMP papers, so that the politicians would recognize their own contributions to VOMP in the revised plan. One reason the politicians' vision was weak was because it was prepared as a consensus vision, not a political prospectus, so the administrators knew that many of the politicians were already sceptical about its value as a guiding text. Instead they wanted to see the plan's overall vision headed with the slogan already in use, 'the municipality of opportunity', and then discussion could revolve around how to define values such as quality of life, life-challenges, self-determination, and so on. Smaller groups each worked on separate themes towards a vision that was founded on the three fundamental qualities that were in the existing vision: fulfilment, security/care, and lifelong learning; or choice, independence, sustainable development, and good common solutions; or responsibility, community, and fulfilment. Much of the rest of the two-day workshop revolved around detailed discussions about how to define key terms and identify specific policies that could be used to achieve the aims identified. Arguments over the qualities of particular words gave way to outlines of strategic ambitions and formulations of idealistic ambitions.

]p1[In the frank exchanges such as those highlighted above, the different actors were both negotiating their own position (wishing to appear forthright and effective to the Chief Executive), establishing the role of the administrator through defining the boundaries of political action versus partisan action, and asserting their authority to produce texts that speak on behalf of the corporate entity that is the municipality through its person, the Chief Executive. As such, much of the meeting was indirectly devoted to the production of the institution, as Schwartzman has outlined, but also of

Comment [J42]: Ambiguous. 'the administrators wanted', OK?

Comment [SA43]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Yes, ok.

Comment [J44]: 'representative'?

Comment [SA45]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
No, the CE is actually the council in person. It's a bit odd but that's what it is. You could rephrase to 'through the person of the Chief Executive'. I think that's clearer.

the imagined internal and external world of the municipality beyond it. That is, a great deal of the discussion concerned the legitimacy of the administrators in developing, or rather derailing, the 'vision' that had emerged from VOMP. Such meetings can thus be shown to be powerful in their potential not only to reproduce the institution, but also to change it, possibly radically.

]p1[At this particular meeting, the administrators were also exercising an unusual freedom of expression that is normally quite absent in everyday administrative life. The two days appear as a moment of almost carnival-like reversal from the normal routine circumspection and formal technicism that characterize the administration's self-presentation. This sense was highlighted by the overnight stay at the hotel, where administrators met in the indoor-outdoor pool and the sauna, and gathered for pre-dinner drinks together in the bedrooms. At the end of the second day, the Chief Executive thanked all the participants for their hard work, and asserted that they had achieved together in two days what would have taken six months of separate working groups back at base. The Chief Planner and Chief Executive's thanks were met by general applause before the participants started to pack their things, engaging in general chat and meandering towards the exits, either to drive or, in at least one case, to ski over the mountains back home.

]p1[In this particular meeting, it was the exemptions from normal procedure that serve to highlight how 'normal' bureaucratic meetings function. The contrast serves to illustrate the degree of constraint and ritualization that applies to municipal meetings, the rigidity of the roles of participants, whose stringency is said to require particular aspects of personality from the actors (see Abram 2004a). Feeding the outcomes of this meeting required a considerable amount of subsequent work to translate it into the discourse of council business, as I will show below, again highlighting the means by which meetings must be shepherded and documented, legitimized and incorporated, before they can contribute to the reproduction of the institution. In contrast, the lack of attention to the legitimizing significance of electoral process in the VOMP meetings meant that the politicians could not participate, yet as the process had, in name, been proposed by the Chief Executive and approved

Comment [J46]: Avoid 'serve to ... serves to': 'helps illustrate' or just 'illustrates'?

Comment [SA47]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Ok, just 'illustrates' then.

by cabinet, they were bound to give the appearance of going along with it. Hence they played along, yet withheld their full participation and delegitimized the process, later ignoring the results too. In the next section, I offer a closer inspection of the formalized codification of these municipal meetings, to illustrate how diverse meetings are translated into standardized documents to meet the requirements of legitimate political action.

]ha[Codification

]p[What eventually emerged from the two days of heated discussion and the argumentative construction of goals and visions described above was a document that was later presented with the composed veneer of officialdom to the political assembly, complete with technical-looking diagrams illustrating future scenarios, and formal charts outlining vague but clearly presented concepts of the ‘life-wheel’ of the citizenry (with its three phases: ages 0-20 years, 20-67, and over 67, corresponding roughly to school, work, and retirement). The lively and intense time at the hotel was thus translated back into the idiom of bureaucratic meetings, with its veneer of generalizability derived from the very standardized form of the documents, minimizing both the degree of informality and the paradoxes that they might actually include. Documents associated with meetings thus have a number of roles. They serve to place the meeting within an institutional framework and offer navigational signals as to where in that framework the meeting fits, as well as recording formal decisions or statements. Hidden within them are the external context on which they purport to act. They are, thus, worthless as bits of paper without the surrounding paraphernalia of council ritual. Papers that are later not acted on are, indeed, described as worthless paper, as Vike (2004) has highlighted.

]p1[On first encounter, meeting papers appear so dry as to be almost illegible, and it takes some experience to divine the vehemence and idealism that may be hidden in the text. Just as one must learn to navigate the meeting itself, one must learn to read its documents. This learning is

Comment [J48]: You use ‘vener’ just a few lines above. Substitute e.g. ‘sheen’ or ‘surface appearance’ here?

Comment [SA49]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Maybe ‘impression’?

entirely contextual, since even if one recognizes the coded language, one cannot know to what it refers without knowing the particular cases in question.

]p1[Meeting papers look something like the following. First there is a cover note, as shown in Figure 1, that lists all the issues to be discussed at the meeting.

]INSERT FIGURE 1 AND 2 NEAR HERE – PARAGRAPH CONTINUES BELOW[

Comment [J50]: To allow the typesetter room for manoeuvre and to avoid having to break these items over the page, I would recommend that they be cross-referred to here as Figure 1 and 2 and they can then be positioned unbroken at the nearest head or foot of the page once typeset, OK?
No title captions required here, just Figure number, OK?

Comment [SA51]: *Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."*
Yes, that sounds ideal.

INVITATION TO MEETING – Part 1

Organ: council

Date: 21.01.2014

Time: 18:00

Place: Town Hall

Deputies attending will be sent special invitations.

Notify valid absence by telephone 00 00 00 00 or Political.secretariat@municipality

Theme hour:

16:00-17:00: Ethics by Tor Jensen, [External Organization Name]

Dinner 17:00 for council members.

CASEMAP

Case	case number
	Content
14/1	13/2305

approval of protocol for council 12.12.2013

14/2 13/2937

scrutiny committee's calendar 2014

14/3 15/2435

negotiation reform. Status report October 2013

14/4 11/2534

status; profession and quality in health and care service

etc.

Municipality cabinet, [date]

Name (Sign.)

Mayor

Figure 1.

This is followed by a sizeable portfolio of notes that adopt the format shown in **Figure 2.**

NAME OF MUNICIPALITY		
	L.no.:	89723/13
	C.no.:	13/2345
	Archive no.:	042//
	Date:	08.01.2014
	Caseoffcr.:	[Name]
Council		
Handled by	date	subcommittee case
Council	23.01.2014	1/14 - PS
Approval of protocol for council 10.12.2013		
The Mayor recommends that Council take the following decision:		
1. Protocol from council meeting 10.12.2013 is approved as it is presented.		
Attached is the protocol from the council meeting of 10.12.2013.		
Name (sign.)		
Mayor		

Figure 2.

]p1[The absolute standard codification of meeting papers has the effect of making all meetings appear equivalent and council procedure reliable and repetitive. To an outsider – a local resident, for example, new to council procedures – it would be difficult to ascertain which meetings are significant and which routine. Documents only provide information to a certain extent, and then only to those who know how to read them. Effective politicians are those who have learned how to read the papers and how to interpret the codes that link the papers to different cases, and who probably already know in advance which papers matter and what is to be in them. For really controversial topics, reading between the lines to discern the line to be taken by the administration, to see the missing statements, or to pre-empt decisions is a key political skill, and also an essential skill for administrators who wish to shepherd a particular policy through committee meetings (see again Abram 2014 for an example).

Indeed, Winifred Holtby's novel of local government *South Riding* (1936) is framed entirely by the contrast between the dry coded language of meeting reports and the complex, messy relations to which they refer.

]ha[Speech and action

]p[The two-day event outlined above is a particularly strong example of the contrast between the narrow event of the meeting itself, from the call to order to the final business, and the formal minute or report that purports to record it. Each such event takes place not only in the context of a longer process and broader procedures, but in its immediate context of time and place, events preceded by

Comment [J52]: I think we should add the title of the novel here, OK? However, this sentence sits rather awkwardly here, I think (bit of an onsequitur). Might it not be better to move it to become a new endnote, with the indicator appearing after the first sentence on p.13, i.e. 'On first encounter, meeting papers appear so dry as to be almost illegible, and it takes some experience to divine the vehemence and idealism that may be hidden in the text'? We could then adjust to: 'In this regard, consider Winifred Holtby's novel of local government *South Riding* (1936), which is framed ...'?

Comment [SA53]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Yes, I like that suggestion, but the 'consider' is not really my style. Maybe something more like 'this contrast is illustrated beautifully in Winifred Holtby's novel...'

Comment [J54]: Perhaps 'conference', to avoid 'event' repetition?

Comment [SA55]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
ok

others, and succeeded by immediate conversation, the coming together and going away of various participants. Codification is a means to an end – minutes link meetings together, sift the consequential talk from the circumstantial, and record only those elements of the meeting that identify actions to be taken, or points of principle to be recorded for future reference. It should be remembered that council minutes also constitute a legal record of decisions and statements that are written with a view to the council being held to account in the event of a future legal challenge.

Comment [J56]: 'dispersal'?

Comment [SA57]: *Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."*
Ha, yes ok.

[p1]It is worth knowing that when the papers from the two-day conference were presented back to the Planning and Development Committee, the response was mixed. One politician noted that there had been significant changes to the documents from the VOMP process that had been supposed to be the vision-setting exercise for the municipality, and asked, pointedly, 'was the administration in the same process?' Another noted that it was important that the process was open, and that it required a proper discussion. Clearly, politicians had got wind of the administrative event, and were sceptical about what appeared to be an attempt to over-ride the political leadership. The place for legitimate planning and decision-making was in the chamber, not in a private hotel with only administrators present (which could be seen as an infelicitous context). The Mayor, chairing the committee, was able to reassure members that this committee would not take decisions but make recommendations to the cabinet committee, thus casting the papers considered in this meeting as advisory, and as a preliminary to the cabinet. Ownership as well as authorship of meeting papers is thus clearly a significant attribute. The Chief Executive tried to gloss the changes as an informed editing of the VOMP outcomes (since the administration has responsibility for drafting papers), with the Mayor indicating that VOMP goals had to be aligned to the fifteen-year perspective required in plans. The committee members accepted that a series of further committee discussions would be held over the plan, and moved on to discuss the next issue: the relocation of post offices within larger shops. Hence, he steered the meeting away from the actual conflict between the politicians and the administration, negating the dilemmas this indicated, by defining the whole event as a mere process, not to be

Comment [J58]: Can we avoid 'legal' x 2, e.g. 'lawsuit'?

Comment [SA59]: *Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."*
Just 'challenge' would be enough, I think.

Comment [SA60]: I don't think this is right here. As in, don't worry, it's just routine. (not a routine). But routine is not the right word here, hence I used process in its place but in the same way.

concerned about. In this context, the external referent for the meeting was in danger of being seen as the hotel seminar, and not the outside world of the residents and their interests, and the land upon which the plan would regulate action. Hence, a useful way to redirect the politicians' ire was to point them back to the content of the plan and its talk of houses, shopping centres, and schools. Conjuring this concrete context enabled the Chief Executive to point to a greater good, a more important concern, hence belittling the politicians' concern about due process and making it appear petty. Why worry about who said what, he appeared to be saying, when you should be worrying about the future of the municipality fifteen or twenty years hence. He was also indicating that their talk about the VOMP process and about the seminar were not purposive, an accusation that presses a sensitive nerve among municipal politicians.

[p1][Purposeless talk is not considered legitimate in municipal meetings, and participants are frequently urged to remain succinct and ensure that they address the issue at hand. This is materialized in the procedure for the municipal meetings of the full council, where speakers step up to a podium to address the council, or more correctly to address the Mayor chairing the meeting (beginning each speech with the single word 'Mayor'). A light on the podium shines green for up to four minutes for a first speech and two minutes for a rejoinder, and then shines red to indicate to both speaker and audience that their time is up (see Fig. 3).² If they continue, they are told abruptly by the Mayor (chair of the meeting) to finish. Discipline is thus both materialized and internalized, as speakers conform to the requirements. I assert that much of the speech at full council meetings is performed to assert political positions, to ensure that voices are heard, or to demonstrate oratorical or political skill, just as Spencer (1971) described for English town councils in the 1960s. Looking through case papers in retrospect, it is clear that the links between talk, decisions, and actions tend to follow a prospective logic. It makes little sense to the participants to spend hours on detailed discussions if they do not promise to have any further purpose, since their aim is expressly to change things in the world outside the meeting room. Thus the various means of conjuring external contexts

Comment [J61]: 'one that merited no concern'?

Comment [SA62]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Maybe 'that need not provoke concern'

Comment [J63]: See above. This now becomes Figure 3

Comment [J64]: We avoid note indicators in figure captions. Instead move the indicator back here, OK?

Comment [SA65]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
ok

Comment [J66]: Cut here? You have already established a few lines above that the Mayor chairs the meeting

Comment [SA67]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Yes, ok.

Comment [J68]: OK?

Comment [SA69]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Yes, ok

into the meeting room can be seen as an attempt to connect speech to action via external objects (be they sites or persons).

]]INSERT FIGURE 3 NEAR HERE[



Figure 1. Asker Municipal council chamber immediately prior to a full council meeting (1 April 2014 screenshot).ⁱⁱ

]p1[It is understood among the participants, therefore, that decisions are a precursor to action, of some kind, and preferably outside the town hall in the imagined municipality that is conjured up through various referents and indexes. Whether or not this action later happens is a known blind-spot in municipal planning, given that municipal forward plans are rarely evaluated *post-hoc* to ascertain which of the goals have been fulfilled; since plans are revised within the period they adopt for their actions, these are constantly shifting (Abram 2011). When a development takes place that is identified in a plan, it is possible to suggest that the plan led to the action. It is rare, though, that actions identified in a plan that do not materialize are taken to indicate that the link between decision and action is fragile, to say the least. Implementation of council decisions is a complex arena that it is not

possible to explore in detail here, but as any follower of politics should recognize, 'implementation' is a short word for a very unstable process in any organization, and nowhere more so than in government, local or otherwise. I suggest that, following Brunsson (1989), we reserve judgement about these links and treat them as ethnographic facts rather than policy evaluations or procedural inevitabilities.

Comment [J70]: Added date ref.

[p1[Of all bureaucratic and political meetings, it is these full council meetings (as noted above) that are primarily routine performances, where objections to decisions proposed by the Mayor are unlikely to change the outcome of a vote if a council is dominated by a majority party or majority coalition. Only on rare occasions might there be a mutiny, and in this the situation is similar in most formal political arenas, from local council to government chamber. However, at smaller sub-committees there may be room to discuss details of cases or policies, and the papers presented by administrators (also known in Norwegian as 'case-handlers', *saksbehandler*) can alert politicians to areas of danger or potential controversy, and equally can hide them. However formal the textual format, the potential for manipulation remains. The formal codification of the papers disguises the personality of the (administrative) author, and appears to depoliticize (at least from party politics) the issue for discussion. This depersonalization is an attempt to contrast with the political idiom and conform to the Weberian ideal of a united administration speaking with one voice. It enables the social politics of the administration to be concealed behind formal language and documentation, a concealment echoed by the administrators during political meetings, where they sit silently outside the political arena, waiting politely in case they are called to clarify an issue. The requirement to remain calm and appear disinterested is an essential quality for administrative staff, at least in this municipality (and, by all accounts, also elsewhere), and takes on the quality of a psychological trait required for the work (see Abram 2004a). Public servants must embody a quality of obedience to the council that is temporally marked. While preparing case papers, administrators must be sure to include all the information they consider essential for a case to be properly evaluated and debated,

Comment [J71]: 'in a party-political sense'?

Comment [SA72]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Yes

since the discipline of a council meeting does not allow them to jump up and voice things they may have forgotten or chosen not to mention. Unless the chair chooses to invite them to contribute a clarification or requests further information – say, about the consequences of a particular decision (which may happen if an option is developed in the meeting that is not foreseen in the papers) – then administrators must remain outside the discussion. I argue that this phenomenon is one way in which the administration's purpose is conveyed as action upon the conjured contexts described in the papers, and **not on its own internal politics**. The administration is seen to speak with one voice (formally the Chief Executive's) in relation to the municipality outside, rather than being an assemblage of individuals engaged in internal power struggles or debates. Appearing to be impersonal is thus crucial to the effectiveness of administrators' roles in council meetings, an essential performance of the Weberian separation of powers that helps to uphold the legitimacy of the political process.

]p1[This embodiment of the separation of powers is echoed through the levels of the council hierarchy, although sub-committees may adopt slightly less formality than full council meetings. In all cases, though, a good administrator – one who wishes to have a long career, that is – will know to speak when spoken to, and to consider the response to any question **carefully** to ensure it is not 'political' but administrative. So much was explained to me carefully by the pool during the seminar at the hotel, where administrators seemed to revel in the freedom to speak out as they desired on the issues to be discussed. Even so, they knew the Chief Executive was watching them (although, considerately, not at the pool), and that their performance would be subtly evaluated in the context of the administrative reorganization.

]p1[Such a close reading of these Norwegian public sector municipal meetings raises particular kinds of questions about meetings that may differ from those arising from business meetings, parochial meetings, educational assemblies, or protest actions. While it is common that much of the meeting may be taken up in organizing the meeting itself and its place in an ongoing series of events, the focus in this context is on the management of the separation of powers,

Comment [J73]: 'and not as the result of its own internal politics'?

Comment [SA74]: *Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."*
No, not quite. More that the result should not be some internal political change. Making changes out in the world and not purely within the city hall for its own sake. (although changes might be needed in the city hall to effect the external actions). Sorry, it's a bit hard to be clear about this, I meant that the action should primarily be thought of as being upon these external contexts. It might actually be simpler to delete this clause, but it was meant to add clarity!

Comment [J75]: Avoid repetition of 'carefully' (see next sentence). Perhaps 'cautiously' or 'in a measured fashion' here?

Comment [SA76]: *Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."*
Yes, cautiously is fine

distinguishing the roles of administrators and elected representatives, as played out through a concern with abiding by the rules of procedure. While much of the discussion appears self-referential in relation to the municipality's own procedures, policies, and practices, these are complemented by frequent reference to potential effects on the physical municipality and its population in relation to their perceived needs or demands. Reference is also made to national policies, laws, or current affairs, in placing the municipality's action into realms of legitimacy that span beyond particular meetings themselves, or the immediate concerns of the municipality. Yet in the Norwegian context, where the legitimacy of devolved local government is largely taken for granted, and the nature of political representation is generally respected (at least more than in other European countries, with Britain as a clear contrast), practices of legitimization are both routine and partial: routine, in the repetitive use of role-identifiers; and partial, in that what must be legitimized are particular policies or decisions, rather than the authority of the municipality to make them. What is not at stake in the meetings described here, for example, is the gender or clan affiliation of the council leaders (cf. Jones 1971), the presence or absence of secretive lobbying, the use of religious prayer, blessing, or language (Kuper 1971), or even the demands of frequent unremittingly long meetings and the sanctions applied to those who absent themselves, such as Howe (1986) documents among the Kuna of San Blas. So while one may argue that the form of the bureaucratic meeting is universalized, the particulars of the meeting practice are grounded in its implementation in each particular context. The ethnographic description above gives a detailed insight into the particulars of a Norwegian local council, while highlighting the general functions of meeting practices in bureaucratic democracies, and aspects of the legitimization of these practices through embodied performances and material practices of legitimization.

][ha[Conclusions

][p[As performative actions, it is fair to conclude that meetings adopt ritual discourse and documentation to legitimize and give credence to their purpose and activities. These include the

Comment [J77]: 'specific' or 'individual' to avoid 'particulars ... particular'?

Comment [SA78]: *Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."*
Specific is fine

location of the meeting, and the presence of appropriate participants – such as accredited elected representatives and a secretariat from the municipality’s administration – as well as the trappings of municipal meeting-ness, such as codified papers, and in full municipal meetings **the council chamber** itself, with its constrained uses and peculiar decoration. As Schwartzman (1989) argues, the adoption of these rituals and routines not only lends credibility to the meeting but also brings into being the council as authoritative agent, and as corporate body (see also Robertson 2006). Here, I add that they lend the organization cumulative presence by establishing its existence over time as well, since the history of meetings along parallel streams that flow upwards through a hierarchy of generality and seniority provides a potentially infinite future for the municipality and its regular and repetitive nested calendar of meetings. Municipal meetings are thus embedded in processes and cycles, offering a set of temporalities that are both constituted by and punctuated by meetings. These meetings carry precedent and prior action, and reconstitute their authority at each turn. Meetings can collapse, and authority can fail, so strict adherence to disciplinary rules is often adopted to secure correct procedures that uphold the coherence of the municipal context and avoid the kind of 'infelicities' that Austin (1962) describes. Yet the by-product of all this legitimizing action is to smooth out the workings of the council to the outsider viewer. All meetings appear equivalent, and crucial issues can disappear into the standardized format of council action. Hence, understanding council business and process requires an investment in time, energy, and education before citizens can effectively participate. I do not argue that councils deliberately obfuscate as routine practice, but the effort that goes into legitimizing council meetings can have the effect of closing them off from external participants, who may then feel excluded from formal local politics. Yet this same structure serves to protect the legitimate activities of the state from prurient or irrelevant interference, enabling effective governance and representation. In this lies the contradiction at the heart of any democratic process, and this contradiction is performed through each meeting in its upholding of ritual procedures, while appealing to the electorate and conjuring up external contexts in the meeting chamber.

Comment [J79]: Feels like a slightly confusing overlap of categories here as the council chamber is also the location of the meeting, as well as indicative of the trappings of meeting-ness. Perhaps omit 'the location of the meeting, and' above?

Comment [SA80]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Yes, that would be a good solution

[p1[In the Norwegian context, central participants personify the council and its administrative body, embodiments that are enacted and acknowledged by the formal use of titles in meeting contexts. As noted, every speech addresses the chair, and the chair is explicitly named at the start of each participant's speech: 'Ordfører'. If the person who holds the office of mayor wishes to contribute to the debate, they must step down from their position and symbolically pass on their role to another person (usually their deputy), and when they stand at the podium to speak, they are addressed by their personal surname, and in turn begin their speech with 'Mayor' before speaking to the chamber. They later return to the chair's seat at the front table and resume the role of Mayor. The administration as a body is represented through the person of the Chief Executive (*Rådmann*), who is addressed by title both directly and indirectly. Policies proposed by the council are introduced as 'the Chief Executive's recommendation to council is ...', so that all business is conducted between the *Rådmann* and the *Ordfører*. Other participants adopt formal roles, becoming the corporate body through naming and through silence – the silence of administrators (public servants) at political meetings being a case in point. This elaborate stepping in and out of personas is itself an acknowledgement of – or an attempt to create – a separation between the personal and the political, and between the political and the administrative (in Weberian fashion), and remains necessary since the separation is always fragile. Constant reinstatement is required for formal structures to hold sway and not dissolve into personal interests or other potentially corrupt practices. Democracy is hard work, not least because the constant policing of correct procedure is both tiresome and necessary. But at the same time this hard work is seen as peripheral to the council's main purpose, which is to act on, and on behalf of, the physical municipal region and its populations, the council's electorate, its environment, and its economy (to name a few of the relevant external objects).

[p1[The papers that are circulated before and at meetings are not only essential equipment for furnishing the meeting and making its content meaningful, but they order the meeting in particular ways. Highly codified papers formalize and universalize the talk of previous and current meetings, as

Comment [SA81]: Maybe 'appears to be' would be more appropriate.

well as then providing a selective record for future meetings. Minutes of meetings are often the central legally accepted record of council proceedings, carrying weight precisely because their form is standardized and readable by non-participants. Even so, minutes and papers prepared by administrators carry coded meanings, and may disguise or provoke controversy or attempt to preempt particular discussions or encourage certain decisions (a role of the public servant that is well recognized in planning theory, e.g. Healey 1992). Given this codification, participants must learn the art of reading or interpreting meeting papers, just as administrators learn to be skilled in their writing. The papers materialize the corporation just as much as do the formal surroundings of the council chamber and the paraphernalia of the control of speech (the podium and its lights in the case presented here).

]p1[In the municipality, a major feature of committee meetings is that their legitimacy lies in the notion that they relate not only to their own procedure, but that meetings are about something else, somewhere else. The defining and manipulation of context thus constitute much of the work that makes any decision or policy felicitous. But bringing the world into the committee room requires an array of techniques, including maps, images, charts, and texts, as well as verbal invocations. Reference to contexts provide a particularly important form of political legitimacy, but the connection is fragile – policies may fail to have the impact envisioned on that context conjured for the meeting, and even the effects that are desired may fail to make their way back to subsequent meetings, whose participants may be different, or for which conditions may have changed since the action was intended (see Abram 2014).

]p1[In the light of this summary of the ethnographic details of a Norwegian municipal meeting, what conclusions can be drawn about the meeting as an object of ethnographic inquiry, beyond the above conclusions about the due processes of (normal) municipal government? First, it should be noted that these municipal meetings are just one incidence of the more general principle of meetings as institutionalized gatherings. One of the advantages of taking the meeting as an object of

Comment [J82]: 'they relate not only to their own procedure, but also to something else, somewhere else'?

Comment [SA83]: *Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."*
No, you'd think that there was some kind of shame attached to talking about the meetings themselves. It's done in a way that makes it quite clear that it's not the real business. Difficult to describe the subtleties of tone of voice, expectation, temporariness that convey a lack of legitimacy. So no also. At best, a 'primarily' or equivalent. Meetings are primarily about...

inquiry is the opportunity to compare and contrast meetings held in different contexts, as in this collection. It becomes apparent, then, that the meeting form, while apparently universal, is flexible enough to be transformed in particular contexts. I can certainly travel to municipal meetings in different European countries, and recognize what kind of meeting I am in, but I will not understand the implications of discussions held there without a substantial degree of local knowledge too. What does that then tell me about the particularities of that context? In the Norwegian case, elements such as the public access to council meetings, public broadcast of those meetings, and availability of contact with participants reveal an entirely different set of assumptions about whom government is for than that found in the United Kingdom. Sitting in the segregated public gallery of a local authority in England recently, I was threatened with eviction for taking out a camera, accused of being a threat to security rather than being seen as a citizen with intense interest in the means by which I was governed. It is sometimes casually asserted that the Norwegian welfare state has more public credibility than the British, but such assertions are empty rhetoric if we cannot see how this supposed credibility is enacted. The publicly available, accountable meeting is one clear demonstration of the public accountability of the state.

Another is the content of the discussion, the scale of the budget, and the range of powers available to such an authority, as reflected in the decisions to be considered. Schwartzman implies that organizational meetings are the embodiment of the organization, yet in this case the meetings can be further understood to be the embodiment of the imagined state. Hence, it is to meetings that we should look for an enactment of what that state consists of, and how it is materialized. However, we must also ensure that this is complemented by an examination of the material context that is referred to in the meeting. Politicians may assert any number of narratives describing their achievements that may bear unpredictable comparison with material facts.

Finally, for the ethnographer of meetings, a challenge lies in the potential for discussions in municipal meetings to conceal as much as they reveal, since it is only possible to ascertain what is

going on ‘beneath the surface’ of the documents and the meeting-speak through experiential knowledge of the council’s history and the positions of different participants. This point echoes the acknowledgement that all meetings are moments in ongoing processes and relations, and their participants continue to learn throughout their lifetime how best to perform them. At the same time, the content of meetings often jumps from case to case, and is often referential, relating to other conversations, documents, or meetings. This makes it particularly difficult to write about meetings in a satisfyingly ethnographic way, since much of the speech is meaningless outside its web of relations, perhaps even more so than in other contexts. The documents, as illustrated above, are often dense and uncompromising, requiring extensive particular sited and temporal local knowledge to interpret them, despite carrying a paradoxical air of general transferability in their formal, generic format. Each section of a set of papers might require an hour's verbal elaboration to explain, making them also difficult to account for in ethnographic writing. The elements that can be explained or generalized lie either in the detailed consideration of the medium of personal relations, or at a meta-level, which may be less suited to contemporary ethnographic aesthetics. In brief, there is little to understand from particular instances of speech or text, since everything lies in the references, or is related to the conjured contexts invoked in the meeting, making it particularly difficult to write about meetings themselves without being attached to the content or banalized into the structure.

]p1[Debates about ‘visions’ and ‘goals’ may equally represent power struggles between politicians and administrators as local disputes about particular sites, or political conflicts between parties. The meeting form enables all of these varied points of contention to be managed and sculpted into the democratic process. The municipal meeting is a particular practice of bureaucratic organization that enables all of the complex and messy relations of governing to be ordered and managed, and which reveals itself as an extraordinarily malleable and amenable form that can be exploited at all levels of sophistication, from the straightforward to the Machiavellian. Seen in this way, bureaucratic governmental meeting practice offers an air of being both generalizable and highly

particular. Whilst this ethnography is not an ethnography of a global organization (such as that by Campbell, Corson, Gray, MacDonald & Brosius 2014), its theoretical approach invites comparative ethnographic reflections from bureaucratic state offices around the world. In its potential to thus corral ethnographic examples from around the world alone, the meeting becomes a fascinating ethnographic moment.

Comment [J84]: Avoid 'around the world' x 2 (see next sentence). Perhaps 'internationally'?

Comment [SA85]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
ok. or just 'other bureaucratic state offices'.

Notes

I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the municipality from January to August 2000, with return visits the following year. I should like to thank everyone who welcomed me into the municipality and shared their experiences and opinions. Note that pseudonyms are used in this text.

² Council meetings are public occasions, and are broadcast on-line:
<http://www.asker.kommune.no/Politikk-og-samfunn/Lokalpolitikk/Video-fra-kommunestyret/>

Comment [J86]: Do you wish to supply a short general unnumbered acknowledgements note thanking people, bodies and grants who have helped with research? (Standard JRAI practice.) One could also mention here whether pseudonyms are used in the essay

Comment [SA87]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Yes ok, thanks. The phrase about pseudonyms is intentionally vague since not all of them are.

REFERENCES

ABRAM, S. 2002. Planning and public-making in municipal government. *Focaal*, 21-34.

Comment [J88]: Issue no.?

——— 2004a. Personality and professionalism in a Norwegian district council. *Planning Theory* 3, 21-40.

——— 2004b. The smell of money: minor risks and olfactory sensibilities – the anatomy of a protest.

In Å. Boholm & R. Löftstedt (eds) *Facility siting: risk, power and identity in land-use planning* (eds)

Å. Boholm & R. Löftstedt, 72-88. London: Earthscan.

Comment [J89]: Not cited? See above

Comment [SA90]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Fine, please delete.

——— 2007. Bricks coming out of the ground: reconstructing Norfolk Park. In S. Macdonald (Ed.)

Materializing Sheffield: place, culture, identity (ed.) S. Macdonald. Sheffield: Humanities Research

Institute Online (available on-line: <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/matshef/abram/MSabram.htm>,

accessed 5 January 2017).

Comment [J91]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here.

Comment [SA92]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Ok, a hangover from an earlier version so please delete.

——— 2011. *Culture and planning*. Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate

——— 2014. The time it takes: temporalities of planning. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) (Special Issue), 129-47.

——— & G. WESZKALNYS (eds) 2013. *Elusive promises: planning in the contemporary world*. Oxford: Berghahn.

AUSTIN, J.L. 1962. *How to do things with words*. Oxford: University Press.

BARTH, F. 1959. *Political leadership among Swat Pathans*. London: Athlone Press.

BAXSTROM, R. 2012. Living on the horizon of the everlasting present: power, planning, and the emergence of baroque forms of life in urban Malaysia. In *Power: Southeast Asian perspectives* (eds)

Chua, Cook, Long & Wilson,. London: Routledge.

BRUNSSON, N. 1989. *The organization of hypocrisy: talk, decisions and actions in organizations*. Chichester: Wiley.

CAMPBELL, L.M., C. CORSON, N.J. GRAY, K.I. MACDONALD & J.P. BROSIUS 2014. Studying global environmental meetings to understand global environmental governance: collaborative event ethnography at the Tenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Global Environmental Politics* **14**, 1-20 (available on-line:

http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/GLEP_e_00236, accessed 5 January 2017).

DURANTI, A. 1984. Lauga and Talanoaga: two speech genres in a Samoan political event. In D. L. Brenneis and F. R. Myers (Eds.) *Dangerous words: language and politics in the Pacific* (eds) D.L. Brenneis & F.R. Myers, . New York: University Press.

EVANS-PRITCHARD, E.E. 1976 [1937]. *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande*. Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks.

FLYVBJERG, B. 1991. *Rationality and power: democracy in practice*. Chicago: University Press.

Comment [J93]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here.

Comment [SA94]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Likewise, please delete

Comment [J95]: Initials and page refs?

Comment [SA96]: Reply to Justin (05/01/2017, 16:28): "..."
Ah, it seems to have changed! It is now:
Southeast Asian Perspectives on Power. Editors Liana Chua, Joanna Cook, Nicholas Long and Lee Wilson. Pp135-150.

Comment [J97]: Online ref. located and added

Comment [J98]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here. If keeping, page refs?

Comment [J99]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here.

Comment [J100]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here.

FORESTER, J. 1987. Planning in the face of conflict: negotiation and mediation strategies in local land use regulation. *Journal of the American Planning Association* **53**, 303-14.

Comment [J101]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here.

GARSTEN, C. & M. LINDH DE MONTOYA (eds) 2008. *Transparency in a new global order: unveiling organizational visions*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

GUYER, J. 2007. Prophecy and the near future: thoughts on macroeconomic, evangelical and punctuated time. *American Ethnologist* **34**, 409-21.

HEALEY, P. 1992. A planner's day: knowledge and action in communicative practice. *Journal of the American Planning Association* **58**, 9-20.

HOLTBY, W. 1936. *South Riding*. London: Collins.

HOWE, J. 1986. *The Kuna Gathering: contemporary village politics in Panama*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

JONES, G.I. 1971. Councils among the central Ibo. In *Councils in action* (eds) A. Richards & A. Kuper, 63-79. Cambridge: University Press.

KUPER, A. 1971. The Kgalagari Lekgota. In *Councils in action* (eds) A. Richards & A. Kuper, 80-99. Cambridge: University Press.

Lea, T. 2008. *Bureaucrats and Bleeding Hearts: Indigenous health in northern Australia*. Sydney: UNSW Press.

LAW, J. 1986. On the methods of long-distance control: vessels, navigation and the Portuguese route to India. In *Power, action and belief: a new sociology of knowledge* (ed.) J. Law, 234-63. Keele: Sociological Review Monograph.

LEA, T. 2008. *Bureaucrats and bleeding hearts: indigenous health in northern Australia*. Sydney: UNSW Press.

Comment [J102]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here.

MANDELBAUM, S., L. MAZZA & R.W. BURCHELL (eds) 1996. *Explorations in planning theory*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Centre for Urban Policy Research.

MAZZI, L. 1996. Designing a domain for planning theory. In S. Mandelbaum, L. Mazza and R. W. Burchell (Eds.) *Explorations in planning theory* (eds) S. Mandelbaum, L. Mazza & R.W. Burchell, 3-9. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Centre for Urban Policy Research.

MURDOCH, J. & S. ABRAM 2002. *Rationalities of planning*. Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate.

Comment [J103]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here.

Riles, A. 2006. *Documents: Artifacts of Modern Knowledge*. Ann-Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

RILES, A. 2001. *The network inside out*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Comment [J104]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here.

——— (ed.) 2006. *Documents: artifacts of modern knowledge*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Comment [J105]: See Intro. This is an edited collection, OK?

ROBERTSON, A.F. 1971. The development of town committees in Ahafo. In *Councils in action* (eds) A. Richards & A. Kuper, 130-70. Cambridge: University Press. ——— 2006. The anthropology of grey zones. *Ethnos* 71, 569-73.

Comment [J106]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here.

SALMOND, A. 1976. *Hui: a study of Maori ceremonial gatherings*. Auckland: A.H. and A.W. Reed.

Comment [J107]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here.

SCHWARTZMAN, H.B. 1989. *The meeting: gatherings in organizations and communities*. New York: Springer.

SEARLE, J.R. 1969. *Speech acts: an essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: University Press.

SPENCER, P. 1971. Politics and democracy in an English town council. In A. Richards and A. Kuper (Eds) *Councils in action* (eds) A. Richards & A. Kuper, 171-201. Cambridge: University Press.

STRATHERN, M. 1975. Veiled speech in Mount Hagen. In *Political language and oratory in traditional society* (ed.) M. Bloch. New York: Academic Press.

Comment [J108]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here. If keeping, page refs?

VIKE, H. 2004. *Velferd uten grenser: den norske velferdsstaten ved veiskillet* [Welfare without limits: the Norwegian welfare state at the crossroads]. Akribe Forlag.

Comment [J109]: Town of publication?

WESZKALNYS, G. 2010. *Berlin, Alexanderplatz: transforming place in a unified Germany*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Comment [J110]: Not cited. Please specify where text ref. should appear or delete entry here.

INSERT SPACE FOR FRENCH ABSTRACT
