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# Corporeality of Consultant Expertise in Arctic Natural Gas Development

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**ABSTRACT** The contemporary ethnographic landscape and social fields of emerging actors involved in resource extraction in the Arctic draw attention to the role of “expert” knowledge, specifically, the organization of consultant work, the production, commodification and dissemination of expert forecasting, and technologies. While anthropology traditionally has focused on adaptations in northern areas in relation to state policies, regulations of the environment and ethnopolitical categorizations, in this article we introduce new approaches to the study of experts and forms of knowledge that have the potential for shaping energy development in the Arctic. We contribute to the state of theory and knowledge in relation to how experts drive the structure and content of pivotal conversations on Arctic oil and gas development by building a conceptual terminology and typology of relations between products of human bodies associated with expertise (gesture, ideas, voice, linguistic phenomena) and the material environment that ensures the security and authority of experts (turnstiles, ID badges, guards) as forces of energy production in their own right.

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**KEYWORDS** Arctic, energy, expertise, corporeality

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## Introduction

In this article, we consider the interactions of consultants and decision makers over the future of Arctic energy development that are taking place in specific, exclusive, and guarded environments. Specifically, we examine the relations between products of human bodies associated with expertise (gesture, ideas, voice, linguistic phenomena) and the material environment that ensures the security and authority of experts (turnstiles, ID badges, guards) as forces of energy production in their own right. This effort is part of a larger project concerning the fleeting phenomena surrounding how agendas are promoted through expertise and the role of corporeality in shaping energy development across the Arctic. We argue that such experts who provide knowledge within the context of capitalism are not simply working for capital, they are themselves important commodities that work in particular ways. They receive specific training, validated through higher education degrees and prestigious grants; they also possess affiliation across academic, government, and private institutions. Moreover, increasingly these specialists require particular material surroundings to highlight their self-worth.

For many years, expert knowledge of Arctic energy development has been reflected upon by reference to written documents, most often in the format of reports. For instance, the legacy of “paper pipelines,” a phrase calling attention to failed Arctic energy transportation proposals, is legendary. Reflecting on the wealth of written knowledge required to assess an Alaska natural gas pipeline proposal, for example, economist George Rogers states during the 1970s:

The sheer bulk of existing reports, studies, and supporting documents from which an environmental analysis could be made is impressive, and the task of reviewing and assessing them sometimes seems greater than the challenge of compiling them in the first place. The staff of the Federal Power Commission, for its February 1977 report alone, reviewed 253 volumes of transcript, embracing almost 45,000 pages and about 1,000 exhibits, some of which were environmental impact statements of over a thousand pages. (Rogers 1977: 21)

Over 20 years after Dr. Rogers’ observations, a new generation of stakeholders continue to call attention to the pile-up of expert documents. Consider the following quip in a report produced by the State of Alaska in conjunction with consulting firms Petrie Parkman & Co. and C2M Hill:

A North Slope gas pipeline has been seriously considered since the 1970s, but to date questionable economics have always blocked its con-

struction. The project is further complicated—or aided, depending on your perspective—by the significant amount of study, legislation, development and permitting that have already occurred or may yet need to occur in the United States and Canada. (ADR 2002: 3.1)

As the starting point for their analysis, officials of the State of Alaska cite an existing body of written documentation consisting of at least eight separate Alaska pipeline project reports commissioned since 1978.

Despite such observations on the volume of materials produced, our own ethnography gathered over the last decade at conferences and in interviews with Arctic pipeline advocates suggests that a different kind of interest at play in decision-making processes is embodied in what we would describe as “the corporeality of expertise.”

To frame the issue, consider one example. Recalling the dramatic energy events in fall 2000, one State of Alaska economist states:

there was a natural gas summit in Columbus, Ohio, put together by Daniel Yergin [of Cambridge Energy]. It was when natural gas prices were starting to rocket up. It was a national thing, co-hosted by Alaska Governor Tony Knowles and the facilitator was Cambridge Energy Research Associates [CERA]. CERA had their *analysts come up one after the other* and explain what was going on—introducing to the public the new gas paradigm and why prices were going so high. (Personal conversation with Marks, emphasis added.)

According to an aide serving the Knowles administration who attended the event, what became evident at the gas summit was the “fantasy that Dan Yergin was going to guide us into how to get the [Alaska] natural gas pipe built very fast.” At the gas summit,

the governor turned to us at some point and said ‘I want to get these guys on contract, as advisors.’ And we said, ‘what do you want them to do’ [to which] the governor replied ‘I just want them, they can advise us.’ (Personal conversation with Persily.)

Two months after the gas summit, the Knowles administration awarded a US \$350,000 “no-bid” contract to Cambridge Energy that included for the governor 24-hour cellphone access to Daniel Yergin (ADN January 31, 2001).

This vignette highlights CERA’s success in becoming a frontrunner in the field of energy expertise and gaining the trust of a governor based on the charismatic authority of Daniel Yergin. Here, the human body serves as a conduit for the display of knowledge. What is more, this corporeal-type knowledge stands apart from the costly written reports typically sold as

end-products of expertise. The occasion of the governor's face-to-face experience with Yergin created a "eureka moment," a type of inspiration that resulted in a new idea to solve a problem and an entrepreneurial thought for seizing opportunity. In this way, we argue, the body of the expert—through gesture, immediacy, spontaneous commentary—provides sense-making performances that channel the complexity of facts about the future of the Arctic into the kinds of simplicity that can further political and economic decision making.

In what follows, we outline an argument in which the corporeality of expertise is a crucial site where the future of the Arctic is being constructed as a hydrocarbon-rich and accessible landscape. Through face-to-face exchanges at executive roundtables, such as Cambridge Energy Week in Houston, Texas, and the St. Petersburg Economic Forum in Russia (forums that abound in numbers) experts' own bodies become a reflection of the Arctic as a valuable energy extractive frontier.

## Mind and Body

Various scholarly treatments have considered the intersection of expertise and the body. The most recent suggestion is that the intellectual professional is "de-corporealized," where the material body is independent of what actually constitutes self-worth (Boyer 2005: 247; Brydon 1998). For Bruno Latour (1999: 4), the expert is a "mind in a vat." This is so, according to Dominic Boyer (2005), because the physical body of the expert does not belong to those characteristics for which we commonly identify and evaluate intellectuals and their labor. The reason for this is that intellectuals encourage each other to experience their mental activities as originating in a purely cognitive process. Experts evaluate and consider *genuine knowledge* only that which derives from mental activities (reading, thinking) (Abbott 1988; Bourdieu 1998).

A different perspective contrasts the immediacy, inspiration, and face-to-face interaction associated with the body of expertise, to the deliberative, contemplative, and isolated activity of reading expert reports. Peter Sloterdijk (1982), for example, contrasts corporeality and textuality by referring to two types of knowledge: ancient cynicism (corporeal, anecdotal) and modern cynicism (distanced reflection through textual familiarity). Pierre Bourdieu (1984) employs a similar dichotomy in the terms "Kantian" and "anti-Kantian" aesthetic, the former tending toward a rejection of representations of the obvious in favor of principles of the esoteric, and the latter, a preference for the sensual, immediate, and obvious. Similar contrasts are found in such phrases as the "civilizing process" (Elias 1978), what

Max Weber (1946: 140) calls “progressiveness,” and what Georg Simmel (1972: 31) refers to as “the blasé attitude,” all of which call attention to a preference for distance from the corporeal subject by way of experiences that favor intellectual practice.

For anthropologists, the corporeal and textual divide marks a threshold of modernity. Here, literacy (textual) emphasizes abstraction, universalization, and depersonalization and thus makes it possible to dispense with spectacle and demonstration in securing the belief and obedience of others. By contrast, for pre-capitalist modes of obedience, relations of power are made, unmade, and remade through personal interactions (corporeal) that rely on visible (conspicuous) expenditures of time and performance of the body. Knowledge and truth are, so to say, carried through the body, which is necessary for symbolic recognition (Mauss 1990).

Thus, an expanded understanding of the role of corporeality raises the possibility that the legitimacy of expertise in a post-capitalist society is based not solely upon theoretical knowledge but, instead, upon pre-capitalist modes of spectacle, charisma, and enchantment—what Alfred Whitehead (1926: 11) called the “staging of verification” in scientific experiments or Bruno Latour (1987: 73) refers to as “inscription.”

The intersection of corporeality and expertise also suggests an imitable quality, of the kind akin to the dichotomy in the *The King's Two Bodies*: the body natural, which is subject to physical experience, and the body politic, which transcends the natural life and serves as a symbol of status that allows for the continuity of power, and in our case also the continuity of knowledge (Kantorowicz 1997).

In his study on expert efficiency, for example, Thomas Princen (2005) argues in favor of the imitable quality of the discretionary principles upon which expert advice is based. The expert, he argues, escapes the threat of outsourcing that comes with eliminating redundancies in labor markets precisely because expertise is unique [imitable] and not open to achieving greater *efficiencies*. In fact, our evidence suggests that the imitable quality of consultant expertise appears on the level of linguistic expression. Western capitalist word formations associated with experts working in Russia, for example, retain English-sounding patterns (“energy consulting” becomes *enerdzhi konsalting/энерджи консалтинг*, versus standard usage of “energy” — *energiya/энергия*). Firms such as Cambridge Energy Research Associates appear in Russian news headlines without the typical possessive grammatical declension (*Компания Кембридж Энерджи Рисерч Ассошиэйтс*). The acronyms of global energy consulting firms such as IHS appear on business cards and engraved on office plaques translated into Russian as a string of words (*Ау-Еуч-Ес/Ай-Эйч-Эс*), thereby demanding Russian speakers to articulate

sound patterns in English (“aye aech es”). Examples such as these protect the imitable quality of expertise and invite a great deal of security through the ubiquity of bodyguards, turnstiles, and identification badges that restrict the body in relation to expert knowledge. More generally, these views resonate with ideas having a long history in the Western intellectual tradition, as in the separation of mind from body. Recent legacies include the effectiveness of Saussure’s *Course in General Linguistics* in which he poses the radical separation of the denotational sign (qua sign) from the material world.

## Presence of Elites and Expertise

The current research is funded by a US National Science Foundation (NSF) grant titled *Assessing Intermediary Expertise in Russian Arctic Natural Gas Development*. The study is informed from earlier explorations of Alaska natural gas development, where we examined the role of energy consultants in fostering social coordination. In that work, we showed how consulting firms in the natural gas industry were capable of redressing the uncertainties of clients. Through scenario planning, executive roundtables, and Internet-based analysis, consultants could objectify risks and operations of industry in ways that generated undisputed knowledge. Technical prediction combined with fashionable modes of communication created socially amenable, and to some extent, ritualized occasions that underlined the knowledge (predictions and solutions) being fashioned (Mason 2007). While in this previous work, we emphasized the establishment of *communities of interpretation* (Mason 2007: 374) our current research is less focused on what is shared than what is *performed*. As such, we are concerned with how the expert becomes a location of non-scripted, non-literate forms of knowledge transmission, while at the same time, a key site where the practices of institutions, imagination, and subjectivity take corporeal form.

Our methodology employs ethnographic data collection consisting of participant observation and semi-structured interviews of expert consultants in North America, Western Europe, and Russia who provide knowledge to industry leaders involved in natural gas development in the Barents Sea area of Russia—in particular, the offshore energy proposal called Shtokman. The Shtokman field is currently under development by three companies: the Russian firm Gazprom, Norway’s Statoil, and France’s Total. Unlike gas development in Alaska, where controversies are fairly concrete, the issues of Shtokman are broader and less defined. For this reason, there are fewer focal points in space and time as project development takes place at a different stage of temporality than Alaska pipeline development.

Because of its international engagement, Shtokman development invites expertise surrounding not only market-oriented trends defining the economic outlook of the project, but also knowledge of political insight. A good case in point is the recent fact that Russia was late to acknowledge the importance of non-conventional natural gas, such as the increase in extracting shale gas in the United States. Russia's largest natural gas firm, Gazprom, glossed over the premise; nevertheless, the importance of new technology, such as hydraulic fracturing, in increasing supply levels for the United States, forced a reformulated vision of global gas development.

Our field research includes a focus on *key networking events*, where interaction among industry, government, and consultants create communities of consensus around imagined futures. This helps us understand the wider social field of actors and institutions and their sense-making performances as well as the distribution of common sense of Arctic energy development in diverse locations. We then supplement these observations with a set of semi-structured interviews with key players in the field by focusing on *ad hoc communications* where future imaginaries are kept dynamic and fresh in people's minds through regular interactions. We consider this data collection process as a road map for approaching expert knowledge about the Arctic, knowledge that is otherwise inaccessible via publicly funded science research. Our method addresses specifically how consultants acquire, generate, and circulate knowledge of Arctic energy development.

One such event was the Norwegian Research Council sponsored workshop Petrosam on Russian gas development, which took place in May 2010 in Oslo, Norway. In attendance were experts of renown, including Jonathan Stern, Director of Gas Research at Oxford Institute for Energy Studies; Arild Moe, Deputy Director of Norway's Fridtjof Nansen Institute and Valeriy Kryukov, who holds a Chair at Moscow's Higher School of Economics. While few industry leaders attended this event, we interpreted the meeting as an incubation forum for creating understandings that would later be presented to industry executives. For example, in February 2011, Stern would serve as a natural gas mediator at one of Europe's leading industry events, the Oslo Energy Forum. The general cost for attendance at this forum was US\$15,000; important participants included Helge Lund, President of Statoil, which holds a one-quarter stake in Shtokman. At the three-day forum, Stern performed a series of crucial stagings surrounding the importance of the public's perception of natural gas. He used his message as a counterpoint to proposals focusing on so-called clean coal (coal provides 50 per cent of current global electricity production versus 25 per cent for natural gas).

In Russia, we traveled to Murmansk, to attend Petromaks, the jointly

organized Norwegian-Russian Shtokman gas field development workshop. This Norwegian government-sponsored program took place within the region of Barents Sea development; unlike the other more enclosed events, it was attended by a wider forum of Russian and Norwegian academics, representatives of NGOs and environmental groups, as well as residents of Teriberka, the village location of the proposed off-loading site for the Shtokman gas field. Speakers at this event were comprised mostly of technical experts—geologists, engineers, and risk assessors, whose technical discourses often served as surrogates for political and community-related issues.

In St. Petersburg, Russia, we attended the International Economic Forum. In attendance was the Russian prime minister, Dmitry Medvedev, and the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy. Also present was Daniel Yergin, chairman of Cambridge Energy Research Associates. Yergin led a key roundtable on global gas development, titled “Energy Futures,” a premier gathering where industry leaders set priorities for Barents Sea gas development, including the determining role of government in market-based decision making.

In Moscow, we attended the Russian Oil and Gas Congress, considered a popular gathering of Western-based companies with offices within Russia. Attendance included journalists, consultants, academics, and government ministry representatives. Among the expert speakers was specialist on Russian natural gas energy Thane Gustafson, senior expert for Cambridge Energy. Gustafson attended the St. Petersburg Forum, accompanying Yergin as the consulting firm’s “Russian expert.” Also at the Congress was Bengt Hansen, then president of the Moscow office of Statoil. Finally, we attended Cambridge Energy Research Week in Houston, where in attendance were corporate sponsors of Russian arctic gas development (Exxon, Rosneft, Gazprom, Statoil, Total), government (European regulatory and Russian ministries), concerns financing Arctic gas (Deutsche), and journalists.

## Security of Corporeal Expertise

There is a great deal of security surrounding the expert body. This is especially noticeable when attending the executive roundtable event, CERAWEEK, where police personnel are ubiquitous. At this event, which takes place in Houston and is attended by elite industry leaders for a five-day discussion of energy trends, we noticed between five and seven policemen wandering the main gathering area, with their hands resting on firearms. The turnstile is another form of security that is often a part of the built-in material framework at the entrance of offices of consulting firms, but also appearing as temporary installations at the entrance of pavilions,



for example, at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in Russia. Turnstile security is common in many buildings across the world and is often accompanied by personnel who register the identity of visitors. In the London offices of CERA, turnstile security is highly aestheticized by the appearance of glamorously dressed administrative assistants, who greet visitors with little or no conversation. Often, there are restrictions on taking photographs of security, as for example, at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum or at the World Bank in Washington DC, where our attempts to capture images of security personnel were thwarted at every turn, with guards requesting formal explanations of our purpose in capturing such images. Ultimately, security measures surrounding the expert body contribute to the aura of the experts' inimitable quality.

The third most ubiquitous form of security, behind the policeman and the barricade, is the identification badge. Everyone attending executive roundtables, such as CERAWeek, is required to wear these badges. They typically hang from a lanyard around the neck and are used not only to identify the names of clients and their place of employment, but also possess computer readable bar codes for access to Internet use or when registering participants as they enter rooms where consultants are giving presentations.

These forms of security add to the aura of expertise by creating a distance between the client of expertise and those persons for whom attendance is not possible because of financial limitations. The concept of aura, according to Walter Benjamin is a phenomenon of distance, a form of resistance that has led to the twin desire for bringing things closer spatially, while overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction. "Every day" Benjamin writes, "the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction" (Benjamin 1989: 572). The role of the guard, the turnstile, and the ID badge provides expertise with an aura precisely through its twin effect of distancing the client from the non-client and ensuring proximity between the client and expert knowledge.

The issue of proximity and distance may be explored from another perspective focusing on how the expert body appears on the *front-stage* and the *back-stage*, concepts developed by Erving Goffman (1959). In exploring these concepts, Goffman captures the shifting identity of individuals, based on their role performances and the consensus between actors and the audience as a kind of dramaturgical development. Similarly, expert roundtables are orchestrated so that actors become manifest as "experts" or "clients" and thus come to understand themselves, specifically on the basis of their expertise and non-expertise. The spaces where clients are allowed to view, participate, and otherwise have access to expertise, for example, may be considered the front-stage, while the spaces where clients are forbidden

from entering are the back-stage. In these situations, distances are further secured by rules governing what portion of an event a client is provided access to, whether by payment, prestige, or function.

During CERAWeek, we were provided with an identification badge with the word “TuesWed,” which meant that our participation was restricted to Tuesday and Wednesday, the two days we paid for attendance. These sequestrations or restrictions also include the given status of a particular participant (speaker, sponsor, journalist) or the position of a client within their own organization that accords them with certain privileges and access to events. Of course, for someone unfamiliar with such events, all industry access we encounter may be considered back-stagings, since these events require formal invitations, elaborate vettings of identity, and large advance payments (attendance at executive roundtables costs US\$6,000 to US\$15,000).

Security draws attention also to the fragility of the body of an expert. Whenever we shake hands with a consultant, we feel as if we are holding the hand of a baby. This soft cellular physicality, developed from years of typing, holding a coffee mug, and sitting, could be brought to physical harm quite easily and great damage would result. By contrast, for example, on Kodiak Island, Alaska, where we worked with communities and experts during the Exxon Valdez oil spill (Mason 2008), among rural villagers, we could not help noticing how hard the hands of informants were and with what “zing” they gripped us in introductory handshakes. They received this strength from working many decades in the fishing industry where they constantly would be using their hands to turn a cold steel wench, pull an icy wet rope, or throw a salmon into a brailer. Physical ability in the commercial salmon fishing environment is a habit that is not quickly or easily acquired, and for persons working decades in these fields, becomes durable. Among retired fishermen in their eighties, handshakes were still strong.

The fragility of the hand is an especially sensitive issue, since it is a point of physical contact between experts and non-experts. A strong handshake from a non-expert is tantamount to aggression and would raise eyebrows. The act serves to enforce authority over the expert by demonstrating physical prowess and is considered an unacceptable practice. The rare instance where the strength of a handshake by a client indicates that his inferior status as a professional could be compensated by the fact that he could handily beat the expert to a pulp, is one scenario that experts avoid by having bodyguards immediately visible and present.

## Sumptuousness of Staging

Spaces of expertise are elegant, and security ensures that everyone present can relax in an elite sequestered environment where knowledge is a high-

ly expensive, sequestered commodity. We have been studying executive roundtables for some time, and often we are struck by the venue chosen for the gathering. Venue is a hallmark for the way the body of an expert is registered. In our experience as anthropologists, we have noticed within our own disciplinary meetings that the venue is given little regard, for example, by the acceptance of speaker systems that do not work well or routine problems with image projectors. These issues we accept with a feeling that knowledge is outside the purview of issues that preoccupy wealthier (and thus more superficial) gatherings. But even for anthropologists, venue matters; otherwise, we could hold job talks in New York's Times Square (and just think how much knowledge would be transferred then!).

In our experience, venues of energy consultants are high-end and represent a sumptuousness of occasion. They usually take place in four-star hotels in major cities across the globe—Houston, London, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Washington DC. Elaborate details are created for the occasion, including personal name place cards, menus, table settings, brochures, and the like. Such sumptuous atmospheres are taken for granted by participants and only commented upon when they do not exist, as for example, in 2010 when CERAWeek changed its venue from the Galleria in Houston to the Hilton. Many attendees we spoke with breathed a sigh of relief about the move, complaining that the Galleria, a four-star hotel and meeting place in its own right, had become outdated and that the move to the newly constructed Hilton put CERAWeek once again back on the A-list of energy events.

In such venues, it is expected that all activities will be orchestrated without a flaw. For example, there are electricity needs, in which the reliability of available energy flow needs to be constant and convenient. In 2010, CERAWeek utilized 20-foot wall screens to depict a live broadcast of Secretary of State Hilary Clinton—a period of time, highly ritualized, in which reliable energy requirements are a necessity. This sumptuousness of space frames the grandeur of the ideas that the expert body desires to convey, with the more ambitious concepts and ritual stagings requiring more prestigious settings.

## Productive Calm

Dominic Boyer (2005) notes how the body of the professional intellectual is an efficient yet passive mechanism for energizing mental activity. Its normative ideal is a state of productive calm. As such, productive calm completes the codification of the body as a purely kinetic and physical entity that would not be expected or affirmed to display expertise in any ration-

alist conception of the term. Thus, intellectual life is often considered a purely mental enterprise that is phenomenologically indebted to (1) intense subject focus of experience upon mental activity and (2) continuous reinvestment of productive energy into the creation and transaction of epistemic [knowledge] forms. This phenomenological enhancement is further stressed by social relations of professionalism that maintain a sanctity of bounded economies of expertise and honing productive activity.

We had the opportunity of experiencing the productive calm of consultant experts at a number of institutes and think tanks. In both Paris and Moscow, we visited the offices of CERA and discussed research with senior experts. In Oslo, we spent several days understanding the operations of three consulting firms: Econ-Pöry, Fridtjof Nansen Institute, and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). In addition, in October 2010, we had exchanges with consultants from NUPI in Helsinki, Finland, attending the Aleksanteri conference, a premier event on Russian energy, which included Norwegian consular members from Moscow.

With exception of Fridtjof Nansen Institute, all offices were in downtown areas in post-1970s glass and brick towers, with fashionable restaurants and bars on the ground floors. A brief tour of NUPI provided a sense of the setting for these locations. Without exception, in each of these offices, books, reports, and written papers could be seen *on display* as primary end-products of intellectual activity. At the reception area of NUPI, for example, an installation for books represents the published products of NUPI experts. All these institutes have in-house libraries and maintain *reading rooms* where employees can browse through various newspapers. As we wandered the hallway, a familiar sight at NUPI was the intellectual professional in his or her office, surrounded by the *clutter of paper*. These scenes emphasize the importance experts place on the written word, but also, the practice of sitting at a desk.

At these locations, the visitor is witness to consultants busy at work which consists of reading, underlining words in books, stacking journals on shelves, printing drafts, and drinking coffee to keep the brain alert, that is, to keep the cognitive capacities working. This activity takes place in temperature-controlled office rooms under warm lighting.

Perhaps one of the more notable representations of the intellectual body in a seated position is the bronze sculpture by Auguste Rodin called *The Thinker*. For many, its significance lies in the ability to re-present the potential of man as a contemplative subject—as a form of distance from corporeal needs. *The Thinker* is a visible signature of intellectual labor and is differentiated from other forms of (manual) labor, drawing attention to the Cartesian duality of mind and body activity. That is, the image of a man

leaning his chin on a fist does not bring to mind a bodily gesture, but in fact, transfers the materiality of the body into the written materials that serve as the end-products of thinking. Nevertheless, the body of *The Thinker* is still a body. It has gesture that signals the appropriate physical position for carrying out the practice of modern thinking, for carrying out the activity of receiving secular knowledge, that is, how to appropriately receive modern facts. *The Thinker* is thus, a reminder that obtaining modern knowledge requires its own *bodily position*. As such, *The Thinker* is best contrasted to another type of gesture, that of religious prayer, of kneeling, placing one's hands together as when communicating and receiving non-secular knowledge. What we see in *The Thinker* is not an emphasis on thinking, but instead, a departure from gestures used to obtain religious, mythical, and magical knowledge of means/ends causality. Reason and rationality under conditions of modernity have their own corporeal expressions.

## Conclusion

Our recent work is part of a larger project concerning the *fleeting phenomena* surrounding how agendas are set through expertise. Here, what we refer to is not political institutions or the history of the energy industry, but instead, all facets (unveiled by the ethnographic eye) of what happens when consultants engage with elites. In doing so, we attempt to recognize that the bodies we examine are not subject to institutions of knowledge but, instead, are representatives of these institutions. They speak on behalf of the firms and institutions they represent. In this sense, our informants represent two faces of the sovereign body, in that they have properties by which institutions can take form. And yet they are also entirely replaceable—what remains is their structural standing (and yet, because the body stands in the positions, the body in effect, makes decisions). Capturing fleeting phenomena is always about the actual ritual context of the moment, despite whether or not certain forms could be historicized.

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