



SESSION ABSTRACT

Creative Ethnography

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Abstract: Ethnography has many faces, and we are all familiar with classic ethnography. This session, however, intends to discuss ethnography and, in general, social and cultural anthropology in a more artistic sense. What new, creative, imaginative developments does ethnography offer in our time? Writing anthropology in the twenty-first century (Wulf 2016) encompasses many creative forms of narration. According to Elliott and Culhane's (2017: 16) *A Different Kind of Ethnography*, the "combination of imagination, creativity and ethnography has the potential [...] to deepen, complicate, and extend our inquiry into how people make, repair, and remake the world." Such insights and practices include, but are not limited to, creative nonfiction, walking and storytelling, experimental video recording, painting/drawing, singing, playing music, dancing, social drama (Victor Turner), social intervention and breaching experiments (Augusto Boal).

For all these creative methodological extensions of classic ethnography, one basic assumption holds true: Ethnography is more than a method of social science research; it has features of a work of art. By which we mean, among other things, that ethnography works not merely with precisely defined concepts but also with symbols and metaphors, images and non-verbal media for "co-creative knowledge making" (Elliott and Culhane 2017). In short, it transcends the scope of what is usually understood as science.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Wednesday, September 28, 2022 | Slot 4 | Room 4

Jasamin Kashanipour & Dietmar Larcher: Welcome and Opening

Helena Böhmová: Walking the AnthropoCZene: Ethnography of a Changing Landscape

Kasey Jernigan: Geographies of Dispossession: Counter-mapping Indigenous Stories of Space, Place, and Histories

Hannah Varga: Design (as) Ethnography: Architectural Design Practices as Creative Tools and Devices for Exploring Urban Spaces and Landscapes in Southern Spain

Kim Đĩnh Bùì: Sensible Ethnography

Wednesday, September 28, 2022 | Slot 5 | Room 4

Renato Athias: Indigenous Peoples, Museological Processes and Decolonizing Museums

Usmon Boron: Memory, Dialogue, and Positionality in Ethnographic Writing

Sarah Rüller & Konstantin Aal: Being Creative in Times of Crisis: Limitations and Opportunities of (Remote) Ethnography through Fiction, Storytelling, and Theater

Marina Jaciuk & María Esther Fernández Mostaza: How to Ethnography the Unknown?

Marie Hermanová: Living with and on Social Media – An (Auto)ethnography of Becoming an Online Person

SESSION PAPERS

Walking the AnthropoCZene: Ethnography of a Changing Landscape

Helena Böhmová

'Walking is more than what body *does*; it is what body *is*' (Ingold & Vergunst 2008). It is a deeply social activity shaping how we feel, think and understand ourselves within the landscape (Foletti ed. 2018). It can be argued that 'social life is walked' (Ingold & Vergunst 2008). Walking represents an interesting method to approach not only landscape change, but also the way its inhabitants perceive it. The presentation focuses on questions of environmental and landscape change and how these changes are lived by those who experience them. 'Footwork' means walking on foot through the landscape and engaging with the environment and people inhabiting it. The aim is to listen to their stories and understand how changes in the landscape affect their individual lives. Such never-heard-before stories of landscape change come from people who are often silent in the public space. The 'footwork' method enables the researcher to create a unique perspective: experience the landscape and its

transformation in a way emphasizing the walking movement (Ingold 2004), altered perception of temporality and spatiality and constant change (Foletti ed. 2018). Walking through the landscape thus becomes a 'poly-sensorial experience' (ibid.) not limited to the sheer movement of the body or practice of observation (Curtis 2008). Stories and narratives gain personal meaning once they are walked. For the timespan of the footwork, the researcher tries not only to visit the landscape, but to actually *live* it.

Project *Walking the AntropoCZene* applies the footwork method to the region Krušné hory (Erzgebirge region, CZ), the epicentre of large-scale landscape and sociocultural change for many years. I will explain how my experience from the 'footwork' influenced the way I perceive the region, and discuss the benefits and limits of this method I used for my Master's thesis research, inspired by the *Climate Walk* project.

Geographies of Dispossession: Counter-mapping Indigenous Stories of Space, Place, and Histories

Kasey Jernigan

This paper highlights a participatory research approach to focus on the geographies of Indigenous dispossession around the University of Virginia (UVA) and Southeastern United States more broadly. Conceived in recognition of the continued erasure of Indigenous peoples within the Commonwealth of Virginia, I describe a course designed to make visible Indigenous relations – both historical and contemporary – with UVA and that fosters collaboration with Virginia tribes, engages students with archived collections, and enables students to make connections between community-based collaborative work, archival research, oral historical work, and the theories and methodologies specific to Native American Indigenous Studies. In this paper, I focus on a class project designed around a genealogy of self and place whereby students design a dynamic, digital map of a particular place meaningful to them. I describe the processes and ways that Indigenous theoretical frameworks and methodologies are “put to work,” enabling students to create multimodal and narrative content that engages in “deep history” of place that brings together Indigenous cultural histories, especially as they relate to students' own genealogy. Using basic anthropological methods (e.g., field work, ethnography, interviews) and Indigenous methods that are increasingly recognized within anthropology (e.g., walking, storytelling, reimagining temporality), students combine and apply multiple tools and frameworks to make sense of space, place, and histories they had previously taken for granted. This course, and the digital mapping project in particular, introduces and challenges students to consider multiple forms of knowledge, while bringing to the fore, a better understanding of Indigenous onto-epistemologies. Additionally, the final projects are compiled using an online software program that creates “tours” of places, but ours is unique in that it weaves Indigenous stories and connection with place while (re)shaping narratives about Indigenous/UVA relations; Eugenics and the Racial Integrity Act; and sites of importance.

Design (as) Ethnography: Architectural design practices as creative tools and devices for exploring urban spaces and landscapes in southern Spain

Hannah Varga

In recent years, architects have begun to engage with concepts and methods from science & technology studies (STS) and anthropology for and through their design

practices. At the same time, scholars from the social sciences and humanities started to think about how research can be expanded with and through creative practices (Marres, Guggenheim & Wilkie 2018). In relation to these debates, attempts are made to creatively explore and intervene in urban spaces and landscapes such as "anthropology of urbanism" (Fariás 2020), "multimodal anthropology" (Collins, Durrington & Gill 2017; Dattatreya & Marrero-Guillamón 2019) or "Architectural Anthropology" (Stender 2016; Ingold 2021) which are aiming to question binary divides such as design/research, practice/theory, or creative practice/science.

In order to develop insights into this debates, I would like to use this presentation to reflect on my own (recently finished) ethnographic PhD research at a Spanish architecture school in the south of Spain. Taking the studio courses of this school as a starting point, I would explain how these architect-teachers and students are using creative and design practices to elaborate and observe landscapes and urban spaces. Thereby, I would like to reflect on, what could we (as anthropologists) learn from such architectural design and creative practices for doing ethnographic research otherwise in urban anthropology.

Sensible Ethnography

Kim Đình Búi

My presentation will propose an ethnographic method that I call *sensible ethnography* applied to examine contemporary visual art initiated by independent art practitioners in the post-socialist Vietnam. *Sensible ethnography* is the processes of investigating how humans and things through human senses are perceived and produced, and through processes of encountering and interacting among those, human minds are emancipated. The sensible in this research is Rancierian aesthetics that indicates how things and humans are put together in different communities.

The notion of the sensible communities is adapted from Rancièrian artistic community that comprises either artworks, choirs, theatres, or exhibitions deployed in institutions. However, in the post-socialist Vietnam, there is no state institutions for contemporary art but private sphere in the face of the state's control. Seeing life as theatre, the meaning of Rancierian community is extended to social forms. Artist gatherings and event happenings are also included. In making communities, exchanging gifts are constantly happened. The gift in this research is implied as talent and present. In constant exchange, it turns into aesthetics and circulates the society.

In order to examine the independent art network interwoven by the constant processes of gift exchange, I construct the Vietnamese independent art field from the selves, the individuals and the communities. Conceptualized from activist- and auto-ethnography, *sensible ethnography* is applied in using myself – an ethnographer – as a device to approach people and access the communities. A cluster of selves is assembled including the situated self, the relational self, and the reflexive self. Depending on the situation I am in; a selected self will be turned on for investigating. As an activist, I take part actively in the processes of making art and exchanging gift. Knowledge exchanges and art projects become devices for me to enter the art field.

Indigenous Peoples, Museological Processes and Decolonizing Museums

Renato Athias

This paper will situate the academic research at the interface of anthropology and museology with a specific emphasis on ethnographic collections and indigenous objects found in museums. By presenting the existing asymmetries of power between the State, museum institutions and indigenous peoples, this paper highlights not only the inherent difficulty in recognizing ethnic identities and specific cultures, but also decolonizing curatorial practices. The argument here insists that decolonization need not be constructed in clear opposition to colonization and that the nuanced work offered by indigenous museological processes has much to offer. By breaking with traditional curatorial approaches. Ethnographies suggest that there are other epistemologies that guide the entire museological process among indigenous peoples. Through concrete ethnographic experiences such as the Kanindé Museum, which shows the impact of a collection that goes in the direction of strengthening Kanindé identity and protecting cultural heritage, pointing to a better performance of indigenous museums to improve museological documentation and the relationship with indigenous peoples. with a proposal of an indigenous museology. Therefore, decolonizing museums means creating an opportunity for indigenous peoples to get to know these objects and contribute to their documentation in museums. The experiences that will be presented show some possibilities for concrete actions to build, in fact, a relationship between museum institutions and indigenous peoples.

Memory, Dialogue, and Positionality in Ethnographic Writing

Usmon Boron

How can we make the work of memory palpable in ethnographic texts? I suggest that conveying the vagaries of memory – the memory of the anthropologist and interlocutors – can create space for revealing the emotional texture of ethnographic encounters and can help delineate the researcher's positionality.

I started thinking about the question of memory in the course of my fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan. My research project aimed to understand how the living legacy of Soviet secularism mediate the ways post-Soviet Muslims understand and relate to Islam. As a person who grew up in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, a country south-west of Kyrgyzstan, I, like all my interlocutors, also embody the legacy of Soviet history. To acknowledge this aspect of my identity, I would start my interviews by inviting my interlocutors to have conversations in which they could ask me personal questions as well. What followed were open-ended, intimate recollections of the past – childhood, family, and university years – and honest reflections on the present. Many interviews thus turned into moments of collaborative remembering.

As I started writing my doctoral dissertation, it became clear to me that I had to convey these modes of remembering and make my own presence palpable in my ethnography. In the proposed paper, I show how retelling dialogues, rather than paraphrasing my interlocutors, helps me tackle this challenge. I argue that dialogues allow for staging interlocutory settings in which the dances of memories, compartments, and meaningful silences gradually reveal the positionality of the anthropologist and the emotional texture of fieldwork.

Being creative in times of crisis: Limitations and opportunities of (remote) ethnography through fiction, storytelling, and theater

Konstantin Aal, Sarah Rüller

The Covid-19 pandemic forced us all to take a step back and reconfigure the way we conduct ethnographic research. Travel restrictions, health concerns, and climate impact are still partially in place, hindering or challenging current research and demanding innovative and creative ways. In our talk, we present fiction, storytelling and theater as a way to conduct empirical, qualitative, and (to some extent) ethnographic research.

Literacy as a concept, understood in the contexts of WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) countries, describes in its most basic understanding the ability to read and write. It can also mean 'knowledge of a particular subject, or a particular type of knowledge'. The latter definition does not specify on the form of knowledge, nor the way expertise can be gained or transferred. Our research lies at the intersection of (digital) literacy and informal learning, largely in non-WEIRD contexts. As researchers in the fields of Human Computer Interaction (HCI) and Socio-informatics, we focus on the usage of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and extract implications for the future design of technologies. In our work, we are looking for ways of approaching technological questions and concerns through non-technical lenses. Respecting the traditions, and the types and layers of literacies of the people we work with, we identified different forms of fiction, storytelling, and theater as a potentially beneficial way of getting in contact with context sensitive technological development and design. While we are still in an early stage of making sense of our first findings and the reflection of this type of research approach, we are positive we are moving towards finding alternative and grounded ways to approach design and ethnographic research that allow us to be responsive to a broad spectrum of literacies and perspectives.

How to Ethnography the Unknown?

Marina Jaciuk, María Esther Fernández Mostaza

The experience in the field is always an experience of embodiment. In a divination session, like using the tarot cards, this embodiment is conditioned by a specific characteristic of the field: A part of that experience is supposedly hidden. By "spreading" the cards, the tarot reader interact with them, "channeling" a sphere of knowledge about the querent's past, present, and future. That sphere is, in most cases, imperceptible to the sensory and cognitive experience of the researcher. Suppose we abandon methodological agnosticism by affirming that the unknown is part of the reality. Therefore, the limits between known and unknown as reality must be considered liminal. How then could the researcher do ethnographical work regarding the unknown? We approach the meaning and scope of autoethnography for this particular social and cultural reality. More than results, we want to bring new questions: To what extent are we affected by the idea of getting it right? How does it influence our vulnerabilities? What happens if the ethnographer can perceive the unknown? Which ethical and professional struggles does the researcher face in submitting results? In brief, our paper is an invitation to think about how reality is co-constructed with writing, seeing, and saying as well as with emptiness, silence, and the invisible.

Living with and on social media – an (auto)ethnography of becoming an online person

Marie Hermanová

The aim of the presentation is to discuss fragments and ideas from my ongoing book project that started with a simple request from a publisher – write a book proposal based on your research about young people on social media, influencers and how it changes (Czech) society. My research project is embedded in both digital ethnography and media studies and focuses on the gendered notion of authenticity in Czech influencer culture. Before that, my PhD research project focused on how social media shaped the individual and collective imagination of young indigenous people in the Mexican state of Chiapas. To support myself financially while doing my PhD, I worked on an applied research project exploring how refugees on the Balkan route heading to Europe from the Middle East use social media to interact with European volunteers and journalists. While all these fields might seem far away from each other, for me, the main question connecting the bits and pieces of all my research projects together always was – how do we use the tools that the Internet offers us to shape the stories we want the world to hear about us? What kind of aspirations and imaginations do social media help us create? In an attempt to bind all the stories I collected over the years together in a coherent framework (that could eventually become a book), I ended up with a partly fictional, partly (auto)-ethnographic protagonist who tells a story of becoming an online person. While I am right now very much inspired by the creative non-fiction approach (Caulley 2008, Watson 2014), I would like to use the opportunity of this panel to discuss the project with other creative ethnographers and hear their ideas and feedback.