

**Fredrik Barth** defined ethnic groups as forms of social organization that are the result of group-environment interaction<sup>1</sup>. Indicating that social organization gives meaning to culture and not the other way around. Therefore, the study of ethnocultural groups should focus on the boundaries that exist prior to the identities that a group gives itself and which its neighbours assign it. Social scientists ought to examine how and why these boundaries are elaborated and maintained between groups, instead of inventorying the cultural traits that supposedly makes each ethnocultural minority unique. With this distinction, analyses can be made of the different paths chosen by ethnocultural groups to participate in their surrounding social systems. According to Barth, these paths are either acceptance of minority status or re-enhancement of ethnocultural identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Barth (1969: p. 33) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Little Brown, Boston