An illustration of five women of diverse ethnicities holding hands in a circle, symbolizing sisterhood. The women are depicted in a stylized, flat-art style with long dark hair. They are wearing colorful dresses: yellow, red, green, pink, and blue. The background is a light, warm yellow.

# Field research and reflexivity in socio-cultural anthropology

Lecture for the course  
Bi1221 History of Anthropology  
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# Resuming contemporary panorama...

## World anthropologies

diverse traditions produced by diverse scholars in diverse geopolitical contexts

## Beyond the human

inclusion in the focus also the experiences with other-than-human actors (i.e. animals, plants and objects)

## Participation and engagement

collaborations and co-production of collaborative efforts toward a political participation



Image: Art orienté objet, by Laval-Jeantet & Mangin, Félinanthropie, 2007  
(source: <https://www.multispecies-salon.org/>)



Image: Kulture Kidz (source: <http://anthropologynotarcheology.wordpress.com>)

Variable relations composing “ethno(-)  
graphy”

From ethnography to ethnographies

Ethnography as “practice” and “engaging”

**“Ethno-”:**  
social and  
cultural  
specificity

**“-graphy”:**  
describing

Some common “methods” for ethnography:

participant observation (staying with people, doing with people, etc.)

interviews (free, semi-structured and structured, etc.)

audiovisual (recording, filming, internet, etc.)

sensing (smelling, testing, listening, etc.)



Image: Frame from Coupé/Décisé by Camille Henrot. France. 2010. 5 min  
(source: <https://vimeo.com/101541132>)



Image: Brno vegetable market (source: <https://www.123rf.com/>)

What we observe or not?

Interests  
Perceptions  
Selections

Public and private

Respecting privacy!

Recording observations

A “native” point of view:  
*“to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world”\**

A “new” point of view:  
*“The contexts of culture are perpetuated and carried forth by... being invented out of each other and through each”\*\**



Image: Spiritual Healing Festival, Brno 2020 (Source: <https://www.123rf.com/>)

\*Malinowski, Bronisław. 1922, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge and Kegan

\*\*Wagner, Roy. 1981. *The Invention of Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.



Image: Lego exhibition (source: Parade Bollettin)

Over-determination: affected by what the observer projects on the observed, what she/he thinks to know about (superindividualized)

Under-determination: unrecognized so to become generic representatives (objectivized)

Ravindranathan, Thangam. 2020. *Behold an Animal: Four Exorbitant Readings*. Evanston: Northwestern University.

Ethnography: “*where true life and real lives meet...*”\*

“True”: as efficacious

“Real”: as representative

Both “fictional” and “ethnographic”

Awareness of intellectual production  
(no reproduction of the reality)

Reopening the space for the  
interlocutors (as subjects involved)



Image: Carpathian Ethnography Project, by Marta Malina Moraczewska - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=50791118>



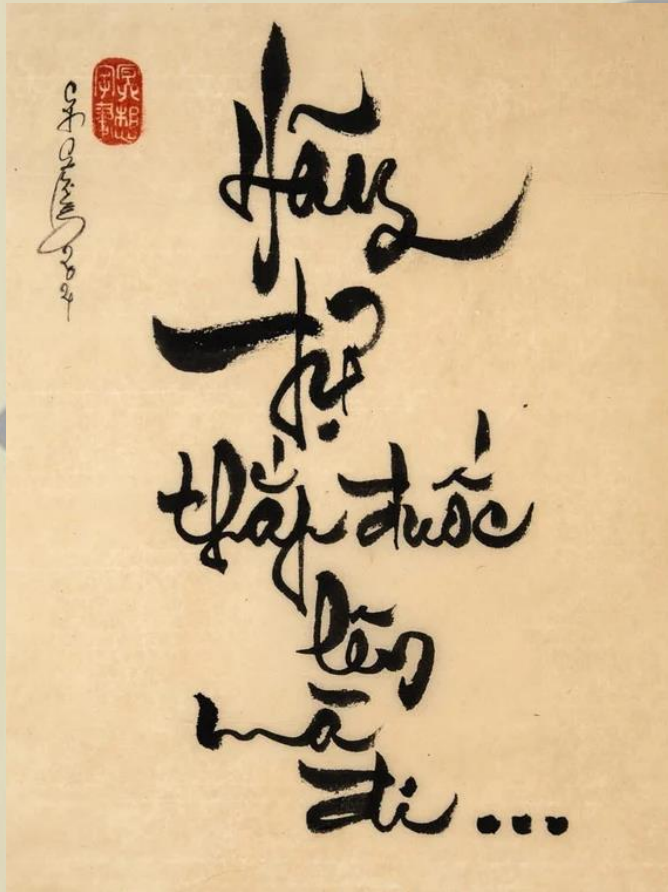
*“What people say in an interview doesn’t only reveals their perspective, but also tells about events that they lived through”\**

From (hi)stories (linear sequences) to trajectories (multiple movements)

\*Mol, Annemarie. 2002. *The body multiple: Ontology in medical practice*. Durham: Duke University Press.



Image: Czech goulash (source: <https://leaandjay.wordpress.com/>)



*“in a world where things are continually coming into being through processes of growth and movement – that is, in a world of life – knotting is the fundamental principle of coherence”\**

**Ethnography as proceedings along the lines of walking, weaving, observing, storytelling, singing, drawing and writing ...**

\*Ingold, Tim. 2015. *The Life of Lines*. London: Routledge..

“*Pedagogy of deep engagement*”\*

From interviews to soundscapes

Attention to silences

Attention to hearing practices

Embodiment of hearing



Image: Brno Botanic Garden (source: <https://www.tripadvisor.it/>)

\*Nabobo-Baba, Unaisi. 2006. *Knowing and Learning: An Indigenous Fijian Approach*. Suva: University of the South Pacific.



Image: Frame from the movie Fitzcarraldo by Werner Herzog, 1982

*“But one of the gifts, I think, that anthropology has to offer social science is that it can (sometimes!) deal with the unpredictable”...\**

**Curiosity!**

\*Strathern, Marilyn. 2005. Anthropology and Interdisciplinarity. *Art and Humanities in Higher Education* 4(2): 125-135.

Art of noticing\*: commitment with the relations shaping and shaped in the experiences

Attunement\*\*: engaging for becoming “sensible” to multiple subjectivities

Ethnography as an embodied and engaged experience

\*Tsing, Anna. 2011. Arts of Inclusion, or, How to Love a Mushroom. *Australian Humanities Review* 50: 05-22.

\*\*Kanngieser, Anja and Todd, Zoe. 2020. From environmental case study to environmental kin study. *History and Theory* 59(3): 385-393.



Image: Exhibition Point of No Return. Attunement of Attention!, by Echo Gone Wrong, 2021, Estonia (source: <https://echogonewrong.com/>)



Image: Kataprove doing ethnography (source: Paride Bollettin)

In a nutshell:

Personal effort to understand and describe other experiences

Collective experience based in dialogues, observations and sensorial experiences

Not knowing the other (objectivation) but yes “with” the other (intersubjective)

What about “with”?

“with” as a joint experimental experience  
(merging in common worlds)

“with” as joint efforts for an intellectual  
enterprise (knowing more about  
something)

“with” as a joint effort for a political  
change (creating something different)

not separated dimension!



Image: Graduation Ceremony and Vodun Celebration for Ambassadors of Peace awarded by Togolese government, April 2019, Lome, Togo (source: <https://publicanthropologist.cmi.no/>)



Image: Mebengokré children playing (source: Paride Bollettin)

First example:

Toward a science of intrinsic  
purposiveness

The Mebengokré and “their”  
environments

Belo Monte hydro dam

Encounter with formal hegemonic  
education

Promoting ecological dialogues in  
knowledge-practices for responding  
environmental and educational  
challenges



Second example:

dynamics in a classroom

Engaging multiple intellectual competencies

Engaging multiple personal and sensorial experiences

Producing alternatives in intellectual efforts

Producing alternatives in political symmetrization



Image: Lecture at the Department (source: Eva Suchankova)

## “Poetics” and “politics”



Image: Mead and Bateson at Bali (source: <http://unifiedtao-it.blogspot.com/>)

Ethnographic authority  
Ethnographer-informant  
Ethnographer-reader

Attention to:  
Partial truths  
Literary devices  
The “self”

## Counter-hegemony

\*Clifford, James and Marcus, George (eds.). 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

*“not to explain this point of view, that is, to find its causes (cognitive, economic, and what have you); it is rather to explicate it: to explore its consequences and follow its implications”\**



Image: Dragon Boat race on water reservoir in Brno (source: <https://www.123rf.com/>)

\*Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 2015. *The Native Relative*. Chicago: Hau Books.

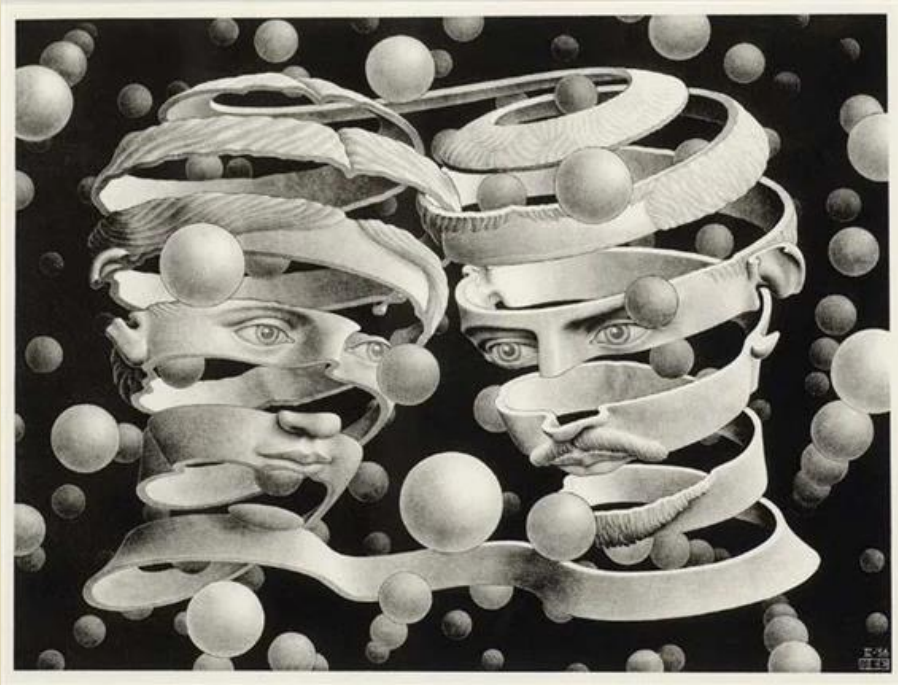


Image: Mutual bond by Escher, 1956 (source: <https://www.mutualart.com/>)

Ethnography as a commitment  
(intellectual, personal, political)

Equivalence of the ethnographer's  
and native's discourses

Equivocation\*: the possibility to  
“translate” an experience in another

Anthropological concepts as  
“relative” since relational!

Self-reflexivity!

\*Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 2018. A antropologia perspectivista e o método de equivocação controlada. *Aceno* 5 (10): 247-264.

“place of speech”\*

the act of “speaking” (writing)  
as related to the possibility of  
“existing”

Intersectionality of engaged  
actors (gender, ethnic,  
class...)

Co-production as breaking the  
silence of silenced people

\*Ribeiro, Djamila. 2017. *O que é lugar de fala?* Belo Horizonte:  
Letramento.



Image: Singularity (source:  
<https://blog.institutosingularidades.edu.br/>)

Rethinking ethnography as a daily life experience...

... what about your lives as ethnographers?

