



International Conference
ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD RESEARCH

Thursday, 25 January 2024, at 17:30

Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology,
Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

Zoom link: <https://uni-lj-si.zoom.us/j/93714769801>



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Program Committee:

Prof. Mirjam Mencej, PhD
Petra Hamer, PhD
Tina Ivnik, PhD

Organising Committee and

Book of Abstract Editors:
Petra Hamer, PhD
Tina Ivnik, PhD





PROGRAMME

17:30–17:40 Welcome speeches

Mirjam Mencej, DEAGENCY project leader

Petra Hamer and Tina Ivnik

17:40–17:55 The question of reciprocity between the researcher, the interlocutor, and the community (Chair: Petra Hamer)

Cssaba Meszaros: **Finding ways to work for the local community and beyond**

Tina Ivnik: **Fieldwork research: Between researcher, interlocutors, community, and research objectives**

Simona Kuntarič Zupanc: **The question of reciprocity between the researcher, the interlocutor, and the community**

18:00–18:10 How to avoid politicization of the ethnographic data (Chair: Tina Ivnik)

Jaka Repič: **Politicization of ethnographic knowledge**

Petra Hamer: **Is it possible to depoliticize music? Fieldwork experiences on popular war music in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

18:10–18:25 What does reflexivity mean in practice? (Chair: Petra Hamer)

Uršula Lipovec Čebren: **What does reflexivity mean in practice?**

Michal Uhrin: **Reflexivity, Evolution and Cognition: Should everyone reflect on their research?**

Juan Esteban de Jager: **Avoiding some usual reflexivity slips**

18:30–18:40 Between legitimate and legal (Chair: Tina Ivnik)

Agnes Hesz: **The limits of transparency in anthropological fieldwork**

Veronika Zavratnik: **Navigating complexity: Social norms, moral principles and legal frameworks**





18:40–18:50 What is private and what is public? Ethical Considerations in Visual Documentation of Fieldwork (Chair: Petra Hamer)

Marta Botiková: **Ethical Considerations in Visual Documentation of Fieldwork**

Ana Sarah Lunaček Brumen: **Photography uses, relations and implications in research and publishing**

19:00–19:30 FINAL DISCUSSION





BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Cssaba Meszaros, Institute of Ethnology, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Finding ways to work for the local community and beyond

Working for the local community is not an unavoidable circumstance of fieldwork but an integral part of it. Based on my experiences in three village communities in Yakutia, where I worked for local schools, museums, and village authorities alongside my anthropological field research, I argue that reciprocity has a strong epistemic value. With the help of three nano-examples, I will point out how the demands of the local community imbued my scholarly activities.

Tina Ivnik, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

Fieldwork research: Between researcher, interlocutors, community, and research objectives

In the presentation, I would like to reflect on some of my past experiences and thoughts about the possibilities of establishing a more reciprocal relationship with interlocutors. During the fieldwork conducted for my PhD, I often felt uneasy and guilty, realising that I was just taking (information, time, food) from local people, and not offering anything in return. Consequently, I tried to find ways to contribute and give something back, and I will elaborate on the strategies I used for this purpose.

Funded by the European Union (ERC project DEAGENCY, № 101095729).





Simona Kuntarič Zupanc, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

The question of reciprocity between the researcher, the interlocutor, and the community

When I read anthropological monographs, I regularly read the introductory pages in which the author expresses his/her gratitude. The acknowledgements to those who played a role in the production of the work are extensive and include numerous individuals and institutions who contributed in various capacities to help researcher in the fieldwork. Apart from formal acknowledgements, anthropologists also need to share their findings in an accessible way with the community they are studying. In this presentation, I will explore how anthropologists can reciprocate the contributions of their interlocutors and the communities they study.

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Jaka Repič, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

Politicization of ethnographic knowledge

The aim of this short presentation is to highlight the concept of politicization in/of ethnographic knowledge. Politicization is an underscrutinized issue that anthropology addresses occasionally and tentatively, e. g. as ethical consideration of politically sensitive topics, in medical research, etc. However, any ethnographic knowledge may have potential political significance. Chelli and Cunliffe argue that “politicization emerges in moments of difference, in which the significance of those differences may or may not be immediately evident to all parties” (2022: 89). Politicization of ethnographically produced knowledge can be an obstacle to research, but if anticipated and recognized, it can also provide an understanding of negotiating differences and a “contribution to debate and action” (cf. Fassin 2017).

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Petra Hamer, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

Is it possible to depoliticize music? Fieldwork experiences on popular war music in Bosnia-Herzegovina

In my short presentation, I argue that in case of Bosnia and Herzegovina it is impossible to avoid politicization, no matter what the research focus is. The ethno-national division between people living in B-H is so deep and present in every aspect of everyday life. Instead of seeing this as a burden one must avoid, I suggest to embrace the fact that each nation has its own nation-building story. Of course the sensibility on different nuances in-between those stories is also very important. Fieldwork results have showed that B-H popular music from the 1990s is political, but when understanding the context of its creation, politicization explains itself.

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Uršula Lipovec Čebren, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

What does reflexivity mean in practice?

Reflexive practices are crucial to all aspects of the research process, from ethical considerations and understanding the researcher's biases and stereotypes to methodological and conceptual decisions (Salzman 2002; Dietz 2010). Moreover, it seems important that we engage in self-reflexivity from the initial steps of our research and are aware of the reasons why we choose a particular research topic. These reasons have an impact not only when deciding on the research theme but also in relation to the research design, the choice of interlocutors, the selection of the collected ethnographic material, and the formulation of key findings and conclusions. Given that the reasons for selecting a particular topic are often unconscious or semi-conscious, their influence is even stronger, making it essential to have the possibility to reflect (individually or in group sessions) on key steps in the research process. In the conference Dilemmas in the field





research, we will discuss different perspectives on reflexivity in cultural anthropology, talk about some examples of reflexive practice in ethnographic research, and try to understand how to engage in self-reflexivity during one's own research process.

Michal Uhrin, Department of Archaeology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts,
Comenius University Bratislava

Reflexivity, Evolution and Cognition: Should everyone reflect on their research?

Researchers using cognitive and evolutionary theories in the study of religion and ritual usually lean towards the scientific study of religion. Methodological diversity and mixed-methods research, including ethnography, are typical of these lines of inquiry, but little attention has been paid to reflexivity. In my contribution, I will attempt to argue in favour of reflexivity in scientific research on religion. Using my ethnographic research as an example, I will try to demonstrate that all ethnographic research requires a certain amount of reflexivity, regardless of the theories applied.

Funded by the European Union (ERC project DEAGENCY, № 101095729).

Juan Esteban de Jager, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

Avoiding some usual reflexivity slips

Reflexivity is at the core of both anthropology as a discipline and ethnography as an integrated practice. Several hindrances might threaten the ways we exercise reflexivity. We will address two such obstacles, in the form of extreme positions along a spectrum: on the one hand, the dismissal of reflexive dialog, often taking the form of some generic statement about our positioning. On the other hand, we will have a look at the narcissistic exacerbation of our ethnographic participation.

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Agnes Hesz, Department of European Ethnology - Cultural Anthropology, University of Pecs

The limits of transparency in anthropological fieldwork

Anthropologists have often been likened to spies or secret police informers (see: Verdery 2014, 6–8; Horváth 2009). Despite fundamental differences between the two groups and their work, this uneasy comparison cannot be dismissed easily: as anthropologists, we closely examine and record everyday behaviour, gain our information by earning the trust of the people we study, and use this information for a special purpose just like spies or informers do. Being transparent is one way to be different from them, but can we truly be transparent? In the roundtable discussion I would like to explore the limits of transparency in anthropological fieldwork.

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Veronika Zavratnik, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

Navigating complexity: Social norms, moral principles and legal frameworks

Ethnographic fieldwork can reveal the complexity that arises when social norms, moral principles and legal frameworks intersect, and the potential dissonances between the legitimate and the legal that arise from these situations. The paper explores how accepted social practices shape what is considered right and/or legal by focusing on a highlighted Carnival practice and reflecting on the role of the researcher and the moral obligation to 'act'.

Marta Botiková, Department of Archaeology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University Bratislava

Ethical Considerations in Visual Documentation of Fieldwork

Photography is one of the obvious research devices of the ethnographic field research. The visualisation gives a feeling of realness, of "truth". Photos create a faithful image of reality.





Tension in between private and public is the key to understand the place of the photographer/researcher and ethical considerations in visual documentation. As for the funeral, various situations are to be considered. Let us mention some of them. Praying in the home of the deceased is a very intimate situation, a moment which belong to the family members and perhaps relatives and neighbours. There are photos from those situations taken rarely. Usually the case is that the photographer is a family member or in some other way related to the survivors. Funeral ceremony is usually a public event starting with the procession, with civic or church ritual, in the church or/and at the cemetery. People might feel uncomfortable for somebody taking pictures that is why the permission given by the organisers should be granted. Cemetery visits at any time, especially the deceased anniversaries, take place in the public space. The names and dates carved into the tombstones might be questioned. Are those private or public information?

Ana Sarah Lunaček Brumen, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

Photography uses, relations and implications in research and publishing

Photography is particularly useful methodological tool in ethnographic research as well as presentation means. Photographs invite memories and enable multiple ways of collaborations. They have affective quality, and they function as witnesses. Ethical guidelines demand informed consent and dedication not to have harmful effects in publishing. Meaning of photography is contextual, therefore subjects, researcher and viewers relations and intentions need to be reflected during research and publishing.

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