

Multispecies ethnography

Discussing methods, results and interdisciplinary knowledge

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Multispecies studies can be described as an effort to decentralize the human subject by recognizing the roles of other species in the development of our own. Multispecies as a grouping theme has been discussed, notably around the work of Eduardo Kohn (Lloyd, 2014; Tsing 2018), and has now been the focus of several thematic issues in different journals (Kirksey and Helmreich, 2010; Fijn and Kavesh, 2021). Multispecies studies have been engaged to carry forward both research and politics around the roles and connections amongst species (Haraway, 2013; Kohn, 2013; Tsing, 2015; Despret and Meuret, 2016; Hartigan Jr, 2019; Mondémé, 2021). They have delineated the importance of these connections for their (mutual) care.

Recent works ask more precisely about multispecies methods, including ethnography. They suggested that methods could be the point of convergence of both research and politics, sometimes suggesting the potential adoption and/or diversion of tools and sensibilities from different (natural sciences) disciplines (Tsing, 2013; Swanson, 2017). This open panel aims to pursue these lines of thought about methods and their results and follow how multispecies ethnographies might engage different disciplines, tools, and people in fruitful dialogues along the way. Multispecies studies raise important questions about how ethnographers can give voice to other-than-humans, and how they can follow others when they do so, sometimes with attention to anthropomorphism tensions during interviews and transcriptions (see Marpot, 2014; Myers, 2015; Servais, 2016). These questions appear in how they observe, collect and register “data” and the tools and techniques they use to do so, while they draft and polish descriptions (Lien and Pálsson, 2021), annotate pictures, transcribe videos, or draw diagrams and sketches (Gan, 2021).

These steps (and others) can lead to asking: what can be done to show how humans and other species are interrelated and how can we follow whom/what enters or exits the “other species” category? But also, what relations can be established with other (environmental) disciplines and methods to do so? What tools, techniques, and methods can be borrowed that could provide us with insight into the lives of other species? What points of convergence, divergence, friction, and reunion might appear in these circulations, and how can we account for these? Methodological discussions grounded in fieldwork experiences about what can be

recovered with different (collection and analysis) methods are our primary goal for this session.

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