

A Line That Doesn't Make a Letter: Preface to the Thematic Section on Drawing in Anthropology



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1.20 Editorial
DOI 10.4312/svetovi.4.2.117-120

The idea to focus on drawing began with my interest in the line. Where can a line lead, if not to a letter? The notion of drawing within the discipline and its specific knowledge production isn't all that novel. Drawing has been used in anthropology since the beginning, albeit with a focus on its illustrative possibilities (Kuschnir 2016). But what can its role be in the present day, especially acknowledging the discipline's overwhelming interest in expanding its multimodal approaches? Even a quick overview offers us an inkling that the method greatly exceeds its original purpose of illustration (Causey 2017). It can act as a collaborative research technique (Pink 2015), nudge its way into autoethnographic reflections (Tausig 2011), or visually mediate what is otherwise hidden. Unlike a photograph, drawing can visually cross the bounds between what is affectively experienced and what can be seen, as also pointed out by artist and anthropologist Karina Kuschnir (2016). A pen in our hand allows us to freely move beyond what can be captured using a camera. In a drawing, a dog can appear bigger than it actually is, emotions take place in a chosen colour palette, time and space assume their embodied forms. The technique as such presents an alternate way of communicating; when words give out, a camera is not enough, or when a fleeting moment is visually obscured.

This issue's section comprises two processual works in which both authors explore the question of ethnographic drawing by offering insights from their ongoing projects. In *Drawing Out Spruce, Bark Beetle, and Foresters*, Paul Katterl places the reader at an event where he, using a sketch-heavy poster, presented his research on multispecies relations in forests linked to Vienna's drinking water. Weaving through the off-the-cuff comments from visitors not too familiar with the discipline, he lingers on the role of drawing within the

researcher's processes of synthesis and analytical questioning. Dagmar Nared follows the thought in *An Ethnographic Sketch of a Tinder Profile* (Etnografska skica Tinder profila) by highlighting drawing's abilities in coding field data, particularly in response to the safety of participants. Employing the method in her analysis of dating-app profiles in Hatay, she, together with artist Andrea Hernandez, points to the visual technique's affordances in researching intimacy, self-presentation, and contemporary (or local, as is the case in Hatay regarding dating) sensitivity concerning data protection.

The following (short) section acts as a mere entry point into further exploration of the method within the journal. It exposes threads, leads, and questions that ought to be carefully developed in the future. Drawing as a method within anthropology is a nuanced and multi-layered technique of scientific interaction, which, I hope, will be more broadly reassessed in issues to come.

CITED REFERENCES

- Causey, Andrew 2017 *Drawn to See: Drawing as an Ethnographic Method*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Kuschnir, Karina 2016 'Ethnographic Drawing: Eleven Benefits of Using a Sketchbook for Fieldwork.' *Visual Ethnography* 5(1): 103–134.
- Pink, Sarah 2015 *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Taussig, Michael 2011 *I Swear I Saw This. Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.