

## Back on the verandah and off again

### Malinowski in South Tyrol and his ethnographic legacy

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**ABSTRACT:** This essay introduces Anuac's thematic section on Malinowski from two perspectives. The first part looks at Malinowski and Elsie Masson's life in South Tyrol, contemplating the historical-political context of the region and bringing to light the Malinowski family's presence and relations in the local setting. The verandah of the villa in Oberbozen is the starting point for a panoramic look on the land and its people, serving as a frame for a reconsideration of Malinowski. The second part traces the development of Malinowski Forum for Ethnography and Anthropology (MFEA) at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, a project that since 2016 has been bringing to light new knowledge about the Malinowskis' presence in South Tyrol. The Malinowski Forum is the backdrop to a Symposium that stimulated the articles presented here, with the aim of reflecting on ethnography today in terms of its continuities and discontinuities with respect to the canon established by Malinowski nearly a century ago.

**KEYWORDS:** MALINOWSKI, ETHNOGRAPHY, ALPINE ANTHROPOLOGY, SOUTH TYROL, FASCISM.

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## 1. *The Malinowski villa in Oberbozen: 1923-2018*

I am writing now on the balcony [...] The sun is just over Kohlern, the Rosengarten begins to glow slightly, the air is warm, still and mellow, the deep-toned bell of Gries cloister is giving tongue. It is marvelous here; on the balcony I think of your pleasure in it (Elsie Masson in a letter to Bronislaw Malinowski, October 1927, in Wayne 1995: 101).

The wooden verandah of the Villa Malinowski in Oberbozen<sup>1</sup> faces southwest, overlooking a meadow with a few old apple trees. To the left of the house is the Schlern, a mountain that is one of South Tyrol's most distinctive landmarks<sup>2</sup>; towards the south, you can almost sense Bolzano

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1. In the following text, we use the German name for Oberbozen (Soprabolzano) as Elsie and Bronislaw used it in their letters.

2. The Schlern is pictured on the MFEA web page and is also the title of a German-language monthly that publishes research into science, research, art and culture in South Tyrol.

[the capital of South Tyrol; east of the house there is a farmstead; and fairly close to Villa Malinowski lie several villas, built around the end of the nineteenth century, that belong to affluent families from Bolzano. As Dorothy Zinn, Daniela Salvucci and I sat on the cozy verandah in September 2018 with three of the ten grandchildren of Bronislaw Malinowski, Lucy Ulrich, Patrick Burke and Rebecca Malinowska Stuart, we were given an insight both into they are embedded locally and into their wider social networks across South Tyrol. Our encounters with the three grandchildren – through email exchanges, meetings on the verandah and at the symposium of which this Special Issue is the outcome – opened out into gentle conversation. It has become an ongoing dialogue with three people who hold memories of their grandfather and grandmother, who have vivid memories of their own childhoods in South Tyrol and who to the present-day maintain long-term friendships with people in Oberbozen and Bolzano. In their talk at the symposium, Lucy and Patrick emphasized «their grandparents’ lives in the South Tyrol and their deep attachment to the region, an attachment they passed down to their daughters and grandchildren» (Burke, Ulrich 2017).

On that afternoon in September 2018, as we drank tea and ate biscuits from one of the traditional patisseries in Bolzano, Lucy, Patrick and Rebecca recalled the *Rittnerbahn* (an electric cog railway that used to connect the people of the high plateau of the Ritten with the city of Bolzano). The vivid picture given was of a rudimentary infrastructure: Both locals and summer holidaymakers would travel up and down the mountain on the *Rittnerbahn*, which traversed the 1,000-metre ascent and descent at a slow but steady speed of 7 kilometers per hour. The construction of the electric cog railroad in 1907 contributed to an economic boom on the Ritten plateau. Thanks to the train, people could travel up or down the mountain in an hour, combining a visit to the city with one to the mountain. Lucy, Rebecca and Patrick remember what a trip to Bolzano was like in the 1960s: the slow journey down to the town, hurrying to get all the shopping done, then, after lunch, catching the *Rittnerbahn* again on Walterplatz (Bolzano’s main square) for the journey back<sup>3</sup>. We will read in the following pages of this Special Issue about the technical and social significance of infrastructure within ethnographic research, as well as of the «thorough knowledge of contexts» (Valeria Siniscalchi, this issue). However, we will also learn about the notion of an «ideational or conceptual infrastructure» and how, since the work of Malinowski, it may be thought of as a significant aspect of doing ethnography, as Marilyn Strathern describes in this issue.

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3. Today the Ritten cable car leaves every four minutes and mainly carries local hikers and tourists.

The verandah in Oberbozen offers a space for conversations that contributed significantly to our initiative of the Malinowski Forum for Ethnography and Anthropology (MFEA, Salvucci 2017). What these conversations also brought to light were family memories, deeply anchored within local networks. It is Lucy, Patrick and Rebecca's relationship with the house, the place and the people there that makes me think that we are close to the interests of their grandfather. Malinowski does not seem to have considered taking an ethnographic look at South Tyrol or, more broadly, at the European Alps. A focus of that kind would have also had a historical and political perspective. Yet, as we read in this journal, Malinowski «had valid political reasons in his time for keeping [...] historical fields as much at bay as possible» (Gingrich, Knoll, this issue). This led us to think that it was for this reason South Tyrol and its cultural practices never became one of Malinowski's «asides» (Strathern, this issue). Although differing from Malinowski's own academic-political agenda (Gingrich, Knoll, this issue), it was an enlightening experience for us to sense the grandchildren's intimacies with the place and its people. It is also possible that verandahs in different places of the world have «supported ethnographic enterprises» (Strathern, this issue).

### *1.a. The family within the South Tyrolean local context*

Good ethnography requires the alertness of every sense. Enthralled by the romantic beauty of the islands, Malinowski enjoyed a heightened awareness of his surroundings. Just a few steps from the sea, he could hear from his tent 'the sound of gentle plashing, and the noise of torrents up above in the lofty green wall'. He went for daily rowing excursions with Ginger, absorbing the scenery from the drifting dinghy (Young 2004: 536).

Although Malinowski did not pursue the idea of actively studying South Tyrol, not least because there was a distinctly nationalist air to cultural representations of the time<sup>4</sup>, it is likely that travelling on the cog railway from the Ritten to Bolzano and back would have given this highly talented and pioneering anthropologist an opportunity to sense the beauty of the mountainous landscape and the cultural complexities of the region in the 1920s and 1930s. Raymond Firth wrote: «He maintained for many years,

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4. The *Schützen* (marksmen) and the *Deutschorden* (the Teutonic Order) still conduct religious parades in Oberbozen, as they do in almost all German-speaking South Tyrolean villages and towns (Tauber 2013; for a comprehensive introduction to Tyrolian nineteenth and early twentieth-century subnationalism see Cole 2000; Cole and Wolf 1974; Clementi 2013; Nequirito 2000).

until his death, a villa at Oberbozen (Soprabolzano) in the South Tyrol, looking out on the Dolomites, on the mountains of Rosengarten, Latemar and Schlern – on to what he declared was the finest scenery in Europe» (1957: 4).

We do not know to what extent Malinowski was aware of Italian peasants struggling to drain swamplands that in the broad Etsch valley near the old market town of Bolzano. Or if he pondered on the networks of the farmers who shipped their products on the Etsch river to the Italian south (Dughera 1998). We do not know to what extent he sensed the cultural differences between these Italians and the self-sufficient German peasants living up on the plateau of the Ritten. They worked on dry and often steep land, with family and domestics organized around the head of the farmstead, the *Bauer* (Cole, Wolf 1974). Or if he mused on the differences between his neighbouring farmers and the rich Bolzano merchants whose profits – made through wine production, transport and Bolzano's trade fair – were invested in prestigious summer villas in mild and sunny Oberbozen. How would he have seen the routes down in the main valley, which connect the northern Alps and Germany with northern and central Italy, and the contrast between this movement, of which Bolzano was a nodal point, and the seeming stability up in the mountains? How aware was he of the networks that exist between town and village, valley and mountain, north and south, of the marriage and inheritance patterns, the rituals of exchange and pilgrimages of these «upland communities» (Viazzo 1989)?

We see a family from elsewhere integrating into local social networks, passing memory along three generations, in a context where belonging is intertwined with language, locality, relations to land and relations with property. This is expressed through the family's unaffected relationships with neighboring farmers, calling on Oberbozen's artisans to carry out any work to be done in the house, as well as through friendships with politically and intellectually prominent South Tyrolian families. While the public sphere where people meet for informal chats and conversations seems to be vanishing in the twenty-first century, something Jaro Stacul thinks makes it difficult to practice the form of participant observation Malinowski established (see Stacul this issue), the verandah of the little summer house in Oberbozen invites casual conversation. Does this verandah, with its view of the mountains, have anything in common with another verandah which played a part in Malinowski's life: the verandah of his friend Billy Hancock, on the Trobriand islands in Papua New Guinea «whose house was on the shore of the lagoon» (Strathern, this issue)? Or is the recurrence of the verandah just a historical coincidence? Whatever the answer, we believe that the verandah in Oberbozen allows us to become acquainted with the place and its people.

In 1923, when Bronislaw and Elsie came to live in Oberbozen (Wayne 1995: 27f), the German, Italian, Ladin and Sinti speaking people in South Tyrol were confronted with Italian Fascism. All the linguistic and cultural groups were faced with the politics of Italianization (Gatterer 1968; Di Michele 2003; Lechner 2005). The historian Stefan Lechner sees the political agenda of Italian Fascism in South Tyrol as defined by three elements: first, the internal border situation with Trentino; second, the external border with Austria; and, third, the ethnic-cultural borders within South Tyrol itself (Lechner 2011: 51). The Italian Fascists were keen on creating a «total act of submission» (*ibidem*: 52). It is noteworthy that economic and political power was in the hands of the German-speaking population, while Italians were de facto excluded from all spheres of power. Italian Fascists in Rome and Bolzano interpreted this as a continuation of the Austro-Hungarian oppression of the Italians, which they were eager to oppose by dismantling all symbols recalling this particular past of the region.

Firth reported that Malinowski «reacted strongly against local injustices, as he saw them in the South Tyrol (Alto Adige) under Italian fascism» (1988: 21-22). The letters of Bronislaw and Elsie (Wayne 1995) give us an insight into how they observed, experienced and commented on Fascism, as well as their everyday lives in South Tyrol. In 1926 Elsie writes to Bronislaw: «By the new decrees, no passes are to be given for anyone to leave the country and old ones are withdrawn, also all antif. [antifascist] papers completely suppressed, including our local ones» (Wayne 1995: 86). In October 1927 Bronislaw, in his discussion with his colleagues at the LSE, speaks of Fascists as «a certain political Sect (the Bloody Fools)» (*ibidem*: 101). In one of her letters of June 1927, Elsie enunciates the political atmosphere and how everybody was talking about the Italianization of school education: «there is no doubt that step [of banning the German language] has touched the peasantry as no other would have done» (*ibidem* : 95). Notwithstanding the political danger, the family decided to send their daughter Józefa to private German lessons and Wanda «went to a kindergarten also run in German. Such schooling had been made illegal by the Fascist government» (*ibidem* : 86). Elsie continues by describing her stay with farmers in a village on the other side of the Ritten plateau, near the Dolomites, visiting Anna (a former maid) and her family, who had prepared «an enormous and very well cooked meal» and given Elsie and the children «the best bedroom» (*ibidem*: 94).

In her letters Elsie gives insight into the everyday performance of Italianization:



This afternoon I went rather early to the grand opening of the *Turnverein* [athletics club] in its Italianised form Hilpold, the old *Turnlehrer* [gym teacher] and Fr. Civegna have got permission to give gymnastic lessons but have to join the new [Fascist] society and give all commands in Italian (November 1927, *ibidem*: 109).

And she expresses her disgust of the Fascist propaganda:

I have not felt inclined to read any actualities ... even the speech of a certain person [Mussolini] failed to awaken any reaction except that of a sort of dry disgust. In fact the nearer I approach the *mis-en-scène* [of Fascism] the less emotional I feel (March 1928, *ibidem*: 111).

In October 1929 the family decided to move to London (*ibidem*: 146), the house in Oberbozen became a holiday home. The family visited Oberbozen in 1930, 1931 and 1933, after 1933 Elsie did not see Oberbozen again<sup>5</sup>. Elsie moved to Natters near Innsbruck in 1934, because its road to the city meant that it was so much easier to get medical help quickly. Her multiple sclerosis had advanced to the point where the length of time it would have taken her doctor to reach Oberbozen from Bolzano was too great<sup>6</sup>. Elsie passed away in 1935. Bronislaw and the girls visited Oberbozen in 1937 and 1938<sup>7</sup>. Later «the house in Oberbozen was administered by a bank as enemy property through the war years. It was handed back to the Malinowska sisters soon after the war and stays in the family» (*ibidem*: 242).

The family, and in particular Elsie and the girls, had seen the region experience the first phase of Italian Fascism and its politics of Italianization. Yet they were not to witness the events that forced the German- and Ladin-speaking population, like many other minority groups all over Europe, to resettle outside their region (Wedekind, Rodogno 2009)<sup>8</sup>.

When Malinowski's children returned to Oberbozen in the 1950s, the region was still experiencing violent conflict in which the German-speaking population opposed the dominance of the Italian state. Furthermore, unlike the rest of Europe, the region underwent an agricultural revolution only in the 1950s and 1960s. Farming structures which had guaranteed the survival of extended families were transformed into smaller nuclear units (Cole, Wolf

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5. Patrick Burke, personal communication, 2018.

6. Lucy Ulrich, personal communication, 2018.

7. Patrick Burke, personal communication, 2018.

8. The division and conflict continued after WW II. However, up to the present, neither of the languages has established itself as completely dominant by totally enforcing or pushing to the edge the other. Instead, one tends to find forms of monolingual practice (in remote villages) or the most diverse forms of «individual multilingualisms» in towns (Risse 2013: 111).

1974). Some farmhouses started offering rooms for tourists; people recall how they would offer «the only good room» to tourists while the family would squeeze into the stable and sleep on the floor. The area of Oberbozen and the Ritten had the advantage of having had experience of summer vacationers from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. New small enterprises burgeoned alongside established hotels, inns and restaurants. I wonder how it was for the daughters of Malinowski to be back in Oberbozen in those years, marked by political tension, agricultural transformation, rural poverty, emigration and a restrictive, conservative, Roman-Catholic atmosphere.

Since the 1960s South Tyrolean society has undergone rapid transformation, though its people, like others of the Alpine region, have been described as being “hard” (e.g. Heady 2001; Ladurner 2003), which might have to do with their farming background and their strong attachment to land. To get a sense of what constitutes these people and how they construct and maintain their society today one needs to allow for «the slender thread of consolation that long-term ethnography» offers (see Chandana Mathur, this issue). Fifty years after Cole and Wolf’s research it might be high time to get off the verandah again to ethnographically understand these people. On that note, the villa Malinowski in Oberbozen and the owners who care for it give occasion to discuss and disseminate what Bronislaw Malinowski stands for and what Marilyn Strathern attributes to him in this issue, namely «that there was [and is] no substitute for first-hand knowledge».

## *2. The Malinowski Forum and the Malinowskian legacy in ethnography*

In 2016 we created the Malinowski Forum for Ethnography and Anthropology (MFEA), housed at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, with two primary audiences in mind: on the one hand, a more general public, and on the other, our colleagues in the academic sphere. With regard to the first of these, and within it especially the local population, our public mission would be to draw attention to the Malinowskian presence in South Tyrol. Unlike what we have witnessed with other cultural figures such as Sigmund Freud and Gustav Mahler, this history has remained widely unknown on the local level. Before we ourselves were apprised of it, the Malinowski family’s villa was “rediscovered” in October 2006, on the occasion of Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski’s visit to Bozen for a public lecture organized by the City of Bolzano’s Peace Center. Kapuscinski knew about the house in Oberbozen and surprised his hosts by insisting on making a pilgrimage to it. With a camera crew and a group of students from Trento in tow, he paid



homage to the compatriot whom he regarded as an inspiration for his own signature brand of journalism, characterized by long-term dwelling among different peoples that informed his poignant, engaged descriptions of them. Subsequently, South Tyrol's historical commission [the Heimatpflegeverband] adorned the façade in Oberbozen with a commemorative plaque dedicated to Malinowski, as well as an engraved slab on the side of the house honoring Elsie Masson, something akin to a stone textual rib emanating from the façade's Adam. In 2017, city officials unveiled a memorial marker to Malinowski in Bozen's neighborhood of Gries, where the family often stayed in the winter, and in the same year the city's newly established «Hill of the Sages» park included Malinowski among numerous other cultural figures celebrated with the tribute of a tree planted in his name.

All the while well aware of what heritage-making processes entail for better or for worse, we admit that we are unabashedly pleased to contribute to the "heritagization" of Malinowski and Masson with our work in the MFEA. To date, our contribution has been to promote research that would illuminate the presence of the Malinowskis in South Tyrol, especially since those years were a critical historical period in local history, that of the 1920s and 30s. It was a time just after South Tyrol's passage from the Austrian-Hungarian Empire to the Kingdom of Italy's sovereignty, increasingly bearing the grip of Mussolini's Italian nationalism and all of the consequences this had for the German and Ladin-speaking populations (see Tauber, first part of this essay). Alongside our attention the figures of Malinowski and Elsie Masson, though, we have wanted the MFEA to bring a public focus upon anthropology as a discipline and ethnography as a practice: these latter bear manifold potential contributions that are publically relevant here in South Tyrol as elsewhere in general – for example, with health, migration and refugee flows, minorities, education, the environment – but given the local territory, a renewed consideration of Alpine anthropology occupies a particular place in the project.

With the Malinowski Forum being anchored at the University, though, the other moiety of its dual nature has an eye to the academic community. Learning more about this period in Malinowski's life has meant shedding light on the history of the discipline, and the exciting work by our research collaborator Daniela Salvucci has helped to reconstruct intellectual networks of the period, as well as infrastructures (as Marilyn Strathern deems them in her contribution to this issue) that contributed to the realization of Malinowski's work. Preeminent among these infrastructures was the role of his first wife, Elsie Masson, but they were also infrastructures that Malinowski himself catalyzed, with a coterie of students and colleagues who visited the villa.

The MFEA project has, moreover, given us a platform for exploring themes in ethnography and anthropology, and one of our concrete endeavors in this regard is the Biennial Symposium «Anthropological Talks in South Tyrol». Indeed, the articles we assemble in this issue developed out of the presentations made at the third Symposium, held in Bozen-Bolzano in September 2017. Unlike the previous two editions of this symposium, on this occasion it was an initiative under the aegis of the newly created Malinowski Forum, and when planning the event, we inevitably looked to Malinowski as a source of inspiration for an overarching theme. Although Malinowski was not the first anthropologist to conduct fieldwork, his contribution was by all admissions decisive in the consolidation of a canon of ethnography in the twentieth century, and his name is indelibly associated with the practice as a founding figure of its modern form. For our symposium, we finally settled on a broad theme that would pay tribute to the master's towering status and his hallmark contribution, and at the same time allow us to think about current developments in anthropology: *The Malinowskian Legacy in Ethnography*.

Now, an indubitably vast quantity of ink has been spilled in the last few decades on ethnographic research and writing, variously suggesting how and why it should be re-tooled, in accordance with developments in the discipline throughout the century that has passed since Malinowski formulated the conception of fieldwork that would become a standard. Without aspiring to recapitulate all of these debates here, which would be truly beyond the scope and available space, we merely want to offer the reader the backdrop to the question we posed our Symposium speakers: what, if anything, remains recognizably “Malinowskian” in ethnography after all these years? Ethnography has changed not only in time, but also in space, as the techniques promoted by Malinowski have spread transnationally within what has become the current global, hegemonic anthropology. We have seen ethnography «through thick and thin» as the droll title of George Marcus' collection of essays puts it (Marcus 1998), moving through copious changes in the epistemologies underlying it, so much so as to provoke a form of disciplinary “turn” fatigue. The synchronic approach of Malinowski's functionalist ethnography has yielded to an reconsideration of history in those national traditions where it was previously ignored; post-colonial and feminist thought have given impetus to reflexivity, as well as to autoethnography and native ethnography; most recently, phenomenological theorizing has led to sensorial ethnography, not to mention the ontological turn and multispecies ethnography.

Ethnography's emplacement has likewise undergone a great delimitation, from its classic exotic village loci to ethnography at home (presumably a Western home), to «non-places» à la Augé, to Marcus's multiple sites, to cyberspace and netnography. The spatial metaphors describing the ethnographer's own subjective emplacement vis-à-vis her research subjects have shifted like a needle on a compass, with the long-standing tradition of studying «down» having been complemented with Laura Nader's «studying up», and more recently, «studying through» (Wright, Reinhold 2011). A type of engagement scarcely conceivable in Malinowski's time is ever more prevalent in collaborative forms of ethnography, not to mention action research and PAR<sup>9</sup>. These latter modes seem to lack a neat spatialization of their own, but perhaps we could suggest that they are “convergent”.

In order to answer our question about the Malinowskian legacy, we also prodded our contributors to consider the effects of the present-day conditions in which we perform ethnography. In this third millennium, we asked, what does it mean to be an ethnographer in a brave new world of audit-centered, academic turbo capitalism? Are third-party funders and evaluation processes dictating the contents and contours of ethnographic research to an excessive degree? In particular, we wondered to what extent it is still possible to actually conduct deep and long-term fieldwork, Malinowski style, with all of its implications for creating relations with research participants, what Čarna Brković – in her suggestive comparison of ethnography to clientelism – has called «sociality with a purpose» (Brković 2017). Even so, assuming that it is indeed possible, some might argue today that it is no longer *necessary* to devote such lengthy spans of time to doing fieldwork, and what Madden (2012) calls «step-in-step-out» research projects have gained a certain legitimacy. It is hard to say how much time is needed for the ethnographer to gain an «a feel for the game», as Bourdieu would put it – an ethnographic intuition, particularly if working at home.

Moreover, the structural conditions of modern Western society have affected ethnography in still other ways. As Agar (2006) has noted, worsening job prospects in academia for anthropology graduates have been a factor in the changing status of applied ethnographic research, which has moved from disciplinary scheduled caste to mainstream, if not actually vogue. Whether in industry, education, health care or the social services, in this context ethnography's older and more literal meaning of description and documentation of a people yields the priority to its rich potential as an

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9. As Daniela Salvucci's recent research has highlighted, however, Malinowski's wife Elsie Masson moved in the direction of engagement in her own early «almost anthropological» fieldwork and in her journalistic critiques of Fascism in South Tyrol (Salvucci 2018).

instrument for problem solving. In all of its various forms, since Malinowski's time ethnography has expanded its toolkit to increasingly embrace mixed methods and even interdisciplinary teams.

Indeed, whether inside or outside the academy, the use of ethnography has proliferated and become exceedingly fashionable in a number of disciplines outside of anthropology. While some scholars coming from outside anthropology are certainly conducting research that is recognizably ethnographic, not all, however, are acutely conscientious in their exploitation of the term's cachet. This is the point Howell (2017) makes, describing her irritation upon reading innumerable ERC applications that propose using qualitative methods that are blithely deemed «ethnography». Would it be right to say, then, that ethnography is a victim of its own success, in that the substance of Malinowskian ethnography is being hollowed out? In the end, what remains the *sine qua non* of ethnography in the Malinowskian legacy? Among the elements highlighted by Howell, we note the importance of the special epistemological stance that undergirds anthropology's use of ethnography: most crucially, the comparison and relativism that constitute ethnography's horizon. Moreover, this epistemological stance leads the ethnographer to problematize her own categories in the process of doing fieldwork, a heuristic practice not easily discerned in much of the qualitative work done in other disciplines.

Each of the articles here, then, addresses one or more of these broad queries in probing the Malinowskian legacy, and in doing so they make reference to their own areas of ethnographic expertise. Andre Gingrich and Eva Maria Knoll's piece treat the relationship of history and ethnography, in its introductory section eloquently resituating the question of using history in fieldwork in Malinowski's time. They restore a context in which different national anthropologies variously interpreted the relationship between the two disciplines, tempering the notion of a categorical distinction between history and anthropology with their proposed notion of a *continuum*. In the second portion of their text, Gingrich and Knoll reverse the usual question of how ethnography can benefit from historical approaches by offering a concrete example from research on navigation in the Maldives in the early Islamic period of the fourteenth century, demonstrating that knowledge from ethnography itself can be of value for historical interpretation.

In her engaging essay, Marilyn Strathern employs the notion of «infra-structures» to grasp the material and non-material, including conceptual, preconditions that make ethnography possible. She draws our attention to what we usually conceive as lying outside ethnography, the traces of which may become visible as context, and she illustrates her point by looking

specifically at the role of such infrastructures, especially the colonial ones, in Malinowski's Trobriand fieldwork. With great breadth of vision, Strathern indicates some of the shifting sands of infrastructure through the changes in ethnography that have taken place since Malinowski's time. What remains central, as she argues with reference to further examples from Oceanian ethnography, is the importance in ethnographic practice of taking relational infrastructure as both instrument and object.

Strathern's essay suggests a key to reading the article by Valeria Siniscalchi: while not using the term «infrastructures», in reviewing her own ethnographic experiences in three different fields, Siniscalchi reminisces precisely about such infrastructures, starting with the conceptual infrastructures developed through her training in a specific Italian school of ethnology. If the spazialization of Malinowski's ethnography was clearly local and synchronic, by using the concept of «economic space», Siniscalchi chronicles how her practice of ethnography has shuttled among various other spatial and temporal scales for grasping social phenomena in a world in which the local and its extralocal and global interconnections have become an object of inevitable reflection. The examples she provides from her work in economic anthropology in a Southern Italian town, a French province and in a food activist organization all meditate on the different relational infrastructures that went hand in hand with the shifting scales of her research.

Jaro Stacul's reflection embraces several of the questions posed by our symposium, drawing on many years of ethnographic research in the Trentine Alps and Poland, and on his experience as a professor of anthropology in Canada. Like Siniscalchi's work, Stacul's research shifted in scale, moving from an initial local focus to the state, and he argues that Malinowskian ethnography still offers much for investigations of this type. He further addresses the changes wrought in a field where new technologies of communication have transformed the physical public sphere, probing the concept of «informality» as a quality of the classic ethnographer's relationality in the field with research subjects. Moreover, as a teacher of ethnography in a Canadian university, Stacul offers a sobering account of the concrete ways in the contemporary late-capitalist academy creates challenges for fieldwork practice.

Embodying the changing politics of fieldwork and the academy since Malinowski's time, Chandana Mathur writes from a post-colonial and feminist perspective that takes stock of a revisit to her old field site in white, working-class Indiana after twenty-five years, inverting the conventional relationship of who should study whom. She considers not only the

transformations that have taken place among the people she knew and the structural conditions of their local post-industrial society, but she attends to the shifts in her own intersectionally marked identity vis-à-vis her interlocutors. In this encounter of what she terms «naked ethnography», she also problematizes the possibility of empathy and mutual understanding as a fieldworker among people who might be part of a group that is antagonistic towards her own subjectivity, or even repugnant to her (and anthropologists in general).

On a final note, we should point out that we do not intend to neglect the fact that *ethnography* has its own duality as both research methodology and research product (the *graphy*), but in the present venue we have chosen to focus on research practice. On the other hand, we will instead highlight the form our ethnographic communication takes in our upcoming ATST Symposium in 2019, *Gender and Genre in Ethnographic Writing*. In the meantime, we invite the reader to take a comfortable seat on his or her own verandah, laptop or tablet in hand, and simply enjoy the articles assembled here in this thematic issue of *Anuac*.



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