Drawing Potentiality	Stasik & Meiu
Abundance	Dankwa
Agriculture	Tischler
Alignment	Cole
Animals	Kaiser-Grolimund
Anthropologist	Geschiere
Belonging	de Lucas Espinosa, Yersin, Cupers, Mohamed & Lozi
Big (Br)other	Meiu
Bleeding	Graf
Breathe	Perracini
Conviviality	Oldenburg
Curse	Baumann
Dimensionalities	Hauser-Schäublin
Encierro	Vollmer Mateus
EthnograFear	Okoekpen
Future	Amrith
Gap	Kittel
Gift	Siegenthaler
Greenwashing	Sokolov
Growing	Fluri
Health	Saria
Hierophanies	Jallo
Ila8642	Bandyopadhyay
Incompleteness	Rutishauser
It	Förster
Juxtaposition	Chappatte
Kinship	Obrist van Eeuwijk
Lifeline	Schubert
Locus	Crima Bellini
Mural	Unseld
Net	Costantini
Organo-graphic	Schulze
Place	Oloruntoba-Oju
Recreation	Rakotomanana
Resiliencia	Watter
Responsibilidad	Wäger
Risk	van Eeuwijk
Sandwich	Mokhtar
Status	Ombere & Merten
Suspect	Stephenson
Theory	Bloom-Christen
Traces	Müller
Translations	Vollmer Mateus & Silbernagel
Wanderlust	Stasik
Waste Monsters	Raidoo
Witness	Mu

bap

basel anthropology papers | drawings | volume 1 | 2024 | ISSN 2813-8503

basel anthropology papers

drawings

volume 1 | 2024

basel anthropology papers
volume 1 (2024): drawings

editor: Michael Stasik
editorial board: Lesley Nicole Braun, Andrea Kaiser-Grolimund, George Paul Meiu, Silke Oldenburg
design: Om Bori
original logo design: Ann Karimi Kern

Institute of Social Anthropology
University of Basel
Münsterplatz 19
CH-4051 Basel

ISSN: 2813-8503 (print) | 2813-8511 (online)

Drawing Potentiality (Stasik & Meiu) 1

Abundance (Dankwa) 8
Agriculture (Tischler) 12
Alignment (Cole) 16
Animals (Kaiser-Grolimund) 22
Anthropologist (Geschiere) 26
Belonging (de Lucas Espinosa, Yersin, Cupers, Mohamed & Lozi) 30
Big (Br)other (Meiu) 36
Bleeding (Graf) 40
Breathe (Perracini) 44
Conviviality (Oldenburg) 48
Curse (Baumann) 52
Dimensionalities (Hauser-Schäublin) 56
Encierro (Vollmer Mateus) 60
EthnograFear (Okoekpen) 64
Future (Amrith) 68
Gap (Kittel) 72
Gift (Siegenthaler) 76
Greenwashing (Sokolov) 80
Growing (Fluri) 84
Health (Saria) 88
Hierophanies (Jallo) 92
Ila8642 (Bandyopadhyay) 96

100 **Incompleteness** (Rutishauser)
104 **It** (Förster)
108 **Juxtaposition** (Chappatte)
112 **Kinship** (Obrist van Eeuwijk)
116 **Lifeline** (Schubert)
120 **Locus** (Crima Bellini)
124 **Mural** (Unseld)
128 **Net** (Costantini)
132 **Organo-graphic** (Schulze)
136 **Place** (Oloruntoba-Oju)
140 **Recreation** (Rakotomanana)
144 **Resiliencia** (Watter)
148 **Responsibilidad** (Wäger)
152 **Risk** (van Eeuwijk)
156 **Sandwich** (Mokhtar)
160 **Status** (Ombere & Merten)
164 **Suspect** (Stephenson)
168 **Theory** (Bloom-Christen)
172 **Traces** (Müller)
176 **Translations** (Vollmer Mateus & Silbernagel)
180 **Wanderlust** (Stasik)
184 **Waste Monsters** (Raidoo)
190 **Witness** (Mu)

Drawing Potentiality

Michael Stasik & George Paul Meiu

Imagine the dance of a pencil on a blank sheet of paper. The pencil hovers, varying its pressure to create different-stroke widths, different degrees of transparency. As the pencil traverses the paper, skittering and twisting, the tapestry of lines gradually acquires the possibilities of meaning. With each line, new connections may emerge, reshuffling the relationship between the seen and the unseen, the actual and the virtual. A drawing emerges. And a world unfurls. With it, hitherto unexpected throughlines, storylines and sidelines come into being, dwelling in the transcendent space between materiality, imagination and inscription, between what was, what is and what could be.

This inaugural issue of the *Basel Anthropology Papers* takes its cues from the act of drawing to pursue new lines of flight – a flight of the imagination – and uncover unexpected resonances in our engagement with the world, its pasts, presents and futures. Unlike the pencil facing an empty piece of paper, we are not starting from a blank slate. We are continuing in the path of earlier publication series produced by the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Basel: the *Basler Beiträge zur Ethnologie* (1964-1999) and the *Basel Papers on Political Transformations* (2011-2022). While continuing the tradition of an in-house publication, we also seek to pursue new directions and think afresh some of the generative possibilities that anthropological writing and the ethnographic imagination can afford. How, we ask, can we deploy the ethnographic imagination to expand our modes of engagement with the contemporary world?

Drawings, the theme of the first issue, seems particularly appropriate for starting such an exploratory endeavor. As a conduit of creative effort, conceptual abstraction and

relational understanding, the act of drawing shares (and helps pursue) some of the key potentials of ethnography. Blending wonder with scrutiny, attention with the quest for deep understanding, both drawing and ethnography look out for the surprising and, through it, seek to expand horizons of understanding. They both invite us to marvel in ways that may decenter our ways of being, take us beyond the point from which we initially begin perceiving the world. Both may unravel alternative points of perception and elicit deeper engagements with things in their fuller complexity. Both also share the capacity to oscillate between the realms of perception and representation, between the domains of actuality and potentiality. And, in opening up the possibilities of the imagination, they both also inform unforeseen modes of perception, comprehension and communication.

'Ethnography' derives etymologically, in part, from the Ancient Greek word *graphikós* – a term that relates to drawing, painting or writing. Not surprisingly, ethnography has been linked to acts of drawing since the earliest days of anthropology as a discipline. For a long time, however, the use of drawing was largely limited to that of an illustrative tool, subordinated to the authority of textual representation. To be sure, as in the case of colonial map-making (see, for example, McClintock 1995), anthropologists and others have also used drawing as an ideological tool of conquest: a way to conquer ambiguity with claims to certainty; to foreclose the myriad affordances of extant social life, its multiple lines of flight, in favor of the narrowly straight line of modernity's teleology. Against such authoritative claims to a representational truth – the fetish 'Truth' of Enlightenment – it is worth remembering anthropologist Gregory Bateson's (1972: 455) (quoting Alfred Korzybski) insistence that 'the map is not the territory'. This simple recognition, Bateson argues, would prevent us from continuously falling into

the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness', a fallacy that occurs when we offer 'abstractions which we make for our own convenience when we set out to describe cultures in words' (73); and, one might add, in drawn sketches, when we seek to quickly put our finger on the issue at hand – to experience the certainty of the object of knowledge. In this sense, as Johannes Fabian (1983: 106) points out, to 'visualize a culture almost becomes synonymous for understanding it'. Recognizing this ideological fallacy and avoiding it should also attune our perception and free our imagination to attend to the multiple potentialities of drawing as an act of being and becoming *in* and *with* the world.

It is only in the past decade or so that anthropologists have begun to reflect more extensively on the potential of drawing as a substantive dimension of ethnographic practice (e.g., Causey 2017; Ingold 2016; Taussig 2011). Subsequent efforts to explore the representational affordance of graphic modalities in ethnography have proven highly generative: they opened up new avenues for the aesthetic, affective and sensory dimensions of ethnographic representation; unraveled new synergies between textual, visual and other more-than-textual elements; and encouraged us to challenge the hegemony of text as the apex of anthropological knowledge production. Arguably, the key possibility that drawing offers over textual accounts is what Michael Taussig (2011: 13) describes as its 'capacity to head off in an altogether other direction'. Taussig relates this capacity to the particular epistemic status of drawings. Unlike the pursuit of completeness and realism in ethnographic writing (or, for that matter, the ethnographic photograph), drawings necessarily remain incomplete, fragmentary, aspirational and approximate, and in this way 'suggestive of a world beyond, a world that does not have to be explicitly recorded and is in fact all the more "complete" because it cannot be completed'.

'In pointing away from the real,' Taussig argues, '[drawings] capture something invisible and auratic that makes the thing depicted worth depicting' (*idem*).

And it is precisely the incomplete, the uncertainly perceived or the invisible and auratic element of something otherwise too easily reduced to the signifying order of language that interests us here as an important conjuncture of the imagination. To be sure, such a pursuit of the imagination is not new. Trying to think *against* or *around* dominant modalities of historicity – e.g., 'progress,' 'decline' or 'epochs' – Walter Benjamin (1999), for example, calls for a different kind of knowledge. Such knowledge, rather than lend solidity to dominant tropes and teleologies, would emerge instead from 'awakenings' or 'flashes' – the sense of surprise or shock – in our engagement with the fragments of various pasts. Indeed, one can think of our drawings as doing something akin to Benjamin's 'dialectical image': they pursue 'the awakening of a not-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been', 'a displacement of the angle of vision ... [so that] a positive element emerges... something different from that previously signified' (458-59). Or, to return to Taussig (1993: 2-17), we can imagine our drawings as exercises in a 'magic of mimesis': taking something from one order and reproducing it (however imperfectly) in another, ethnographers – just like shamans engaged in ritual – deploy the sensuous power of imitation to move thought, to lift imagination through representational media. Even if this work of the imagination is not novel as such, it is of central importance to living in the contemporary world. As dominant modes of being in space and time – modes of political subjectivity associated with specific grammars of identity, nature, progress, consumption, etc. – have become hegemonic across the world, we risk what Binyavanga Wainaina (2014) calls a 'bankruptcy of the imagination', the impossibility to legitimately envision things outside the

categories of colonial modernity. The point then is precisely to pursue a mode of imagination that attends keenly to not-yet-conscious potentialities for modes of being and relating *otherwise* (see also Pandian 2019).

*

In setting the parameters for this issue, we wanted to create a space that reveals some of the wondrously suggestive potential that drawing holds for ethnography, especially in relation to how it serves to unravel something unexpected in the lived complexities that anthropologists encounter and strive to record during fieldwork. The instructions we gave to the contributors were kept deliberately open to interpretation and imagination. We asked for a fieldwork-related drawing, which could be of one's own or someone else's making, accompanied by a short text and a one-word title. We did not limit our definition of drawing to a specific format or device, such as pen and paper, thereby opening up our collection to a diversity of techniques, materials and approaches.

The forty-five contributions in this issue speak of this diversity. They encompass a wide range of understandings of what drawings are, what they can and cannot do, and how they intersect with, provoke and extend the ethnographic imagination. In terms of content and style, the collection curated here includes classic illustrations of fieldwork scenes, objects, places and kinship charts; visualized stories, memories and dreams; elaborate murals and conceptual sketches; artistic portraits, educational posters and scribbles found on a public toilet wall, a tree and glossy advertising brochures.

Some drawings have been made recently; others have been unearthed from older fieldwork records archived up to half a century ago. Most of the drawings were created by the contributing authors themselves, though others by colleagues, friends and not just by human but also other-than-human

interlocutors, including insects and algorithms. Some texts speak more directly to the drawing they accompany, reflecting on its content to elicit something contextual, contemplative or analytical. Others only partly relate to the visual representation of the drawing as such, enticing readers to intuit the relationship between the image and the text. Each entry offers a perspective of its own, hinting at the different possibilities afforded by drawings as a tool of ethnographic representation and interpretation. Thematically, too, our drawings prompt reflection on a wide variety of issues, from questions of intimacy (one's bodily proximity to an object, moment or situation) and memory (mnemonic devices and their relationship to loss, secrecy or taboos) to questions of affect, desire, dreaming, fantasy and futurity. These ethnographic themes prompt our authors to reflect also on conundrums associated with knowledge production, such as practices of selection and mediation, processuality, positionality and reflexivity, among other things. Key points of reflection emerge also around the limitations of drawings – that which remains beyond their purview.

We have arranged the entries alphabetically according to the one-word titles provided by the contributors, which is just another way of saying that readers are welcome to find their own ways through them. In moving from one entry to another, we encourage readers to become aware of intuitive and counterintuitive resonances emerging between these texts and drawings. How might such resonances stimulate our ethnographic imagination? If, as Paul Willis (2000: xviii) puts it, 'ethnography is the eye of the needle through which the threads of the imagination must pass,' then 'imagination is thereby forced to try to see the world in a grain of salt.' Hence, we hope, readers will discover, for example, how drawings may draw up the monsters of contradiction and paradox in colonial and postcolonial settings where competing forms

of knowledge production confront dissonant social realities in ways that, for many, remain uncanny and unintelligible; how drawings may call forth and give body to fantasy futures and apocalyptic end-times, reorienting people in space and time amidst myriad, competing possibilities, while delivering all kinds of livelihoods beyond those they actually promise; or how drawings may help decenter us, our linguistic and affective capacities, by confronting us with potentialities – indeed, sometimes with images of ourselves and our relations of belonging – that are, at first at least, different than what we know. It is with such possibilities in mind that we shall then start the work of crafting an ethnographic imagination.

Bateson, G. 1972. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Benjamin, W. 1999. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Causey, A. 2017. *Drawn to See: Drawing as an Ethnographic Method*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Ingold, T. 2016. *Lines: A Brief History*. New York: Routledge.

McClintock, A. 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge.

Pandian, A. 2019. *A Possible Anthropology: Methods for Uneasy Times*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Taussig, M. 1993. *Mimesis and Alterity*. New York: Routledge.

Taussig, M. 2011. *I Swear I Saw This: Drawing in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wainaina, B. 2014. 'We Must Free Our Imagination'. Part 1 of 6. Video recording. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uMwppw5AgU

Willis, P. 2000. *The Ethnographic Imagination*. Cambridge: Polity.


DOCTOR DANKWA'S
NYA NKWA
FAMILY
CLINIC

Abundance
Serena Owusua Dankwa

After weeks of coughing, Grace Tagoe died at Korle-Bu hospital, where my father used to run the sickle-cell unit. The signboard Grace made for his seventieth birthday, still decorates my father's bedroom.

Grace, skinny, smart, cropped hair. The way she called herself a 'single mum' and bemoaned her lack of 'fatherly love' made me suspect that she had attended some 'positive parenting' workshop by the Planned Parenthood NGO. Her own 'planning' involved a businessman, married with three daughters, who wanted a boy child – but he urged Grace to abort and disappeared to the US before she had given birth to his twin boys. Since then, Grace struggled to make a living, supported by her mum and occasionally by her 'best friend' Mary, the young woman selling kenkey by her work site.

Grace was a sign writer at the workshop hidden behind the smelly backwaters of the Korle lagoon. She was one in two women among eighty workers, as estimated by her colleague, who likely included in his calculation the youngsters their boss tried to 'keep from the streets' by offering them training. Grace too was full of admiration of their hard-working boss, until 'confusion' began. First, the boss scrutinized her for privately taking on a job they were supposed to do with the company. Grace, for whom the job was a little fish, was disappointed when the boss called her out on it and 'disgraced' her in front the trainees. Next, he gossiped about her friendship with Mary, joining the chorus of those defaming them 'lesbians'. Meanwhile, rumors circulated that the boss himself had developed a romantic interest in Mary.

Grace lost the job, but even prior to that she had been facing financial difficulties. Because, as she explained to me during my research stay in 2007, unlike other women in her

Accra neighborhood, she did not like 'too much sex with men'. She preferred 'girls' (of little means). At some point she did try another 'boy lover', hoping that he would 'help me support my children.' He did not. She quit.

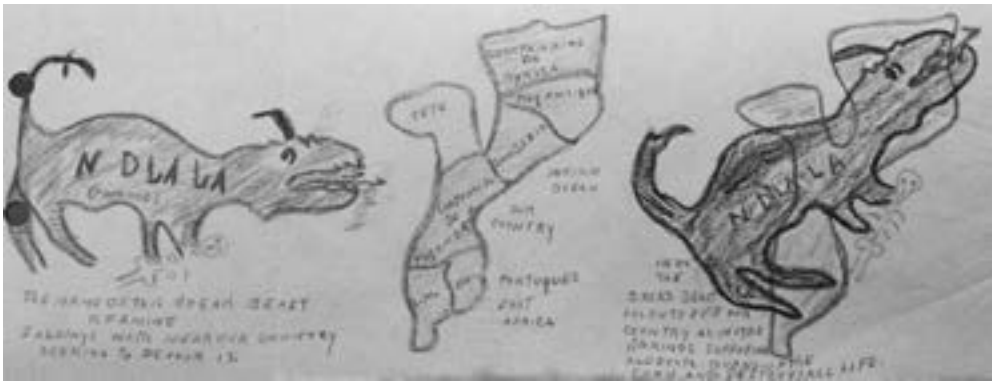
I gave her my favorite photograph of my retired father. It was taken when I was few months into my research and joined father at a distant relative's funeral in his Ghanaian home town. As the deceased was an elder past the age of seventy, we wore white cloth streaked with dark blue lines. At the time, my father had long given up on his dream of becoming a family doctor in Switzerland. In 1967, when he took his state examination in Zurich, non-Swiss medical students were examined by technical experts only and not by the confederate expert, necessary to later qualify as a Swiss family doctor. He did not worry about it much. Soon after receiving his doctorate, he brought my mother and me to Accra and began working at Korle-Bu hospital – in smelling distance of Grace' Korle lagoon.

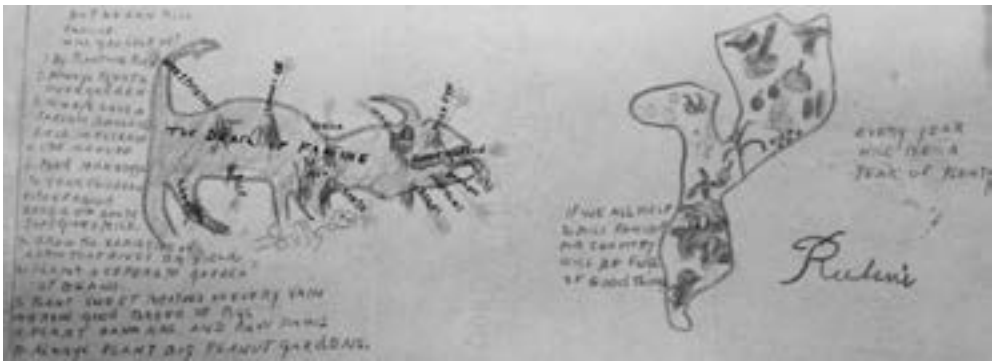
Only much later, after staying put in a Swiss village for the obligatory ten years, paying for and passing the test, and being voted into citizenship by the village assembly, did my father start working towards taking the state exam again, but this time as a Swiss. It never happened. His family clinic remained a dream – the dream I asked Grace to depict on a birthday banner. But Grace, as always short of money, 'ate' my prepayment before buying the banner. Instead, a left-over wooden board became the signboard for my father's imaginary 'nya nkaw' clinic.

I do not know the cause of Grace' death. As her mother was allowed to see the dead body, she reasoned that it was neither Covid-19 nor Tuberculosis. All I know is that it was Grace who chose the Twi name for my father's dream: 'nya nkaw' which means: 'receive life – in all its abundance.'

———————

Serena Owusua Dankwa is a Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Basel. She is author of *Knowing Women: Same-Sex Intimacy, Gender, and Identity in Postcolonial Ghana* (2021) and co-edited *Racial Profiling* (2019) and *Bildung.Macht.Diversität* (2021). serena.dankwa@unibas.ch


NDLALA
Portuguese
East
Africa


Reuben

Agriculture
Julia Tischler

I don't know Ndlala, the beast of famine. I don't think Kenyon Butterfield, the American rural reformer in whose archives at the Library of Congress the drawing is kept, knew famine either. But clearly, the person who made this drawing sometime in the early 1930s did. In the first image of the sequence, Ndlala, meaning 'hunger' or 'famine' in Tsonga, is attacking 'our country', Portuguese East Africa. On the next image, Ndlala has entered the country, burning the corn and 'destroy[ing] all life'. But then Ndlala is shot by various arrows entitled 'sweet potatoes,' 'rice,' 'corn,' 'milk + eggs' and 'paw paws'. The accompanying caption reads like the ABC of improved agriculture at the time. These were simple means to enhance farming outputs without major capital investments that were advocated by missionaries, government officials, but also wealthier African farmers: planting rice, keeping a river garden, using manure, producing milk and eggs, growing vegetables and so forth.

After months of researching agricultural education and rural reform in early twentieth-century southern Africa, digging through numerous dusty archives, this image spoke to me more directly than anything I had encountered. The drawing seems to say: if there is one economic activity that is directly linked to issues of life and death, it is agriculture. And yet it seems that, to many colonized Africans, progress meant leaving agriculture behind. After experiences of colonial encroachment, land dispossession and forced crash cropping, agriculture had acquired a bad name among many Africans.

Whites, by contrast, seemed to like the idea of African smallholder farming. Missionaries started preaching the gospel of the plough in the nineteenth century, and were eventually joined in their efforts by colonial administrators.

Butterfield himself was part of a cohort of white American, European and South African reformers, most of whom were urban-based social scientists with little practical farming experience. They advocated for agriculture as the cornerstone of an 'adapted education' for black communities. Learning to farm better, work harder and produce more and better food, according to these experts, served Africans better than what they termed 'book knowledge'. Even today, many rural development initiatives in support of smallholder farming project an image of the docile rural African, who is self-reliant, makes no demands on the state, stays put in one place and does not challenge authority – a non-threatening African, member of a non-threatening rural underclass.

However, there have always been Africans who championed the idea of independent smallholder farming themselves. Casting agriculture as a way out of poverty, famine or even a path to wealth and respectability, many experimented with new farming methods and actively sought technical knowledge. Some also embedded the notion of improved farming in an anti-racist politics of separatism and black emancipation.

What then does this drawing represent? Is it the testimony of a good missionary student and their internalized discriminating concepts of education? Is it the visual expression of experiences of hunger and hardship? Is it a document of subversion in a world of global capitalism and a colonial economy that sought to make Africans dependent on wage labor rather than autonomous farmers? Maybe it is none, or all of these options.

Caption: Library of Congress, Washington, Butterfield collection, Box 7, drawing 'Ruteni', folder 'African Agriculture', 1929-1932.

Julia Tischler is Associate Professor of African History at the University of Basel. Her research focusses on agriculture, development and settler colonialism in southern Africa.
julia.tischler@unibas.ch

Alignment
Jennifer Cole

I was walking in Antalaha, a town on Madagascar's east coast, when I first saw the mural. Painted onto the side of a building, perhaps a small shop, the image was deceptively simple: a Malagasy woman and a European man, his arm around her waist, sitting on a bench cobbled together from bamboo, which is plentiful in the region, enjoying the view of the bay. How does one read such an image?

It is possible to read the mural as an example of 'cruel optimism' – which Lauren Berlant characterized as a relationship 'in which something or someone you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing' (2011: 1). Madagascar is currently the fourth poorest country in the world; ongoing poverty, and the exotic tropical setting combine to make the island a well-known destination for sex tourism. Many Malagasy women also seek husbands overseas, especially in France, where marriage remains one of the few legal paths to entry and, eventually, citizenship. Given that the French state has adopted a politics of suspicion, which entails treating binational marriages, and especially the in-marrying spouse, as fraudulent until proven otherwise, a woman who experiences conjugal violence can find it extremely difficult to get the help she needs to leave an unhappy marriage. A woman who marries and migrates abroad can thus easily find herself trapped, far from home, in an extraordinary vulnerable position.

But one can also see the mural as an outcome of a process I call the labor of alignment. The labor of alignment encompasses all the different kinds of work a person undertakes to align the contradictory structures of which they are a part on their own terms, despite considerable constraints. It includes both the material investments in their rustic French hus-

bands that women make to overcome the 'paradoxes of global hypergamy' (Constable 2005) and social, symbolic and interactional labor as well. These multiple different kinds of labor contribute to a process of unseeing some things so as to be able to see – and show – others.

For the woman in the mural, if we allow ourselves to imagine a backstory for her, it probably meant working her social connections to find a French husband and get all the way to France. And more. From the perspective of many a coastal Malagasy woman, an ideal husband shows his love through material support – material support that helps not only a woman but also her family, thereby recognizing the life-giving power of her ancestors. French husbands, meanwhile, seek Malagasy wives because they believe they will be willing to adopt traditional gender roles. Although they are largely correct in this belief, they also tend to see these marriages as indicating a woman's commitment to full integration into the man's family and life in France. Consequently, women have to find ways to align their husbands' expectations with their own – despite the power imbalance created by global inequality and strengthened by French laws. Against considerable odds, many seek to slowly incorporate their foreign husbands back into their Malagasy social networks.

More than anything, the mural testifies to this process. It is probably no accident that the mural was located in a part of the town where many Malagasy women married to French men have built fancy cement houses – paid for with the money that they have access to through their relationships with foreign men. Is the mural painted on the side of the woman's house, celebrating her marriage? Or perhaps the wall of the shop run by her little sister – and paid for by capital invested by the woman in France? In this sense, the mural appears akin to the decorations on tombs in the south of the island that commemorate the lives of wealthy men, their

tombs decorated with cars, helicopters and airplanes that are all signs of a powerful modernity. Cruel optimism is a useful starting point for understanding the fantasy that the mural represents, to be sure. But fantasy is a rather static concept. Equally important is the everyday social work of unseeing, and thereby aligning, that the mural indexes as women work to smooth over the conflicting aspects of social life so that they can incorporate men back into their networks and have their relationships understood on their own terms. That unseeing exists at multiple scales from the individual to the family to the state. It is a crucial part of alignment work that *vadimbazaha* – a Malagasy woman in a relationship with a European man – perform, in tandem with cultural artifacts like this mural.

Berlant, L. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. North Carolina: Duke University Press.

Constable, N. 2005. Introduction: Cross-Border Marriages, Gendered Mobility and Global Hypergamy. In: N. Costable, ed., *Cross-Border Marriages: Gender and Mobility in Transnational Asia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Jennifer Cole is an anthropologist and professor in the Department of Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago. She is the author of *Forget Colonialism: Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar* (2001) and *Sex and Salvation: Imagining the Future in Madagascar* (2010) in addition to several edited volumes. jcole@uchicago.edu

Animals
Andrea Kaiser-Grolimund

This scene, featuring a cow and her calf, was captured during my time spent with mobile pastoralists in Northern Togo while conducting research for my Master thesis in January 2009. During that period, I collaborated with Mathias Kulo, a veterinarian from the University of Lomé to explore the impact of a newly enacted *arrêté interministériel*, which aimed to re-regulate the entry of mobile pastoralists from the Sahel region. While the new regulation seems to have resulted in fewer mobile herders arriving at the border posts, disease surveillance became more challenging. Many years later, as I once engage with animals, including cattle, in my new research, I see this sketched cattle scene as a coming together of many complex interconnections, if not paradoxes, that currently shape my thinking about the relationship between humans, animals and health.

Animals have been of interest to anthropologists since the beginning of the discipline. Edward E. Evans-Pritchard comes to mind as one of the first anthropologists to attend to the significance of cattle for human existence. Or Claude Lévi-Strauss who taught us to think with (totemic) animals. Not to mention Clifford Geertz, who later wrote about the symbolic significance of cocks in Bali. However, the current debates around animals in anthropology are formulated differently. How do animals matter to people or other organisms in different contexts? Around the time when I captured this particular cow and her calf in my drawing, new posthumanist approaches emerged, proposing multispecies relatedness by asking how the livelihoods of diverse organisms are interlinked. Our shared lives are indeed complex, shaped by both local and global influences.

While some of the academic proponents of the so-called 'animal turn' raise philosophical questions about the world in which we can and should differentiate between different living beings, public health debates, shaped by recent pandemics, often emphasize the dangerous proximity to animals as carriers of diseases. How do we prevent further 'spillovers'? How do we work together to protect our 'One World' and consequently 'One Health'? Today, the cattle in the drawing (or its descendants) may therefore stand for many unsolved challenges of our time. For example, livestock farming is often blamed for contributing to environmental pollution, while at the same time providing a source of income and food for so many. But what does this mean for this particular cow and her calf and their embeddedness in complex (health) contexts and hierarchies? I am reminded of Donna Haraway's book *Staying with the Trouble*; or, with regard to this drawing: to stay with the cattle and re-think our ways of relating to a diversity of organisms in the world(s).

Andrea Kaiser-Grolimund is a medical/social anthropologist at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute and the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel. Within the ERC-funded project 'ALIVEAfrica. Animals, Livelihoods and Wellbeing in Africa' at Durham University, she currently conducts her ethnographic research on 'One Health' as it travels across contexts. andrea.kaisergrolimund@unibas.ch


Sociolo
Metso
Bagbeze' II
Le 14/2/19


gue, Appetit
ame Franklin Rosny
73

Anthropologist
Peter Geschiere

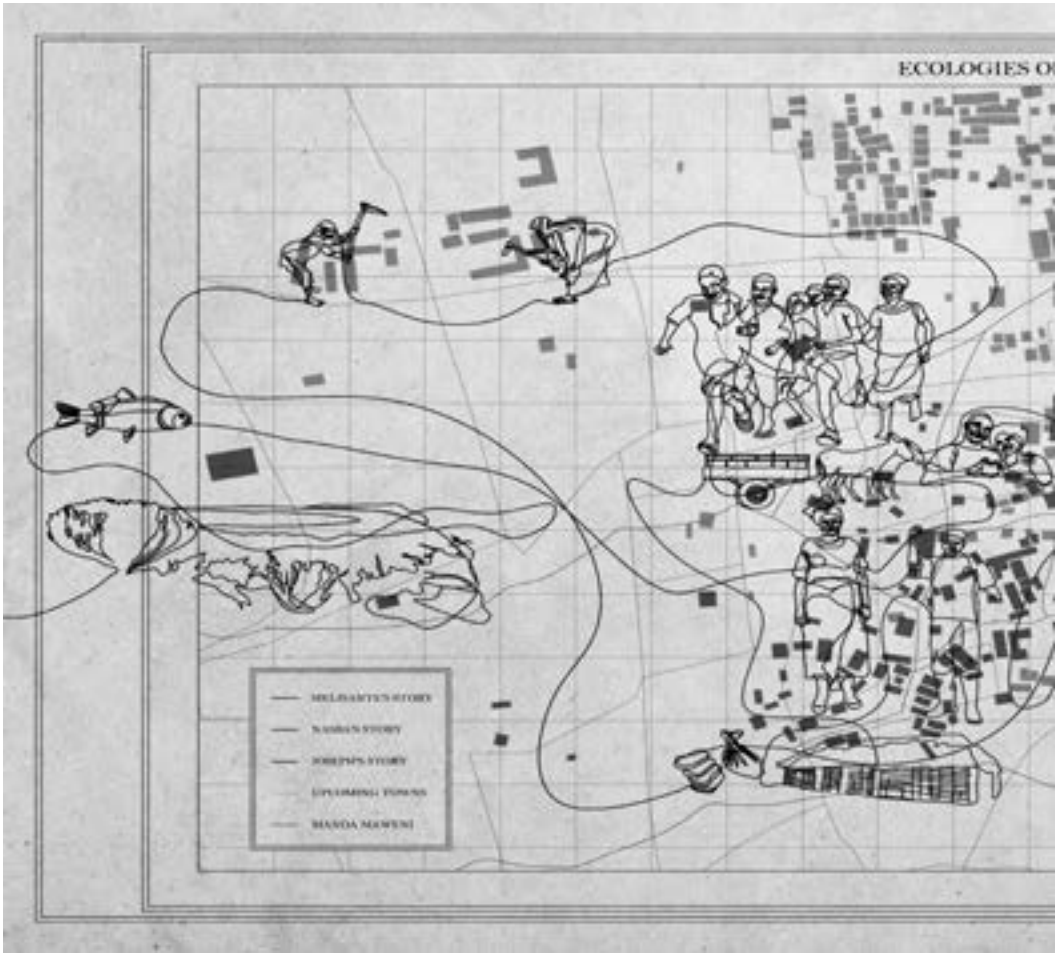
In 1973, during my second period of fieldwork in Maka villages, in the forest of southeastern Cameroon, I had brought along a set of colored ballpoints with the idea of using them for making marks in my field notes (hand-written, at the time). I never used them but my ever growing group of assistants – every assistant recruiting an assisting assistant (and so on) – discovered them and suddenly they developed a mania for drawing. Topics varied, including a successful action of the national keeper (football) in a recent match against Zaire, flowery poetic expressions and drawings of my recording machine. But Metsame Franklin, who always had original ideas, produced a drawing of me eating with two other persons and wishing me (*sociologue*) 'bon appetit'.

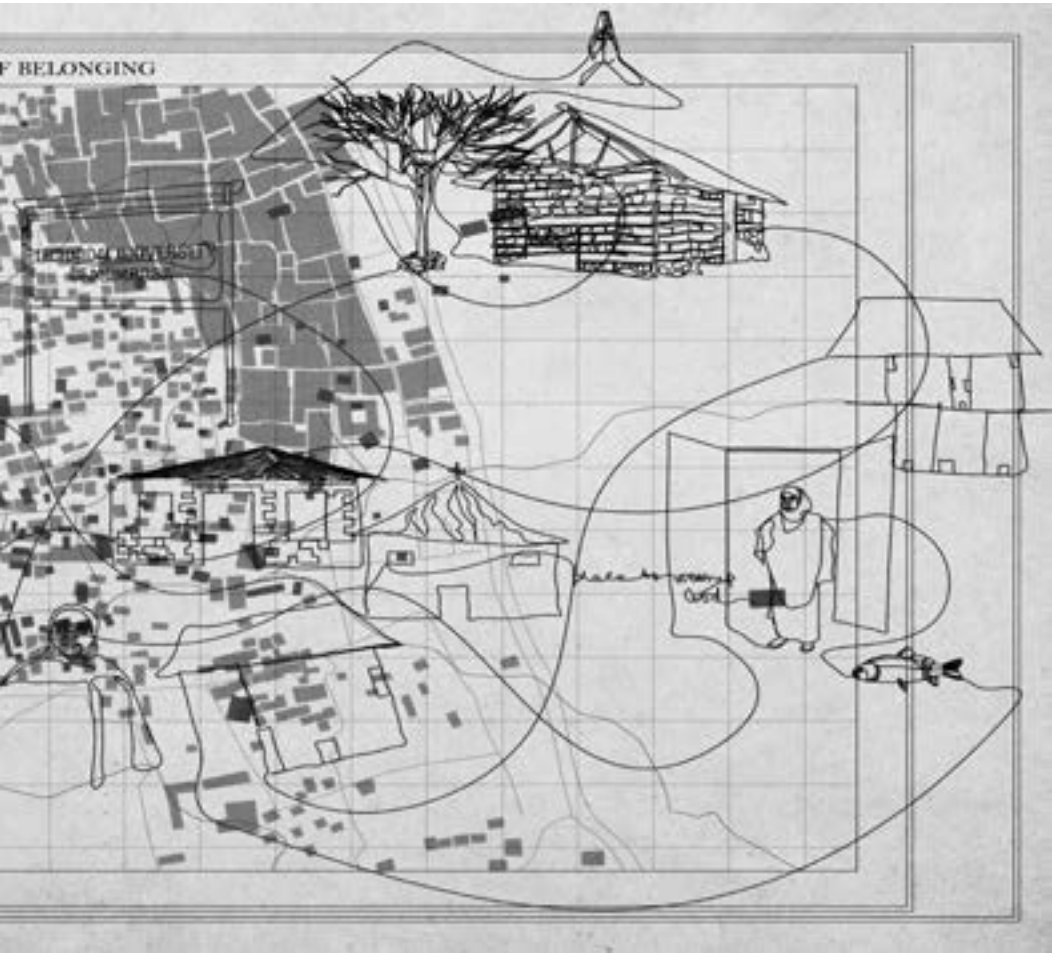
I like the drawing because it raises all sorts of questions – or maybe misunderstandings. First of all, it is not clear who is me. During my previous fieldwork period, Franklin had also worked with me when my father had come to visit me. So, this could have inspired Franklin to draw me, in my youth, with my father and my mother. But my partner (male) had also come to visit me and of course we had introduced him as a 'friend' (at the time, it was wise to hide homosexuality in the Netherlands if you wanted to make an academic career and it was – and still is – a crime in Cameroon). But everybody in the village kept wondering why I did not produce a wife; children would have been even better. So, Franklin might also have decided to draw me with a wife and a child in order to assuage doubts among the villagers. In general, my fieldwork was marked by ongoing misunderstandings, although some of these were productive. Franklin's drawing reproduced the setup of our own modest dining table where we ate together every day. At the begin of my stay, the village chief had decided I would live in the most modern house in the village (a huge construction with a corrugated iron roof), while I felt

that as an anthropologist I had to live in a more 'traditional' house. So, I ended up in a ramshackle *poto-poto* hut (walls of pressed mud bricks and a roof of raffia leaves). Later it turned out to be built as the *case de passage* for the Presbyterian pastor, formerly an American. So, what is 'traditional' after all?

Another misunderstanding was that Franklin identified me as a *sociologue*. At the time, I had chosen that identity for fear that anthropology would be seen as colonial. However, a few years later, I had to redefine myself: after recurrent student unrest in the course of the 1970s, the one-party regime became suspicious of sociology, seeing it as a revolutionary discipline. So, it was better to 'become' an anthropologist again. Such metamorphosis may give some hope. Currently, while the very future of our discipline is being threatened as researchers are so easily accused of exploitation as soon as they study people outside their own world – and for me going out of your own bubble is the hallmark of anthropology – there is some solace in the idea that we can always go underground by disciplinary crossovers. My example may show that certainly in the fieldwork situation the power position of the anthropologist is highly relative (to say the least). It may also suggest that the obsession with purity that seems to take over anthropology again – whether by focusing on an 'ontological' cultural core, or by dividing the world in 'predators' and 'survivors' – has its dangers. I find Franklin's drawing interesting because it is a tentative exploration at the interface, hybrid and therefore dynamic.

Peter Geschiere is Professor Emeritus for the Anthropology of Africa at the University of Amsterdam and Leiden University. Since 1971, he has undertaken historical-anthropological fieldwork in various parts of Cameroon and elsewhere in West and Central Africa. He published on 'witchcraft' and intimacy; autochthony and exclusion; Freemasonry and homophobia.
p.l.geschiere@uva.nl


ECOLOGIES O
UPCOMING TOWNS


F BELONGING

Belonging

Cristina de Lucas Espinosa, Maèva Yersin, Kenny Cupers, Nasba Mohamed & Ruth Lozi

In our engaged research as part of the Critical Urbanisms program at the University of Basel, we used drawings and maps to explore the ecological relationality of belonging. Someone's sense of belonging cannot be easily pinned on a map or represented in a drawing, yet the practice of drawing together with our research participants allowed us to grasp the complex links between places and people.

Our work took place in Lamu, Kenya, an ancient node of the Indian Ocean trade famous for its coral stone architectural heritage. The town is undergoing rapid urban development, and the building of new coral stone houses raises pressing questions about who belongs. Our urban research with community organizers, stone masons, house builders, home owners and neighborhood residents combined hand drawing with photography, mapping, interviews and ethnographic walks. This dialogical process of creating something together allowed us to better understand what it means to belong.

Drawing to locate ourselves in the present and to look at the past: While walking, we began to draw an environment with our mobile phones. The students and community organizers geolocated places and took pictures to remember objects, houses and materials that make up the environment. This first step into visual representation established a solid foundation in the present, enabling us to comprehend the physical backdrop in which belonging unfolds. We first drew this environment in the form of a physical map that brings narratives to life in a spatial form. The proximities and distances between the visualized elements of discourse allowed us to explore the intricate web of connections between people and their surroundings. Through intertwining past experiences into the initial drawing, interviewees established a stronger connection

to the present. This enabled us to gain deeper insights into how past encounters shape one's sense of belonging. Through this exercise, we realized that each story has its own rhythm and frame. Drawing provides a gateway to the reverberations of past events in individuals' present lives, revealing how fundamental the concept of ecology is to locate space-time at the core of the understanding of the sense of belonging.

Drawing and imagining the future: Drawing on the map allowed us to delve into individuals' desires, dreams and un/certainties. The interviewees took the pen and offered a glimpse into the anticipation of sweeping economic changes in the town, and the impact these had on their personal lives and intimate aspirations. Simultaneously, the drawings uncovered a desire to create and prosper by building more permanent structures, juxtaposed with an underlying fear of sudden loss of their present homes due to their possible destruction. The drawings on the map provided insights into individuals' envisioned futures within their current environment, shedding light on whether living in the quarry area serves as a transient stopover, an anchor point, or perhaps both.

Drawing and understanding belonging as something fundamentally relational: The drawing allowed us to take up the salient aspects of the narratives to tell life stories without fixing belonging to a particular place or moment in life. Instead, drawing empowers interviewees to traverse time and space in a non-linear way. Consequently, it provides a more comprehensive perspective, by considering space, time and relationships simultaneously. Animated visual narratives go beyond surface level storytelling of people's sense of belonging by vividly depicting complex subjective experiences, memories, aspirations and their connections to the environment. By empowering research participants to draw, we were then able to visualize their uniquely traced experiences, providing invaluable insights into the intricate ecologies of belonging.

Videolink to generation of drawing:
http://youtu.be/lwpzjWWt-D8

Cristina De Lucas Espinosa is a trained architect from the Polytechnic University of Madrid. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in Critical Urbanisms at the University of Basel, where she has been conducting fieldwork research in Lamu, Kenya, on the topics of property and belonging. cristina.delucasespinosa@stud.unibas.ch

Maèva Yersin is a human geographer from the Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne. She is currently enrolled in the master's program in Critical Urbanisms at the University of Basel, where she has been conducting fieldwork research in Lamu, Kenya, focusing on ecologies of building and belonging. maev.yersin@stud.unibas.ch

Kenny Cupers is a Professor of Architectural History and Urban Studies who co-founded and leads the Critical Urbanisms program at the University of Basel. He is the author of the award-winning book, *The Social Project: Housing Postwar France* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
kenny.cupers@unibas.ch

Nasba Mohamed is a volunteer at the Lamu Youth Alliance. She studied Procurement and Materials Management in Kenya. nasbashee69@gmail.com

Ruth Lozi is an environmental scientist from Kenyatta University. She currently volunteers at the Lamu Youth Alliance in Kenya. loziruth@gmail.com


Linah


FRIDGE
KITCHEN

Big (Br)other

George Paul Meiu

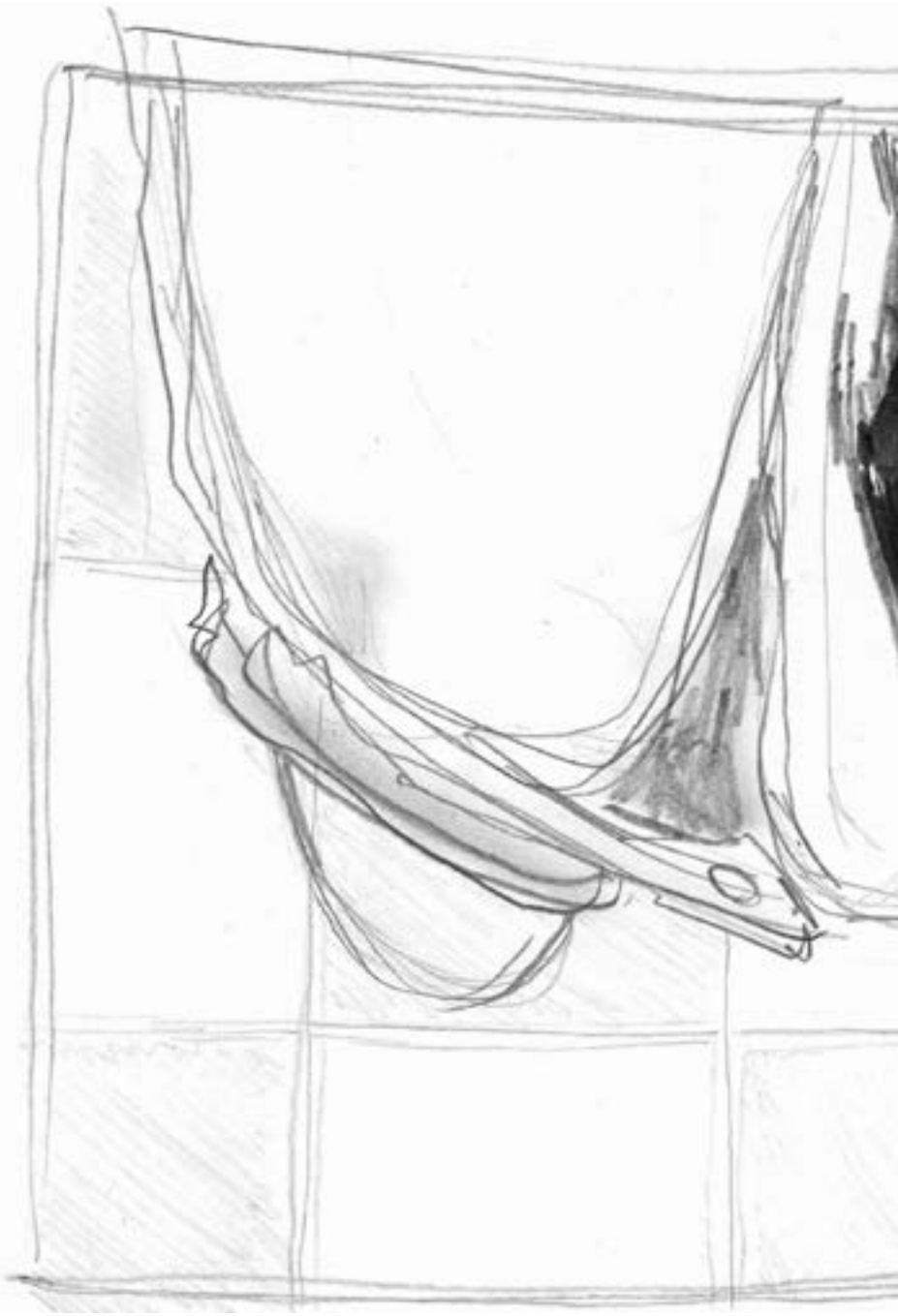
Lina grew up in Mombasa, Kenya, in the 1970s. As a child, she had desired a big house, with a spacious, elegantly decorated sitting room, a well-equipped kitchen and modern bathrooms. At that time, she was sharing a bunkbed with five other children in her grandparents' rented, one-bedroom apartment. Migrant laborers from upcountry, her grandparents lived with their two daughters (both single mothers) and six grandchildren. 'I used to say', Lina recalls, 'when I will grow up, I will buy myself a beautiful house, with all these fashions.' She pointed to her current sitting room, where, in February 2017, Lina and I sat down to talk. This was a house she now owned in Mtwapa, a coastal town north of Mombasa. A dream-come-true, the house was a large, two-story concrete building. Her sitting room displayed a large couch, a love seat and two matching armchairs, all decorated with sculpted wood and gray leather upholstery. A flatscreen TV stood on the opposite wall and a fluffy carpet with brown and black water-wave patterns covered the center of the tile floor. Lina told me proudly that she looks out assiduously for the latest fashion in the how other people decorate their houses. 'Then, when I get some money, I get those things. Your heart sometimes wants a TV or something for the house.' A curatorship of the self, I thought; a labor of becoming.

During our conversation, an episode of the popular reality show *Big Brother* Africa aired on TV. I must have thought relevant the coincidence between Lina's extensive preoccupation with decorating her home and a show premised on a fascination for how people lived their private life to have drawn this in my fieldnote book. *Big Brother* commodifies intimacy as something to be uncovered as potentially containing an essential truth about its protagonists. Lina's labor of becoming through homemaking reminded me of a related, similar-sounding term: the Big Other, a concept coined by

Jacques Lacan to refer to something that exists *beyond* us but speaks through us, a space from whence one desires the recognition of others. Here the house and the sitting room are the spaces through which Lina's subjectivity is staged. If my pencil sketch depicts Lina as but a fading silhouette, the house and sitting room appear in striking detail, a detail that perhaps Lina herself had insisted upon in our conversation.

After studying tourist hospitality, Lina had worked for an airline office. In 1997, following the eruption of preelection violence in Mombasa, tourism declined and Lina lost her job. Unable to find formal employment again, in 1999, she joined other women to Mtwapa, a town known for nearly miraculous possibilities to make wealth through sex economies. Indeed, Lina soon married a Swiss retiree who helped her build the house in which she now lived. 'Here', Lina said, 'people speak very badly of the 'girls of the night' [*wasichana wa usiku*]. Elders and neighbors don't like them. But when you get money, they all come looking for you. Then, they like you.' Not even Mtwapa's many churches, Lina insisted, truly care to eradicate sex work, 'because, when you get money from the *mzungu* [white person] and you make a house, then priests say you must come give money to the church [to thank God for your success].' A Faustian bargain of sorts: a fascination with peeking into how others live privately (Big Brother) becomes the very fascination through which one seeks the joy of respectable self-making (Big Other). And here, the Big Other is sort of a Brother: mostly *male* priests, elders and neighbors.

George Paul Meiu is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Basel. He is author of *Ethno-erotic Economies: Sexuality, Money, and Belonging in Kenya* (University of Chicago Press, 2017) and *Queer Objects to the Rescue: Intimacy and Citizenship in Kenya* (University of Chicago Press, 2023).
gp.meiu@unibas.ch



Bleeding
Chiara Graf

> Menstruation itself is not visible, observable.
> The only menstrual blood that one sees is one's own.

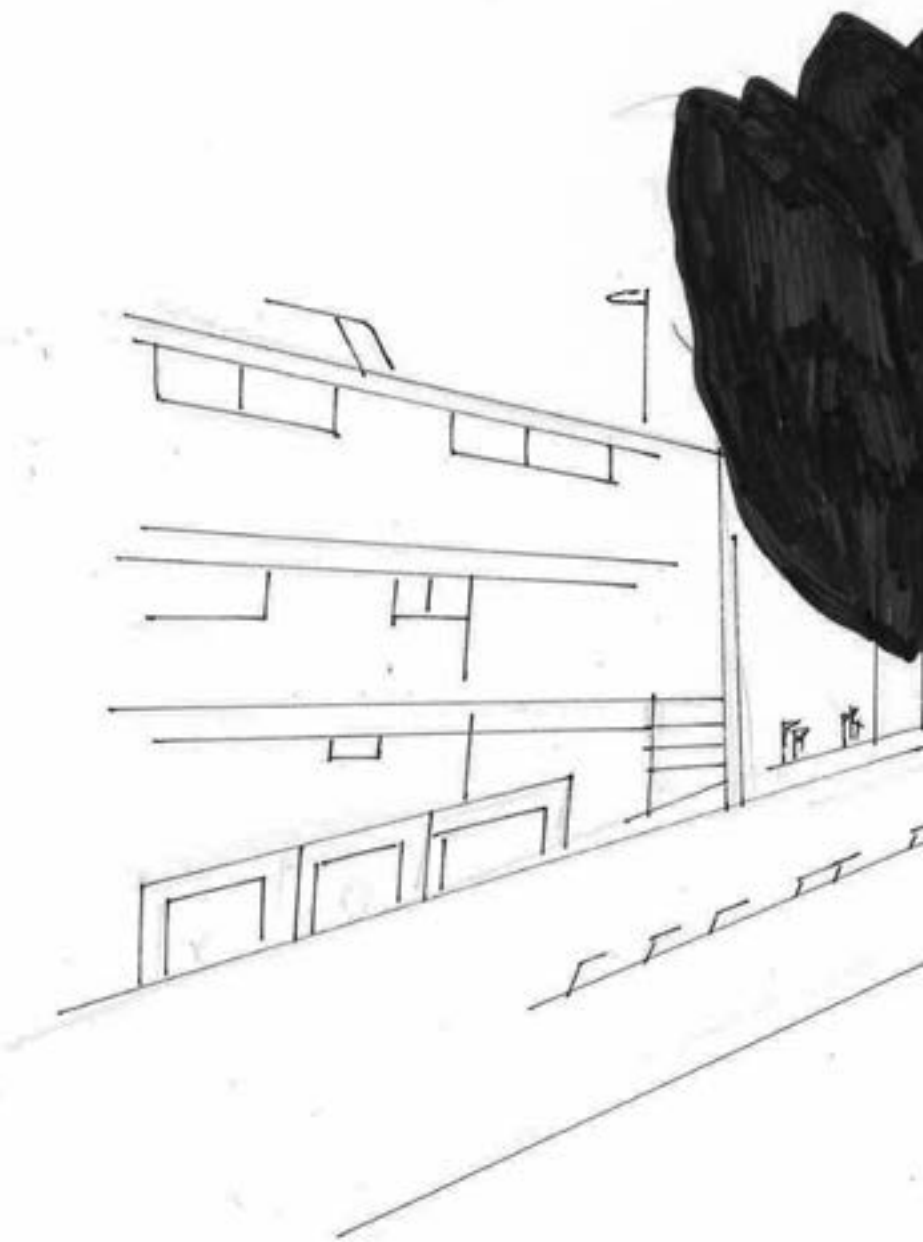
During various settings, be it sitting in the corner of a coffee shop, on a bench in the park, or around the dinner table, I noticed a shared theme in conversations with women regarding their menstruation. The bodily experience of bleeding, in these discussions, underwent a process of abstraction. Although not all my interlocutors approached the conversation about menstruation in the same manner, some of them engaged in discursive strategies that included multiple ways of generating distance by displacement. Language thus allowed this bodily experience to become abstracted, and enabled them to speak about something that seemed difficult to address.

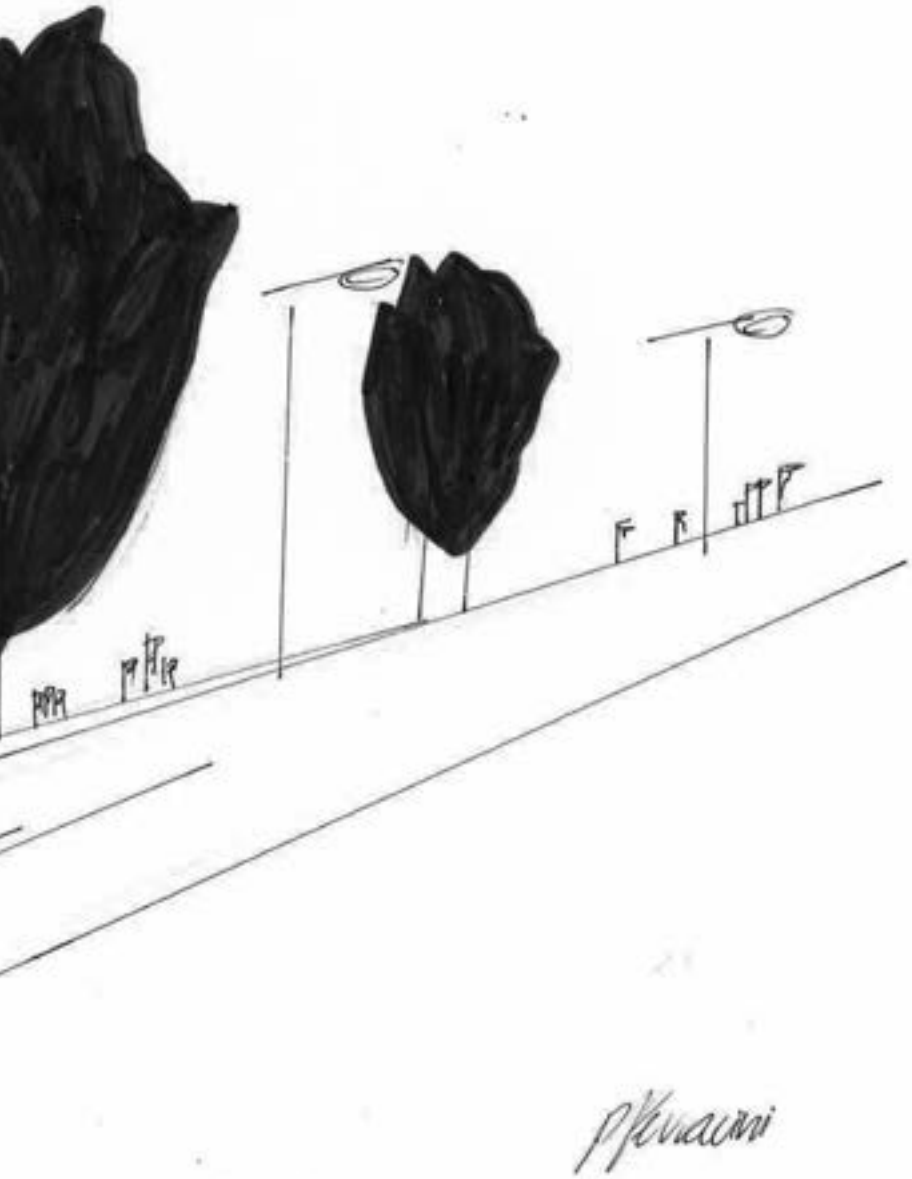
I remember one mild evening when I sat at tiny table in a coffee shop with a young woman. It was already dark outside, and we were both illuminated by the bright light of the lamp above us. She explained to me how fruits can be used to refer to intimate body parts. *La papaya* (papaya) and *las melones* (melons) did not need any further explanation, since many people can intuitively understand these codes. Other women seemed more comfortable by predominantly talking about the accompanying symptoms of their menstruation instead of the bleeding itself: they were referring to *los dolores* (*pain*) in general, or to the colic and migraines more specifically, to talk about their periods. In further dialogues, I observed a displacement of the term 'menstruation' itself, as different signifiers were employed. For instance, there was a woman who referred to her menstrual cycle as '*mi luna*' (my moon). Another woman told me about someone saying

tengo la cosa rara (I have the weird thing). There were even more abstract ways of saying that one had her period. For instance, the statement '*Me ha venido St. Andres*' (St. Andres has come to me), referred to a saying: *St. Andres, el que visita cada mes* (Andres, who comes to visit every month). These were a few examples that illustrated how language served to distance. Language enabled us to take detours. In addition to these linguistic strategies, there were more subtle ways of distancing. Many of these conversations were accompanied by humor. Creating an atmosphere of lightness, a joke or laughter was used to navigate one's own and others' discomfort.

It was the moment I held the pencil in my hand, filled with anticipation to begin drawing, that I asked myself: How do I depict menstruation? What should I capture when the only bleeding visible is one's own? In that moment of hesitation, the inquiries that had accompanied my previous conversations resurfaced: How does one observe that which remains unseen? How does one articulate what is typically concealed? I recognized that drawing, with its capacity to transform the taboo and obscured into tangible forms, held comparable if not greater potential than language itself.

Chiara Graf is a student in the MA Changing Societies at the University of Basel. Her interests lie in conflict research, climate justice and gender equality. chiara.graf@stud.unibas.ch





Breathe
Anna-Isabel Perracini

My exploration in Cartagena de Indias, Columbia, during the months of January and February in 2023 confirmed, in many ways, the potential of public space as a space for interaction among people of all kinds. Let me elaborate on this, taking you along on one of my countless observational walks through the city.

Strolling along the beach and later crossing a large street to circumnavigate parts of the walled city, I come across the traffic junction pictured. It is located in a transit zone, between the walled city center and the artists' neighborhood of Cartagena de Indias. Traffic wise, the street is not too busy, as it is exclusively accessible to buses. Yet, it is highly frequented by people and therefore confronted with different, often rapidly changing and sometimes clashing appropriations.

On part of the walled city center, vendors sell coffee, fruits and vegetables, conveying the calm feeling of finding oneself at a Saturday morning market. They often position themselves in the same spot as the days before, suggesting unspoken but very much abided rules. Owners stand in front of their shops, talking to each other. A restaurant has put out chairs. People increasingly gather under the trees, imparting the feeling as though the street and the sidewalk lose their appeal in favor of the shade offered by them. Shoes, watches and purses are available for purchase across the street. On this side of the junction, commercialization appears as a multiple, shops are expanding onto the street and people are passing through without lingering when not targeting a specific store.

The square stretching in-between the pictured and a smaller street in the back evinces a large mix of different social groups and its liveliness seems to spread much further than just within the square itself. Urban life unfolds as the

public space continues. Interestingly enough, this junction is not limited to one specific activity or utilization. Without providing much material or furniture, residents, workers and tourists find themselves interacting in social, professional, economic and leisure motivated actions. And even though the objectives of the various users evidently differ, the junction seems to meet their individual needs as it affords people with a space for different activities as well as tempi.

My strolling takes me to various junctions, squares, streets and plazas within the city where I repeatedly observe similar situations. Particularly the many social interactions that take place in public space are fascinating. Be it a short hello, a coffee break between friends or a longer chat on a wooden bench. Finding myself in a city as fast as Cartagena de Indias, I realize that while, on the one hand, public space such as streets and squares functions as a practical passthrough, it very often also takes on the role of a space of encounter, a place for interruption and an opportunity to stand still. A place to stop and breathe.

Anna-Isabel Perracini was born in Bern, Switzerland, where she completed her Bachelor of Science in Geography in 2020. She is currently working in urban planning and studies Critical Urbanisms in her Master of Arts at the University of Basel.
anna-isabel.perracini@stud.unibas.ch


Happy Labor Day

Conviviality
Silke Oldenburg

On May 1st, a friend who lives in Cartagena and is well aware of my focus on researching humor in Colombia sent me a meme, entitled 'Happy Labor Day'. Intrigued by the depicted scene of a young man observing his caged bird, I decided to draw it without exposing his face. When I began my research in Cartagena, I was particularly fascinated by this often-seen human-animal relationship where young men parade with caged songbirds. I wondered what this unequal but commonplace dynamic might reveal about everyday life, conviviality and even multispecies conviviality at the city's margins.

During my first exploration of the dusty streets through the *barrio*, I noticed far more pets in this sector than anywhere else in Cartagena. This part of town is located in Cartagena's urban wetland, where people displaced by war, gentrification or dire living conditions in neighboring Venezuela try to make a better life by extracting soil from the water and illegally invading the mangroves by building up rubble. Seemingly, the trafficking of illegally caught songbirds has also become part of the new social fabric.

To create a homely feel in this place between land and water, many people turn to pets as an essential element of companionship. However, in contrast to the casual roaming dog, here, carefully displayed bird cages hang in front of many improvised houses, decorating people's porches, and even chirping from the counters of various street corner stores. One friend hangs his bird from a signpost for better air, another one would thoughtfully place the cage in the grass for his birds to enjoy the sun throughout the day. Talking to bird owners, I learned that fishermen take their caged birds to accompany them to the mangroves to enjoy their pleasant songs while fishing in solitude. Others highlight the birds' easy company during uncer-

tain times, while also generating a sense of belonging to a context full of fragmentation: distracting them with their songs from unreliable electricity, violence and insecure income.

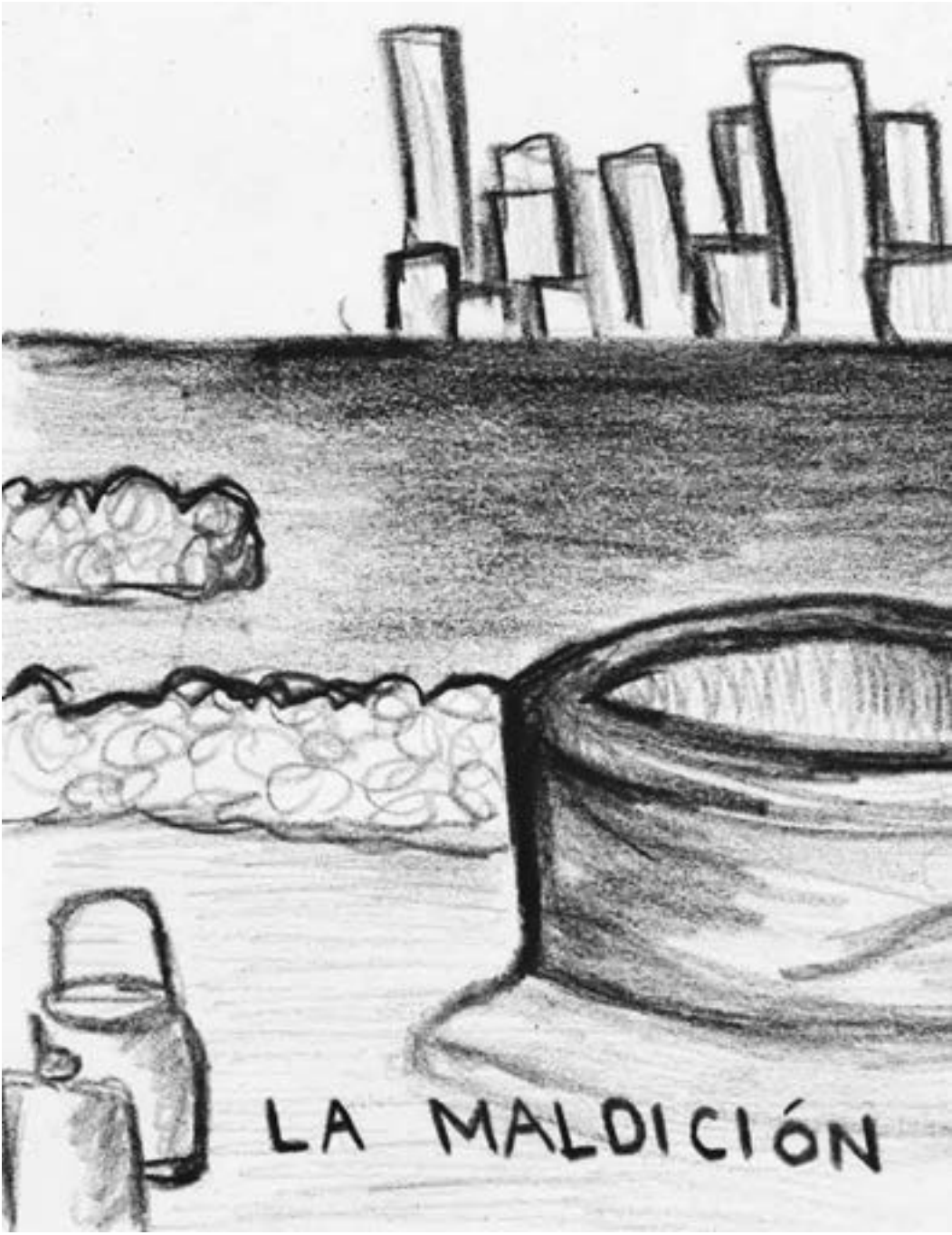
Many of the young men I conversed with take pride in parading their birds through the streets, engaging in singing competitions that blend elements of conviviality. These events foster local engagement with the songbirds, igniting a passionate discussion about whose bird sings the best. Beyond the camaraderie, these activities also give rise to a new economic niche, with participants competing for trophies and monetary rewards.

Conviviality as an analytic optic, but also as a lived experience, describes situations and encounters in which people come together to have a (mostly normatively considered) good time. In more recent years, scholars have used the concept of multispecies conviviality to focus on the co-creation and co-existence of human and nonhuman relations. Observing the singing competitions and the ways of interaction between humans and songbirds made me think of Clifford Geertz's interpretation of the Balinese cockfight and the messy, complex meanings surrounding those performances. Dismissed as a rather rural tradition by many urbanites and as cruel practice by environmentalists, many inhabitants of the wetland *barrios* voice an idea of conviviality with and through these songbirds. However, their possession as pets is illegal in Cartagena, and the local environmental protection agency is implementing efforts to release the birds wherever they encounter them.

The meme-turned-drawing exemplifies for me in this way two messages about conviviality: the evident power relation between human and animal and the more subtle power relation between those creating a meme that mocks marginalized unemployed men for participating in supposedly idle practices and those men themselves, who associate these practices with pleasure, self-worth and a little income.

———————

Silke Oldenburg was a Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel, until September 2023 and now works at the Graduate Institute Geneva. Silke's ethnographic research focuses primarily on intersections of the urban and the political, and specifically on the spatialization and materialization of power, urban environment and sociality within cities. silke.oldenburg@graduateinstitute.ch


LA MALDICIÓN


EN EL POZO

Curse
Annalou Baumann

'You know, many people here and in Cartagena don't know about our stories', Lilia tells me in front of an old well in Tierra Bomba. The 19.84 km2 big island is located some hundred meters in distance from Bocagrande, a wealthy area of Cartagena, referred to proudly by some people as the 'Miami' of the city. The skyline of Bocagrande seems surreal from here, like a city growing from the sea. Looking in direction of the skyscrapers, Lilia tells me about her writing project about stories from the island. She plans to create a children's book in order to contribute to a collective identity and spread a positive image of her community. Lilia began the project from stories her grandmother had told her, later adapting them to her own context. The dried-out well we are standing in front of is where she begins to reads the story loudly from her cellphone. 'La maldición en el pozo' (the curse in the well) is about a man who polluted the well and as a result becomes cursed by an invisible power. The woman who is in love with him can free him by bringing many inhabitants together to clean the water in the well collectively.

While listening to the story, some children pass by with a wheelbarrow filled with canisters to draw water from a public water tank located a few steps downstairs from the old well's position. This particular tank is one of many collective water reservoirs in Tierra Bomba. Since there is no public water system on the island, every household needs to find its own strategy to get the water they need in a day. Wheelbarrows, big canisters, rainwater collecting systems and water tanks have all contributed to shaping the architectural landscape of the village. The lack of regular access to water serves as a stark reminder of the state's neglect and abandonment. Since years the inhabitants of the four communities on the island are fighting

to gain access to basic infrastructure from Cartagena's government. Through collective action in the form of protests, the inhabitants try to get the government's attention. To protest the absence of adequate coastal protection, the inhabitants of the village did not vote in the presidential elections in 2014. In 2011 and 2016, fishermen blocked the port of Cartagena with their boats, preventing container vessels and cruise ships from entering the city of Cartagena. The water question is not settled yet, but different plans such as a main water pipe under the sea are in discussion.

Collective action can be, as in the story of the well, a means to face the many curses of the island. The story makes visible that 'agua blanca y transparente' (white and transparent water, a notion from the story) is a precious good, which here has to be worked for collectively, within the community as well as at home. 'We have to fight for everything,' Lilia tells me as we make our way along the rugged path back to her house nestled in the heart of the village.

———————

Special thanks to Lilia María Herrera Jiménez who shared her story with me. She is a writer and the coordinator of the community library 'Alas Libres' in Tierra Bomba.

Annalou Baumann is currently enrolled in the MA Changing Societies program at the University of Basel. She is particularly interested in questions of social transitions, conflicts and memory, as well as activities connecting science and society. annalou.baumann@stud.unibas.ch

Dimensionalities

Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin

This is a print of a black-and-white photograph of a construction model that illustrates the structure of an Abelam ceremonial house, *korambo*, in Papua New Guinea.[1] Thus, this is the representation (print or in digital form) of a representation (photograph) of a representation (model). To make matters even more complicated: my writing on this series of representations which is also a series of increasing abstractions, is a further representation.

We leave it at that for the moment.

Jörg Hauser made this model during our fieldwork in the Maprik Hills, East Sepik Province in 1979. We investigated the construction, function and meaning of the towering ceremonial houses of the Abelam. The buildings, consisting of individual logs and beams exclusively fixed with liana, reached heights of up to 25 meters. To enter them, one had to crawl in on hands and knees. The interior was completely dark. How to explore the details of the construction? Our interlocutors and teachers used a torch to point to some junctions they considered crucial and encouraged Jörg to climb up and inspect them with his own eyes. It helped but it was not enough. It was at this point when our verbal communication broke down. Language was simply not enough to describe in words what had been built by dozens of men working simultaneously and in a seemingly endless series of particular steps. All of our interlocutors, middle-aged and elderly men, had participated in the construction of ceremonial houses many times since their youth. With each building, their knowledge increased until they became experienced men who were regularly invited by neighboring villages to assist in setting up a new *korambo*. It was a process of learning by doing and the knowledge consisted of the material – types of wood, liana, leaves, as well as performances (rituals).

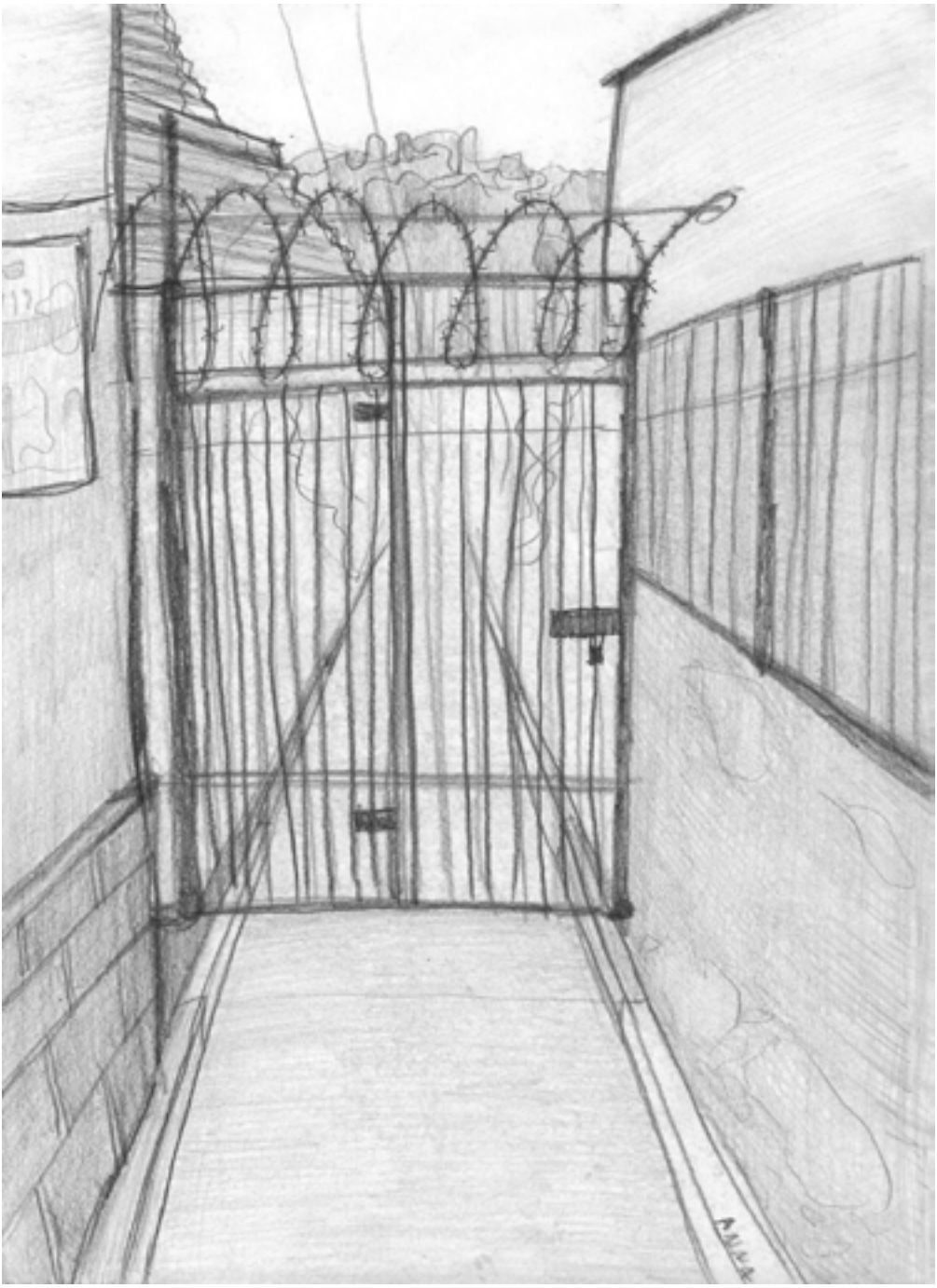
Moreover, it involved mastering the intricate hand grips and the ingenious technology of Abelam architecture, which encompassed dozens and hundreds of individual techniques.

Language fails to represent the work of *homo faber*. The processes of manufacture, fabricating and creating things can only clumsily be translated into sounds, characters, syllables, words and sentences. Language is the basic tool of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Their main products are presented in writing. Yet, writing reduces life's multidimensionality to the one dimensionality of script. It transforms sensations, emotions and experiences, like those of being in the dark mythic microcosmos of a ceremonial house, into words. These words are often expressed in the hegemonic academic idiom of (American) English. A picture, chart or photograph, though pretending to represent three-dimensionality, remains captured in two-dimensionality. One needs to adapt the western way of reading a picture in order to understand how it represents a three-dimensional object. Here, the model comes in again. Jörg's idea to make a model was the solution to the unspeakable and the break-down in our verbal communication. Our Abelam research partners enthusiastically welcomed it and used it as a tool to teach us how the construction of a ceremonial house 'really' works.

---

[1] The scale model with the numbers referring to the nomenclature of the architectural elements is part of the collection of the ethnographic museum in Basel, Museum der Kulturen. Its inventory number is Vb 28542. It also served as a model for the construction of the 16 m high ceremonial house completed in 1981 in the museum. See: Hauser-Schäublin, B. 2016. *Ceremonial Houses of the Abelam: Architecture and Ritual – A Passage to the Ancestors*. Goolwa, SA/Port Moresby: Crawford House Publishing and Papua New Guinea National Museum & Art Gallery. www.publications.goettingen-research-online.de/handle/2/93823 [3 May 2023].

Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, PhD and Habilitation at the University of Basel. She is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Göttingen (since 1992; emerita 2016). Fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Cambodia. Her recent publications focus on the ritual and political organization of space and on material culture, cultural heritage and cultural politics. Brigitta.Hauser@sowi.uni-goettingen.de



Encierro

Anna Magdalena Vollmer Mateus

The topic of the gate first arose when I inquired about Neila's relationship with her neighbors. She enthusiastically spoke about the beautiful bonds and friendships she had with the women residing on her street. Proudly illustrating their joint solidarity, she mentioned that they had collectively decided to demand the installation of a gate at the entrance of the two parallel rows of houses. This site of passage – once a scene of frequent disruptions and armed fights – is where the children are left to play.

On the quiet afternoon when I returned to talk to Neila, I asked her explicitly about the gate again. This time, she made a point of conveying the feeling of safety the metal construction gave her – it provided a sense of control and clarity over who could enter, traverse, and leave the passage: 'Yes, because one feels this [gate] has a lock, and everyone has their own keys in their own house. There are four people [in this street] and all four have to leave because they work. People go and close [the gate], that's it, easy. You don't have to be there [at home]. [...] In this neighborhood, almost everything is locked.'

I had arrived earlier that afternoon at the Bicentenario, a social housing project at the outskirts of Cartagena, with Emerson, one of the main participants in my research project. We first went to Wilfrido's repair atelier. Wilfrido is an old friend of Emerson – they are both middle aged men who share a kindred spirit and a softness in their eyes. Wilfrido is also Neila's partner. As I set out to leave the atelier to meet her again, Wilfrido remembered, 'Wait, I have to come with you, to open the gate.'

It is a white gate with thin bars – the barbed wire almost seems delicately added on top of it. A small lock on the right-

hand side keeps it shut. The gate did not look threatening when I waited for Wilfrido to open it, especially since there are so many fences and grilles throughout the city. There is a sense in which the eye normalizes the omnipresence of these highly visible security measures, as it easily glosses over them after some time spent in Cartagena. Only in the process of sketching the gate, its materiality became more vivid to me. With each pencil stroke, it slowly detached itself from its real-life context. The calmness of the small street behind the gate, the blue sky, the lush trees that provided shade for the playing children, all slowly faded away and the practice of *encierro* (enclosure), so common across the urban space, again took center stage.

———————

I thank Emerson for his generous encouragement and valuable comments on this text.

Anna Magdalena Vollmer Mateus began her MA in Political Science and Social Anthropology at the University of Basel in 2021. She is interested in the topics of transitional justice, trade and mobility, digital ethnography, as well as urban space in the contemporary neoliberal context. anna.vollmermateus@unibas.ch


Always
Be home
6am 45 Day
Beware of the Area
Boys in 30 30 so area
are very
Don't travel
at night, there
are plenty
kidnappers
on the roads at
NEWS NAIJA
Teens beheading
girlfriend for
money
29 JANUARY 2022
Send your
geolocation
when you have
arrived.
Ritist kill
people for money


come
ae dusk
5pm!
6pm 45 Night
NEWS NAIJA
Fear grips UI
Students of
Robbers strike
again, kill one
08 JANUARY 2022
There windows do not have burglary, we cannot sleep in this hotel !!!
NEWS NAIJA
IBADAN
Robbers attack
Bullion van, Kill two
Policemen, two
civilians at 4 pm
Idi-Ape
FEBRUARY 2022
Tell trusted people where and when you travel !
Do not tell anyone else !!
Hire a secure
deliver ooo
PAW
#END SARS
20.10.2020

EthnograFear

Salomé Isibhenmen Okoekpen

Eruwa, a rural Nigerian town on a hot April Sunday evening. As we are cooking for Iftar, the breaking of the Ramadan fast, one of the daughters comes home with a worried look. She says a few words in Yoruba and the two other women in the room stand up, serious faces followed by many exclamations. I ask what is going on, and she replies: 'A woman was kidnapped yesterday evening in this our town.' She comes and holds my hands in her own.

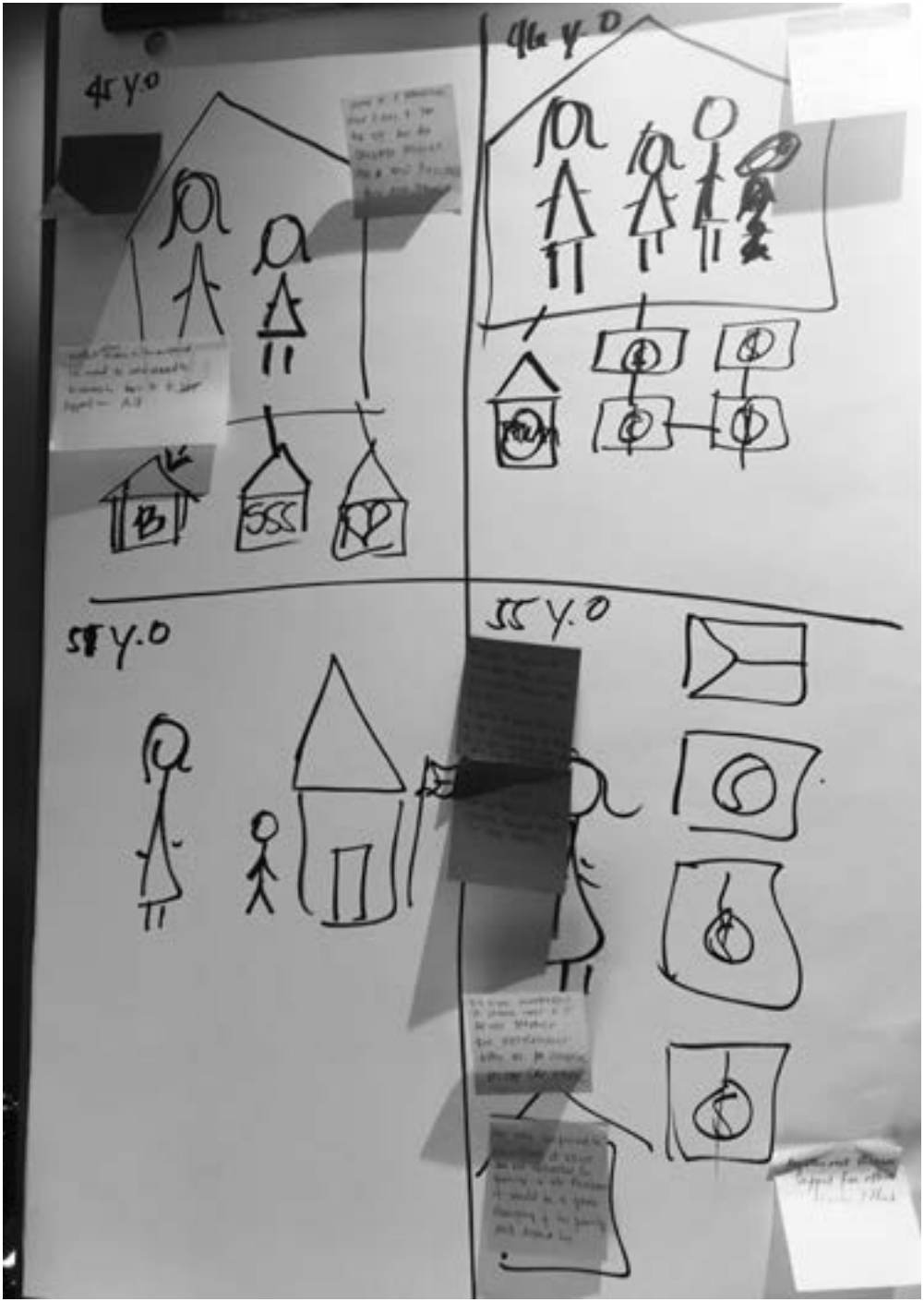
Whether it is in response to real or imaginary violent events, fear is part of the daily Nigerian life. Viral news, videos of shootings, police brutality, and violent crimes spread through WhatsApp with few to no context, and security alerts have become commonplace. This general anxiety contributes to the shaping of a distinctive relationship between individuals and between people and their environments. Relations of mistrust also affect the ethnographer who is exploring this space, similar to a frail vessel in troubled waters in search of safe islands to land.

This fear that I share with my research participants, particularly regarding the vulnerabilities associated with our gender and age, is compounded by the fear of those who care for us. The weight of these accumulated anxieties accompanies us day and night. As a result, fear gives rise to distinct experiences of public spaces, leading to urban and social practices such as confinement, restriction of movement, analysis of the press and the surrounding context, geolocation via WhatsApp, and receiving daily calls from relatives and complaining about not giving frequent updates. All of these factors produce physical and psychological manifestations that contribute to shared feelings of anxiety, tension and emotional exhaustion.

As such, it is not just a matter of physical safety but also of navigating the complex range of emotions that accompanies the general feeling of insecurity for both the researcher and the participants. We need to build a trustful and deep relationships, learning not only to extract data but also to hold each other's hand in journeying this shared reality together. By doing so, we build a common safe space where our relationships can grow and the research can flourish.

Could the experience and expression of fear not help us more accurately position ourselves in our research and cultivate a deeper reflexive stance? For I am a mixed race middle-class young woman conducting research among women in Nigeria. A group with whom I share the experience of gender and, to some extent, of racial identification, which often comes with a greater susceptibility to physical threats. We need to allow space for reflecting on how the emotions experienced during fieldwork affect our experiences and identities, as well as shape our research approach and insights. Addressing emotions also honors the care-labor of both researchers and participants towards each other, which otherwise would remain hidden. Feelings inform the investigative context and shape what we claim. As such, fear participates immensely in shaping ethnographic knowledge about Nigeria. However, the question remains: how and where can I express it more effectively than through drawing?

Salomé Isibhenmen Okoekpen is a Swiss-Nigerian social anthropologist focusing on cultural and religious diversity. As a Swiss National Science Foundation-funded PhD student at the University of Geneva, she is investigating rural Nigerian Muslim women's organizations. salome.okoekpen@unige.ch


45 y.o
46 y.o
58 y.o
55 y.o

Future
Megha Amrith

'If you fail to plan for retirement early, you'll most likely die poor', writes a financial motivational trainer in his best-selling book among overseas Filipino workers. The book, written for a migrant and diasporic audience, outlines step-by-step the financial missteps that many take – and how they can turn their futures around through financial planning, particularly investing. This book circulates in a training course for migrant women in Singapore on financial education, a course led by an organization of migrant domestic workers. Their programs are supported by a Philippine-based co-operative and, on occasion, regional and intergovernmental organizations.

Nanette joined this group when she realized her son was not going to complete college, and she realized she would need to start saving for her own future before returning home to the Philippines 'for good' (which she must, as a 'temporary' worker in Singapore despite her long years of work). A single mother, she left her son with her mother when he was 6-years-old to work abroad, the goal being that she would be able to support his education. Nanette reflects on how her own mother (herself a former migrant domestic worker) and her peers returned to the Philippines without any plans, with no ideas on how to continue earning an income and holding the 'common attitude that the parents just depend on the kids. That's it. Some parents are still like that, also in my generation.' She continued, 'But for me, we have our plans, we start from our ourselves, we don't do that to our kids, we save more, make a retirement plan, otherwise you go home with nothing.' Since joining this group, Nanette has invested in a plot of land which overlooks the sea in her home province in the Visayas region of the central Philippines, which

she someday envisions turning into a campsite weekend getaway for city-dwellers to earn some income. She has also invested in various co-operatives, including managing a cacao farm with her peers, from which she earns a good interest from her shares.

A question that many of my Interlocutors have asked: 'Will they [my kin] still love me without my money?' Much of the narrative surrounding contemporary Filipino migration revolves around the emotional and contractual dimensions of kinship: the notions of sacrifice, painful separations and the hope for eventual intergenerational reciprocity. Nanette, and others like her, question the integrity, and desirability, of this intergenerational contract. Questions surrounding 'social protection' in later life shift towards a logic of marketized self-protection, with financial self-responsibility at its core. This shift reflects, on the one hand, the emergence of new aspirations among migrant women around self-development, future visions of becoming business-owners with status, and a desire to shed their associations with the figure of the exploited migrant laborer. This retreat of kinship and of the state as sources of social protection also tells a story of the financialization of the future among migrant workers. Despite being central to state economic policy through their labor and remittances, these workers are still burdened with the responsibility of sustaining their precarious livelihoods after a lifetime of working abroad.

Megha Amrith leads the 'Ageing in a Time of Mobility' Research Group at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. Her research focuses on migrant labor, care, ageing and inequalities, primarily in Southeast Asia, but also drawing upon comparative ethnographic perspectives. amrith@mmg.mpg.de

Gap
Nadège Kittel

While strolling through and discovering the streets of the historical center, passing by the many street vendors filling the space – physically and acoustically –, I turned my attention to the array of products they were selling. Amongst the multitude of offerings, I observed a wide variety of souvenirs. From the beaded and braided bracelets to earrings, magnets, baskets, bags, hats, small paintings, keychains, cutlery, the selection seemed abundant. I thought to myself, 'A lot of those seem to be imported goods.' This sparked my curiosity, prompting me to delve deeper into the origins and implications of these products.

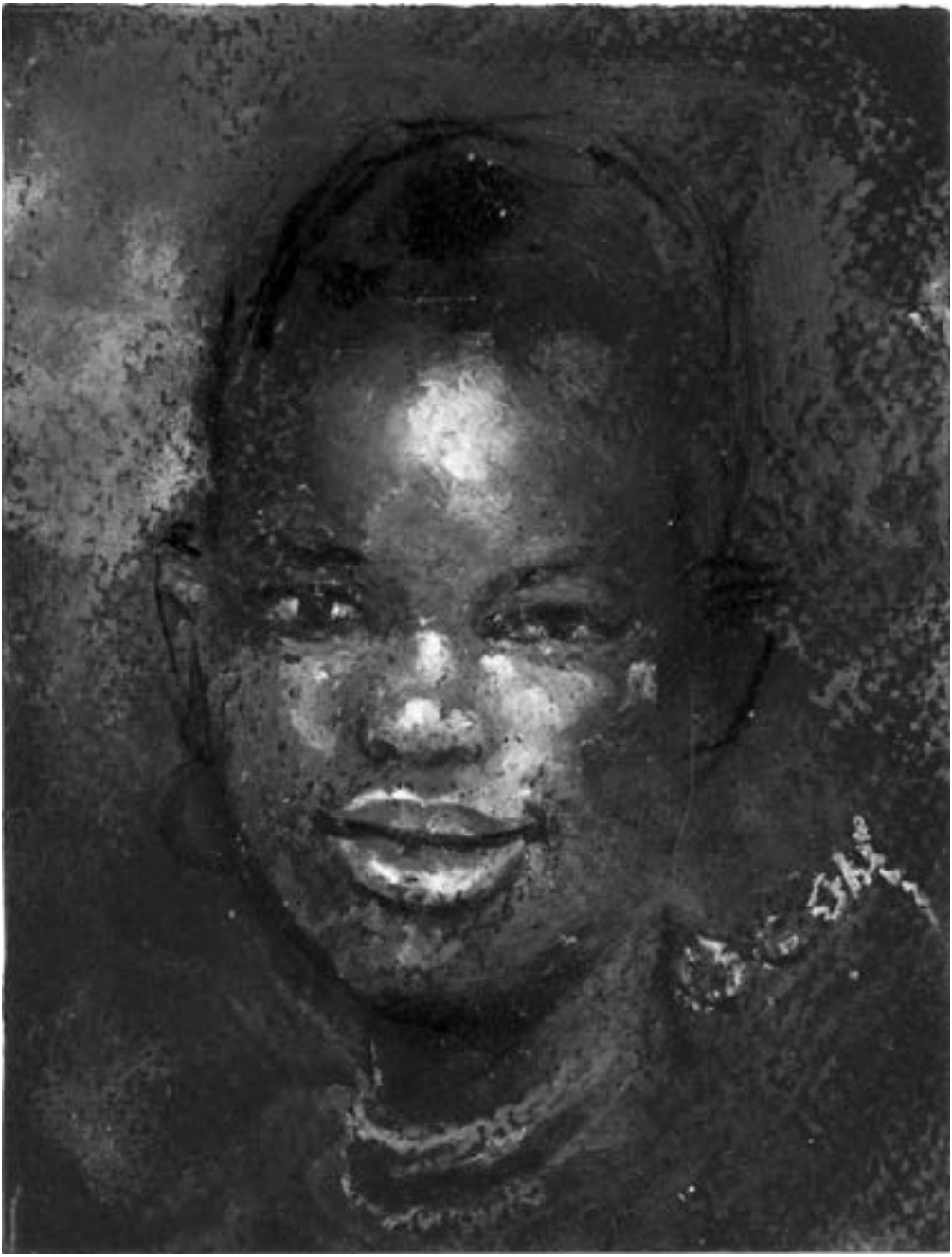
Something particularly struck me: I began to inquire about the origin and production of these items from various individuals, both vendors and non-vendors. I posed questions such as, 'Where do these items come from? Where are they made? By whom?'. I often received the same response: they are made 'here', without further elaboration or specifics provided. The consistent response left me surprised, and in the case of certain objects, skeptical as well.

In a neighborhood much further away from the center, I was lucky to get the opportunity to meet several craftspeople. I had been wanting to see the local craftsmanship; the men and women starting the whole business and entrepreneurial process as well as life cycle of the objects being sold to tourists. One person, in particular, left a lasting mark in my mind and memories. He specialized in products primarily made out of coconut, such as large spoons and smaller bowls. One spoon only costs him a whole day of work. Despite his youthful appearance, he bore the responsibility of providing for his family. Remarkably, he had dedicated himself to this craft for over a decade. The moment I saw him, I realized he

had paused his work due to my presence. His clothes and hands were dirty, showing signs of what seemed to be hard labor, and there was a layer of some fine, sand-looking, light brown dust on his face, which made his beard look slightly blonde. I then realized that he worked without much protection, only using a simple t-shirt wrapped around his head – his lungs remain unprotected from all the dust that comes from working with wood. I had to go through the main room of his house to access a small courtyard in which he has his own working space, a small wooden shed, surrounded by coconuts in either a raw or already cut and sanded state.

I thought a lot about how the street vendors I spoke with never gave me details regarding the makers of the products. However, I realized that this omission was part of their livelihood strategy, as well as their duty to support their families. By disclosing the exact origins of the products, vendors run the risk of potential clients seeking to purchase them directly at the source for less money. This, in turn, could lead to a loss of clients for the vendors. I think of it as a gap in the overall process where crucial information is being omitted and, subsequently, lost. I felt like recognition and value was lost in the process as well, which was something the craftsmen I met lamented. This realization made me picture those objects now existing anonymously in many different households worldwide, bought as regular souvenirs, but missing a part of their identity.

Nadège Kittel has a bachelor's degree in Prehistoric Archaeology and Social Anthropology and is currently enrolled in the University of Basel MA program in African Studies. She has done archival and museum work for different projects and institutions. She is interested in provenance research, cultural changes and material culture. nadege.kittel@stud.unibas.ch



Gift

Fiona Siegenthaler

She smiles, hesitantly: a youthful Ugandan, skillfully sketched in bright pastel colors on a piece of black drawing paper sized 12 x 9.3 cm. I don't know her. She may be a relative or friend of Ocom Adonias, the artist who gifted the drawing to me after my first visit at his studio in August 2015. He had discreetly and carefully wrapped it in a home-made, custom-sized envelope. He did this while talking to me about his sociocultural research in the Teso and Karamoja sub-regions of Uganda and about the ways in which it reflects in his art practice. We had been in a deep conversation and I had paid little attention to what his hands were doing while he was speaking. Outside the studio, as I climbed the *bodaboda* to head to my next appointment, he handed me the envelope and requested that I open it only when I arrived at home.

The drawing entered my small private collection of artworks but never became the subject of my postdoctoral research project, despite the latter being dedicated to the contemporary art scene in Kampala and the physical, infrastructural and discursive spaces created by artists in a situation of poor public support for visual arts. Even now, I hesitate to publish the drawing in a research-related context. Why? I think the reasons lie in the immediacy and the intimacy that accompany a gifted drawing.

Unlike other drawings made during ethnographic research, such as sketches of spaces, objects, situations or graphic diagrams, memo aids or maps, this drawing is not about a 'third'. It is not made to elaborate on a subject discussed or observed by the researcher and her conversation partner. Even though it represents someone 'third' – in this case the young woman – the drawing eludes this subject at the moment when it becomes a gift. The drawing not only

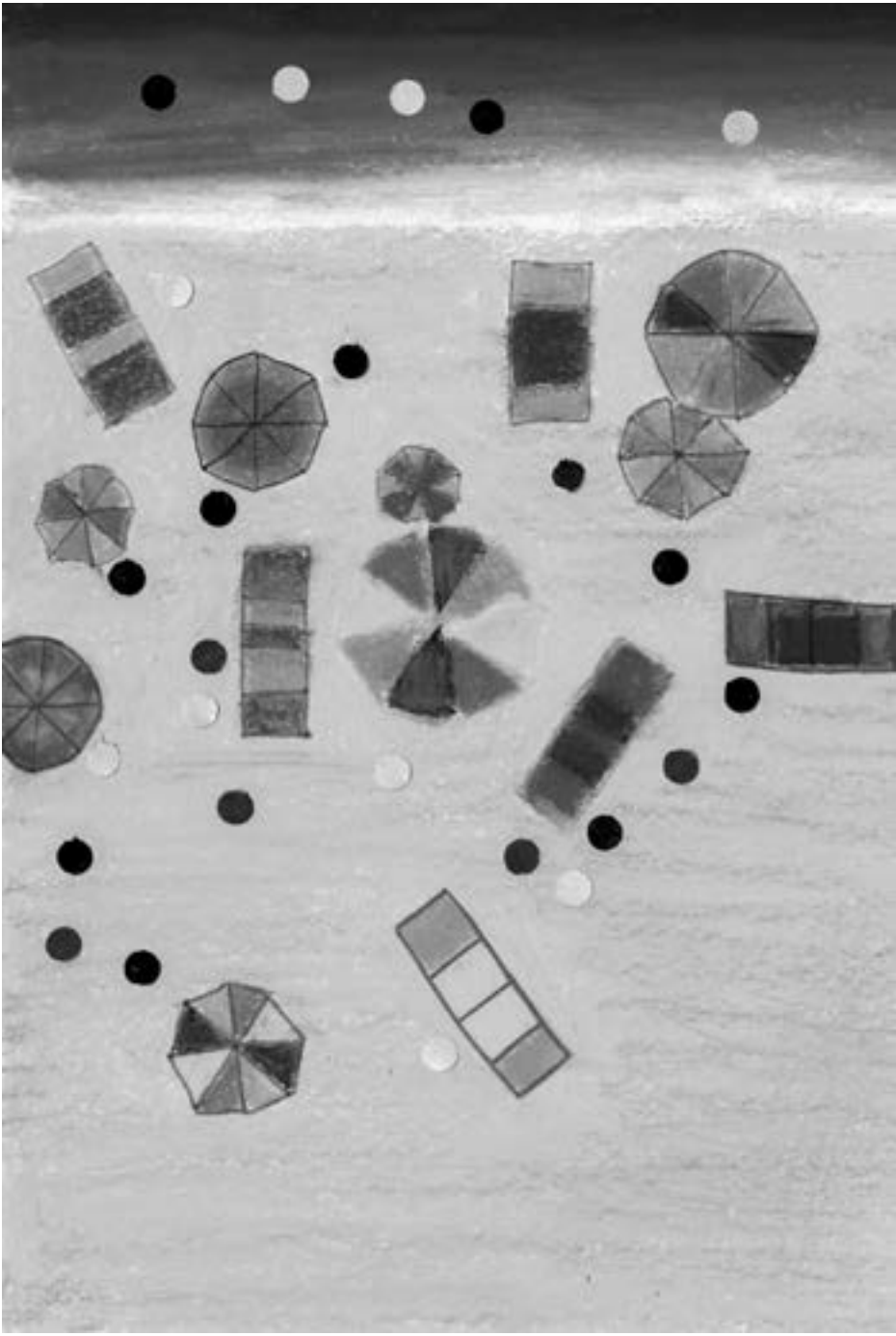
embodies a relationship between the artist and the person he has drawn, but also between him as a giver and myself as a receiver. Perhaps more than most other forms of gifts, the drawing is intimate, as the body and mind of the giver are literally inscribed in the lines of the drawing. This embodiment is transferred to the receiver. The drawing as a gift may entail social obligations, as theorized by Marcel Mauss in his *Essay sur le don*, but it does so through the generous sharing of intimate vulnerability by the giver, which also appeals to generosity on the part of the receiver.

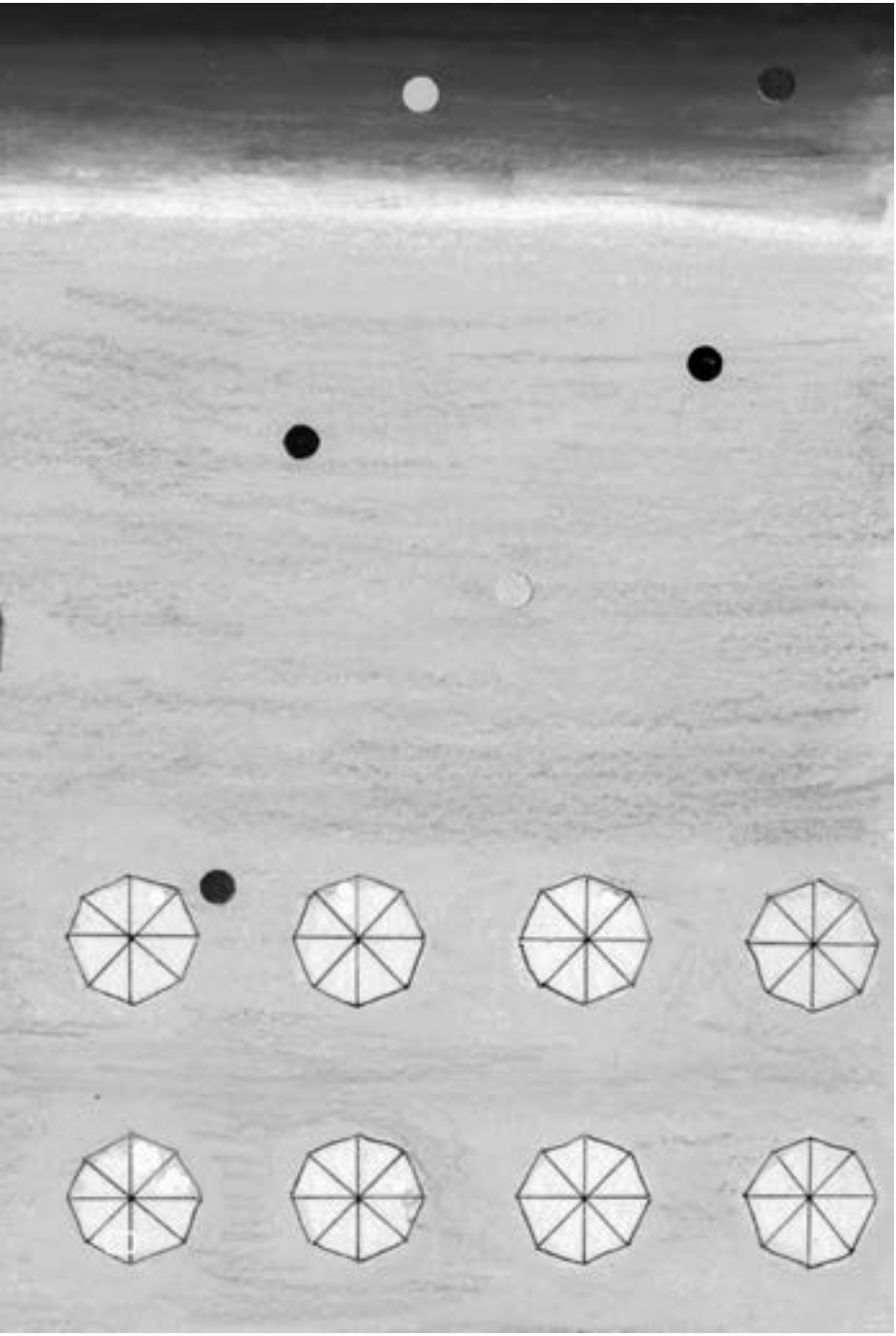
There is a saying in German, my mother tongue: 'Einem geschenkten Gaul schaut man nicht ins Maul.' In English, it translates literally as 'Never look a gift horse in the mouth.' Figuratively, it means that when receiving a gift, one should refrain from analyzing or scrutinizing it in terms of quality, value or the intensions of the giver. While this principle can be applied to any gift, it is particularly relevant when it comes to drawings. This is evident in how parents often carefully preserve their child's first drawings, or how aunts and grandparents proudly display drawings gifted by their nieces, nephews and grandchildren on their walls, doors and fridges, even if they cannot figure out in detail what the scribbles represent.

Ocom's drawing is a remarkable piece of art created by an exceptional artist from Uganda who has garnered significant attention from the art world and collectors in recent years. While Ocom's public-oriented works demonstrate his keen observations and critical interpretations of the sociocultural and sociopolitical dynamics in Uganda and beyond, this particular drawing serves as an intimate souvenir of our intellectual and creative exchange in his art studio.

Caption: Ocom Adonias: *Nakiru* (from Teso-Karamoja series), 2015, oil pastels on black paper, 12 x 9.3 cm.

Fiona Siegenthaler is an art historian and social anthropologist with a specialization in the interdisciplinary field of contemporary African art, performance and visual culture. She conducted her PhD and postdoctoral research in Johannesburg and Kampala and is currently senior curator at the Africa department of Linden-Museum Stuttgart.
fiona.siegenthaler.fs@gmail.com





Greenwashing
Lena Sokolov

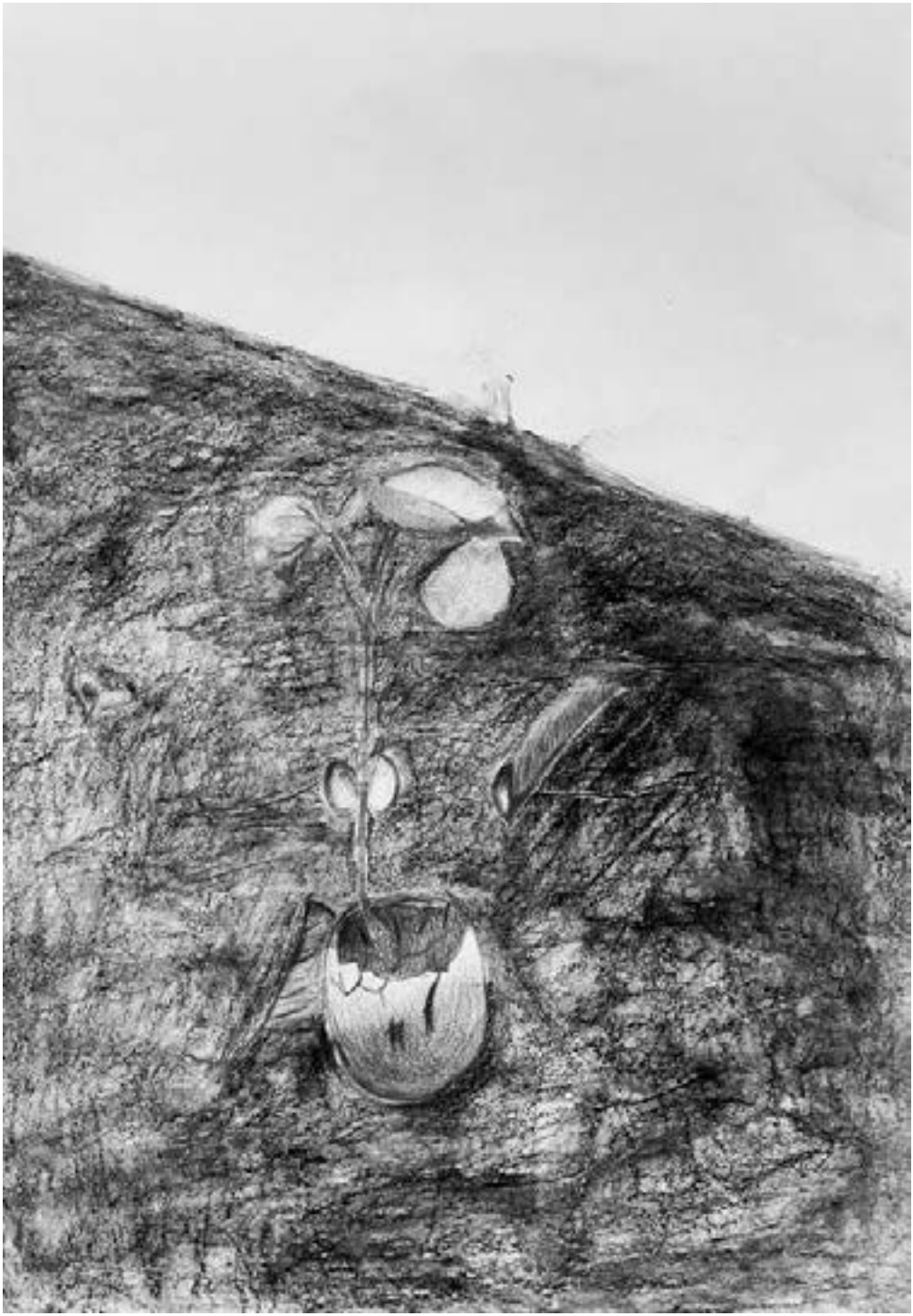
While visiting Playa Azul (Cartagena de Indias), the first thing you see is a fenced path leading from the busy main road to the beach. Past the showers and a children's playground, you will find bright white deck chairs and umbrellas. The beach has been awarded the internationally recognized 'Blue Flag' eco-label, which gives it an environmentally friendly reputation. At the beach, you immediately notice the large signs and the flag of the eco-label. The label claims that this hundred meter long beach is different from others. Here, the protection of nature and the inclusion of all beachgoers have top priority. After several visits to Playa Azul, I wonder if protecting the marine ecosystem is really the main focus of the label. I noticed that the beach is maintained with machines rather than left natural. Algae, though important for the marine ecosystem, and pieces of wood are removed because they could disturb bathers. Much is done to ensure the comfort of visitors. Drinking water is provided and the showers are clean. These are just a few of the many requirements that are not directly related to environmental protection.

The image of an inclusive beach seems to crumble. Playa Azul is a small area. The border to the next section of beach is visible. It runs through the sand like a narrow, straight line. Playa Azul is placed on the right side of the drawing. The beach umbrellas are neatly and clearly arranged. They stand at a great distance from the water line. Only a few tourists rent a relatively expensive place with a deck chair and a beach umbrella. On the other side of this border, numerous people are already at the beach in the morning hours. Plastic tarpaulins are stretched over wooden and metal poles. These colorful constructions and beach umbrellas, rented at a relatively low price serve as protection from sun. Many tarpaulins and

wooden poles are damaged, lying on the ground and smeared with graffiti. Smaller, hut-like structures have also been erected. Their sides are covered with floor-length tarpaulins. These observations are in contradiction to the principles of social integration emphasized by the eco-label guidelines.

Based on my observations, it has become evident to me that this eco-label certification aims to present itself with a 'green' image, potentially as a means of cleansing its reputation. The emphasis on environmental friendliness may serve as a cover to divert attention from the underlying reality that the primary objective of the eco-label is to attract (international) tourists. Unfortunately, this focus on tourism comes at the expense of nature and exacerbates social inequalities. It appears that the eco-label's intentions are driven more by economic considerations rather than genuine environmental and social sustainability.

Lena Sokolov has been studying Anthropology and Art History at the University of Basel since 2019. She is interested in topics of political economy in a transnational context and anthropological approaches to land conflicts and human-nature interactions. l.sokolov@stud.unibas.ch



Growing
Christine Fluri

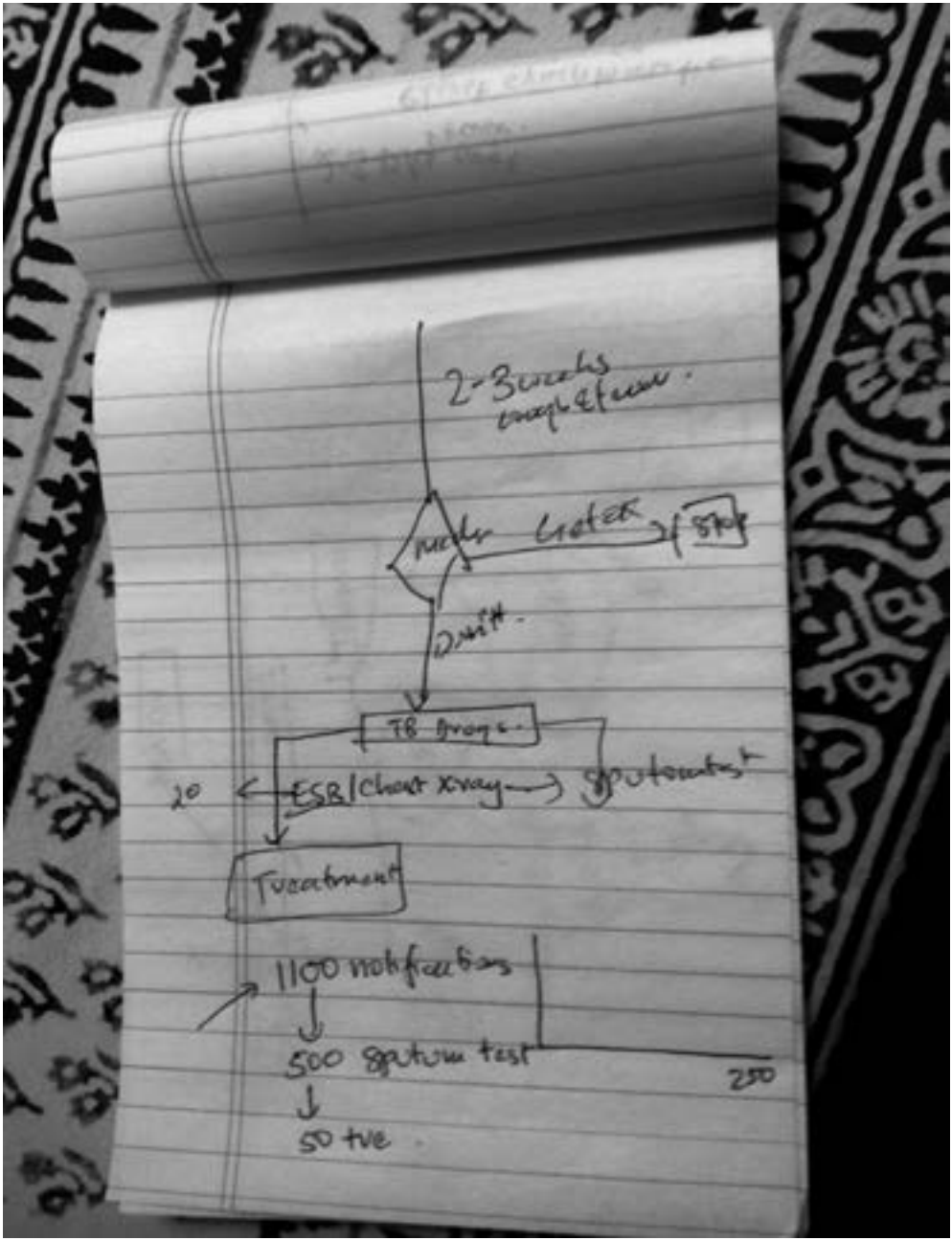
This drawing depicts a picture that was shared with me by one of my interlocuters in my research project about food security and urban gardening in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia). It shows one section of a vegetable bed as well as one of the earliest tangible outputs from my fieldwork. At the center of the soil stands an eggshell from which a little plant is growing – a baby beanstalk. It is one of the plants I have seeded during a previous visit at the headquarters of the *Cooperación de Mujeres Emprendedoras*. The members of the cooperation – mostly women – live in one of the poorer neighborhoods of the city where they have several community gardens.

I remember this visit very well as many different feelings are tied to it. Being eager to help and participate, I was grateful to get hands-on and get a multi-sensorial experience of planting beans, cucumbers, peppers, and lemons. However, shortly after beginning, I realized that the cooperative members had organized this activity especially for me. They later explained to me that they were busy with other community activities, and the gardening season would only be kicked off later. This situation led me to question my reciprocity as a researcher. What could I give back in return for the time they have spent showing me how they plant seeds? I noted my inner uncertainties about how to behave during this presentation, but decided to focus on the opportunity and enthusiasm of my interlocuters.

The act of creating this drawing served as a catalyst for me to reconsider my methodological approach in the field. After using a pencil to draw lines, shapes and shadings on the picture, I proceeded with color pens and water drops to somehow imitate the wet and uneven earth of the vegetable bed. But it did not come out as I had imagined. Being

worried that I had just destroyed the drawing, I instead used wax pastels, water and a paintbrush. This was more successful, and I continued with coloring the beanstalk, the eggshell and other leaves with color pencils. In the meantime, the paper with the 'earth' on it had dried and became a brittle, wrinkled and ruby texture. While drawing, I realized that this non-linear, experimental, diverse, sometimes frustrating, yet pleasing process had many similarities with my experiences in the field. From being unsure how to tackle the research, to being full of energy and new ideas, to again questioning my project. Additionally, this multidimensional, multilayered and multimethod attempt to copy the picture helped to render visible different aspects of the 'growing': either drawing, painting, drying, coloring or shading. Each method and tool employed throughout the process has contributed to expanding the perspectives. With each addition, these various approaches interacted with one another, allowing for new insights to emerge. While no single step can provide a complete and comprehensive picture, collectively they offer a more comprehensive understanding, albeit with some inherent incompleteness. Each method leaves a trace, and when combined, they contribute to painting a more nuanced and layered depiction of the subject under investigation.

Christine Fluri is a master's degree student in Social Anthropology and Political Sciences at the University of Basel. She has an academic background in International Relations with a focus on international politics. Her thematic interests are centered around urban agriculture and political representation.
ch.fluri@stud.unibas.ch


2-3 weeks
Drift.
TB Drugs.
20
ESR/Chest Xray
Sputum test
Treatment
1100 notifications
500 Sputum test
250
50 tve

Health
Vaibhav Saria

This sketch was drawn by Jishnu Das in November of 2014, when he was explaining to me the complex health intervention that we were going to be studying. Jishnu Das and Madhukar Pai were co-PIs of a large interdisciplinary team that was going to evaluate if and how a Gates-funded project had succeeded in addressing the delay in diagnosing patients with tuberculosis. Anthropology has a long history of studying tuberculosis; a lot of questions have been raised on the basis of that scholarship as well as a critique of Global Health. By 2014, Veena Das, Ranendra K. Das and Jishnu Das had been trying for twenty years to shift the needle from pointing out the failures of interventions to showing how interventions were missing the mark because of not attending closely to how bodies, health, life and medicine intersected. Scholars from varied fields have studied what design and the constellation of concepts that surround it – algorithms, big data, computation – can be. Can they be opened and made to reckon with uncertainty against the claimed correspondence between reality and models?

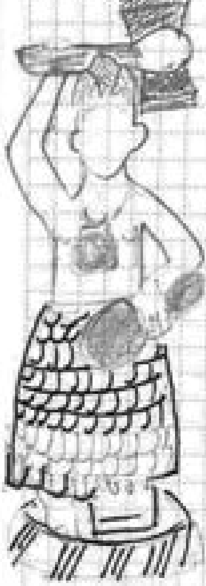
The team designed a method called Simulated Standardized Patients (SSP) to measure the utilization of the various benefits and incentives that the intervention offered. The results revealed the assumptions about the Indian health system that had been made hitherto in TB care. This has, in turn, put additional pressure on ethnography as a method and on what anthropology could offer in such contexts. For example, while shadowing clinical providers, the messy illness narrative that patients offered made it difficult to implement the intervention's protocols. But the SSP method showed that even when given a standardized, text book picture of a patient suspected to have TB, providers did not test

for TB. The SSP method achieved what Helen Verran, pace Marilyn Strathern, has called 'decomposing numbers': the SSPs rendered the facts about the milieu into an enumerated reality rather than incontestable and impliable cultural truths. The logics of the intervention such as the presence of informal providers, the role of pharmacists in relation to antibiotic abuse and the value of technology amongst others were taken apart and re-examined. But the challenge I face is in the second part of Verran's provocation, that is, in recomposing logics. Thus, ethnography had to show why providers were not using the intervention and what exactly were the implications of health, illness, death and disease in the local moral world or the site of the intervention.

Studying the clinical encounters as an 'ethnographic moment' meant that I could not claim that providers were not diagnosing either because of the messy illness narratives – since the SSP disproved that, nor because of lack of resources – since the intervention made available tests, medicines and an infrastructure. Furthermore, providers were trained in biomedicine in some of the best medical colleges of the world and TB is a familiar epidemic for them and their patients. Recomposing the intervention has revealed that in the light of health, death lurks in the shadows of the everyday and the ordinary.

Vaibhav Saria is Assistant Professor at Simon Fraser University and author of *Hijras, Lover, Brothers: Surviving Sex and Poverty in Rural India*. vaibhav_saria@sfu.ca

Xango / Ṣango / Shango - Thunder, lightning, fire!



Opon Ifá

Face of Exú @ intersections

Carved wood.

Divination tray (1940)

Used with sixteen sacred palm nuts

Face of Exú / Eshu - messenger between Aiye and Orun.

Hierophanies
Zainabu Jallo

At some point in their eventful lives, many of the objects I have sat with in museum storages were, or perhaps are still, hierophanies – manifestations of the divine. Hierophany was given currency through Mircea Eliade's 1959 *The Sacred and the Profane* as a descriptive term for embodiments of the scared. If, indeed, the objects have been receptacles for divinities in the past, it might not be far-flung to assume that remnants of their numinousness are still thither, waiting to be awakened. As carved inanimate objects, they are not, at least for the most part, prone to instant vicissitudes, as they remain faithful in form. So, for the probing gaze of a researcher, drawing objects, I find, augments the process of discovery.

In Sao Paulo, Brazil, I examine a carved image of Xangô, the Yorubá deity of thunder and lightning, wielding the unmistakable symbolic double-headed axe in the company of other sacred objects. In a ceremonial setting, Xangô is venerated through a dance movement with the object in hand. This veneration is referred to as *Alujá*, or *roda de Xangô*, where devotees demonstrate Xangô's conquests, power and dominion. Xangô is dubbed as one of the most geographically prosperous African deities in the Afro-Atlantic as 'the success or failure of African deities in their new world milieus was also determined by their cultural relevance' (Voeks 1997: 55).

Exú, the messenger deity communicating divine messages between physical and spiritual realms, requires, amongst many things, an *Opon Ifá*, a divination tray used by a diviner-priest in the ritual of divine communication. Exu's face is often carved on the tray, watching keenly as the diviner, also called *Babalawo* (father of secrets), deciphers messages in the form of patterns left by the cowries after throwing them on the

tray, a process known as *jogo de búzios*. The tray symbolizes the cosmos and is sectioned into four parts; each quadrant represents specific significant components of being.

Sketching these erstwhile hierophanies offers the performative act of seeing, of conversations with things that were once raw material – blocks of wood, on their own terms and in their own diction. Line after line, curve after curve, newer points of view unfold as I attempt to follow the carver's skill while seeing significant things I was not looking for. The multi-layered narratives 'dictate a plurality of ontologies' (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2005: 8).

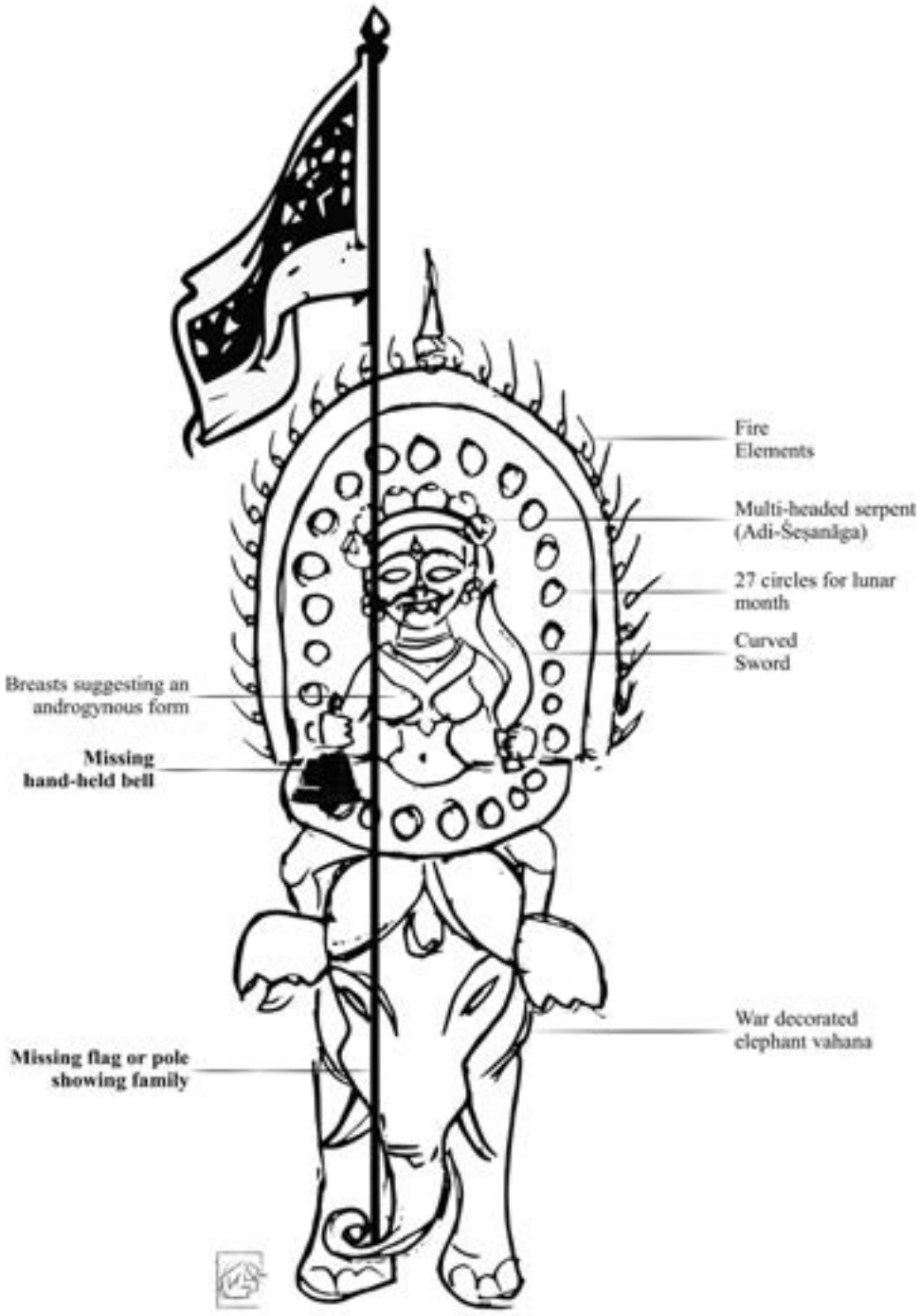
Both ethnography and drawing are methods of seeing, perceiving and relating to the various worlds. As Andrew Causey (2017: 31) inquires, '[w]hy would anthropologists mostly stick to a verbal system for encoding their visual experiences?' There is a growing aspiration to break away from the long-established use of textual and verbal vocabularies, and this is simply wondrous.

Causey, A. 2017. *Drawn to See: Drawing as an Ethnographic Method*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Henare, A., M. Holbraad and S. Wastell, eds. 2005. *Thinking through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically*. London: UCL.

Voeks, R. 1997. *Sacred Leaves of Candomblé: African Magic, Medicine, and Religion in Brazil*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Zainabu Jallo is Post-doctoral Fellow and Lecturer at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel.
zainabu.jallo@unibas.ch


Fire Elements
Multi-headed serpent (Adi-Śeṣanāga)
27 circles for lunar month
Curved Sword
Breasts suggesting an androgynous form
Missing hand-held bell
War decorated elephant vahana
Missing flag or pole showing family

Ila8642
Debolina Bandyopadhyay

Bhūta figures are revered by modern-day Hindus in the Tulu Nadu region, mainly in the Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts of Karnataka state and Kasaragod district of Kerala state. The figure in question – *Jumadi* – is a demi-God that can either protect or harm people according to the judgement it passes, and reminds modern-day humanity of the need for honor and the significance of camaraderie. What is also remarkable is that this ritual worship of *bhūta-daiva* is not monopolized by the upper caste – i.e., a known feature of the Indian societal organization. The caste system is well regarded as the fundamental institution of Hindu, and indeed, Indian society. Making it obvious to those who are acquainted with its ridged nature that such rituals are to be presided over by the upper caste. That is where this object stands as an opposite reality to Hindu texts of Ramayana or Mahabharata, whose narration and worship entertains the notion of purity and auspiciousness, hence limiting it to upper caste worship. Thus, rendering the previous documents from the Sammlung der Basler Mission (dated 20.02.1996) claiming the said *bhūta* figure to be the 'giant Kumbhakarna' as obsolete information. Bhūta Jumadi Daiva is not a physical entity like the mythical race of *rākṣasa/preservers* that Kumbhakarna belonged to, or that Rama fought in the Ramayana.

The problem spills into the contemporary anthropological interest in Hinduism and preoccupation with pan-Indian structures which consistently warrants uniformity over diversity by ethnographers who often look at India with a Western eye. Thus, in an independent study conducted through experimental qualitative image-based research, where information was gathered mainly over video data platforms reliable for visual communication, such as You-

Tube, I managed to find out the true identity of the figurine numbered Ila8642 at the Tellplatz warehouse of Museum der Kulturen in Basel. Through my research, it was clear that the aspect of caste system and disparity in modern India is a factor motivating many to convert to Christianity and hence those who are newly baptized would benevolently donate these priceless heirlooms and artifacts to the Basel Mission. And as seen in ceremonial un-staged videos or raw footages on YouTube, it is also evident that the region still practices these ceremonies. Figurine Ila8642, or this tangible representation of Bhūta Jumadi Daiva depicts an androgynous equestrian figure with intricate jewelry including *gaggara* or metal anklet, a diadem consisting of three tiers of *nāgas* (snakes) and multi-headed serpent (*adi-śeṣanāga*), ornamental halo and a skirt that shows the phases of the moon or twenty-seven circles to symbolize the lunar calendar, as well as flames to denote the power of the sun (similar iconic representation of flames can be seen in the architecture of Konark Sun Temple thirteenth century CE). On one of its hand, Jumadi-Daiva, the deity, carries a curved sword, and, on the other hand the deity should hold a bell. Depending on the kind of Jumadi (function of the spirit/deity) it can either be seated on a highly decorated war elephant or on a bull. In some cases, it might even have a flag with the family crest/name on it, and/or engravings on the base of the figure with prayer and/or other information regarding the family or individual.

In conclusion, IIa8642 is a *tribal purāṇic figurine for magico-religious purposes*. The deity represented in the figure is: Bhūta Jumadi Daiva riding an elephant '*vahana*' (Sanskrit वहाना – for 'mount' or 'vehicle'), similar to the elephant Airavata of Indra. *Bhūta*, in this context, is a spirit or demi-God that can either protect or harm people according to the judgement it passes.

———————

Original Object Consignor: Sammlung der Basler Mission 19/20 century; brass; IIa8642, Coll. Basel Mission.

Debolina Bandyopadhyay holds a Master of Arts in Design from the Basel School of Design, and is currently enrolled in the MA program at the University of Basel where she is studying Anthropology (Major) and Indology (Minor at University of Zürich). She enjoys writing Indian ethno-fiction with gender-norms as a main topic.
deb.dubois-bandyopadhyay@stud.unibas.ch

Incompleteness
Melina Rutishauser

What is represented here?, you will probably ask while looking at the postcard with its (in the original) green circles – one in the form of an orbital shape, the other in a helical shape. What connection does this imagery hold with drawings, specifically within the realm of anthropology?

It is a visual note to myself, sent home as a postcard from my doctoral field research in 2017. It features a drawing made on a digital picture taken with my smartphone during a visit in Lugala – a small town at the outer part of the Kilombero Valley located in Morogoro Region, Tanzania. During this journey with Iddy Mayumana, I was once again fascinated by all the (hi)stories I encountered during the myriad of conversations that I had with people. How should I write about the things I hear? What is a piece of writing that does not fragment things, but valorises the plurality encountered around me, among us and in each of us? How can I comprehend the coexistence of various complex states that I have encountered? Moreover, how can I determine what constitutes a legitimate and valid interpretation? These questions occupied my solitary moments during the field research and have persisted within me ever since, resurfacing in different contexts.

I find myself continuously orbiting around various topics and themes, gradually approaching a deeper understanding with each iteration, but never being sure that I actually understood it. Reality appeared to be multiple. There was always another version of the (hi)story or new explanations of a specific topic. Sometimes they came up in the same conversation. Sometimes I encountered them in a completely different context. There were pauses in the discourses and unsaid things. There seemed to be different possible readings of a statement at

almost any given moment in time – things said were fluid and left open to different interpretations. A lived and cultivated ambiguity? My feeling was that I moved to places from where I could see differently, a position of 'radical openness and possibility', a 'space in the margin', which 'is a site of creativity and power', as bell hooks describes it (1990: 159). Circling around. Resisting the idea of knowing and understanding everything. To recognize and embrace the 'complex communication'. A communication which 'thrives on recognition of opacity and on reading opacity, not through assimilating the text of others to our own' (Lugones 2006: 84). Orbiting and changing perspectives. Certainty I never had – except of the impermanence in which everything seemed to be, including myself with my attempts to write about it and understand. Themes, topics and interpretations often originate from conversations, sometimes emerging unexpectedly at what initially seems to be the conclusion of a discussion. To shortly after turn out that I encountered myself somewhere in the middle of a cycle, not knowing how much was missing of the beginning of the history. Or to realize many months later, that I came across certain puzzle pieces, which gradually revealed their significance over time. This certainly has to do with the research topic diabetes mellitus, a disease manifesting itself in different ways depending on the social context. But everything was fluid. Therefore, to embrace incompleteness as a disposition, as advocated by Nyamnjoh (2021), and resisting the inclination to think and theorize solely from a central perspective holds significant importance for me.

hooks, b. 1990. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press.

Lugones, M. 2006. On Complex Communication. *Hypatia* 21: 75-85.

Nyamnjoh, F.B. 2021. Cecil John Rhodes: 'The Complete Gentleman' of Imperial Dominance. *The Jugaad Project*. https://www.thejugaadproject.pub/home/rhodes-the-complete-gentleman

---

Melina Rutishauser is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel, supervised by Prof. em. Dr. Brigit Obrist van Eeuwijk. In her PhD, Melina is exploring how individuals with a diagnosis of diabetes mellitus and/or hypertension, living in Tanzania are making use of the available biomedical infrastructures. melina.rutishauser@unibas.ch

It
Till Förster

From afar, it looked like a rubbish heap. Just like any other in front of a compound in town. Its auburn and grey colors merged with the earth and whatever lay around. Only when it moved, it became visible as an extraordinary thing. Its halting steps were neither those of animals nor of human beings. It moved as if it could not. It had no face, no front and no back. It looked like a giant bowler, composed of vegetable materials, fabrics and fur woven into it. But it did not resemble any form other than that big, dome-like hood that could easily enwomb a person. I saw it the first time when an old Senufo woman of a neighborhood close by passed away. When I came close to it, I noticed that it was carried by someone. Nobody had mentioned that this masquerade existed, nor did anybody comment on it when it approached the house of the deceased woman.

While the appearance and performance of other masks were discussed and reviewed when the villagers were chatting during the evening in their compounds, this masquerade had no discursive presence. Its absence was so salient that a friend asked me why I raised questions again and again about 'this one'. Masks have names among the Senufo. But my friend did not seem to know any and only used generic terms or none at all. Several young men called it *jina*, borrowing a term from Arabic, which was used to describe various invisible beings capable of assisting or causing harm to the living. The word carried a pejorative connotation as these beings were often thought to be dangerous and not really belonging to the savannah region where the Senufo people live. For the villagers, *jinas* were part of that other cultural realm of the Muslim faith. They did not align with the many masquerades that the Senufo have.

'You cannot take pictures', said my neighbor that evening. I asked him whether I would be allowed to draw it. He agreed, saying that it would be fine with him, but perhaps not with the people in the other neighborhood. He added that I should not draw in front of them, rather that I should do it at home or in his compound. He knew that the drawing would mirror the appearance of the mask and have almost the same indexical quality as a photo. There was a tension between me as an ethnographer who was trained to observe and name the features of all possible things and events on the one side and the peasant Senufo people who were excellent sculptors but who are not interested in any mirror of nature and opposed to all acts of predication on the other. I drew the mask late at night when everybody else had gone to bed, trying to remember all the details and features of the mask as they were. The following day, however, I asked myself whether that did not miss the purpose of 'it'. The mask was not meant to have any features – while my drawing displayed a couple of them. It was an object with non-predicative and non-propositional qualities because it was not visible as such, while my drawing made it visible, though not as a moving actor – only as shades of a lead pencil on paper.

Till Förster is Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and founding director of the Centre for African Studies at the University of Basel. He works on visual culture and political transformations in Africa and conducted field research in West and Central Africa. His publications focus on questions of governance and social creativity. till.foerster@unibas.ch


YAYE SEYNABOU

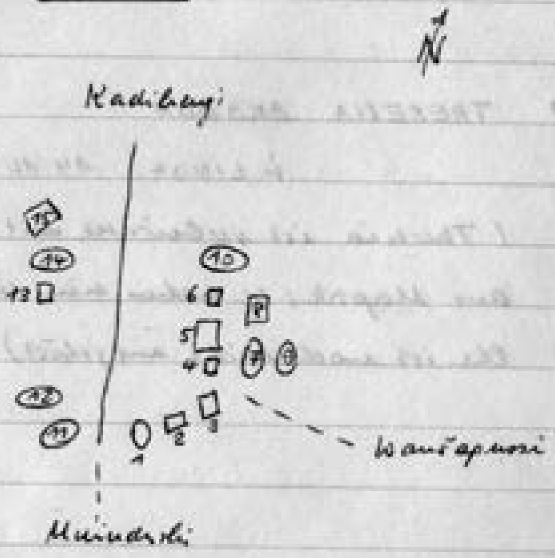
Juxtaposition
André Chappatte

In West Africa, painted drawings on means of transport are ubiquitous. In my interpretation, many of these drawings advocate for the protection of powerful entities (e.g., country, club, public figures) in dangerous work environments. In February 2022, I spent a week in Saint-Louis, Senegal. While walking in town, I saw a freshly painted fishing boat. This boat showcased various drawings, including depictions of the American flag, the emblem of FC Barcelona and the portrait of a seemingly Muslim scholar. In addition to the content of these drawings, what captivated me was their vividness. Over the years, I have come to realize that it was not necessarily a specific quality inherent in each drawing individually that struck me, but rather the overall impression created by their collective presence. To my mind, it is their 'disorienting' juxtaposition that stood out. Here, the American flag is juxtaposed with an Arabic script related to Islam. This juxtaposition has been widespread in West Africa for few decades. In an upcoming fieldwork trip to the République de Guinée, I would not be surprised to see, for instance, a painting of the American flag alongside a depiction of Vladimir Putin on a truck. From my European-Swiss educated perspective, these juxtapositions often cut across the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion associated with and desired by power bodies depicted in these paintings. It was disorienting. But I appreciated that. I even valued some of these juxtapositions as they gave me hope against any imperialistic shaping of allegiance and ideas of what should a legitimate society be. They speak about *the autonomy of the social*, a force of freedom from below, a creativity and aspiration that is needed to balance the violence of any state reductionism.

———————

André Chappatte is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the Global Studies Institute, University of Geneva. He recently published *In Search of 'Tunga': Prosperity, Almighty God, and Lives in Motion in a Malian Provincial Town* (University of Michigan Press, 2022). His analyses are influenced by social thought, human geography and phenomenology. andre.chappatte@unige.ch

HIMBENGE



1 Diwitaw (2. Frau v. Walundala → Himbenge 11)
 > Wanjapussi
 † [Alois Akkumba → Wanjapussi 6]
 [Alpina → "]
 [Gottfried Kubai → Kunau 12]
 Flewai (Tasubun 14) Fr v. Diwitaw

2 MATHEW NANDEBE ∞ AKAKUNG (Himbenge)
 †[Theresia Akamun [Alguelko 3]
 [Magdalena Takunjwa [Wanj. p. 6]
 WAREGU
 DORA MUNDALISA 1977

HIMDENGE

3 haus bilong mi

4 haus kuk v. Sahamoku (1. Frau v. Lukas)

5 LUKAS HAUSENG ∞ SAHAMOKU (Wanyenye)
† [Robin Lopokupa → Rabaul]
NANLAU CONNI
KININI BONIPAS †
HAUSENG CHRISTOPHER
MANGRIMA BRIGIT 20.11.80
TASINOLE BONIPAS 16.7.83 – 15.10.84

∞ KIARU ANNA (Tututuru)
1 Wauwor baby †
2 Wunumbroho wokabaut pinis † ↓ PONDOUHEI MANUEL
NANČINWO DENIS 28.1.79
SINGANONGO SALVIUS 20.3.83

6 haus kuk v. Kiaru
7 haus man v. Lukas
haus slip v. MANARU (Junggeselle)

Kinship
Brigit Obrist van Eeuwijk

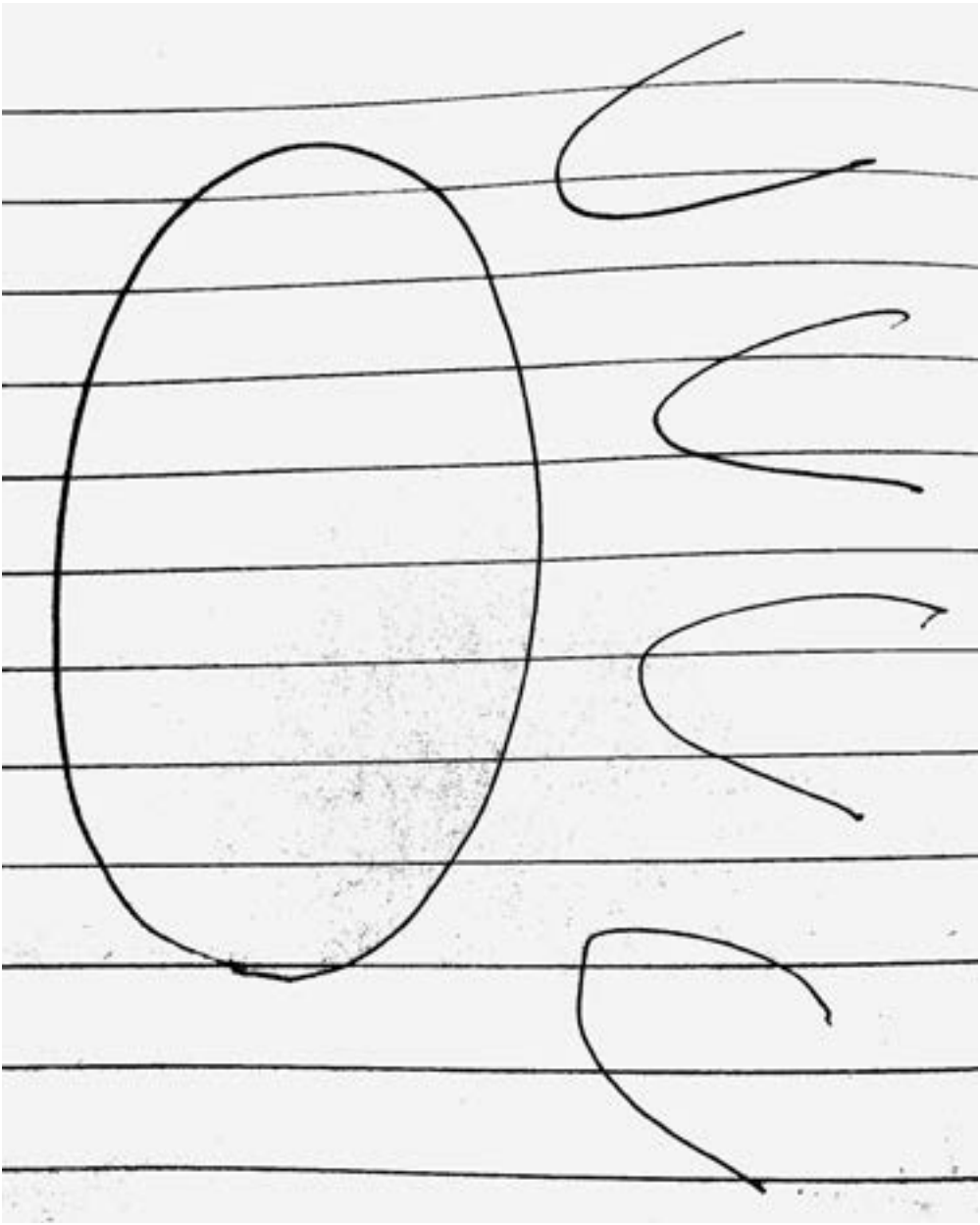
Imagine a novice Swiss anthropologist in Papua New Guinea, walking through a string of hamlets perched on hillcrests, half hidden under coconut palms in an endless sea of primary rain forest. She just started her fieldwork. To become acquainted with this village and its people, she draws a map of each hamlet and records who lives in which house and how they relate to one another. As she moves from one hamlet to the next, her maps and name lists gradually expand and transform into kinship charts spanning across the village and into neighboring localities. Generating order according to the logic of anthropology is a deeply gratifying experience. She feels increasingly more competent as an ethnographer and guest of this Kwanga community.

When the hosts associate her with a lineage of the Wainassa clan, classify her as a sister of Hauseng and assign her to house number 3 in the hamlet Himdenge, the maps and charts come to life. She now has a clearly defined position in relation to all the other village members and has to learn how her kinship position translates into rules of daily conduct. Acting as her mentor, Hauseng introduces her, for example, to an elaborate set of avoidance rules that regulate relations between women and men, younger and older generations and between members and non-members of the local men's cult. The rules restrict specific contacts in housing, gardening and the handling of animals, plants and cooked food in order to protect the more vulnerable counterparts against health-threatening effects of regenerative power. If a woman or a member of the younger generation with their special power in human procreation violates an avoidance rule, the man or the member of the older generation is in danger of catching an illness called *wahapsila* (translated as 'loss of

stamina'). If an initiated member of the men's cult with its power to safeguard the reproduction of animals and food plants violates an avoidance rule, the non-member may fall sick of an even more severe illness described as *nalo orin tolo* (literally 'red [or men's cult] spirit, him, holds').

The Swiss anthropologist is fascinated by these avoidance rules and the insights they provide in the Kwanga social imaginary, but living according to these rules becomes a daunting challenge. Hauseng scolds her, for instance, for offering cooked food to a younger woman in the hamlet Muindurhi because she is the daughter of this woman. Other people stop her from entering a garden or a house because it belongs to an initiated member of the men's cult. And she cannot taste the yams soup containing coconut milk prepared by a classificatory daughter. These, and many other unsettling experiences, make sense once she consults her maps and kinship charts. It is a person's genealogical and ritual position that counts in the Kwanga social imaginary. Luckily, people laugh at her blunders rather than feeling threatened because she is a foreign guest and does not really share their powers.

Brigit Obrist van Eeuwijk is Professor Emerita of Anthropology at the University of Basel, Switzerland, and held a joint position at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute. Since 1980, she has conducted field research in Papua New Guinea, Switzerland, Indonesia and Tanzania, and directed a medical anthropology research group. brigit.obrist@unibas.ch



Lifeline
Jon Schubert

My interlocutor Paulo drew me this very rough sketch in my notebook over lunch, during my doctoral research in Luanda in 2010. I had landed a few weeks earlier and was still rather disoriented and very uncertain about the direction of my research. This is often the case with new fieldwork, and perhaps even more so with doctoral research, when you can get dizzy at the idea of 12 unstructured months that lie ahead and you realize that all your plans that looked very nice and thought-through on paper seem unworkable.

One of these planned entries into 'my field' was Luanda's fabled Roque Santeiro open-air market. It had come into being during the 1980s as a parallel market, when the war and socialist planned economy combined to create widespread *falta* (lack, of basically everything), and had evolved, by the early 2000s, into Africa's largest open-air market, catering to, allegedly, up to 1m people per day.

Yet when I arrived in Luanda in October 2010, the government had just razed the 'Roque', ostensibly for reasons of hygiene and safety, and created a new, 'modern' and structured concrete market in Panguila, some 30km from the city center. Instead of a bustling hub of activity and, in my mind, ideal starting point for field research there was only a desolate, partially fenced off field of red earth and rubble. Some vendors had started selling in Panguila, but the commute was expensive, and there were only few customers as the area was a very recent urban development/resettlement area (even though by now, ten years later, Panguila has become a more desirable suburb).

As Paulo explained, 'before it was easy, I could just drive down to Roque in the afternoon in 15 minutes for some shopping. Now we go hungry. Also – and here he starts

drawing – residents living next to the market used to rent out one of their rooms facing the market as *armazém* (warehouse/storage room), or they built an *armazém*, and rented it out to the vendors to lock up their wares overnight. This gave them a source of steady income that is now lost.'

Despite my initial worry about my lost 'field', that basic line drawing became a lifeline, as it prompted me to think about the market's ecosystem, and then more broadly, about what visible gaps and holes in the cityspace do. The sketch evoked a set of economic and social relations that had been produced by physical proximity and easy access which were now transformed by violent dispersal and exhausting commutes in Luanda's hour-long monster traffic jams. More importantly, even though the Roque had disappeared as a functioning market, its memory lingered on, and its palpable absence brought forth emotions: sentiments of loss, of government violence and neglect, which echoed earlier experiences of violence and erasure – of places, of place names and of people – at the hands of the ruling party. In many conversations, the Roque appeared as a mnemonic device that tied people's individual biographies together, inserting them, albeit often uncomfortably, into larger national narratives of liberation, conflict and development.

Jon Schubert is SNF Eccellenza Professor in Critical Urbanisms, University of Basel. His research focuses on the social life of infrastructures, the impact of extractive industries on African polities, authoritarian politics and urban development in times of climate crisis, mainly through the lens of cities in Angola and Mozambique. jon.schubert@unibas.ch


Wo sind die Geile
Dominante Perverse
Blase + Schl
Zeit Wo und wann?
hotguybi ch
Fick
ADOLF
BERSET
VERBRECHER
Fick mich
Faschistische
Regierung


Ruf an
Wo sind die Geile
Arschficker auch 2 bis6 Hengste
Immer ab 23 30 bis 00 30
Wo sind
die Arschficker
Blase + Schlucke
Mega geil

Locus

Kaue Felipe Nogarotto Crima Bellini

The cultural politics of emotion as explored by Ahmed (2004), can be evoked for understanding the phenomenon of bathroom writings and their effects. These writings, often found on restroom walls, are entangled by more than layers of paint on a surface. They relate to circulating different scales of intimacy as a site of expectations and interventions that mobilize affective economies.

One message read 'Adolf Berset Criminal,' directed at Alain Berset (Social Democratic Party of Switzerland – SP). The politician, who held the presidency in 2023, was the head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs during the Covid-19 pandemic. Berset was strongly criticized by those who opposed the response to the pandemic, either for being too weak or authoritarian. Many Swiss citizens believed the government could not take actions that would directly restrict their bodily autonomy, which was read as challenging the right to move and the mandatory use of masks, testing, and vaccination. Amidst old scandals resurfacing, public threats, political pressure and a full-blown pandemic, the Swiss government still was called to enact the referendum twice, reaffirming its decision-power to deal with the pandemic. Political parties, the media and other citizens mobilize the Swiss population's emotional ties with freedom and autonomy. Nonetheless, rather than freedom, the pandemic challenged Swiss intimacy. Intimacy with one's bodily autonomy, space, desire, and interactions.

The public bathroom is the perfect locus for emoting the political affects of a frustrated intimacy. As a sticky relational space, the toilet occupies both the public and the private, intersects intimate desires and social anxieties, and entangles the restriction of intimate practices with the invisible threat of a non-human agent. When limited, intimacy is rearranged,

and the affective politics of desire circulate uncertainty. The use of 'Adolf' mobilizes and calls for an emotional response. The public (arena) bathroom is now the site of intimacy. The intimacy that challenges the state and is saturated with affect.

Similarly, the call for 'horny dominant perverts' (Geile Dominante Perverse) is produced by the same system of affective mobilization that entices prohibited forms of intimacy. Both exist in the same wall, where mostly cisgender men will see. When asking for the location of 'ass-fuckers' (Wo Sind die Arschfickers?), one is attempting to create intimacy in liminal spaces of public and private. The oppression of the homoerotic has historically pushed men to perform sexual practices in semi-public spaces (cruising) outside the intimacy of the home. Cruising assembles desire and social anxieties, mobilizing political responses to the occupation of spaces. Entangled to and by non-human agents such as telephones, tiles, the smell of urine, ink and viruses, both messages occupy the political discourses of a sector of the population.

These messages found in bathroom writings communicate a larger set of intimate relations arranged with political affects on both a local and global scale. They offer people the possibility of entanglement, not only as a writer-reader relationship but as an invitation for restricted intimacies at the nexus of the public and the private, of the local, national and international. A place that is patrolled at times but remains a transitory site for restricted intimacies. A site for cruising.

Ahmed, S. 2014. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Kaue Felipe Nogarotto Crima Bellini holds an MA from the Centre for African Studies and is currently a PhD candidate at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel. Their research focuses on the political economies of sexuality, racialization and embodied practices. k.crimabellini@unibas.ch


IF A LIE IS
TOLD TOO MANY
TIMES, IT DOES
NOT BECOME TRUE

Mural
Frederik Unseld

As I walked through Kibera, Nairobi's largest and infamous low-income settlement, I stumbled upon a graffiti mural that caught me off guard and had me stop right in my tracks, embarrassed and dumbstruck. The mural depicts a white visitor, likely a journalist or development worker, rushing through the city's shantytowns, taking pictures. The intruding visitor squints in stress as he seeks to find what he is looking for: time tested iterations of colonial figurations of poverty, crime and life on the other side of the train tracks. Three men sit in front of a mud house at the intersection of myriad global flows. One of them raises his arm, perhaps to begin a story or to offer a point of view. In the left corner, a pile of books shines from under the inscription, 'If a lie is told too many times, it does not become true.'

It was my first time in Kibera and I was heading for an interview about the lives of creatives here, not without discomfort about my own status of some sort of 'cultural tourist'. As a PhD student researching art and marginalization, I nurtured high hopes of producing a book that would illuminate injustice and powerfully chronicle the narrative of those who had been marginalized. Meanwhile, the photograph of the mural had its own way of returning to me. It kept popping up on my desktop and in my photo journal in unexpected ways. As if questioning me regularly whether I was wise and careful enough to let the story unfold from my material rather than my own preconceived notions of poverty and power.

After the writing years and completing my research, the perceptive mural still has not entirely lost its grip on me. To what degree did I unwittingly embody the caricature in the mural in my research? Did I do justice to the lived experiences

of those I studied? Does my research serve their purpose, too? While some of my interlocutors have meanwhile worked their way up in the Kenyan entertainment industry, and some found different routes to make it to Europe or the United States, others still sit at the same junction, offering their interpretations of their situation and predicament to whoever has the patience, care and humility to engage in such transformative conversations.

Frederik Unseld is a researcher, scholar and hypno-systemic coach committed to bridging disciplinary, epistemological and ontological divides. His current research project focuses on sustainability sciences and aims to integrate perspectives from qualitative social science and computational earth science.
frederik.unseld@unibas.ch

Net

Djanet Rose Costantini

The Bazurto market moves to the rhythm of the shouts, the chopping of the knives and the taxis trudging through the crowds. Smells, sounds and colors mix into a deafening orchestra. Rivers of blood flow out of the butcher's shop. Fish are tossed from hand to hand. Garzas, large, white, tapering birds are perched on top of umbrellas, shooting like arrows at the remains of fish thrown around by the merchants. The place is swarming with people, those buying and those selling, vendors holding the weighing scales for the fish in the air, others with shopping carts full of limes, avocados, mangos, and potatoes alluring prospective buyers. Elegant constellations of fruits arranged on tables give a flash of order to the bustle.

My drawing is a sketch of a fish stall in the Bazurto market, one of Cartagena's major selling points. Fish is brought in with the *lancias*, small sharp boats, unloaded, arranged neatly on plastic sheets and tables, bought, resold, delivered to restaurants, processed, chopped, fried and cooked.

Passing through the stalls, Fermin, the President of the *Red de Pescadores Artesanales Afrodescendientes de Caribe*, points out the fish species, *mojarra, róbalo, sábalo, corvina, pargo, atún*. But he also points out to me some other fish, clarifying that they are products of illegal fishing.

There are many *loros*, also known as parrot fish, and *tiburones*, small sharks. The first are the product of intentional illegal fishing and are caught among the corals of the coast. The latter are the result of accidental illegal fishing, whereby the small sharks are caught in nets that are intended for other fish and end up suffocating in the meshes. Fermin calls this '*una falta de interés por conservar las especies*' ('*a lack of interest for species conservation*'). He shows me the nets used,

which have a very small mesh, allowing the capture of smaller fish that would otherwise be prohibited by law.

I reflect on the fishing nets as an object dense of meaning for my research. They encapsulate a complex web of contradictions, metaphorically symbolizing the interplay of economic, social, educational, and political dysfunctionality. Artisanal fishermen find themselves entangled within this intricate structure, much like a fish trapped in a net with no escape. The nets serve as a poignant metaphor for the constricting forces that restrict the livelihoods and opportunities of these fishermen, highlighting the oppressive nature of their circumstances.The work of the artisanal fishery has been described to me as difficult, one that, as Fermin told me, makes you '*perder el sueño en la noche*' ('*lose sleep at night*') and at the same time bearing less and less fruit with time, so that catching fish, even if too small, becomes necessary to ensure a daily income. Who shares responsibility for declining biodiversity, pollution, coral destruction? Fermin says, '*eso es lo que ha hecho el hombre, nosotros somos los culpables*' '*that's what man has done, we are the ones to blame*'). To me this question is loaded and complicated. On the one hand, causes that are greater than artisanal fishing alone, trigger the transformations mentioned above. On the other hand, the contribution of artisanal fishing cannot be underestimated, just as dynamite fishing, the use of narrow-meshed nets, the disinterest in preserving species reported by Fermin and illegal fishing continue. These transformations are like narrow meshes that close on fishery as a form of livelihood. At the same time, the fishermen themselves continue to pull these same meshes and tighten them around their bodies, in an attempt to return to the surface for a breath of oxygen, just as the shark struggles in the meshes till he suffocates.

———————

Djanet Rose Costantini grew up in Italy and moved to Zurich after high school, where she completed a BA in Social Anthropology with a minor in Comparative Linguistics in 2021. She is now enrolled in the MA in Anthropology and Political Science at the University of Basel. djanetrose.costantini@unibas.ch

Organo-graphic
Marion Schulze

'Organo-graphic?' This humoristic wordplay on *ethnographic* by Donna Haraway in her interview with Joseph Schneider (2005: 118) resonated with me. I literally heard her laugh. *Ethno*-graphic inquiry had become unfit for some of the descriptions and writings I was doing. What all of these have in common is that they are variations of plant-related writing, in some way or form.

First came floriography – a language *with* plants, usually flowers, as seen in South Korean television series, known as K-Dramas. I collect this flower language for six years: the jealousy that a bouquet of yellow tulips communicates, the meaning of freesia as a new beginning and the understanding that people will fall in love when they first walk together underneath cherry blossoms. Floriography made me an attuned watcher but also reader; attuned to flowers and attentive to greenery in general.

Though I have always liked the entry passage on glowing autumn leaves in *A Room of One's Own*, my appreciation deepened when I re-read Virginia Woolf's text through my floriographic lens. It opened up even more depth and layers in Woolf's writing. The juxtaposition of free-willed grass and smooth lawns, the vanished marsh with its waving grass, the gaudy blossoms in window-boxes and the violet seller are definitely more than just part of a background setting (Schulze 2022). Since then, those same lens have allowed me to perceive queer-feminist texts differently. Much like Virginia Woolf, writers such as Gloria E. Anzaldúa, and more recently, Karen Barad, also wrote with plants to make sense of gender – my worldplay on Evelyn Fox Keller's important book. But still, plants in both settings – in K-Dramas and

in queer-feminist literature – usually serve as analogies and speak for and about humans as well as their relations.

Haraway's fleeting comment and proposed shift from *ethno* to *organo* clearly opens up the question of whether 'flower writing' suffices to descriptively and analytically gather and grasp the vegetal and its part in world making practices. Is there more to organo-graphic? It is not a stretch to think that Haraway had chosen 'organo' with regard to her lasting interest in organisms. It invites, I like to think, to ask as to how ethnography, the analytical and formal organi-zing of 'culture' on paper shifts if we start *from* organisms – from life forms? Which worlds do organographic practices allow for bringing into being? When shifting the focus to '-graphic', the term also reminds us that the word's root *graphikós* encompasses painting and drawing as descriptive practices and also stands for vividness and liveliness when used as an adjective. When recently I drew a bean plant using ink and feather (Schulze and Tschoepe 2023), I clearly sensed how the swift tracing on paper brought life into lines. Might organographic practices then be the lifeline for 'writing culture' today?

Schneider, J. 2005. *Donna Haraway: Live Theory*. London: Bloomsbury.

Schulze, M. 2022. Durch Pflanzen. Überlegungen mit Virginia Woolf für ein anderes Wissenschaffen. *Fabrikzeitung*, 2 February. www.fabrikzeitung.ch/durch-pflanzen/#.

Schulze, M. and A. Tschoepe. 2023. A Near-Future Herbarium: Field Guide and Posthuman Collaboration. *NiCHE: Network in Canad an History & Environment/ Nouvelle initiative canadienne en histoire de l'environne ment*, 6 February. www.nichte-canada.org2023/06/02/a-near-future-herbarium-field-guide-and-post-human-collaboration.

Trained in Arts, English and Sociology, Marion Schulze holds a tenure-track Assistant Professorship in Gender Studies and Cultural Anthropology and co-chairs the Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Basel. Her research and teaching activities center around feminist epistemologies, ecologies of knowledge as well as more-than-human worlds.
marion.schulze@unibas.ch


Banky
UNILORIN
KARAT
TEAM
PRECIOUS
UDU
A
MONA
LGBT
LORD
LONGR
BAKARE
GOd
JOSUS
ODO
MIL ADA
BAKS
MILE
#
LEO
DAMY
WALTER
Felix
ADE
Precious

Place

Diekara Oloruntoba-Oju

> What happens to the energy of attachment
> when it has no designated place?
> (Lauren Berlant, *Intimacy*)

In August 2022, a group of my interlocutors and I encountered a tree at the University of Lagos Lagoon front. The Lagoon front, a recreational area that looks over the Lagos lagoon and the expansive third mainland bridge that connects the Lagos mainland to its island, was one of the first places I was directed to when I was seeking out spaces in the campus area where students gather, away from the regimentation of institutional life. Over the course of the summer, I had spent time there, meeting young people who walked on the concrete interlocking path surrounded by trees or to spend time sitting with friends or lovers beneath a shade or on the low concrete fence at the edge of the water. The campus was closed on account of an industrial action, but students continued to visit the lagoon front in significant numbers as it remained 'a place to chill and meet with others' as Chuks, one of my interlocutors put it.

Yet throughout these encounters, I had only primarily considered the embodied practices involved in place making/seeking – such as how people gathered for hours on a low bench, or how lovers selected secluded benches, turned away from others to create a semblance of privacy. It was not until August, when Gbenga, another interlocutor asked 'have you seen that tree?', that I paused to look at the tree at the end of his pointed finger. It was dense with inscriptions and for the first time I was confronted with how contestations over signification – in this case, identity markers, also entail projects of making place.

Many single word identifiers are etched onto trunk of the tree – most of them are personal names or nicknames, others – religious identifications, some conventionalized icons of attachment/intimacy like the love sign written against individual names or used to cojoin two names as in Walter (love icon) Ade. The most conspicuous inscription is the abbreviation: LGBT. It is conspicuous because it is a palimpsest of inscriptions – the thickness and inconsistency of the strokes suggest that it was not made at once, and potentially not by the same person. It also had two intersecting lines drawn across it, suggesting an attempt or more has been made to overwrite it.

Since 2014, when Nigeria's antihomosexuality law was passed, the abbreviation has proliferated in use by various institutions and actors that demonstrate different orientations towards it – of affinity, allyship, anxiety, phobia, outright hostility etc. Its unique form on the tree of inscriptions gestures towards this spectrum of contested orientations. It suggests that tied to Chuks' observation that the Lagoon front is 'a place to chill and meet others' is the question of place that is not simply geographically marked but tied to forms of legibility, signification in which people come to be recognizable as subjects in relation to others. In the end, the sign we encounter – written over and overwritten – awkwardly compounds a brush with solidarity and antagonism over who can belong to a place.

Diekara Oloruntoba-Oju is a doctoral candidate in the department of African and African Studies with a primary field in Anthropology at Harvard University. Her dissertation research explores how space and intimacy shape the ways young people experience, perform and become recognizable as youth in Nigeria. doloruntobaoju@fas.harvard.edu


SNACK PIZZERIA
RESTAURANT
5ème Avenue
TRATOUR
COLD


EASY
BARBECUE

Recreation
Claudine Rakotomanana

This sketch represents a fictive scenery of the local places that attract mostly foreigners in Mahajanga, Madagascar. The vibrant city known for its diverse street food and local eatery festivities offers unique characteristics. While local inhabitants do not necessarily prefer typical Euro-American-style cafés as recreational destinations, there are several establishments in Mahajanga that hold a special appeal for a specific group of foreigners, including tourists and permanent residents.

Lounge bars, bistros and cafés hold a particular allure for studying transnational relationships and cultural dynamics of relationships between French-citizen men and Malagasy women. In my upcoming field research, I am specifically drawn to these captivating spaces as primary sites for connecting with individuals engaged in such partnerships. Mahajanga's European-styled eateries provide a distinctive backdrop for younger and older male foreigners to meet with Malagasy women. These eateries offer an interesting fusion of European aesthetics and local Malagasy elements.

In these lounge bars, one can observe many male foreigners enjoying food and drinks while engaging in conversations in their social circles. Some of these men are regular customers, spending extended periods of time there, accompanied by Malagasy women who may be their partners or newly-met acquaintances. These places combine Malagasy artistic elements, exotic local decorative patterns, with European scenery, menus and cuisine. Most people speak French. This juxtaposition creates an optimal meeting point of Malagasy and foreign cultural landscapes. It is not uncommon to witness active conversations between these men, while their Malagasy companions may assume a more passive role.

As a researcher and long-time resident of Mahajanga, I have noticed distinct patterns within these spaces and the customers frequenting them. The pricing structure tailored for foreign tourists may attract a particular clientele, but it is the overall ambience, often orchestrated by foreign owners or spouses, that contributes to the captivating cross-cultural interactions. These Europeanized eateries offer an environment that enables foreigners to maintain certain aspects of their own recreational traditions while adapting them to the Malagasy context. Mahajanga's lounge bars and cafés such as shown in the sketch offer an attractive setting for studying transnational relationships. These establishments, with their unique ambience and clientele, provide a lens through which to explore the interplay between local and foreign cultures, providing primary information about the dynamics of exchange and the experiences of individuals dealing with transnational partnerships.

Claudine Rakotomanana is a PhD candidate in Social Anthropology at the University of Basel. Her current research focuses on the social and affective aspects of transnational mobility within intimate relationships involving Malagasy women and French men, both in Madagascar and abroad.
claudine.rakotomanana@unibas.ch

Resiliencia
Nina Watter

'Colombia: the risk is that you want to stay' is one of the country's most famous slogans to promote tourism. However, it raises an important question about the type of tourism that Cartagena, one of Colombia's most popular destinations, promotes.

Cartagena is a city that showcases a multitude of facets. The streets inside the old town, the walled city, surrounded by colonial architecture; the maze-like alleys of the Getsemani quarter, where one gets lost in a cacophony of smells and sounds of both street food and musicians. Beyond the areas of Cartagena that are specifically designed to cater to tourists, there is a different reality that exists for the local residents. The development of white modern buildings and 5-star resorts along the beaches of la Boquilla or Bocagrande has created an image of luxury and exclusivity. But what lies behind?

The tourist's eye often overlooks the smelly pipes, the dirt and the garbage, while also failing to recognize the pulsating heart of the city: the Ciénaga de la Virgen, a remarkable wetland. The Ciénaga is an essential ecosystem for the city as it controls floods, regulates river flows, purifies the water coming from the basins and human settlements. Furthermore, the Ciénaga de la Virgen serves as a habitat for diverse wildlife, showcasing a wealth of biodiversity. Not only that, it also acts as a vital source of sustenance for the local population in Cartagena. In general, Ciénagas are highly prevalent in Colombia with approximately 1000 Ciénagas spanning across 7, 800 km of Colombian territory. Simultaneously, in many cases, such as Ciénaga de La Virgen, wetlands end up being the main receptor of black waters coming from the city as well as the dumping ground for waste generated by illegally constructed residences encroaching upon the ecosystem. I had the opportunity to meet Juan, an individual who advocates for 'Plan Para el Buen Vivir' (plan for the good living):

a collective effort to improve the quality of life of those living in the areas surrounding Cartagena's largest wetland. He told me that that the communities residing in this particular area of the city lack a strong sense of belonging, something that really stuck in my head throughout my time in Cartagena. How can a project build a new kind of relationship with people and their surroundings?

'Plan para el Buen vivir', aims not only to reconstruct not only the ecosystem, but also foster a harmonious relationship between the community and the waterbody. This is being achieved through various initiatives, including reforestation, ecotourism programs and collaborative projects with other governmental organizations.

Despite the numerous challenges that the Ciénaga de la Virgen faces, the resilience of this ecosystem became clear to me every time I witnessed the white Garzas with their elegant, long and slim legs flying from mangrove to mangrove, as if they were trying to protect their natural habitat from threats to their ecosystem. For me, the Garzas became a symbol of hope, representing the potential for a brighter future for the Ciénaga de la Virgen.

I hope that sooner rather than later, the day will come in Colombia, and more particularly in Cartagena, where the only risk will be that people will want to stay, not the deterioration of ecosystems and the impoverishment of the community living around the Ciénaga de la Virgen.

Nina Watter grew up in Bogotá, Colombia. She moved to Zurich in 2017 to complete her bachelor's degree at the UZH, where she majored in Anthropology and minored in Environmental Studies. She is currently enrolled in the MA Changing Societies program at the University of Basel.
nina.watter@stud.unibas.ch


sostenibilidad - amar - empatia
equilibrio financiero - no more
capit - ////////// -
cuidad a aturaleza -
respon ibilidad - /////////
inversio dicion
existencia - d -
/////////// - libert - res ecto al
espa io - ////////// - cir ulo
ecosistemas diversos - sos ener
algo - justicia social - /////////////

Responsibilidad
Flurin Wäger

'I don't believe in a future.' That was the answer Andrés gave me to my opening question in the first conversation I had with him for my project. With that answer, he already turned my work upside down. I had not expected that. And yet I was delighted by his extreme reaction. Andrés is a young artist and DJ in Cartagena, who is involved in various small cultural venues. He was one of the central actors in my work. I set out to understand the concept of sustainability, focusing on young people engaged in Cartagena's art and culture. Not necessarily people who are active in sustainability causes or otherwise deal with it a lot. But creative people from an area I work in myself in Switzerland and from which I hoped to get new and profound answers.

No more capitalism, some then said. For others it was simply about '*responsibilidad*.' Views on sustainability went in many different directions. Ecological, social, but also economic aspects played a role therein. Often we simply talked about things like justice, dignity or empathy or about how their spaces could be sustained. With every interview, every observation or spontaneous conversation, I learned something new and unexpected. It would be difficult to choose a single image, to depict a specific scene from this process or to sketch a single memory. But my work always revolved around one thing: conversations. These were what made it valuable. So instead of picking out a detail, I decided to summarize a moment from all the moments I collected: the moment of being opposite to an interlocutor, of being in conversation.

The chair in my picture stands for precisely this opposite position. It symbolizes the situation I had so often experienced in my work, my perspective on the person I interviewed. From my perspective, the only (visual) constant that

ran through my entire work. The words in the background, on the other hand, stand for the opposite. They represent the variety of answers and contents that I encountered in these interviews, some of them readable and understandable, others incomprehensible, due to the language barrier or for other reasons. Each interview, even when based on a structure, turned out differently, took its own directions and formed different images around the concept of sustainability. All in all, the picture is symbolic of this central scene of my work on the one hand, while on the other hand, gesturing to the central method that accompanied me through my project: the interview.

André's image of a sustainable future turned out to be somewhat different at the end of our long conversation. He would like to have a life without worries, on his own land, his animals. If everyone could have that, then that would be sustainability for him. Not all my interviewees would agree on this rather simple definition of the term. Their perceptions differed in many points. It is my job now to sort out this pile of different ideas, concepts and imaginations and craft a final work. A challenge, but a very interesting one.

Flurin Wäger holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Zurich and is currently enrolled in the Master in Changing Societies program at the University of Basel. He is involved in various music festivals.
flurin.waeger@stud.unibas.ch

Penyakit Malaria

Risk

Peter van Eeuwijk

Are you afraid of giant killer insects, which abduct children and put them to death? You should if your children are exposed to malaria. This hand-made drawing embraces all characteristics of a horror story with no happy ending.

This drawing is part of a well-intentioned prevention programme against the malaria disease (*penyakit malaria*) on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. It is drawn on pink cardboard and pinned to the exterior wall of the village head's house, which serves as the location for the monthly community-based integrated health post. This Public Health informed service is provided by a health foundation of a Christian faith-based organization, as the Christian graves with their visible crosses on the drawing indicate.

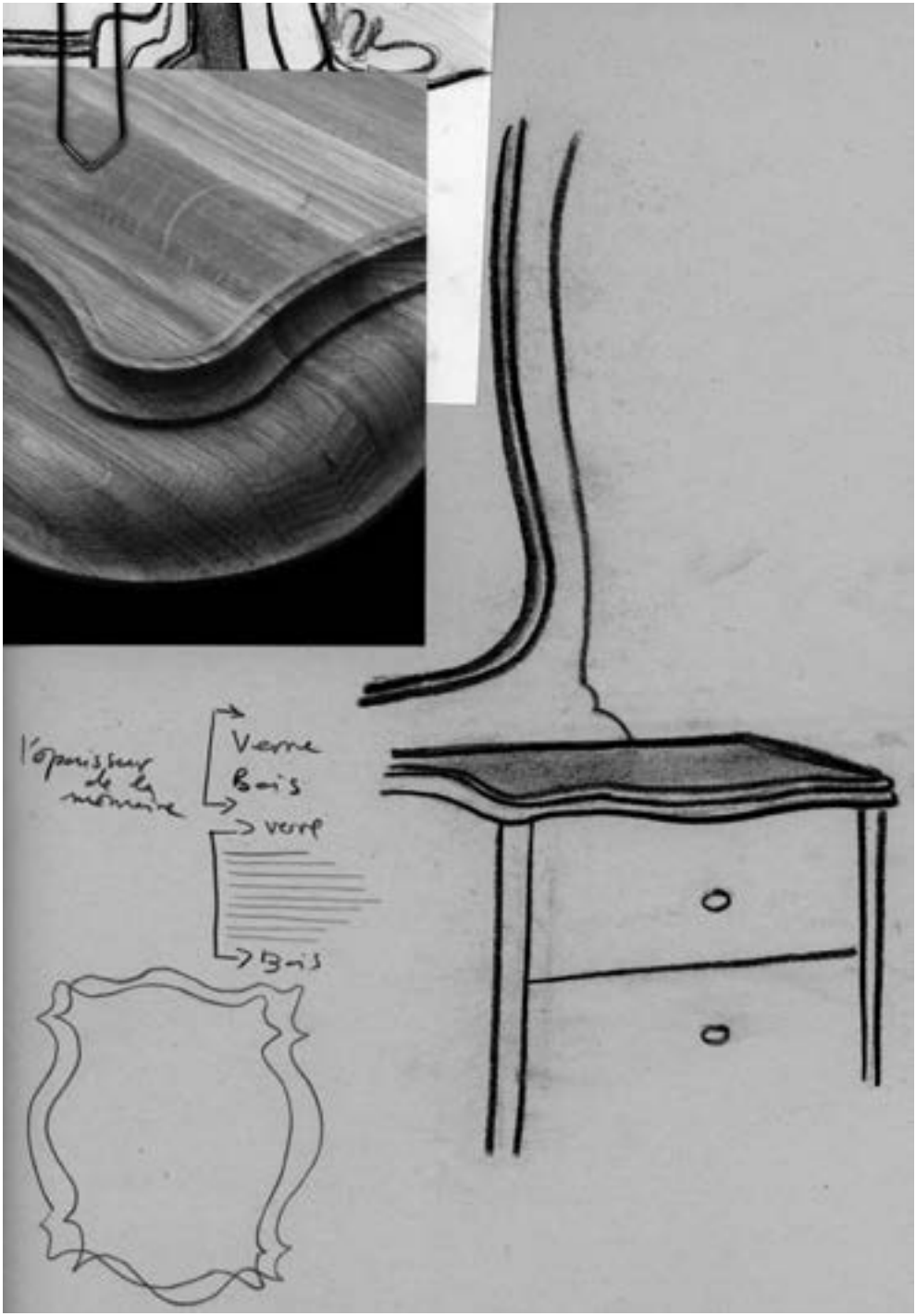
The sad medical reality behind this story-telling drawing is the high infant mortality rate due to malaria – a large Public Health challenge in the Indonesian archipelagos. The silent killer 'malaria' exerts a very high price particularly from a society group which is already vulnerable towards acute infectious diseases, namely babies and infants such as those potential 'victims' portrayed in the drawing. It comes therefore at no surprise that this exposed young generation becomes the main target group of malaria prevention programmes. The 'fever mosquito' Anopheles plays a crucial role in the mode of transmission as main carrier of the malaria pathogen, the so-called plasmodium. Moreover, where health-damaging mosquitoes meet with malaria prevention, the mosquito net becomes a prominent 'weapon' in this 'battle' against malaria.

So far, so good, says the Public Health message. This (in the original) bright-red drawing tells yet another story, namely the narratives of the community members living in such

malaria endemic areas in Eastern Indonesia. A first 'counter-narrative' of mothers with babies addresses the metaphorical appearance of the giant man-eating mosquito: 'We have never met and found such gigantic mosquitoes in our area; the mosquitoes in our village are much smaller and do not carry away our children.' And they turned toward the observing anthropologist: 'Maybe you have such huge mosquitoes in Europe?' The mothers' discussion at the monthly community health post regarding this drawing represents a fictional narrative where giant mosquitoes exist and cause children's deaths, but certainly not within their own rural vicinity. This imagination of a 'phenomenological othering' when mothers interpret this picture evokes feelings of compassion towards the abducted moribund children and indignation because parents failed to protect their snatched children.

The second underlying 'counter-narrative' is based on above implicit negation of the mosquito's dangerousness. The community members' etiological notion attributes particular food (i.e., sweet mangoes or coconut milk from young palms) and not mosquitoes to be the main cause for malaria fever. Consequently, this local perception, which significantly challenges Public Health concepts, results in non-utilization of mosquito nets even when they are provided free of charge. The nets' good quality leads to a different local usage, namely as fishing nets and for protection of new-borns against rat and snake bites, but certainly not for preventing mosquito bites.

Piet van Eeuwijk (PD Dr. habil.) is social anthropologist and historian. He works as senior lecturer/senior researcher at different Swiss and German universities and at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (University of Basel). His special field for 35 years is Medical Anthropology in different settings in the Global South. peter.vaneeuwijk@unibas.ch


Verre
Bois
verre
Bois

Sandwich
Noha Mokhtar

I remember dreaming of a memory sandwich. It is the top of a table, or maybe a dresser. Between the wood and the glass there are notes scribbled on the pages of an old agenda, a list of phone numbers, a child's drawing – probably my own – and a black and white photo of a woman I don't recognize.

The documents are trapped, like those exhibited in a museum's display case, to ensure they are not forgotten. They are protected from the draft that enters through the open window, from unfamiliar hands blind to the value of the papers, and from the dust that reappears each morning. They are infallible witnesses.

What is the expiry date of an old agenda? Perhaps December 31st of its year, or the last day of Dhu al-Hijja on the Islamic Hijri Calendar. Yet, the paper itself does not expire. Its color may fade, but it remains usable. And so, the agenda adopts another life, where the order of pages becomes irrelevant. In Egypt, I have witnessed several times the utilization of outdated agendas for various purposes. My aunt, when I visited her in Cairo during the summer break, always gave me her old agendas for me to use as drawing books. And even though it was July or maybe August, I obviously paid no attention to the dates.

Now, the notebooks I use are often dummies of books, which my husband designs. Exhibition catalogs, artist publications, books on architecture, etc. Depending on their future content, the dummies vary in size, weight, type of paper, number of pages. The covers, hard or soft, can be cardboard, fabric, plastic. I write and make images in a book that is not yet one, a blank copy of someone else's work.

Holmen, Munken, Bavaria gloss, Chromolux, Polarlight. And for the covers: Swissboard, Crylux, Curious Matter or Curious Skin.

I have no souvenir of my paternal grandmother. When I think of her, I think of all my five aunts put together and I try to imagine the result of this amalgam in an older version of itself. Maybe this is the woman in the black and white photograph kept between the wood and the glass. If I could flip the image I might find a handwritten name on the back. But given the placement of the photograph (between the two layers) and the nature of its existence (a memory or a dream), flipping it is no longer possible.

A few years ago, I had an artist residency in Cairo. I was given a studio to work in and a place to live. The apartment, located on the fifth floor of an old but well maintained building in Garden City, was subleased from a family with two kids (based on the bunk beds in the smaller room). In the master bedroom there was a dresser similar to the one I had dreamed of. Everything that could have been between the wood and the glass had been removed. What remained was the possibility to compose a sandwich of one's own.

In my notebooks, ethnographic observations and ideas for art projects come together. I do not have a notebook for fieldwork and a separate sketchbook for my artistic practice. A note is at the same time a memory and a draft. The drawing of a piece of furniture, for example, is as much a recollection of a detail from 'the field' as it is a sketch for a future sculpture I envision making.

In a surrealist interior, an installation called Dreambox, legless tabletops levitate above the floor.

Noha Mokhtar is an artist from Switzerland. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Anthropology at Harvard University, where she focuses on the relationship between architecture, kinship and materiality in contemporary Egypt. Her artistic practice includes photography, sculpture, installation and video. Often, her projects flirt with the line between fiction and documentary.
mokhtar@fas.harvard.edu


FISH BANDA
KNOW YOUR HIV STATUS

Status
Stephen Okumu Ombere & Sonja Merten

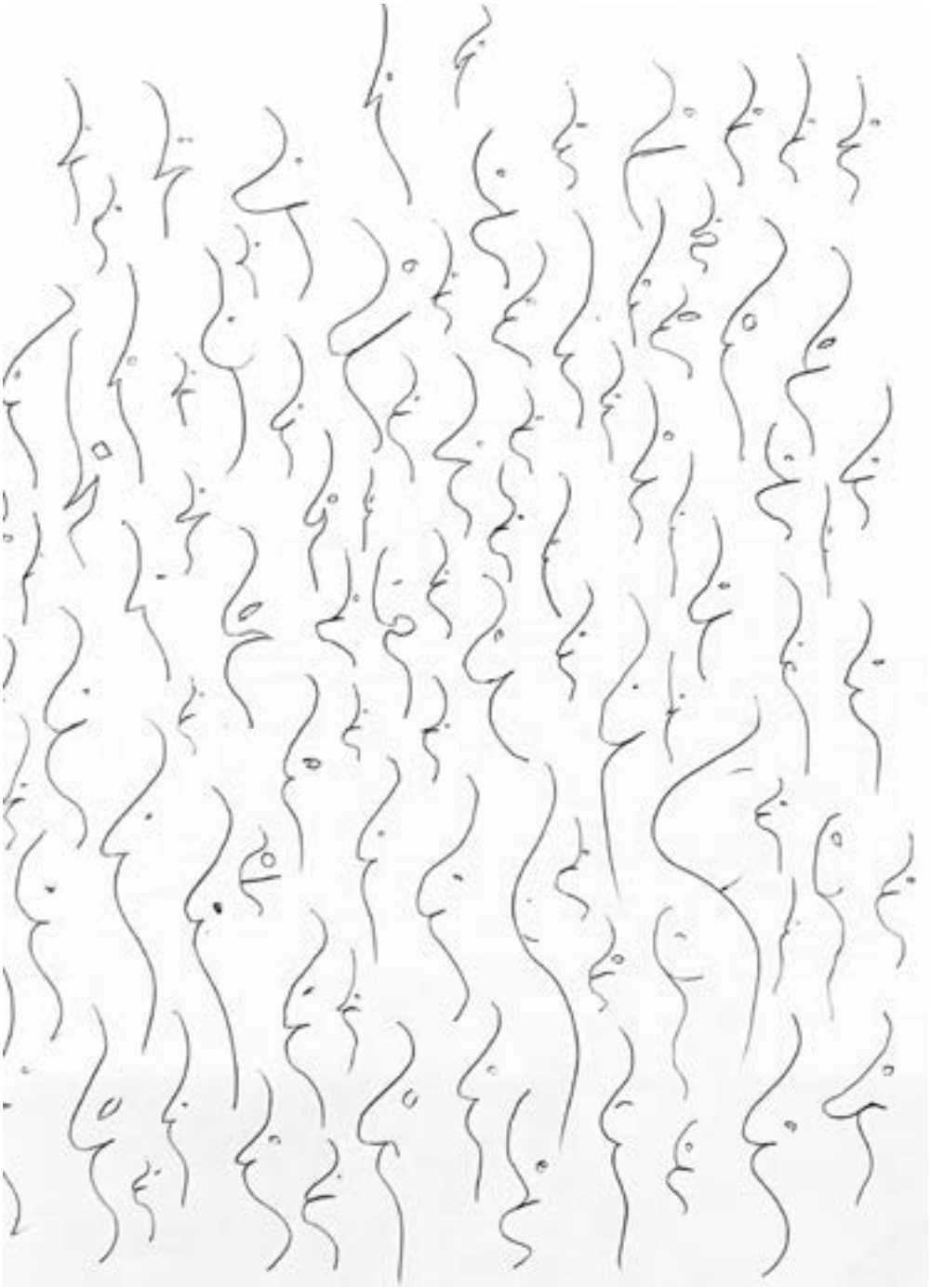
We set out to conduct a qualitative study to investigate the reception of visual arts-based posters used in family planning and other sexual and reproductive health campaigns among young people in Western Kenya. The study was implemented by the first author (S.O.) in both an urban and a rural site. The urban site was the Nyalenda Slums in Kisumu town, while the rural site encompassed the Uhanya and Usenge Beach settlements, which are two fishing villages located in Bondo Sub County, Siaya County, known for their high HIV and AIDS prevalence. Participants for the study were recruited from the study areas and included young people between the ages of 18 and 28, both in school and some out of school. The young people were purposefully identified by the first author and two local trained research assistants. We examined approximately twenty different posters, which were shown to the participants for a discussion. From the posters, we elicited the following information: aesthetic aspects of the poster; poster origin; how the language used in the poster reach young people; and whether the language used speaks to young people; how the design for the poster could reach the illiterate young people; social position/situation represented on the poster; how could young people be involved to come up with a young-people-centered art-based materials in sexual and reproductive health. Following up on these group discussions, we engaged the participants in a co-creation process for designing art-based materials from their perspectives. For this process we invited a local artist recommended by the young people themselves to draw what young people felt speak to them. We then compared the results from the poster discussion with the co-created posters.

This was a picture drawn based on the suggestions of the young people from the fish landing beaches of western Kenya. The picture illustrates lifestyle along the lake region. The poster features a key HIV and AIDS prevention message indicating that young people in the fishing community need to know their HIV status and go regularly for testing. The picture reflects that young people from the lake region engage in sexual activities from a very early age, and it is not easily differentiate between those who are 18 years old and those who are 33 years old, as young people perceive themselves as aging too quickly. The poster illustrates the critical role the local context plays in developing sexual and reproductive health messages targeting at young people.

Caption: Levis Odongo Odiwuor, *The Fishing Community*, 2022.

Stephen Okumu Ombere (PhD) is a Kenyan citizen, medical anthropologist and lecturer at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Maseno University. He is passionate about and published widely on the anthropology of reproduction, focusing more closely on social protection, childbirth, visual information on sexual health, and sexual and reproductive health, which he continuously studies and writes about. sokumu2@gmail.com

Sonja Merten is a public health researcher at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, and she previously studied fine arts at the Zurich University of the Arts. She is interested in the circulation and reception of visual information on sexual health, family planning and reproductive health.
sonja.merten@swisstph.ch



Suspect
Nigel Stephenson

This doodle almost created itself, albeit through my hand, during a trial at the Criminal Court in Basel where I used to work from time to time as an interpreter during my years at the Institute of Social Anthropology. What the picture shows is a gathering of faces in profile, made up of a simple line and a dot, all facing in the same direction. Many of the people I represented in court were young African men accused of dealing drugs in Basel, and the unidirectionality of the faces kind of reflects what the people present in the courtroom, at least the majority of them, thought of the lonesome defendant: guilty until proven innocent.

What, among other things, intrigued me in my work as an interpreter were the similarities between the process of criminal investigation and the process of ethnographic fieldwork. Both have to do with how knowledge is produced. To learn about the culture he or she is working in, an anthropologist relies on the same methodological resources as does an investigator working on a criminal case: materiality, observation and verbal interaction. While the latter builds his or her case on material evidence (fingerprints, DNA traces, seized drugs, etc.), observations such as witness reports and/or CCTV footage and the questioning of suspects, I as an anthropologist may examine a people's material culture, observe ritual performances, daily interactions, marriage practices, etc., in an attempt to gain an understanding of what I see going on around me, and then delve deeper by discussing it with the people involved in different interview settings. The more I information I receive, including 'secret' knowledge, the better, in a way just like a prosecutor.

In the field – in my case this was Warengeme village among the Wam people of the East Sepik Province in Papua

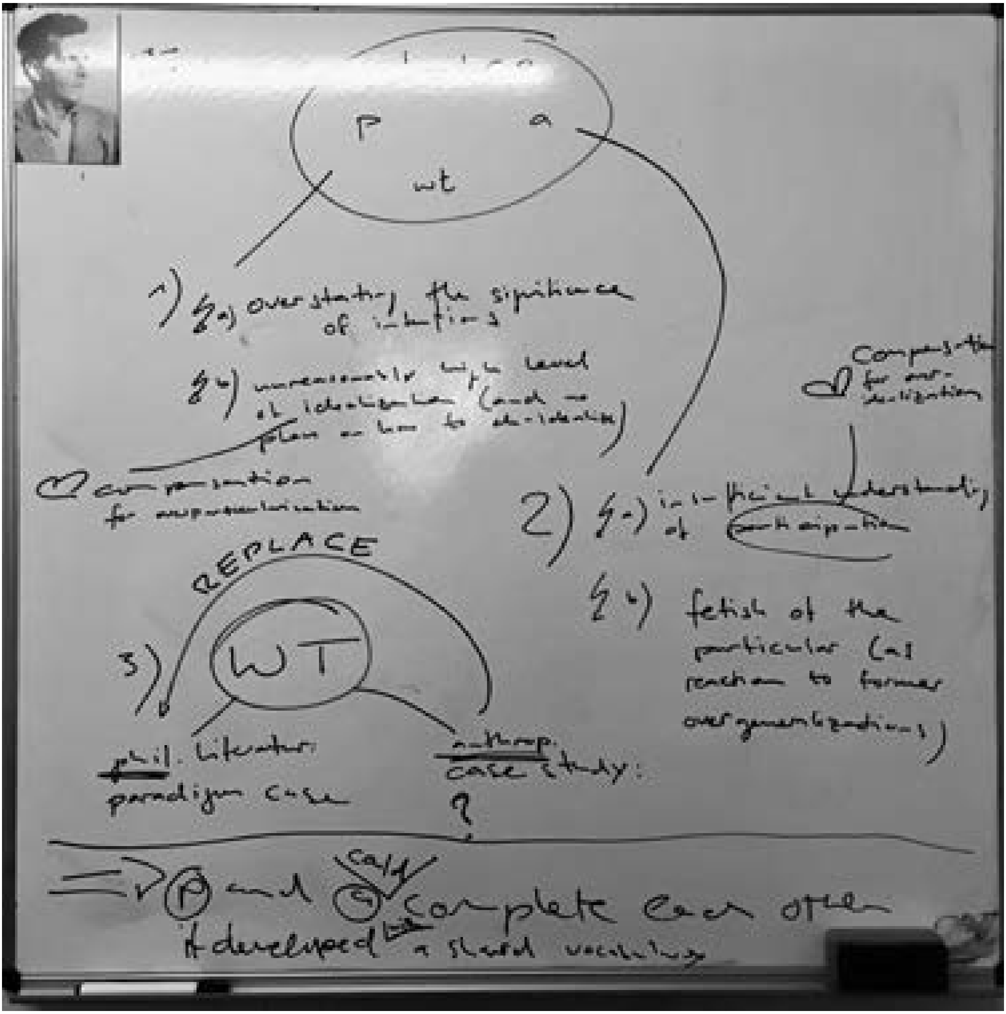
New Guinea – I was the lonesome figure, the odd one out, at least initially. This is a second reading of the doodle. All eyes were directed on me and it was I who was questioned: What are you doing here? Why the Wam? How long do you plan to stay, etc.? Unlike a defendant in the dock, I was not sentenced to eighteen months in the field, I was there voluntarily; moreover, I could get up and walk off whenever I liked. I settled in easily, and soon the direction of questions was reversed: It was no longer the villagers asking me questions, instead, I as the 'outsider' began asking the people things ... many, many things, it's a wonder they didn't get fed up of me. But maybe they did!

Apart from being a researcher, I always also saw my part as that of a translator or interpreter, not only with regard to language but also in terms of cultural ideas and concepts. To be more precise, I took their terms and words for specific practices, translated them into English and fitted them into the scientific boxes I had been taught about, for example, cross-cousin/kinship, lineage/belonging, sorcery/antagonism. Back home, anthropologists sift through their material, analyzing and sorting it with regard to its explanatory power, building their case, so to speak, before sitting down and writing up their study. What they write is usually considered authoritative and reliable, not least because it is based on scientific methodology and 'having been there'.

I never consciously valuated or judged the Wam but merely tried to describe how I understood what I had learnt in the field. I took their words and turned them into a new narrative. Given the colonial roots of anthropology, this automatically raises the question as to how far I – and anthropologists of my and earlier generations in general – inadvertently helped to cement the divide between Us and Them, to create the Other. Although well-intentioned, we must keep in mind that our work also forwarded the clichéd view of Indigenous

people of the South held by many in the Western world, in this sense comparable to the prejudiced view regarding a defendant in a Basel court. This, so to speak, is the third reading of the drawing above.

Nigel Stephenson holds a PhD in Anthropology. He worked as a lecturer at the Institute of Social Anthropology from 1986 to 2000. He conducted fieldwork in Papua New Guinea and Ghana. Since 2003, he has been working as a freelance translator in Basel. n.stephenson@bluewin.ch



p
a
wt
1)
overstating the significance of intentions
2)
fetish of the particular (as reaction to former overgeneralizations)
REPLACE
3)
WT
phil. literature:
paradigm case
anthrop.
case study:
?
p and a complete each other
a shared vocabulary

Theory
Anna Bloom-Christen

Suppose you said: 'This phrase in music always
makes me make one peculiar gesture.'
A painter might draw this gesture.
(Wittgenstein [1966: 38], judging my theoretical point
of departure, upper left corner)

Who is this man?
Why is he so angry at the big panda?
(Unfamiliar child, puzzled by the drawing,
peeking through my office door, 2019)

As the South African spring of 2019 approached, scribbles in my field diary were getting increasingly desperate. Things I thought I understood turned out to be incorrect or more complicated than they appeared; or else they presented themselves as things I could have understood by thinking and reading *at home*. I had produced piles of files on random encounters and various interpretations of the same situations – none of which felt right. My fieldnotes were riddled with question marks and BUTs. Ambivalence had not decreased, but taken over. Was I Balzac's botanist who had collected so many plants that she had to feed them all to the next best cow? Had I taken too seriously the ideal of inductive research, of pressing aside the theoretical framework I had drawn up for my grant application? Or have I been fooling myself? Was theory always there, dominating and framing every attentive moment? Was my work driven by stories or by theories?

I started mapping my initial ideas onto the whiteboard. I needed to get some perspective, a bird's eye view of my overall aims. Is this Ungrounded Theory? Is all I will reap the forbidden fruit of deduction? Arrows and alleys between concepts started to form in my head, and I drew them onto

the board as they came. At least I was in good company. Framing the problem of finding the right moment to move between the particular and the general, Michael Jackson identifies a peculiar need to distance oneself from the episode in which one was embedded in order to interpret it. This 'dialectic between engagement and disengagement' (2014: 27), between present instances and their future interpretations, finds further expression in Jackson's thoughts on ethnography, where he describes a tension between tacit everyday knowledge and conscious reflection. The act of distancing ourselves from the world by theorizing seems to be in opposition to the ethnographer's concern to understand the unique details of human experience. To emphasize the danger of two extremes – empty theorizing on the one hand and not seeing the wood for the trees on the other – Jackson draws on Wittgenstein, who himself was trying to understand what would later become known as the rule-following paradox. This paradox refers to the problem that 'no course of action could be determined by a rule, because any course of action can be made out to accord with the rule' (2009: §201). In order to narrow the gap between theory and practice, we need to:

> get ourselves off the 'slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk' and back 'to the rough ground' where our feet, and our thoughts, can gain some purchase. (Wittgenstein 2009: §107; quoted in Jackson 2014: 27)

Here, the slippery ice represents pure theorizing: analysis or synthesis of existent scholarship. The friction depicts empiricism: experience gained in practice. With this interpretation, Jackson identifies what he takes to be the key challenge to which the participant observer must rise. Ethnographic fieldwork must be a constant dialectic between near and far, in which human consciousness:

> oscillates between moments of complete absorption in an immediate situation an moments of detachment – when we stand back and take stock of what we are doing, how we are doing it and why. (Jackson 2014: 27)

A child whom I had never seen before appeared in the doorway and asked what I was doing. Why was the man in the corner so mad at the panda? I had no idea what the child was on about, but clearly, they saw something I did not. I took a step back and discovered the p and a eyes and the wt snout. Was I ready to re-draw theory? The angry man was there to remind me: If a sound can be drawn, translated from one language into another, then perhaps my generalization is a form of translation.

Jackson, M. 2014. Ajàlá's Heads: Reflections on Anthropology and Philosophy in a West African Setting. In: V. Das, M. Jackson, A. Kleinman and B. Singh, eds., *The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Wittgenstein, L. 2009 [1953]. *Philosophical Investigations*. Ed. and Transl. by P.M.S. Hacker and J. Schulte. 4th ed. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. 1966. *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Anna Bloom-Christen is SNSF Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of California, Los Angeles. She studied Anthropology at the University of Basel and Philosophy at the University of St Andrews. Her dissertation 'Walking Together' discusses conditions of knowledge gain through bodily participation. Her current book project examines joint attention as it breaks down in divided societies. abc22@g.ucla.edu

Traces
Alain Müller

This photograph of a civil register kept at the Archives départementales de l'Ain in Bourg-en-Bresse, France, was kindly sent to me by archivist Sonia Dollinger-Désert, who took it and posted it online. That is where I first came across it. It shows the civil register, in which traces of bookworms, probably the larvae of furniture beetles, or anobiids (*Anobium punctatum*), are drawn. A drawing, indeed, 'understood in the widest sense as a linear movement that leaves an impression or *trace* of one kind or another' (Ingold 2011: 2, my italicization), which is in the foreground, relegating the human writing to its margin.

The aesthetics of the photograph, and of the drawing it portrays, is stunning. Not necessarily in the sense of modern aesthetics, that is, in the sense of beauty, but rather in the sense of *aisthesis*, that is to say, relative to the sensible, to the affects. For this drawing is a matter of the sublime. It projects us into a vertigo, disengages us from ourselves and from the objects 'we' hold dear, and which hold us as individuals and historical collectives.

A tiny find, indeed, that of the traces of two millimeter larvae, but which nevertheless points to the immensity that characterizes the sublime as it unfolds, for an instant, the folds of multiple times, spaces and scales. Tiny larvae that draw their own history and become thus, to our stupefaction, agents of history. But the histories they draw, the stories they write, do not have the attributes of exclusivity of modern human history. They are multiple. They are the entangled histories of the 'endosymbiotic relations [anobiids] develop[ed] with several species of yeasts, bacteria, protozoa and microscopic fungi, by means of which they succeed in digesting the lignin and the cellulose from wood' (Gămălie and Mustaţă

2006: 73). In the light of these different (hi-)stories, the civil register, archetype and agent of the modern invention of human individuation and of its collective history, becomes however nothing else than a piece of wood to be eaten, testifying itself of the deep time during which the atoms of carbons followed their cycle, the cycle of matter and of life.

Let us follow the materials, as Ingold invites us, to end up in the realization, both sublime and vertiginous, of our own finitude, of our embedding in a meshwork of multiple beings and substances. Both humans and the *quasi-objects* – in Michel Serres's sense – that matter to them and weave them as collectives are indeed vulnerable, 'permanently mortal' in the words of Donna Haraway. This is where the power of this drawing lies. It diffracts the ontological conviction of 'our' specificity and exclusivity, and by the same token '[re-]multiplie[s] the [ontological] possibles' (Latour 2017: 257). They may have conjugated with capital letters, but the so-called History of the Moderns – of which 'we' continue to be the heirs both in spite of ourselves and with our complicity – is in fact one history among a multiplicity of stories, a written trace among a multitude of traces. Just as modern knowledge, despite its rhetorical promise of transcendence, is in fact subjected to marginalization and/or erasure by other modes of knowledge and engagement of the world, other worldings.

Anthropologists have paid much attention to the conditions and consequences of the production of their own knowledge. While this attention and the care for the relations constitutive of the ethnographic field are commendable, the question of the possibility of anthropological knowledge's own complicity with the rhetoric of transcendental knowledge of modern science, and with the belief in human exclusivity, might deserve to be questioned. More-than-human drawings do not wait for ethnographies to be drawn, just as more-than-human stories do not wait for them

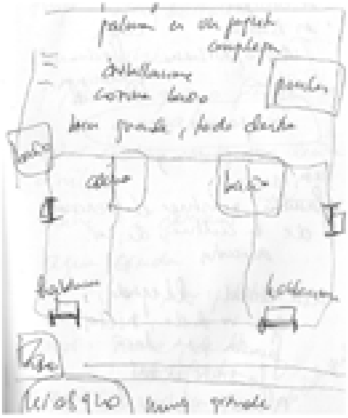
to be written. And if anthropological knowledge is willing to venture out of such rhetoric and belief, how might it reinvent itself? I see this drawing as an invitation to think of the mode of existence of ethnography as that of an *intercessor* – in the sense that Gilles Deleuze meant it, that is, as a political mediator whose role is to allow the multiple regimes of existence to unfold.

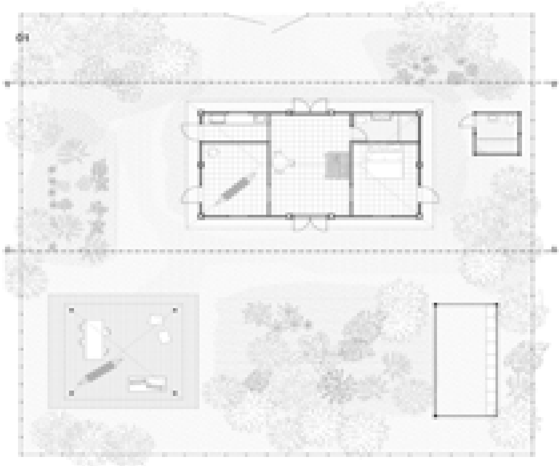
Gămălie, G. and M. Mustaţă. 2006. The Attack of Anobiids on Books from the Ecclesiastic Patrimony. *European Journal of Science and Theology 2* (2): 69-81.

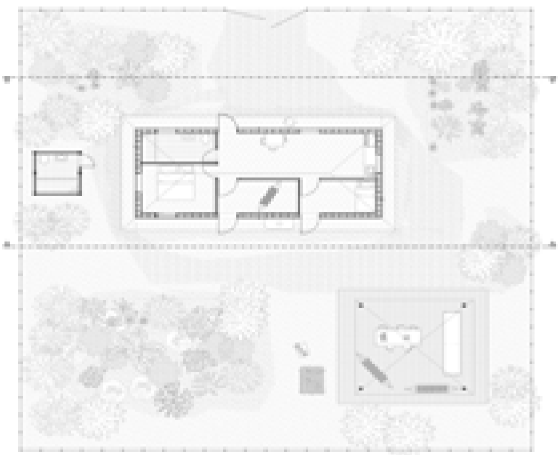
Ingold, T. 2011. *Redrawing Anthropology: Materials, Movements, Lines*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

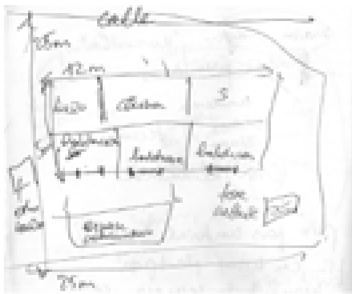
Latour, B. 2017. *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Alain Müller is an Assistant Professor in Cultural Anthropology (Kulturanthropologie) and Gender Studies at the Seminar für Kulturwissenschaft and Europäische Ethnologie, University of Basel. Combining anthropology with insights from STS and environmental humanities, his current research focuses on practices at the interface of arts, crafts and sciences, with an attention to materialities and practical ontologies.
alain.mueller@unibas.ch








calle

Translations
Anna Magdalena Vollmer Mateus & Sarah Silbernagel

I asked the Zénu *Capitán*, 'so, you want a plan?', unsure if I had misunderstood something. Speaking on behalf of all members of the community, the *Capitán* explained they wanted a plan for houses that they hoped to replace their current ones with.

I returned coincidentally on a morning when most of the men had left to work on a plot of land not far away. While strolling on a small path with two research participants in the now very quiet village, we heard a woman's voice calling out: 'You, there! What are you doing?' We were promptly invited into her home and asked to explain our presence. The four of us then engaged in a conversation, discussing specifics about her envisioned ideal home. This led us to the collective elaboration of the first sketch. About an hour later, another woman in the village kindly offered us seats in her backyard. In a similar generous way to our first interlocutor, she actively engaged in this exercise of imagination which resulted in the second sketch.

Talking about housing infrastructure means centering the space around the house; it means appreciating practical furniture such as hammocks and *trojas* (a multi-use surface on four legs rammed into the earth) and noting the importance of water storage systems. I write '*terre cultivée*' (cultivated land) to remind myself that the space around the house is ideally land on which the majority of what the household subsides from can be grown. Mixing French and Spanish, I record the mention of an '*espace communitario*' (communal space), unsure about the materiality of this desired infrastructure. I spell '*kiosquo*' instead of '*quiosco*', as I only know the word in French, '*kiosque*'. '*Poules*' (chicken) is written in a rectangle to indicate the importance of having a space to keep animals.

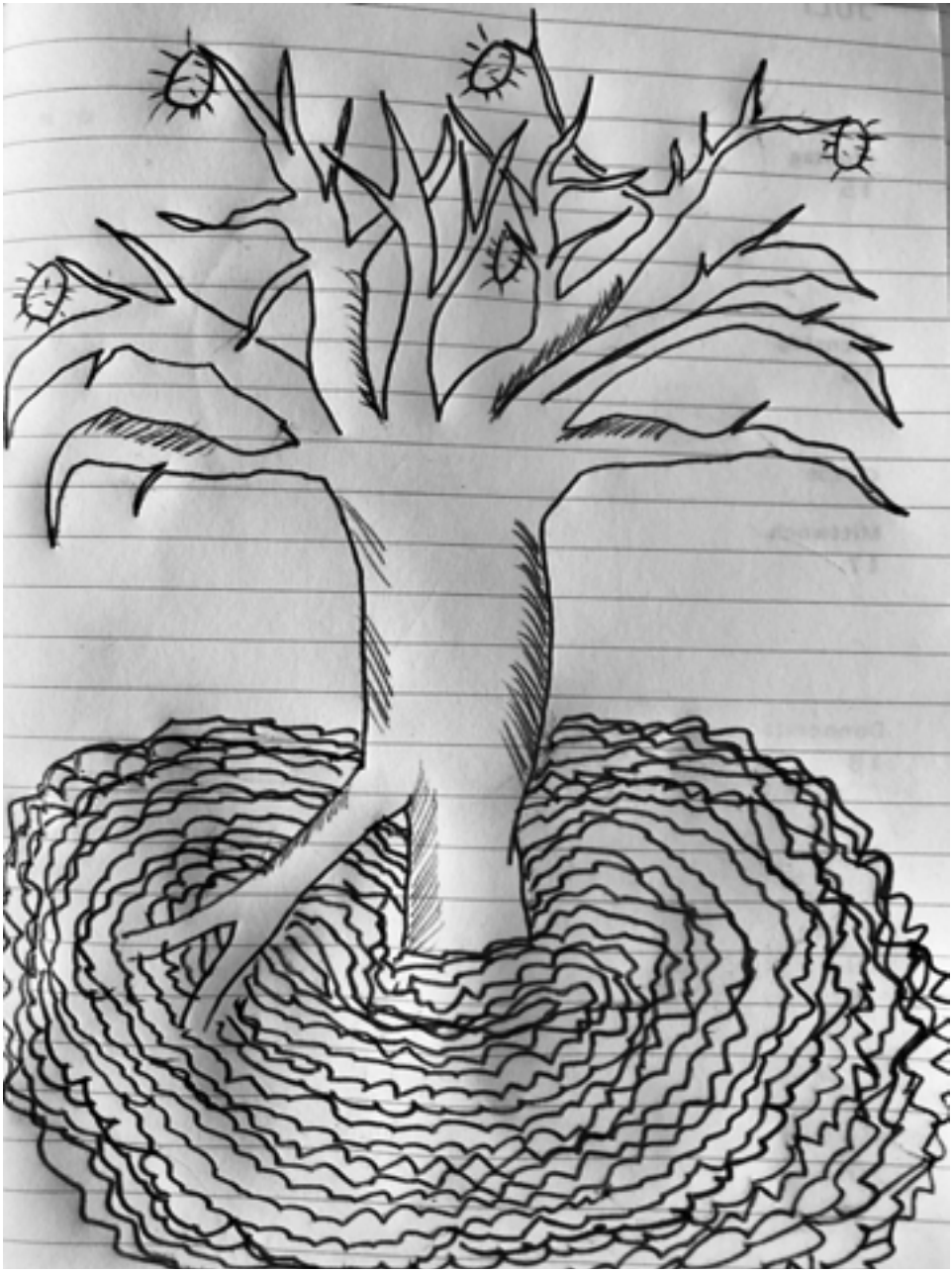
I ask myself: what has been lost, what has been gained in translation? My jotting, partially visible in the sketches, frenetically runs behind the women's visions. Rough lines suddenly flatten intricate descriptions. Back in Basel, I do my best to tie together the traces left on the pages as I am explaining the situation to my friend Sarah Silbernagel, the architect who made the blueprints pictured here. She patiently reintroduced dimensions back into my ramblings and the precious sketches. We then flattened everything again since we wanted to display only the floor plans and not the 3D-visualizers in this publication.

During the first meeting with the *Capitán*, the blueprints for the houses were presented to me as an instrument that, in ways that were not entirely clear to me, was intended to play a role in a much more important process: fighting for collective ownership of the land the inhabitants of the village had settled on, displaced by the violence in the Colombian countryside. One thing was eminently clear: owning this land, located near Cartagena's extensive industrial zone, was the priority – there was no way around it.

We thank Fabio, one of the two crucial research participants mentioned above, for his valuable feedback.

Anna Magdalena Vollmer Mateus began her MA in Political Science and Social Anthropology at the University of Basel in 2021. She is interested in the topics of transitional justice, trade and mobility, digital ethnography, as well as urban space in the contemporary neoliberal context. anna.vollmermateus@unibas.ch

Sarah Silbernagel studied Architecture at the Bauhaus University and is currently enrolled in the Master Program at the Art University Berlin. She worked in offices in Basel, Brussels and Berlin and started freelancing as an architectural photographer and journalist. sarahsilbernagel@hotmail.de



Wanderlust
Michael Stasik

There was no moment when M. decided to run away. One day he just left. And he did not turn back. He found reasons much later. The early death of his parents. Fights with his brothers over money. His failed apprenticeship as a mechanic. The girl he was in love with, who ignored his heartfelt messages. He recalled that months before his departure he had begun to suspect that someone had put a spell on him, fearing that he might slip into madness. On the day he left, he had cast off the spell, or whatever it was. From then on, chance led his way. He passed villages eerily similar to his own. The excitement he felt when he entered the city was soon replaced by despair. Hunger made him beg, lie and steal. He fought over a bowl of beans and one cold night almost killed a man over a blanket. A nocturnal encounter with a tree spirit saved him from his malevolent ways. The spirit turned the tree upside down and placed tears on the roots for M. to collect, but they turned into thorny plums whenever he reached for them. The next morning, he got up and started walking south. He underestimated his strength and collapsed in the middle of a bush road. A truck driver took pity on him. They drove for days. He dropped M. off behind the border. Entering a foreign land filled him with humility. Though he did not understand a word, the people treated him kindly. An old man took him in. He taught him how to cook and one day introduced him to the hotel where he himself had learned to cook. M. worked there for three years. His spiced plum chutney impressed a Spanish diplomat enough to entice M. to work for him. Initially shocked by the family's affluence, he soon got used to it. He became their dinner chef. Every day he slept a little longer and started drinking a little earlier. He was fired for inappropriately touching the diplomat's wife. By then, he

suspected, he had already impregnated two of the staff. Stagnation is the root of many ills, he explained with hindsight, and wandering is its cure. He did not, however, immediately set out on a new journey. He had money now and spent it on food and girls. One girl persuaded him to buy a motorbike. He rode it for a week and crashed. The accident left him limping and the hospital bill left him penniless. He again started cooking for money, wondering why a limp makes a cook earn less. A woman told him about a sacred spring that could cure all kinds of ailments. When he got there, he found that the spring had dried up. He moved in with the warden of a nearby herbal clinic, where he learned to process plants to make curative agents. One day a group of children from a school for the blind visited the clinic. He fell in love with one of their teachers. He joined the school as a cook and spent months courting her in vain. She feared that his wanderlust would drive him away, he explained. He stayed on for another year, hoping that his persistence would make her change her mind. She did not, and one morning he left. In the evening of the same day, M. arrived at the bus station in Accra where I was doing my research. He spoke to me first in Spanish and asked for directions to a decent hotel. I went with him and listened to his story until late at night. When I returned the next evening to check on him, he was gone.

Michael Stasik is a lecturer at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel, and author of *DISCOnnections: Popular Music Audiences in Freetown, Sierra Leone* (2012) and *Bus Station Hustle: Transport Work in Urban Ghana* (in press). michael.stasik@unibas.ch

The immaculate Waterfall Crescent homes are offered in a variety of 4 and 5 bedroom designs.

Waste Monsters
Renugan Raidoo

Ethnography thrives in excess. We collect voraciously. Fieldwork never goes as planned, so seemingly irrelevant or unexpected data spark new insights. It's the surprising things – those exceeding expectation, need, 'logic' or 'rationality' – that inspire our most novel arguments. One might say that culture is found in excess. But as excess has amassed into waste, it has caused alarm as much as reflection.

During my fieldwork in South African luxury estates, waste manifested in many ways. Amidst the gross opulence of elite conspicuous consumption, golf-estate residents nonetheless decried the litter (which they blamed on much poorer Black township residents upstream) that flowed into the estate on the Jukskei river, worried about climate change, and fiercely debated the welfare of animals and plants – domesticated, indigenous and otherwise – in and out of the estate.

I observed, participated in the management of – and wrote about – waste, but my ethnographic practice also generated it. All research leaves data on the cutting room floor and in unused notebooks, destining it for, at best, the yawning maw of the archive. A personal archive of advertising brochures, sample contracts, homeowners' association agreements, magazines, and newspapers piled up on my coffee table, in the back of my car, on shelves and in drawers.

During long industry webinars and meetings, my mind often wandered. I used the time to whittle down this overwhelming archive, pulling materials I was convinced I'd never need, procrastinating the digitization of useful material until the days before my return flight. My attention was split between listening to an estate manager complain about residents or a service provider selling a product, and making decisions about what to discard. Daydreams oozed from the seam

perilously holding listlessness and focus together in those moments. I found myself inattentively doodling them onto the heavy, glossy, expensive brochures otherwise destined for recycling.

The sanitized, modern, aspired-to spaces of exclusionary urban development are filled with grotesque fantasies the world over, belying a remarkably pervasive anxiety that beneath the shiny surfaces are repressed pasts, alienations and monstrosities threatening to rupture the facade. The 1982 film *Poltergeist* finds a new family in the Cuesta Verde planned community menaced by supernatural forces revealed, ultimately, to originate in a subterranean ancient graveyard. In the *X-Files* episode 'Arcadia' (1999), Scully and Mulder investigate disappearances in The Falls at Arcadia, another fictional California development. They find homeowners terrified into submission by an association president who has summoned a '*tulpa*...a Tibetan thought-form' to enforce rules. The thought-form materializes from the sewerage, taking its substance from waste and inhabiting the infrastructures that direct runoff in an organized fashion around civilized life. Suburban horror fantasies around Chiang Mai are populated by malevolent specters – in *Laddaland* (2011) the ghost of a Burmese maid murdered by a white resident – and figures of criminal migrants (Johnson 2013). It was an imagined criminal intruder behind a closed door that Oscar Pistorius blamed for leading him to shoot his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp in their Pretoria gated community home. In the novel *Nineveh*, a development near Cape Town is overrun by an insect infestation verging on the science fictional. But the infestation was born of family dysfunction, recapitulating in suburbia the anxieties of Gothic horror, the suspicion that external grotesqueries manifest corruption at the heart of domesticity. Monstrous infestation is hardly distant from the realm of plausibility. Mount Edgecombe Golf Estate in

Durban was famously overrun by aggressive monkeys forced there by encroaching urban development. More recently, *carpinchos* (capybaras) invaded (or, depending on whom you ask, reclaimed) a swanky gated community built atop a wetland just outside of Buenos Aires.

Johnson, A. 2013. Progress and Its Ruins: Ghosts, Migrants, and the Uncanny in Thailand. *Cultural Anthropology* 28 (2): 299-319.

Renugan Raidoo's work focuses on the values that underpin urban segregation in South Africa. He has taught at Brandeis University and currently teaches at Harvard University, where he completed his PhD in Social Anthropology. His academic work on gated communities and on the politics of homophobia can be found in edited volumes and journals including *Africa* and *GLQ*. rraidoo@gmail.com

Witness

Junnan Mu

In the realm of fieldwork, a set of tools – camera, recorder, exercise book and pen – serve as a means to organize and record encounters and perspectives. It is within this context that this image was captured – a drawing of myself as an ethnographer, created by a young man during my preliminary fieldwork in a Kenyan village adjacent to a proposed futurist city in 2022. The drawing, produced while I filmed him and his friends outside a kiosk, encapsulates our initial encounter in the village. It emerges as a response, perhaps even a mocking one, to the 'annoying' tools I carried with me despite people's prior agreement to participate. In this drawing, I am depicted as a fully bounded figure, devoid of any contextual or environmental elements, in stark contrast to the filming where individuals are inseparable from the places they inhabit.

Indeed, this drawing assumes the role of a witness, diligently preserving and embodying the multi-sensory texture of intimacy experienced during fieldwork. The act of observing and documenting, as fundamental as it is, is not without its complexities and implications. However, this very process of drawing suggests a new method of engaging with the initial encounter—one where the possibility of involvement or withdrawal is brought into focus. Within this context, the image casts doubt on my endeavor to represent the 'everyday life in the village' in a sensorially vivid and seamless manner. I still remember how spontaneity of the creative process fills the air as anticipation builds for the unveiling of a drawing. Eagerly awaiting its reveal, a mixture of excitement and curiosity intertwines. This condensed image reshaped the temporal sequencing that was once guided by my camera. In fact, upon beholding the drawing, a wave of embarrassment

washes over me. I find myself inwardly exclaiming, 'Gosh, I wouldn't want to be filmed by a mysterious figure wearing such a gigantic mask!'

This interaction goes beyond mere observation; it captures and conveys the profound connections and sensory experiences shared between the ethnographer and the individuals being studied. By contrasting it with my filming, this drawing expands the realm of intimacy. I film what they draw, and they draw what I film, transforming us into co-creators of the ethnography. The drawing thus becomes a testament to this reciprocal exchange, encapsulating the multi-sensory aspects of intimacy and the shared act of seeing in a tangible and expressive form. In essence, this drawing serves as a powerful reminder of the intricate dynamics and transformative potential inherent in the fieldwork process. It tangiblizes not only the subjectivity of the ethnographer but also the agency and creativity of the participants. Together, they navigate the complex terrain of understanding and interactions, ultimately shaping a more nuanced and comprehensive ethnographic narrative.

Junnan Mu is a PhD candidate in African and African American Studies and a fellow at the Film Study Center at Harvard University. She combines an ethnographic and multi-sensory approach to understanding urbanism, digitality, spirituality and the technoscientific future-making in Kenya and beyond. Her work is supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation of Anthropology. junnanmu@g.harvard.edu

bap