

KINESTHETIC ETHNO-ETHOGRAPHY I

LABORATORY STUDIES, AND GENDER-SENSITIVE
PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

*»An ant writing for other ants,
this fits my project very well!«*

Bruno Latour 2005, 9

UNI
FREIBURG

mbody

CENTER FOR ANTHROPOLOGY AND
GENDER STUDIES (ZAG)

ZAG-Team

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*Concept & Layout: © Marion Mangelsdorf, humananimalisch 2014
in Correspondence to BUZZ, © Fetzner/Dornberg 2014*

// Kinesthetic ethno-ethography from April 2014 to May 2015
in-between Freiburg and India
kindly supported by DAAD-PROMOS scholarship

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LABORATORY STUDIES, AND GENDER-SENSITIVE
PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

With participant observation a team from the Center for Anthropology and Gender Studies (ZAG) at Freiburg University accompanies two laboratories in Bangalore, India. A scientific one at the Center for Ecological Sciences at Indian Institute of Science (IISc). Here, especially the research of the South Indian wasp *Ropalidia marginata* will be focused. In August 2014 connected to this lab and in collaboration with Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology an artistic research laboratory will be established. This art-lab explores issues relating to embodiment theories, observation practices and entanglements of human and animal societies at the example of wasp colonies.

In both contexts the ZAG-team asks how knowledge is generated. Thereby not just cognitive, but also kinesthetic – that means (e)motional and sensual – aspects of behavior attract attention. As well as different forms of human and non-human agencies – intersections of bio- and technospheres – matter.

*The project is initiated by Daniel Fetzner, Professor for Design and Artistic Research at Hochschule Offenburg, who was 2012 Visiting Professor at Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore. During that time he got to know the Entomologist Raghavendra Gadagkar, Head of the Centre for Ecological Sciences at IISc (cf. interview between Gadagkar and Fetzner: <http://www.metaspaces.de/Main/InterviewRg>). A first artistic research between Freiburg and Bangalore took place 2013: called *Embedded Phase Delay* in cooperation with Martin Dornberg, doctor for psychosomatics and philosophy, as well as (other) members of MBoody – a Group for Artistic Research in Media, Psychosomatics, Dance and Philosophy. Inter alia this is a follow-up project of that one.*

>>> Cf.: <http://www.metaspaces.de/Dokumentation/Buzz>

LABORATORY STUDIES

In *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* the sociologist Bruno Latour and his colleague Steve Woolgar compare their empirical science studies in a laboratory with that of traditional anthropology. A tradition, where

»scores of men and women have penetrated deep forests, lived in hostel climates, and weathered hostility, boredom, and disease in order to gather the remnants of so called primitive societies.« In contrast they refer to »tribes of scientists and their production of science.« Latour & Woolgar 1986: 17

For them labs are metaphors of our contemporary societies, *hybrids*: artificial environments to study (natural) entities, and produce epistemological discourses in-between science|fiction|technologies (cf. Macho & Wuschel 2004); although the hybridity of this »manufacture of knowledge« (Knorr-Cetina 1981) should be – in favor of facts – purged from aspects like affects, imaginations etc.



Photography: © Daniel Fetzner

*»For the world to become knowable, it must become a laboratory.«
Bruno Latour 1999*

Laboratory Studies are part of the *Social Studies of Science and Technology Studies* (STS) as well as *Actor-Network-Theory* (ANT). In the 1960s Latour and Woolgar were co-founder of STS and ANT. In this context participant observation is a common method, where science and technology as socially embedded enterprises with different human and non-human actors, and their circling references get attention. Referring to STS-ethnographers the ZAG-team follows entomologists and artistic researchers in different, but mutual interwoven environments, focussing on their hybridity. Here, we take account what the feminist STS-biologist Donna J. Haraway emphasizes:

CYBORG ONTOLOGIES AND HUMAN ANIMAL STUDIES (HAS)

»The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation.« Donna J. Haraway 1991



Photography: *The Fly*, USA 1958

By watching animals this ›cyborg-ontology‹ plays an essential role. Is it possible to come off our anthropocentric point of view? Which metamorphoses do we undergo in contact with animals we studying, even as natural scientists, who – professionally – want to keep an objective distance to their research subjects?

In the horror science-fiction-film *The Fly* an entomologist experiences a metamorphose physically. Therefore the film narrates imaginations, and the state of the art in popular scientific knowledge about flies in the 1950s,– differences, but also a continuum between living beings are thematized.

But – beside these horror scenarios – in natural and social sciences an human-animal-continuum is controversial discussed. Even more, over a long period in Western cultures philosophers and biologists have declared boundaries between humans and non-humans. But following the *body turn* in social sciences we consider also an *animal turn*, where human-animal-relationships on different levels are studied. The STS-based *Human-Animal-Studies* (HAS) gives human and non-human animals through ethnomethodological – empirical orientated – research an idea of the scope's diversity. They work out the intersection of heterogenous agencies,– so we do. One approach in this context is called *Ethno-Ethology*.

ETHNO-ETHOLOGY

The philosopher Dominique Lestel speaks about a ›coming synthesis‹ concerning the transdisciplinary approach of Ethno-Ethology. Therefore he deals

»[...] with the highly problematic question of interfaces between ethology and ethnology. These are in effect two autonomous disciplines: ethnologists study human societies, while ethologists study animal societies. The first are social scientists, while the second tend to be biologists or behaviorists. These are not only two distinct areas of expertise; they are also disciplines that have grown up, historically, in opposition to each other.« Lestel 2006: 147

In analyze of the conflictual sythnesis between biology and social sciences – historically condensed in the term ›Sociobiology‹ – Lestel sketch out perspectives for the transdisciplinary challenge in-between Ethnology and Ethology:

»[T]his new ethnological approach sets out to integrate the analysis and understanding of our knowledge of the living world, its organization as well as its application, in an approach to the interactive relational system that links humans and non-humans. At the same time, it grants all living beings the status of relational beings, that is, agents interacting on the phenomenon of ›culture‹ that was hitherto reserved for human beings.« Lestel 2006: 168

In addition the ethnographer Anna Tsing writes:

»It allows something new: passionate immersion in the lives of the nonhumans being studied. Once such immersion was allowed only to natural scientists, and mainly on the condition that the love didn't show. The critical intervention of this new science studies is that it allows learnedness in natural science and all the tools of the arts to convey passionate connection.« Tsing 2011: 19

But – do we want to ask – which preconditions have caused this shift? Here, we want to name two:

PATHOCENTRISM

Firstly, the change was layed by philosophers like Benjamin Bentham and Jacques Derrida, who critically analyzed our

epicly artificial separation from other animals through *rationality*. Following Bentham, Derrida explains:

»Thus the question will not be to know whether animals are the types *zōon logon echon*, whether they can speak or reason thanks to the capacity or that attribute of the *logos*, [...] (and logocentrism is first of all a thesis regarding the animal, the animal deprived of the *logos*, deprived of the can-have-the-*logos*: this is the thesis, position, or pre-supposition maintained from Aristotle to Heidegger, from Descartes to Kant, Levinans, and Lacan). The first and decisive question would rather be to know whether animals can suffer.

»Can they suffer?« asks Bentham, simply yet so profoundly.« Derrida 2008: 27

>>> Cf.: *Can they suffer? Facing Animal Suffering in Jacques Derrida and Primo Levi* by Damiano Benvegna, 2012 International Society for Anthrozoology Conference, Cambridge, UK: https://www.academia.edu/2063316/Can_they_suffer_Facing_Animal_Suffering_in_Jacques_Derrida_and_Primo_Levi

Pathocentrism includes to conceive, that humans share characteristics – even more then they mostly want to confess – with other living beings: first of all natality, vulnerability, and mortality. For this reason social structures are indispensable for a variety of animals and affect pack-, herd-, swarm- or group-intelligence (cf. Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* 1960).



Photography: *Matrix reloaded*, 2003
Swarm Dance in Zion

>>> Cf.: *Swarm* by Daniel Fetzner: <https://vimeo.com/86822709>

KINESTHETIC EMPATHY AND THE HERMENEUTIC CIRCLE

Secondly, another precondition was layed by research in cognitive science concerning *mirror neurons* – a neuronal base for empathy. Empathy is an inevitable capacity to study human *and* non-human animals – it's a basic skill for ethnographical processes. In the book *Mirrors in the brain. How Our Minds Share Actions, Emotions, and Experience* one of the early researchers of mirror neurons, the Neuroscientist Giacomo Rizzolatti, writes:

»In an interview some time ago, the great theatrical director, Peter Brook commented that with the discovery of mirror neurons, neurosciences has finally started to understand what has long been common knowledge in the theatre: the actor's efforts would be in vain if he were not able to surmount all cultural and linguistic barriers and share his bodily sounds and movements with the spectators, who thus actively contribute to the event and become one with the players on the stage. This sharing is the basis on which the theatre evolves and revolves, and mirror neurons, which became active both when an individual executes an act and when he observes it being executed by others, now provide this sharing with a biological explanation.« Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia 2006, ix

For the ethno-ethnographical process this base plays a key-function for other-awareness, but it also commits the scientists to critically reflect this process of understanding. The ethologist Kenneth Shapiro remarks:

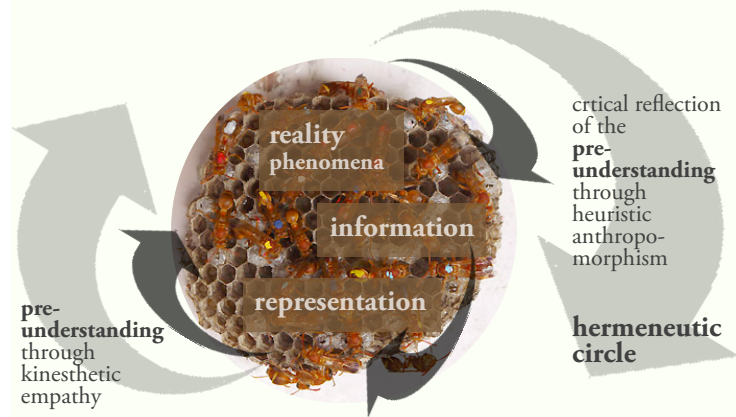
»The understanding that I bring to the object of study necessarily affects and is affected by that object such that I am involved in a progressive circle of further understanding—what is called the hermeneutic circle. While the empathic act aims to deliver just what the object of study is experiencing, that act is necessarily informed by my »preunderstanding« of the object. My lived body is continually informed by the world and subsequently takes up that world, including the other's world, differently. That is why it is critical to the present method that the investigator reflectively evaluate the product of his or her kinesthetic empathy.« Shapiro 1990, 185

>>> Cf.: *RSA Animate - The Empathic Civilisation*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7AWnfFRc7g>

HEURISTIC ANTHROPOCENTRISM

Additionally, the primatologist Frans de Waal writes about an *zoo centric, heuristic anthropomorphism*, an important perspective while observing animals. Because it helps us to emphasize with the animals point of view, which is necessary to develop verifiable ideas and theories. But we have to differentiate between this reflexive anthropomorphism and a *naïve* one, where animal behavior incorrectly is identified with human behavior. And alike he denies an *anthroponegation*, which asserts an insurmountable difference between humans and non-humans (cf. de Waal 2001).

MANUFACTURE OF KNOWLEDGE FOR KINESTHETIC ETHNO-ETHOGRAPHICAL STUDIES



Photography of an Indian Wasp Colony: © Daniel Fetzner
Manufacture-Concept: © ZAG-team

›SPEAKING NEARBY – NOT ABOUT‹

Since the writing culture debate in the 1980s we can find a critical handling with the triangle of ethnographical knowledge with the components: reality (phenomena) – information – representation. Whereas the question of how we perceive reality and gather information is an epistemological and phenomenological one, the question of representation is an ethical and political one. Here, the ZAG-team follows the nonrepresentational approach of the feminist and postcolonial videographer Trinh T.

Minh-ha. She uses the term ›speaking nearby, not about‹ as one of her techniques to ›make visible the invisible.‹

»[...] a speaking that does not objectify, does not point to an object as if it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place. A speaking that reflects on itself and can come very close to a subject without, however, seizing or claiming it. A speaking in brief, whose closures are only moments of transition opening up to other possible moments of transition — these are forms of indirectness well understood by anyone in tune with poetic language.«

For videographical processes she further points out:

»Truth never yields itself in anything said or shown. One cannot just point a camera at it to catch it: the very effort to do so will kill it. It is worth quoting here again Walter Benjamin for whom, ›nothing is poorer than a truth expressed as it was thought.‹ Truth can only be approached indirectly if one does not want to lose it and find oneself hanging on to a dead, empty skin. Even when the indirect has to take refuge in the very figures of the direct, it continues to defy the closure of a direct reading. [...] Because here, there is necessarily, among others, a layered play between political discourse and poetical language, or between the direct role of men and the indirect role of women.« Chen 1992: 87; cf. <http://docfilmhist.files.wordpress.com/2008/09/chen.pdf>

Additionally, her nonrepresentational videographical approach includes an understanding of ›the other‹ as an ›inappropriate/d other‹, ›not quite other, not quite the same‹:

INAPPROPRIATE/D OTHER

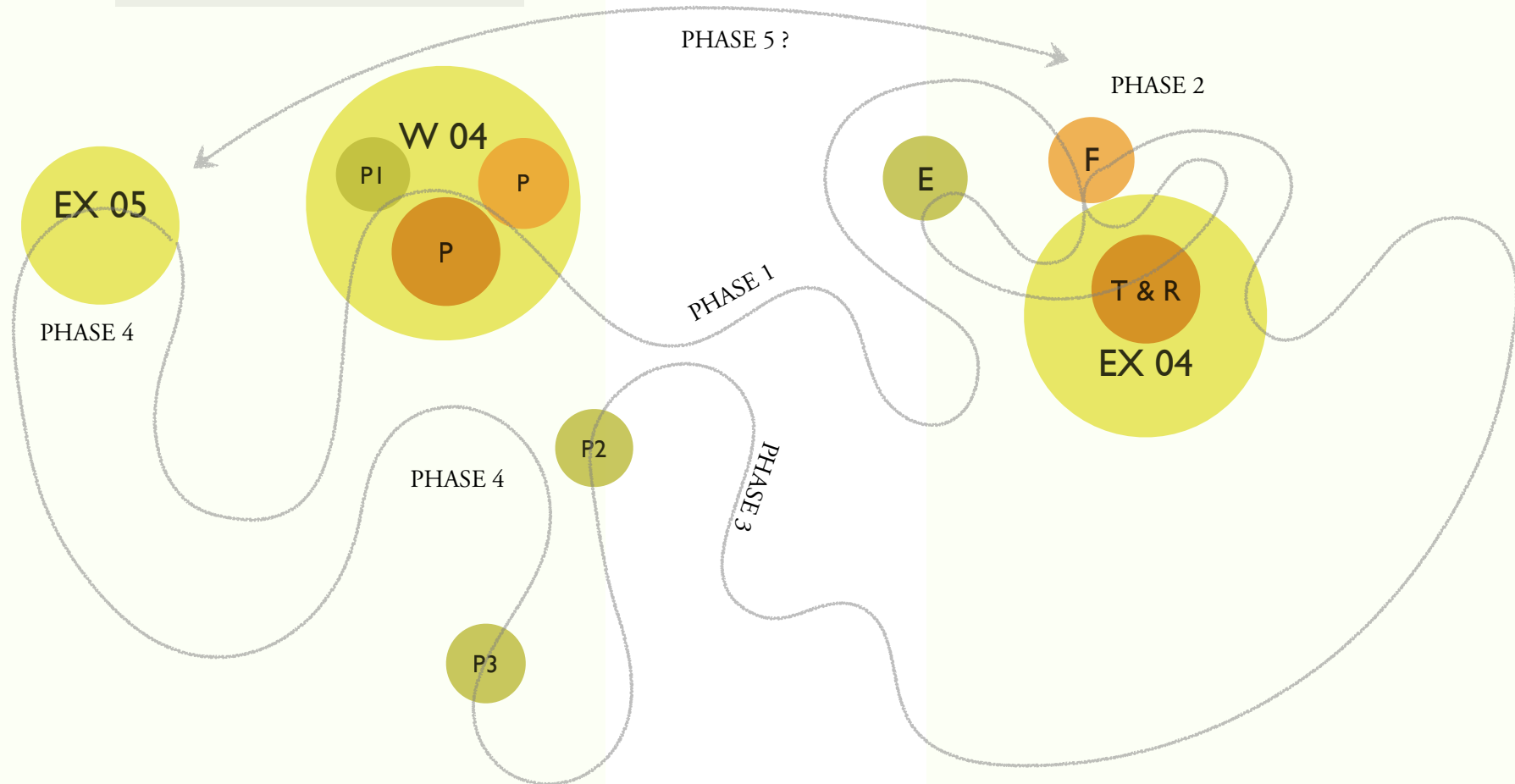
Minh-ha explains:

»One strategical definition of ›the inappropriate/d other‹ [...] is that you always fare with at least four simultaneous gestures: that of affirming ›I am like you‹ while persisting in one's difference; and that of affirming ›I am different‹ while unsettling all definitions and practices of otherness arrived at. This is where ›inappropriate(d)ness‹ takes form. Because if you talk about difference, there are many ways to take it in; if you simply understand it as a division between cultures, between people, between entities, you can't go very far with it. But when that difference between entities is being worked out as a difference also within, things start opening up. Inside and outside are both expanded. Within each entity, there is a vast field and within each self is a multiplicity.« Min-ha 2001: 46.

CARTHOGRAPHY OF KINESTHETIC ETHNO-ETHOGRAPHY IN THE CONTEXT OF SCIENTIFIC AND ARTISTIC LABORATORIES

ACTIVITIES IN FREIBURG / GERMANY &
VIENNA / AUSTRIA

ACTIVITIES IN BANGALORE / INDIA



Fetzner & students: Schnitzer, Tshiang Tshiananga (Hochschule Offenburg) & Dornberg (Uni Freiburg)/W=Workshop, EX= Exhibition

Mangelsdorf & students: Vonau, Skorzinski (Uni Freiburg)/P= Presentation; E= Ethno-Ethography

Gadagkar & students (Indian Institut of Science, Bangalore)/T& R= Teaching & Research

Mariadaas & students (Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology Bnagalore)/F= Filming

ZAG-TEAM

The ZAG-team includes following people. They will accompany the project differently:

WHO IS WHO?

MARION MANGELSDORF

Dr.^a phil. born 1968 in Cologne/G. She studied art, cultural anthropology, sociology, and philosophy. Since 1998 lecturer and special advisor at ZAG, Freiburg University.

Research interests: Feminist Science and Technology Studies (STS), Human-Animal-Studies (HAS), and Gender & Environment. The last ten years she has made ethnographical studies, first on human-wolve-relationships, then on diverse forms of human-horse-interaction.

In addition she (co-)organizes international projects regarding participatory methods in the context of media, artistic research and environmental sciences (with Bioersity international/MYL, Daniel Fetzner/G, Doris Ingrisch/AU and Mónica Alarcón/CO).

Since 2010 she is member of *MBody*.

FREDERIK SKORZINSKI

born 1988 in Renquishausen/G. Since 2013 he is master-student of interdisciplinary anthropology at Freiburg University. Member of the curator-team »zwischen/miete« in Freiburg (to organize lectures of young authors). He works as a freelancer journalist in print and radio media (Freiburg city-magazin *Chilli*, ethnological journal *iz3u*, and radio *Dreyeckland*). He has a seat on the board of the German-Southafrica Youth Office. In this context his main focus lies on the description of the process of producing and conveying knowledge. Yet, he dealt with this issue in academic, journalistic and cultural fields.

VICTORIA VONAU

born 1990 in Wippra/G. She studied philosophy, neuroscience and cognition as undergraduate studies in Magdeburg, and since 2013 she is master-student in interdisciplinary anthropology in Freiburg. She have experienced different disciplines such as psychophysics (testing human participants with visual experiments on attention and multi-stability), comparative psychology (testing causal cognition in chimpanzees at MPI EVA in Leipzig), and ethology (assisting a fieldstudy in Costa Rica about incest avoiding strategies in capuchin monkeys). Currently, she is interested in human-animal-interactions and an interdisciplinary approach combining ethnological and ethological methods.

PHASES AND DIVISION OF LABOUR

PHASE 1 – APRIL-AUG 2014

Participatory Media-Praxis in Ethnography, Teaching course at Freiburg University by Marion Mangelsdorf*

Human and (their) animals, Related course at Hochschule Offenburg by Daniel Fetzner

Participatory Observations (22./23.05.2014 at Hochschule Offenburg)

Joined workshop with students from

Freiburg (philosophy students of Martin Dornberg, and anthropology students of Marion Mangelsdorf),

Offenburg (media design students of Daniel Fetzner)

Further Participants:

Ute Holl (Basel University), Raghavendra Gadagkar (Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore), Vasanthi Mariadass (Srishti School of Art and Design, Bangalore)

FOCUS ON:

Built up a methodological base for participant observation.

OUTCOME:

- Interactive video documentations in m.gp3 *Human and (their) animals* by media design students at Hochschule Offenburg July, 25
- Concept-description *Buzz. Parasitic Media Intervention in an Indian Lab* by Fetzner/Dornberg
- Concept-paper *Kinesthetic Etho-Ethnography I*, and association- & reflexion-exercise on Buzz by ZAG-team

PHASE 2 – AUG 8-29, 2014

Kinethetic ethno-ethnography by Victoria Vonau in Bangalore, India, (kindly supported by DAAD-PROMOS scholarship) in close connection to Marion Mangelsdorf via Skype and E-Mail. Victoria accompanies two different laboratories:

* During the time of the teaching course another participant were important for the discussions and she was part auf the ZAG-team:

JULIA PATTOK. In 2013 she obtained a Bachelor's degree in ethnology at the University of Leipzig and started to study a master's programme at the University of Freiburg subsequently. As her undergraduate studies concentrated on traditional theory and methodology of social and cultural anthropology, she is now more interested in alternative ways of investigation like participant and audio-visual methods of ethnography.

- A scientific lab at the *Center for Ecological Sciences at Indian Institut of Science (IISc)*, and
- an artistic research laboratory in collaboration with Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology (cf. *Buzz. Parasitic Media Intervention in an Indian Lab*)

FOCUS ON:

Participant observation, creating memos, diagrams, gathering experiences, writing descriptions of perception.

PHASE 3 – AUG 8-29, 2014

In dialogue with each other Victoria Vonau and Frederik Skorzinski will work out their research-project in context of the master interdisciplinary anthropology. Marion Mangelsdorf is their supervisor. Therefore they will evaluate and analyze the ethno-ethographical process in India.

PHASE 4 – Oct 2014-Feb 2015

Contributions to discuss processes of participation, ethno-(etho)graphy, and artistic research by Victoria Vonau and Frederik Skorzinski in following contexts could be possible:

- Team-teaching course *Performing Change* by Marion Mangelsdorf in cooperation with *Mathilde ter Heijne* (Kunsthochschule Kassel), Museum for Contemporary Art and Theatre Freiburg, and *Mónica Alarcón* (University Colombia).
- *Experimental workshop* Nov 10-11 2014 by *Doris Ingrisch* (University for Music and Performing Arts Vienna/AU) and Marion Mangelsdorf

PHASE 5 – March-May 2015

Marion Mangelsdorf will accompany the process while German and Indian students will document the »BUZZ intervention« intercultural-ly.. Furthermore she will be part of the discussion of the research group *MBody* regarding the whole project progression. Especially following activity will be interesting: alongside Freiburg Filmforum's ethnographic group in the Kommunalen Kino Freiburg (May 13th – 15th 2015), an experimental artistic exposition in the galleries of T66 will take place.

PHASE 6

As the ZAG-team conceive their ethnography as an activity of *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) the question after the field trip in August 2014 to Bangalore will be: What could we give back to the people we have been observed? How can our work be fruitful for them, for the people, who travelled from Germany to India, but also for the people in India? And could we create possibilities to exchange our ideas on the long run? Are their opportunities to invite our Indian cooperation partners to Germany (once more), and built up sustainable structures between us?

GENDER SENSITIVE PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

»Participatory research attempts to break down the distinction between the researchers and the researched, the subjects and objects of knowledge production by the participation of the people-for-themselves in the process of gaining and creating knowledge. In the process, research is seen not only as a process of creating knowledge, but simultaneously, as education and development of consciousness, and of mobilization for action.« Gaventa 1988: 19



Photography: © Cross-Cultural-Media 2013

THE GOAL OF
PARTICIPATORY ETHNOGRAPHY IS

NOT
d e t e r m i n i n g
›TRUTHS‹

OF THE FIELD, BUT

B E C O M I N G
P A R T

OF THE RESEARCHED FIELD AS A

LEARNER AND

REACTING TO THE UNFORESEEABLE WORLD BY

i m p r o v i s i n g

IT'S AN ACTIVE LISTENING

>>> Cf.: SAS²: A Guide to Collaborative Inquiry: <http://idl-bnc.idrc.ca/dspace/bitstream/10625/35977/1/IDL-35977.pdf>

›BECOMING ANIMAL‹

The ethnographical process itself is a becoming. While observing you become part of the field – chameleoon-like. Regarding STS-ethno-ethnography the researcher is looking for multiple forms of hybridity – in between facts and fiction, rationality, sensuality, e(motions), and perception. In this special context it's also a dialogue between science & arts. As Minh-ha we want to shift the boundaries while ›becoming animal‹, while ›becoming artist‹. Thereby we will exchange theories and praxis with our Indian colleagues, it will be a ›nomadic theorizing‹, a travelling through disciplines, cultures, and countries.

>>> Cf.: Nick Perry (1995) *Travelling Theory/Nomadic Theorezing*. In: *Organization* 2: 35-54.

»For philosophical nomadology the strength of animals lies precisely in not being-one which is expressed in their attachment to and independence on a territory. They rely on a small and highly confined slice of environment to which they relate sensorily and perceptively. Insects, especially spiders and parasites like ticks, are among Deleuze's favorites. Like artists, animals mark their territories physically, by color, sound or marking/framing. In order to mark, code, possess or frame their territory, animals produce signals and signs constantly; insects buzz and make all sorts of sounds; upper primates practically talk (ask Jane Goodall); cats, wolves and dogs mark the lands with bodily fluids of their production, dogs bark and howl in pain and desire. They are immanent to their gestures aimed at coping with needs and environments«. Rosi Braidotti 2002: 368

FINAL REMARK

Following this contribution the next paper *Kinesthetic Ethnography II* will focus on the intersection of arts and ethnography, as well as the ZAG-team will discuss the concept *BUZZ* by Daniel Fetzner and Martin Dornberg through exercises of associations and reflections.

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THANK YOU

- Daniel Fetzner & Martin Dornberg
- *MBody*. Artistic Research in Media, Somatic, Dance, and Philosophy
- Raghavendra Gadagkar, Head of the Centre for Ecological Sciences at IISc, Bangalore/India
- Vasanthi Maradaas, Dean at Srishti School of Art and Design, Bangalore/India