



CALL FOR PANELS

Annual Meetings of the Swiss Anthropological Association (SAA)

SEG Jahrestagung

Colloque annuel de la SSE

Neuchâtel, November 10-12, 2022

“Give and Take – Anthropology as Exchange”

Contemporary anthropology is marked by a sustained effort to rethink anthropologists' relations with the people, objects and organizations with which they work. If the myth of the innocent scientist (participating merely better to observe) was never fully credible, over the past decades it has been scrapped almost entirely. This does not mean that anthropology has abandoned its claims to scientificity, nor that the forms of knowledge we produce are merely subjective or impressionistic. To the contrary, in much contemporary thinking about the nature of our knowledge, it is precisely anthropology's reflexive, intersubjective and situated qualities that guarantee its validity and value.

Anthropologists engage in processes of “give and take” in the double sense of this phrase: they both exchange ideas, experiences and value(s) with others and continually renegotiate the terms of this exchange. Anthropology is both a perspective on and a form of intervention in the world, and it is at its most powerful when it consciously reflects on its discursive and practical positionality. This complex epistemology has resulted in a multiplicity of methods, subject-positions, thematic foci and theoretical frameworks from which it can go about its business, many of which have been thoroughly discussed in the literature. In this Annual Meeting, we aim further to explore these multiple methods and themes, and where possible to ground them in concrete experiences of exchange. We welcome panels that present specific forms of giving and of taking, and explore their varied theoretical, political, ethical, epistemological and methodological implications.





Giving

Since the 1980s, anthropology has been inventing new avenues for giving knowledge, objects and experiences back to the groups, organizations and individuals who are their partners in knowledge production. These new forms of restitution, in the broad sense of the word, are driven by crucial critiques of the discipline's colonial and metropolitan origins and by demands for practices of accountability that are long overdue. However, through impatience to do the right thing, they perhaps insufficiently acknowledge the ambiguities and unanticipated consequences of giving back. What and how are anthropologists to give back? Mauss pointed out nearly a century ago, in the context of gift exchange, that returning the same object one receives is a violation of the gift-giving code, amounting to a refusal to receive the gift in the first place. To maintain dynamic equilibrium, the object (practice, knowledge) returned must therefore be augmented in some way. As James Ferguson has argued, giving is a form of sharing, raising the question of what are "rightful shares" on each side of the exchange.

For this annual meeting, we welcome panels that explore these dynamics of accounting, accountability and restitution in critical perspective. Suggested themes include:

- Experiences and "best practices" for working "with", and not simply "on" or "about", such as protocols for sharing research results; co-production and ownership of knowledge; new (and old) forms of action, engaged and applied anthropology; or advocacy work for the groups, persons and organizations we work with;
- Research on programs and policies for the restitution of museum collections (including human remains) and archival materials to the countries from which they came and/or the groups or individuals who produced them;
- New forms of "scientific communication", fueled both by disciplinary curiosity and by the increasing demands of funding agencies, universities and politicians for "accountability" in publicly funded research. These include the current wave of anthropological experiments in collaboration with the visual and living arts, as well contemporary uses of podcasts, film, installation and performances.

Taking

Less decorous but equally important are the processes by which anthropologists take material from the field in order to format it as "anthropological knowledge". Indeed, for there to be something anthropological that we can "give back", this taking must precede the giving. Since Foucault, anthropologists are well aware that these forms of material and semiotic extraction are conditioned by institutions of power, and this has perhaps made them shy away from exploring them in detail. Taking seriously the metaphor of exchange, we welcome analyses of





the empirical, theoretical, political, methodological and ethical implications of taking, and the institutional constraints and affordances that surround them. Suggested themes include:

- New epistemological practices that reconsider the ontological status of “data”, “objects”, “actors” and “the environment”;
- Increased standardization and regulation of ethical concerns by governing organizations such as states, funding agencies and universities (institutional review boards’ mandatory ethics approval, mandatory data management protocols, etc.);
- Dynamics of anthropological professionalization, such as the creation of a new niche for anthropological consulting in the areas of “community participation”, sustainable development and humanitarian aid.

Exchange

Finally, we also welcome panel proposals that reflect on anthropology through the metaphor of exchange in the broadest sense. Suggested topics range from new theoretical paradigms for making sense of human’s place in the world (from Cyrulnik’s “resilience” to Rosa’s “resonance”) to more classical reflections on the socioeconomic dynamics of “development” and “aid” in a world characterized by multiple forms of resource grabbing. Reflections on the negative aspect of anthropological practice for anthropologists themselves, such as risk and trauma in the field, or discouraging and exploitative professional norms, particularly as they affect younger scholars, are also welcome.

SAA members are invited to submit panel proposals by **April 11, 2022**. Please fill out the electronic form at <https://forms.gle/FQHU7y5LsCNSUMqe6> and submit a short description (max. 5000 bytes) of the panel theme with a list of potential speakers (max. 6 per panel) and an institutional affiliation.

Panel proposals will be evaluated by the scientific commission for this colloquium. Selected panels will receive a budget for travel costs and conference expenses. Panel organizers should conduct an open “Call for Papers” from April-June of 2022, and should finalize their panels by early September 2022 so that travel and conference arrangements can be made in time. Panels may be conducted in all of the Swiss national languages and/or in English.

The colloquium will take place in partnership with the Neuchâtel Ethnography Museum.

Please address all questions about contents to Ellen Hertz (ellen.hertz@unine.ch), all budgetary inquiries to Christiane Girardin (secretariat.sse@unine.ch), and all technical questions to Miriam Wohlgemuth (webmaster@seg-sse.ch).

