

# From Anthropologies of Technique to Design Anthropology

WiSe 2018-19 – BA in Europäische Ethnologie | 4 ECTS  
Wednesdays, 12-14 - Room 211, IfEE

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## Summary of the course

Design features amongst the most important set of practices shaping our contemporary worlds: our work, private, and public settings are, in fact, designed through and through. Because of this, design has recently acquired great importance in anthropology. In fact, a newly developed field called Design Anthropology has become an interesting crossroads of different people trying to address design as (1) a topic of scholarly interest, (2) a source of methodological inspiration, and (3) an object of intervention. Since the 1980s, several scholars have in fact analysed different aspects of design ethnographically: for instance, its creative spaces and operations, the imagined and inscribed users of different design objects, together with their more or less creative or disputed uses and appropriations. Also, many ethnographers have tried to analyse artefacts and their mediating role in work, cognitive and everyday life practices; or have sought to understand the particular modes of exchange. Besides, the methods of design—from user studies to forms of collaborative and participatory design—are scrutinised and sometimes imported into the discipline, searching to have an impact on the particular modes in which ethnography and anthropological research at large are carried out (as a means for social intervention, be it for the creation of public debate or collaborative forms of research). This course approaches these series of works around design seeking to ground them in the wider intellectual concerns of different anthropological traditions studying technique, artefacts and technology. In order to understand the core debates these series of interconnected works bring to the fore, on a weekly basis, students will have to read and comment readings and re-enact some of these debates. In doing this, students will develop an insightful analytical gaze to understand manifold dimensions of our lives together with designed artefacts.

## Methodology and requirements to pass the course

a) Weekly work: The course is structured in two main parts, with different requirements.

1. *Anthropologies of Technique* (sessions from 24.10 to 23.1) will be focused on reading, selecting quotations and commenting in class

reference texts in the discipline. In each session, the lecturer will provide a 20' introductory lecture to frame the debates.

2. *Design Anthropology* (sessions from 31.1 to 13.2) will be based on group work, with each group having to select one of the readings (without overlaps) and prepare a presentation of around 10', as well as read another one and send a quotation and comments for another group to engage with them in 5'. After all presentations, we will have a general discussion on the different modes of performing design anthropology afforded by the readings. Each student would then have to submit a sketch or drawing as a summary of the debate. For each session, the lecturer will provide assistance in the preparation of the presentation, the framing of the debates and how to visually summarize the debates.

All materials should be uploaded to the Moodle a day in advance of the class.

b) Book summary: Besides these weekly work requirements, all students should be preparing a summary of a reading of the *Semesterapparat*: students should pick and read one of the suggested monographs of the *Semesterapparat* in order to write a summary of its main argument and ideas in no more than 3 pages.

The summary should be submitted by February 15<sup>th</sup> 2019.

## **Organization of the course**

17.10 | Presentation of the course, its structure and methodology

### **ANTHROPOLOGIES OF TECHNIQUE**

Methodology: Each class of the *Anthropologies of Technique* sections will have a 20-30 minute introduction framing the main topics, followed by a discussion in class structured around a detailed reading of the obligatory texts.

Required weekly work: Students should (i) read the texts for each class, (ii) select one quotation, and (iii) share it through Moodle a day in advance, together a comment of one paragraph on doubts or ideas to be shared with the class.

24.10 | Introductory session: From Anthropologies of Technique to Design Anthropology

#### Semesterapparat

Rabinow, P., Marcus, G. E., Faubion, J. D., & Rees, T. (2008). *Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary*. Durham: Duke

University Press.  
Estalella, A. & Criado, T. S. (Eds.), *Experimental Collaborations: Ethnography through Fieldwork Devices*. New York: Berghahn.

- a. A 'non-modern' reading of a very 'modern' topic
  - i. Techniques beyond instrumentalism
  - ii. Materials beyond materialism
  - iii. Design as a trope of 'the contemporary'
- b. Towards an anthropology experimentally and collaboratively engaged with/in worldings

*Obligatory reading:*

Lemonnier, P. (1992). Chapter 1 "Technology and Anthropology". In *Elements for An Anthropology of Technology*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

*Non-obligatory further reading:*

Murphy, K. M. (2016). Design and Anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 45(1), 433–449.

## I. Efficacy expanded

### Semesterapparat

Lemonnier, P. (1992). *Elements for An Anthropology of Technology*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Mauss, M. (2006). *Techniques, Technology and Civilization*. London: Berghahn Books

### 31.10 | Traditional efficient acts

Mauss, M. (2006). Techniques of the Body [1935]. In *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation* (pp.77-96). London: Berghahn Books.

### 7.11 | Operational sequences

White, R. (1993). Introduction. In A. Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*. (pp.xiii-xxii). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Leroi-Gourhan, A. (1993 [1964]). Gesture and Program. In *Gesture and Speech*. (pp.237-255). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

*Non-obligatory further reading:*

Lemonnier, P. (1992). Chapter 2 "From field to files". In *Elements for An Anthropology of Technology*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

#### 14.11 | Arbitrariness

Lemonnier, P. (1992). Chapter 3 “Arbitrariness in Technologies”. In *Elements for An Anthropology of Technology*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

#### 21.11 | Enchantments

Gell, A. (1992). The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology. In J. Coote & A. Shelton (Eds.), *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics* (pp. 40–66). Oxford: Clarendon.

#### 28.11 | A critique of the standard view of technology

Pfaffenberger, B. (1992). Social Anthropology of Technology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 21, 491–516.

### **II. Beyond hylemorphism: From intentional agents and instrumental artifacts to the complex making of socio-material ecologies**

#### Semesterapparat

Harvey, P., & Knox, H. (2015). *Roads: An Anthropology of Infrastructure and Expertise*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Ingold, T. (2013). *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*. New York: Routledge.

Latour, B. (1996). *Aramis or the Love of Technology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Suchman, L. (2007). *Human-Machine Reconfigurations. Plans and Situated Actions 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

#### 5.12 | Cyborgs

Haraway, D. (1991). A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century. In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (pp. 149–181). New York: Routledge.

#### 12.12 | Mediation

Latour, B. (1999). A Collective of Humans and Nonhumans: Following Daedalus's Labyrinth. In *Pandora's Hope* (pp.174-215). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

#### 19.12 | Scripts

Akrich, M. (1992). The de-scription of technical objects. In W. Bijker & J. Law (Eds.), *Shaping Technology/Building Society. Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (pp. 205–224). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Akrich, M., & Latour, B. (1992). A summary of convenient vocabulary for the semiotics of human and nonhuman assemblies. In W. E. Bijker & J. Law (Eds.), *Shaping Technology/Building Society. Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (pp. 259–264). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

### 9.1 | Ordering

Suchman, L. (2007). Plans, Scripts, and Other Ordering Devices. *Human-Machine Reconfigurations. Plans and Situated Actions 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (pp. 187-205). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### 16.1 | Ecology of materials

Ingold, T. (2012). Toward an Ecology of Materials. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41, 427–442.

### 23.1 | Infrastructures

Harvey, P., Jensen, C.B. & Morita, A. (2017). Introduction: Infrastructural complications. In P. Harvey, C.B. Jensen & A. Morita (Eds.), *Infrastructures and Social Complexity: A companion* (pp. 1-22). London: Routledge.

## **DESIGN ANTHROPOLOGY (IN THE VICINITY OF STS)**

Methodology: The texts for this section should be prepared by and presented in groups, searching to summarize their main ideas for the rest of the class.

The main purpose of these sessions—where time will be very strictly managed—is that we could have an interesting debate on what design anthropology could be, attending to the different accounts proposed by the texts: an anthropology *of, for, or through* design?

### Required weekly work:

- (a) Students should distribute each session's readings in groups (the main idea would be that all texts are read);
- (b) With the help of the lecturer, each group should then read and prepare a **10' presentation of one of the texts**;
- (c) Each group should also read another text and then send a quotation and a **comment/question** for another group to engage with it **in the next 5'**;
- (d) After all presentations end, a **30' discussion on 'what design anthropology is according to these texts'** will ensue;

- (e) Whilst in class, students must attempt to **visually summarize the situation, and the main debates** (following the experiments discussed by Mauksch, 2018a, 2018b, see below);
- (f) After each session, all students will be asked to **individually submit a visual summary of the discussion** through the Moodle.

### Semesterapparat

- Estalella, A. & Criado, T. S. (Eds.), *Experimental Collaborations: Ethnography through Fieldwork Devices*. New York: Berghahn.
- Fariás, I. & Wilkie, A. (Eds.), *Studio Studies: Operations, Topologies & Displacements*. London: Routledge.
- Gunn, W., Otto, T., & Smith, R. C. (Eds.). (2013). *Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Squires, S. (Ed.). (2002). *Creating breakthrough ideas: The collaboration of anthropologists and designers in the product development industry*. Westport: Bergin & Garvey.

### Non-obligatory further reading

- Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Murphy, K. M. (2016). Design and Anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 45(1), 433–449.
- Mauksh, S. (2018a). Envisioning Theory: An Anthropological Teaching Experiment, Part One. *Cultural Anthropology*, Teaching Tools, May 28, 2018. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1431-envisioning-theory-an-anthropological-teaching-experiment-part-one>
- Mauksh, S. (2018b). Envisioning Theory: An Anthropological Teaching Experiment, Part Two. *Cultural Anthropology*, Teaching Tools, June 4, 2018. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1432-envisioning-theory-an-anthropological-teaching-experiment-part-two>

## **Debates on an Anthropology of, for, or through Design?**

### 31.1 | Anthropology of Design?

- Murphy, K. M. (2005). Collaborative imagining: The interactive use of gestures, talk, and graphic representation in architectural practice. *Semiotica*, 156(1), 113–145.
- Yaneva, A. (2005). Scaling Up and Down: Extraction Trials in Architectural Design. *Social Studies of Science*, 35(6), 867–894.

Wilkie, A., & Michael, M. (2015). The design studio as a centre of synthesis. In I. Farías & A. Wilkie (Eds.), *Studio Studies: Operations, Topologies & Displacements* (pp. 25–39). London: Routledge.

Criado, T. S., & Rodríguez-Giralt, I. (2016). Caring through Design?: En torno a la silla and the 'Joint Problem-Making' of Technical Aids. In C. Bates, R. Imrie, & K. Kullman (Eds.), *Care and Design: Bodies, Buildings, Cities* (pp. 198–218). Oxford: Wiley.

## 6.2 | Anthropology for Design?

Halse, J. (2013). Ethnographies of the Possible. In W. Gunn, T. Otto, & R.C. Smith (Eds.), *Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice* (pp. 180-196). London: Bloomsbury.

Brandt, E., Binder, T., & Sanders, E. (2012). Tools and techniques: Ways to engage telling, making and enacting. In J. Simonsen & T. Robertson (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Participatory Design* (pp. 145–181). London: Routledge.

Drazin, A., & Roberts, S. (2009). Exploring Design Dialogues for Ageing in Place. *Anthropology in Action*, 16(1), 72–88.

Murphy, K. M., & Marcus, G. E. (2013). Ethnography and Design, Ethnography in Design . . . Ethnography by Design. In W. Gunn, T. Otto, & R.C. Smith (Eds.), *Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice* (pp. 251–268). London: Bloomsbury.

## 13.2 | Anthropology through Design?

Marcus, G. (2013). Prototyping and Contemporary Anthropological Experiments With Ethnographic Method. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 7(4), 399–410.

Criado, T. S., & Estalella, A. (2018). Introduction: Experimental Collaborations. In A. Estalella & T. S. Criado (Eds.), *Experimental Collaborations: Ethnography through Fieldwork Devices* (pp. 1–30). New York: Berghahn.

Marrero-Guillamón, I. (2018). Making fieldwork public: Repurposing ethnography as a hosting platform in Hackney Wick, London. In A. Estalella & T. S. Criado (Eds.), *Experimental Collaborations: Ethnography through Fieldwork Devices* (pp. 179–200). New York: Berghahn.

Gaspar, A. (2018). Idiotic Encounters: Experimenting with Collaborations between Ethnography and Design. In A. Estalella & T. S. Criado (Eds.), *Experimental Collaborations: Ethnography through Fieldwork Devices* (pp. 94–113). New York: Berghahn.