SIMPOSIO 2

ANTROPOLOGÍA AUDIOVISUAL: AFIANZANDO LOS CRITERIOS DE ETNOGRAFICIDAD

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ÍNDICE SIMPOSIO 2

ON MAKING CHOICES: SOME THOUGHTS ON AN ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM SCREENING

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Film festivals and other screening events have acquired a regular presence in our cultural landscapes. Their role in the formation and expansion of visual anthropology has received, however, little attention, perhaps because it has generally been taken for granted. Indeed, from its early beginnings, anthropologists and filmmakers involved in ethnographic or anthropological filmmaking have had their films showcased in such renowned events as the Venice Film Festival (running since 1932 and considered the model of all film festivals – cf. Taillibert & Wäfler, 2016), the Locarno Festival (running since 1946), the Florence Festival dei Populi (active since 1959), and many others. Both Locarno and Florence had links with the *Comité International du Film Ethnographique* (International Committee of Ethnographic Film, henceforth CIFE), an organization that was responsible for the expansion of visual anthropology from the 1950s onwards, especially through the efforts of Jean Rouch (CIFE's secretary general since its foundation, in 1957[2]), Edgar Morin and others (cf. De Heush, 2007). The fact that some of the films sent to these festivals won prizes no doubt contributed to the formation and consolidation of this filmic genre and field.[3] Besides earning recognition from other filmmakers, these films also received exposure to wider audiences. We can thus safely say that the ethnographic film was, from its inception,

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[1]   This paper was written by four authors as a multi-vocal collaborative exercise that resulted from our experience as members of the jury of the ethnographic film screening that the Portuguese Anthropological Association (APA) organised in 2016. However, given the conference regulations, which establishes a maximum of three authors per paper, we have collectively decided to provide one name - that of the corresponding author. The de facto authors of this paper are: Humberto Martins (humbmsm@yahoo.com, UTAD/CETRAD), Ricardo Seiça Salgado (ricardoseica@gmail.com, CRIA-UMinho), Raquel Schefer (raquelschefer@gmail.com, Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3) and Sofia Sampaio. We hope that, in the near future, the conference organisation may find a way to fully acknowledge this kind of collaborative work.

[2]   CIFE would change its name, in 1959, to reflect its incorporation into the International Association of Sociology, thus becoming the *Comité du film ethnographique et sociologique* (CIFES, cf. De Heusch, 2007: 376). The committee died out in the early 1970s, in Luc de Heusch's words, "victim to contemporary anthropology's disarray" (De Heusch, 2007: 380).

[3]   As early as 1957, Jean Rouch's *Les Maîtres Fous* won first prize for documentaries, at the Venice Film Festival. David MacDougall's first feature-length film, *To Live With Herds*, also received a distinction from Venice, with the Grand Prix Venezia Genti, in 1972.

placed in-between the fields of art and academic knowledge, attracting both a small professional audience and the more general public.

Clearly, ethnographic films have also relied on more specialized festivals for their dissemination. Such have been the cases of the Margaret Mead Film and Video Festival, held in New York since 1977; of the Cinéma du Réel, created in 1979 and originally dedicated to ethnographic and sociological films;[4] and of the International Film Festival of Ethnographic Film organised by the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) and held biennially since 1985. More recently, we also have the Göttingen International Film Festival, set up in 1993, and many others.[5]

1. APA's Ethnographic Film Screening

In 2009, when it was preparing to launch its 4th Meeting, in Lisbon, under the general theme "Classifying the World", APA decided to include in its programme the exhibition of ethnographic films.[6] Even before the format and the editorial criteria had been settled, a small group of people was invited to launch the event.[7] Lacking administrative support or a budget and taking on, at once, the functions of a jury and organising committee, the committee had three months to organise what would be the first event of the kind organised under the banner of APA.

The final format was that of a festival with two awards: the First Screening Award (Primeira Mostra), aimed at initial work done by students; and the APA's Grand Award (Grande Prémio APA), which acknowledged work done by older filmmakers. The event aimed at creating a space that would host ethnographic films in the midst of the major Portuguese scientific anthropological organisation, thus following in the footsteps of other national and international associations, such as the Royal Anthropological Institute and the European Association of Social Anthropologists, which had been organising ethnographic film screenings or festivals for a long time.

The idea was not new. Many visual anthropologists working in Portugal had expressed the desire to create a space -which they saw as legitimate and fair- within the academia where audio-visual ethnographic products could be presented and discussed. They regretted the under-representation of visual anthropology in Portuguese anthropology and the lack of debate over forms of representation that offered alternatives to the written text. Somehow paradoxically, the invisibility of the ethnographic film seemed to result from the failure of (visual) anthropologists to come together and create research agendas and regular film exhibition programmes.

These events were lacking, despite the growing number of works being produced, the rise of a public with an interest in these films, and the sporadic organisation of ethnographic film screenings as part of other events. Most importantly, by this

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[4] The Bilan du Film Ethnographique, a section of the Festival du Cinéma du Réel, exists since 1982 and was re-baptised, in 2008, the Jean Rouch International Film Festival, in honour of this key figure. From its inception, the Bilan was closely associated with the CIFE and the French national Centre for Research (the CNRS).

[5] For a list of up-and-running ethnographic film festivals see the VANEASA's webpage at: http://www.easaonline.org/networks/vaneasa/festivals.shtml

[6] Throughout this paper, the term 'film' is used broadly, including other formats, such as video.

[7] The team consisted of four Portuguese researchers and academics with an interest in visual anthropology, namely: Humberto Martins (UTAD); Clara Carvalho (ISCTE-IUL); José Ribeiro (CEMRI-UA); and the anthropologist and filmmaker Catarina Alves Costa (FCSH-UNL).

time, proposals were being discussed within the Visual Anthropology Network of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (VANEASA) and the Nordic Anthropological Film Association (NAFA) that aimed at enhancing the recognition of audio-visual products within the academy – not just in terms of their scientificity (and "anthropologicness") as non-textual research outputs, but also in terms of their effective contribution to their authors' academic careers.[8]

This was a time when visual anthropology was being vindicated a place in European and world anthropology. Many stressed the epistemic specificity of technologized visual images, calling for more intra-anthropological dialogues and recognition, as well as more openness to other fields – in particular, the arts, social intervention, visual studies and media studies. Reference works by authors such as Sarah Pink or Anna Grimshaw proclaimed a visual anthropology (or an anthropology of the visual) that would not only cross over disciplinary borders, both from a methodological and an epistemological point of view, but also open new paths to reach less-academic audiences. After all, either as a (necessarily fictionalised) representation of the real or, following Grieson, as a creative construction of reality, filmmaking proved very attractive throughout its different phases (research, camerawork, montage and post-production) to academic and non-academic practitioners.

Through the ethnographic film and the documentary, anthropology found itself out in the streets, despite the ambiguity that characterises these two filmic genres, as far as their anthropological aims are concerned. After all, where can we situate anthropology in visual anthropology? What can we do with the visual in anthropology? These questions resumed and rehashed old debates within anthropology -a discipline that had been a forerunner in the use of images for the representation of the world, but which, for some reason, continues to feel uneasy towards images- or, to be more precise, towards its epistemological status within "a discipline of words", to quote Margaret Mead's seminal article (1975).

In fact, Portuguese visual anthropologists or visual anthropologists working in Portugal had been longing for the opportunity to have ethnographic films exhibited and debated within a vaster event dedicated to anthropology. A context of more students, more films, more researchers,[9] as well as an increase in images circulating in digital platforms, had created the right conditions for the organisation of APA's first ethnographic film festival. Other well-established events, like DocLisboa (since 2003) and Indie Lisboa (since 2004), had also been programming ethnographic films and documentaries, proving that these films had an audience.

Two days, six sessions, seventeen films, some of which presented by the filmmakers, made up APA's first ethnographic film festival. The call for films read:

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[8]   See   http://nafa.uib.no/?q=system/files/newsletters/NAFA-Network_vol_16_1_March_2009.pdf (accessed 21/02/2017).

[9]   By 2009 graduate courses in visual anthropology such as the MA in Visual Cultures of the New University of Lisbon (FCSH-UNL) and the post-graduation programme in Visual Digital Culture of the Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL) had appeared. Worthy of mention is also the annual event "Anthropology, Cinema and the Senses", organised by the University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro (UTAD) since 2006, which created another occasion for the screening and debate of anthropological films in the extreme North-east of Portugal. Note that these years also saw the expansion of research centres active in the area (such as CEMRI and CRIA).

"(…) between shots and sequences, frames and narratives, anthropology reveals and makes itself through the images and the sounds (…) A place for the screening of films, this festival is also a meeting point of techniques and possibilities for the making of anthropology".[10]

In the end, a total of thirty films were submitted to the competition section, most of which school films and first works. Given the committee's scant resources, the submissions had been limited to Portuguese and Spanish, and most films came from Portugal and Brazil. The feedback was very positive, but it was also clear that, to most conference attendees, the festival was a relatively marginal event, where you could take a break from the more hectic panels and keynote sessions. More importantly, the audience included a higher number of visual anthropologists than other, more classical, anthropologists; i.e. it attracted anthropologists more interested in making image-based ethnographies than paper-based ones. This, of course, was in line with what happens in similar events abroad and has been an object of much reflection (cf. Martins 2013).

Humberto Martins (APA's Vice-President since 2014) is the only member of the jury that remained attached to the festival. For the screening events that took place in 2013 and 2016, he invited younger researchers with different academic backgrounds who shared an interest in anthropology, the ethnographic film and the documentary, as critics, researchers or filmmakers. The two subsequent editions – organised as part of APA's 2013 and 2016 conferences (held, respectively, in the cities of Vila Real and Coimbra)[11] – saw a clear improvement in the number and quality of the submissions. The event ceased to be called a festival in order to reflect its non-competitive nature, but took on more professional contours. It also came to occupy a more central place in the conference. The two editions caught the attention of filmmakers, anthropologists and production companies, attracting films from different parts of the world that testified to the rising film production coming out of the new technological means of production, diffusion and reception (digital, interactive, online, hypermedia). We were now accepting films spoken and/or subtitled in Portuguese, Spanish, French and English. The team also agreed that the film screenings would not be restricted to the conference attendants -a public made of anthropologists and other social scientists- but open to the general public and the cities where the conferences were taking place, hence the introduction of more conventional exhibition venues (such as downtown film theatres), alongside with the university auditoria. Some of the night sessions that took place in these non-academic places were highly frequented and participated, generating lively debates, often in open dialogue with the filmmakers. In most sessions, the viewers were ready to engage in debate with the filmmakers. Two set of questions regularly came up: first, queries regarding the professional engagement of the filmmakers with their subjects and context – e.g. the way they filmed, the time they had spent in the shooting setting and fieldwork terrain, the anthropological and cinematographic options they took during the filmmaking process, particularly if the film was the work of a single person, etc. A second concern had to do with the anthropological subject itself, whenever it coincided with the research interests of the viewers, which elicited questions more

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[10] See *Livro do IV Congresso da Associação Portuguesa de Antropologia*, p. 315.

[11]   These were APA's 5th Conference ("Anthropology in Counterpoint") and APA's 6th Conference ("Disputed Futures"). The members of the film screening jury were: Humberto Martins, Peter Zoetl, Sofia Sampaio, Gonçalo Mota and Patrícia Freire (2013) and Humberto Martins, Sofia Sampaio, Ricardo Seiça Salgado, Raquel Schefer and Gonçalo Mota (2016).

focused on the ethnography. These viewers would often point out descriptive or context-related aspects that were missing in the film or even attempt more general anthropological comparisons with other cases, regions and individuals. This dimension of the screenings was particularly rewarding to us, confirming the importance of having the filmmaker, or at least a member of the team, attending the session.

Finally, a quick note on the post-conference life and circulation of the films: in response to suggestions made by conference attendees, a selection of films was offered (with the filmmakers and producers' agreement), to the videothéque of the Centre for Research in Anthropology (CRIA), the chief Portuguese research centre in anthropology, thus making them accessible to researchers, teachers and students of anthropology. Also, at the beginning of this year, APA decided to create several extensions of the film screening in every Portuguese university that offers graduate and post-graduate programmes in anthropology. The films have been circulating in single events or integrated in thematic seminars, where anthropologists with an interest in the film's theme have been invited to discuss it. This decision allows for renewed receptions of the films. As we mentioned before, contexts of exhibition are critical to the ways a film (and images more generally) communicate ideas, information, content and intentions. This aspect deserves more attention, but we have not been able to include it here.

2. A glimpse into a film selection process: four testimonies

Both Vila Real and Coimbra inaugurated a new phase in APA's film screenings, which became occasions not just for showcasing films but also for debating the role of the ethnographic film in anthropology. As members of the jury, and despite our different backgrounds, we were keen to situate, from the onset, our intentionality, responsibility and agenciality within a reflexive framework. Is there any kind of "anthropology" in ethnographic films? Can they be considered "anthropology"? Is that what ethnographic film and documentary filmmakers aim at? What should be the direction criteria and preferred dialogues of those who choose to work with anthropology-orientated audio-visual production? Which selection criteria and *spectator longings* should a member of the jury follow and own up?

2.1. Humberto Martins

Choosing a so-called "ethnographic film" to integrate the final selection of a film screening is not an easy task, not only because of the multiple aspects one needs to look at but also because these events are increasingly participated. Hundreds of films are being produced every year everywhere; filmmakers and producers can easily submit them to festivals and screenings (with a more academic or artistic orientation) all over the world and the quality of the majority of them (technically speaking), in our digital era, is considerably high. But what are ethnographic films? What specific features should films have or reveal as to be considered 'ethnographic'? Should they be theoretically significant (i.e. work as anthropological representations)? Or should they be visually impressive (i.e. work as cinematographic products)? Or both? Are these questions relevant when we have to choose a film? As an anthropologist who sometimes uses visual means to represent aspects of social reality and having been a member of the juries of different anthropological film screenings, I do not have clear

and definitive answers to these questions. I support the old (but important) statement by Jean Rouch, which called for time and the presence of the anthropologist-filmmaker in the field, as well as the integrity of the people represented by the camera (Rouch, 1975). No concessions can be made to cinematographic matters when it comes to the actual life being recorded, since what must prevail is the primacy of the events of life as witnessed by the anthropologist – this was the commitment that Rouch was asking for. But times are changing, and perhaps most of those who submit films today are neither anthropologists (and why should they be?) nor have the time Rouch was referring to – a malinowskian time of full immersion in the everyday life of those being represented through images, which allowed filmmakers to capture the *imponderabilia* and the unexpected. However, today filmmakers have other tools and resources – they can shoot hours of rushes, record synchronic sound, and edit images in the field easily. More importantly, those who are recorded on film are now different subjects, able to enact a different kind of agenciality towards the camera and the filmmaker. In this sense, the "ingenuousness" and "purity" that some past ethnographic films suggest are quite unattainable characteristics today. Former naked bodies of remote villages are now dressed-up citizens of a common (but not equal) world and we see children, women and men putting on their "Indian cloaks" and eventually performing their imagined and imaged "indigenousness". For whom? For themselves, for the tourists, for us, the anthropologists, for us, the audiences of the festivals? The time of anthropology on prime time television (Singer, 1992) is gone. Times are changing, indeed. Filmed subjects and audiences have changed.

How and what to choose then? Are these events merely organized for anthropological purposes? Do we want to capture and celebrate the diversity we find in social life through the processes of shooting, editing and programming ethnographic filmmaking, which are themselves inscribed in wider social, cultural and ideological contexts? (This is actually one of the main fields of inquiry in visual anthropology.) Or do we want to make statements about how to film ethnographically in order to get "accepted" by the wider community of anthropologists? This is not a linear process. At the end of the day, we never wanted to make a statement on how to make good ethnographic films. The idea of becoming normative in this respect frightens me, as my main criterion is related to my own cinematographic experiences as a viewer/spectator, far beyond an anthropological scope. Reality, realism, ethnography, current human stories, anthropological subjects (who and *what* are they? in case we admit that the whole world, human and non-human alike, are part of our research terrain) can be good drivers for my choices but I always extend my regard and feelings to other dimensions.

I do not consider this a problem, but an advantage: i.e. when I watch a film for the first time, I want to explore an author's creative account about (human) life. What the film is about and how it tells it can only be assessed as a composite unit. In fact, we can formulate this task in a different way – almost as intertwined layers. Should we, who have the task and duty of choosing and rejecting films, be more concerned with what the films are about? Or with how the films tell a story? The "what" and the "how" can here be equated respectively and in a certain way with the significance of disciplinary subjects (anthropological) and with the creative (editorial and authorial) treatment of it. To write scientifically (anthropologically) and to make a film about something is not the same. We are dealing with different epistemologies; i.e., with different products of knowledge or different representations. Furthermore, reception conditions and

contexts are also different: if, in a distant past, films were mainly viewed collectively, in theatres, nowadays their reception is likely to be quite individual, taking "place" in a personal TV or computer screen. Here I am more concerned with perceptive and sensorial appropriations of these different forms of representation, by considering also another simple (but really important) assumption: let us choose something people will enjoy, regardless of whether this is so because of the sound, the story, the setting, the region, the ritual, the characters, the photography, the landscape, the visual availability of culture or the sensuous and sensorial impacts on us. This 'composite unit' extends beyond the individual scope of an anthropological "I" (and "eye"), because we have projected or anticipated the expected viewers. Many of those who attend the sessions are, generally speaking, people who like to watch films, who appreciate good stories with a fluent narrative and pace. A few are specialists on a specific subject, theme, regional or area context and there is likely to be a minority who simply pop up in the auditoria to "take a rest from the conventional workshop and seminars". In a dark room they can – if the film does not match their interests – close their eyes. Another form of haptic experience!

But, having said this, are there better and worse anthropological subjects? Are there better and worse ethnographic frames or sequences? Are there better and worse ethnographic regards – or receptions? Am I being an anthropologist when I choose a film by its ethnographicness? Where are the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction? In fact, many aspects have to be considered, there must be a balance between anthropology and cinematographic criteria (but which should come first as a criterion?). What does this mean in concrete terms, if the event, as the one we are considering here, is neither a film festival nor an academic seminar? I believe this balance also has to consider the audience, the contemporary relevance of subjects represented and also the dialogic interaction with the other members of the jury. The five of us (the four authors of this text and Gonçalo Mota, a filmmaker and anthropologist) have different social and cultural trajectories, distinct relations and experiences with cinema, anthropology, documentary and ethnographic filmmaking and different sensibilities. The dialogues we had in the group sessions opened up different avenues of perception and appreciation, while stimulating access to aspects one would not have individually noticed in a first viewing. The premise was simple: diversity in the jury would create diversity in the reception and a wider scope of different forms of "world revelation"– both in their cinematographic and ethnographic aspects.

For the 6th APA's film screening our motto was: "Disputed Futures". The world and, consequently, anthropology are facing great challenges, especially as far as the right to be different in a global scenario of imposed and imposing consensus is concerned. A film screening like this one -marginal to the main documentary and ethnographic film festivals held in Europe and Portugal- would have to be a space for alternative and diverse ethnographies and cinematographies -considering country of production, shooting locations, themes and subjects-. In this sense, we also had to be political regarding these different criteria. In the end, I would say that each film, understood as an author(ised) story, had to be respectful of those it represents, in the sense of approaching, as much as possible, their immense complexity and subjectivity, thus avoiding any kind of stereotypical representation (e.g. general statements on individuals based on cultural assumptions). It also had to engage the spectators in journeys of discovery and meaning.

2.2. Raquel Schefer

Coming from a film studies background and working as a filmmaker and a film curator, I found it a complex task to choose (and delineate) an "ethnographic film". It was particularly difficult to balance the three general criteria of the selection process. The challenge consisted in knowing how to avoid giving preference to the film's aesthetic proposal and to its originality over its anthropological dimension. Would my background allow me to overcome the operative "division" between art and anthropology, between content and form? This question accompanied me constantly throughout the selection process.

Over the last years, confronting moving images has meant for me preponderantly to disentangle and examine their formal-expressive dimension. At the same time, looking at moving images has signified prospecting their "underside" (Didi-Huberman, 2005), in which sensible forms defy rational understanding and representation appears as a process involving limits and contradictions. The three selection criteria therefore implied that I had to conciliate these issues with choices of knowledge, in other words, with an "objective" exercise of knowledge. In a first moment, this posed a three-fold problem with regard to my theoretical and practical background: first, I needed to separate content and form; second, I had to go back to the discussion of whether documentary films objectively capture truth and reality or subjectively "represent reality" (Nichols, 2001); finally, I had to consider to which extent so-called "ethnographic films" do not look for answers that are already given by their discursive problematic.

Therefore, initially, the cinematographic quality of the films was, for me, the most important aspect, even if their anthropological dimension could not be neglected. However, at a certain point, I began thinking if the act of separating it from the film's anthropological dimension was not historically and ideologically determined. James Clifford (1988) argues that the emergence of twentieth-century modernism reinforced the distinction between the aesthetic and the anthropological. According to this anthropologist, "the aesthetic-anthropological opposition is systematic, presupposing an underlying set of attitudes toward the 'tribal'[*sic*]" (1988: 200). Clifford adds that "the concrete, inventive existence of tribal cultures and artists is suppressed in the process of either constituting authentic, 'traditional' [*sic*] worlds or appreciating their products in the timeless category of 'art' [*sic*]" (Clifford, 1988, 200). Was it not necessary, therefore, to overcome these two historically and culturally distinguishable traditions – as well as the boundaries between art and science –, by exploring their changing definitions and interstices? Looking back at the history of cinema and the history of visual anthropology, how many examples can we find of filmmakers working at the edge of art and ethnography? Jean Rouch, Juan Downey, Kidlat Tahimik, and Trinh T. Minh-ha, just to mention a few. And do not these filmographies demonstrate in themselves the possibility of dissolving the disciplinary boundaries between art and ethnography, experimental film and ethnographic film, which, in any case, are always on the margins of dominant cinema, as argued by Catherine Russell (1999) and Hal Foster (1995)?

The experience of being a member of the jury of this Ethnographic Film Screening meant, therefore, that I needed to perceive the films without being influenced by my former prejudices. At the same time, the experience was a means to examine cinema from a more complex and fragmented perspective. Jonathan Crary considers that, if

looking at images today is fundamental to the functioning of most dominant institutions, then, "most of the historically accumulated understandings of the term 'observer' [*sic*] are destabilized" (2014). Within this framework, the interplay (rather than the separation) between the films' cinematographic quality and their anthropological dimension appeared, finally, as the affirmation of a true act of seeing -and of the image's productivity- in a network of permanent observation (Foucault, 1993).

2.3. Ricardo Seiça Salgado

When you think of selecting twenty out of one hundred films for an ethnographic exhibition, two things immediately happen: panic and anxiety. You have to be aware of what you are really looking for when analysing each of the films, and create a coherent feeling-thinking during the evaluation process. The important thing is to be sure of your own established criteria in order to produce a conceptual framework around which you can support your subjective judgement. Because we're talking about an ethnographic film exhibition, we thought that three general criteria were fair enough to start with: (1) cinematographic quality; (2) the anthropological dimension; (3) originality.

Once we agreed on these criteria we had the freedom to define each one as we liked. We had an evaluation scale (from bad to excellent) but the important thing was to write one or two paragraphs to justify our evaluation, taking into account those three criteria. This is a short testimony of my experience to overcome all the psycho-emotional pitfalls of the selection process. Having at least a clear understanding of each criterion for the evaluation, I would now have the framework for a possible curatorship, more than a "good and bad" reasoning of the selection process. In this way, I felt I could overcome "blind" subjectivity.

Since this was an ethnographic film screening, it seemed to me that the anthropological dimension of the films had to be the most relevant aspect. When I think of the quality of the ethnography, I think mainly about the quality of the participant observation process. This includes the performance and the roles of the researcher in the research process (which can be more or less observational or more or less participatory, or play with the two of them), the management between the archive and the repertoire, to use Diana Taylor's distinction (Taylor, 2007), the quality of the interviews, or the process of reading documents. In other words, the density of the overall collected data is, in my opinion, translated into the film's dramaturgy.

The dramaturgy can focus more on an emic or "experience-near" (Geertz, 1983) attitude, or on an "experience-distant" or etic attitude, as an heuristic device to explain the context of the analyses. Both attitudes should contribute to the translation process. One way or another, I could appreciate the quality of the given ethnographic data. A film's dramaturgy also carries a specific *poiesis* which is very important to me. By *poiesis* I mean not only how the images embody the making of the worldview that the film wants to express and how they enclose and reveal the context of the analyses, but also how the film translates the performative sensitivity that the director extracts from his/her research role to (po)etically frame a specific worldview.

In other words, the quality of the ethnography is accomplished by the level of density that comes from the perspective and context of the research. The type of encounters between the researcher and the subjects of inquiry is reflected on how we perceive and imagine the world. In some films, the simplification of the interviews or the reduction

to one or two interlocutors impoverishes the worldview (in others, of course, one interlocutor may be enough). Most of the times, however, multivocality is important to more fully understand the culture ethos. Also, if the camera is to show the range of positions taken by the researcher in the fieldwork, we are more likely to understand the different types of relationships that were built.

On the other hand, I also analysed the perspective of the film from the outside, i.e. from the point of view of the dramaturgical options that were taken. For instance, a film can contribute to deconstruct preconceived ideas about a context or theme; it may bring up political issues that underline any invisible resistance process going on, thus contributing to the awareness of on-going struggles; it can allow for comparisons that bring forth a new understanding of a given phenomenon, such as an inherited know-how; it can produce culture by stimulating a community to do a "definitional ceremony" (Meyerhoff, 1989), promoting cultural creations on the move, and so on.

The dramaturgical construction is, of course, related to the editing and, here, we enter the second criterion, the cinematographic quality. I include in this criterion technical issues such as the quality of the image and sound, but mostly the quality of photography, which tells me a lot about the researcher's sensitivity, the type of encounters that the ethnography is made of or the researcher's ruminations during the fieldwork. Of course, there's the aesthetic dimension of photography which I think is relevant, but I tend to consider this artful dimension as another form of ethnographic expression, namely the performative sensitivity. In other words, the aesthetic dimension of a film tells us a lot about the worldview that the ethnographer wants to express, as it is related to the translation process. It's like the difference between rough writing and poetic writing, when used to express different worldviews. It seems to me that the form feeds the content.

The dramaturgical dimension reflects the editing process, confronting us with the way the anthropological density is revealed or expressed. This means that the quality of the editing is dependent on the quality of the ethnographic data. That is why I make a point in stressing the relevance of the ethnographic investment when appreciating an ethnographic film. Of course the filmmaker's elegance, style and sensitivity may contribute a lot to the translation process. That's where aesthetics meets the purposes of the translation process.

That brings us to the last of the three criteria, the originality of the film. I understand originality as a dimension of the two previous criteria since the creativity of the theme under analysis and its approach (plus the way the director worked with a particular theme) greatly contribute to the reflection of the cinematographic quality or the "ethnographicness" of the film.

The context of the analysis is also important, since anthropology is not a naïve science: it has an important function in the contemporary world, which is to give voice to those who cannot speak. Within the scientific world, anthropology is the last chance for us to understand the marginal and obscure zones of culture and society, which entails political sociocultural issues; the last chance to take into account the heritage matters that nobody knows or cares about; the last chance to understand new ways of relating to or comparing singularities which carry along epistemological, structural or functional consequences that may prove revolutionary to the way we perceive the world. The three criteria must satisfy these assumptions. This is what I would call the anthropological avant-garde *en route*.

2.4. Sofia Sampaio

I start by stressing the arduous nature of the selection process, which required watching a large number of films in order to choose but a few of them to be part of a coherent film programme. Indeed, our open call returned over a hundred films originating from over forty countries. Some of the films were big-budgeted (co-) productions; others were school films; many were first works; others had been previously showcased in other (bigger and smaller) film festivals. Each film had also benefited from different resources, reflecting very different artistic, educational and commercial aims. Topics also varied a lot: people's transient and not so transient routines in a shopping centre; life in a neighbourhood undergoing gentrification; the workings of a theatre production; people coming to terms with a traumatic event or the plight of being a refugee; the colonial and postcolonial lives of a musical instrument; the current uses of a traditional hallucinogenic beverage, among many others. Clearly, all films had something in common: regardless of their contexts, they all shared an interest in contemporary experiences as seen and lived from the perspective of the people encountered during the ethnographic and cinematographic fieldwork. In keeping with our call,[12] they all had something to say about the world we are living in and the possibilities and predicaments that lie ahead, i.e. all the "disputed futures" that it is our task, today, to identify, articulate and reflect upon.

I am aware that to say this is to embrace a very broad definition of "ethnographic film" – one no longer confined to being the representation of an intercultural meeting and therefore, to "exotic" locations, or to being a product of a trained anthropologist, either as director or consultant. We also received that kind of ethnographic film. Nevertheless, most of the films that reached us were a keen reflection of our current times, when anthropology is increasingly being done "at home" (cf. Picton, 2011), or even in many places at once, and when ethnographic films (or videos) are mostly being made by non-anthropologists, often without any specialist assistance, thus actually merging with popular documentaries (cf. Vannini, 2015). Our inclusive understanding of "ethnographic filmmaking", though already implicit in our call, was therefore also a response to this kind of diversity, which digital filmmaking has certainly encouraged, if not made possible (cf. MacDougall, 2001).

My task and that of my colleagues, to put it very succinctly, was to put together a programme of contemporary ethnographic films (i.e. films released between 2014 and 2016), on grounds of their cinematographic and ethnographic interest or even "quality". The underlying idea was that both criteria would complement and even reinforce each other, so that a good ethnographic film would ultimately also prove a good cinematographic experience. In other words, despite drawing on different rationalities, both criteria would somehow lead up to a similar result, namely: a satisfactory film experience on both counts – ethnographic and cinematographic.

This (perhaps amazing) notion guided my selection process, which involved the assessment of the individual films in terms of their "ethnographicness", cinematographic value and originality. The former was probably the most difficult of the three to assess,

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[12]   The English call read: "Life visualized in its regular normality and exceptionality. And what about creativity? Suffering? Voices, gestures, faces and bodies? And noise, sounds and music? This is the simple invitation of this ethnographic film screening – show through images how 'Disputed Futures' mean the diversity of presents and pasts; because the world is made on different rhythms, impulses, desires towards the uncertainty and incompleteness of history." See: http://vicongresso.apantropologia.org/call-for-ethnographic-film-proposals-en/

since we had scant information (or none at all) about the films' making-of, including the theory, methodology and general ethics that had underpinned the research. Our approach was therefore largely text-centred. Looking at my notes, however, it is clear that methodological and ethical issues kept creeping in, often in an intertwined manner: for instance, in one film, I was disturbed by the fact that the interviewees appeared to have personal ties with the filmmaker (either as family members or employees) without this being acknowledged, let alone reflected upon. Had this piece of information been included, how different would our attitude towards these subjects and the issues they discuss be?

In fact, even without much background information, we can learn a lot about the research on which a film was based (or, even better, which it helped to shape) just by watching it. A wide range of sources and materials (e.g. vibrant footage; evocative sounds; deep interviews; captivating subjects; relevant archival material; etc.) is, no doubt, a sign of good research, whereas poor research will tend to produce stereotypes, sweeping generalisations, disengaging interviews and the wrong tone. Poor research will often also translate into a poor aesthetics (e.g. ad hoc framing; uninteresting footage or even clichés; unmotivated fast or slow editing; lack of rhythm, etc.), though this may also be caused by poor filmmaking skills. Nevertheless, filmmaking expertise (e.g. top quality image and a sophisticated sound design) and even experimentalism (e.g. split screens and other special effects) also proved disappointing when they clashed with what was being said and put on display. On the whole, I assessed positively the way a filmmaker took up, and creatively dealt with, technical and anthropological challenges (which often overlapped), such as gaining access to private or privatised spaces (as in the case of "studying up") or capturing, in a meaningful way, invisible, fleeting, or in-transit phenomena. I was less sympathetic towards projects that tried to force upon the material a theoretical framework or argument, which often ran into contradiction or proved the whole film redundant.

In the end, it was clear to me that cinematographic and ethnographic criteria, rather than competing against each other, actually complemented each other: a poor cinematography could compromise the dignity of the subjects or divert the viewers' attention to marginal issues; the lack of a point of view had consequences on both cinematographic and ethnographic fronts; finally, ignorance of filmic codes (such as realism, continuity editing and other stylistic options) risked producing awkward results, just as ignorance of key anthropological insights and concepts proved equally disabling and misleading. The organic nature of the filmmaking process and, intricately connected to it, of the research process, is what ultimately makes for a good (ethnographic) film – not the fact that it follows (or not) an observational mode, that it favours (or not) long shots, that it avoids (or not) manipulation of what goes on in front of the camera, that it introduces (or not) staged scenes, or that it revels (or not) in overt reflexivity, among many other stylistic options that have regularly circulated (depending on fashion) as rules of thumb for ethnographic filmmaking. Ethics, as I see it, is inevitably part of the research and filmmaking processes and will end up being reflected on the film.

Given the mixed nature of our target audience – made up of anthropologists and a non-academic public – I ultimately endorsed a programme that would include school films made by young anthropologists; films by more experienced anthropologists; some examples of "anthropology at home"; and films with higher production values on solid and well-researched topics. I also endorsed the exhibition of films made by Portuguese students and young filmmakers, whose enthusiastic participation had partly accounted for

the success of the film screening event organised for APA's 5th Meeting. Finally, I gave preference to films with fewer distribution connections, so as to increase their chances of reaching an audience.

3. Conclusion

There is a long (and rather well-known) debate within visual anthropology about what should make for an "ethnographic film" and, for that matter, for a *good* "ethnographic film". As one would expect, opinions vary a lot. Our approach to our mission, as members of the jury, was to put together an ethnographic film programme that would reflect the diversity in both form and content that has characterised the vast (and hybrid) field of documentary and ethnographic filmmaking. It is clear that anthropologists have a lot to learn from these rich, complex and sensuous audio-visual works, which are deeply embedded in our world. On the other hand, it is also clear that greater access to filmmaking has not always been accompanied by reflexivity and ethical responsibility on the part of filmmakers. The ethics and politics of filmmaking do not rank highly in most filmmakers' priorities, often because they lack the theoretical instruments to deal with them in a conscious and self-reflexive manner. The legacy of visual anthropology is, of course, strong on these matters. By bringing it to wider, non-academic audiences, we hope to extend its positive influence to more popular forms of "ethnographic" filmmaking. The context of this particular screening event – a meeting of anthropologists – is, we believe, the right place to start such a lively and promising interchange.

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