



**Anthropology for Architects | Social Relations
and the Built Environment | Ray Lucas**



B L O O M S B U R Y

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Environment

RAY LUCAS

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Introduction: Typologies of Social Relation

Introduction

In framing this book around *typologies of social relation*, the intention is to discuss building types and the theories derived from social anthropology best suited to understanding them. Some of these relationships are tightly intertwined, as in the case of dwelling or performance, whilst others are broader theories such as exchange or practice. The book's intention is to present anthropology as directly relevant to architectural design and theory. In some instances, this gives further elaboration to tacit knowledge within architecture, the embedded knowledges passed down through studio cultures but rarely made explicit, whilst in other cases the theories will offer new perspectives on the ways we interpret architecture.

The broader intention of the book is to propose a productive relationship between architecture and anthropology, with the ideas developed through anthropology taken seriously as prompts for architectural design and theory. In short, architects and others can benefit greatly from reading ethnographic works and the theories derived from them. Most architects will not have the opportunity to engage directly in ethnographic research, so closely tied to anthropology as a discipline, but other opportunities present themselves: as Ingold reminds us, anthropology is not ethnography and vice versa. Architects can engage in alternative anthropological enquiries more suited to their skillset and resources. The discipline of anthropology is opening up beyond its well-established textual and lens-based practices of ethnography, and other ways of knowing are being developed. The key lesson is that one must not take the social world for granted: that the most everyday occurrences have complexity

and variation, open to analysis and heavy with further implications for the worldview of participants.

Anthropology offers us the potential for an architecture of broader ecologies, where skills and practices provide insights into the ways people understand the world in a broad range of mutually inclusive ways. Anthropology offers architects ways of understanding materials and their life stories; economies and their networks of trust and obligation; how conservation strategies can be understood through museum studies and the critique of the collection; how practices of maintenance define ideas of cleanliness and the concept of dwelling as a perpetually unfinished project; and the co-production of people with their environments, how roles are performed in both dramatic and religious contexts as well as everyday encounters. The architectural implications of this are broad, suggesting the architectural humanities might turn their eye away from both the canon of Western antiquity and the othering practices of vernacular architecture, and towards understanding the full range of our deliberate environmental adaptations that might be considered as architectural.

Architecture and the lifeworld

Anthropology is a well-established and defined discipline in which a concern for the social and cultural lifeworlds of people is described. This concern with *being human* is central to the discipline and lies at the root of the possible collaboration between the disciplines of architecture and anthropology.

The *lifeworld* is a fundamental concept when considering how architecture and anthropology inform one another. This concept allows anthropologists to consider the intermingled nature of people with their environment: context in this case is inextricable from *being*. Conventionally, this is presented by the anthropologist as a series of encounters with people who live their lives in a way which is different to the anthropologist themselves: this space of otherness is problematic, but introduces a useful critical distance to the discussion. As such, anthropologists often work away from their homes.¹

Architecture deals with people and their *lifeworlds* in a different way, seeing the facts of our everyday lives as the raw material from which new possibilities can be wrought. A more detailed and fine-grained understanding of the facts of these lifeworlds, in all of their diversity, offers the potential for accommodating (in both senses of the word) the lives of people in a more nuanced and intelligent fashion. The potential is for a more socially informed and engaged architecture to emerge from a deeper understanding of what it means to dwell in space. Anthropologist Michael Jackson (2013) considers his preference for the term lifeworld:

If I prefer the term 'lifeworld' to 'culture' or 'society', it is because I want to capture this sense of a social field as a force field (*kraftfeld*), a constellation of both ideas and passions, moral norms and ethical dilemmas, the tried and true as well as the unprecedented, a field charged with vitality and animated by struggle. (Jackson, 2013:7)

By eschewing categories such as 'culture', the lifeworld avoids some of the assumptions of a bounded social group sedimented within the term. Whilst not perfect in itself, it does assist us in thinking of how concepts of the world are bound up in individuals and how they live their lives within it. One of the things anthropology excels at as a discipline is the discussion of knowledge and its production. Anthropology challenges structures of knowledge based on conventional power relations, such as patriarchal, imperialist, academic or capitalist constructs, and gives equal weight to knowledge possessed by other groups and won through other ways of knowing and understanding the world. These challenges to the conventional structures allow for a more holistic understanding of the many ways in which it is possible to be human, to dwell within the world and to construct a coherent lifeworld. In order to do this, anthropological approaches ask us to understand where we ourselves come from and to make fewer assumptions about the world around us. Living is, therefore, to produce working knowledge of the world.

It is this principle of observing, asking, participating and questioning the world rather than walking into a context, situation or place knowing everything about it that is most valuable to the process of architectural design: how can we mobilize the methodologies and practices of anthropology in order to situate our design practices more carefully, responding more fully to the needs of people and the wider environment.

The importance of the lifeworld concept is that it suggests we cannot understand elements of social life in isolation, but must have a holistic approach which considers the following at a range of scales from micro- to macro-scale: environmental conditions, historical legacy, politics, ecology, economics and many more aspects. Even if the eventual account focuses on a small set of examples, these are chosen as representative of the entire context, highlighting its most significant features which demonstrate an alternative way of living.

This introductory chapter discusses some key methodologies in anthropology, suggesting where these cross over with architectural concerns and practices. This allows the body of the book to focus on specific examples and theories developed by way of anthropology. By engaging with participant-participant-observation, auto-ethnography, and methodological atheism/philistinism visual anthropology and design anthropology amongst other methods, one can begin to draw parallels with not only architectural theory, but also aspects

of the design process itself from specification of a programme, context analysis, spatial and formal design, materiality, construction process and post-occupancy analysis.

A range of practices already exist in architecture in order to integrate elements of the social more fully into architectural design processes. The results of these as practices have specific aims, often aimed at particular types of community, such as vulnerable or disenfranchised groups. User-centred design, co-design, people-environment studies, environmental psychology, space syntax, and other systems and processes have sought to reduce the distance between architects and the people they are working for, but are designed to address particular aspects of socially responsible design. My intention is not to be dismissive of these important and evolving practices, but rather to add further nuance to conventional design practice rather than suggest additional work packages of activity and enquiry.

Anthropology for Architects offers a substantially different approach, one which places the architect as someone who *draws, models, designs* and hopefully *builds* culture; intervenes upon and provides *context*, where anthropologists classically *write* it.²

The introduction concludes by summarizing the approach taken by subsequent chapters, which are arranged according to site typologies and their associated anthropological interpretations.

The anthropology of architecture

In situating the intentions of this book, it is helpful to consider some of the possibilities in sketching a relationship between architecture and anthropology. This is often discussed in terms of the distinction between anthropologies 'of' architecture and *anthropological architecture* or *architectural anthropology*. The *anthropology of architecture* often takes *architecture and its practices* as the unit of analysis, studying the agency of designers, clients or users and their buildings through participant-observation with the aim of understanding the complex network of social interactions which contributes towards the construction of our built environment. Similar approaches exist within the study of vernacular architecture, where building conventions alternative to the dominant paradigm are charted.³ The potential of an anthropology *with* architecture suggests that the disciplines work closely with one another in order to produce a new manner of understanding, exploring a wider range of methodologies and approaches in order to produce a new social and spatial context.

This book presents a survey of the theory that underpins the strong correspondence between contemporary social anthropology

and architecture with the aim of moving towards an *anthropological architecture* or *architectural anthropology*. As the study of people and their lifeworlds, anthropology has a great deal to contribute to architecture, with implications for long-held assumptions, reinforcing and elaborating as much as it contradicts and complicates. The central contention is that this is good for both disciplines and lies at the root of any cross-disciplinarity. Anthropologists often seek to engage with architects and academics in architecture, a shared interest in dwelling and how we make places in the world makes for fruitful discussion.

Above all, the book is to be read from the point of view of what assists us with the practice of architectural design. This idea of practice is broadly sketched to include more than the professional and commercial office familiar to bodies such as the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) or American Institute of Architects (AIA), but rather to consider the practices which constitute the built environment at the scale of the building. The more explicitly urban scale presents another set of problems of course and lies outside the scope of this study.

The initial research question is: what can architects learn from anthropologists?⁴ This swiftly developed to ask how architects can integrate anthropological thinking and processes into their work.

As architects, reading ethnographic accounts written by anthropologists gives us a window into other peoples' worlds: precisely the aim of anthropology. This is, of course, highly specific and problematic when we attempt to mobilize this directly into designing. Where anthropology can contribute, however, is at the level of theoretical structures: the scaffolding for thinking about complex, messy, real-world situations – more appropriate than the fashion for philosophy with its essentially reductive approach and abstraction of problems. Anthropology can also offer methodological approaches: not only the fully engaged ethnography, which takes a great deal of time, but other ways of knowing are certainly possible.

The book seeks to demonstrate the applicability of anthropological thought and ethnographic practices to both the understanding and the design of the built environment. This is fraught with as many difficulties as correspondences, of course, and the fundamental nature of architecture and design as broadly interventionist is the most problematic of all. Anthropology is conventionally understood as an observational practice – one which stresses engagement and participation, but methodologically atheist, apolitical and philistine: taking a position apart from our own desire to interpret through our existing belief and value systems. The notion of taking these observations and making fundamental changes to the environment in question is often anathema to anthropologists, where it is second nature to designers such as architects and other designers.

Our definitions of architecture must change to encapsulate the social sphere in a more holistic manner. In order to do this, the lessons of disciplines such as anthropology must be attended to, their practices understood and adopted as appropriate, allowing architecture to enter into informed collaboration with its practitioners. Exploiting existing disciplinary intersections relies upon collaboration with contemporary practitioners rather than solely upon our reflections on the writings of anthropologists. Our alternative reading of these theories as designers informs this collaboration significantly: we approach the material differently as architects. One way to discuss this is to consider what a parallel discipline of *Architectural Anthropology* might look like, borrowing from the recent and continuing development of *Design Anthropology* with its focus on industrial and product design but with the aims and needs of architecture kept in mind. Design anthropology's methods use provocation and prototypes in a way that architecture cannot: different concepts of scale are a significant issue in this, where the size of a building often precludes building a prototype leading to adaptation and conversion after construction to resolve issues, whereas the scale of industrialized production requires product design to have a high degree of refinement before committing to a run of thousands of units. Despite a clear kinship between architecture and the other design disciplines, the terms of engagement between architecture and anthropology are distinct from those found in design anthropology, so it is mainly the process of forming this sub-discipline and how it established its methodologies that is of interest to us here.

The potential is a more socially informed, engaged and sensitive architecture which responds more directly to people's needs. It is crucial for architecture to move away from the technocratic models developed during Modernism, but which remain persistent today – and perhaps more efficiently enacted with automation in the design and construction processes. The profession can adopt alternative models of practice which surpass the demands and economics of professional and commercial practices in order to produce a more holistic built environment.

The enormous potential for anthropologically informed architecture lies in a reassertion of what architecture is as a discipline. It is more than merely economic activity, building what is determined by market forces in a manner determined by vested interests. Instead, we must build resilient and sustainable architecture fit for people to truly dwell in. This indicates that an approach towards anthropology needs to be embedded within architecture rather than as an add-on or sub-discipline. Care needs to be taken in the manner of architecture's adoption of anthropological thinking, particularly around the idea of making use of traditional or vernacular knowledge. Whilst such recoveries of historical precedent can be appropriate, they are only ever one option for architectural design: it is not the role of a recast architecture to

police what is acceptable and what is not, whether that is as a form of cultural appropriation by learning from other cultures or the denial of modernity and its technologies. These options must remain on the table, articulated in new ways by an architectural anthropology.

There are opportunities for close collaboration between architecture and anthropology, and, it can be argued, a need for it. Buildings fail or succeed based on social conditions as often as material failures: yet the questions are rarely framed around the social status of the building, such a massive investment of time, materials and other resources. More than a curiosity or study in the collaboration possible between two cognate disciplines, this book suggests that the social aspect of architecture is crucial rather than luxurious, pragmatic rather than philosophical.

A brief history of anthropology

It's helpful to have a little context to the discipline of anthropology, noting important developments such as structuralism as well as its origins in colonialist practices. This progression of dominant ideas is sometimes rendered by historians as a sequence of discrete schools of thought, but the actual developments are more fraught and overlapping than this might suggest. The identification of a dominant school of thought often occurs after the fact (with some notable exceptions), noting a trend, a series of common concerns and a shared approach. This is why we can never say with any certitude what school is dominant at this moment, but it is clear that a set of concerns are apparent across architecture, including an increased concern for environmental technology and sustainability as well as the formalism afforded by developments in computer-aided design and manufacture. In architectural history, there has been a recent phase of postcolonial theory looking at the mechanisms of transnational movement of ideas and practitioners, and a recent move to the examination of second-order manifestations of architectural practice such as journals, exhibitions and competitions as ways of constructing architectural taste. Each such development looks not only to examine something under-represented in the existing literature, but to build upon what we have learned from prior movements. More than mere fashions, such collections of scholarship allow us to learn collectively, discussing common challenges and issues with the aim of making substantial progress in understanding.

In anthropology, the discipline was founded by missionaries, explorers and adventurers. This origin has marked the study of cultures deeply and creates a problematic deep at the heart of the study, where power relations between

the studied people and the anthropologist are potentially unethical. This early anthropology conceptualized people as Other, often with a capitalized 'O'. The problem with this approach was that it was based in and supported by Colonialism. This means that the people examined by such early anthropology were seen as exotic, often expressed in the terminology of the 'Noble Savage'.

one simultaneously interesting and anachronistic example of this is James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. He was trained as a philosopher and engaged on a project to describe the history of humanity and also of the contemporary non-Western world. It is easy to criticize his work from the point of views we have nowadays, as some of his work misunderstands the cultures he encounters in fairly fundamental ways. Indeed, his work can be understood as potentially racist in many ways, and whilst we are properly critical of this racism nowadays, it does not entirely invalidate his work, which must be read in the context of the times. Despite these failings, his writing until his death in 1941 sets him as one of the precursors of the modern movement.

Frazer is, as a product of Britain in the nineteenth century, an imperialist. The United Kingdom had an empire and held dominion over vast swathes of the globe at this time. This lack of self-determination is, of course, politically problematic, and as an imperial power, Britain subjugated and exploited these countries as a self-professed benevolent dominion. The belief of such imperialists was founded in an idea that such countries were not as advanced, and as such, we could help them at the same time as integrating their people and raw natural resources into a globalized economy. There was no choice involved in this; this was rule imposed from the West; which establishes an unethical power imbalance in the relationship between any researcher and the people he (for it was at this point invariably a male domain) came across. Romanticism was a great part of this era, where the so-called savage state of people was granted a kind of cache and fashionability in the place of true understanding of the sophisticated lives being lived on a different set of terms, and with completely different reference points.

There is a reason we still read his work, based on his own observations as well as a vast literature:

Because Frazer was a product of the nineteenth century we think of him, confusedly, as an imperialist and a romantic. He was at bottom neither, believing fixedly in a kinship of the intellect that transcended cultures, and above all in the primacy of thought. Magic was this: schematized though; and ritual was thought-in-practice. His aborigines, like his Romans, come with a completely worked out, if fallible, system of epistemology and ontology, even of technology. They had views, so do we; they got things wrong; but which of us, in the last resort, is wiser? Robert Frazer, *Introduction to The Golden Bough* (Frazer, 1994[1890]:xxxix)

The book is comparative in its approach, taking thematic approaches to diverse themes such as *The King of the Wood*; *Killing the God*; *Scapegoats*; and the *Golden Bough* of the title (which refers to the Roman myth in which a golden-leaved bough enables Aeneas to travel safely in the Underworld). In what was a particularly daring observation for the time, Frazer drew parallels between the Christian story of the Crucifixion with other religions and traditions in which the king or god is sacrificed and consumed, mirroring ancient traditions in which a ruler is slain ritually before becoming old and infirm.

Such notions that any human being could be understood as 'savage' have, over the course of the twentieth century, been entirely eradicated from anthropological discourse. This is deeply embedded in the politics of anthropology as a movement, which began as a way of understanding people with radically different lives, as an extension of natural history in a way. This science aspect of the social sciences has been supplanted by a stronger association with the humanities.

This association sets anthropology apart from these European missionaries, setting an agenda of so-called methodological atheism. This approach was required in a time when the majority of practising anthropologists were themselves Christian: that such beliefs are actually difficult to reconcile when in the field with the various belief systems held by people across the world. The criticism inherent in holding a religious belief system was impossible to reconcile with an accurate and sensitive study of the life of people with even slightly different views of the world, be they alternative Christian traditions, small regional religious traditions or the other great world religions. This remains a difficulty for researchers of faith today, but has developed further into a generalized approach for the discipline, making the anthropologist methodologically apolitical, philistine and even to an extent amoral: not making judgements on the people they have chosen to study.

We are now at a stage where anthropology is fractured into sub-disciplines based on either a thematic differentiation or a regional one. As such, there are groups of *medical* anthropologists, anthropologists of art and anthropologists who look into skill. Others might focus on the anthropology of Africa, East Asia, Australia or 'The North'. Each of these groupings allows anthropologists to consider a similar set of issues, cross-comparing and offering up generalizable theories about humanity, and the multitude of ways in which it is possible to be human. There are some notable exceptions: some anthropologists directly engage with development work, actually attempting to make a difference when visiting troubled areas of the world. Others, such as feminist anthropologists, engage directly with the gender politics of their chosen field. This is another important exception from the trend of uncritical anthropologists: where the lives of women are examined in terms of their freedom, opportunity, equality and power.

One of the founding figures of the contemporary discipline of anthropology is Claude Lévi-Strauss. As an anthropologist, Lévi-Strauss is famously associated with the structuralist tendency in anthropological theory. Whilst such schools of thought and the development of ideas might seem completely academic in interest, it is worth considering in detail the development of intellectual discovery. Any field, such as architecture, anthropology or philosophy, has certain dominant characteristics at any given point.

Structuralism is a key development in this history of anthropology, and it is understood to be a watershed moment in the discipline. Anthropologists continue to use the term to define a work as being either structuralist or post-structuralist. For these reasons, it is worth considering precisely what is meant by a structuralist theory. Lévi-Strauss abstracts human life into common structures held to be universal. These categories include *kinship*, *religion*, *mythology*, *language*, *art*, *magic* and *medicine*. We shall see later that there is not only an influence and continuing utility for this notion, but also a rejection of it – particularly on the basis that it promotes an idea of universality. Anthropology is founded on the specific rather than the general, so how is it possible to reconcile this idea of universality at all?

Lévi-Strauss's approach to this, which draws a distinction between ethnography and ethnology in that ethnology, is the comparative study (1963:2) enabled by the process of conducting an ethnography. In this understanding, ethnography is source material and anthropology the analysis and understanding that is made of this. Ethnology has been superseded by social anthropology in the UK and cultural anthropology in North America, with ethnology remaining the prevailing terminology in the European discipline.

Lévi-Strauss examined the history of anthropology and developed four fields of investigation:

sociocultural anthropology (primarily social anthropology)

linguistic anthropology

biological anthropology (also known as physical anthropology)

archaic anthropology (strongly related to archaeology).

This model is strongly associated with American anthropology, where British schools of thought would consider social anthropology to be their primary area of concern. This sketches a broad *discipline* of human development which can accommodate the study of ancient humans, differences in physical biology and also in approaches to language and

how this affects cognition. Archaeological anthropology, for example, deals with similar issues to social anthropology as it seeks to understand the lives of ancient people. The evidence available drives a methodology resulting in an anthropology based on the material traces people leave behind rather than having direct access to them for ethnographic, fully embedded research.

Such categorizations of the discipline are not universally accepted, even considering the British focus on social anthropology, there are a great many sub-disciplines each with a different regional or topical focus.

Boas achieved a great deal for anthropology, in particular moving on from Frazer's era where there was assumed to be a singular thread of human development and evolution; Boas established the idea that there are multiple forms and variations of this human development, opening the door for there to be parity between such evolutions.

After Boas, Malinowski moves the discipline closer to what we now understand as anthropology by formulating methodologies which reduce the distance of the observer to the observed. Malinowski helped to establish the idea of participant-observation as the primary technique of social anthropology. This research practice embeds the researcher in the field and involving extended periods of months or years living with a community and participating fully in their world. This overturned the presumptions of earlier ethnographic research which stressed the distance of the observer; that in order to remain objective, the researcher cannot get involved in the lives of the people he is studying.

Lévi-Strauss accepts this new model of anthropological methodology, but is more interested in the theorized results than the reportage. Rather than merely describing, Lévi-Strauss is concerned with drawing out the meaning of what is happening in the field site. For this, he argues that there are common and universal structures to human life and activity. This structuralist approach is sure of itself, consisting of the analysis of field notes and abstracting their content from the specific towards *irreducible elements*. Lévi-Strauss notes the similarity in approach between the anthropologist and the historian in this regard, with reference to his rejection of an earlier and commonly held idea that anthropology is an equivalent discipline focused only on non-literate cultures (1963:23).

In this model of anthropology there is an objective of reaching deeper into a phenomenon, of a lifestyle, of a culture in order not only to understand the surface of what is happening, but also to discern the true motivations and meanings at the heart of what is being observed. Such reasons might be conscious, but are more often unconscious and the result of a long tradition of knowledge and understanding. We can begin to understand the difference

between anthropology and history not to lie in the form of the evidence available so much as the qualities of the temporality. History attempts to find patterns in decision making and the wider cause and effect, where anthropology has a concern for the way lives are lived, the relationships between people and how we can find similarities or differences therein.

Ethnography and anthropology

Anthropology is closely associated with the methodology of ethnography, specifically of participant-observation. Early ethnographic enquiries would position the researcher as an observer, scientifically maintaining a distance to ensure they do not influence the subject of the study. The impossibility of this, together with developments in methodologies which place the researcher firmly within the context, resulted in the development of a mode of participant-observation, where the ethnographer recognizes and allows for their own presence.⁵ Ethnography generally consists of a long-term study, often presented as a *rite of passage* for the anthropologists themselves, where they would typically travel to another place, living there for a period of months or years and learn how people live in the process. Like most disciplines, there is a continual crisis within the discipline concerning the practices of conducting research, with classic ethnographies adopting a version of the scientific method. This involves attempting to remain apart from the object of study, so as not to influence it. This could never really be the case, however, and a more nuanced approach of participant-observation became the norm.

The ethnographer is implicated in their research, present at all times, and objectivity is recognized as an impossible aim to achieve. This makes for a very subjective social science, verging on biography and autobiography at times. Ethnographic studies consist of pertinent stories which allow the anthropologist to begin to develop theories about the underlying meaning of what they have observed and participated in.

There is a growing body of literature around the ethnography of architectural practice. Often framed as a form of science and technology studies (STS) and informed by the work of Bruno Latour and Isabelle Stengers, these texts seek to unpack the processes by which designers work, how decisions are made and the nature of architectural design as a technical practice. These studies are fascinating insights into the workings of practice which allow us to avoid the myth of the *individual genius architect* and to see the process in the round. Examples include Sophie Houdart's work *Kengo Kuma: An Unconventional Monograph* (2009), the result of an extended ethnographic engagement with the office of Kuma Kengo; this text describes the day-to-day

activity of the practice, including the social nature of architectural drawings, and the place of such materials in the design process. For further discussion of the full extent of a building process, Rachel Harkness's (2011) study of *Earthship* builders in Scotland follows the materials used and the transfers of knowledge among a group of self-builders looking for more environmentally sustainable ways to live.

Other significant writers in the field include Albena Yaneva and Victor Buchli. Yaneva's ethnographic account (2009) of the work of OMA focuses on the use and re-use of models from one proposal to the next, seeing the design process of an architectural firm outside the bounds of individual projects, and is one example of the confluence of architecture with anthropology, specifically of the ethnographic method – partly on account of the difficulties presented by attempting a more informed and contemporary form of participant-observation (problematized by the necessity for specific expertise). Buchli's *Anthropology and Architecture* (2013) is written more explicitly from the disciplinary perspective of anthropology and written from the perspective of material culture studies with a regional focus on the ex-Soviet Union. Such an approach explores the life stories of materials and objects as well as people, noting that inanimate objects have narratives of making, use, and disuse which intertwine with the people who own them. Buchli's approach is to see architecture as an agent, one which acts in a variety of ways on the people who encounter it, and which can be used as an instrument of state control over peoples' lives. The historical context of the relationship between the two disciplines is important and useful, discussing art historical, archaeological and anthropological discussions of vernacular architecture.

Architecture and anthropology share a common root of observation. Whilst anthropology goes to great lengths to problematize its observational practices through the discussion of ethnographic field work and participant-observation modes of working, it is clear that observation remains a part of that story. The drawings I discuss later are in this observational mode, developing the idea of the sketchbook as comparable to ethnographic field notes, highlighting its role in forming theories, contexts and a basis for future action. It is this future orientation present in architecture which anthropology has had an issue with historically, but various forms of activist anthropologies and design anthropology have begun to find routes out of this: anthropology can be as interventionist as architecture. Thomas Binder, writing in *Design Anthropological Futures*, notes that recent developments in the field indicate that *collaborative encounters* (in Smith et al (Eds.), 2016: loc.6114) allow for new lifeworlds to come into being.

Further discussion in design anthropology reveals that design can be understood as a provocation, that design is a *mode of knowledge production* (Donahue in Yelavich & Adams, 2014:38). New methods might be required

in this case, rather than simply adopting existing processes which carry a great deal of theoretical baggage with them. The model proposed by Donahue (2014) is an alternative to the positivist model of design as problem solving. Both Donahue and Binder, as well as other contributors to these collections, are part of a movement in contemporary anthropology around emergent conditions rather than operating with presumptions of stability and continually re-enacted social rituals. Design is recast as relating to *futures* as plural possibilities of change, framing the intervention of the design professional within ideas of emergence (Smith & Otto in Smith et al., 2016: loc. 692).

This conundrum of intervention with regard to anthropology has long been an issue – it is raised by Smith and Otto but not fully resolved: how can anthropology, as conventionally defined, reconcile the idea of intervention given its fundamental opposition to action? The co-production argument and socially engaged practice only take us so far once we recognize expertise and specialism in design disciplines and designers themselves. Anthropological approaches are uncomfortable with conventional practices of design, where individuals or teams work from a client's brief, gather information and produce variations on the design before presenting them to the client again. Often, anthropology tries to avoid such conventional instances in preference to fully engaged practices where designers collaborate with clients and users. The fact remains, however, that design, much of it good, exists within the dominant paradigm.

Smith and Otto draw upon Rabinow's *contemporary anthropology* (2016: loc.718), referring to the notion of the *emergent* that is used to oppose conventional anthropology of societal reproduction, where the new, the altered and the changed are all smoothed out. What we have in emergent models of social life is an anthropology which has an eye on continual reinvention, of creativity and cultural improvisation as we might have understood it elsewhere. The idea of what the contemporary means in itself is also challenged:

Tradition and modernity are not opposed but paired... the contemporary is a moving image of modernity, moving through the recent past and near future in a space that gauges modernity as an ethos already becoming historical. (Rabinow, P., Marcus, G., et al., 2008: loc. 645)

Rabinow complicates the accounts of emergence coming from Deleuze and his source, Bergson. Virtuality and potentiality are then added to the terminology of futures and emergence. There are some distinctions in the inflection each of these give, but there is perhaps a lack of precision, but it is important to report on not only what facts can be observed on the ground, but also the possibilities people understand to exist:

Anthropology has paid more attention to what is than to what might be, and has had a greater interest in how societies are reproduced than how they are transformed. (Smith, R.C. & Otto, T., in Smith et al (Eds.), 2016: loc. 747)

There are other approaches to anthropology beyond participant-observation including ethnographic film⁶ and the photographic practices of visual ethnography.⁷ The presence of the lens and recording media is theorized carefully as a sub-discipline related to documentary filmmaking, not only accounting for the influence of the lens on what happens in front of it, but also accentuating the multisensory nature of what can be captured and conveyed through non-textual means.

Further methodological innovations are present within design anthropology, and these are perhaps most relevant to architecture. Still relatively young as a sub-discipline, design anthropology⁸ still has an issue in applying across all of the design disciplines: architecture is a particular case in point. The use of prototypes within design anthropology is particularly interesting, with the anthropologist working alongside designers and end users of products, observing and collaborating throughout the process in order to understand how a designed object might be used, what it is actually needed for and how best to achieve this.

Controversially, some anthropologists are beginning to question the near-exclusive focus on ethnography as anthropology's method. Tim Ingold (2014, 2017) has written about the habit of conflating anthropology with ethnography:

Anthropology, I maintain, is a generous, open-ended, comparative, and yet critical inquiry into the conditions and possibilities of human life in the one world we all inhabit. (Ingold, 2017:22)

In defining anthropology, Ingold describes its concern with considering all of the ways in which it is possible to live life as a human being in a social context. The question asked by anthropology is, given that no way of life is simply 'natural' or the way things must be, *why* is social life arranged in this way? As such, he defines it as a *comparative* discipline.

I've long avoided positioning my work as *ethnographic*, preferring to call it anthropological. This is perhaps strategic, as I am most often presenting work to anthropologists. This discussion stems from my early work in anthropology, where I spent my time at my own drawing board interrogating a research question about creative practice through my own work. The result of these conversations was to underline that this upstart architect was resolutely *not* doing ethnography.

Despite projects which relied on my observations of another context, Japan, this has made me a little uncomfortable about describing my work explicitly as ethnographic, but instead arguing for it as an alternative form of anthropology.

The distinction might lie in the nature of ethnography as a non-judgemental form of reportage, accurately and unflinchingly accounting for what happens within a social context. By drawing and using other inscriptive practices, I feel that I have already made a step towards interpretation, making sense of things and theorizing through drawing.

It occurs to me that this might be different if my drawings were conducted in situ and over a longer period, rather than from brief visits and drawn up afterwards in the studio. The immediacy of the data of ethnographic field notes is akin to the hurried sketch made whilst in a place; this is typically followed by a longer consideration of the recorded events afterwards in order to bring some order to them, and this sense-making process could be considered as characteristic of anthropology. Ingold has argued several times for a disentangling of ethnography and anthropology. This is not to be protective of either term, but to be more precise in what we mean by them: and importantly, opening the door for anthropology to be conducted by a range of alternative methods – not only ethnography, but also by creative practice such as drawing, dancing, pottery, pedagogy and more.

I was trained to understand anthropology as an alternative to the philosophical tradition whereby theory was grounded in the lifeworlds of people, and the aim was not to find a single universal truth, but to celebrate the multiplicity of ways to be human in the world.

The research that follows maintains a tension between what I will call an ethnographic aspect and the anthropological interpretation of that condition.⁹ The argument made by Ingold is perhaps internal to anthropology, but it underlines some of the ways in which ethnography is being made to stand in for anthropology: as a kind of reportage without the reflective element of anthropology. Ingold positions anthropology as follows:

Anthropology, as I have presented it, is fundamentally a speculative discipline. It is akin to philosophy in that sense, but differs from philosophy (at least as practiced by the majority of professional philosophers) in that it does its philosophizing in the world, in conversation with its diverse inhabitants rather than in arcane reflections on an already established literary canon. (Ingold, 2017:24)

The key phrase here is that anthropology does its philosophizing *in the world*. There is more to it than this, however: anthropology, unlike philosophy, is not looking to establish a singular truth applicable to every context: anthropology respects the various possible truths which people construct for themselves in order to live their lives, seeing them as having validity and not imposing a normative view which can never be neutral or universal.

- 3 Such as Yaneva (2009) and Houdart & Chihiro (2009); see also Kaijima, Stalder & Iseki (2018).
- 4 See Ingold (2013) for more on this distinction.
- 5 See Lucas (2014). for more on the role of the sketchbook.
- 6 See Tschumi (1996) for more on this.
- 7 Discussed much more fully in Lucas (2019a).
- 8 Such as Lynch (1960) and Gould & White (1986).
- 9 As discussed by Cureton (2016:80–88).
- 10 See Lucas & Romice (2008) and Lucas (2009a, 2009b) for more details on this project.
- 11 This notation is fully detailed up as part of Lucas (2006).
- 12 See Lucas (2008a) for the Tokyo Metro project and Lucas (2009c) for the Daruma notations. The notations of Sanja Matsuri (discussed in Chapter 7 of this volume) can be found in Lucas (2018b).
- 13 This discussion of attention is indebted to the *Knowing from the Inside* European Research Council research group, with this epistemology of attention forming the basis of discussions about a new curriculum exploring the themes of how we can come to know the world and communicate our knowledge of it. <https://knowingfromtheinside.org> <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/research/kfi/>.

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