

CHAPTER 3

Autoethnography of the Inbetweenness. Between Art and Anthropology

In this chapter, I bring my own experiences of being in between the disciplines of art and anthropology. Through autoethnography, I examine the challenges and possibilities of this collaboration. I look closely at the complex relations between ethics and aesthetics, as well as theory and practices, and how this contributes to today's multimodality. I engage with the concept of liminality as a case study by looking at it through the double lens of art and anthropology. In this chapter, I am rethinking the positionality of art within academic projects in the social sciences.

3.1 Multimodalities: Between Art and Anthropology

Over the past few years, there has been growing interest in the adoption of multimodal and cross-disciplinary methods in social sciences and humanities research. Many of these studies include engagements with art, design, architecture, participatory research, and methodological modalities that challenge normative forms of knowledge production, especially academic reading and scientific writing (Stadtlaibor, 2021; Garland and Myrtsou, 2022). This opening of the methodological spectrum to further experimentation has led many research projects in the social sciences to invite artistic partners and cultural producers to collaborate and produce knowledge for a more experimental ethnography that is receptive to new forms and materials, raising interest in the juxtaposition between artistic practices and ethnography; however, it is a relationship that has been forming since the 1980s. In this first section of the chapter, I reflect on this renewed engagement of the social sciences and humanities with creative and artistic practices and the way researchers are working across disciplines to undertake more exploratory research and methods that move beyond text as a format of knowledge production. This “new” interest makes me question (as an artist) the role and recognition of artistic practices in this new multimodal form in the sciences, and ask: When did anthropology become multi-

modal? When did artistic practices and methods become inspirational and relevant in ethnography?

In this section, I am investigating “the ethnographic turn,” which brought various transformations in both practice and epistemology, shaping new research methods in the social sciences and the arts. These developments paved the way for today’s approaches, including multimodal, engaged, and public anthropology. My analysis draws on key moments in anthropology’s history and its intersections with art—particularly during the “decade of cultural critique” in the 1980s and within the art scene of the 1990s. I aim to highlight instances of collaboration between these disciplines and to reflect on them through an autoethnography¹ of my own experience moving between art and anthropology. This reflection also includes two courses I taught to art and social science students, exploring the intersections of both fields. Through these experiences, I reconsider the virtues and challenges of this entanglement, especially regarding the recognition and validation of artists and their practices within social science research, and the possibilities opened by what is now called multimodal anthropology—a contemporary space for collaboration between anthropology and other modes of knowledge production (see Chapter 4).

Between Practice and Theory

Back in 2018, when I joined the Institute of European Ethnology at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (IfEE) to start my pre-PhD process, the term multimodal and artistic practices as methodologies for fieldwork research were not yet “trendy.” Very few students came from applied and artistic disciplines; I was one of only two artists doing a PhD in anthropology at the time. Persefoni Myrtsou,² my colleague and dear friend, was also at the same institute, working on her PhD research on the migratory and “homing” practices of artists, employing the method of performative autoethnography in her data collection and conducting 50 in-depth autobiographical interviews with the artists. Some of the data results are also presented through charts and tables, gesturing toward a quantifiable interpretation of the data. While this felt novel in our immediate environment, it was not entirely without precedent.

1 As it falls outside the scope of this book to reflect on *autoethnography*, I understand it in broad terms as a method through which the researcher draws on their own biography and personal experiences to connect them with broader social and cultural phenomena. The use of self-reflexivity and self-criticism shapes the internal process of analysis. This approach resonates strongly with artistic research practices, where the artist’s thematic interests are deeply interwoven with lived experience, often blurring the boundaries between life and work—the artwork becomes life itself. In this sense, autoethnography is not only autobiographical; it serves as a lens through which wider social and collective phenomena can be understood, extending beyond individual experience (see Herrmann and Adams, 2022).

2 See her website <https://persefonimyrtsou.com/>

The discipline of anthropology already had a history of transdisciplinary crossover between the arts and anthropology stretching back more than 30 years, particularly in the social science departments in the USA and England, where there was a crossover between arts, literature, and film, but in the Berlin universities it was not yet an element of significant interest. Then, in the following years, the IfEE started to take an interesting turn with the arrival of professors Ignacio Farias and Tomás Sanchez, who brought the discourse of multimodality into urban studies research; their laboratory Stadtlabor³ began to perform various multimodal approaches as a valid form that deserves more research. Today Stadtlabor is going further by working with multimodal scholars like Carla J. Maier, Judith Albrecht, and Andrew Gilbert (see Multimodal Appreciation project⁴), researching ways to validate multimodal practices as an aspect of equal importance to scientific academic literature. The multimodal approach's use of non-text as a format of knowledge production remains a challenge in the scientific sphere. There are ongoing debates about how to validate it academically and recognize it in terms of its affectivity, sensibility, and sensoriality, which differs from the rational and cognitive qualities that scientific knowledge production typically entails. The work already done in decolonial, indigenous, and queer studies on self-reflexivity in relation to their case studies has inspired the researcher working with multimodal, engaged, and public anthropology to look for new affective and sensorial settings and methods for connecting with the communities they are collaborating with.

By its very nature, anthropology sits between the humanities and the social sciences, as described by scholar Eleana Yalouri in her essay: "From Cultural Critique to Multimodality" (2022). Given that anthropology exists in a liminal state within academic institutions, it is an ideal discipline for future research on validation and experimentation with other methodologies and forms of representation. However, for me, it is important to reflect on these aspects of validation and recognition of artists and culture producers, and artistic practices as research methods and forms of representation and collaboration, which have unfortunately been missing in the development of multimodality as a sub-discipline. In various multimodal projects, I have found that multimodal discourse benefits significantly from the sensory, aesthetic, and affective forms and qualities of the arts, which in many cases reproduces a pseudo-appropriation of these ways of working by the social science researcher.

This tension between disciplines isn't entirely new. In fact, it echoes earlier shifts in ethnographic thinking. In the 1980s scholars Michael Fischer, James Clifford and George Marcus (1986) began to question traditional notions of ethnography by deploying new understandings and possibilities regarding its formal and material aspects. Their aim was to facilitate research collaboration with other forms of

3 See <https://www2.hu-berlin.de/stadtlabor/news/>

4 See <https://www2.hu-berlin.de/multimodalappreciation/>

practices and disciplines. Clifford, in his renowned book *The Predicament of Culture* (1988), presents ethnography as a “hybrid activity,” which can take the form of writing, collecting, and a kind of modern collage. He suggests that it is necessary to combine more creative and artistic experimentation with scientific disciplines, as anthropology has lost its “subversive vocation” (Clifford, 1988: 12). He criticizes the institutionalization of “scientific ethnography” and how with this shift in the discipline it alienated itself from the creative forms that could have invited other ways of perceiving, interpreting, and describing what ethnography seeks to examine. Clifford highlights the French ethnography of the interwar period, which had not lost contact with literary forms of description and representation (Clifford, 1988: 118). French ethnography was inspired by Dadaist and Surrealist artistic modalities in which Western artists, musicians, poets, and anthropologists came together to problematize the cultural parameters of the West and the experiences they were going through during the Second World War, which for Clifford was an early form of collaboration between the arts and the social sciences. For example, the artistic surrealism at the time was influenced by the way ethnography analyzes culture, and ethnography, as Clifford argues, took a surreal approach when it juxtaposed different ways of understanding cultural phenomena—resembling a surreal collage (Clifford, 1988: 10; also cited in Yalouri, 2022: 3). This early juxtaposition and collaboration between art and anthropology, with ethnography as their meeting point, was lost in the following decades. It has appeared again today from a more dispersed multimodal perspective.

The book *Writing Culture* (1986), edited by Fischer, Clifford, and Marcus, is one of the first approaches to challenge the classical outlook that ethnography had at that time. It problematizes ethnographic representations that had very classical, conventional, and hierarchical ways of describing culture in research. They also touched on the issues of power around ethnographic texts and how it was necessary to move away from the text to rethink the great problem of representation. At that time, there was already experimentation with visuals, but it was ignored by the social sciences, so such experimentation only continued in the arts (Yalouri, 2022). The discourse at that time was divided. On the one hand, it was said that Fischer, Clifford, and Marcus were opening an extended discussion of representation and modalities within ethnography, while others criticized that these “new” reflections threatened the sciences and their rules, institutionalization, and professionalization (Yalouri, 2022). These criticisms ignored the seriousness, efficiency, and efficacy of the arts, literature, and creative processes as well as feminist anthropology, thereby reaffirming the patriarchal and colonialist model within the academy. Today, similar patterns of erasure are surfacing, mirroring how the process of validating collaborators in multimodal social sciences plays out—the recognition of artists and cultural practitioners is often lost in the development of a multimodal project in an academic context. (I elaborate on this in the closing paragraphs).

Years after the publication of *Writing Culture* and after conducting further research into the juxtaposition between art and anthropology, Marcus (1995) reflects on the criticisms made by his colleagues in the 1980s in which the aspect of knowledge production and research within the social sciences through aesthetics would have led to a redefinition of the traditional ways of thinking and practicing anthropology, in which experimentation with the visual and material would have led to a reformulation of the discipline, something which at that time it was not prepared for (Calzadilla and Marcus, 2006, cited in Yalouri, 2022: 4). Today, these entanglements are flourishing again, and aesthetics continue to play an important role in the “innovative form” of multimodal representation and methods in anthropology. But at the same time, this “innovative form” raises questions about its validation, recognition, and credibility within the sciences.

I remember one of my first presentations at the IfEE PhD colloquium. I was nervous because I did not know how to translate my project into an academic scientific context. I remember when I was presenting my research methods, which were pseudo-ethnographic with artistic practices, one of the professors asked me directly, “Why arts? Why does the artist feel that through art, they will be a savior in resolving social issues?” I did not know how to answer at first. I tried to distance myself from the personal and see it from a broader view, which for me was difficult because it was clear to me that being an artist in a context of socially engaged art and with a desire for political change, I could contribute alternative methodological perspectives and insights to anthropological research around my PhD topics on migration dynamics and the border regime crisis in Europe and South America. It was clear to me that for artists and anthropologists there was already historically a beneficial juxtaposition, collaboration, and interest between the disciplines.

Since the “ethnographic turn” produced in the 1990s art scene, socially engaged artists have been influenced by anthropology and taken a greater interest in politics, activism, the social, ethics, and collaborative work. Artists began adopting methodologies from the social sciences such as interviewing, documenting social events (Foster, 1995), archiving struggles, and participatory observation at the site of interest, which was already a kind of fieldwork as a research method (see also Laine, 2018; Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2015; Marcus, 2010, all cited in Yalouri, 2022: 4). In my artistic studies at the University of Chile, we had to read, among others, Hal Foster’s essay: “The Artist as an Ethnographer?” (1995), a classic that is the basis for artistic techniques and expressions, especially in South America. In countries like Chile, where there was a dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s, artists working during that time began different forms of activism, documentation, and reflections related to the massacres perpetrated by the dictatorship and the stories of the disappeared detainees. Later, in our generation of the 1990s, we were called the “sons/daughters of dictatorship.” Through archival techniques, narrative collection, interviews, and storytelling, the artists of the 1990s generation began to create a contemporary Chilean

imaginary, in which precarious art, objectival, museological, and pseudo-ethnography were methodological ways to deal with an absent and unspoken memory of our history, which, if we perceive it through the eyes of the social anthropologist Alfred Gell (1996, 1998), was already a question of the relational in the arts (see below).

After the ethnographic turn in artistic practices, artists began to use fieldwork and in situ research methods to develop socially connected art (Yalouri, 2022). The foundation of this approach can be observed today in the statements of many art residencies, where the artist is asked to do research, conduct fieldwork, and work directly with the community. The artist no longer stays in their studio and produces artwork but instead uses fieldwork as their art studio, where various artistic practices are tested within the community. Thanks to the influence of decolonial and feminist discourses, the artist incorporates awareness and ethical considerations when collaborating with the “other.” This approach, which centers the “concept” as a driving force, recalls the definitions of conceptual art. Anthropologist Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (2013a, 2013b) describes a shift from an aesthetic or sensory focus to a conceptual and social one. Similarly, Yalouri (2022) suggests that conceptual art moves the aesthetic and sensory toward ethnographic conceptualism (Yalouri, 2022: 4–5), drawing on Sol LeWitt’s foundational idea from 1967: “The idea becomes a machine that makes the art” (LeWitt, 1967: 80).

Alongside this, since the 1980s, anthropologists have also been influenced by and interested in artistic practices and the art scene, not only semiotic theories as a cultural and visual language, but also, as Alfred Gell writes in his renowned text *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (1998), a relational approach to research that perceives artworks as social actions rather than simply aesthetic elements. Gell asks: What does a work of art mean and do? This opens up new interpretations from the social sciences on the social and relational aspect of art, as analyzed by the anthropologists Arnd Schneider and Chris Wright (2006, 2010, 2013). By experimenting with the tensions between methodological and theoretical research in art and anthropology, we are moving from an anthropology of art to an anthropology through art (Yalouri, 2022). Today, with the turns toward multimodal, multisensory, collaborative, and engaged anthropology (and previously with the anthropology of art, visual anthropology, and the anthropology of sound), we can speak of a growing awareness about the value of investigating emotions, sensations, bodies, and aesthetics, as well as an interest in indigenous practices in a contemporary world, all of which raise new research questions, as Sarah Pink (2015) suggests. These questions lead researchers to go beyond the rational, logical, and cognitive to embrace sensoriality, affect, and spirituality, introducing new materials, categories, and concepts that address “evocation” (Tyler, 1987), “action” (Gell, 1998), and “affect” (Stewart, 2007; Navaro-Yashin, 2009) rather than “representation.” Yalouri (2022) argues that by emphasizing the research process, it is possible to highlight the “thinking through making” by experimenting with materials and methods from art and other practical

disciplines. In her book: *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis*, Katherine Hayles (2012) analyzes the process of production through ceramics and its relationship with the idea and conceptualization:

Drawing on my own experience with throwing pots, I typically would begin with a conscious idea: the shape to be crafted, the size, texture, and glaze, etc. Wedging the clay gives other cognitions a chance to work as I absorb through my hands information about the clay's graininess, moisture content, chemical composition, etc., which may perhaps cause me to modify my original idea. Even more dynamic is working the clay on the wheel, a complex interaction between what I envision and what the clay has a mind to do. A successful pot emerges when these interactions become a fluid dance, with the clay and my hands coming to rest at the same moment. In this process, embodied cognitions of many kinds participate, including unconscious and nonconscious ones running throughout my body and, through the rhythmic kicking of my foot, extending into the wheel. (Hayles, 2012: 92)

"Thinking through making" is defined by thinking through and with aesthetic and sensory forms, not only thinking for and about them (Yalouri, 2022). This places the process of conceptualizing and theorizing sociocultural phenomena into another modality, where effectiveness and sensoriality are the guides to the cognitive and the rational. However, it is important to emphasize that multimodal and artistic practices in anthropology do not intend to supplant the text form. With my analysis of the interaction between artistic practices and ethnography, I am not aiming to counteract the analytical power of text, especially scientific text, which deploys another discursive and conceptual modality when describing, analyzing, and questioning sociocultural problems. The recent trend of experimentation in multimodal ethnography and the multiplicity of epistemologies, affectivities, and political ways of engaging with sociocultural, urban, and natural issues instead stress the traditional predominance of the cognitive, rational, and textual approaches of the sciences, yet also opens up possibilities for other ways of producing knowledge, where affectivity, sensoriality, collaboration, and experimentation come into play and contribute to expand research that is more-than-textual, as well as public engagement interventions (Stadtlabor, 2021). In Chapter 4 of this book, I reflect on the aspect of "thinking through making" that intertwines practice and theory, which is reflected in the notion of "artistic research," where artistic practices are considered as working methods that approach the multimodal ethnographic discourse of social sciences.

Today, multimodality is not only a way of dealing with the problem of representation in ethnography but goes further, as Stadtlabor (2021) argues, "as a mode of ethnographic knowledge production in itself, a way of approaching concept-work,

analysis or fieldwork.” From my understanding of the history between art and anthropology and between practice and theory, the way of interacting with the multimodal approach today comes from that old juxtaposition between practices and theory, which makes me question why there is still only limited recognition of artistic practices as research methods in the social sciences. I wonder, with the current tendency to experiment with these other forms of knowledge production, how to develop frameworks that do not neglect the recognition of artistic agents and cultural practitioners who, from within their disciplines, have already come a long way in dealing with the affective, sensory, and material. It is true that nowadays there is greater recognition through multimodal projects, where co-authorship and co-production help recognize artists in social science research. However, there is still a long way to go, especially in the German context, for artists and cultural practitioners to be validated as scholars in the social sciences. The great problem of the anthropological discipline and its colonial legacy of the Western gaze in research toward “the others” is somehow reflected in the ongoing interaction between art and anthropology through the reproduction of hierarchies and vulnerabilities in relation to the artist in an academic social science context. The anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2003: 18) argues that anthropology became a “curiosity turned profession,” which I link here to the great interest of the social sciences in artistic practices. In many cases, this “curiosity” has led to a lack of truly horizontal collaborations within academic contexts, where the burden often falls on the artist to “academicize” themselves in order to be accepted into the world of anthropology. This dynamic is rarely mirrored on the other side—anthropologists and social scientists are not expected to study art or become artists in order to engage with artistic practices. This asymmetry continues to shape the terms of collaboration. If the social sciences did not perceive artists and cultural producers as only in “service” of aesthetic production and recognized the arts and their methods as essential aspects of academic knowledge production, collaboration, and beyond, the current multimodal discourse would benefit significantly. (I will return to its implications in the final paragraphs of this section).

Between Aesthetics and Ethics

Returning to the reflections around the juxtaposition and the longstanding relationship between art and anthropology, I reflect here on how the ethics of research and collaboration differ between artistic and anthropological practices, and the kinds of issues these differences raise. On the one hand, aesthetics often exceeds ethics in artistic contexts, raising issues of vulnerabilization, appropriation, and extractivism with the subject concerned—a recurring criticism from the social sciences. On the other hand, ethics and its reflections on positionality and power relations often paralyzes and does not allow researchers to move forward in their experimentation with new modes of research and knowledge production. I was able to experi-

ence the relationship and clash between aesthetics and ethics directly as a lecturer in two seminars I taught; the first was for art and curatorial students (in Antofagasta) and the second for students of the social sciences and humanities (in Berlin). This allowed me to explore practically and also from different educational contexts (between South America and Europe) the difficulties and virtues that exist at the intersection between art and anthropology. In turn, the discoveries we made with the students can help address some of the challenges of multimodal validation in the social sciences and enable a deeper exploration of the entanglement between art/anthropology, practice/theory, and aesthetics/ethics.

From Aesthetics to Ethics

In June 2022, I was invited to be part of the teaching group of the graduate course *Microcuradurias* hosted by SACO's⁵ *escuela sin escuela* program in Antofagasta, Chile—a non-academic program focused on artistic research. I taught the course *Curating in Migratory Zones*, which covers more than reflections on how to work with “migrant communities” in a South American context. I was interested in reflecting with the students on the ethics around the challenges of “social art” and “participatory art” (see Bishop, 2023) and the collaboration of such artists with communities, as well as how an understanding of ethics plays an important role in art in general and specifically in artistic practices that work with the social, taking into account the social science critique that art can produce “aesthetic extractivists” as well as power relations between the artist/curator and the subject. I had already collaborated with SACO within the context of this research on the Los Arenales community in Antofagasta, one of my case studies in this book. The artist and curator Dagmara Wyskiel, the director of SACO, invited me to design this course with the curatorial theme of migratory zones as a result of our repeated conversations about the ethical issues concerning institutions, artists, and the community, and how the production process of an artistic project often makes the community vulnerable and invisible, causing more harm than good, which is reflected in the current ethical concerns of artists and curators working in migration settings in the north of Chile.

These reflections with Wyskiel were ideal for the framework of SACO's educational practices, since SACO is not a university or educational institute but rather an organization that focuses on cultural and artistic decentralization and, as they put it, a process of decolonization of education in Chile, stressing the current reality in the Chilean state and private universities that are financed by the students themselves. This fee-based Chilean education system privileges people who can pay for it or decide to take out loans that leave them with significant debt in the initial years of their working lives. Moreover, in Chile most of the professions that are

5 See SACO Contemporary Art Biennial Antofagasta-Chile, <https://bienalsaco.com/>

less in demand in the Chilean neoliberal market, such as those that involve studying the arts, literature, anthropology, social sciences, etc., are concentrated in the geographic center of the country (between the cities of Valparaíso and Valdivia). The provision of those disciplines in the north and south of the country is either minimal or non-existent. We cannot forget that Chile is geographically long and there is a significant difference between the country's northern and southern extremities and its center. That is why SACO, driven by a strong political, ethical, and philosophical vocation expressed through artistic practice, created the Biennial of Contemporary Art, hosted in Antofagasta, and later developed the graduate program *Microcuradurías*. This program is aimed at students who lack access to formal university education in curatorial studies and art theory, and it opens a space for critical reflection on the Chilean cultural and education system. Through these initiatives, SACO has not only expanded access to artistic discourse but has also contributed to shaping the conversation around ethics in the arts—both within Chile and across the broader South American context.

The students who participated in the course had a variety of backgrounds and interests but were united by a vision of actively supporting the decentralization of Chilean culture. I was struck by their awareness, self-reflexivity, and criticism concerning cultural and institutional practices and their environment. Most of the students already had a prior background in a self-taught or professional artistic and curatorial practice as well as a tendency toward a decolonial discourse, which came across in their reflections when we discussed how to collaborate with communities ethically. It could be that this first cohort of the graduate program (2022) were influenced and inspired by what happened in 2019 in Chile; the struggles and protests that led to the “Estallido Social” (social outbreak)⁶ in 2019 and the long influence of decolonial discourses in theory and practice in South America. They were interested in issues such as natural extractivism, the crisis in border regimes, the struggle of the indigenous Mapuche community to regain their lands, and the general context of the mass demonstrations in Chile. The students were influenced by Chilean feminist movements as a theoretical and practical base, which resonated strongly in their perspectives on ethics in artistic processes and cultural production within communities. The need to create spaces for exchange, support political struggles, and advocate for social justice in aesthetics and artistic practices were strongly present in their projects, making me question the presumption that there is a non-existence or lack of ethical concerns in artistic contexts. It also led me to reflect on whether this ethical and collaborative turn is, in part, a response to the growing influence of South American feminist and decolonial discourses—discourses that challenge

6 See more in Terri Gordon-Zolov's paper “Chile's Estallido Social and the Art of Protest” (2023), <https://sociologica.unibo.it/article/view/16817/16616>

dominant narratives and reimagine the role of art as both a critical and relational practice.

These reflections brought me back to my own experience as an artist navigating the academic world. One of the biggest criticisms (and self-criticisms) that I have faced as an artist working with social concerns and injustices over the years has been the question of ethics. The common image of the artist as having “poor ethics” or “poor self-reflexivity” is present in the daily production of an artwork. One of the questions I was asked at the beginning of my PhD research was: Why does the artist feel they will be able to solve social issues through art? I question this image of the artist and their circle, which is generated outside the art world, and how it influences decisions within the creative process. Since the ethnographic turn in the 1990s, the great increase in artists’ interest in social questions has given rise to new forms of artistic production: social art, participatory art, art action, collaborative performance art, and, lately, activism (art+activism). These new forms have provided spaces for collaboration, not only between artists and the community but also with other disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, social work, and political agents and activists. I do not ignore the criticisms of these collaborations, which often tend to reproduce vulnerability, precariousness, and power relations with the community, even if the artist and the curator have good intentions and are aware of their positionality. In this chapter, I do not want to go deeper into these criticisms since there is already a lot of theory and debate about the problem of artists in social and ethical issues (see Bishop, 2006, 2012; Atkins et al., 2008; Dezeuze, 2010; Brown, 2014). Instead, I am interested in looking at this image of the artist from the perspective of the artists’ social circles, which is far more complex and often reproduces precariousness that goes beyond the relationship between the artist, the artwork, and the community, in many cases affecting the curator and cultural mediator as well.

The infrastructure of “the art scene”—including galleries, museums, networking platforms, and art residencies—along with its financing mechanisms, such as art sales, state and private funding, and its modes of visualization through exhibitions, art talks, interviews, publicity, and social media, collectively facilitates the production of artworks and art projects which, in many cases, unintentionally reproduce or even capitalize on vulnerability. In the Chilean context, for example, the funding process, short-term project execution, quasi-obligatory photo documentation, and social media publicity surrounding the artistic result allow the system to generate community visibility while reinforcing its own invisibility. Based on the neoliberal idea, the community “needs” this form of visibility that is provided by cultural and artistic agents. I have seen much more evidence of this aspect in a Chilean and neoliberal context, which differs from the artistic context in Berlin (where my artistic production is based). In the Berlin context, the funding process and reports are based on a framework that helps in some ways to be more careful with the commu-

nity. However, the interaction between artists, institutions/funding, and communities is still complex when seeking strategies for collaboration in cultural projects. By way of contrast, the visualization of the artistic “outcome” from a Chilean perspective has an aspect of “the immediate,” which often raises the question of vulnerability and extractivism in relation to the community. These concerns became especially tangible in our discussions with the students, where we debated and reflected on the visual registration and documentation of artworks and art projects. The need to record and share (in social networks) each process in the production of the art can directly affect communities and reproduce vulnerability. We discussed other types of documentation such as soundscapes, poems, and drawings, which could serve as a counter-response to traditional ways of recording and documenting cultural projects. These reflections also considered the ethical practices of artistic work.

I will not leave aside the recurrent concern that many artistic and cultural agents often think that their artistic or curatorial projects are the right ones for the community without first conducting research and engaging in a dialogue about what the community needs. I understand that the image of the “artist as creator/God who will solve social problems” comes from criticisms about the absence of prior research within the community. From my own experience and looking at it from an artist’s perspective, in general, the artist has noble intentions for the project development, which unfortunately are arbitrated by institutional funding structures whose application criteria require the artist to have already structured the project as a “finished product.” This is in contrast with the social sciences, where funding institutions understand that research and fieldwork must first be completed before the finished product can be defined. Cultural funding structures are not necessarily the “fault” of the artist and the written conceptualizations of their projects. Instead, it is the scarcity of economic resources or the lack of importance attributed to artistic research by the funding organizations which prevents the artist from conducting fieldwork. I am talking mainly about the Chilean and South American context, where there is very little funding for artistic research in the cultural context. In general, if there is funding for artistic research, it is only available within universities and art schools, which means that the opportunity to reflect ethically is only framed in an academic context that is not translated to the public cultural context. Cultural funding is generally directed toward the production and visualization of the artwork, and this structure often leaves little scope for preliminary research into what the community needs and wants.

Therefore, I was struck by how most of the students had already conducted research through collaboration with social workers and psychologists, or were contemplating ethical research about the community in collaboration with social science professionals. Many took up the idea of the “workshop” as a space for data collection, and others worked with the community as artist agents and co-authors to create collective pieces. These aspects of collaboration between cultural and soci-

ological agents exemplify the mutual aid between the juxtaposition of art and anthropology. Through the students' reflections, it was possible to perceive that although there was no funding for prior research, in many cases the partnership with researchers who already had data collections made the idea of collaboration possible and meant that artists did not have to start from scratch. I later understood that many students wanted to work with the social services department of local municipalities, as such departments were looking for cultural agents to visualize and communicate their findings. In many cases, this involved addressing data related to racism in the context of contemporary migration in Chile—an issue that continues to intensify and demand creative, collaborative responses.

It was around this time, when I began collaborating more closely with communities, that I started asking myself a different set of questions—questions I now recognize as grounded in anthropological reflexivity. What is my position in relation to the community? What are my history and privileges? Why and how do I relate to them? What do I come to learn, understand, and deliver to the community? While conducting the fieldwork for this book, members of the community asked me questions like: What are you going to provide us? What is the benefit for us of your presence, research, and ideas? These questions related to the great problem of ethics, which was more strained when I spoke to the community as an ethnographer than as an artist. When I approached my artistic project, the playfulness of artistic practices helped to soften this tension between the researcher and the community. However, the playfulness of art also produced ambiguity and gray zones of ethical practices for developing artistic work. Donna Haraway's "Situated Knowledges" ([1991] 2018) contributes enormously toward dealing with the examination of one's own positionality within the field of study, suggesting researchers take into consideration their own situated positionality and that all knowledge produced is linked to the subjectivity of the one who produces it, which makes the researchers' political positioning explicit. Haraway argues that it is necessary to specify one's perspective, since it is never neutral and generalized. She emphasizes that there are multiple vantage points from which to observe, critique, and reflect upon reality, and that recognizing these diverse positionalities is essential for cultivating a deeper understanding of different ways of knowing. This recognition, in turn, enables more meaningful forms of collaboration—ones that are respectful, horizontal, and rooted in mutual accountability.

Building on these ideas, the students and I were in a position to continue discussing the processes of sensitization from an anthropological and ethical perspective, and how to collaborate "with others"—thereby counteracting the classic way of working "about the other" (see Ortiz, 2022)—by positioning the community at the center of the collaborative and productive process of the curatorial project. We reflected on the possibility that the community's role is no longer that of a spectator or merely a participatory entity, but rather that it is part of each stage of the curatorial

process, from conceptualization to production and exhibition (see Bailer, 2024). We considered how these different stages could be developed in a collaborative and mutually respectful way, trying to leave aside colonial and racist structures that we have learned socially and professionally. We also considered one of the criticisms of collaborative processes, which is the amount of time it takes to carry out collaborative projects. This is something that, when assessed according to the definition of “time” under capitalism and neoliberalism, makes it difficult to design a publicly funded artistic project. How can we keep co-producing and collaborating transdisciplinarily in today’s capitalist and neoliberal context? From my experience of being between the roles of artist and ethnographer, I was interested in openly reflecting on my experiences carrying out fieldwork and artistic projects (see Chapter 4), and on the work of interesting contemporary decolonial artists such as Maria Thereza Alves,⁷ who works with ideas of co-production and co-authorship in curatorial processes. We were engaging with decolonial approaches, reflexivity, and situated knowledge as sources of inspiration when rethinking the dynamics of collaboration within cultural and artistic projects.

From Ethics to Aesthetics

I will now return to my reflections around multimodal discourse and methodologies in social sciences research, especially the engagements with creative disciplines that produce knowledge through a variety of aesthetic experiments, affective tools, and sociopolitical strategies. As artists conducting anthropological research, my colleague Persefoni Myrtsou and I decided to create a course focusing on the entanglement of artistic practices and ethnography, which we called “Making Sense of Culture(s) through Art: Methodological Implications of Artistic Research on Anthropological Knowledge Production.” The course was designed for BSc and MA students in the social sciences and humanities at Berlin universities and was held in the 2022/23 winter semester in the context of an X-Student Research Group supported by the Berlin University Alliance. We were interested in further exploring the entanglements between artistic and ethnographic practices in social sciences research by challenging the view that such disciplinary convergences have little scientific value and validity. Our initial questions were: How can we develop artistic forms of knowledge production and epistemology within academic research and writing that emphasize transdisciplinary experimentation? How can we create a dialogue between different modes of learning that span from rational and cognitive to affective and artistic? How can these learning modes interact with and inform each other in the case of the ethnography–art encounter? What do we learn from transdisciplinary experimentation and interaction between the methods used by different disciplines to view, understand, and relate to their research subjects? What can we learn from

7 See her personal website, <https://www.mariatherezaalves.org/>

the encounter between artistic and ethnographic methods in terms of integrating “non-scientific” methods into our research? (Garland and Myrtsou, 2022).

We started our conversation based on our own experience of being between art and anthropology and of doing a PhD in anthropology, while coming from an artistic and practical discipline rather than a scientific profession. Added to this was the context of the German university, which, given that we are both “migrants” and did not grow up in the German educational context (which differs significantly from the teaching methodologies we learned in our countries of origin), was a burden that at times made us feel even more distanced from the reality of the German academic social sciences environment. Against this background of feeling “out of place” in many senses of the word, we began formulating the course. It involved decolonial and feminist discourses, not only for a theorization of the reflections between art, anthropology, and its transdisciplinarity, or for taking a critical look at today’s multimodality from the perspective of the artist, but also because we were inspired by the spirituality and ethics that decolonial and feminist practices have and their effectiveness in providing a safer and friendlier space to develop the course. We wanted to bring the creative atmosphere of the art classes we attended at our universities in Greece and Chile (and beyond) and transport them into the German scientific academic context. How can we bring the ideas of the art studio, the workshop, and of “making” into the classroom, where the infrastructure is designed for scientific lectures? This was one of the questions that were always on our minds, which we had to translate in parallel into an online/offline space.

The structure of the course was designed in such a way that the social sciences and humanities students would incorporate experimental methods in their research to participate and develop their own projects individually or collaboratively. It was not only a hands-on course—we also had the opportunity to respond critically to the existing literature on art and anthropology. We invited five researchers who work between the entanglement of artistic, multimodal, and ethnographic practices: Elpida Rikou, a visual artist, social anthropologist, and social psychologist whose work concerns the relationship between the arts and the humanities; Sofia Grigoriadou, a visual artist and anthropologist who used contemporary art and methods such as walking and sound in her PhD research on the art scenes in Athens and Skopje; Michael Westrich, who works on cultural production, urban practice, and ethnographic filmmaking—in his PhD research, he used film as a collaborative tool; Eva Giannakopoulou, a visual artist and PhD candidate who works with performance, installation, film, and participatory acts in intercultural frameworks, public spaces, and secluded or subaltern communities; Carla J. Maier, an independent scholar working on sound and postcolonial studies, music, and cultural anthropology. She has produced sound walks, audio walks, and audio papers.

Through conversations between students, researchers, and ourselves, we began mapping current reflections on transdisciplinary and multimodality between art

and anthropology, including their limitations and virtues. These conversations inspired the second part of the course, where we undertook practical work in a temporary “workshop” space that we created inside the IfEE. Together with the students, we focused on the affective aspects of this cross-disciplinary encounter and their epistemological potential, which still requires more systematic study, hoping to contribute to today’s discussions on the validation and recognition of artistic practices and multimodal approaches within academia. Observing the theoretical and methodological entanglements between ethnography and art can be a valuable tool for students, as it allows them to think beyond the limits of their disciplines and gives them a chance to perceive and combine different cognitive, aesthetic, affective, and bodily modes while planning and conducting research and making sense of their data and their research generally. We aimed to collect a database of existing theoretical positions and applications of the encounter between ethnographic and artistic practices and critically respond to them, provide a space for new theoretical explorations and hands-on experimentation with unique methods that test this transdisciplinary encounter, as well as document our findings and rewrite aspects of the dialogue between art and ethnography through this encounter between students and researchers (Garland and Myrtsou, 2022).

We used a theoretical starting point to introduce the students to methodological reflections on experimentation in artistic practices. If we had been teaching students from the arts, we would instead have begun from a practical starting point. This decision to draw from theory and use a lecture format was also to avoid overloading the students with new ways of receiving information. We had heard comments and reflections from colleagues and professors who taught with multimodal practices; when their courses began by experimentation with practical methods, and without a previous theoretical approach, in many cases the students became blocked and felt uncomfortable as they had the idea that they could not be sufficiently “creative and artistic.” With this in mind, our sessions were divided between theoretical discussions and practical work with the guest researchers. Later on, we began our group process through the online workspace Miro where we collaboratively started to map the topics of interest, projects, ideas, and, in parallel, skills and creative methods that the students had or wanted to try out. This group process helped us to gradually gain a general picture of the interests and methods the students wanted to use for the second part of the course—the concept’s practical and artistic production process. This process of mapping interests and skills was more difficult in some cases than others. Myrtsou and I realized that many students had a clear idea of their topics of interest, but it was challenging to materialize or visualize those ideas and work out how their topics of interest could be turned into a material, audio, visual, or performative production. In our conversations after the classes, we were slowly noticing how challenging it was for the students to translate their idea/concept, as well as the sociological and anthropological topics, into some

form of representation or materiality. For us as artists, it was the other way around: we usually start with experimentation, with a feel for aesthetics, materials, forms, performance, and sensoriality and then, after some trial and error, we begin with the conceptualization.

In response to this challenge, we designed different exercises to help the students “let go” of the distinction between theory and practice. The exercises were a more relaxed, playful, and not so “serious” way to work on their projects, based on the notion of the playfulness of the creative process and involving trial and error as a basis for the process of materialization and production. Our approach was inspired by similar exercises such as “freewriting,” which is a literary technique but is often used in the social sciences and humanities, and which leaves reasoning aside, letting words simply take their place on the paper. We were also interested in further reflecting on the idea of objects as agents and how we relate to them from a practical perspective, which forms an important basis for reflecting on the material relationship between the artist and the artwork. We drew inspiration from Alfred Gell’s theories about the object concept. He wrote that objects mediate and act on social relations as agents. Gell brought anthropology and art closer through his theory on art and agency. In *Vogel’s Net: Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps* (1996), he explored the basis of the distinction between works of art or art objects and “mere” artifacts, which are useful but not aesthetically interesting or beautiful, concluding that an aesthetic definition of the art object is consequently unsatisfactory. Subsequently, in his book *Art and Agency*, Gell (1998: 96) argues “that works of art, images, icons, and the like have to be treated, in the context of an anthropological theory instead of the context of a (western) art history canon, as person-like, that is sources of, and targets for, social agency.” He does not believe that artworks only have “symbolic meaning.” Art objects do not necessarily have meaning—they are not passive signs to be symbolically decoded by a distanced beholder. Instead, they have agency; they do. Gell views “art as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it” (Gell, 1998: 6).

Starting from the idea of the object as a relational entity, Myrtsou had the idea to create an exercise where the student would think about and look for a representative object that they would like to work with for their project. The aim was to use this object as a “prop”⁸ for different activities within the workshop. A prop is an object used in theatrical staging and later in film and screen production, mainly by actors and performers (Harris, 1975). The instructions for the selection of the object were very broad. Students could use a concrete object (e.g., a photo, a carpet, a text, an artifact from fieldwork, an item of food) or a more abstract/elusive/fragmented object (e.g., water, a photo/video of an object that is not mobile). The idea was to get the students

8 A prop is specifically considered anything movable and portable that can be on stage, leaving aside actors, costumes, and electrical and lighting equipment (Nesfield-Cookson, 1934).

to start perceiving aesthetics, form, materiality, and sensitization, then take the second step toward conceptualizing and theorizing the object and its relation to their project.

How do objects and material culture help us orient ourselves in the world, and how do they mobilize us? Can we visualize our research as an object? With these questions in mind, we took our students to see the exhibition *Material Legacies* at the Kunstgewerbemuseum⁹ in October 2022, which brought together artifacts from the Kunstgewerbemuseum's collection with installations by designers and researchers from the Cluster of Excellence (Humboldt Berlin) to create a dialogue between past, present, and future materials. This exhibition caught my attention, and I thought it would be ideal to begin the process of "letting go" of the distinction between theory and practice, because it was rich in objects and materials from textures to visuals and sounds, making it an ideal "playground" to experiment with how to practically approach materials and objects. We did an exercise with the students, where they walked through the exhibition in silence and drew an object that attracted them in terms of its materiality, color, and texture, without reading what it was and its theoretical and curatorial context. These drawings were not going to be shared later as the aim was not to produce an aesthetic result, but rather to experience the processes of observation, visual synthesis, and drawing. The drawn lines synthesized (like a scientific sketch) what we were visualizing, "capturing" (like an ethnographic process) the desired form on paper.

I had already tried this approach as an ethnographic method in my previous fieldwork, where I began thinking about how the gestures of sitting, observing, and drawing helped me to understand a kind of filter that contributes to the synthesizing of the "real" situation. For example, the raw drawing gave me the first filter for a preliminary field description due to its degree of precision and detail. My gaze became more analytical, searching for the perfect structural drawing line, focusing on specific points to be as precise as possible at the moment of depiction, and blocking out the visual overload of my fieldwork. I used drawing to try and reach the essence of the field site through its dimensions, movement, and forms, and through the effort of visually capturing the atmosphere of emotion and place. The close observation involved in drawing allowed me to be more present in the "here" and "now" of the fieldwork; I felt that I really "was there" (Marquez, 2018: 3) and not in a hazy memory of my presence in the place (Garland, 2023b). It was from this embodied experience that I turned to the students, inviting them to explore similar processes. I asked students questions to open spaces for conversation around the relationship between objects, aesthetics, and practice. Did you feel a connection and/or inspiration with

9 Matters of activity (2022). Exhibition: Design Lab #13: Material Legacies. Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin. Cluster of Excellence (Humboldt Berlin). <https://www.matters-of-activity.de/en/activities/8684/design-lab-13-material-legacies>

any object? What (new) ways of perception/understanding were you able to achieve while drawing an object? Thinking about an object as the beginning of a process of theoretical and practical research encourages one to focus on the effectiveness and sensoriality of the object.

Returning to the exercise where we asked students to find an object as a prop for their project, we noticed that many chose items closely linked to their initial conceptual ideas. For instance, one student brought a seashell as an inspirational object, which eventually became part of a video work combining old film archives. This piece explored the question “What is listening?” from biological, physical, and social perspectives, tying these threads into contemporary debates about who listens, how we listen, and the role of collective listening as a sociocultural method in postcolonial contexts. In the student own words: “Listening to a seashell explores knowledge as a mediation of an embodied, multisensory and imaginative engagement” (NomadicRadio, 2023). Another of our students, engaged with a piece of fabric as her prop object. She was interested in the physical intertwining of threads as a process of overlapping personal and family histories and genealogies, which led her to a reflection on “The non-tangible component of working with textiles—a practice where oral history is explored as a form of procedural ritual, temporal dimension, and the character of the feminized hands-on work and crafts practices in Central Asia” (NomadicRadio, 2023). She developed a video piece portraying a mother and daughter working with textiles during an artistic production, capturing a multiplicity of voices, languages, and sonorities. These and other student projects were co-curated into a radio show broadcast on FM and online via NomadicRadio, session No. 26, featuring outcomes developed within the course [listen [here](https://on.soundcloud.com/ZZCLAoCX8lGe5GheVT)¹⁰]. The works presented by the students in the class offer a rich, multifaceted theoretical and practical contribution to reflections on the value and potential of artistic practices in social science research; they rewrite aspects of the dialogue between art and anthropology (Garland and Myrtsou, 2022).

Recognition toward Validation and Valorization

The landscape of research in the humanities and social sciences is being transformed by a surge of interest in multimodal methodologies, resulting in the spread of diverse forms of experimentation that go beyond the text format historically predominant in these disciplines. Particularly with the current boom in multimodal approaches in anthropology, I have been struck by the great variety of creative methods and techniques coming from the artistic, theatrical, architectural, design, and practical disciplines. These techniques are often renamed or reframed in the context

10 <https://on.soundcloud.com/ZZCLAoCX8lGe5GheVT>

of scientific research, presented as a natural contamination, inspiration, and influence between disciplines. This perceived transdisciplinary approach, which could open new possibilities for a desire for horizontal collaboration and exchange between scholars and practitioners, often overlooks the hierarchies and power dynamics generated in such collaborations. There is often a lack of recognition for the history of these creative and artistic methodologies and practices, as this “new idea” of multimodality is frequently described as an “innovation” within the social sciences in general. In some cases, the artistic professionals who develop these methods and techniques within scientific research projects are not acknowledged as co-authors by academics, as their methods and techniques are seen as “services” provided for the project rather than as integral conceptual contributions.

At the same time, from the perspective of social scientists and ethnographers, there also appears to be a struggle to institutionalize multimodality in their own academic contexts. It is currently very hard to academically classify and validate these multimodal forms in scientific research, and although there is a significant increase in interest in the use of more-than-textual forms as research processes, such forms are still not perceived in the same way as written articles, papers, or monographs (StadtLabor, 2021). This is problematic but also understandable, as questions arise regarding how to place “value” on and “validate” these multimodal forms. The StadtLabor scholars ask: What criteria should be employed to evaluate such multimodal singularities? (StadtLabor, 2021). A new project by the StadtLabor tries to solve this question by selecting and documenting various multimodal research artifacts and creating a set of prototyping and toolkit exercises. The StadtLabor is also looking for ways to facilitate the process of evaluation and institutionalization of future multimodal research in academia (StadtLabor, 2021).

This inquiry drew my attention, and I wondered whether, in the process of reconfiguring the evaluation of these research forms at a scientific academic level, Social Sciences Institutes would invite artists and cultural practitioners to provide their input in the final evaluation of a course or thesis, rather than leaving the social science lecturer alone to evaluate students’ creative, artistic multimodal projects. After all, for decades, art, design, and architecture schools and universities have been trying to solve the issue of how to validate artistic and creative work, where subjectivity is central to the process of aesthetic evaluation. When Myrtsou and I taught our course about the entanglement between artistic and ethnographic practices, our evaluation structure was inspired by art classes, where innovation, experimentation, constancy, craft, and aesthetics are the primary evaluation criteria used to assess students’ final projects. For us, it was also important to remember that the students were not art students, so we could not expect their final projects to demonstrate outstanding technique and aesthetic results. Still, through the course, we motivated them to refine their technical skills and, if necessary, to collaborate with experienced

artists and create a co-production (and, therefore, a co-authorship) with whoever had a technique that suited their project.

In summary, while the social sciences increasingly embrace multimodal and artistic approaches, persistent hierarchies of knowledge and disciplinary boundaries continue to challenge their full recognition and valorization. In some ways, this represents a return to the debates of the 1980s regarding the challenge of opening anthropology to new forms and modalities of representation. Today, there is a desire for experimentation, but the recognition and validation of new modalities as forms equal to classic scientific texts and monographs remain problematic. This reopens discussions around the hierarchies of ways of knowing and producing knowledge, which tend to reproduce an “otherness.” On the one hand, the seriousness, efficiency, and efficacy of the arts, literature, and creative processes as methods for scientific academic research are still not fully validated. On the other hand, anthropologists and ethnographers appear to be fascinated by these “new ways” of experimenting. This anthropological “curiosity” (Trouillot, 2016) toward new forms of producing knowledge reflects the unresolved colonial legacy of the discipline by exoticizing creative and artistic practices and, at the same time, often not recognizing the artist in the scientific research process (see Chapter 4).

Through my own experience of beginning a long path to the “academization” of my artistic practices in the social sciences through my PhD, I have wondered how the hierarchies between disciplines devalue the very process of producing knowledge, which is still framed by the process of academization and Western scientific validation. The ongoing debates sparked by decolonial, indigenous, and feminist discourses not only invite but demand a rethinking of what counts as knowledge, opening the door to debate the hierarchies of knowledge forms that have gone unspoken for decades. These discursive influences have led to alternative, multiple, and plural epistemological and methodological reflections. They have also empowered artists and cultural practitioners to create spaces for their own position within academia and to demand recognition and validation in scientific research.

3.2 Liminality: Between Art and Anthropology

In this second section of this chapter, I approach my understanding of being between practice and theory through the anthropological concept of liminality. The great interest in liminality in the artistic context in recent years and criticism from the social sciences led me to question on the double perspective of this term. I explore how liminality has evolved from anthropology to art to become relevant in the artistic field, particularly in theater and performance, and how in this artistic environment it might be possible for liminality to evoke political and critical thinking among the marginalized and be challenged from an anthropological perspec-

tive. Throughout this book, I engage with liminality from different angles, from a potential concept of inbetweenness in migratory experiences to questioning it as an ambiguous and apolitical term. This comes from critiques in the social sciences, which makes the term problematic when analyzing migration, especially in the context of the current border regimes on which this research is based. In this section, I examine the potential of the entanglement of liminality and hybridity as a political form against marginalization, drawing on the idea of postmigration (see Langhoff, 2011; Yıldız, 2010), which has opened a window for reflections on states of inbetween identities involving the urban fabric with a migratory background.

I want to point out that, in this chapter, I will not analyze the meaning and various theoretical aspects of the concept of liminality and its entanglement with migration studies, as this is dealt with in detail in Chapter 5. Rather, I analyze liminality from an artistic lens and how it has opened new epistemologies that would otherwise have been impossible within the framework of social science. I approach the concept of liminality as a kind of case study to reflect on how art and anthropology coexist and intertwine, not only from a practical perspective, as detailed in the first section of this chapter, but also from a theoretical perspective, asking: How does liminality, a concept so criticized by the social sciences, find a space and flourish in artistic contexts? In this section, I engage with liminality through a theatrical and art action lens, highlighting differences between art and anthropology, and showing how this journey has been a productive process for my understanding of the sensory, temporal, and spatial experience of inbetweenness in migration contexts.

Liminality: From Anthropology to Art

Since my years at the art university in Chile, I've felt drawn to the notion of inbetweenness; this extended beyond physical spaces marked by geographical borders to my own South American context, which has a complex genealogy of forced *mestizaje*. As I described in Chapter 1, I was interested in exploring my own family history, which is marked by narratives of European migration, reflecting the broader colonial traces that are present in many South American families. The personal and familial experience of existing between the so-called Global South and the Global North—the West—became a central point of reference in my ongoing engagement with the idea of “inbetweenness” and, eventually, with the concept of liminality (Garland, 2024a).

Furthermore, together with my theater colleagues at the university, I was constantly inspired by liminality and the liminoid as both theoretical and practical frameworks for acting and performance. The anthropologist Victor Turner was one of the influential scholars who applied liminality to theater; he drew our attention to how to create a spatial moment in which time is suspended and a process of transition and transformation occurs between the spectator, the actor, and the

play itself. During one of my research exchanges in 2021 at the Faculty of Arts and Theater at the Catholic University in Chile, I came to understand this translation from theory to practice—especially in relation to liminality as an anthropological concept for theatrical and performative forms. The temporal character of the spectacle and the “here and now” of performativity were inspirations for the use of ritual processes and structures in stage design. Here lies the great interest of theater and performance art: the translation of sociocultural and political phenomena through bodily encounters.

One of the few books dealing with the concept of contemporary liminality is *Liminality and the Modern* (2016) by the anthropologist Bjorn Thomassen, who emphasizes that liminality is not “just any” concept; it occurs at moments and periods of transition in which “normal” boundaries are broken, self-understanding and behavior are loosened, opening up conceptual and physical pathways and spaces of originality, the unusual and the imaginative, which in turn are marked by construction and destruction. Thomassen emphasizes that liminality can drive new experiments and directions in social and political theory. For these reasons, he proposed the liminality of place as a central concept in the social sciences, in line with our notions of “structure” and “practice” (Thomassen, 2015). Thinking with liminality serves to conceptualize moments where the overlap between structure and action was not easily defined or understood with classical “theoretical structuration” (Thomassen, 2015). Thomassen focuses on the transportation of liminality from ethnographic studies of ritual transitions in (small-scale) communities, as explored by the ethnologist Arnold van Gennep ([1961] 2019), a pioneer of the concept of “rites of passage,” toward an analysis of how large communities and societies respond to and experience change and transition: how they live through the uncertainty of life in the inbetween, and how they manage to come out the other side, if they come out at all, as the notion of “Permanent Liminality” shows.

Thomassen emphasizes that liminality is “a particular kind of unsettling situation in which nothing really matters, in which hierarchies and prevailing norms disappear, in which sacred symbols are mocked and ridiculed” (Thomassen, 2015: 1). He stresses the theatricality that liminality generates, which produces that carnivalesque and playful aspect noted by the anthropologist Victor Turner (1982). This is one of the problematic aspects of liminality when placed in a migratory context, and even more so when it comes to autonomous urban spaces of resistance to the border regime, such as the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, the case studies presented in this book. As I discuss in Chapter 6, one of the challenges in engaging with concepts such as waiting, limbo, and liminality in a migration, refugee, and border regime context is that, as the anthropologist Giorgina Ramsay (2019b) argues, by defining “migrants” and “refugees” as being in a state of “stuckness” and “between borders,” we ignore how they share these particular rhythms of time happening inside these places and view them as “people out of time” (Ramsay, 2019b), re-

producing the idea of “otherness” in a border regime context. As I discuss in Chapter 5, the notion of “inbetween” in liminality becomes a state outside the temporal norm. The cultural anthropologists Christine M. Jacobsen and Marry-Anne Karlsen (2020) refer to the positionality of transition between pre- and post-liminality, highlighting the linear temporality after which the person within the liminal moment should be reintegrated into the “social norms,” assuming that the “normal” lives of citizens are safe and stable and that people living in the “inbetween” are “outside a normal temporality” of everyday life. Such a way of looking at time is associated in post-modern societies with productivity, money, and work from a capitalist perspective, and ignores the alternative spatiality and temporality of people on the move in the border regime (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Returning to the idea of thinking with liminality that Thomassen addresses, the playwright and scholar Ileana Diéguez, in her book *Liminal Scenarios: Political Performance Theatricalities* (2014), reflects on the metaphorical process of translation and interpretation from theory to practice, addressing the idea of liminality as a symbolic process of interpreting societies from the ritual, theatrical, and scenographic process. In her argument, Diéguez establishes a direct relationship between liminality, social drama, and *communitas* (Turner, 1982), with social, poetic, or linguistic events and spectacle (Dubatti, 2000), and with art and relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, [1998] 2020), by focusing on the 1980s and the various theoretical and practical changes that emerged between art and anthropology, as described in the first section of this chapter. Diéguez emphasizes Turner’s view of *communitas*, a relation with society and communities that is not individual but a group process that generates a sensibility and shared experience that becomes the basis of the theatrical experience between the people who are part of this specific performative moment.

In turn, she emphasizes how everyday ritual processes within societies have a scenographic and performative aesthetic, albeit outside of theatrical parameters. Diéguez relates carnivalization, and the grotesque to hybridity (Bhabha, [1994] 2012), saying that hybrid communities living between cultures and social boundaries have been inspirations for reflections on liminality since their early marginalization. As analyzed in Chapter 6, hybridity has been an important concept in postcolonial debate, and refers to the emergence of mixed cultures in areas affected by colonization. It represents the blending of two or more cultures to create a new “in-between” space, recognized as a third space of cultural identity, going beyond mere “multicultural” critique in postcolonial discussions (Bhabha, [1994] 2012). In this context, hybridity can be seen as liminality, the space between cultures. However, even here, hybridity is critical, as it’s often used in cultural biology merely to describe cross-cultural “exchange,” and can be criticized for overlooking power imbalances causing this so-called “exchange” (Young, [1995] 2005; see Chapter 6).

To return to my initial questions: Why does liminality exert such a significant influence on diverse artistic aesthetics operating in the domains of the inbetween

states? What makes this concept less problematic in artistic and aesthetic terms, so that ethics seems to allow its use and translation in the arts? The arts, theater, and literature have been fascinated by ambiguous and confusing spaces since the beginnings of their disciplines (Diéguez, 2014). For example, on the one hand, theater and its scenographic dimension, where the temporality of a performance is considered from the “beginning to the end of the action,” where the concepts of liminality and liminoids encompass the interpretation of being inbetween as a real everyday theatrical performance experience of marginalization. On the other hand, the artist’s lifestyle is often portrayed as an “outsider” to social norms, with the interplay of ethics and aesthetics taking on a particular role in daily existence. Early narratives in which the artist is portrayed as “misunderstood,” “sensitive,” and “perceiving the world through a different lens” have contributed to an alternative perspective that challenges conventional interpretations of ethics and social norms (Thomassen, 2014). This portrayal of marginalization was also reflected in Turner defining performers and artists as “liminal and marginal people” and “peripheral observers” immersed in a kind of “sacred madness,” romanticizing the idea of the artist and the theater with a kind of idealization that, although derived from the idea of marginalization, was raised to a pedestal exoticizing these “peripheral beings” (Diéguez, 2014). Dieguez criticizes Turner with this anthropological vision of the artist and theater as a marginalized and, simultaneously, romantically idealized entity, reproducing the great problem of the anthropological discipline at the moment of representing “the other.” This representation and analysis are exemplified by the transfer of the liminal concept from anthropology to the arts, which finds a home in the theatrical idea and its temporality of the spectacle itself (Diéguez, 2014).

The liminality in theater addressed by Turner in collaboration with Richard Schechner in their work *The Anthropology of Performance* (1988) proceeds from observations in Van Gennep’s “Rite de passage,” associated with situations of edge, limen, and threshold, related to ambiguous, ephemeral life and boundaries between two elements, which, according to Diéguez, exemplify theatricality. Liminality encompasses conditions such as purifying and pedagogical aspects, when one experiences a period of healing and restorative change, and experiments of reversal: “the one who is above must experience what it is to be below” (Turner and Schechner, 1988: 104). Subordinates have the opportunity to take on the role of their superiors, which in other circumstances would have been impossible. In the ritual process, Turner argues, some moments become risky because of their transformative aspect and the unpredictable risk of “what will happen when power is handed over to the weak?” (Diéguez, 2014: 42). This idea of reversal and play between two worlds, between subalterns and dominants, is only possible in the ritual and liminal process, which is embedded in a context of *communitas* as an “anti-structure” (Turner, 1969)

that suspends hierarchies and allows “egalitarian,” spontaneous, and non-rational relationships to appear (Diéguez, 2014).

Building on this understanding of liminality and ritual reversal, western theater evolved from ancient religious rituals and was influenced by ritual processes of communities, in which the ritual later transformed into the idea of “tragedy” through mimesis—the aesthetic concept of representation. The community involved in the ritual processes changed its role from participant to observer, thus creating the idea of the “audience” as spectators of the ritual tragedy scene (Oliva and Torres Monreal, 1990). This is described by Diéguez as an educational process, used as a space for the transmission of values and also for the purification and release of feelings and emotions that had accumulated in the audience (catharsis), representing the culmination of the ritual process. Later on, comedy, satire, and farce gained prominence in the theatrical landscape, providing a platform for political and social critique. Through the art of “mocking,” hierarchical structures and marginalized perspectives found a sanctuary for expression. This unfolding marked a significant shift toward cross-class entertainment, creating a space where the “subaltern” could voice their experiences. In this diverse theatrical environment, a multitude of voices seamlessly integrated into the scene, offering a nuanced representation of society while simultaneously critiquing its intricacies. This juxtaposition and interweaving of social critique and analysis could be experienced in an artistic context. The liminal aspect of the ritual framework that theater provides broke through hierarchical and ethical norms and opened up a space for experimentation and role-playing. The “liminal entities” of social structures—those on the margins and fringes of socioeconomic norms, their stigmatized marginalization as “inferior,” “dispossessed,” “other,” outside the social structure—found a space of liberation where roles and realities could be transformed, even if only for a predetermined time (Diéguez, 2014).

Postmigrant theater and its “liminal” existence

From this perspective, theater developed into a community space for the “subalterns” and offered not only a platform for their emancipation, but also a forum for social and political criticism and a discourse on their “liminal” existence (Diéguez, 2014). In today’s theater, especially in metropolitan cities, the stage is transformed into a hybrid urban space where different “marginalized” voices meet. I take inspiration from the concept of postmigrant theater, particularly from one of its key figures of dissemination, Shermin Langhoff, a theater maker associated with the Ballhaus Naunynstraße and currently the director of the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin. Postmigrant theater emerged as a reaction to the persistent representation of “otherness” in Berlin communities with “migrationshintergrund” (migration backgrounds), especially with regard to the second generation of Turkish immigrants. Born in Germany to Turkish parents, they continue to face marginalization due to their non-German, non-white ancestry. With her film project and per-

formance program *Beyond Belonging* (2006), Langhoff began a process of actively promoting talent from this second generation and advancing the idea of postmigrant theater as a counternarrative to Germany's historical "Gastarbeiter"¹¹ (guest workers) tradition. Postmigrant theater embodies a nuanced perspective on society that is shaped through both negotiation and resistance. It embraces a "transcultural" and "translocal" understanding of society while acknowledging the presence of difference, conflict, and historical narratives (Florino, 2015). Central to this framework is the concept of hybridity (Bhabha, [1994] 2012), which serves as a catalyst for considering postcolonial societies in which traditional social and cultural delineations blur, giving rise to a transcultural urban landscape.

That presupposes a situation in which two or more completely separate and internally homogeneous "cultures" face each other—say one Western and one Oriental—and struggle to establish relationships. This has nothing to do with the reality of Europe and the Federal Republic in the 21st century. No one I know belongs to a single, closed cultural area. Our real life has long been transcultural and translocal, beyond origin. Rather, it is important to us to celebrate and enforce the naturalness of hybridity and transculturality. (Langhoff, 2014). My English translation.

By acknowledging the significance of understanding transculturality and hybridity within the German context, postmigrant theater encourages us to examine a society free from marginalizations based on diverse origins and religions. Instead, it presents a locality that grasps the intricacies of a postmigrant society and embraces subjective perspectives within the same urban space (Langhoff, 2011, cited in Florino, 2015). The sociologist Erol Yıldız advocates the use of the term "postmigrant" to examine the adaptive resilience strategies employed in the global arena by generations lacking direct migration encounters. Yıldız anchors this concept in the transformations evident in present-day society. These shifts, explicated through "cosmopolitanism" (see Epilogue), underscore the assimilation of transnational spaces and global allusions into the everyday routines of every individual (Yıldız, 2010; also cited in Florino, 2015). The concept of postmigration illustrates a dynamic that emanates from the theatrical world and serves as a political and social strategy against marginalization rooted in a social resistance to embrace the diversity and transculturality of the contemporary landscape. In this sense, by wrapping up Diéguez theorization on rituality and liminality, postmigrant theater exemplifies how theatricality can go beyond the theater stage, permeating everyday

11 The term *Gastarbeiter*, originating from 1961 onwards, refers to the period when Turkish job-seekers were recruited by German companies based on the agreement between the Federal Republic of Germany and Turkey. This marked the beginning of Turkish guest workers' influx into Germany (see Rass, 2023).

life and creating a political space for encounters echoing Turner's *communitas*. These encounters foster connections between communities that share common experiences—in this case, especially between those who are marginalized due to their migration genealogy. The hybrid communities that live in the interstices of cultures and social boundaries serve as a source of inspiration for reflections on liminality as a potential political space and place of possibility for people who are still marginalized in today's societies (Diéguez, 2014).

Connecting Stories: An Art Action from Berlin to Calais

SENSORY SATELLITES¹²



I would like to end this chapter by focusing on my first experience in one of the case studies I conducted and how this experience raised various questions about liminality and the juxtaposition of art and anthropology by questioning the artistic methodology of my first visit to the Dzjanganl with the art action *Connecting Stories*. In doing so, I introduced liminality from an art action approach and reflected beyond the aesthetics produced in the artistic work. Moreover, the inbetween of art and anthropology has helped me to understand different angles of observation, ethnographic reflection “between” these disciplinary boundaries, and a potential contribution to current discourses on border and migration studies and its relations with liminality.

Fragments of the paper “The Jungle de Calais: Entre Liminalidad, Espacio fronterizo y lugar de posibilidades Post(s)” (Garland, 2021b). Original text in Spanish, my English translation.

The decision to go to the Dzjanganl was spontaneous and a kind of collaborative decision. At the end of 2015 I worked in different formal “refugee camps” in Berlin, the NUK (Notunterkunft: emergency accommodation), where the NUK organizers invited my art collective NomadicArt as a volunteer to run art workshops for children, women, and youth. One of the workshops I conducted was *Connecting Stories*, where a group of participants (women, men, and youth) wrote an anonymous letter to a compatriot they didn't know, but knew that the recipient would ideally be a person of the same language (Arabic and/or Farsi), gender, and age. I

12 More information on the *Connecting Stories* project. <https://somewhereinbetween.cargo.site/connecting-stories>

collected these letters and passed them on to the other NUKs in Berlin, where the same process took place. The aim of the workshop was that writing anonymously to an unknown person could facilitate the participant's process of reflection (on a small scale), and that receiving a letter could (in some way) help them to adapt to their new home. In the anonymous letters, participants shared survival situations, feelings, and strategies to adapt to the circumstances of the new territory. Each participant knew that the letters would be scanned for recording and analysis. In the course of developing the initial translations with the help of friends who can read Arabic and Farsi, we realized that the letters generally told of good and bad experiences in the new country (in this case Germany) and their (often traumatic) odyssey from their country of origin. These letters repeatedly described the feeling of being trapped, stuck, caught between past and present, between the memory of the country of origin and life in the present in the new country (mainly in the context of the official refugee centers and the German bureaucracy). These were my first encounters with the concept of liminality, which was described in some letters as a state of limbo within the NUK.

Connecting Stories was the starting point that led me to travel to the Dzjantal in July 2016. At my last workshop at a NUK in Berlin, some participants asked me if I could bring some of their letters to the Dzjantal camp if I went to France. Some workshop participants believed that their families and friends lived there and were unable to get in touch due to a lack of technical and/or digital information (e.g., Facebook or telephone numbers). Here, the artistic workshop of *Connecting Stories* became more complicated and transformed into a possible means of connecting people and family members who could not communicate. This is where being a "postwoman" was transformed into a possible activist role. I remember how we—five participants, a translator friend, and I—sat on the lawn in front of the NUK and talked about this possibility. I explained to them that the art project was not intended to bring people who knew each other into contact (an almost impossible task). Instead, in its anonymous form, it was meant to share experiences with the other compatriots and create a kind of collective thinking that could accompany the process of traveling and inclusion into the new place. The seven people sitting on the lawn (myself included) agreed that I would go to the Dzjantal to deliver anonymous letters to the Syrian and Iranian community and try to get some letters back, without promising to contact relatives. There was hope that the letters would be shared and exchanged in the camp, and there was a chance that the sender and recipient would match. I received 20 letters from adults, teenagers, and children.

When I arrived at the Dzjantal at the beginning of July (2016), I asked where I could find the Syrian and Iranian communities, knowing that the Dzjantal was segregated by communities and languages. My guides were volunteers and people I met along the way; they pointed me in the right direction. Walking through the streets of the settlement, I passed different communities: Sudanese, Afghan, and Iranian. The last two were very close to the Syrian community as they described themselves as part of the same community (a volunteer I met on the way told me

this). I managed to find the Syrian community and their leader, who spoke fluent English. Thanks to a Bolivian volunteer who lived with them for more than four months, I was very well received because I was from South America as well. The leader kept repeating that most of the “guerrilla” volunteers were Latin Americans. I believe that without this territorial connection I would not have been able to enter the Syrian organization and interact with the leader and his comrades, who called each other “guerrilleros” (in Spanish), as they defended themselves against the French police and the nightly internal disturbances. As we chatted over a cup of tea in the leader’s home with his companions and the volunteer, I explained why I was there and the *Connecting Stories* project. When I told them that I was an artist and that this project was an artistic intervention/action, their expectant attitude changed to a more confident and relaxed one. The group we were in turned into a kind of pseudo-therapeutic conversation in Arabic, English, and Spanish. The group shared their stories inside the camp and their experiences at the border with England, which they could not cross. This is where the letter-writing process began to happen intuitively. At this point, I received five letters addressed to their compatriots in Berlin and handed over the 20 letters I had brought with me. (Garland, 2021b: 77–81)

Since starting my PhD research, I have had the opportunity to take a step back and reflect on my actions and artistic methods from the first experience in the Dz-jangal, which allowed me to position myself in relation to what happened almost seven years ago. My artistic practice at the time was characterized by a pseudo-ethnographic approach, which allowed me to begin a journey of exploring alternative narratives of people living in these borderlands—stories that could be told through letters exchanged between the inhabitants themselves. Collecting and exchanging letters and then collecting them again became a kind of qualitative dataset that formed the basis for my initial reflections on the concept of liminality and its state of inbetween. When I look at the art action *Connecting Stories* again, I have mixed feelings. On the one hand, this action emerged from an art workshop sponsored by the German government on the topic of “integration,” which was heavily criticized in Berlin at the time (2016), both sociopolitically and artistically. The artistic community, especially my fellow artists, questioned these integration methods, which we saw instead as an “adaptation” to German society; but from our precarious situation as artists, it was a convenient income at the time, which created conflicting feelings and ethical questions when we organized the art workshops. Without any in-depth knowledge of the psychological and anthropological aspects of dealing with these communities, many artists began to conduct various workshops with a community that had a forced and traumatic history of migration, working with participants who had survived an odyssey full of obstacles, trauma, grief, and suffering. I do not want to romanticize and celebrate our actions; looking back, I emphasize the issues of power and vulnerability between the artist and the participant. Instead, I want to make known the context in which we lived, particularly the circumstances that led me to pursue this art action in

the Dzjanganl. My privilege of being able to cross borders allowed me to become a postwoman; an artifact of mobility and information exchange.

It is not easy to analyze an art action and its underlying methodology from an ethical perspective, especially when the artist collaborates directly with the community, as is the case with “participatory art” and “social art,” where there is a social science critique of the way artists perceive and relate to the artwork, the community, and the ethical processes of this collaboration. These artistic practices are often perceived as superficial and extractivist, and in many cases lead to complex power dynamics and a degradation of the social and urban fabric of a place. (Garland, 2021b: 86–87) [*Considering the reflections already made in the first section of this chapter on the relationship between aesthetics and ethics, Connecting Stories has several dimensions that illustrate the complex relation and potencial collaboration between art and anthropology.*]

Connecting Stories was initially motivated by the desire to connect people who were unable to communicate with each other due to the circumstances of the border crisis, government policies, and isolation in the camps and NUK; then this art project crossed borders out of the motivation of the participants and myself, initially traveling to Calais. My first motivation was the idea of the art workshop as a possible creative, playful, and quasi-therapeutic space in the face of the humanitarian emergency that Berlin and Europe have been experiencing since 2015. Berlin in particular was unprepared to deal with this so-called “integration,” and the cultural and art scene felt the need to engage in this cause because there was no infrastructure for recreation and socializing within the NUK based on regulations that denied residents access to recreational and social spaces with each other. The Berlin artist communities began to set up various types of art workshops, many of them funded by the German state itself, which also contributed to the problematic idea of “integration” with regard to the migration context. I was in addition motivated to understand more deeply what was happening in these places from the perspectives of the people living there. At that time (2015), there was only information in the European press about the perspectives of political and state actors that spoke of a “migration crisis” rather than a border or humanitarian emergency, leaving aside the colonial history and historical questions of why these communities migrated to Europe. (Garland, 2021b: 87)

[*In this book*], I will not go into detail about the humanitarian conflicts within the NUK, or about the reality in the Dzjanganl at the time; you can find some brief stories from my fieldwork in Calais (2016 and 2022) [*in Chapter 1*], and there are also many academic books that sensitively and profoundly address the humanitarian issue from the direct perspective of the inhabitants of the Dzjanganl, such as *Voices from the “Jungle”: Stories from the Calais Refugee Camp* (Soye, 2019), and *Humans of Calais: Migration from the Perspective of Migrants* (Singh et al., 2016). These books make an important contribution to the postcolonial discourse on cross-border issues from the perspective of people-in-transit. (Garland, 2021b: 87)

Connecting Stories intertwines the complexity between aesthetics and ethics due to the power relationship between the artist-tutor and the “migrant”-participant and a potential aesthetic extractivism given the dramatic situation of these communities. In general, the ethical boundaries in social art and participatory art are blurred and can easily be crossed, leading to their weakening. Based on this ethical conflict, after my first experience in the Dzjanganl—one of the reasons for starting my PhD in Anthropology and Migration Studies—I became interested in ethical issues in social art, which led me to stage a one-off exhibition of the project in May 2019, thanks to an invitation from Lite-Haus Gallery Berlin. At first, I didn’t know how to exhibit this project. How could I visually represent my experience as an artist-postwoman and simultaneously the particular participants’ narratives? How could I present the findings of inbetweenness and limbo within the context of the border regime? I didn’t want to display the content of the letters, as, although I had the consent of all the participants, I already felt that I was about to cross the ethical line. Their letters were going to be part of an art exhibition in a context alien to their nature; also, not involving the participants in the curatorial process as a collaborative process was going to trigger layers of appropriation and aesthetic capitalization of their personal migratory experiences. At that time, I already had almost 300 letters, as this action was reproduced over three years between Germany, France, Italy, Turkey, Syria, and Chile, resulting in significant material which could theoretically introduce the state of transit and inbetweenness of these communities in the face of the border regime.

I invited my good friend, the anthropologist and artist Myriam Perrot, to curate the exhibition with me. In a series of exchanges of letters resonating aesthetically with the action itself, we reflected on the great challenge of representation in the social sciences and participatory art projects, using *Connecting Stories* as a case study and thinking about how to exhibit these participatory projects publicly. One of the first letters between us became the curatorial text, in which Perrot reflected on the moral responsibility and agency of participatory art projects through *Connecting Stories*:

The questions I’d like to share with you in this letter are those I generally ask myself when I’m confronted by projects that fit within the contemporary art genre of “social practice art” or “participatory art.” By this term I mean a variety of artistic endeavors which have in common the use of the social as the main material for the artwork. It could be that artists directly address social issues as part of their artwork, or the collaboration with social minorities is constitutive of it. For instance, since 2015 there has been a noticeable growing response from art world actors to the “refugee crisis,” the latter acting as a kind of goldmine for inspiration and potential appropriation from the first. When I say “appropriation” here, I don’t mean it as something necessarily wrong. I believe creative processes happen through processes of appropriation. Though when we think of these projects from an an-

thropological, critical perspective, then there is an inevitable set of questions we might need to take into account. They concern the positions occupied by the different actors of the project (the artist and other participants), and the various interests crossing such situations. To me, they are ultimately questions about power relations, moral responsibility and agency. (Garland and Perrot, 2019)

I began to discuss with Perrot various questions that would later lead me to a further understanding of the complex relation between aesthetics and ethics: What are the various interests crossing the artistic collaborative endeavor? How are they negotiated in the first place? And whose interest is the artwork ultimately serving? Who is profiting from such an artistic process? What are the power relations at play within the realization of the artwork up to its exhibition and merchandising? (see the complete curatorial letter exchange in Garland and Perrot, 2019;¹³ see further Perrot, 2017). Based on these initial questions, I decided to limit myself to mapping my research process, documenting my routes between countries, and numbering the compilation and distribution of the letters by creating a wall installation of empty letters. I wanted to show my journey as an artist-postwoman and share my concerns between aesthetics and ethics, which prevented me from continuing to produce artistic materials for this exhibition. In retrospect, this was already a kind of multimodal autoethnography in which, by using the text format (the letter exchange between Perrot and myself) and mapping this art action, I revealed the great challenge of ethical issues in participatory art and social art. Through this first experience, I also initiated questions about how to exhibit ethnographically and how the exhibition format itself can be a multimodal method that deepens the questions of the ethnographic field process, which is discussed further in Chapter 4 of this book, describing the different artifacts and multimodal forms I used in the methodological part of this research.

The art action *Connecting Stories* marked the beginning of my journey into anthropology, delving into the ethical challenges inherent in aesthetic processes. The complex and potential interplay between art and anthropology explores questions at the crossroads of practice and theory, as well as aesthetics and ethics. Despite the complexity of this relationship, I became aware of a very strong potential collaboration between the two disciplines. In Chapter 4, I propose artistic practices as a method for multimodal ethnography, highlighting the potential of experimentation and openness through sensorial and ethical modes that challenge the violence embedded in traditional ethnographic methods.

13 See <https://somerwhereinbetween.cargo.site/connecting-stories>