

Christian Elster

Follow the tracks

On the methodology of tracing in ethnographic cultural analysis*

Abstract: The search for tracks as a knowledge practice represents a fundamental methodology of European ethnology. Developed on the basis of an empirical study on music collecting, the text embarks on a “search for tracks” in ethnographic working disciplines. As an example, it is proposed to understand the search for tracks programmatically as a comprehensive methodology of ethnographic-cultural-analytical research into everyday life, following Rolf Lindner’s cultural analysis and the ‘follow the actor’ imperative of praxeographic approaches, which, furthermore, also includes questions of textual representation.

Keywords: ethnography, methodology, tracks, tracking, popular culture, ethnographic writing

Pick up the trail

‘Tracking’ is a term often used in ethnographic cultural analysis to describe methodological procedures.¹ What it means in detail often remains vague, and questions arise: does the term “search for tracks” refer to a concrete method or stand metaphorically for a kind of open search movement, which is considered the ideal of ethnographic research? What are these traces that are being followed? Are they intersubjectively recognizable or are traces first created or staged by researchers? Whither do these traces lead, and to what do they refer? What is their relationship to each other and what idea of ‘field’ does this imply? And what effects does the search for traces have on text production? In other words, how is it reflected in ethnography?²

I would like to explore these questions in my contribution by way of example. For this purpose, the text undertakes a ‘search for tracks’ in ethnographic working disci-

* German version in *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 2021, LXXV/124, Heft 2: 181–208. The text and quotations in German have been translated by Philip Saunders.

1 The terms ‘trace’ and ‘tracking’ can be found in numerous thematically and theoretically very different texts, some of which are the subject of the following remarks. See e. g. Latour 2005; Marcus 1995; Tsing 2015; Massmünster 2017; . Moreover, the terms are often used as (sub)titles of publications, lectures or courses. They seem to be placeholders for an ‘inductive approach’ and do not play a conceptual role beyond that. See e. g. Bürkert et al. 2019.

2 I understand ethnography as a (multi-)methodological approach, epistemological perspective and representational practice. See Schmidt-Lauber 2010: 54.

plines. My aim is to synthesize different partly established, partly newer approaches of 'tracking' in the discipline and related disciplines and point out the consequences of a programmatic implementation of ethnographic tracking such as I will propose.

The philosopher Sybille Krämer has described the art of reading tracks as a universal art of knowledge, which is not only an "archaic remnant of a 'wild knowledge'" (Krämer 2007: 11), but represents a central epistemological moment of many disciplines – in both the humanities and the natural sciences.³ In addition, reading the tracks illustrates "how everyday practices and scientific procedures intertwine" (Krämer 2007: 11). This is especially true for ethnographic disciplines.⁴ A central thesis of this text is, therefore, that the search for tracks represents a fundamental epistemology of ethnographic cultural analysis that can connect different research perspectives, albeit – as I will show – under varying theoretical auspices, methodological implications and, consequently, different conceptions of what is conceived as a 'trace.' What I propose beyond this stocktaking is to link the search for tracks with questions of textual representation.

Feedback between field and desk: ethnographic tracks

The following reflections arose in connection with my research project *Pop-Musik sammeln. Zehn ethnografische Tracks zwischen Plattenladen und Streamingportal* ('Collecting Pop Music. Ten Ethnographic Tracks between the Record Store and the Streaming Portal'). In this project, I described the practice of collecting music in the form of ten tracks that can be understood as ethnographic short stories (Elster 2021). The tracks, so I argue therein, are more than a linguistic image that refers to the piece of music or the soundtrack. They are also an expression (or imprint) of my methodological and theoretical-epistemological approach, my cultural-analytical search for traces. The tracks examine the topic of music collecting from different perspectives. There are several tracks on practices associated with collecting, such as rummaging, organizing or sorting out; on media artifacts, such as the record, the iPod, Spotify or the object biography of a CD; on spaces associated with collecting, such as the record store; and on cultural figures, such as the collector. They all approach the topic with varying methods and the help of different theoretical concepts.

These tracks are framed by an intro and a final hidden track, a conclusion, which finally takes up, arranges and bundles these 'tracks.' I interpret music collecting as a multilayered, technically grounded, subjectivizing practice and everyday competence, which also takes on a sense- and world-creating character in the course of digitalization. The tracks, I would argue for the use of this text structure, allow the complexity

3 On the search for traces in scientific disciplines, see e. g. Bock von Wülfig 2017.

4 Ethnographic methods, such as participant observation and the interview, can be understood as systematized everyday practices. See e. g. Schmidt-Lauber 2007 [2001]: 221.

and ambiguity to be mapped, and help to avoid leveling them in the linearity of the text.

Orvar Löfgren and Billy Ehn, in the last chapter of their study *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*, search for traces in their own material (2010). Similar to archaeologists, they try to reconstruct their methodical approach by means of notes, drafts, exposés, and earlier versions of their manuscript. This, they write, they do not do in order to derive a recipe for 'how to do cultural analysis' from a "messy"⁵ research process typical of ethnographic research. Instead, the aim is to understand how a project transforms in the course of research, i. e., what influence the exploratory searching, writing, linking and rewriting has on the researchers' relationship to their research topic and, thus, on their analysis (Ehn and Löfgren 2010: 218). Inspired by this approach, I also question my research and reflect on what the search for traces achieves. It can be stated that my ethnographic foraging as well as its textual representation in the form of tracks are in a kind of feedback process that has emerged between the observation of pop-cultural collecting practices and my research-based tracking. Music collecting is also a tracking that parallels ethnographic research practices, which, as I will show later, has brought home to me key aspects of each. The methodological considerations formulated here are, thus, by no means to be considered in isolation but as the result of feedback between 'field' and 'desk.' The following sections are, therefore, each preceded by small vignettes – traces – from my work on music collecting.

The course of argumentation

I will first collate various approaches to the search for traces in the subject of European ethnology and question them regarding their epistemic potential. These are partly contradictory to each other and have been formulated from different cultural-theoretical positions. My aim is not to resolve these inconsistencies, but to ask what they each achieve, what view they allow of the object of investigation, and how differences between them can be made productive. In doing so, I am also following up on considerations that were the central subject of the dgv university conference *Äußerungen. Die Oberfläche als Gegenstand und Perspektive der Europäischen Ethnologie* ('Statements. The Surface as the Subject and Perspective of European ethnology'). In the introductory text of the corresponding anthology, Timo Heimerdinger outlines debates about "the surface" (which is empirically accessible) and its counterpart, "the depth" (which is interpretatively accessed from surface phenomena), as well as cultural understandings that are associated with them (also in terms of subject history) (2013). Concepts of tracing, as I will show in the course of my paper and discuss in the conclusion, also draw

5 The authors note: "In the secure world of research handbooks a study proceeds in well-planned steps, driven by clear ideas about aims, materials, and methods. In cultural analysis the process tends to be messier [...]" (Ehn and Löfgren 2010: 217).

on these notions of depth and surface. I will show that in combination they circumvent this problematic dichotomous separation and open up multidimensional analytical perspectives.

I propose to understand tracking as a program that not only includes multidirectional empirical-methodical search movements and a specific epistemic gaze, but, in a further development, also includes textual production. Therefore, I outline below four approaches or aspects of the search for traces that are present in the subject and seem to me to be particularly relevant: (1) circumstantial paradigm: here, the search for clues is conceived as a movement into depth that reveals what is hidden. (2) Serendipity: in connection with this concept of the only apparent chance find, forensics appears as an open search movement and requires specific research attention. (3) *Follow the actor* imperative: in contrast to the circumstantial paradigm, the trace in multi-sited ethnography and actor-network theory is conceived of as a connection that points to the surface, not the depth. (4) *Writing tracks*: in the light of the *Writing Culture* debate, I finally explore the question of what textual forms of representation tracking can lead to.

Trace 1 – Circumstantial paradigm

Moritz was a real collector, a real freak, my neighbor had told me. I urgently needed to interview him for my research. A few weeks later, I met Moritz in a bar. He had collected several thousand records and his hard drives were overflowing with music, he reported. We talked for almost two hours and agreed to talk again. But it never came to that. Moritz could no longer be reached. When we met by chance, he avoided eye contact; on Facebook, he 'unfriended' me. After relistening to the recording of our conversation several times, I noticed that it faltered oddly at some points. "Have you talked to real collectors, too?," he asked me several times. He anticipated in the conversation itself that he might be perceived as "weird," "problematic" or "extreme." It seemed to me afterwards that he might have feared that I would interpret his behavior as neurotic or somehow pathological – a familiar pattern of interpretation when it comes to collectors in 'science and media.' As if for protection, he anticipated an analysis – which he perhaps feared. I encountered the rejection of the term 'collector' as a self-attribution even more often in the course of the research, although not as explicitly. I interpreted this as an indication that there must be a notion of what a 'real collector' is in the air that is identity-effective for Moritz – in a way that made it impossible for him to position himself as a collector to me as a researcher.

Jens Wietschorke describes the "heuristics and methodology of 'trackers'" in European ethnology with its focus on "small sections of reality" as a traditional procedure (2013: 26). The view of the inconspicuous, the incidental, sometimes even the banal has always been an established approach to research topics in folkloristic and cultural stud-

ies; the “trivia” are the subject.⁶ Microhistorian Carlo Ginzburg theorized this turn to supposed trivialities as a “circumstantial paradigm” in his essay *Spurensicherung* (‘Securing Evidence’). Ginzburg recognizes parallels between the methodology of Freudian psychoanalysis, the detective approach of Sherlock Holmes and the procedure of the art historian Giovanni Morelli, who exposed art forgeries on the basis of seemingly unimportant details, such as messily traced fingers, for the late 19th century. “In all three cases, infinitely fine traces allow us to capture a deeper reality that is otherwise inaccessible. Traces, more precisely: symptoms (in Freud’s case), clues (in Sherlock Holmes’ case) and picturesque details (in Morelli’s case)” (Ginzburg 2011: 17). Ginzburg identifies the origin of this circumstantial paradigm in a medical semiotic: “a science that allows us to diagnose diseases unattainable by direct observation by means of surface symptoms that sometimes seem irrelevant in the eyes of the layman [...]” (2011: 17). Even though, according to Ginzburg, the roots of tracking go back much further – “[for] thousands of years man was a hunter,” (2011: 18) he writes, romanticizing the epistemological practice of tracking as a kind of anthropological constant – he locates the circumstantial paradigm at the end of the 19th century.

Rolf Lindner refers to Carlo Ginzburg in several places, and in his text *Spür-Sinn: Oder: Die Rückgewinnung der Andacht zum Unbedeutenden* (‘Tracking Sense: or: the Recovery of Devotion to the Insignificant’) he argues for a methodical turn to the supposed trivialities, which, following Ginzburg, can be read as clues, as traces (2011). Lindner illustrates this with photographs. In one photograph, which he takes from a volume by the writer Wilhelm Genazino, it is the pillows behind a posing woman; in another, which shows the former German Chancellor Willy Brandt with his two sons in the hallway at home, it is the key rack next to the front door that, according to Lindner, allows greater conclusions to be drawn about the social milieu of those depicted than the carefully staged main motif (2011: 163). “Traces are not made, but left unintentionally,” Krämer describes a key attribute of traces, which here, in Lindner’s methodology, represents the central epistemic moment (2007: 16). The unintentionally (co-)photographed becomes the focus of analysis and is interpreted as a telltale trace. But where does it lead? What does it suggest? The trace is caused by the social milieu of the person depicted, which is formally imprinted in the pillow or the key rack – in other words, in their taste. Lindner’s concise interpretations do not allow for any polysemy as to what else the trace could refer to; at least, he does not make it explicit. The cultural or social deep grammar to which the traces refer, thus, appears indexically, as totality. Reading traces, as Sybille Krämer makes clear, is always observer-dependent. Traces are not found, but produced (through interpretation). The question therefore arises: what does this interpretation of the trace actually reveal about the tracker? Does the interpretation in the end say more about the researcher Lindner than about the originator of the trace, the social

6 Wietschorke names the interest in the banal and the trivial as a “basis of epistemology in cultural studies,” referring to Martin Scharfe’s *Bagatellen* (1995). See Wietschorke 2005.

milieu of the depicted? “To read a trace is to transform the disturbed order to which the trace formation owes its existence into a new order” (Krämer 2007: 17). The disorder, in Lindner’s sociologically trained eyes, represents an incongruence between bodily pose and material culture, which he sees as being in a telltale relationship to one another. The new order into which Lindner transfers the trace is based on the sociological or cultural-scientific knowledge of social milieus and the assumption, made explicit above all by Pierre Bourdieu, that social structure inscribes itself as habitus in body and taste (Bourdieu 1982) – and, thus, indirectly also in the things with which people surround themselves. Lindner’s reading of the traces, therefore, reveals a certain amount about his theoretical preferences, research interests, his own social position and, based on the selection of photographs, perhaps also his sense of humor. What is revealed here above all, however, is that all knowledge is situated (Haraway 1988). In the case of the quest for traces, this becomes particularly clear: traces only appear as such in the eyes of those searching for them, and they only gain meaning through interpretation.⁷

The irritation described at the beginning, which had arisen in the conversation with my interview partner Moritz, was based on a somewhat different ‘disturbance’ than the one just described. Moritz, the owner of a substantial music collection, did not want to be understood as a collector. I interpreted this as an indication that there must be an image and a kind of ideal type of collector from which he would like to distinguish himself. This assumption led to a targeted search movement in my research: I was sensitized to images, literary texts, feature articles, psychological literature, films and online videos that have collectors as their subject. These materials opened up a broad panorama of imaginaries and attributions. Collectors (usually male) appear here as connoisseurs, preservers and experts, but also as (anal) neurotics, freaks, hoarders, nerds or “junkies.”⁸ The track I have followed does not refer to any totality or structurally unambiguous “deep cultural grammar.” The manifold attributions, according to my interpretation, condense into a shimmering cultural figure to which collectors relate, to which they can position themselves.⁹ At any rate, this is the new order, the discursive cultural-scientific proposition into which I transferred the trace through whose lens I interpreted it. Here, too, it becomes clear: “Something is not a trace, but is read as a

7 Within the framework of interpretive workshops, as they take place, for example, in the working group Wiener Werkstatt Ethnographie (‘Vienna Workshop Ethnography’), attempts are made to counter possible (narrow) readings of empirical materials through collective interpretations. Similar efforts are made by groups oriented towards ethnopschoanalytic approaches, where the person of the researcher is of particular importance. See e. g. Bonz et al. 2017.

8 In particular, supposedly negative, pathologizing attributes are also negotiated affirmatively and playfully in pop cultural contexts. An impressive example of this is the term ‘vinyl junkies,’ which functions as an attribution to others and oneself. In extreme cases, this person has lost control of his or her ‘passion for collecting,’ but is also the one who knows the ‘good stuff.’

9 This has culminated in the track *Der Sammler als (Anti-)Figur* (Elster 2021: 143–160). On the concept of the cultural figure, see Ege 2013: 49–74; Ege and Wietschorke 2014.

trace" (Krämer 2007: 16). The inattention of the person who leaves the traces and the attention of the tracker who finds and identifies the traces are the obverse and reverse of the trace in the sense of the circumstantial paradigm (Krämer 2007: 17). Tracking, therefore, always has something to do with speculation.¹⁰ The "sense of intuition" that Linder calls for in this context has a more general meaning in ethnographic research and points beyond the methodology of the circumstantial paradigm. This describes a researcher's attitude, which leads me to a second track.

Trace 2 – Serendipity

Browsing is an essential part of music collecting, whether in the record store, on the CD shelf at home or in the offerings of streaming services, where browsing can become programmatic and guided by algorithms. A central aspect of browsing is the chance find. Discovering a recording or a song by chance, however, is more preconditioned than the term suggests. On the one hand, openness is required to discover new things. In addition, prior knowledge is necessary, without which chance cannot be recognized as such. When I 'accidentally' came across the concept of serendipity, sensitized by my interest in rummaging, it not only changed my view of this practice by suggesting a cultural studies interpretation of it. The obvious parallels between 'academic' and 'pop-cultural' rummaging also made it clear that the search for traces is not limited to an 'empirical field,' it is also crucial in the search for literature, theoretical concepts, and sources as well as methods, and in this interconnectedness, it also influences the analysis.

Krämer points out how closely "tracking,' i. e. the act of picking up and following a scent ('sniffing!)" is related to the trace in terms of etymology (2007: 13). According to Lindner, perceiving the trace as such requires "an unorthodox and unprejudiced receptivity that engages with what it encounters and also considers the deviant, peripheral, and accidental" (2011: 167).

Lindner connects this notion of a sense of intuition with the concept of serendipity (2012). He characterizes the methodology and attention it presupposes in his text *Zum Wesen der Kulturanalyse* ('On the Essence of Cultural Analysis') as follows:

'Entering' a theme, an object means 'living' this theme, this object for a time. Not only in the sense of classical field research, but in the total sense of a researcher who opens all his senses, who sees, hears, smells, tastes, feels, who is constantly on the trail and tracks down sources, who thinks (of) nothing but (of) his object in order to be able to 'grasp' it. He must stalk his object, circle around it, penetrate it, encounter it in a perverse way, sometimes even give it the cold shoulder, in order to gain new stimuli from its opposite, the antipode. He will meet the object, if he abandons himself to it totally,

10 The aspect of the speculative appears particularly acute when traces are interpreted as signs of the future, as Arjun Appadurai suggested in his lecture *Traces of the Future* at the Berlin Institute Colloquium on April 20, 2021.

in the most impossible places. [...] Then, and only then, the way is also cleared for the chance hit, for the experience of *serendipity* [emphasis in original, author's note], yet chance [...] helps only the prepared minds. (Lindner 2012)

The linguistic images that Lindner draws on here – researchers would have to be permanently on the “trail,” “stalking” their subject and “tracking down” sources – evoke associations with hunting and make one think of Ginzburg, who introduces tracking as an archaic practice. This undoubtedly carries the danger of romanticizing ethnographic research and the figure of the researcher, who is imagined here as male and appears at least implicitly as a daring and perhaps pretentious adventurer.¹¹ Nevertheless, an open, multi-method approach is introduced into the field, which proves to be fruitful for cultural analyses of everyday life. While the search for traces in the sense of orientation is often used as a metaphor to describe the “orientation in the field” that is especially necessary at the beginning of qualitative research, this procedure seems more comprehensive and central here. The object of research is opened up by searching for traces.

Michel Massmünster refers to Lindner in his study *Im Taumel der Nacht. Urbane Imaginationen, Rhythmen und Erfahrungen* (‘In the Rapture of the Night. Urban Imaginations, Rhythms and Experiences’) and works with the concept of traces (2017). He writes:

Cultural analysis does not start from a pre-structured existing and consequently ‘ascertainable’ object or field of research, nor from structures that are merely to be uncovered, but from the fact that the field is constantly being redeveloped. Cultural analysis, thus understood, harnesses the insight that science can never investigate something independent of inquiry that would exist objectively and independently of perspective, language and concepts. (Massmünster 2017: 46)

In this constructivist view, the object of research is first produced in the search process. “The traces do not exist independently of me, but are produced when I follow connections,” Massmünster states (2017: 50). This can be further refined: the potentiality to read something as a trace, its creation, exists very well intersubjectively, independent of the researcher. But the trace becomes a trace and is generated as such only when it is grasped. In this context, it is also important to reflect on which traces are not (or cannot be) discovered or have not been consciously traced. Traces can, for example, remain invisible or seem uninteresting from the social or gender-specific position of a

11 This competence of tracking down traces is reflected in a whole series of (explorer) figures. Robert Ezra Park propagated “nosing around” in the city. Before his career as a sociologist, Park worked as a reporter for tabloid newspapers. Lindner sees a connection between Park’s work as a reporter and the methodology of later Chicago-style urban sociology, which relied heavily on ethnographic research methods. The gallery of stereotypical figures of tracking, which Ginzburg filled with the hunter, psychoanalyst, detective and art historian, is now supplemented here by the reporter who develops into an ethnographer. See Lindner 2007.

researcher. Questions that direct the view or simply practical research questions can also lead to certain traces being disregarded or eluding researchers.¹²

Massmünster identifies moments of serendipity in his research: “My search for traces was at times characterized by a seemingly aimless buzzing around and by readings found by chance that took me further and opened up new questions” (2017: 46). The sensitivity to recognize traces as such depends on the prior knowledge and the research question of the researcher and is much less ‘unsystematic’ or ‘random,’ as is often associated with “serendipity.”

The moment of serendipity described at the beginning, which I experienced when I became aware of this very concept, did not only influence the chapter on rummaging. My research subject of music collecting increasingly mirrored my entire ethnographic work. I recognized aspects of the one in the other and vice versa. Similar to many music fans, ethnographers are also passionate collectors: instead of browsing record stores or streaming portals, they browse libraries and online catalogs, collecting research literature and field notes, recordings of interviews and informal conversations, newspaper clippings, and Internet finds that, like music collectors on streaming portals, increasingly come to their attention through algorithmically generated suggestions.¹³ They try to put what they have collected into context, to order the material. They have to sort out elements and part with ideas, as do some collectors of recordings or files that no longer fit into the collection for various reasons. Just as a music collection can never be complete in view of the abundance of available music, ethnography (not only that of ‘modern societies’) also inevitably remains incomplete, fragmentary. The modern idea that the world can be collected in its entirety seems futile in both cases. Research fields have long since ceased to be imagined as closed spaces, but as open, dynamic webs “of relationships, connections, influences, and alignments that point in all directions and to different levels” (Massmünster 2017: 51). These cannot be holistically opened up, but can merely be made visible or produced partially – in traces – and only from certain perspectives that are to be reflected upon. The search for traces as a tentative and situated method(olog)ic movement corresponds to this understanding of the subject and brings forth the concept of the field. Just like music collecting, ethnographic tracking is not a purely rational practice based exclusively on explicit knowledge, but is guided by affects, emotions and tacit knowledge, not infrequently grounded in (media) technology, and influenced by moments of serendipity.

12 On the withdrawal paradigm, see Levy 2007.

13 The anthropologist Nick Seaver, who has ethnographically researched developers of *recommender* algorithms, theorizes these programs as traps in which users are supposed to get caught. The digital traces that users create through their media usage are the basis for optimizing suggestions and making the traps more effective. The traces left behind, thus, influence the course of the (pop-cultural and exploratory) search for traces, which must increasingly be understood as technically grounded. See Seaver 2019: 423. Many thanks to the anonymous reviewer for this literature reference.

Trace 3 – Follow the actor

The history of the vinyl record can be read as ‘one track.’ Chronologically descending, it then leads from the so-called vinyl revival of recent years to its near disappearance in the 1990s, through its pop-cultural heyday in the 1960s and 1970s, back to its invention by Emil Berliner in the 1880s. That, at least, would be one possible narrative. But its history can also be read ‘in traces’ (Timm 2013: 57).¹⁴ At every conceivable point of the outlined time span, traces lead in all possible directions away from and through the record. These traces refer to different subjects (e.g. pressing plant operators, label owners, dealers, DJs, cover designers, collectors), practices (e.g. recording, designing, making, rummaging, arranging, putting on, sorting out), places (e.g. pressing plants, record stores, shelves), discourses (e.g. novels, films, advertising, pictures, magazines), meanings (e.g. memory carriers, authenticity, nostalgia, coolness), and so on. Interpreted in this way, traces are no longer to be understood (only) as indications that are followed with a sense of sleuthing. Instead, they form paths and connecting lines that are to be followed in cultural analysis, that are to be traced. When viewed from above, they allow the record to appear as part of a structure.

In connection with the circumstantial paradigm or the concept of serendipity, traces tend to be picked up passively or discovered by chance in research practice. In other contexts, the search for traces turns out to be more active and directed. “Traces” and “tracking” are particularly prominent in George Marcus’ “Multi-sited Ethnography.” In the mid-1990s, against the backdrop of virulent globalization debates, George Marcus proposed the methodology of a mobile ethnography (1995: 102). “Tracing paths and discovering connections, ‘tracing’ and ‘tracking’ – in other words, finding and following traces – are subsequently the central tasks of mobile field research,” says Gisela Welz (1998: 184), who introduced Marcus’ concept to the German-language professional discourse at the end of the 1990s, summarizing the main concern of multi-sited ethnography. Marcus uses studies from different research directions to show what a mobilization of research or multiplication of “sites” – in contrast to the classical ethnological “single-sited” field research, which is limited to one (more or less ‘artificially’ limited) place as a field – can look like. The assumption of an increasingly mobilized and globalizing world guides Marcus to form a set of methodological imperatives: follow the people, follow the thing, follow the metaphor, follow the story, follow the life or biography, and follow the conflict (1995: 106ff.). “Instead of claiming holistic cultural capture, multi-sited ethnography takes a look at cultural dynamics and linkages, threads, pathways, and connections, and is involved in different research designs and questions that follow people, things, metaphors and symbols, narratives or conflicts,” writes Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber (2009: 240). The search for traces, thus, becomes potentially global and

14 Timm points out that Michel Foucault (1981) reads documents not *as traces* that point to a totality, but rather *as traces* on the surface.

is no longer limited to supposedly 'small sections of reality' that are holistically examined. Although Marcus understands "*multisitedness*" not only in spatial-geographical terms, his approach has also been taken up (Hess and Schwertl 2013: 27) in European ethnology, primarily in transregional or -national fields, for example, in the context of migration research. In this context, the perspective of multisitedness and spatially bound research are not to be understood as opposites. "Field research based on the principle of immersion and prolonged presence in a place need [...] by no means lead to the construction of closed horizons. On the contrary, paths and connections can also be recognized and opened up from a locus of research" (Schmidt-Lauber 2009: 247). But in terms of research practice, what does it mean to follow people, things, metaphors, etc.? What traces do they leave behind that can be 'tracked'? Marcus leaves this question only vaguely answered. However, the trace appears implicitly less as a (material) imprint of a movement or structure, which is tracked diachronically and interpreted as an indication, and more as a "trajectory" (Marcus 1995: 96), as a straight flight path, which is traced more or less synchronously. How this can be implemented methodically in detail – especially on a global scale – can only be understood in a casuistic way on the basis of concrete studies.

Considering my research, this kind of following appears manifold: from the statements of an interviewee, who in her remarks has laid a trail to a topic, a person, a place, which I have followed, to go-alongs in record stores, which represent a 'following on the heels,' to production processes, trade routes and economies, which I have tried to trace. Parts of this project resulted in the track *The Biography of a Spice Girls* CD. Following Arjun Appadurai's idea of a *Social Life of Things* (1986)¹⁵ and Igor Kopytoff's explicit notion of a biography of things (1986), I combined various research materials and brought them into a conceivable, but empirically found, context. This methodological trick, inspired by ethnofiction, makes it possible to trace the object from its production, through appropriation by various actors and the reproduction of the object's biography in an online exchange, to the death of the CD as trash. *Follow the thing* can, thus, sometimes require unconventional approaches.

In the context of actor-network theory, Marcus' imperatives shrink to a terse "follow the actor" (Latour 2005), referring to both human and nonhuman actors. In order to trace the social, Bruno Latour urges "to trace connections" in *Reassembling the Social* (2005: 1). Elisabeth Timm writes that "traces [in the ANT perspective, author's note] [are] seen as laid or activated rather than found and existing" (2013: 56). And, compared to the circumstantial paradigm, they differ fundamentally in their orientation: "When we speak of traces here, they do not lead vertically to causes or entities, but horizontally to confluences whose open flanks are always thematized as well" (Timm 2013: 61). It is not deeper structures and orders that are of interest here, but fleeting oc-

15 Marcus cites this text as an example of multi-sited ethnography.

currences and situational associations. “‘Connections’ are not of interest in a structured way, but at best as temporary ‘stabilizations’ that always refer to their having become or becoming (but precisely not to history!)” (Timm 2013: 62). Traces point to the surface, not to the depth, and they do not hide anything. When researchers trace them, they lie open on the surface as connections. *To trace*, therefore, means less ‘tracing’ than ‘drawing’ tracks. Timm criticizes the reduction to this two-dimensional search for traces, which she observes, above all, in the field of social anthropology of the life sciences as well as in science and technology research. As a “praxeography” it would be unjustifiably positioned as a methodological innovation in these contexts.¹⁶

In fact, the mere description of these connections, which Latour describes as the most important research task, can only be an intermediate step from the point of view of an interpretive ethnographic cultural analysis. The ‘blind spots’ of actor-network theory – primarily its focus on the situation, which knows no structures, no history, no ‘cultural context’ – can be put forward as an argument against ANT, if one understands European ethnology as a ‘contextual science’ that argues historically, certainly in the sense of cultural studies. Nevertheless, this theoretical approach to empirical cultural studies offers more than the metaphorical twist of understanding the trace as a horizontal connection between actors, even if its context of origin, the natural science laboratory, does not make a transfer to everyday cultural questions smooth (Timm 2013: 74). Jens Wietschorke sees the possibility of reading the concept of a network as a plea for “starting from the material practices – which can be traced ethnographically – in which artifacts, things, people, signs, norms, organizations, texts and many other things are linked together, forming a network of *connections* [emphasis in original, author’s note]” when describing contexts (2005: 343).

Following collecting practices, the vinyl record appears polysemous in the hands of different actors and from different standpoints of the network of relationships: as a nostalgic artifact, as a hip merchandising object, as an audiophile recording medium and as a memory store. The groove of the record, which has stored traces of a musical event (voice, sound, atmosphere), connects with biographical events, situations, places and meanings. Situationally, in dealing with the record, in listening to and looking at the cover, these emerge and form a structure that can be traced ethnographically. It is important to keep in mind that ethnographers not only follow traces and (re)draw them, they also leave traces in the field, through their interests, their questions, their way of confronting people with their practices and worldviews that are unquestioned in everyday life. This happens during the research process as well as afterwards, through the publication, with which the research itself becomes part of this web of relationships (Massmünster 2017: 47). This leads me to one last trace.

16 Timm refers in her critique, for example, to works by Michi Knecht and Stefan Beck. See Knecht 2012.

Trace 4 – Writing Tracks¹⁷

The search for traces of music collecting resulted in a text that consists of ten tracks. These tracks are not simply tracings put down on paper or descriptive tracings of the tracks I came across or that were left for me. They are again interpretations, constructions preceded by a change of perspective. This fragmentary-seeming textual production does not aim at the 'grand narrative,' as the classical monograph ideally does; it does not level 'partial truths,' but exposes them. The text is more like a playlist, which is always incomplete and can potentially be continued, than a self-contained concept album. The tracks enter into conflict, depicting contradictions and complexity. Connected to this is a theoretical eclecticism: each track is contextualized with the help of different theoretical approaches. Theory is a lens, not an all-encompassing corset.

Following the Writing Culture debate (Berg and Fuchs 1995; Clifford and Marcus 1986) in which a crisis of representation was diagnosed, there has been increased experimentation with different forms of (scientific) writing (Binder 2015: 109). Beate Binder emphasizes "that the challenges of ethnographic representation can only be met if form and content remain related to each other" (2015: 122). Calling the chapters of my study 'tracks'¹⁸ could be interpreted as an attempt (or need?) to write myself close to the 'field' in which I am involved as a music fan, collector and researcher (Bönisch-Brednich 2001). However, the tracks also have other, epistemological dimensions, which I would like to explain by means of an example.

American cultural anthropologist Anna Tsing tracks down the matsutake mushroom in her book *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2019). This mushroom, which is considered a delicacy in Japan, grows on industrially ruined soil and cannot be cultivated. The mushroom is circumstantial – a material, intersubjectively recognizable trace – that points to an economic system and its forms of exploitation, which gives Tsing grounds for a critique of capitalism. To this end, she traces and establishes connections between people, plants, animals, soils and capitalist ruins.¹⁹ These interconnections can be described as decentered and posthumanist, and they are global in scale. Tsing radically transfers her search for traces in these ramifications to her text. She writes on its structure:

Following a mushroom, this book offers [...] true stories. Unlike most scholarly books, what follows is a riot of short chapters. I wanted them to be like the flushes of mushrooms that come up after a rain: an over-the-top bounty; a temptation to explore; an always too many. The chapters build an open-ended assemblage, not a logical machine;

17 *Writing Tracks* evokes associations not only with the *Writing Culture*, but also with the ANTI-inspired *Writing Networks* debate, to which I link by implication. See Färber 2013: 61f.

18 'Track' refers to several things in pop culture: the trace on the tape or digital recording program is called a track, as is the groove on the record. In addition, pieces of music, especially in the context of electronic music, are called tracks.

19 Tsing laid the foundation for an "ethnography of global connection" much earlier. See Tsing 2004.

they gesture to the so-much-more out there. They tangle with and interrupt each other – mimicking the patchiness of the world I am trying to describe. Adding another thread, the photographs tell a story alongside the text but do not illustrate it directly. I use images to present the spirit of my argument rather than the scenes I discuss. (Tsing 2015: viii)

The traces of the mushroom that Tsing follows here are reminiscent of George Marcus' traces. Tsing traveled the world for years for her study, seeking out places where the mushroom grows and is collected (USA, Japan, Canada, China, Finland). She follows the matsutake as a nonhuman actor and, through it, comes into contact with people who collect it, eat it, trade in it – and who themselves often have migratory biographies. Starting from the mushroom and the network of relationships that surrounds it, she develops a view of the capitalist present. In her introduction, she juxtaposes “scholarly books” – presumably meaning classic monographs – with her book of short chapters that spring up like mushrooms. She, thus, establishes an aesthetic connection to her object of study, which seems idiosyncratic, wild and difficult to calculate. The analogy, however, is much more far-reaching. The notion of the field as an “open-ended assemblage” is applied to the text, which, like the underground network of mushrooms, resembles an open structure, a rhizome.²⁰ By contrast, the “logical machine” evokes associations with a rational modernity in which, ideally, everything can be deduced and resolved without contradiction. The rhizome as a text is the anti-monograph,²¹ the opposite of the ‘grand narrative,’ and, according to Tsing, suitable to represent the complex patchiness of the world. The atmospheric underscoring of what is said, which Tsing attributes to the pictures attached, is, thus, largely already provided by the text. Tsing also refers to various theoretical currents in her chapters. Stefan Wellgraf writes about this: Tsing is

[...] drawing, among other things, on a feminist philosophy of technology to destabilize the distinction between nature and culture, and elaborates on unusual value chains with reference to (post-)Marxist discussions. In doing so, however, she places the mushroom, rather than the theories, at the center of her ethnography, taking stylistic cues from mushroom analogies and constructing her text as a kind of rhizomatic web. Such an approach requires an unorthodox understanding of theory, the ability to as-

- 20 Tim Ingold argues for a similar understanding of the field in *Eine kurze Geschichte der Linien* ('A Brief History of Lineages') (2021). Curiously, he traces his interest in lines back to his father's profession as a mycologist. As a child, he says, he regularly observed his father drawing microscopic fungal species with hairline precision; he describes this as a key experience. Unlike other animal or plant species, fungi could not be clearly distinguished from one another, and they interbreed in an almost anarchistic manner. This gave fungi a special status in biology that fascinated him. Ingold does not make the parallel to the development of cultural and social theory (especially the “rhizome” of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1977)) explicit, but it, nevertheless, seems obvious. See Ingold 2021: 61.
- 21 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1977) wrote, contrary to the Freudian paradigm of circumstantial evidence, the anti-Oedipus.

sociate and combine, and also knowledge of various contextual issues for discussion. (Wellgraf 2020: 16 f.)

Despite all the danger of foreshortening and inaccuracy that accompanies it, this form of theoretical contextualization, which is more lens than scaffolding, represents added value. Theory here does not pursue an end in itself; it is a tool that is put away again as soon as it has served its purpose (Massmünster 2017: 58 f.). The writing does not follow the research, it is not the monographic outline including the theoretical framework to which the ‘empirical results’ are assigned. Writing in rhizome-like chapters (or tracks) emphasizes the processual character of the research and the nature of the subject, it remains fragmentary.

Nevertheless, writing remains an interpretative and, thus, also potentially problematic act. Traces are homogenized, combined, arranged and produced in writing. Traces become tracks.

When we stretch our net of signifying relationships around things, we do indeed follow the traces to which our field points us, but, above all, we actually *construct* [emphasis in original, author’s note] – in the sense of [...] ‘writing culture’ – a plausible context that was not there previously. For that very reason, it can also make visible something that was not there before. (Wietschorke 2005: 345)

Tracking, analysis and writing are, thus, closely intertwined. Which lines are finally selected and into which narrative structure they are put depends on the research interest, the research question, and, not least, on the personal priorities of the researcher. Researching and writing in pursuit of traces are, however, only one side of the story. It is completed by the readers. They also make connections, interpret what they read, relate it to their knowledge and their experiences. Open and fragmentary text forms, such as Tsing’s teeming chapters or the tracks of my research, offer multilayered interpretations, and, at least potentially, more comprehensive space than closed narratives.

Tracking as a program: depth, surface, sleuthing and representation

These four dimensions of ‘traces’ and the authors to whom I refer each stand for specific characteristics of the search for traces, which I would like to highlight once again in conclusion. It is important for me to emphasize that the concepts do not have to exclude each other in research practice, despite their partly different goals and cultural-theoretical basic assumptions; on the contrary, I plead for interweaving them.

Sybille Krämer locates traces between semiotic discourses, on the one hand, and the world of things, on the other. “[W]ith the reading of traces [...] we hold an Ariadne’s thread in our hands that leads us out of the ‘pure’ world of signs and connects us with the thingness, physicality and materiality of the world” (Krämer 2007: 13). The presence of the trace testifies to the absence of that which produced it. Furthermore, according to Krämer, traces are never left intentionally, but always casually, and there is a time gap between the creation of the trace and its discovery as such. These at-

tributes of trace apply to the circumstantial paradigm. Traces appear in the examples given above as materializations (pillow and key rack) or (speech-)performative utterances (“Have you also already talked to real collectors?”), which can be understood as im- or expressions of a social structure or a cultural figure. The empirically accessible surface in this conception opens up the interpretative access to something deeper, actual, which is, however, ‘absent’ (in the research situation) and does not immediately reveal itself to researchers. This idea of a cultural surface, on which the essential either emerges or which conceals this essential, is the subject of a traditional epistemology of European ethnology (Heimerdinger 2013: 7 ff.). However, as Timo Heimerdinger shows, the idea that the ‘big picture’ is reflected in the details or that a congruent ‘inside’ can be inferred from the ‘outside’ may be true in individual cases, but it is only sustainable to a very limited extent as a comprehensive epistemology. Not everything is reflected in everything (Heimerdinger 2013: 11). Instead of a ‘totality,’ as Ginzburg and (presumably not intended to the same extent) Linder suggest, fragmented contexts have long since emerged. Empirical details, understood as traces, as shown in the example, can certainly provide interpretative access to these. However, as Heimerdinger demands, it is necessary to name to what the traces concretely refer, to which contexts they suggest, and what is meant by ‘depth,’ ‘structure’ or ‘figure’ (beyond the metaphorical designation) in detail (2013: 15). This is because, as much as the dichotomous figure of thought consisting of surface/depth, outside/inside is entrenched in everyday thinking and also in scientific disciplines, it has no analytical value in itself. Heimerdinger, therefore, states that “the all too simply imagined division into an allegedly superficial outside and an allegedly actual inside” has been overcome in our discipline for quite some time. It is, therefore, a matter of distancing oneself from the polar positions and structures of either-or in cultural theory, and of moving instead in complex contexts, the both/and (Heimerdinger 2013: 14 f.).

This interplay is reflected in the use of the concept of trace in the research practice of European ethnology. Tracing functions beyond its conceptualization as imprinting (e.g. after Krämer) as a metaphor for the processual picking up and mapping of threads, the following of paths and the making of connections. Contrary to the movement into an imagined depth, the *traces* of multi-sited ethnography and ANT, as described, spread out rather flatly, they know nothing hidden, real. Their interest lies in the observable surface. These *traces* do not correspond to Krämer’s definition of trace. They neither necessarily indicate something absent, which is traced diachronically (it is more a matter of a synchronous following on the heels), nor are the ‘traces’ *per se* left behind unintentionally. On the contrary, they are understood as placed or staged. *Following or tracking*, thus, refers less to an interpretative process than to a comprehensible description. I am skeptical about the extent to which these practices can be sharply differentiated; there is already interpretation, or at least selection, in every description. Nevertheless, the concepts offer a perspective that does justice to a focus on concrete

practices and situations and enables the identification of connections and relationships between human and nonhuman actors. It is precisely in this dialectic that the search for traces proves to be a suitable methodology for ethnographic cultural analyses, allowing it to oscillate between praxeological-situational descriptions and interpretative deep drilling.

Both of these methodological search processes require 'tracking sense'. The moment of serendipity is closely connected to this and makes clear that both of these orientations of the search for traces are observer-dependent practices that are connected to the specific perspective of the ethnographic researcher. The latter is interested in the empirical detail and is at eye level with the object of research, which, in constructivist terms, only gains shape during this search. The role of chance, which is often in the foreground in the perception of the serendipity concept, should not be overestimated. The attention of the researcher is at least as important. This, in turn, depends on prior knowledge, theoretical preferences, research interests and concrete questions and, ultimately, decides what is recognized and taken up as a trace and which traces elude us and remain hidden. Finally, the concept of tracks offers the possibility of translating the results of these multidirectional search movements into text. Tracks are also not traces in Krämer's sense. They are constructions based on empirical materials whose contradictoriness, complexity, and incompleteness they represent. They can be understood as a narrative stylistic device that makes the search for traces comprehensible.

The example of Anna Tsing and my research on music collecting show that the approaches presented can be combined. This is accompanied by a certain understanding of the field, an undogmatic (but, thus, not arbitrary) relationship to theory, and a multi-perspectival form of representation. Tracking in the understanding proposed here is, thus, a program that flexibly alternates between the surface, where actors and practices are traced and connections are shown, and deep drilling, which makes historical dimensions visible and brings to light cultural contexts that allow interpretations beyond a description of the situation (Timm 2013: 75). Thus, tracking as a program can be understood as a multilayered methodological process that combines orientation and search processes, descriptions and interpretations, and narrative strategies.

Bibliography

- Appadurai, Arjun, ed. 1986. *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Berg, Eberhard, and Martin Fuchs, eds. 1995. *Kultur, soziale Praxis, Text. Zur Krise der ethnographischen Repräsentation*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Binder, Beate. 2015. "Imaginäres bändigen. Über literarische Techniken im ethnografischen Schreiben." *Berliner Blätter* 68: 109–125
- Bock von Wülfig, Bettina. 2017. *Spuren. Erzeugung des Dagewesenen*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

- Bönisch-Brednich, Brigitte. 2001. "Zur Poetik des Fachs. Wie man sich in die Nähe schreibt." In *Dazwischen. Zur Spezifik der Empirien in der Volkskunde*, ed. by Klara Löffler, 65–73. Vienna: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde.
- Bonz, Jochen, Katharina Eisch-Angus, Marion Hamm, and Almut Sülzle. 2017. *Ethnografie und Deutung. Gruppenvision als Methode reflexiven Forschens*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1982. *Die feinen Unterschiede. Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Bürkert, Karin, Alexander Engel, Timo Heimerdinger, Markus Tauschek, and Tobias Werron, eds. 2019. *Auf den Spuren der Konkurrenz. Kultur- und sozialwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*. Münster/New York: Waxmann.
- Clifford, James, and George Marcus. 1986. *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix. 1977. *Rhizom*. Berlin: Merve Verlag.
- Ege, Moritz. 2013. *Ein Proll mit Klasse: Mode, Popkultur und soziale Ungleichheiten unter jungen Männern in Berlin*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.
- Ege, Moritz, and Jens Wietschorke. 2014. "Figuren und Figurationen in der empirischen Kulturanalyse. Methodische Überlegungen am Beispiel der 'Wiener Typen' im 18. bis 20. und des Berliner 'Prolls' im 21. Jahrhundert." *LiTheS. Zeitschrift für Literatur- und Theatersoziologie* 11: 16–35.
- Ehn, Billy, and Orvar Löfgren. 2010. *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Elster, Christian. 2021. *Pop-Musik sammeln. Zehn ethnografische Tracks zwischen Plattenladen und Streamingportal*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
- Färber, Alexa. 2013. "Anthropologie in der Stadt und/oder Akteurnetzwerkforschung. Zur Greifbarkeit der Stadt und ihrer kulturwissenschaftlichen Erforschbarkeit." In *Reziproke Räume. Texte zu Kulturanthropologie und Architektur*, ed. by Johanna Rolshoven and Manfred Omahna, 50–64. Marburg: Jonas Verlag.
- Foucault, Michel. 1981 [1973]. *Archäologie des Wissens*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. 2011 [1983]. *Spurensicherung. Die Wissenschaft auf der Suche nach sich selbst*. Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach.
- Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism as a Site of Discourse on the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 3/14: 575–599.
- Heimerdinger, Timo. 2013. "Europäische Ethnologie als Oberflächenwissenschaft – Zur Einführung in provozierender Absicht." In *Äußerungen. Die Oberfläche als Gegenstand und Perspektive der Europäischen Ethnologie*, ed. by Timo Heimerdinger and Silke Meyer, 5–20. Vienna: Selbstverlag des Vereins für Volkskunde.
- Hess, Sabine, and Maria Schwertl. 2013. "Vom 'Feld' zur 'Assemblage'? Perspektiven europäisch-ethnologischer Methodenentwicklung – eine Hinleitung." In *Europäisch-ethnologisches Forschen. Neue Methoden und Konzepte*, ed. by Sabine Hess, Johannes Moser, and Maria Schwertl, 13–38. Berlin: Reiner Verlag.
- Ingold, Tim. 2021. *Eine kurze Geschichte der Linien*. Konstanz: Wallstein Verlag.
- Knecht, Michi. 2012. "Ethnographische Praxis im Feld der Wissenschafts-, Medizin- und Technik-anthropologie." In *Science and Technology Studies. Eine sozialanthropologische Einführung*, ed. by Stefan Beck, Jörg Niewöhner, and Estrid Sørensen, 245–274. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

- Kopytoff, Igor. 1986. "The Cultural Biography of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective." In *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by Arjun Appadurai, 64–94. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Krämer, Sybille. 2007. "Was also ist eine Spur? Und worin besteht ihre epistemologische Rolle? Eine Bestandsaufnahme." In *Spur. Spurenlesen als Orientierungstechnik und Wissenskunst*, ed. by Sybille Krämer, Werner Kogge, and Gernot Grube, 11–36. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Latour, Bruno. 2005. *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Levy, Ze'ev. 2007. "Die Rolle der Spur in der Philosophie von Emmanuel Levinas und Jacques Derrida." In *Spur. Spurenlesen als Orientierungstechnik und Wissenskunst*, ed. by Sybille Krämer, Werner Kogge, and Gernot Grube, 145–154. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Lindner, Rolf. 2007. *Die Entdeckung der Stadtkultur. Soziologie aus der Erfahrung der Reportage*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag
- Lindner, Rolf. 2011. "Spür-Sinn: Oder: Die Rückgewinnung der Andacht zum Unbedeutenden." *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 2/107: 155–169.
- Lindner, Rolf. 2012. "Serendipity und andere Merkwürdigkeiten." *VOKUS* 1/22: 6–11.
- Marcus, George. 1995. "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95–117.
- Massmünster, Michel. 2017. *Im Taumel der Nacht. Urbane Imaginationen, Rhythmen und Erfahrungen*. Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos.
- Scharfe, Martin. 1995. "Bagatellen. Zu einer Pathognomik der Kultur." *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 91: 1–26.
- Schmidt-Lauber, Brigitta. 2007 [2001]. "Feldforschung. Kulturanalyse durch teilnehmende Beobachtung." In *Methoden der Volkskunde. Positionen, Quellen, Arbeitsweisen der Europäischen Ethnologie*, ed. by Silke Göttisch and Albrecht Lehmann, 219–248. Berlin: Reimer Verlag.
- Schmidt-Lauber, Brigitta. 2009. "Orte von Dauer. Der Feldforschungsbegriff in der Europäischen Ethnologie in der Kritik." In *Kultur - Forschung. Zum Profil einer volkskundlichen Kulturwissenschaft*, ed. by Beate Binder, Thomas Hengartner, and Sonja Windmüller, 237–259. Münster: LIT Verlag.
- Schmidt-Lauber, Brigitta. 2010. "Der Alltag und die Europäische Ethnologie. Einige Gedanken über einen Begriff und ein Fach." In *Alltag als Politik - Politik als Alltag. Dimensionen des Politischen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, ed. by Michaela Fenske, 45–61. Berlin: LIT Verlag.
- Seaver, Nick. 2019. "Captivating Algorithms. Recommender Systems as Traps." *Journal of Material Culture* 4/24: 421–436
- Timm, Elisabeth. 2013. "Bodenloses Spurenlesen. Probleme der kulturanthropologischen Empirie unter den Bedingungen der Emergenztheorie." *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* LXVII/116: 49–75
- Tsing, Anna. 2004. *Friction. An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tsing, Anna. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World. On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Wellgraf, Stefan. 2020. "Nach dem Exotismus. Ethnografie als Kritik." *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 1/116: 5–25.
- Welz, Gisela. 1998. "Moving Targets. Feldforschung unter Mobilitätsdruck." *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 2/94: 177–194.
- Wietschorke, Jens. 2005. "Beziehungswissenschaft. Ein Versuch zur volkskundlich-kulturwissenschaftlichen Epistemologie." *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* LXVI/66: 325–359.
- Wietschorke, Jens. 2013. "Die kulturelle Oberfläche und die Tiefen des Sozialen? Ein Sondierungsversuch." In *Äußerungen. Die Oberfläche als Gegenstand und Perspektive der Europäischen Ethnologie*, ed. by Timo Heimerdinger and Silke Meyer, 21–36. Vienna: Selbstverlag des Vereins für Volkskunde.