

# HAU

Journal of Ethnographic Theory

**Editors-in-Chief** Giovanni da Col (Cambridge)  
Justin Shaffner  
**Managing Editor** Stéphane Gros (CNRS)  
**Editor-at-Large** David Graeber (Goldsmiths College, London)  
**Editorial Assistants** Harriet Boulding (SOAS)  
Rachel Douglas-Jones (Durham)  
Mylene Hengen (EHESS)  
Philip Swift

HAU, Journal of Ethnographic Theory is an international peer-reviewed, open-access online journal which aims to situate ethnography as the prime heuristic of anthropology, and return it to the forefront of conceptual developments in the discipline.

The journal is motivated by the need to reinstate ethnographic theorization in contemporary anthropology as a potent alternative to its ‘explanation’ or ‘contextualization’ by philosophical arguments, moves which have resulted in a loss of the discipline’s distinctive theoretical nerve. By drawing out its potential to critically engage and challenge Western cosmological assumptions and conceptual determinations, HAU aims to provide an exciting new arena for evaluating ethnography as a daring enterprise for ‘worlding’ alien terms and forms of life, by exploiting their potential for rethinking humanity and alterity.

## Editorial Board

Catherine Allerton (LSE), Debora Battaglia (Mount Holyoke College), Amita Baviskar (Delhi University Enclave), Niko Besnier (Amsterdam), Chen Bo (Sichuan University), Matei Candea (Durham), Alberto Corsin-Jimenez (CSIC, Spain), Inge Daniels (Oxford), Gregory Delaplace (Nanterre), Philippe Descola (Collège de France), Bum-Ochir Dulam (Ulan Bator), Gary Dunham (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association), Jeanette Edwards (Manchester), Carlos Fausto (Museu Nacional, Rio de Janeiro), Jeanne Favret-Saada (EPHE), Maurice Godelier (EHESS), Sarah Green (Manchester), Chris Gregory (ANU), Stephen Gudeman (Minnesota), Caterina Guenzi (EHESS), Keith Hart (Goldsmiths College London), Stefan Helmreich (MIT), Chris Kelty (UCLA), Holly High (Sydney), Eric Hirsch (Brunel), Martin Holbraad (UCL), Signe Howell (Oslo), Shu-min Huang (Academia Sinica), Caroline Humphrey (Cambridge), Deborah James (LSE), Casper Bruun Jensen (Copenhagen), Bruce Kapferer (Bergen), Bruno Latour (Sciences Po, Paris), James Leach (Aberdeen), Nancy Levine (UCLA), Alan Macfarlane (Cambridge), Magnus Marsden (SOAS), George Mentore (Virginia), Daniel Miller (University College London), Jadran Mimica (Sydney), Annemarie Mol (Amsterdam), Howard Morphy (ANU), Katsuo Nawa (Tokyo), Morten Nielsen (Aarhus University), Morten Pedersen (Copenhagen), Anastasia Piliavsky (Cambridge), Charles Piot (Duke), Michael Ralph (NYU), Adam Reed (St Andrews), Knut Rio (Bergen), Joel Robbins (UCSD), Hanan Sabea (American University in Cairo), Marshall Sahlins (Chicago), Gregory Schrempf (Indiana), Michael Scott (LSE), Andrew Shryock (Michigan), Rupert Stasch (UCSD), Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge), Karen Sykes (Manchester), Paul Tapsell (University of Otago), Nicholas Thomas (Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge), Mark Turin (Cambridge/Yale), Edith Turner (Virginia), Aparecida Vilaça (Museu Nacional, Rio de Janeiro), Soumya Venkatesan (Manchester), Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (Museu Nacional, Rio de Janeiro), Roy Wagner (Virginia), Wang Mingming (Peking University), Mike Wesch (Kansas State), Yan Yunxiang (UCLA)

# HAU



## Journal of Ethnographic Theory



**A new, international, peer-reviewed,  
open-access and copyleft journal**

[www.haujournal.org](http://www.haujournal.org)

# HAU

Journal of Ethnographic Theory

takes its name from Mauss' Spirit of the Gift, an anthropological concept that derives its theoretical potential precisely from the translational inadequations and equivocations involved in comparing the incomparable.

## Endorsements

I am strongly in favor of the laudable double aims of HAU: open access (via internet) and the grounding of anthropological knowledge in and as ethnography. Especially I respect the notion that *we cannot know the novel cosmologies of others by the received philosophies of ours.*

**Marshall Sahlins**, Charles F. Grey Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, University of Chicago

I enthusiastically support the project of a journal such as HAU: for its accessibility of course (online and open to every reader), but even more so for the specific matter it intends to deal with: revivify anthropological theory on the basis of ethnography. The most decisive level, in my opinion, is that of our so-called "analytical concepts", which are most of the time no more than terms of the ordinary speech, heavily loaded with ambiguities. *What are we talking about when we pretend to work on "belief", on a "tribe", on "witchcraft", on "identity"?* What do the "social relationships" of people we talk about consist of exactly? *To refer them to terms which are a century old does not do the job of describing them anymore – if they ever described them at all.* The societies in which we live, and in which those we visit live in themselves, can neither be apprehended through the ancient categories, nor through the general categories of our current theories (globalisation, etc.). Deeply questioning our so-called concepts, a journal such as HAU could be a prelude to a needed renewal of the ethnographic gaze.

**Jeanne Favret-Saada**, Directeur d'Études, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études

Contemporary anthropology often seems a discipline determined to commit suicide. *Where once we drew our theoretical terms – "totem", "taboo", "mana", "potlatch" – from ethnography, causing Continental thinkers from Ludwig Wittgenstein to Sigmund Freud and Jean-Paul Sartre to feel the need to weigh in on the resulting debates, we have now reduced ourselves to the scholastic dissection of terms drawn from Continental philosophy (deterritorialization, governmentality, bare life...) – and nobody else cares what we have to say about them. And honestly, why should they – if they can just as easily read Deleuze, Agamben, or Foucault in the original?* A project like HAU is exactly what's needed to begin to reverse this bizarre self-strangulation. It is a journal that dares to defy the Great Man theory of intellectual history, to recognize that most ordinary human beings, the world over, have just as much to say about love, time, power, and dilemmas of human existence as any paid philosophers, and that sometimes, their reflections can be decidedly more interesting. It proposes anthropologists return to the kind of conversations with which we began, except this time, as equals, and that we have a moral responsibility to make the results freely available to everyone, the world over.

**David Graeber**, Reader, Goldsmiths College London

I wish to second David Graeber's trenchant remarks. And would just add a comment about *delusion*. There are so many ways in which we 'know' people these days, and we seem to inform one another so quickly, the delusion is that anthropology can side-step its own project of engagement. *Anthropologists really have nothing to offer if they cannot demonstrate the difference it makes to understand relations through the relationships they are involved with.* Here HAU opens a window to theoretical reflection – and to ways of knowing that are not reducible to information-gathering. This could not be more important.

**Dame Marilyn Strathern**, Professor, University of Cambridge

I see anthropology as one of the major players in today's intellectual landscape, and precisely to the extent that it has decided to engage directly in a conceptually determining way with classic so-called philosophical problems, rather than being forced to express those problems unreflectively and implicitly. *What is distinctive about anthropology's engagement with its own cultural (philosophical) tradition, however, is its reliance on an epistemological relation – a cosmopolitical alliance – with what has been "constitutively" excluded from that tradition, and which may as well be located inside as outside its historical and geopolitical limits.* This excluded element is the subject-matter of what is usually called "ethnography" – the description of the myriad ways and sundry means of people's ontological self-determination: the intelligence of life. Anthropology is the effort to think through ethnography, in other words, to think with those thinking practices which are in perpetual insurrection against the colonization of the mind. So anthropological practice is ethnographic theory. *No word expresses this better than HAU, the spirit of the relation, the gift of the concept, the felicitous equivocation.*

**Eduardo Viveiros de Castro**, Professor, Museu Nacional Rio de Janeiro

## Mission

*As every experienced fieldworker knows, the most difficult task in social anthropological fieldwork is to determine the meaning of a few key words, upon an understanding of which the success of the whole investigation depends.*

E. E. Evans-Pritchard

## Submissions

HAU welcomes submissions that strengthen ethnographic engagement with received knowledges, and revive the vibrant themes of anthropology through debate and engagement with other disciplines and explore domains held until recently to be the province of economics, philosophy and the natural sciences. *The journal aims to publish online suitable manuscripts within six months from their receipt.*

## Topics

Indigenous ontologies and systems of knowledge, forms of human engagement and relationality, cosmology and myth, magic, witchcraft and sorcery, truth and falsehood, indigenous theories of kinship and relatedness with humans and non-humans, hierarchy, materiality, perception, environment and space, time and temporality, personhood and subjectivity, alternative metaphysics of morality.