

Organizer: **Hirsiäho, Anu**, University of Tampere, Finland; **Oikarinen-Jabai, Helena**, Aalto University, Finland

### **Ethnography and Fiction: Creative Intersections**

In the history of anthropology, several researchers have turned into writers of fiction, or their ethnographic fieldwork accounts have been appreciated as fiction besides research. There are theorists who argue that all ethnographic writing is essentially fictional and therefore the border between the two genres is unnecessary, and others who argue for the necessity to maintain a border between ethnographic and literary genres. Since the publication of a landmark anthology, *Writing Culture* (1986), by James Clifford and George E. Marcus, the debate about representing cultures through fictional forms inside academia has intensified and moved on to all humanities and social sciences. Cultures have been approached as fictional constructs, the representation of which may or may not depend on the notion of “being there”.

Inside cultural studies, experimental forms of academic writing have often been more welcome than in many other disciplines. The subject matter of much of cultural studies deals with individuals’ and groups’ relationships with fictional worlds. Researchers of fan fiction often engage in producing fan fiction themselves, researchers of multicultural education “cross over” and start writing children’s books. Turning towards fiction is a sign of wider engagement with the communities with whom one works and interacts. Also, the notion of autoethnography has brought about a new layer to the understanding and analysis of the everyday fictional worlds people share.

This panel explores the political, aesthetic and ethical promises and challenges of merging ethnographic writing and fiction, through theory, case studies and our own experiences.