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"DO NOT USE THE WORD ANTHROPOLOGY!": ON THE STRUGGLE OF ARTISTIC AND SCIENTIGIC SELVES IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL FILM-MAKING

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Abstract: In our everyday lives, we often have to blend our different roles and various selves. Sometimes, they coexist in harmony. But there are times when they come into conflict, and we have to make a significant effort to get them back in balance. This paper focuses on my scientific/artistic practice in anthropological documentary film-making. Drawing on two films I have directed, I reflect on situations where I needed to compromise my different roles and perspectives on the film set and beyond. My actions and decisions have drawn on anthropological principles in documentary film-making. Through my autoethnographic reflection, I have come to the inevitable conclusion that in anthropological film-making, anthropology cannot be dominant nor submissive to storytelling. It should be the principle that guides the author (director) in achieving their focus and in creating the meaning of the story.

Keywords: autoethnography; documentary; film-making; visual anthropology; identity-making; subjectivity.

Introduction

There should be a proper introduction to an academic paper here. Neatly put, rational, and conclusive. Possibly starting with a suitable quote by one of the big names of visual anthropology such as Margaret Mead or someone more up to date like David MacDougall. A person who has been walking along the edge of different fields of human creativity like anthropology and art, but who has also undoubtedly contributed to answering the fundamental theoretical and methodological questions of our scientific field. Someone who has single-handedly conquered the realms of words and not been bound by them. Who has freely transitioned from writing to (moving) images and back.

Writing here and now, in the first week of 2021, during yet another COVID-19 quarantine, in my kitchen, with a huge pile of washed and dried clothes on the back of my chair and two small children waiting to be fed, entertained, and then fed again, it is, as it is. A reflection of the time we live in, but also of me as a person, with the roles I fulfill in my everyday life: a scientist, artist, wife, and mother. After two stints of maternal leave, I returned to full-time employment amidst the outbreak of the worldwide pandemic. I try to

synchronize my various professional callings, participating in the academic anthropological research projects at the institute I work at, and directing a full-length feature time-lapse documentary being shot in Sweden. At the same time, I take care of my sons, a first-grader in elementary school and a preschooler. I try to take it day by day and not become overwhelmed by the sheer number of tasks and responsibilities.

…
A.: *"Dad?!"*
Me: *"Yes?!"*
A.: *"Where's dad?"*
Me: *"Daddy is on a call."*
A.: *"Come and have a look."*
Me: *"Just a sec."*[1]
…

Anyway, this brings me to the idea of how we blend our different roles and the selves attached to them in our everyday lives. Even more so today, when they often co-exist at the same time and place. Some of them, previously somewhat strictly assigned to public spaces, now invade our kitchens, living rooms, or even bedrooms... The current "clash of selves" is also objectified in an interactive process of self-expression through material objects (Miller, 1993).[2] A suit paired with sweatpants says a lot about how we handle ourselves in the pandemic age. Currently, our public selves co-exist with our "homely" selves in a strange muddle.

However, even in "normal" times, can we simply "shed" one of our selves and "put on" a different one? Or do our selves always have to compromise, discuss among themselves, and sometimes even bribe one another? I have a decade-long experience of this – being an academic anthropologist and a documentary film-director working with a professional film crew. It brings out specific theoretical and practical problems and dilemmas on the film set, in the editing room, and beyond. Often, I have to carefully re-consider my actions from the various perspectives – on occasions even conflicting – attached to my different roles and selves.

In this paper, focusing on my artistic/scientific[3] practice, I will analyze how the different aspects merge in a meaningful whole. Also, I will scrutinize particular moments when my motivations, perspectives, and actions inevitably clash. For me, the film-making process is both an artistic as well as a scientific experience, but also, inevitably, part of my very own personal journey. After all, the borders between the arts and sciences (specifically the social sciences and humanities) are often illusory and fluid (Grimshaw & Ravetz, 2015). Therefore,

[1] The current situation has exerted different pressures and has different consequences for people depending on their social status, particularly their gender (Wenham, Smith & Morgan, 2020; Bitušíková, 2020). It is often women who have to juggle more "apples". I don't want to give the wrong impression of my diligent and caring husband. Our current situation is the result of persistent systemic inequalities in the living circumstances of men and women in society. These are reflected in the workplace but also in households.

[2] In this, things are not merely passive objects, but they are the bridge between the individual's conscious and unconscious (Miller, 1993; Clarke, 2008; G. Lutherová, 2014).

[3] In alphabetical order.

I do not intend to draw a strict line between them, either in my practice, or this paper (G. Lutherová, 2016a).

Two stories about selves

In this paper, I reflect upon the two documentary films I have directed: my professional debut *Flooded* (premiered in 2017), and my upcoming documentary feature film *A Happy Man*, currently still in production[4]. I feel the need to emphasize here that this is not a reckoning of some sort. Not with myself, nor with anyone else – although there certainly have been doubts and metaphorical bruises along the way. This paper is more a reflection of my thoughts, positions, and actions regarding my practice, which I have always perceived as being on the edge of two intertwined worlds (G. Lutherová, 2016a). I will try to delve as deeply as possible, to autoethnographically challenge my assumptions and insecurities (Ellis, 2013).

Thematically, both of my films focus on the process of identity-making. They are personal stories of specific individuals, but they are very different from one another. They vary not only in the scope of the stories but also in the storytelling. In *Flooded*, I look into the way protagonists' selves are shaped in relation to family, generational memory, and Holocaust trauma. These have been objectified through their relationship to the lost family heirloom – a historical mansion in the Central Slovak village of Parizovce. The main protagonists of the film are Trudka and her older sister Zuzana, who are Holocaust survivors and over 90 years old, and Matej, Trudka's adult grandson. The sisters lost all of their close relatives in the Second World War. Their family home was confiscated, first during the Aryanization in the 1940s. Later, under the socialist collectivization of private property in Czechoslovakia. In the film, I focus on the way the family trauma is transmitted over the generations. Matej travels with his small son to their ancestral "to appropriate" it and make it their own just for this one occasion. For them, the confiscation of the mansion symbolizes the tragedy and injustice inflicted on them. But the building also objectifies their endurance and ability to survive. The story of the family continues in their offspring, who carry the legacy of their ancestors.

A Happy Man is the intimate story of a middle-class migrant family from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, currently living in Sweden. A few years ago, the young mother came out as a transgender man, Marvin. In the time-lapse documentary film, I aim to capture the authentic (unstaged) everyday situations in the protagonists' lives. Gender transition is not just a physical change; it is a fundamental change in the way the person perceives themself (Wiesner, 2017; Stryker, 2006; Van Der Ros, 2015; G. Lutherová, 2016b).[5] It is reflected in Marvin's alternating social roles: in the way he approaches and fulfils them. Concurrently, his recreating of his self profoundly influences people in his social circle. The transition acts as a catalyst for the transformation of relationships within the family: Marvin's marriage,

[4] Around two thirds of the material has already been filmed.

[5] Gender is not characterized by a definite set of features. On the contrary, it is individually and socially acquired through a set of attitudes and activities influenced by the normative conceptions in the society (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 129).

parenthood, and his relationships with his parents, as well as other close relatives and people in his social circle.

In terms of film style and storytelling, these two films could hardly be more different from one another. *A Happy Man* is shot as a straightforward observational documentary[6]. In the film, the scenes of everyday lives are combined with biographical, thematically focused interviews (used mainly as voiceover).[7] By contrast, in *Flooded*, the story of several generations of one family goes back to the beginning of the 20th century. To recapture the events and depict protagonists' perspectives, the storytelling is heavily dependent on biographical interviews, archival photographs, and voiceover commentary from the diary of one of the protagonists. To uncover the deeper meanings of the story, I have not hesitated to use more poetic elements, such as photographs with video effects (to recreate the spirit of the past) or stylized underwater scenes (to express the feeling of loss in the family). Despite using different ways to tell the stories, I consider both of these films to be anthropological. Not just thematically but, more importantly, in my intentions and film-making approach. Neither is it simply a matter of putting labels on them. A film is anthropological mainly because of the focus and principles governing this particular artistic/scientific practice. And, unequivocally, it relates to me as an author and anthropologist. As the creator, I cannot exclude myself from the label I put on the fruit of my creative labor.

On "doing" anthropology through film-making

"This is not an anthropological film! I've seen anthropological films and this is not one![8] From time to time, I have been confronted with this sort of judgment. Mostly during the production of *Flooded*. Interestingly, I have heard these remarks more often from colleagues who work in other scientific fields, usually social scientists, not film theorists or film-makers.[9] There are always some academics who consider scientific fields (but also art and science for that matter) to be domains with precisely determined boundaries and characteristics (Kuhn, 1970). In these encounters, the battleground is defined by what they consider to be the undisputable characteristics of anthropological practice. Their assessment of anthropological films is usually based more on the form than the substance as they consider the realistic approach to storytelling to be a key element of its "ethnographicness" (e.g. Heider, 2006; Banks, 1992; G. Lutherová, 2016a). This affected me on a personal level, as my film-maker self was still quite fragile at the time. Besides, when my film

[6] Technically, it's not finished yet as we are currently in the last third of the production phase. But it already exists in my mind – with the ending yet to be determined.

[7] In addition to this, we also use selfie videos (shot by Marvin) and audio excerpts from his novels. These features also bring the storytelling back to representing the self. But let's put that aside for the sake of the argument.

[8] Over the years, as part of my reflexive process, I have been taking notes during and after the events at which I present my documentary projects. I focus on the statements, remarks, and situations that have inspired me, or influenced me both positively and negatively.

[9] This is related to the position of authority on a specific kind of knowledge. At the same time, uninformed opinions can be supported by an expert position from a different area of expertise (Urban, 2017, p.116).

was interpreted as not "anthropological enough", I felt that judgement was not simply being passed on my film, but also on me as an anthropologist and on my ability to "do" anthropology.

To make things more complicated, there are other types of events that require me to define (and sometimes also label) my film-making approach. These are professional filming industry events such as film markets, festivals, workshops, and others. Currently, mid-way through the production of *A Happy Man*, I attend them mainly to support the marketing and future distribution of the film. At the workshops, the experts on storytelling and marketing advise the attendees on how to "make their films work", how to promote them and make them more marketable. Some time ago, one of the experts gave me this advice: *"From now on, do not ever use the word 'anthropology' in relation to your film. When promoters hear this, they imagine an observational film about an indigenous clan, shot with a lousy camera somewhere on an island in the Pacific. Also, you should not refer to yourself as an anthropologist. People will think that you are too rigorous, and not artistically creative."* My anthropological self smirked at this remark. Nevertheless, from a practical point of view the labeling might indeed become important. It could limit the financing opportunities and affect the marketing of the film (Urban, 2017; Vlček, 2017). A strong belief that there is an inseparable connection between author (visual anthropologist and director) and film often comes into play (Urban, 2017)[10]. That leads us directly back to the issue of "labeling".

How does the film-maker AND anthropologist define their endeavors, and does it even matter? According to Jean Rouch, both anthropology and film constitute a "transition point" from one domain to the other. In the case of anthropology, it is the transition from one conceptual universe to the other (individual or collective), and in the case of cinema, it is from the real world to the imaginary. The agent (be they a scientist or film-maker) can easily lose their way on this path (Rouch & Fulchignoni, 2003, p. 185). As I see it, trying to conform to the label of "anthropological film-making" might possibly diminish the director's creativity as they (un)consciously limit the available storytelling tools that would potentially enable them to approach the matter holistically.

Anthropology in documentary film-making is defined through various aspects. As argued by Marcus Banks, anthropology relates to the intention, realized in the process of film-making, and finalized in the audience's reaction to the film (Banks, 1992, p. 117). This equation starts with the rather vague prerequisite of the author's "intention". It presupposes a specific kind of expertise and knowledge. The subsequent practice is inseparably tied to the persona of the author/director/visual anthropologist. It implies their motivation as well as their focus and perspective.

…

A.: *"Mom?!"*

Sorry, my son has just come in.

Me: *"Yes?"*

[10] As Marek Urban has shown in his analysis of the evaluations of the committee members of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund, the films are often interpretatively reviewed vis- -vis the author (director), their authorship and even their life story. Besides, there is a preference for clear categories and labels (Urban, 2017).

A.: *"Do you want to play a Pokémon card game with me?"*
I will get back to you in an hour.
…

So, where were we? Yep, we'd reached the "good" stuff. On a fundamental level, this coincides with the way I see myself in the neverending process of becoming myself in relation to my occupation. Holland and Leander argue that actors' thoughts, sentiments, embodied sensibilities, and senses of self as well as self-world relations are all part of their subjectivities (Holland & Leander, 2004, p.127). People engage with different social positionings, which may pertain to various personal and group characteristics such as class, race, gender, religion, occupation, and operate simultaneously or situationally. People can wholly or partially accept or reject them, and possibly also sidestep them in one way or another. As explained by the concept of laminated subjectivity[11], selves are shaped by prior episodes of positive and negative positionings (Holland & Leander, 2004). The different presentations of the selves relate to self-understanding, but also the understanding of others, resonances, scales of belonging, and social possibilities (Venkatesan, 2012, p. 417).

In the world of science, interdisciplinarity is not always welcomed with open arms (Kuhn, 1970). On a declarative level, it is considered fruitful and valuable. And yet, there is also a strong tendency to reject these individual attempts as insufficient, not rigorous enough, and possibly also ostentatious. This leads me into a paradoxical situation. As my films become too "authorial" in the eyes of my peers in academia[12], they could still be "too scientific" for film critics. Both of these labels might not actually be connected to the films themselves, but rather to myself and the way they understand my position on this artistic/scientific practice. But how to cut this Gordian knot? Can I be both – scientist and artist – at the same time, or are these two positions mutually exclusive? Understandably, I feel the need to be positioned in a way that reflects how I see myself and my practice. To circumvent the dissonances, I reconcile my different selves by focusing on the creative artistic/scientific practice itself. I try to navigate it by focusing on anthropological principles, and balancing them with the storytelling.[13]

[11] First introduced by Don Brenneis in his speech for the Society for Psychological Anthropology in 2003 (Holland & Leander, 2004).

[12] Which film-makers consider to be the highest regard and ambition (Urban, 2017).

[13] Then the film-making might become an intrinsic part of the wider anthropological research process. Making *Flooded* was a good example of this. Before taking part in the film, the main protagonists had rarely spoken about their personal tragedies in the Holocaust. If they had, then only in bits and pieces. When interviewed for the film, they created their own narrations of the events and their life stories. Moreover, their self-realization did not end with the film. While watching it, they observed how I had represented them, and they experienced how the audience became immersed in their stories. Later, the protagonists said that articulating their emotions and perspectives (during the film-making), observing the representation of their story (the film), and experiencing the public's reaction (the presentations of the film) triggered a feeling of catharsis in them. Working on the film therefore provided me with an opportunity to study the narrations of the (un)spoken individual and collective past. Film has become a highly functional tool for the in-depth analysis of the identity-making process in the narration of identities and the generational transmission of family trauma (G. Lutherová, 2020). What remains is not "only" the research data and academic literature, but the "physical manifestation" of the process – the film (Banks, 1992, p. 117).

Let us examine in greater detail what it means to "do" anthropology in documentary film-making. As I understand it, anthropology reflects on how we experience, perform, and represent our everyday lives and how we share this experience with others. According to Anand Pandian, when pursuing anthropology, we need to put experience into motion as both the means and the end of the investigation. The positionalities of the different anthropologists vary. We need to acknowledge that and make anthropology plural. We need to employ anthropology to engage with others, examine and represent the different ways they "do" human existence (Pandian, 2020). Visual anthropology in particular might indeed provide us with a powerful tool in this regard, as it is through film-making that we enter into an intimate dialogue with our protagonists as partners in this "crime". This experience is brought forth and shared with the viewers, who engage with the stories through the film.

About the story

Neither the film's ethnographicness nor appropriating film-making as part of the research process ensure that a film will be "good" in an artistic sense. Czech documentary film-maker and director of time-lapse documentaries Helena Třeštíková argues that every life is interesting enough to produce a story (Třeštíková, 2018). Is it though? How do we balance the storytelling with the anthropology, and whose experience does the film represent? Perhaps, this latter question is not particularly poignant from an artistic point of view. Yet, it is a crucial one from the anthropological one.

In my practice, be it academic writing, documentary film, or a children's book[14], I focus strongly on the stories of selves. In the prologue to my book of fictional stories for children, the main protagonist, five-year-old Miško, sits on the windowsill in his room in the top floor apartment. He looks at the lights on the opposite side of the street and wonders: Who lives there? What kind of life do they have? That sense of curiosity is very familiar to me. It is why I have studied anthropology in the first place. How do people experience their everyday lives? How do they perceive themselves and relate to the world around them – social and material – and to other people and things? How do their selves change in time and place? The focus on the theme of identity-making makes me want to dive into the personal stories and perspectives of others. And yet, as an anthropologist, I feel the need to retain some level of methodological, epistemological, and ethical clarity.

When we talk about film, be it anthropological documentary or fictional film, the author's perspective is always very much "present" in the result[15]. The author[16] makes a number of decisions about the story, its purpose, and the intended audience (Aufderheide, 2007, p. 2). Unavoidably, as director, I always become part of my protagonists' stories.[17]

[14] In 2018, I wrote a book of stories *Can superheroes wear glasses?* (G. Lutherová, 2018). It is a collection of realistic and humorous stories about a preschooler. In the book, I teach children about inclusion and promote the ideas of equality and humanity. From an anthropological point of view, this presented particular methodological and ethical problems. For example, how could I talk about ethnic differences clearly and unobtrusively, and yet not re-produce stereotypical perspectives on minorities?

[15] Even though it may look realistic to the audience.

[16] The director is usually positioned and perceived as the principle author of the film (Urban, 2017).

[17] The director decides whether they acknowledge this in the film formally. Are they visible on camera?

With *Flooded*, this was even more complicated as I was a member of the family whose story I captured in the film.[18] It was this that gave me the opportunity to tackle such an intimate topic in the first place. Otherwise, I would never have got at the story, moreover the family would probably not have let me film it. But it made some things particularly difficult (G. Lutherová, 2020)[19].

Where *A Happy Man* was concerned, Marvin, the main protagonist, had been re-inventing himself throughout the story as a transgender man. One has to bear in mind that any gender transition can easily become a personal fight for survival (Wiesner, 2017, p. 189). Marvin is living in a happy functioning relationship with his husband, and thanks to that sees his close family as a "safe haven", and does not have to struggle with his identity at home on a day to day basis. But as becomes apparent throughout the film, we all are influenced by gender norms in our social lives. When "doing" gender, men and women become hostages to its social production (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). The inability to comply with the restrictive norms and expectations results in more or less effective coping strategies for dealing with negative experiences (G. Lutherová, 2016b). In the film, Marvin has to find his own way of being content with his authentic self, and the way he expresses himself in his everyday life. As a film-maker, I have accompanied him on his personal journey since 2018.[20] I don't want to exaggerate my role in his story, but my discussions with him and his husband provided them with opportunities to articulate their changing situation, perceptions of themselves, and their relations.

When I am in the editing room, watching the raw material captured on set, I am easily dragged into the story and start to see the protagonists as characters. In real-life situations, I see them as whole people. I am aware of their real feelings, everyday struggles, and dilemmas. When I diminish them as characters (or objectify them in a sense), I feel ashamed and consciously fight against this position of author dominance. The holistic approach to the anthropological film-making is about presenting things and events as wholes: whole bodies, personalities, and behaviors (Heider, 2006, p. 5).[21] This is precisely what the medium of film is capable of doing. It uses experience to express these wholes, capturing the sensation of a living presence (Barbash & Taylor, 1997, p. 2).

"Being a film-maker means daring to simplify," a dramaturgist said to me during one of the workshops. It struck a chord with me. While selecting the situations and moments in the protagonists' lives (when the camera is rolling and later in the editing room), do we simplify the reality to the extent that it in fact becomes fiction? And is this the direct opposite of

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Can the audience hear their voice? Can we hear the question they ask? There are a lot of practical ways of acknowledging one's presence in the scene, and shattering the illusion of an "untouched" reality.

[18] I am married to one of the main protagonists of the story.

[19] For more information, read the chapter "To draw a thick line" in the monograph *Difficult times: The years 1938–1945 in the current social discourse* (written in Slovak) (G. Lutherová, 2020).

[20] I started working on the treatment shortly after he came out as a transgender man and started the transition process. From the beginning of production in 2019, we filmed twice a year in Gothenburg. I have also conducted numerous formal and informal on- and off-camera interviews with Marvin and his husband Ivan.

[21] Even though Heider's perspective was considered problematic by some for its "naïve" positivity and privileging of material for its ethnographic worth rather than cinematographic merit (Banks, 1992, p.119).

what "mainstream" anthropologists do when using their fieldwork data? To maintain my role as a researcher, I need to be aware of the limitations of or the extent to which I can influence the reality of fieldwork, and in this case – the film set[22] (Sjoberg, 2017, p. 183). Simply put, accuracy is the answer. It also affects the way the audience perceives the film. According to Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor, viewers think a film good or bad (or accurate or inaccurate) depending on how faithfully it captures the reality (or rather their assessment of it).[23] They usually consider it (albeit not consciously) to be a precise record of the events that "magically appear on the screen" (Barbash & Taylor, 1997, p. 9).

When I was finalizing *Flooded* in the sound studio, I had long discussions with my sound-technician about the presence of the author's voice in the storytelling.[24] "I can't see your opinion in the film. You should be more obvious about what you the author think and feel about the matter. You shouldn't present the issue so "objectively". It needs to be more obvious whose side you are on." His critique stung a bit. Had I distanced myself from the story in a futile attempt to capture reality accurately and not subjectively? At the same time, there was a paradox to his remark, which made me proud. The film tells the story of Holocaust victims losing their relatives, home, and inheritance. When the main protagonists (my husband's grandmother and her sister) attempted to get their property back under restitution,[25] their case was rejected. The state considered the existing building to be merely a duplicate of the original one. [26] Over the years, the discourse of tragedy and injustice inflicted on the family has persisted. As a member of the family, I understood and empathized with them. But as an anthropologist, I felt the it was my responsibility to depicture the story within its wider context. I thought have found it necessary to represent the past in all its ambiguities, because it influences affect the living present (G. Lutherová, 2020). I have approached itthis by looking at the past events from various (possibly even conflicting) perspectives. Therefore, I have included the interviews with the conpreservationists and museologists in the film. They cared aboutfor the building in their own way, not justonly professionally, but also personally and emotionally. They felt strongly about preserving this particularspecific piece of cultural heritage for the public. From my perspective My view was that, their position did has not contradicted the dramatic story of the family of the last private owners of the building. But, for some, it could have diminished the urgency of the story of the family's loss.

There is no generally valid answer to this puzzle. At the end of the day, each member of the audience perceives the story in their own way. What took place in front of the camera passes through the "double filter" of perception – the viewers' and mine (Gauthier, 2004, p. 23). The audience perceives the meaning of the story as given by the author of the film.

[22] Here I mean the real-life situation and setting I shoot. It might be at the protagonists' home, workplace, or elsewhere.

[23] At the same time, their judgement may be related to their assessment of the credibility of the author (director) as well (Urban, 2017).

[24] I mean this in the metaphorical, not literal, sense of the word.

[25] Restitution refers to the legal return of confiscated private property following the fall of the communist regime.

[26] When the dam was constructed at Liptovská Mara, the original building was taken apart and rebuilt again in the museum in Pribylina.

The source material they work with is part of the lived story, which was given meaning by the person who lived it (Třeštíková, 2018). In narrating selves, the protagonists build on their past approached through their current understanding, feelings, and relations.[27] The author gives the film its meaning, and it might be completely different from what the protagonist had in mind. Because of this, the answer to the question of who owns the story is both conclusive and ambiguous.

A balancing act

In the end, many of the dilemmas affecting my different roles and how these engage with the multilayered practice of film-making practice fall within the domain of ethics. The relationship between director and protagonist concerns participation and power (Grimshaw, 2005). I am always anxious about how the protagonists will perceive my interpretation of their lives, and the meanings I have woven into their stories. As the work on a film progresses, and the main storyline takes shape, the internal pressure rises.

I had been friends with the main protagonists of *A Happy Man* long before the film production started. On a personal level, I don't want to put our relationship in jeopardy. As protagonists, they place their trust in me as the director; they unveil their intimacy and inner thoughts. The more they "give", the greater my obligation is (Třeštíková, 2018). Working on *A Happy Man*, this burdens me in two particular ways. First, my personal relationship with the protagonists might make them less cautious about how they behave in front of the camera. It makes them relaxed, more open, and possibly vulnerable. As a film-maker I rejoice, but my anthropological and personal selves want to warn and protect them. One particular time, there was a moment on the film set, when one of the protagonists was spontaneously doing something that would have cast his current living situation in a very particular (and possibly misleading) light. As we were shooting, I exchanged looks with my camera operator. It was apparent we were both thinking the same thing. That the scene could end up being funny, but might give the audience the wrong impression. We didn't stop shooting. Later on, when I was going through the rough-cut material, I talked it over with my editor and I expressed my doubts. He disagreed. *"Leave that kind of decision for the editing room. Then you can decide what to get rid of and what to keep. If you don't capture something in the first place, you can never get it back. It's lost forever."* On one hand, he was absolutely right. On the other, the obligation to protect the protagonist's dignity came to the forefront.

Second, the protagonists are particularly vulnerable given their living situation, being a "non-conformist" family with a transgender parent. I have to be mindful of the way I represent them. Who has a legitimate claim to represent others and elaborate on their problems (Hlinčíková, 2016, p. 32)? I have high regard for the lives and perspectives of my non-binary partners in the film-making process. I still need to learn a lot about their experiences, even though I have been focusing on this theme for quite a while as an anthropologist (G. Lutherová, 2016b). As a researcher and "ally" I understand that their experience is not mine and I am mindful of this throughout the whole process. As Anna

[27] They are also influenced by the idea of a life well-lived and a story well-told (Gullestad, 2004).

Grimshaw suggests, an ethical approach to film-making does not lie in the film-maker distancing themself from the protagonists, but in communicating with them as partners (G. Lutherová & Hlinčíková, 2016). It consists of "the constant negotiation, the giving and withholding of permission, and trust" (Grimshaw & Ravetz, 2005, p. 8). As a director, I put as many cards as possible on the table, regularly voicing my intentions. But in the end, the film is my representation of their story. It is not a reproduction, nor a precise reflection of their reality as they see it. As author, director, and anthropologist, I must embrace this and perform the balancing act over and over again (Barbash & Taylor, 1997, p. 48). This is the very essence of anthropological film-making. My first responsibility is to those who I engage with in this artistic/scientific practice. That should always take precedence over the lure of the story.

Conclusion

Visual anthropology has always been a discipline on the edge of anthropological practice. It remains so despite the increasing accessibility of audiovisual technologies and their ascent in our everyday lives (Banks & Morphy, 1999, G. Lutherová, 2016a). There are (and always have been) anthropologists who operate on the borders of artistic/scientific practice, forever looking for innovative ways to share their experience of looking at things through an anthropological perspective (Pandian, 2020). For me though, anthropological film-making has become an essential way of engaging with others through artistic/scientific practice.

As Banks puts it, anthropology in documentary film-making relies on the intention of the author (shaped by their expertise of anthropological knowledge and perspective), which is reflected in their particular way of approaching and solving the problems that emerge during film-making. Hence, the creative practice is guided by anthropological principles such as collaboration and holism. It results in a film that is characterized by its ethnographicness.[28] There are many ways in which ethnographicness might be attributed to a film; it is not, and nor should it be, an absolute concept (Banks, 1992).

From where I stand, anthropology cannot dominate over, nor be submissive to the storytelling. Rather, it must lead the author in finding their way to create the meaning of the story. Their focus should be on uncovering the experience that "makes possible a break from the confines of an individual life" (Pandian, 2020, p. 48–49), and connects us to one another. Film uses experience to express this, capturing the sensation of the living presence (Barbash & Taylor, 1997, p. 2). Many of us "do" anthropology to understand the lives of others, to understand their positions and perspectives and take part in their experience. Through anthropological film we might reach even further and invite the audience into the dialogue as well. Film is not just capable of giving a voice to others, but of engaging the audience in the story as well. By immersing themselves into the story, viewers can make it their own. Hence, they have a means of experiencing and understanding its ethnographic complexity, richness and depth (Banks, 2007).

All of this revolves around the author as the agent whose intention propels the anthropological film-making process into action. There are many situations where I (as

[28] Film-making could become a part of the wider process of scientific inquiry (but need not).

anthropologist, director, and author) have to make compromises with my different selves. Sometimes, my selves are dissonant and have to compromise with one another. As shown through the various situations and contexts in this paper, this need not be a disadvantage, as it shapes the way I approach my anthropological endeavors through film-making – it enriches my experience and gives it a new quality. It also gives my self-positioning a new meaning, as it is not a matter of mere labels, but a principal act of reflection that shapes my creative artistic/scientific practice.

…

Now let me bid you farewell since I have to go and put the children to bed.

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