

TRABALHO DE CAMPO - NOTAS PARA INICIANTES EM ANTROPOLOGIA

TRABAJO DE CAMPO - NOTAS PARA PRINCIPIANTES EN ANTROPOLOGÍA

FIELDWORK - NOTES FOR BEGINNERS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

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RESUMO: O objetivo deste artigo é trazer ao leitor/a algumas discussões que foram feitas na disciplina Trabalho de Campo, Ética, Subjetividade e Engajamento, ministrada pela professora doutora Miriam Pillar Grossi. As aulas aconteceram no curso de graduação em Antropologia da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) durante o segundo semestre do ano letivo de 2014. O objetivo aqui é compartilhar algumas importantes questões acerca de trabalho de campo com outros iniciantes na Antropologia. Desse modo, abordar-se-á a relação entre trabalho de campo e Antropologia, o uso do diário etnográfico e a realização de entrevistas, bem como reflexões acerca da escrita antropológica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Diário de campo. Entrevista. Anonimato. Antropólogo iniciante.

RESUMEN: El propósito de este artículo es llevar al lector algunas discusiones que se realizaron en el trabajo de campo, ética, subjetividad y compromiso, impartido por la profesora Miriam Pillar Grossi. Las clases se llevaron a cabo en el Curso de Antropología de la Universidad Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) durante el segundo semestre del año escolar 2014. El objetivo aquí es compartir algunas preguntas importantes sobre el trabajo de campo con otros principiantes en Antropología. Así, se abordará la relación entre el trabajo de campo y la antropología, el uso del diario etnográfico y las entrevistas, así como las reflexiones sobre la escritura antropológica.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Diario de campo. Entrevista. Anonimato. Antropólogo principiante.

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this article is to bring to the reader some discussions that were made in the Fieldwork, Ethics, Subjectivity and Engagement discipline, taught by Professor Miriam Pillar Grossi. The classes were held at the Anthropology Undergraduate Course at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) during the second semester of the 2014 school year. The goal here is to share some important questions about fieldwork with other beginners in Anthropology. Thus, the relationship between fieldwork and anthropology, the use of ethnographic diary and interviews, as well as reflections on anthropological writing will be addressed.

KEYWORDS: Field diary. Interview. Anonymity. Beginner anthropologist.

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Introduction

This article brings some discussions that were held during the second semester of 2014 in the optional subject of Fieldwork, Ethics, Subjectivity and Engagement. This subject was offered in the undergraduate course in Anthropology at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) by Professor Miriam Pillar Grossi and her trainee Anahí Guedes de Mello (PhD student in Social Anthropology). The notes contained here are, therefore, the result of decades of anthropological knowledge that Dr. Miriam Grossi acquired, as well as the contributions/reflections that were made in the classroom by her trainee teacher and my nineteen colleagues who also attended the discipline. It should be noted, however, that this text is my perception of the topics that were debated in class.

Two questions made the class of this discipline different from what is normally found in an anthropology class. The first is that our teaching intern is oralized deaf, which turned out to be a fantastic experience for us, as it required attention from simple questions that would go unnoticed if Anahí was not in the classroom: not talking with the hand over mouth and look at her when we were speaking out, for example, since she does lip reading. It was a learning of how to deal with difference (central point of anthropology) in practice, in the classroom. The second issue is that as an optional subject, students were from different stages of undergraduate degrees in Anthropology and Social Sciences. Even more interesting was the fact that several had already started different courses before reaching Anthropology, such as Philosophy and Cinema. Two students were graduated in Psychology. It is in this interdisciplinary context that I need to put myself in order to understand the purpose of this article.

Graduated in International Relations, I decided to take a postgraduate degree course in Social Anthropology: this is how my liminality began². I started attending undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Anthropology at UFSC in order to prepare for the master's degree selection process. But in the process, I am reminded all the time that I have no training in the field. That is, I don't have '*pedigree*'. This category - '*pedigree anthropologist*' - was told to me at a bar table after the end of a postgraduate course (this bar is very popular with college students because it is located very close to UFSC. It is usual that students and teachers gather there after the closure of events and subjects). Asked by me about his background, he who holds a

² The concept of liminality was coined by the British anthropologist Victor Turner and refers to a state of marginality in which one is no longer what one was before and not yet what one is going to be after, for example in rites of passage between boys in African groups. During these rites, young men are usually estranged from the rest of their group; these are often times of suffering and pain; This period marks the shift from childhood to adulthood. See Turner (2005).

doctorate in Social Anthropology, pompously answered: “a degree in Anthropology, a master's degree in Anthropology and now a doctorate in Anthropology. I have ‘*pedigree*’!”.

At other times, not only at the bar table, I was reminded that I don't have the '*pedigree*' (teachers often like to stress this point. A colleague, already in the master's degree course, was also surprised, in line from the University Restaurant, when he found out I'm not from Social Sciences). But what is '*pedigree*'? “It is a certificate of purebred animals [...] The pedigrees reveal detailed information about the animal's ancestral line, that is, about its origin”. Therefore, to be an anthropologist with '*pedigree*' you must have a degree in anthropology or social sciences. This rose to two important questions.

First, many of the most renowned anthropologists have not had initial academic training in the field. Franz Boas and Claude Lévi-Strauss, for example - major representatives of Culturalism and Structuralism, two classic theories of anthropology - came from other fields of knowledge. But it is true, at that time anthropology was still being founded. We can then give a more recent example: Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, a Luso-Brazilian anthropologist, former president of the ABA (Brazilian Association of Anthropology) and who is widely recognized for her work, had an initial degree in Mathematics.³

We can also draw on closer examples: about nine of the teachers of the Postgraduate Program in Social Anthropology at UFSC do not have original training in Social Sciences, but in History, Philosophy, Social Communication, Engineering, Music, Advertising and Advertising, and Architecture and Urbanism. Sílvia Coelho dos Santos, a fundamental name in regard to Anthropology at UFSC and in relation to indigenous ethnology in southern Brazil, had a degree in History, and only after graduation did a specialization in Anthropology at the Museu Nacional/RJ. What does that mean? This issue of initial training in anthropology needs to be relativized: excellent anthropologists have not had a degree in the field, just as having an undergraduate degree in this field is not synonymous with guaranteed academic success.

The second issue is that I need to expose this context in order to understand my place of speech. According to feminist Donna Haraway (1995), objectivity does not mean positivist distancing between the researcher and his object of study - which presupposed a scientific 'neutrality' - but rather the location of knowledge, that is, situated and embodied knowledge:

[...] objectivity reveals itself as something that concerns the specific and particular embodiment and not definitely, as something about the false vision that promises transcendence of all limits and responsibilities. The moral is

³ Clifford Geertz and Roy Wagner also turned to Anthropology only in postgraduation.

simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision (HARAWAY, 1995, p. 21).⁴

Thus, it is clear that the production of knowledge is not neutral. You have to assume the place you talk about, write about. My place at the moment is this: the liminality of those who come from another area of knowledge but intend to become an anthropologist. It is, therefore, thinking of this context of mine that I decided to make as the final work of the above mentioned discipline an article with some notes for beginners in Anthropology, keeping in mind, specifically, the subjects who come from other fields of knowledge in which the discussions about fieldwork are different or even non-existent. That is, I write to possible anthropologists who, like me, also do not have '*pedigree*'.

Fieldwork

When mentioning fieldwork in anthropology, one immediately thinks of Bronislaw Malinowski, the Polish anthropologist based in the United Kingdom. Malinowski was not the creator of this method, that is, he was not the first to realize it: before him Boas, Rivers, and even Morgan had made field incursions. However, it was Malinowski who first systematized how the anthropologist should put himself in the field, creating the 'participant observation' presented in the famous introduction of his *Western Pacific Argonauts* (1922). In order to know a group in depth - such as the Trobrianders, in the case of Malinowski - it would be necessary to spend a great deal of time living among them, away from other 'whites'. It was essential to get as much information as possible about the social organization of the group, but also to see how social relations actually took place in practice (there may be a difference between social rules and the way people live following or not these rules). The anthropologist should look at the 'imponderables of real life', i.e., the way food is prepared, the friendships and enmities that the natives had, etc. To this end, Malinowski says it is necessary to use a field diary, or ethnographic diary. In fact, to this day the use of the diary is still essential to fieldwork and so we will return to this point throughout the text. Another point stressed by Malinowski is that the anthropologist himself should learn the native language, so not to be dependent on interpreters and thus achieve the mentality of native speakers, that is, the way they think.

⁴ [...] a objetividade revela-se como algo que diz respeito à corporificação específica e particular e não definitivamente, como algo a respeito da falsa visão que promete transcendência de todos os limites e responsabilidades. A moral é simples: apenas a perspectiva parcial promete visão objetiva (HARAWAY, 1995, p. 21).

Of course, much has changed in the way of doing fieldwork since Malinowski was among the Trobrianders. At that time, anthropology was still restricted to research remote, exotic and supposedly isolated groups such as the Melanesian peoples. However, even today, many of Malinowski's propositions make sense, such as the importance of field diary, for example. Learning the native language as well: not necessarily a foreign language, but, for example, if you study some segment of your own society, the anthropologist must learn how to communicate among the members of that group, the jargon, slang, etc., as put by Gilberto Velho (1978).

In the article *A situação etnográfica: andar e ver*, Hélio Silva (2009) states that fieldwork is constituted by three synchronic phases: circulation in the field (standing/walking), observation in the field (see) and the version the anthropologist of what happened in the field (write). In order to be among his/her interlocutors, the anthropologist must seek his or her location in the field, a location thought out in relation to the social actors he/she observes. And it is through the 'walking' through the space in which the research takes place that the anthropologist finds himself, that is, acquires in that context a place and an identity. It is a path marked by interaction: "This interaction implies mutuality. In this action, the ethnographer suffers and exerts influence from/on others, affects and is affected" (SILVA, 2009, p. 179). The characteristic of interaction is also present in the field observation (the 'see'): "we are idiosyncratically observing a scene of which we are part. This involves, besides the relativity that subjectivity imposes on perception, the ability to include oneself as an external piece whose presence alters the scene" (SILVA, 2009, p. 179-180). It is because of this interactional mark that Helio Silva defines ethnography as a 'report' of a 'conflicting experience' of an 'observer' (SILVA, 2009, p. 187).

Before we focus on 'writing' in anthropology, a few comments about standing/walking/observing are necessary. The first point: If it is necessary to 'walk' and 'see' to do fieldwork, can't people who can't walk or who are blind be anthropologists?⁵

In order to answer the above question, we just need a few examples. The first refers to the Greek Margarita Xanthakou and the Brazilian José Augusto Laranjeira Sampaio, better known as Guga, both anthropologists and blind people. The other example is the classic book "The Chrysanthemum and the Sword" by the American anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1972). In this work, the author compares the US and Japanese personalities, but without doing fieldwork in Japan, that is, she was not in Asia. It was through films and books of literature, for

⁵ Perhaps this discussion would not have arisen during class if our teaching intern was not oralized deaf.

example, that Benedict analyzed how the Japanese personality differed from the American personality. This 'alternative' methodology, that is, research in which there was no geographical displacement and no 'walking', takes us to a second point: does anthropology necessarily need fieldwork?

It is precisely the privileged association usually made between fieldwork and anthropology that Emerson Giumbelli problematizes in his article “*Para além do 'trabalho de campo': reflexões supostamente malinowskianas*” (2002). The author states that much has changed in anthropology since Malinowski's time (as we explained above), but that the view that fieldwork is the preferred method in the area still seems hegemonic (GIUMBELLI, 2002, p. 92). Drawing on his own research experiences in the masters and doctorate programs, in which he did not carry out field work, the author states that there is no doubt that there are other methodologies for doing anthropology: “the volume and variety of research conducted within spaces and institutions related to anthropology that use (sometimes exclusively) historical sources and techniques other than participant observation leave no room for doubt” (GIUMBELLI, 2002, p. 92). Therefore, although not the only possible method of doing anthropological research, fieldwork is the hegemonic form and beginners without '*pedigree*' should have a solid knowledge of this methodology.

Two techniques are used recurrently when in the field: the ethnographic diary and interviews.

The diary is essential for field work:

[...] is the first support of the theoretical elaboration of a research. But it has the virtue of preserving visible the whole process of its elaboration. This may be secondary in another type of science; it is fundamental in a reflexive science like [Anthropology] (CALAVIA SÁEZ, 2013, p. 167).⁶

It should be written every day before bed, so that you do not forget any important details (if you leave it to write the next day, for example, some points may be forgotten):

The first method of work will be to start a travel journal where the work done during the day will be recorded every night; completed forms and collected objects will enter this diary consisting of an easy-to-read repertoire (MAUSS, 1993, p. 30).⁷

⁶ [...] é o primeiro suporte da elaboração teórica de uma pesquisa. Mas tem a virtude de preservar visível o processo todo de elaboração dela. Isso pode ser secundário em outro tipo de ciência; é fundamental em uma ciência reflexiva como [a Antropologia] (CALAVIA SÁEZ, 2013, p. 167).

⁷ O primeiro método de trabalho consistirá em iniciar um *diário de viagem* onde se anotarà, todas as noites, o trabalho realizado durante o dia; fichas preenchidas e objetos recolhidos entrarão neste diário que consistirá em um repertório fácil de consultar (MAUSS, 1993, p. 30).

The diary is not the same as the notebook. This should be small so that the anthropologist will always take it with him⁸. In it are written the most important points, the keywords, even when it is in the field. In the notebook you write what you are listening to, what you see, that is, what is happening. First, therefore, are written the most relevant points in the notebook. Afterwards, after returning from the field, the journal should be written about that day.

The diary is written discursively, that is, it is not just the most important topics, as in notebook. It should be divided into two parts: the left side and the right side. On the left are the subjective questions, what you do not want to make public, how you felt in the field, how you experienced the experience, whether you were emotional or not, etc. The right side is analytical, with more objective questions: we describe what we saw, the sequence in which the phenomena occurred, we begin to make the first theorizations and relate what was experienced with theories of others authors. So, on the right side theorizes about experience.

The novice in anthropology may ask: “why write the left side of the diary? The right side, of course, serves as a record of information and facilitates later in the writing of the anthropological text, but why write down how I felt in the field?” According to Miriam Grossi, the importance of writing the left side, thus to record our subjectivity is that “all knowledge involves us as a person. He speaks of our life, speaks of our experience”⁹. Moreover, as reported by Claudia Fonseca, writing the diary “is to be able to live the field once again, to re-live the emotion”¹⁰.

In technological times like today, the diary does not necessarily have to be a notebook; It can be done on the computer. However, it is still necessary to separate the “left” and the “right” part. This can be done through two columns, as if it were, in fact, an open notebook, or else what would be on the left side can be spelled out (italic, bold, other color) to mark the difference with the text on the right side.¹¹

Finally, in relation to the diary, it is essential to point out that there are two textual elements that are central: time and space. Space is the territory, it is what gives materiality to what is happening and needs to be described as thoroughly as possible; It is not enough to write that something happened in a 'classroom', it is necessary to describe, characterize that

⁸ Note that hardcover notebooks are preferable in order to facilitate writing in various situations during the course.

⁹ GROSSI, Miriam. **Trabalho de Campo, Ética, Subjetividade e Engajamento**. 2014.2. UFSC. Class notes.

¹⁰ FONSECA, Claudia. *Dueto Fronteiras da Etnografia: Hélio Silva e Claudia Fonseca*. In: **29ª Reunião Brasileira de Antropologia**, Natal/RN, 2014.

¹¹ A fim de uma discussão sobre as vantagens e desvantagens de se fazer o diário de campo no computador ver Calavia Sáez (2013, p. 165-166).

classroom. Why? Because categories of space are cultural, so if they are not well described, the reader who does not share the same sociability as the author may not understand what is reported. Just as the context of the space must be specified in the field journal, the time must also be well described: what was the day of the week? How was the weather? What was the season? Did the reported situation occur morning or night? At the time of research these data may seem irrelevant, however, once recorded can be used in the future, revealing new relationships and explanations/interpretations about what is being studied.

Conducting interviews is another very recurring technique when going on the field. And usually they are recorded via recorder¹². This object has the function of knowing what were the words that the interlocutor used, that is, it is recorded to not forget what was said: “we are in the field permanently fighting against forgetting” (SILVA, 2009, p. 182). But the device can also have another utility beyond the question of registration: to serve to give the researcher legitimacy, that is, it is an instrument that demonstrates that the person is in fact a researcher. In this way, the recorder is sometimes a gateway to talk to the individuals being studied or intended to study. However, it is up to the investigator to be aware of the specifics of his field, since occasionally, instead of facilitating, the device can be an impediment for the interlocutors to speak.

A relevant question is about the transcript of the interviews. It is important to perform the complete transcription so that the information is not lost (it is very laborious, but it must be transcribed in full, as audios can easily be damaged or technical problems, such as software incompatibility, etc.)¹³. It is the researcher who must do the transcriptions, after all, it is more work to correct them - when one pays for someone else to do the work than do it themselves. In addition, it is at this moment that this activity is taking place that the ideas about research come to light, the insights happen.

Professor Miriam Grossi, during her classes, gave us three tips about conducting interviews. The first is that she often goes on typing on her computer what the person is saying during the interview at the same time as the recording is done. So, just listen to the audio later and fill in what could not be typed, thus facilitating the work of transcription. The second tip is that the researcher should start saying goodbye, say that he or she will leave about thirty or forty minutes before the time you really want to leave, because that's moment - when you start saying thank you, implying that is gone and the interview is over - that the interlocutors usually say what matters most to the research. Finally, it is interesting to contact the interviewee a day or

¹² Or instruments that record audio, like most cell phones today.

¹³ Because the transcription process is laborious, it is prudent that the recordings are not too long.

two after the conversation, with the intention of knowing if he/she has reevaluated any information, if he/she has remembered any other facts, etc.

Now we need to return to the question of anthropological writing. For Geertz (1989), the anthropologist's job is precisely this: writing. It is also Geertz who proposes an approximation of Anthropology with Literature, an approach that, for Hélió Silva, is actually the founder of anthropological writing:

The ethnographic text, which suffered the influx of academic text, monograph, theses and dissertations, papers circulating in the academic universe, was also influenced by the novel, this genre that emerges contemporary from the very emergence of the great industrial cities of Europe (SILVA, 2009, 184).¹⁴

This twofold feature of the anthropological text - academic and literary - is perhaps what at first draws the attention of those who come from another field of knowledge. I clearly remember my first day of International Relations undergraduate class, when the professor doctor said, among other things, to us - 'freshman' - that after we graduated, we would do a masters and doctorate, from there we could have our own ideas and write them in the first person singular! Before that, it is written only in the third person plural, or even better, in the most impersonal way possible, without placing us in the text. In anthropology, on the other hand, it is usually written in the first person and, moreover, as a rule, the 'putting yourself in the text' is valued, that is, the evidence of subjectivity. So, this is my first academic text which I write in first person singular and make a point of showing my place of speech.

Because it is not an academic text in the conventional positivist way, there is a concern about aesthetics in anthropological writing. An example of this discussion is the book “*Ética e Estética na Antropologia*” (LEITE, 1998). In the chapter of this work entitled “*Trotsky e Travesti*”, Luiz Eduardo Soares reflects on what it is to write well. For him, the anthropological text should not follow the pattern of 'positivist purity', in which we would first know and then convey the findings, but neither can it be emotional overflow, i.e., maternal lap or psychoanalysis session. For Soares, the challenge for the anthropologist is not to write well or bad, beautiful or ugly.

The challenge is to construct our object by converting it into discursive material in order to reveal and communicate the meanings we have identified in research, whose intellectual/hermeneutic movement includes the creative dynamics of descriptive elaboration. In other words: ethnography is a task of

¹⁴ O texto etnográfico, que sofreu os influxos do texto acadêmico, da monografia, das teses e dissertações, *papers* que circulam no universo acadêmico, sofreu ainda a influência do romance, esse gênero que surge contemporâneo do próprio surgimento das grandes cidades industriais da Europa (SILVA, 2009, p. 184).

language, as well as being an undertaking of observation (LEITE, 1998, p. 69).¹⁵

Finally, we need to comment on another important point regarding writing: the issue of anonymity. This theme is discussed by Cláudia Fonseca in her article “Anonymity and the anthropological text” (2005). The author begins by stating that there was 'naturalized' the anonymity, automatically triggering it in all her texts: “Even in my research on prostitutes, I created names to replace their already invented 'battle names'” (FONSECA, 2005, p. 41). The anthropologist began to reflect on the matter, however, when one of her advisers refused to use fictitious names in her research on a *quilombola* community claiming rights. Soon after, says Fonseca, “a colleague from indigenous studies challenged a student who had changed the names of his informants from an MST settlement” (FONSECA, 2005, p. 42).

There are therefore times when the anthropologist can - or should, according to the contextual interpretation - keep the actual names of the interlocutors. The novice anthropologist without ‘*pedigree*’ needs to pay close attention to this subject in order to avoid ethical problems. When in doubt, it is best to opt for anonymity. As Claudia Fonseca puts it:

[...] there should be no single stance on the issue of anonymity in our texts. Today, anthropologists are increasingly engaging in extra-academic spaces where they have diverse styles of research and written text. [...] However, in the tension of the debate, I think it is important to remember that there is a certain ethnographic style in which there are good reasons to remain anonymous (FONSECA, 2005, p. 51).¹⁶

Final considerations

The purpose of this article was to bring some relevant questions about fieldwork in anthropology to beginners who, like me, also lack ‘*pedigree*’. We use several authors, such as Bronislaw Malinowski, Ruth Benedict, Gilberto Velho, Emerson Giumbelli, among others, to contextualize the fieldwork, as well as to question whether this is the only possible methodology in Anthropology. We also discuss the specificity of anthropological writing, sometimes distant from other forms of writing in the academic world.

¹⁵ O desafio é: construir nosso objeto, convertendo-o em material discursivo, de modo a revelar e comunicar os sentidos que identificamos na pesquisa, cujo movimento intelectual/hermenêutico inclui a dinâmica criativa da elaboração descritiva. Em outras palavras: a etnografia é uma tarefa da linguagem, além de ser um empreendimento de observação (LEITE, 1998, p. 69).

¹⁶ [...] não deve haver postura única frente à questão do anonimato em nossos textos. Hoje, os antropólogos estão se engajando cada vez mais em espaços extra acadêmicos onde lhes cabe estilos diversos de pesquisa e de texto escrito. [...] Entretanto, na tensão do debate, acho importante lembrar que existe determinado estilo etnográfico em que há bons motivos para manter o anonimato (FONSECA, 2005, p. 51).

Finally, I point out, again, that the intention in writing this article as a final paper for the discipline was to share my current speech location with other subjects who are in a similar situation: the academic liminality of those who do not come with a degree in Anthropology or Social Sciences, but intends to pursue a career in this area of knowledge.

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