

Ethnology

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Ethnology (a word deriving from a combination of the Greek *ethnos*, meaning “people,” and *logos*, meaning “knowledge”) focuses on the analysis of various cultures and cultural expressions, often within a national context. Among ethnologists, cultures are mainly viewed as sets of shared beliefs and practices that unify individuals and groups of people as well as separate them from other individuals and groups of people. In some countries, ethnology is merely regarded as a branch of anthropology, while in other countries it is considered an independent scientific discipline, often within the humanities. The latter strand of ethnology has emerged from its own traditions and gradually become more or less interwoven with anthropology, due to the two disciplines’ shared perspectives and methods, though it still maintains its habitus as well as specific perspectives and methods (Frykman 2012).

Origin and development over time and space

The development of ethnology runs parallel to the general development of the social sciences and humanities, dating back to processes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and in particular to philosophical movements such as the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Ideas of eighteenth-century philosophers were significantly influential in the progress of ethnology. One of them was Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), who argued against a uniform human culture and stressed that all nations should be mindful of their own significant cultural expressions. Another important impact on the development of ethnology was the National Romantic movement during the nineteenth century. It emerged both as a philosophical reaction against the progress of industrial society, stressing a nostalgia toward the endangered preindustrial society, and as a political necessity to categorize differences as well as similarities between the newly formed cultures (which were connected to the industrialization processes) and the residual cultures of preindustrial society. Brought together, these influences helped to form the outline of ethnology as a scientific discipline during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its focus was the study of cultural origins and expressions, as well as regional differences between groups of people within a nation.

Ethnology’s traditional focus on the formation and expression of cultures within a national context has cemented its continuing knowledge production. It has also allowed for perspectives and methods to vary depending on researchers’ local traditions, enabling them to be tailored to fit the specific circumstances and needs of individual countries and regions. As a direct effect, various parallel ethnological

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traditions and topics have been formed and developed across countries and regions over the years. It is therefore not possible to characterize a uniform and unison development and shaping of ethnology.

The remaining variations within the early twenty-first century's national and intranational ethnological approaches depend on several factors. The first is the extent to which the focus has been directed toward cultures and cultural expressions in the past or in a contemporary society. This in turn has led to a split focus between a more historically oriented and often traditionally implemented ethnology, and a more contemporary-oriented modern ethnology. This division of focus has gradually become less prominent as a more contemporary-oriented modern ethnology continues to apply a traditional historical perspective when studying cultures and cultural expressions, in order to identify processes over time and provide historical explanations for present cultural phenomenon. A second factor is the extent to which there has been a focus on material, social, and/or spiritual aspects of culture as well as the functional, experienced, or socially constructed aspects of culture. A third factor has been diverse expressions of culture (e.g., oral, textual, or visual). Finally, a local variety within contemporary ethnology may to some extent also be explained by the same flexibility that has gradually allowed ethnology to be influenced by anthropological methods and theories. This process has formed similar—if not consistent—theoretical extensions toward philosophy, history, sociology, and cultural geography across the various variants of ethnology. This in turn allows a definition of contemporary ethnology as an in-between scientific subject that comprises perspectives and methods from both the humanities and the social sciences—though, in practice, ethnologists have an interest in the study of individuals as both cultural and social beings. Despite these various influences, contemporary ethnology retains and continues to develop its traditional focus of cultures and cultural expressions as phenomena and fields of study (Hofer 1984; Voget 1975). Accordingly, this has inspired adjacent scientific subjects within the humanities and social sciences to adopt its perspectives and methods.

Ethnology's diverse and individually based concept of culture

Culture (a word deriving from the Latin word *cultura*, which refers to cultivation and tillage) has traditionally and popularly come to represent a mental evolutionary process whereby certain people consider themselves above nature and other people. The ethnological understanding and usage of culture has significantly taken a stance against this traditional conception, which deems culture to be disconnected from nature, evolutionary, primarily intellectual, essential, aesthetic, static, and homogeneous. Instead, the starting point among ethnologists is to regard culture as naturally flexible, asymmetric, performable, variegated, changing, and inconsistent. This approach to culture partly relates to the original focus of the discipline, highlighting various cultures with both similarities and differences through time and space as well as a variety of cultural expressions. It also partly mirrors more recent notions within ethnology of the difficulties of obtaining an overview of culture as a whole entity. This has resulted

in ethnologists preferring to aim their studies at cultural phenomena (rather than culture as a whole) in order to highlight the various aspects of cultures. Furthermore, an ethnological approach to culture comprises a deeply rooted interest in processes of cultural shaping—highlighting aspects of continuity and change—and also aims to capture and represent cultural beliefs and practices of both the present and the past.

Ethnologists since the 1970s have continued their predecessors' interest in capturing the cultural expressions of declining industrial societies. They have also shown an increased interest in studying emerging postindustrial societies' cultural expressions. Ethnology has come to be presented as a modern cultural and cultural heritage science, influential in the establishment of a diversified and inclusive concept of culture within academia and contemporary society.

The cultural focal point in ethnology is—in theory—a pluralistic and complex concept of culture. Cultures are seen as various sets of meanings among specific peoples, which ultimately shape their lives as well as their understandings of the world they live in. In practice, ethnologists have come to favor an approach toward culture that takes an individual perspective, with a key interest in how single ordinary individuals think and act in their everyday lives. This interest touches upon a pronounced social commitment among ethnologists to represent and give voice to vulnerable individuals on the margins of society. Here, individuals are primarily seen as active cultural beings. This implies that they are both shaped by and contributors in the shaping of cultures in their everyday lives. However, within ethnology, culture—viewed as a bidirectional phenomenon—is not merely regarded as an individual process. Much rather, ethnologists tend to regard it as something that occurs in collective social contexts—that is, single individuals are studied both in their own right and as members of various social groups.

Ethnology's focus on individuals as cultural beings implies a focus on culture as a connecting link between single individuals, who are united more or less consciously. This, according to ethnologists, creates a sense of cultural belonging and togetherness. Similar to the understanding and handling of the concept of society within the social sciences, an ethnological understanding and handling of the concept of culture involves aspects of both an individual orientation and collectively shared ideals and practices. In ethnology, such beliefs and practices are studied within various social contexts. These contexts include work as well as leisure, and such beliefs and practices are considered to generate various cultural unities that may be more or less separate from one another and more or less related to the social categories of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, generation, and so on. As a result, an ethnological study of culture comprises both micro and macro levels of culture and involves the interplay between various subcultures and more imminent cultural unities. In turn, this involves aspects of inclusion and exclusion, as well as power struggles within and among cultural formations.

As a result, ethnology has often been described as a discipline with diverse foci. This provides the possibility for ethnological studies to have relevance both for academia and for labor markets outside academia (e.g., archives, museums). Many ethnologists would argue that such disciplinary complexity mirrors the complexity of cultures themselves. However, it can also be said to mirror changes in disciplinary trends as well as a disciplinary interest in evolving cultural formations and cultural expressions. Despite these diversities within ethnology, it is still possible to point out some general foci

regarding ethnologists' study of cultures. These have been forged both through deeply rooted disciplinary traditions and through prominent interdisciplinary theories within the human and social sciences during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. These prominent theories include functionalism, structuralism, and phenomenology, in combination with an explicit social constructivist approach. This combination has become particularly influential in shaping a general theoretical framework for contemporary ethnology. It has resulted in a focus on functions and social structures as key aspects of the consideration of culture in ethnology but also in studies of how various processes are individually and collectively shaped and experienced. Furthermore, these aspects involve both tangible and intangible expressions of cultures, as well as spaces and social contexts in which cultures are formed and maintained. Though these aspects are presented separately in the discussion that follows, ethnologists usually combine them in order to capture the diversity of culture (Bendix and Sandberg 2014; Kockel, Craith, and Frykman 2012).

Norms, habits, and folklore

Ethnology's interest in the diverse forms, meanings, and entities of cultures involves the ideational aspects that permeate those cultures. This has naturally resulted in a focus on norms and values. Ethnologists study how these norms and values are converted to shared beliefs, ideals, and needs and also embodied in social interactions and situations (i.e., in the collective behavior patterns that are salient in specific sociocultural contexts). When doing so, ethnologists may analyze the extent to which norms and values within cultures are inherited or more recently formed. They may also examine how these traditional and more contemporary social guidelines are transformed into collective customs that are formed on ideas of acceptable and nonacceptable habits. Furthermore, ethnologists ask how norms and values organize people's everyday lives through unwritten rules that determine sociocultural relations as well as secular rites that mark transitions between sociocultural and spatial contexts (e.g., weekday and weekend, work and leisure).

When ethnologists study the production and dispersal of norms and values in time and space, they usually consider specific aspects of cultural practices. Such studies may involve written accounts, oral communications, and bodily performances of societies that form part of their folklore and folk poetry. Ethnology's focus on the cultural norms and values of societies, reflected through folklore, are deeply rooted within the discipline. Folklore has become a well-integrated part of the discipline as a whole, though its prominence as a perspective varies across anthropology's diverse national and local designs. In addition, folklore studies in ethnology have evolved to be interdisciplinary and to involve several disciplines within the human sciences (e.g., linguistics and religion studies), with shared theoretical and methodological approaches.

The ideas of the nineteenth-century British antiquarian William Thoms became influential in the progress of folklore studies within ethnology. Throughout his work, Thoms examined a set of collective cultural expressions of anonymous national authors, outlining how these expressions had been shaped and widely mediated nationally

through oral communications from generation to generation. This, according to Thoms, qualified them as remnants of old-established and authentic intangible cultural expressions of their respective nations.

Such beliefs were well aligned with the ambitions of early ethnologists. Ethnology's focus on folklore, particularly during the initial stage of the discipline's development but to some extent also later, would be directed toward deep comparative studies of the intangible expressions of various cultural contexts within a nation. Within the national context, similarities and differences were observed in relation to geographical locations and changes over time. Furthermore, as to the aspects of space and time, ethnologists' main focus was directed toward the folklore formed and/or spread in preindustrial rural societies. Ethnological folklore-oriented analyses of rural society have involved the identification and organization of various typologies—such as fairy tales, legends, myths, riddles, proverbs, and jokes—beside an interest in tracking origins and examining the dispersal of cultural phenomena. From the mid-twentieth century onward, ethnological studies of past folklore expressions have often targeted collectively shared norms and values connected with cultural notions of death, religion, and magic. These studies have drawn on functionalism and structuralism. They also stress collective and individual folklore variations, in terms of both content and form, through common techniques and performances (e.g., singing and dancing). In addition, they highlight the processes through which the function of folklore is transformed over time, looking at the differences between past and contemporary societies (Bendix and Hasan-Rokem 2012).

This ethnological approach has gradually developed to create a diverse and multi-functional sense of folklore that also applies to the folklore of contemporary society, covering modern myths (e.g., urban legends), proverbs, and jokes. It involves an interest in the shaping and spreading of contemporary folklore within new sociocultural contexts (e.g., communications media and social media). Ethnologists examine how contemporary folklore reflects the norms and values of modern society and also how folklore provides means for the organization of everyday life in a changing world. In addition, they are interested in the expression of folklore within specific social groups and in how such expressions are linked to the social categories of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and so on. They are further interested in how folklore is ascribed functions, such as increased self-esteem and counterpower among marginalized and often stigmatized groups in society (see Abrahams 1970; Handoo and Kvideland 1999). Formerly overlooked expressions (e.g., satirical drawings, graffiti, martial arts, and pop music) are also included in folklore studies within contemporary ethnology (see Green 1997).

Materiality

The ethnological focus on the various expressions of cultures through time and space includes a deeply rooted interest in their tangible aspects. Similar to ethnologists' interest in the intangible aspects of cultures, the development of a materiality perspective within the discipline includes a redirection in terms of time and spatiality. Traditionally, ethnologists have primarily focused on the material culture of preindustrial and

(later on) early industrial societies, targeting regional similarities and differences over time. The focus has been on the materiality of both work and leisure time, which are connected to how societies are shaped by types of production (e.g., agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishing, and early industrial production). This focus comprises buildings as well as utility objects and more decorative objects (e.g., folk art made of wood, metal, cloth, clay, paper, etc.).

Gradually, the ethnological focus on the tangible expressions of cultures has developed from a primary focus on the functional and economic aspects of materiality to include more prominent studies of relations between objects and individuals. This comprises an interest in the individuals behind the objects, who are viewed as creators in addition to users. By extension, based on the function and design of objects, ethnological studies reconstruct the economic, social, and cultural conditions as well as the power relations in the preindustrial and industrial societies that generated these items (see Jones 1975). Such studies aim to uncover an object's explicit and hidden information about the social class, profession, gender, age, religion, and ethnicity of its creators or users within both majority and minority groups in societies (minority groups can include indigenous people, immigrants, and migrant workers). These studies pay attention to how the object under consideration marks a transition in time and place (e.g., between work and leisure time or between the profane and the sacred contexts of everyday life).

From the same starting point—examining material objects as mirrors of people's everyday lives and social relationships—ethnologists have embraced contemporary society's diverse material expressions and continuing use of traditional objects, considering them in relation to both work and leisure. However, in doing so, they usually aim to reach beyond merely capturing social categories and sociocultural demarcations. They also consider the shifting and sometimes conflicting norms and values that characterize contemporary relations between individuals and objects. When studying the so-called consumption cultures in late modern consumer society, ethnologists highlight widespread ideals and needs connected to the use of technologically advanced and highly designed objects, as well as parallel processes of nostalgic consumption of the materiality of past societies. When ethnologists analyze people's beliefs and practices regarding consumption, they provide knowledge not only of the expectations and needs of individuals and social groups but also of how these are forged by possibilities and limitations and by commercial and political forces. By aiming to uncover the meanings and symbols within seemingly mute objects in various spatial and temporal contexts, ethnology demonstrates how tangible expressions of culture involve intangible aspects, in the form of ideas and experiences that permeate the diverse materiality that people relate to (Glassie 1999). The same principle applies to another type of materiality that ethnology has traditionally focused on: the spatiality of cultures.

Place as a cultural locality and boundary marker

Place is a central aspect in ethnological studies of cultures. Among ethnologists, it is viewed partly as a physical demarcation between different cultures and partly as

the starting point from which diverse cultural expressions take shape and form. By tradition, ethnology uses a triangular spatial focus in this area, studying the cause and effect between nations' overall spatiality, major regions, and local areas. As a result of the increasing globalization of society, this focus is no longer triangular and has instead become fourfold. Nowadays, spatial study also involves the notion of a connecting international spatiality, which both has an effect and is affected by the other forms of spatiality.

Over the course of ethnology's development, successive generations of ethnologists—with their varying political and ideological interests—have mainly focused on the local level of spatiality. Earlier generations of ethnologists mainly focused on cultures in rural areas, with a particular interest in the traditionally idealized preindustrial peasant society. In reality, this meant a rather vague and extensible location of the “peasant society” that covered wide geographical areas rather than definable settlements. In the mid-twentieth century, the spatial perspective was influenced by the widespread local community studies that were undertaken within anthropology at that time. The result was a corresponding focus among ethnologists that was directed toward relatively transparent rural villages and industrial small towns (where a considerable proportion of the population still lived). In reaction to the increasingly globalized and urbanized ways of living of postindustrial society, these local community studies aimed at preservation, similarly to earlier studies of the peasant society.

Retrospectively, such depictions of small communities have been criticized among ethnologists for appearing too homogeneous and demarcated. In contemporary ethnology, communities, regardless of size, are not regarded as static, isolated phenomena. Instead, the prominent view is that these communities interact with each other and are shaped and reshaped continuously. At a minimum, this ought to occur when people move into and out of them. Hence, the local community in contemporary ethnology appears to be demarcated and boundless; foreseeable and unforeseeable. This also means that local communities are regarded as part of regional, national, and global contexts.

The recognition among modern ethnologists that people belong to larger sociocultural spatial contexts does not contradict the view that beliefs and practices are shaped in a smaller and more comprehensible context. The local community is, therefore, closely related to the human experience, something that can be perceived to exist here and nowhere else. For this reason, the local community has not lost its significance as a key scientific analytical site in ethnology, and it has increasingly been perceived as a place that is shared (see Agnidakis 2013). An ethnological analysis of the human experience of space seems therefore equally applicable across societal levels (e.g., the world, the nation, the region, the small town, and the village) as well as across the spatial units that more directly surround individuals' everyday lives (e.g., their living environment, workplace, leisure areas, etc.). Included among the spatial units of sociocultural activities that interest contemporary ethnologists is the internet, which is viewed as both a mirror of the conditions in physical spatial units and a different kind of spatiality with its own opportunities and limitations.

When ethnologists study spatiality, they focus on the cultural beliefs and practices of specific places, in particular how people collectively and individually imagine places

and what they do within and outside sites. In a viewpoint inspired by human geography and philosophy, places are regarded within ethnology as sociocultural constructions as well as platforms for lived experiences. At the same time, the disciplinary tradition has given rise to an interest in the processes that point to both spatial continuity and change. On that basis, ethnologists examine how individuals, as sociocultural beings, create order in places as they jointly and individually shape their everyday lives. Such examinations include researching how they establish boundary markers at and between places that are manifested as physical entities, in terms of geographical boundaries between places of various kinds. In addition, they include the study of symbolic aspects through the identification of similarities and differences between types of places, and how these are ascribed diverse meanings. These types of places include nations; outside and inside spaces; areas for dwelling, working, and leisure; and microlevel places—one's own place and the places of others (Kockel 2009).

Ethnologists examine how places can be transformed into venues of power struggles between different groups and individuals. Such struggles are associated with how place is used in relation to acceptance of or the challenging of spatial boundaries. Ethnologists also have an interest in a particular kind of challenge to spatial boundaries that characterizes the early twenty-first century; this challenge may or may not involve conflict and concerns people's movements between locations as a result of political, work-related, and/or industrial factors. It involves various groups (e.g., fugitives, migrant workers, and tourists). Ethnologists pay attention to how these groups are both given and take places and how, in the process, they contribute to the reshaping of those places, despite their limited experience of them (see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998).

Ethnological studies of people's spatial beliefs and practices comprise the human relationship with place, including both real places and imaginary places surrounded by ideals, needs, and dreams. Ethnologists aim to show not only how individuals, as sociocultural beings, exist in places but also how places in turn exist in them: place both is formed by people and forms them.

Identity as a basis for the shaping and experience of cultures

A common denominator of the perspective on culture that dominates in ethnology is that all cultures in one way or another stress issues of identity. Within ethnology, identity has therefore come to be seen as a kind of overarching focus in the study of culture, and is often regarded as a basis for cultural creation, in which people—as active sociocultural beings—shape their lives and experiences. Studies of identity in earlier ethnology were usually subsumed into studies of regional variations in culture within nations. In more recent studies, and as an effect of general trends within anthropology, identity has become a significant analytical tool used to highlight the complexities in the various cultural contexts of which human individuals are a part. This has led contemporary ethnologists to assume that cultural identities undergo constant shaping and reshaping, forming hybrids that include relations to sociocultural contexts, social categories (e.g., gender, age, sexuality, social class, occupation, and ethnicity), ideas, objects, and spatial

units that are both experienced and socially created, both conscious and unconscious, both elective and enforced, and both persistent and situational (see Baskar 2008).

By further focusing on the processes and mechanisms of cultural identity making, looking at both individual and collective levels, ethnologists examine the interplay between two aspects: first, individuals' diverse identities, regarded as personally experienced, bodily performed, and assigned by others, and, second, individual and collective identities (e.g., national identities, class identities, and professional identities) that are shaped through various types of socialization practices, which often include rites and transformations. Both aspects in turn allow ethnologists to analyze how identities contribute to the forging of cultural belonging and communality—that is, how identities partly raise self-awareness among individuals in terms of who one is and what cultural contexts one relates to, and also how identities partly provide a collectively shared awareness of similarities and differences in regard to how others forge a sense of belonging (or not) to the same cultural contexts.

Notions among ethnologists regarding cultural identity as being shaped through individual, collective, and contrastive processes are thought to reflect tensions between the individual–collective relation, which permeates cultures at large and inhabits both inclusive (i.e., shared features of a group) and exclusive (i.e., differences from another group) elements. These involve language, customs, and traditions as well as collective memories. All of these aspects separate one sociocultural context from another, whether that context is a nation or a smaller community (e.g., subcultures or ethnic-minority groups). When ethnologists identify elements of inclusion and exclusion in the cultural-identity-making processes of communities, they elucidate not merely social structures but also fundamental human needs. This in turn raises aspirations among ethnologists to advocate for a variety of representations of identity formation within a nation, both more widespread cultural identities and the more marginalized ones (see Eriksen 2014; Frykman and Löfgren 1987). The fact that mechanisms of belonging and solidarity are not only shaped over time but also challenged by the changing times is something that is increasingly occupying contemporary ethnologists in the light of prevailing globalization and urbanization processes. Here ethnology draws attention to consequences in terms of (for example) intercultural encounters between traditional and newly shaped beliefs and practices, due to increased dissemination of information and increased mobility. Both traditional and contemporary cultural expressions shape cultural identities within late modern societies. As an effect, ethnological studies of national and locally shaped identities are increasingly focusing on the analysis of transnational and translocal identities. This in turn widens the ethnological understanding of cultural formations within a nation (see Roth and Roth 1999).

General methodological approaches

In order to study cultural phenomena as socially constructed and individually perceived (i.e., to explain the cause and effect of these phenomena), ethnologists usually conduct a form of cultural analysis. This comprises not only various and often

combined theoretical perspectives on culture (involving social positions, customs, materiality, spatiality, and identities) but also various and often combined methods to study these (see Craith, Kockel, and Jöhler 2008). Through cultural analysis, ethnologists can provide knowledge of what individuals, seen as active cultural beings, individually and in social interaction do and how they do it. This uncovers their beliefs and practices and also problematizes their use of materiality and symbols, so as to ultimately be able to say something about the complex cultural context in which people exist and with which they identify. In other words, when ethnologists conduct cultural analysis, they aim at the micro level of societies, in order to cover the individual shaping and experience of culture. They are also able to provide knowledge of the macro level through the micro level, covering the meta-individual formations and notions of culture. Similarly, ethnological analysis of culture aims at the mundane and trivial cultural expressions in the everyday lives of individuals. Overall, it usually touches the informal and unexpected aspects of culture that other socioculturally oriented disciplines (e.g., sociologists, geographers, and historians) usually overlook. Thereby, ethnology can be said to fill these gaps of knowledge regarding cultures. An ethnologically conducted cultural analysis usually involves a set of methodological tools accumulated and developed through interdisciplinary exchange and taking inspiration from more general anthropology as well as sociology, literature studies, and psychology. In addition, the methods are largely based on ethnology's own disciplinary traditions.

The methods in ethnology that originate in its early years can partly be explained by the fact that it has largely been shaped as an empirical rather than a theoretical discipline, due to its focus on collecting various types of data about the origin of cultures, their intangible and tangible expressions, and life forms. In the past as well as the present, this has mainly involved three parallel methodological approaches to providing ethnological sources. Together they comprise written, object-based, and verbal as well as bodily performed information about socially constructed and perceived cultures through (1) textual studies, including various types of recorded unpublished documents (e.g., inventories, letters, and diaries), printed books and other texts (e.g., pamphlets, sagas, and folk poetry), and more recently newspapers and magazines; (2) studies of various types of artifacts and structures; and (3) ethnographic fieldwork, including various types of interviews and participant observation. The third methodology involves various degrees of participation in combination with various degrees of observation. All are used in order to capture cultural beliefs and practices as well as to provide information on the interplay between those beliefs and practices.

These methods may be implemented separately or in combination, depending on the researcher's objectives. As an example, textual studies and materials studies, conducted in archives and museums, can provide information on historical processes or contextualizing cultural phenomena, while ethnographic fieldwork can provide detailed and nuanced information on how these cultural phenomena are applied in the everyday lives of individuals. Consequently, orally communicated data, through ethnographic fieldwork, also contribute to the collection of text- and object-based data within folk-culture-oriented museums and archives. Such data provide contextual understandings that can be used by contemporary and future ethnological studies as well as other culture-related research.

Fieldwork in ethnology is primarily a pragmatic act, due to the lack of preexisting data pertaining to the topics ethnologists take an interest in. The material has to be created by ethnologists themselves. Fieldwork has resulted in the collection of extensive ethnological data of significant historical and contextual value relating to both past and contemporary folk culture. Although ethnographic fieldwork has deep roots, its forms and contents have changed in line with shifting theoretical framework and objects of study. In the study of rural folk cultures in early ethnology, it was not necessarily the ethnologists who conducted fieldwork. This task was rather carried out by amateurs (e.g., students, elementary school teachers, priests, and local historians), who also functioned as informants, each representing a local community. The tradition of working with informants partly still exists within ethnology through the continuous use of surveys, not least among ethnologists working in cultural archives and museums. Nowadays, ethnologically designed surveys are aimed at covering a greater variety of informants than was previously the case.

Ethnologists today, to a greater extent than previously, are interested in organizing, implementing, and processing fieldwork data. This has resulted in advanced methods for conducting interviews and observations (Ehn, Löfgren, and Wilk 2016). Such methods have primarily focused on in-depth, conversational interviews and participant observation, in order to best capture how complex cultural phenomena have an effect on people's everyday lives. Conversational interviews are valued among ethnologists for their ability to provide the small narratives of cultures. These contain important information regarding people's relationships to things, places, and social contexts, in addition to highlighting cultural beliefs and practices. In addition, participant observation allows ethnologists to reside and take part in the diverse sociocultural contexts and spatial units they wish to study in order to better capture nuances and variations. Contemporary methodologies within ethnology have also been adjusted to the challenges of multisited spatial units within ethnography, where contemporary cultural formations and activities are created and performed. This especially includes the internet, regarded among contemporary ethnologists as an important interactive medium of cultural formation, concerning which ethnography provides a valuable combination of interactive textual, image, and audio analysis.

Overall, the methodological development of fieldwork within contemporary ethnology is closely connected to an increasingly widespread hermeneutic phenomenologically oriented ambition within the discipline, also acknowledged in anthropology. This has amounted to a greater understanding of the researcher's relationship to the object of study (i.e., the ethnologist's own presence and participation in the cultural context in which their informants exist). It has also brought greater ethical awareness of the problems attached to ethnologists' inevitable impact on their objects of study and how to deal with those problems. Both of these aspects seem particularly important in relation to ethnology's traditional focus on nationally situated cultural processes, as they take place in the spatial units and cultural contexts that ethnologists themselves are part of. On the one hand, this challenges ethnologists to distance themselves from their own culturally ingrained perspectives, in order to be able to question habituated cultural meanings and discover their cultural causes and effects. On the other hand, it is seen as

advantageous for ethnologists to use their prior understanding of national cultures as a contextual point of entrance to their cultural fields of interest.

SEE ALSO: Anthropology: Scope of the Discipline; Archaeological Approaches in Anthropology; Bastian, Adolf (1826–1905); Baumann, Hermann (1902–72); Built Environment; Comparison; Conception Beliefs; Cultural Relativism; Culture, Concept of; Culture, Cumulative; Essentialism; Ethnography; Ethnography, Multisited; Evolutionism; Fiction, Anthropological Themes in; Fieldwork; France, Anthropology in; Functionalism; Geertz, Clifford (1926–2006); Germany, Anthropology in; Globalization; Glocalization; Griaule, Marcel (1898–1956); Heritage; Home; Interculturality; Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1908–2009); Material Culture; Memory; Migration; Multiculturalism; Music and Language; Myth; Narrative and Storytelling; Nationalism; Netherlands, Anthropology in the; Oral Cultures; Oral Literatures; Pilgrimage; Poland, Anthropology in; Popular Culture, Anthropological Perspectives on; Power, Anthropological Approaches to; Reflexivity; Ritual; Rouch, Jean (1917–2004); Sense of Place; Sweden, Anthropology in; Symbolic Culture, Origins of; Transnationalism; United States, Anthropology in; Virtual Worlds; Wolf, Eric (1923–99); Worldviews

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