



Volume 3, Issue 1 (Spring/Summer 2020)

Can you hear me?

Melissa Nolas and Chrisos Varvantakis

Keywords: Lockdown, Covid19, Research Methods,

Recommended Citation:

Nolas, M., and Varvantakis, C. (2020). 'Can you hear me?', *entanglements*, 3(1):1-6



Licensing

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

[Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

We started drafting this editorial in the middle of lockdown, at snail's pace, as children and toddlers, out of school and out of nurseries, bounced around and climbed the walls behind us, punctuating anything that might resemble thinking with lyrical sounds, deadpan jokes, and the repeated requests for water bottles to be filled.

We put the editorial 'to bed' in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, a 46-year-old African American man from Minneapolis, Minnesota, who was killed when a white police officer kneeling on his neck continuously for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, as he repeated the words 'I can't breathe' to deaf ears.

The last few months have forced many of us, with access to the internet, online for work, for entertainment, for socializing, for mourning, for protest.

Undoubtedly, new possibilities have been forged with online communication enabling, for example, remote participation in events that would not have been possible for many (e.g. see [Diamantis 2020](#) on the experience of running the Greek node of the largely online conference [Distribute 2020](#) or Julian Henriques and colleagues' [Sound System Outernational](#) which this year was run [virtually and online](#)).

At the same time existing inequalities are made more visible: structural inequalities pertaining to digital access and gendered workloads persist. For example, as this relates to the academic and research communities many of us inhabit, it is [reported](#) that women make up only one third of authors with published research on Covid19 during the last six months and their representation is lower still for first or last author.

Technology has kept us together, while we are all kept apart but without quite cutting through the chasm of touch or flattening the inequalities that pervade most aspects of our lives to greater and lesser extents.

As lockdown lifts in various parts of the world we are left to negotiate the re-establishment of touch, proximity and distance in their various guises: How far is close or far enough? One, one and a half, or two metres? One, one and a half or twice as more recognition and remuneration for the same job?

This time has also been characterised by gestures of audio and visual solidarity, of resistance and of surveillance.

Music, singing and claps have sometimes filled the spaces between buildings in densely built up urban areas. The London skyline has also been filled with the sound of helicopters overhead, metal birds over protesters.

If we close our eyes to remember this period of pandemic and protest we might be left with the following imprints on our retinas



the words 'andrà tutto bene' or 'stay safe' offering the obvious contradiction: everything is not alright for everyone, not everyone is safe. And this has got to change. Black Lives Matter.

There are so many things today, that 'would have been' about something else. Under 'different circumstances'. In another time. But this is our time, and, as Chris Marker, a filmmaker we admire has put it, 'you don't choose your time' (2007, 7).

We, like so many others, have watched and continue to watch. Shaken by the global death toll, infuriated by the underfunding of our health care systems, angered by the continued denial of systemic racism and inequalities that means that black and brown bodies suffer worse ill-health and continue to be discriminated against.

While the urge to escape, to bury heads, under pillows and duvet covers, in tubs of ice-cream, in large glasses of gin, is strong, and sometimes doing these things can be acts of rest and self-care; ultimately, and as Michael Rosen puts it, a children's author and poet we also admire dearly, and who is currently recovering from Covid19 after 72 days in intensive care: ['we can't go over it, we can't go under it/oh no! We got to go through it'](#).

And so we continue. And we try to do so with the same care with which we set up entanglements, addressing our own blind spots along the way. 'The powers of care,' as Ellie Walton reminds us, can also be 'a force of resilience', transgression and transformation, 'a burst of light' (Walton 2020).

And so, another (beautiful, we feel) issue of entanglements is at hand, to accompany us through these times. From Scale-Collapsing methods in ethnography (Morgan) to Ultrashort films in India (Verstappen), from human-animal transformations (Carlyle) to voice-over and silence (Dorsett), from an exploration of the crossroads between graphic art, poetry and ethnography (Sacks), to our own experiments with poly-vocal reviews (Kyriazidou, Vivod, Esposito, Hundley, Horn), this is then another, we hope, thought-provoking issue for you all.

In terms of the immediate future, we will, in July, be convening a panel on multimodal ethnography at the forthcoming, 16th *European Association of Social Anthropologists* biennial conference - which is taking place online. The panel is titled "[Languages of entanglement: mapping the ethnographic modes and media](#)" and is a response to the

burgeoning interest in multimodal research that we have seen in anthropology and elsewhere, and which we have been exploring through the pages of this journal over the last couple of years.

The multimodal, visual, aural, inventive, artistic, and experimental practices that take place in the service of knowledge creation within and beyond the academy, call for a new scholarship and pedagogical languages and practices to support their flourishing. While this field of research and practice has a long and diverse history, it is currently undergoing something of a 'coming of age' and in the panel we hope, together with others, to explore this liminal space and its tropes.

Amongst other things, we are looking forward to discussing and debating a range of topics relating to the role of the following in multimedia and multimodal anthropological compositions: the role of production, curation and re-presentation; the appreciation, re-view and feedback of audio-visual compositions; the sites of knowledge and power; the collaborative, transformative, and unfolding temporalities of production; audiences, publics, and other collectivities. The panel will be 'carbon neutral'. It was so by design. It is so now by necessity.

Finally, and on the back of the response to our call for contributions to the panel, as well as taking our queue from the growing audience of the journal, we have decided to make an application for a more permanent network for multimodal ethnography within the EASA. We will be submitting our proposal for the establishment of the network within 2020 and to that end we invite anyone interested to participate/endorse the network, to express their interest by completing this [form](#). Please feel free to circulate this call and form to anyone you would think may be interested, and do get in touch if you have any additional ideas, queries or comments.

References

Diamantis, K. (2020) 'A Visual Anthropologists in Distribute 2020 Conference', [NAFA Network vol. 27.1 \(June 2020\)](#)

Marker, C. (2007) *Staring Back*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press

Rosen, M. (1989) *We're going on a bear hunt*. Walker Books.

Walton, E. (2020) 'Be safe, take care: on the matters of a feminist pandemic', *The European Sociologist*, Issue 45: Pandemic Impossibilities (2 June 2020) <https://www.europeansociologist.org/issue-45-pandemic-impossibilities-vol-1/gendering---be-safe-take-care-matters-feminist-pandemic>

Anti-racists resources

Like many white people we have more work to do in order to make explicit and to sustain anti-racist thinking and doing as it relates to this journal and the spheres of work and play we have control and influence over. We continue to do this work especially in relation to submissions, topics, and editorial board membership going forward. In the meantime, we have collated some of the many excellent multimedia and multimodal resources that have been circulated online, which we are also making our way through. Many are US centred and there has been much debate in the U.K., as well as in other parts of Europe, about raising similar debates as relevant to each country's context.

Anti-Racist reading list https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Fr4SHRS_aFIDkxhlaaJSMUW-oX9Vpxq3FNTZJfqcLg/edit

Anti-Racist Resources

<https://linktr.ee/antiracistresourcesuk>

Docplay 10 Documentaries To Watch About Race Instead Of Asking A Person Of Colour To Explain Things For You

<https://www.docplay.com/articles/10-documentaries-to-watch-about-race-instead-of-asking-a-person-of-colour-to-explain-things-for-you/>

JSTOR Institutionalized Racism: A Syllabus

https://daily.jstor.org/institutionalized-racism-a-syllabus/?utm_campaign=generalmarketing&utm_content=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook

Rewire Essential listening: Podcasts on Race and Racism

<https://www.rewire.org/essential-listening-podcasts-on-race-and-racism/>

The Everygirl: 29 Movies, Shows, and Documentaries to Watch to Educate Yourself on Racial Injustice

<https://theeverygirl.com/movies-shows-documentaries-racial-injustice/>

The New Bridge Project: Black Lives Matter and Resources + How to Help
<https://thenewbridgeproject.com/news/black-lives-matter-resources-how-to-help/>

The Research Companion : Anti-Racist Resources
<https://theresearchcompanion.com/antiracistresources/>

Wbur Boston's NPR News Station - 5 Podcasts To Listen To If You Really Want To Know About Race In America
<https://www.wbur.org/artery/2020/06/05/podcasts-to-listen-to-about-race-america>

Dr Sevasti-Melissa Nolas is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Goldsmiths College, University of London. Melissa has an interdisciplinary background in the social sciences and has been carrying out multimodal ethnographic and other qualitative and action research since 2000 with a focus on the lived experiences and everyday lives of children, young people and women/mothers, and their relationship to public life, politics, activism and the state. You can read more about the Childhood Publics Research Programme and its various projects, [here](#). She co-founded and co-directs the [Children's Photography Archive](#).

ORCID: [0000-0001-6928-7001](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6928-7001)

Dr Christos Varvatakis is an anthropologist, working as researcher at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He has a BA in Sociology (University of Crete, Greece), an MA in Visual Anthropology (Goldsmiths, UK) and a PhD (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany). His research focuses on the intersections of childhood and public life, politics and urban environments, as well as on visual and multimodal research methodologies. He has carried out ethnographic research in Greece, India and Germany over the last 15 years. Christos is a founding member and the Head of Programming of Ethnofest, an international festival of ethnographic film held in Athens, Greece every year. **ORCID:** [0000-0003-0808-2795](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0808-2795)