

Script for EASA TAN Conference Dec 2021.

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What does it mean to teach anthropology today? In reflection of the questions of this conference, we would like to bring to the table the example of an anthropologically informed alliance of pedagogic projects – the Educere Alliance, which seeks to re-conceptualise teaching and learning by thinking through and with indigenous and community led projects.

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Educere Alliance

Educere - from the Latin meaning: to lead out with creative thought.

Woven Communities

Perform Research Project (France, UK And Spain)

Formabiap (Peru)

Rios De Encontro (Rivers Of Meeting)

The Promise Foundation (India)

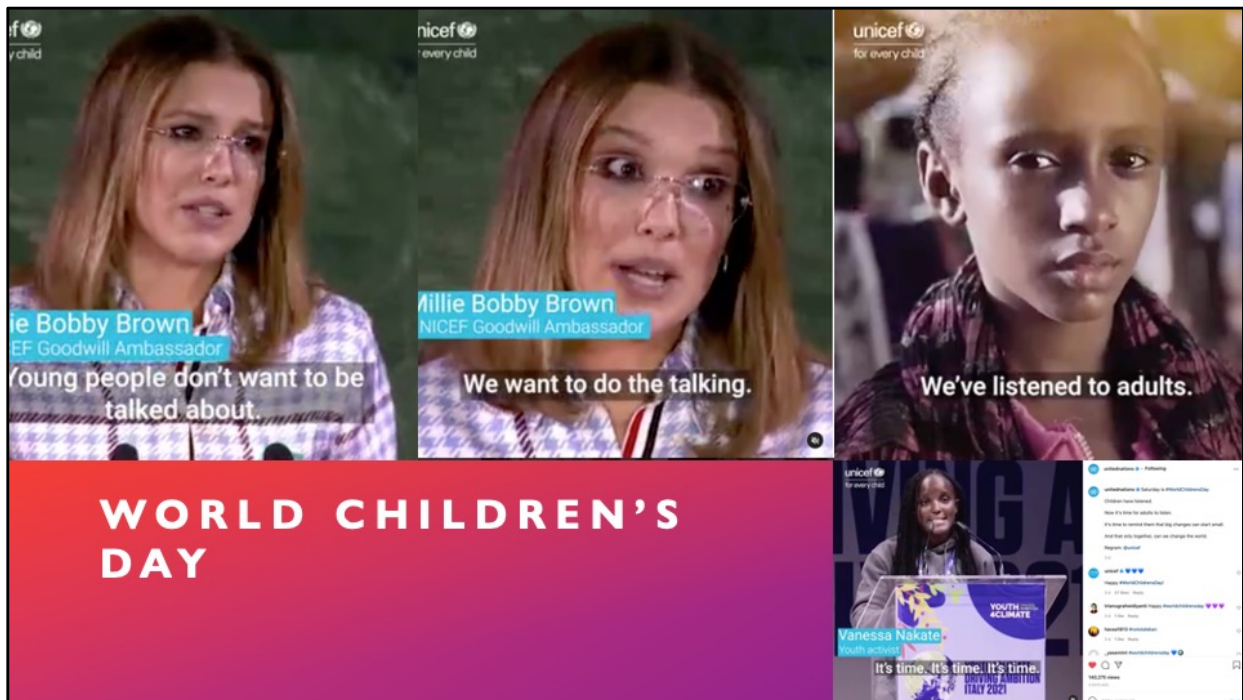
We would like to suggest, that one of the problems with anthropological teaching is the bifurcation between the anthropologist-in-the-field and anthropologist-in-the-classroom. These days anthropologists going into the field are trained and expected to take on a particular epistemic and affective subjectivity in the field – one that emphasises deep humility, epistemic and otherwise, intense listening and learning, continuous engagement with our positionality and an ability to be taught by others who are deemed to have greater knowledge and understanding. In 2019 Candea, drew the space that stands in contrast to the field to our attention. He said being in the field throws ‘the space behind the ethnographer, the commonplace conceptual shores from which she or he sailed out in the first place’(2019:280) into relief. The power of anthropology emerges when one moves out of one’s spaces; it is then that we can find eye-opening paths for the process of critical and transformative pedagogic creation. This is when we learn...so why is this not the technique of the classroom?



The ontological turn of recent decades has argued that interlocutors' worlds should not be reshaped into forms the anthropologist immediately understands. Often characterised as 'taking interlocutors seriously' the anthropological pursuit now centres on producing theoretical reflections *through* the worlds of others. We suggest that this inversion of researcher as expert should also be drawn into informing our classroom practices, thereby allowing the mainstream unidirectional teacher/learner dichotomy to become circular, blurred and porous, and in doing so destabilise our collective ontological assumptions.

One way in which we suggest one can bring the humility of the field into the classroom and subvert the hierarchy of educator as expert, is by learning the pedagogic practices of those who are often the subjects of anthropological knowledge making - indigenous and minority communities. In many communities across the world, we encounter pedagogic practices that challenged or disrupt the standard teaching practices expected of the classroom. This could, for example, take the form of teaching practices that deeply engage with embodied learning and practice, that take seriously the body as a tool for learning, such as practicing craft making, or learning to walk through forest landscapes. It could also take the form of pedagogies that centre questions of human moral landscapes, such as community,

togetherness, shared process, as key to the forms of and purposes for teaching and learning. This could also mean, and often does, teaching and learning modalities that take on a wholistic ontology which incorporates the natural world into ideas about what it means to learn and know. It could mean different approaches to temporality, where taking time to sit with questions or thoughts is privileged over getting through agenda items. Or it could mean highlighting different voices, where the voices of the youth or the elderly are seen as essential constituents of teaching and learning practices.



Other ways to rethink what appears self-evident is to disrupt or even dissolve the categories 'teacher' and 'learner' by interrogating where the responsibility for determining what another needs to know lies. It appears self-evident that adults should govern what youths need to learn. Simply put - Qualified elders know; kids need to learn, but can this axiom be challenged?

It was World Children's Day recently. The UN made a short vid to celebrate, using youth activists to send a message that they don't want to be talked at anymore – that they want to do the talking. They have listened to adults, been told how to behave and now it is time for adults to listen to them...to listen to the people who will be most affected by the future. This appears to be an emerging zeitgeist; rejecting current practice by youths' brave enough to challenge the established blah, blah, blah. In direct contrast to norms, these kids assume the identity teacher, and they place adults as learners.

From an ethnographic perspective, experts and teachers are not restricted to the educated, the elder, the trained, qualified or even the human – plant teachers, dream teachers, spirit teachers, non-human animal teachers are commonplace – Worldly practice already extends and problematise the identity 'teacher'. Similarly, numerous

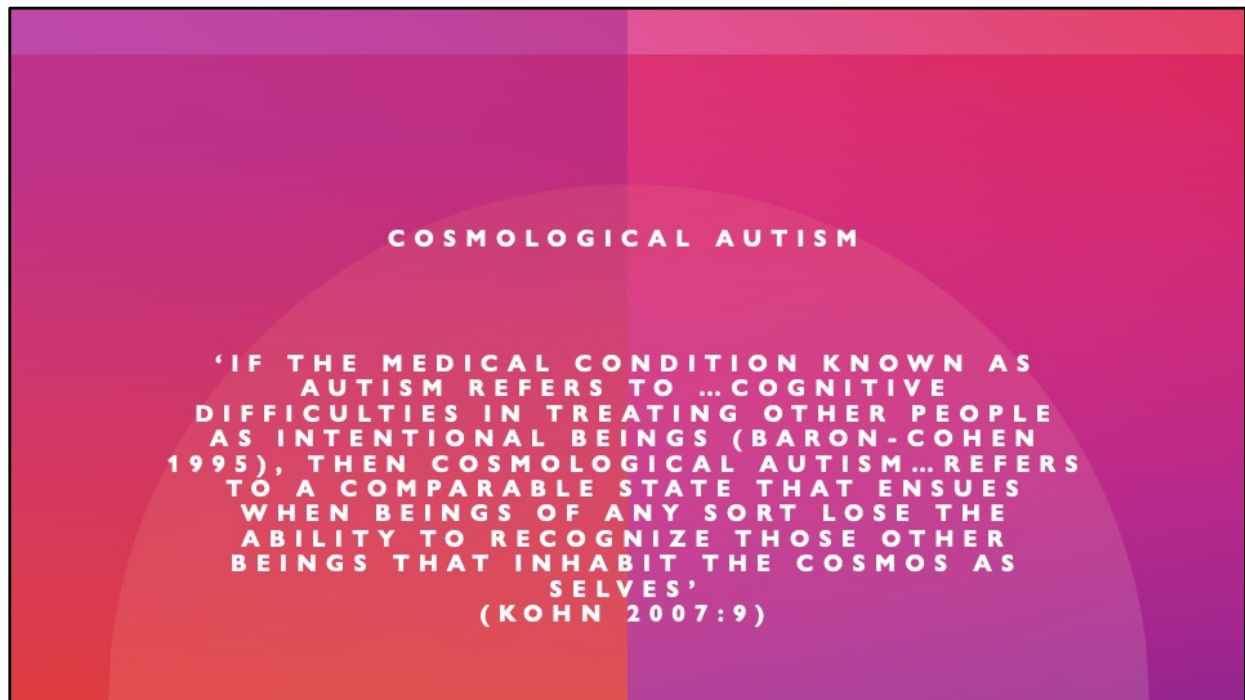
critiques of educational processes question established methods.

Bateson (1979), critiqued official education systems that require learning ideas *of* the world and claimed that Euro-american education fails to know the nature of anything because it can only teach in abstractions. Similarly critical, AS Neill was not convinced that educationists should assume they know what children must learn. He felt that was the children's business



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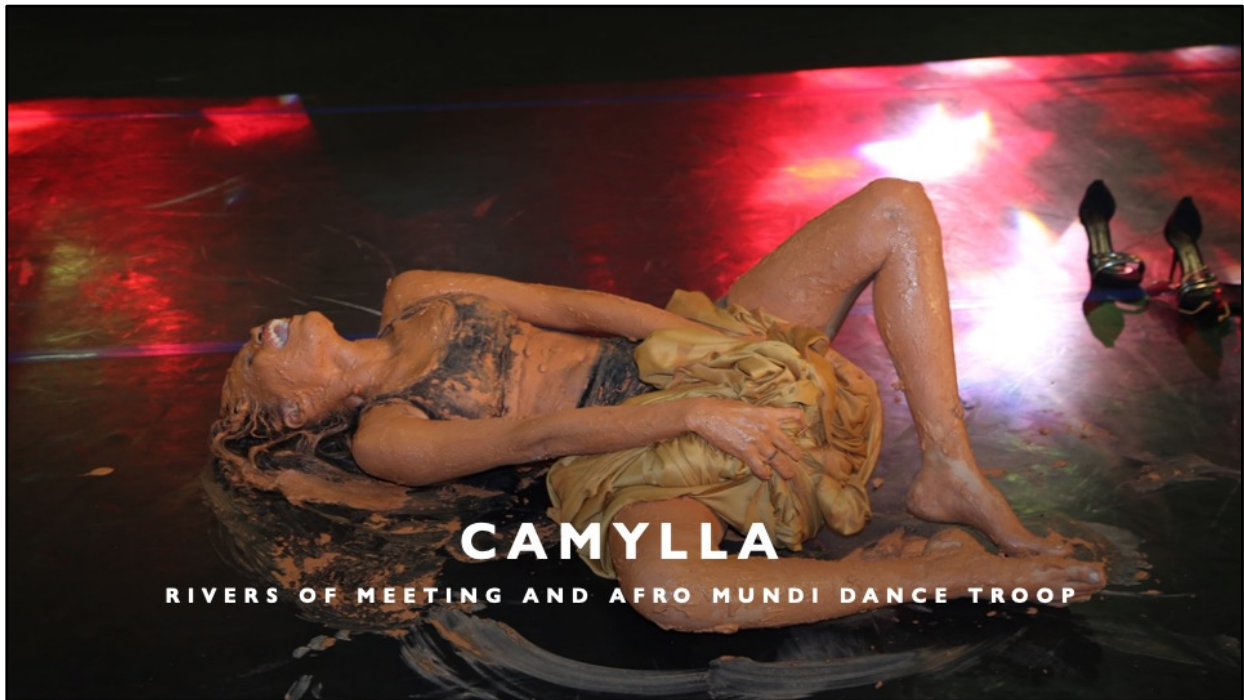
Recognising there may be issues with curricula, this conference asks what anthropology students could be taught. The question is driven from a hierarchical position – one that strikes as alien to that advocated and adopted by the methods anthropologists themselves use to learn. Anthropologists are learner-experts (or expert learners) during fieldwork. Interlocutors don't tend to organise what they think we need to know, yet we revert to this method for our students. Can we continue to imagine that teaching for a generic 'student' is necessary?



The inability to recognise students 'inhabit the cosmos as selves' chimes with what Kohn calls cosmological autism. Is it workable to suggest that students are experts of their own lives able to actively engage in their own education, just as anthropologists do when they arrive in 'their fields'?



Educere, from the Latin meaning 'to lead out with creative thought', has gathered several projects that have reconsidered educational identities.



For example, Camylla, a young afro-indigenous activist protects her community by dancing the condition of lives in the Amazon for the world to see. Her dances employ bodies to communicate violations, to visually and rhythmically realise the pain wrought upon the living world. She describes her work as choreographies of hope.

MUSKAN TELLING AND HEARING STORIES



TEACHING EACH OTHER

Similarly, Muskan, uses stories and poetry to think through community issues for marginalised groups in India. Here youth authors publish their writings to teach each other of their traditional cultural practices, thus allowing youths to make their education relevant.



These provide a snapshot of just 2 projects where the category identities of teacher and learner are fluidly reorganised. Driven to communicate their worlds in ways that are internally generated and nourished, these projects demonstrate the spark to learn is not transferred from adults.

Perhaps it is time to seriously trouble the distinctions between learner and teachers, and facilitate youth collaboration in course content, design and delivery?

References

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