

當民族誌遇到後人類： 數位田野中的拼裝與關照*

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數位民族誌因應著二十世紀下半葉數位科技的快速發展而生，它挑戰了過往田野工作要長時間身處一地的預設，甚至打破了物理空間的想像，讓參與觀察可以跨越實體空間遠距發生，也讓參與的身體不再受肉體所限。透過打破線上／線下、虛擬／實體的二分，數位民族誌確立了其作為人類學的重要課題。但是過往的數位民族誌仍然是以「人」作為行動者主體、「科技」是被動的物與客體，忽略了在當代田野的多重時空與碎片化下，田野工作者賴以參與觀察的身體五感是藉由數位科技而延展、擴充、分身、和瞬移的賽伯格（cyborg）身體；同時，所研究的對象也不再是以個體的人及其集合作為基本單位，而是與和各種非人與技術物的拼裝、異質元素集結的混種。在本文中，我引入女性主義後人類理論來重新思考田野工作者如何藉由將非人與物納入研究關懷，並且認真看待研究者帶入田野的身體與物質、處境與行動如何促成我們的田野經驗，從而超越過往以人類中心論的民族誌書寫，並重組數位田野中人與物、主體與客體、研究者與被研究者的關係。女性主義

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*謝詞：本文發展自筆者於2022年臺灣人類學與民族學學會年會，發表在「在電腦前面做田野：人類學家與報導人的線上／線下互動」場次的論文。感謝籌組人鄭肇祺的邀請與號召，以及同場次發表者謝竹雯、張正衡、賴奕諭，和評論人蕭季樺，對本文所提供的各種建議與討論。本文對民族誌方法的探討奠基於我在2014到2024年間，橫跨十年對公民科技社群零時政府所進行的研究。零時政府參與者在田野期間對我提供的協助、陪伴、與照顧催生本文，在此表達由衷的感謝。本文對田野的許多反思也來自於過去兩年在各地進行的「數位 x 民族誌」專題演講，謝謝參與的老師、同學們對我的提問和回饋。我的助理劉旭鈞在本文撰寫過程中亦提供寶貴的編修建議。最後，特別感謝兩位匿名審查人在本文修改的過程中，不吝提供對本文精闢的批評指教與修改建議，讓原本不夠成熟的文章能夠進化為足以發表的面貌。

後人類理論不只為數位人類學帶來本體論與知識論上的新視野，更敦促田野工作者採取一種「關照」的倫理批判與實作，在與田野中的人、物、資料、技術、與數位互動交纏的同時，接納片段而充滿缺陷的田野工作者自身。

關鍵詞：數位民族誌，女性主義後人類理論，拼裝，照護，田野

When Ethnography Meets Posthuman:

Assemblage and Care in Digital Fieldwork

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Digital ethnography emerged in response to the rapid development of digital technologies in the second half of the 20th century. It challenged the assumption that fieldwork requires a long-term presence in one location and transcends the limitations of physical space. Participant observation can now take place remotely and across various dimensions of space-time, allowing ethnographers to no longer be confined by their biological bodies. Over the past three decades, by breaking the dichotomy of online/offline and virtual/real and addressing social changes alongside technological advancements, digital anthropology has established itself as an important sub-field in anthropology. However, past digital ethnographers often treated “humans” as actors and subjects while considering “technology” as media and objects. This perspective overlooks the fact that our digital activities rely on the assemblage of humans and machines, neither of which is the sole actor. Digital ethnographers’ bodies are extended, expanded, duplicated, and teleported by digital technologies to conduct fieldwork and move across multiple dimensions of space-time. Meanwhile, the subjects of study in digital ethnography are not merely humans and their collectives but are hybrids assembled with various human and non-human parts and entities.

This article draws on my reflection of conducting digital ethnography with the civic tech community, g0v (pronounced gov-zero), in Taiwan. The embodied experience of digital fieldwork prompts me to rethink how ethnographers incorporate non-humans and machines into our research and consider how ethnographers’ bodies, situatedness, and materials brought into the field facilitate and shape our participant observation. In this article, I introduce feminist posthumanism and posit the necessity of a “posthuman” reorientation of digital ethnography. This shift transcends the confines of Internet or online ethnography to encompass a broader understanding of how our encounters with the digital invariably intersect with corporeality, materiality, infrastructure, and atmosphere.

Feminist posthumanism signifies an ethical politics that humbles anthropocentric arrogance, recognizing the realities of chaos and transgression in and across every field. It develops a relational ethics that lets go of identity politics, aiming to “stay with the trouble.” A posthuman turn challenges anthropocentric ethnographic writing and unsettles the binary between humans and machines, subjects and objects, researchers and the researched in digital fieldwork. Feminist posthumanism calls our attention to our posthuman bodies as we seek to understand how our digital life is constantly mediated, materialized, connected, and disconnected. It not only brings an ontological and epistemological turn to digital anthropology but also urges ethnographers to adopt an ethical critique and practice of “care.” This practice emphasizes the ethnographer’s situatedness and engagement, incorporating the nuances of affective and ethical interactions. Indeed, ethnographic research is an anthropologist’s expression of care for a topic, group, or thing, and fieldwork is the corresponding act of care. It is our care and desire to engage that make fieldwork possible.

The ethical practice of care in fieldwork applies to human-to-human and human-to-non-human. It involves considering whether the digital environment is open or closed, whether participants are anonymous or using real names, and when a fieldworker can “lurk” or should surface. It includes the manner of “appearing” appropriately, the ethical boundaries for copying conversations, taking screenshots, and recording audio or video. It addresses how digital data should be stored, interpreted, archived, maintained, and destroyed at the appropriate time. Beyond “do no harm,” care involves establishing caring interactions with humans and non-humans, navigating complex relationships and power networks, and recognizing that conducting fieldwork is possible because of being cared for by others.

In summary, the integration of feminist posthumanism into digital ethnography not only challenges traditional anthropocentric perspectives but also fosters a deeper, more relational understanding of digital life. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of humans, non-humans, and technologies, and by adopting an ethical practice of care, digital ethnographers can more effectively navigate the complexities of contemporary digital environments. This approach ensures that their research remains ethically grounded and relevant in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Keywords: digital ethnography, feminist posthumanism, assemblage, care, fieldwork ethics
