

Making *as* Praxis? Making *in* Action?



6th and 7th November 2025

**MSH Lyon Saint Etienne
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**UFR ANTHROPOLOGIE
SOCIOLOGIE
SCIENCE POLITIQUE**

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Introduction

State-making, identity-making, war-making, policy-making, and meaning-making have all become common theoretical concepts in recent years; sometimes the hyphen is dropped to create new words, e.g., placemaking. “Making” signifies the actor-oriented, dynamic, and historical nature of socio-cultural and political activities under study, making it a popular concept useful to various disciplines.

This workshop aims at examining where the diverse subjects of “making” may lead us in analyzing socio-cultural processes.

It will especially explore culture-related activities that form programs (ideals) and practices (praxis) of nurturing, internalizing, or enabling that contribute to societies in both positive and negative ways. These may include making as self-improvement, performing (sense-making), devotions (religion-making), social relations (e.g., kinship and gender), skill, technology, politics (e.g., new populism), or AI-scape production (the cultural world AI provides).

We will pay special attention to how these “makings” relate to the society under study, and to the world as a whole.

This session is being co-organized by

Pr.Dr. Salomé Deboos, Laboratoire d’Anthropologie Des Enjeux Contemporains, UFR Anthropologie Sociologie Sciences Politiques, Université Lumière Lyon2.

Pr.Dr. Mei-Ling Chen, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, College of Hakka Studies, National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University.

Pr.Dr. Shuenn-der Yu, Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taipei.

Thursday, the 6th of November 2025:

OPENING SESSION

9h – 9h45: wellcome addresses

Stephane Chretien, Professor in Mathmatics, Dean of the UFR Anthropology, Sociology and Political Sciences, University Lumière Lyon2

James Walker, Vice president, International Relations, University Lumière Lyon 2

9h45 – 10h Coffee Breack

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEING THANKS TO TECHNOSCIENCES AND NEUROSCIENCES

10h – 10h45: Theory-Making in American Cultural Anthropology, or Can Neuroscience Help?

Shuenn-Der YU, Research Fellow, Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taipei – Taiwan .

Culture has long been the key concept in American anthropology, but its elusiveness has also made defining it a difficult business. Nonetheless, there has been no shortage of attempts at its theorization. This paper will review a few of these theoretical paradigms to argue that since cultural is increasingly being considered as internal, rather than superorganic or a system of meanings “out there,” anthropologists may have to take neuroscience seriously, instead of treating its propositions as simply reductionist. However, I will also argue that since there is no simple answer as to how we might demarcate culture from a neurological perspective, we need to find ways to incorporate neuroscience in our enterprise of theory making.

10h45 – 11h30: Technoscience and science fiction: A world-making imaginary

Marie-Clémence JALABER, PhD student, Laboratoire de recherche historique Rhône-Alpes (LARHRA) – UMR 5190, University Lumière Lyon2.

Human and social sciences discuss the concept of the imaginary in many forms, as based on thought, beliefs, and human psychology. Although it has quite recently come under critical review, it has nevertheless remained a pillar in the study of symbolism in human societies and cultures. These symbolic imaginaries were first developed by Godelier, Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Bachelard and Durand, and more recently they have been expanded to collective social imaginaries (Taylor, 2004; Castoriadis, 2006). As an anthropological object, the imaginary is particularly relevant for questioning our representations of the world.

Technoscience’s narratives are an important new generator of symbolization whose founding pronouncements promote technocentric society as a natural, necessary, and unavoidable innovation that can benefit humanity and is driven by a desire for conquest. Yet, those

technoscientific imaginaries, space exploration in particular, are the result of futuristic speculation portrayed in science fiction, to which the fans are now heirs. It is the romanticized 1960's and 1970's vision of outer space that Elon Musk, with his SpaceX, and Jeff Bezos, with the Blue Origin space tourism program, are spreading. If spatial imaginaries capitalize on people's aspirations, reactions from the international public online (regarding the latest tourist mission of Blue Origin including various female celebrities such as singer Katy Perry and the enormous pollution it caused) have been particularly fierce. There are now conspiracy theories that seem to reject the instrumentalization of dreams for a science that is no longer a fiction for those who possess the financial means to do so.

Indicative bibliography

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11h30 – 12h15: Life as Autofabrication: The role of AI

Wei-Wen CHUNG, Professor Emeritus, National Chengchi University, Taiwan.

This paper investigates the potential role of artificial intelligence (AI) in the process of human self-creation, or what Ortega y Gasset terms *autofabrication*. For Ortega, human life is fundamentally defined by the effort to bring oneself into existence—a continual act of production. Distinct from other species, humans, as Tim Ingold observes, are “zoo-sociological hybrids,” straddling both nature and culture. In this light, technology can be viewed as a material expression of the autofabricating impulse intrinsic to human life.

The emergence of AI presents a new and complex chapter in this ongoing narrative. This paper explores three central questions: First, what is the historical relationship between technology and autofabrication, and how might AI contribute to or transform it? Second, what trajectories might autofabrication take in the context of AI's unique capabilities and material presence, particularly given concerns about human obsolescence? Finally, how might AI be shaped or directed to support human well-being rather than undermine it? Through these inquiries, the paper seeks to position AI not as a threat to human significance, but as a potential partner in the evolving project of human becoming.

12h15 – 14h: Lunch Break

Served at Cafetariat

IDENTITY MAKING PROCESS

14h – 14h45: Sensory Weaving: Making Cross-ethnic Identity in Taiwan's Yunnanese Dage Community

Tasaw Hsin-chun LU, Institute of Musicology, National Taiwan University, Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan.

The concept of “making” illuminates the dynamic, actor-oriented processes through which socio-cultural identities and meanings are crafted. It is particularly evidenced in embodied practices like dance that weave sensory, historical, and transcultural threads. This paper explores sense-making and identity-making among dage performers in the Yunnanese immigrant community of Longgang, Taiwan, through cultural cultivation and musicking. Drawing on Tomie Hahn's *Sensational Knowledge* (2007), which positions dance as embodied cultural transmission, the study examines how performers internalize multiethnic sociocultural norms and sensory knowledge through dage, a hybrid music and dance practice rooted in the Thai-Myanmar borderlands. Hahn's concept of sensory engagement as performative “becoming” informs the analysis of cultivating a “dage body,” where performers embody cultural memory and aesthetic values through sonic interaction with the sanxian's “Kuang Tan Kuang” soundscape and costume-making. Based on the author's ethnographic experience as a dage performer since 2019, the study highlights negotiations of sensory attributes—sound, movement, tactility—that interweave historical memories, transcultural identities, and aesthetic ideals into cultural programs and praxis. By blending diverse cultural threads, performers co-create a cross-ethnic identity, navigating ethnic preconceptions to foster social cohesion. This embodied sense-making, rooted in musicking and material agency, reflects a post-capitalist ethos of collective creativity, contributing to community-building, cultural heritage preservation, and insights into the dynamics of “making” in Taiwanese.

14h45 – 15h30: Local lives, global shifts: Identity-making processes among Djiboutian women

Ibtissem BATTOUM, PhD Student, Laboratoire d'Anthropologie des Enjeux Contemporains, University Lumière Lyon2.

Identity-making processes among Djiboutian women living in both urban and rural contexts reveal complex negotiations shaped by social constraints, cultural inheritances, and global influences. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in Djibouti, this study examines how identity is constructed and continuously reshaped within these intersecting dynamics.

Far from a binary opposition between tradition and modernity, women's narratives highlight diverse and creative strategies of adaptation that articulate cultural continuity alongside

aspirations for change. These identity-making practices unfold through the reinterpretation of gender roles, representations of femininity, positions within kinship networks, and relationships to the body. The discourses illustrate the ongoing negotiation between individual and collective identities, balancing social prescriptions with desires for transformation.

The identity-making processes of Djiboutian women appear fluid and dynamic, shaped by socio-economic transformations, the rise of digital technologies, and evolving intergenerational relationships. In the face of these upheavals, women deploy strategies of adaptation and circumvention while navigating familial and communal expectations. The narratives reveal their ability to navigate diverse spheres of change - material, such as access to urban infrastructure or digital tools; discursive, through new ways of speaking about self and gender; and symbolic, in shifting cultural values and social roles - to transform and circumvent obstacles without always rupturing or confronting. These identity-making practices reflect an ongoing self-fashioning, situated between the affirmation of cultural heritage and the pursuit of alternative possibilities. Embedded in wider processes of social transformation, local reference points are continually rearticulated in dialogue with global influences. By focusing on an understudied field site, this research in Djibouti contributes to broader debates on contemporary forms of identity-making, meaning-making, and social cohesion in postcolonial societies undergoing transition.

15h30 – 15h45: Coffee break

15h45 – 16h30: Making salt tea and eating tsampa: The zaskari identity in motion

Salomé DEBOOS, Professor of Anthropology, UFR Anthropology, Sociology, Political Sciences, Laboratoire d'Anthropologie des Enjeux Contemporains, Université Lumière Lyon2.

In the Zanskar Valley, situated in the Indian Himalayas, the practice of offering salted tea to visitors is an expression of welcome, in line with the tradition of presenting tsampa to passing visitors. In the course of my preliminary fieldwork, these forms of hospitality emerged as a matter of great cultural significance.

The present-day capital of Zanskar, Padum, sits on the New Delhi - Manali - Kargil route, which has been upgraded to motorway status. This development has enabled the Indian tourism industry to flourish there, accompanied by a significant change in prevailing customs. The traditional consumption of salted tea has been superseded by chai, and tsampa has been replaced by biscuits, with the exception of instances where these offerings are employed to affirm one's identity or during ritual receptions.

This presentation will provide an opportunity to explore the places and times at which Zanskari identity is expressed, sometimes in accordance with ancestral traditions, and sometimes in accordance with modernity.

Friday, the 7th of November 2025:

STATE MAKING IDENTITY

9h – 9h45: Narration, Ritual Making, and the Ethnography of Development among the Hmub of the Eastern Yun-Gui Plateau

Mei-ling CHIEN, Professor in Anthropology – ethnology, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, Taiwan.

This paper explores how the indigenization of modernity and development was experienced and made through the act of speaking by Hmub local elites. These men, originally rural immigrants, now serve as the local political leaders of an extensive cultural renewal feast ritual (lasting four years) at an upland village in eastern Guizhou. Discarding the Han Chinese discourse of otherness that tends to emphasize a feminine image of the periphery and minorities, this paper shows that throughout this indigenization process, the local elites worked as the main channels in communications, passing down and re-learning the language and knowledge of this feast ritual. By using specific vocabulary and phrases, they created dialectical relationships among tradition, development and modernity. The indigenization of development and modernity they articulate in speech results from the creative linking of traditional perspectives, the ethnography of development, and modern reality, which they present to the outside world by means of cultural exhibitions and ritual making.

9h45 – 10h30: On the use of handicrafts for state-making in India

Raphaëlle KOGEL, PhD Student, Laboratoire d'Anthropologie des Enjeux Contemporains, University Lumière Lyon 2

In India the process of state-making takes place at different levels of society, with the aim to produce national unity amidst local diversity (Jaffrelot, 2019). The handicraft industry is rooted in local structures and knowledge, and its commercialization on the local and global markets participate to the Indian outreach. Yet, postcolonial Indian state-making is sometimes expressed in ethnonationalist policies such as the promotion of State Handloom Manufactures and State Handicraft Shops. Within the handicraft sector, localities are chosen to promote Indian values, sometimes to the detriment of a locality's long-standing cultural history.

This presentation explores how in India state-making operates through its cultural policy. The case of pashmina weaving, historically anchored in the regions of Jammu-Kashmir and Ladakh, illustrates how retellings of origins and practices in these localities do not align with the prevailing conception of Indian identity.

In recent years, the state has supported a newly established Ladakhi branch of pashmina production, thereby positioning the Union Territory as a proponent of national heritage in contradiction to Kashmiri tradition – since the community is already targeted by anti-Muslim policies in a region characterized by geopolitical tensions. By this move, cultural policy has become an actor in the regional rivalry and a vector of legitimization and delegitimization

(Polyani, 2001[1944])

India's handicraft policies engage in the appropriation and rewriting of local practices, imposing the ideal of a unified cultural identity while actually exercising othering within its own borders (Dumont, 1991[1985] ; Graeber, 2022[2001]). This analysis of state involvement in the pashmina industry across multiple scales will demonstrate the production of national unity as a narrative, whilst highlighting the political redefining of difference. In this context, state-making is achieved through the rewriting of imaginaries to reshape local practices and refocus the view of handicraft production through an Indian lens.

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10h30 – 10h45 Coffee break

MAKING THE WORLD, SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT.

10h45 – 11h30: Flavor of the Mountains: The Development of Taiwan's High-Altitude Agriculture

Chia-Ling HSU, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan.

This study examines the historical evolution of Taiwan's high-altitude agriculture, followed by in-depth interviews with high-altitude farmers to explore the "making" of high-mountain flavor. With the rise of specialty coffees, global research on high-altitude agriculture has attracted increasing attention in recent years. In Taiwan, farmers have also begun cultivating coffee trees at progressively higher altitudes, but commercial agriculture in Taiwan's mountainous regions did not begin with coffee. Since the 1950s, these regions have served as key production areas for a variety of commercial agricultural products, ranging from temperate-climate fruits and vegetables and high-mountain tea to today's specialty coffees.

Throughout the development of mountain agriculture, farmers have drawn on their expertise to associate high-altitude areas with high quality and superior flavor across different crops. In so doing, they have shaped the symbolism and narratives surrounding Taiwan's mountain agriculture. Furthermore, the flavors associated with high-mountain cultivation are actively being "made" to monopolize the perception of flavor and quality. And this practice ultimately leads to the commodification and alienation of value.

11h30 – 12h15: Bears, roosters, pheasants: The making of the emblematic animal.

Gersande PASQUINI, PhD Student, Laboratoire d'Anthropologie des Enjeux Contemporains, Université Lumière Lyon2.

The zoo has long been a space where the colonial imaginary can be conjured up through displays of non-human animals. From the beginning of the 20th century, in Germany and then in France, zoos were designed to imitate the natural environments in which captive animals supposedly lived in the wild (Roustan, 2025 : 7). These animals evolved in their “*papier-mache*” settings for many years. Successive legislative reforms and a societal shift regarding animal welfare, sentience, vegetarianism, veganism, and animal experimentation, have all impacted the treatment of animals. At the zoo in Lyon’s Parc de la Tête d’Or, this change is reflected in the institutional discourse, which focuses on the protection of biodiversity. Each information panel includes the IUCN classification, indicating the species’ extinction risk and its causes to justify the animal’s confinement. Non-humans thus are drafted to represent their own disappearance without ever having known their native territory. In the heart of the Asian forest exhibit at the zoo, you can find the Vietnamese pheasant, a symbol of France’s former colonial empire and also a political and nationalist issue that simultaneously is used to highlight the fragility of ecosystems.

This paper will examine the concept of ‘emblematic animals’ by considering three examples: the Vietnamese pheasant, the Taiwanese black bear, and the Gallic rooster. First, we’ll examine how these images are constructed and the discourses associated with them. Then we’ll consider the practical implications of these emblematic species’ heritage status.

12h15 – 12h45: Closing session

Resume of the two days conferences and perspectives for the future.

12h45 – 14h30: Lunch Break

Served at the Cafétariat

14h30 – 16h: ANTHROPOLOGIST ON THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

Shuenn-Der YU, Research Fellow, Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taipei – Taiwan.

Shuenn Der YU, is scheduled to deliver a presentation on the subject of conducting research projects within the Korean context, with family members.

This session will be also online: <https://visio.univ-lyon2.fr/sal-yf4-cud-np0>

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