Paradigms and Debates: Photography in Ethnography
Images and Text: What is the Problem?

→ A hierarchy of formats?

Arguments in Favour of Captioning:

→ Photographs do not speak for themselves

→ Viewing is already a matter of training

→ Mead: telling viewers what they should look for

→ David MacDougall: “An uncaptioned photograph is full of undirected potential”

→ David MacDougall:

“What was paradoxical about visual imagery, as against written text, was its apparent plenitude, which flooded the observer with concreteness and detail, yet revealed little in the absence of a surrounding discourse”
Arguments Against Captioning:
→ images, an equally meaningful element of ethnographic work
→ Text adds neither clarity nor objectivity
→ Authority: 4 Questions
→ word-and-sentence to image-and-sequence
Objective versus Subjective: Anthropology between the Natural Sciences and the Humanities

→ Mead, realism, science
→ Bateson, subjectivity, art

Bateson ...I think the photographic record should be an art form.
Mead if it’s an art form, it has been altered.
Bateson It’s undoubtedly been altered. I don’t think it exists unaltered.
Mead I think it’s very important, if you’re going to be scientific about behavior, to give other people access to the material, as comparable as possible to the access you had. You don’t, then, alter the material. There’s a bunch of film makers now that are saying, “It should be art,” and wrecking everything that we’re trying to do. Why the hell should it be art?....

Bateson If you put the damn thing on a tripod, you don’t get any relevance.
Mead No, you get what happened
Bateson It isn’t what happened.
Mead I don’t want people leaping around thinking that a profile at this moment would be beautiful.
Bateson I wouldn’t want beautiful.
Mead Well, what’s the leaping around for?
Bateson To get what’s happening.
Mead What you think is happening.
Bateson Of the things that happen, the camera is only going to record one percent anyway.
Subjectivity & the “new ethnography”? 
James Clifford: “ethnography as fiction”

Selectivity is inevitable, outcome of one’s cultural training

Bourdieu:

“photography cannot be delivered over to the randomness of the individual imagination...” — “...via the mediation of the ethos, the internalization of objective and common realities”

Reflexivity—monitor yourself, maintain awareness of your presence in a situation

centrality of the subjectivity of the researcher
The Inevitability of Selectivity?
Editing, Planned and Natural

→ subjective positioning manifested in selectivity

→ Framing the subject

● Post-production
● In-camera
● Pre-camera
Controlling Images: Debates over Presentation

_Naturalism_ (see _Erklärung_—previous session)
- against aesthetic distraction
- realistic portrayals of normal, natural fact
- facts need to be pointed out to the viewer—require captioning

_Subjectivism_ (see _Verstehen_—previous session)
- use the image to make a statement
- tell a story, many different stories
- reflexivity: emphasize the position of the researcher within the research setting