Interspecies Performance
The Composition of the Arabian Show Horse as 
Living Sculpture

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Abstract: The chapter focuses on conceptualizing event and situation for ethnographic knowledge production and development of anthropological theory. Therefore, in a first step, I draw attention to the historical and conceptual importance of the anthropological approaches of "situational analysis" and "extended-case method", developed by Max Gluckman (1958 [1940]) and his early Manchester School colleagues, and the subsequent elaborations of the two approaches by the next generations of anthropologists. Their enduring relevance for core issues in contemporary anthropological debates is discussed by stressing the conceptual significance of event and situation in practice theory, global ethnography approaches, and subjectivity. In a second step, I perform the experimental exercise of a "situational analysis" based on parts of my research on global Arabian horse breeding and present an ethnographic description of an Arabian horse show event in Egypt 2016, which leads to the concept of the interspecies performance and composition of the Arabian horse as living sculpture. The chapter's conclusion links the anthropological discussion and ethnographic case study by answering Burawoy's call (2000) for the four extensions of the extended-case method as framework for the analysis. In this sense, the chapter takes up the idea of an "anthropology of generic moments" (Meinert/Kapferer 2015) and tries to reinforce it ethnographically.
The winners of social dramas positively require cultural performances to continue to legitimate their success. (Turner 1980: 155)

1. **INTRODUCTION: SITUATING SITUATIONALITY**

In this chapter I pursue the question of situationality of the human-animal relation in two interrelated ways. First, I focus on the concept of situation(ality) by looking at an age-old discussion on the role and importance of the notion of event for theory and methodology in social anthropology that can be traced back to Max Gluckman's initial proposal of “situation analysis” (1958 [1940]), which lead to the methodological innovation of and call for the “extended-case method,” an extension and refinement of situational analysis by second generation anthropologists of the Manchester School. In the time when Gluckman and his colleagues developed the situational analysis and extended-case method, their aim was not primarily to develop a framework for the study of human-animal relations. Nonetheless, the conceptual idea of situations and events as “moments of social life in the very process of formation” (Kapferer 2005: 92), and the emphasis on situations and their extension over time, space, and the actual actors of the particular event, theoretically does not give any analytical primacy to human actors and should therefore also be applicable for interspecies interactions. Furthermore, in extending the method in a self-reflexive way to the positionality of the anthropologist who is always and necessarily situated in the ethnographic event, it offers a balanced and de-centered alternative to the postmodernist auto-ethnographic and overly self-reflexive answers developed after the crisis of representation in anthropology (Clifford/Marcus 1986). The chapter shall try to give a confirmation of these points.

This first part concludes with a brief look into the Manchester School’s legacy in relation to the contemporary anthropological and sociological concepts of event and situation. Rather than adding another genealogical contribution to the existing corpus of articles and books about the Manchester School’s legacy, the extended-case method, and its relevance and potential contributions today, this part wishes to set the stage for what follows. Thus, what might seem slightly eclectic and arbitrary is the result of a personal choice of highlighting key elements for the underlying chapter’s purpose out of a discussion in anthropology which touches nearly every cornerstone of the discipline and beyond (e.g. Burawoy 2000 and 2009; Englund 2018; Evens/Handelman 2006; Kapferer/Meiner 2015).

Second, inspired by this legacy, the next part demonstrates a sort of experimental exercise based on parts of my own research on the global breeding and circulation of Arabian horses and present ethnographic material of a concrete event in the form of a situational analysis (for a general overview on the research project and its main theoretical implications see Lange 2016).

Arabian horse breeding and its surrounding community developed in the course of the 20th century from a relatively small and localized enterprise of a few US-European breed enthusiasts into a global industry of interlinked breeders, breeding experts and equine professionals, national and international breeding associations, regulatory organizations and, of course, a constant worldwide circulation of Arabian horses, people and their ideas. Central to the makeup of this global Arabian horse world is a busy annual event schedule of national and international Arabian horse breeding shows and championships performed worldwide, ranging from Las Vegas, Aachen, and Paris to Cairo, Kuwait City, and Doha, where horse owners, breeders, enthusiasts, professionals and their horses meet, greet and compete with each other to win trophies in various classes of beauty and breed excellence.

In a double sense, these performance events will serve for the chapter’s aim to investigate situationality and human-animal relations through the methodological exercise of an extended-case study. First, in taking the notion of event seriously and tracing out the analytical potential embedded within it, I show that the ethnographic focus on situated practices and particular situations opens up an understanding of the translocal dynamics of the global (breeding) community. Thus, an event-focused approach could undermine the still ongoing feud of localists vs. globalists in social sciences. This leads to the second point: namely, one central claim of Manchester anthropologists is expressed in Gluckman’s protest against an ethnography of situations and events as an “apt illustration” (1961: 7) of greater social wholes or theories to exemplify. Moreover, the atypical and unique events of crisis the Mancunians were interested in “were likely to reveal the social and political forces engaged in the generation or production of social life” (Kapferer 2015: 2f.). But not only that, with the work of Don Handelman (1977), Clyde

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1 Especially Clyde Mitchell’s *Kalela Dance* (1956) and Victor Turner’s *Schism and Continuity* (1957); for an excellent historical overview of the ‘events’ surrounding the Manchester School see Bruce Kapferer 2005.
Mitchell (1956, 1969) and Victor Turner (1957, 1974) events and situational analysis helped “to develop theory from the ethnographic grounds of lived practices” (Kapferer 2015: 11). My hope is that the conclusion of the chapter makes clear that the idea and concept of the Arabian horse as a living sculpture and processual composition of interspecies interaction in the show ring emerges from these “ethnographic grounds of lived practices” (ibid.).

2. Situations of Crisis, Critical Events, Decision-Events, and an Anthropology of Generic Moments and the Concrete

In this section I try to single out a set of diverse approaches of different anthropological traditions and schools that all share a common focus on event and situation as the central area of research. American anthropologist Sherry Ortner’s essay, “Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties” (1984), is often quoted as one of the first to recognize “practice theory” as a “new trend that seems to be gathering force and coherence” (ibid.: 144) in social science and anthropological theory since the late 1970s and 1980s. She summarizes two “bundle[s] of interrelated terms: practice, praxis, action, interaction, activity, experience, performance. A second [...] bundle of terms focuses on the doer of all that doing: agent, actor, person, self, individual, subject” (ibid.). In her 2006 collection on “Updating Practice Theory”, she identifies Pierre Bourdieu’s Outline of a Theory of Practice (1977), Anthony Giddens’s Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis (1979), and Marshall Sahlins’s Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom (1981) as the “key works” of a practice theory movement which intended to overcome over-deterministic “theories of constraint” (Ortner 2006: 1f.). She isolates three “key symbols” of practice theory. First, the prioritization of practice itself offers an alternative to the traditional Durkheimian/Parsonian opposition of social wholes in the form of societies, cultures, systems and structures versus individuals, subjects and actors with no or very limited agency, and if they possess a sort of agency, only to reproduce, confirm or follow the social order (1984: 146). Partly because of the postcolonial struggle, the increasingly tense and frustrating political situation of the Cold War as well as widely failed social reformist movements of the 1960s in the West, the second key symbol is the introduction (and focus on reproduction) of political power, discourses of domination and hegemony by James Scott, Michel Foucault, Raymond Williams, and Antonio Gramsci (2006: 3; 1984: 146). Her last key symbol, intertwined with and to a certain degree overarching the other two, is history and the historicizing of social science (2006: 3; 1984: 158).

Ortner’s accounts of her contact with and influence by practice theory were never intended to be exhaustive reviews of all works of practice theory of that time (2006: 3; 1984: 127); neither is this present chapter. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that in both of her essays, except for Victor Turner’s invention of a British-style symbolic anthropology (1984: 130f.) and Bruce Kapferer’s contributions to transactionalism (1984: 144f.), there is only little to no mention of the contributions of the early Manchester School anthropologists and later generations. This is quite remarkable because the Mancunians’ concern with Ortner’s three key symbols of practice, power and history is omnipresent in their “situational analysis” and “extended-event method.” The aim is not to incite any politics of citation or criticize Ortner’s practice theory approach, but rather to emphasize that focusing on the Manchester School means focusing on an anthropological tradition, which has never really entered the mainstream and never become influential as, for example, the above described broader practice theory movements.

2 In retrospect, it seems like the Mancunian’s approach to situation and event did not only anticipate the general turn to practice theory in the 1970/80s (see below) but as well to some degree the “ontological turn” considering ethnographic material as the primary (and only) source of anthropological theorizing.

3 A term I borrowed from a series of famous performances by the London artist duo Gilbert & George during the late 1960s. The living sculpture and works of the duo became very important in the following years for the conceptual examination of performance art in general and also for the reordering of the relationship between artists, art object, and exhibition space.

4 There are probably two reasons for her neglect. First, Ortner is mainly concerned with the developments in American anthropological theories and second, and more importantly, she probably situates the Manchester School in the realm of individualistic interactionism, which, by stressing the actors paramount importance and ignoring social structures and constraints altogether, is of no relevance for her to the practice theory approach, because interactionism remains caught in the situation, and therefore, in the traditional opposition of structure vs. individual (Ortner 2006: 2). That is probably also the reason why ethnomethodology and Garfinkel (1967) are not mentioned.
In the following, I concentrate on the ambitious attempts of Bruce Kapferer (2000, 2005, 2015), probably Manchester’s most determined advocate in contemporary anthropological discussion, and Michael Burawoy (2000, 2009) to re-actualize and integrate the extended-case study into an anthropology of the concrete and an ethnography of globalization.

Though tackling the flaws and discomfort of structural functionalism may have been the initial goal of situational analysis and the extended-case method, it was never the only one. Decades later, this approach’s relevance and adaptability to contemporary anthropological debates remains in effect. In “Reaching for the Global” sociologist, Michael Burawoy (2000) critically examines and combines the two traditions of the Chicago and Manchester School in order to re-formulate four methodological dimensions already implicitly inherent in the extended-case method, which propose a global ethnography that echoes Ortner’s key symbols: “extending from observer to participant, extending observations over time and place, extending from process to external forces, and extending theory” (2000: 28; for a similar sociological approach, see Gleser 2005). All four dimensions are confronted with a particular “face of power” which he describes as “domination, silencing, objectification, and normalization” (ibid.). In this strain of the re-actualization of situational analysis, the authors focus on the methodological value of event and situation for promoting updated versions and perspectives of fieldwork and participant observation in order to meet the challenges brought by the unleashed forces of post-transnationalist corporate capitalism and all kinds of “global flows” (Appadurai 1990; a classical point of reference in this debate see Marcus 1995, 1998; comprehended by e.g. Falcón 2009). For example, by invoking the ‘traditional’ notion of the fieldwork situation as rite de passage, Kapferer argues that fieldwork creates an “anthropological attitude” in a “process of almost ontological proportions whereby the fieldworker-becoming-anthropologist is placed in a routine situation where all that was taken for granted is radically problematized [...] and invites the extension towards new possibilities” (2000: 189). For Kapferer this situated experience of radical doubt and ontological challenge is the key for anthropological knowledge production and too often forgotten “in some recent postcolonial and postmodern discussions of fieldwork” (ibid.). In a further development Kapferer performs a “Deleuzian turn to the event [as] part of a general approach that strives to break away from various oppositions and exclusivist positions that, for example, overprivilege the individual subject or the idea of society as a coherent totalized order” (2015: 15). For Kapferer, deploying Deleuze (2004) is a way out of Western ethnocentric assumptions embedded in modernist psychological and social theory, which for him [Kapferer] emphasizes the “multiplicity of sensory and cognitive processes, which permits all kinds of agency or effect (human, non-human, structural, etc.) and patterning of relations” (Kapferer 2015: 15). Finally, this leads to the event understood as “the critical site of emergence, manifesting the singularity of particular multiplicity within tensional space and opening toward new horizons of potential” (ibid.: 16).

As a closing remark for this section, I shall stress another important application of the event in contemporary anthropological theory in the context of the ‘post-human turn’ and the corresponding ‘death of the subject’ [which] has been convincingly argued for in so many disciplines in the humanities and social sciences” (Humphrey 2008: 358).

Bearing a striking resemblance to Kapferer’s own approach (above) to the event and situation as “generic moments” of multiplicity (2015), British anthropologist Caroline Humphrey’s “Re-assembling individual subjects” (2008) is inspired by the post-structuralist philosophy of Alain Badiou (2006, 2001); and through him more indirectly also by Deleuze (1993), while nonetheless pursuing an opposite intention. Instead of opening up the event and situation and allowing in a “multiplicity of one kind or another, whether they be discursive fields, rhizomic processes, individuals, or actor-networks” (Humphrey 2008: 358), she highlights the purpose of Badiou’s event theory for the particular anthropological requirement for a “conceptualization of singular analytical subjects: individual actors who are constituted in particular circumstances” (ibid.: 357). In her perspective, Badiou turns out to be useful precisely because he is one of the few post-structuralist philosophers who “accounts for conjuring up the subject in what he calls ‘the situation’, that is, real, substantive, historically and geographically particular conditions” (ibid.: 360). Among many others, Humphrey’s anthropological adaptation of Badiou draws on Veena Das’ research on critical events (1995, 2007; see also her recent reply to Humphrey: Das 2018) and leads to the decision-event

[…] a particular moment (the decision-event) when they [persons, actors, interlocutors in the field] open themselves to a radically different composition of the self, a switch that has a lasting effect and involves the most significant—but not all—ways in which that person conceives of her or himself. (Humphrey 2008: 371)5

5 Recently, and from the perspective of freedom, creativity and decision, anthropologists Barbara Rodenborn, Martin Holbraad and James Laidlaw see Humphrey’s 2008 article as a common reference and starting point to “reformulate a conception of human subjectivity as a distinctive phenomenon at least in part using the conceptual repertoire developed in the post-structuralist and current post-humanist turn.” (Laidlaw et al. 2018: 2f)
This section made sufficiently clear that the anthropological discussion of situationality—in the form of conceptualizations of reflexivity, scale, history and situated practices towards event, situation and their associated ‘inhabitants’ as a primary ethnographic area of research—is far from over. The described extension(s) of event-centered approaches from early situational analysis and extended-case method into “generic moments” of social life and the reassembled individual subject should be seen as taking and offering a middle ground position within the multiplicity of possibilities. The next step is to open the stage for the ethnographic ground of this.

3. THE SOCIAL SITUATION

I would like to envision the following situation: It is a warm and sunny day in Egypt at the end of March in the year 2016. Today is a special day as the three-day Egyptian National Arabian Horses Championship begins, which is one of the most important events for Egyptian breeders organized by the Egyptian Arabian Horse Breeders Association (EAHBA). Consequently, in addition to the trucks and Tuk-tuks that make up the normal traffic on Saqqara road, today there are not only a recognizable amount of fancy high class SUVs and luxurious limousines but also an anthropologist in a taxi; all of them heading to Rabab Stud—the most famous Arabian horse farm and equestrian center in the area and part of the upper half of Egypt’s top 10 list of Arabian horse breeders. The stud’s owner is the renowned Saudi Sheikh Khalid bin Laden who started his Arabian breeding program in this area way back in the early 1980s. There are only two more months left of my one-year field research in Egypt and it is going to be my third time participating in a show at Rabab. At this time, I consider myself quite well-known in the community of Egyptian Arabian horse breeders.

Nonetheless, the situation is a ‘composite’ of the actual event in time and space where well-known and public persons and places are kept. My individual interlocutors, informants and their accounts have been anonymized when necessary, due to critical statements which could cause trouble when associated with them.

Figure 1. Show tribune and ring at Rabab’s Egyptian National Arabian Horses Championship 2016. (Photo: C. Lange)

We are in a rural area in the Southwestern outskirts of Cairo. The famous Sphinx and pyramids of Giza are located some kilometers to the north and the less famous but equally important Step pyramid of Saqqara lies just a few kilometers to the south. The constant noise, traffic smog and chaotic life of Cairo are left behind us. The Saqqara dirt road marks the last public infrastructural border line of the metropolitan area of Cairo and could be seen as the outer periphery of Egypt’s center; just a few hundred meters to the West the Sahara Desert begins. The road follows exactly the desert line and connects the Giza tourist area with the necropolis of Saqqara and continues to the southern oasis of Dahshur. Nonetheless, the setting is not as quaint and romantic as it might suggest. Directly beside the road runs one of Egypt’s typical open irrigation canals, where it is impossible to judge whether it carries fresh water or sewage due to the smell, dirt and garbage at the edges. On the road’s eastern side, the two historic fellahin villages of Abu Sir and Shabrament have been transformed into overpopulated settlements for mainly the poor, which are made up of crowded and mostly haphazardly constructed cheap concrete and brick buildings due to Egypt’s extreme population growth, lack of housing space and an ever-expanding city boundary. Before this development, the area’s remoteness was also appreciated by Egypt’s wealthy, who built their high-walled luxury villas and watered palm gardens here and in the 1980s decided to open the Sakkara Country Club.
Without a private car, it is difficult to reach the area. There is no direct public transportation to get there, from Cairo’s downtown you either have to take the metro to its Southern terminal station, change to a minibus heading to Shubriment and take a Tuk-tuk for the last kilometer, or, you have to start your journey from one of the Giza minibus hubs but still need to change at least twice, and at the end, you must still depend on a Tuk-tuk. Either way, the one-way trip will take at least an hour. Taking a taxi might be the most comfortable way, but there’s no promise it will be the fastest. And besides that, compared to the metro and minibus hassle, it is often ten-times more expensive and always involves an annoying discussion with the driver about a compensation fee for returning empty, when he finally realizes how far out of Cairo the journey ends. All this does not really matter for most Egyptians because there is no reason to drive out here; people who work on the vegetable and fruit farming fields in this area usually live out here and the people about whom I am going to talk are privileged enough to have their own cars and private drivers.

This relatively remote post-rural area has developed, since the 1980s, into Egypt’s central and most prominent Arabian horse breeding region; despite lacking official numbers, Egyptian horse insiders estimate the current number of Arabian horses up to 5000 (which makes two thirds of all officially registered Arabian horses) dispersed on approximately 250 farms. The average of 20 horses per farm is just an abstraction to illustrate the extreme horse density in the area; in reality it might be even more because you have a vast majority of small-scale breeders with 8 horses and a few big breeding and boarding facilities with 300 horses. This is the reason why this far-off area became one of the centers of my fieldwork and to continue with the situational imaginational exercise, why I took the hassle to drive out here.

For entering the main gate of Rabab stud, one must cross the irrigation canal and pass a security checkpoint. Nowadays, Rabab stud consists of Sheikh bin Laden’s private villa complex, the Arabian horse breeding facility, a riding school, training paddocks and several stables including a boarding service. Besides this, Sheikh bin Laden constructed a show area where, annually since 2010, he has hosted several breeders’ competitions and championships. Usually I tell the drivers to stop in front of the gate and I walk the last few hundred meters. The path is lined with palm trees and leads past facility and guest housings and stables to the car parking lot directly at the border of the desert. From the parking lot, you reach another guarded gate and the entry to the show ground, which this time is also secured by official police forces.

Not only is the journey stressful but the participation in the event as well. Since my very first show event of this kind in 2014, which also happened to be at Rabab—and where I contemplated the living sculpture for the first time—I feel lost and uncomfortable in these situations. This has not changed much even after being at a dozen of these shows around the globe. Compared to my other fields in Egypt, where with time and growing familiarity with the place and people I gradually felt more and more at ease with the situation, the experience of participating in a show does not improve. The main source of the problem is the social setting itself. From the very beginning of my research in Egypt, I realized that I had to ‘study up’ and deal with Egypt’s (and not only Egypt’s) more wealthy and elite class. My obviously non-Egyptian appearance certainly helped in passing the first two gates of Rabab without being questioned at all. But when entering the area of the show ground, things change and get a kind of cosmopolitan twist (most noticeable in the general use of English not only in dealing with foreigners but also among Egyptians themselves).

To the left is a garden plot with a small barbecue and take away restaurant where one can order directly or the staff prepares your table orders; a little behind it are the lavatories. To the right is the backside of the roofed show tribune and seating area which is directly adjacent to the show ring and accessible through the main entrance in the middle section and two additional entrances at both ends. Following the path ahead leads to another small secured gate; from there one has access to the show stables, collecting ring (the area where the horses of a class are collected and prepared before they enter the main show ring), and the private area

7 In recent years more and more breeders decided to open or relocate their horse farms to the farming area outside of the Cairo satellite city of Sheikh Zayed in the North of Giza Pyramid area close to the Alexandria Desert Road. Another popular horse breeding area is the agricultural and residential area of Obour City close to Cairo International Airport next to Ismailia Desert Road at the Eastern edges of Cairo.

8 This concerns not only the anthropologist, many breeders who prefer to stay away from these events name as one of their reasons the stressful and “fake” atmosphere. In personal complaints to friends and informants about my show experience, they also pointed out that this ‘situation’ makes people behave strange and show-off all the time. For my first shows, I joined into this strange behavior and always went suited up and totally overdressed; this stopped after I realized that my suits do not change anything (and that they will never be able to match in price and quality with the dresses of the other participants).

9 For an account of how I entered the field as an example of symptomatic misunderstandings, see Lange (2016: 46f.).
of Sheikh bin Laden. But without an organizer or VIP badge, there is no way of passing this gate.

I arrived alone, it is around 1 pm and I still had some time to spare before the start of the show at 2:30 pm. My hope is that this will give me the chance to meet somebody I know in advance to get invited to her or his table. In the area between the little restaurant and the entrance to the seating area, there are already plenty of people present, most of them I know by face, some by name: new and old Egyptian breeders who are at every show, representatives of the private breeders' association (EAHBA), judges, and the managing staff and organizers of the show. Mixed in-between is another group, foreigners who are almost exclusively European males and all share the same profession: Arabian horse trainers and handlers. I also know most of their faces and names. The bigger famous Egyptian farm and Arabian horse owners have contracted and flown them to Egypt to train and prepare their horses for a couple of weeks and sometimes only days before the event. They are also the ones who present and show the horses later in the ring.

Besides the horses and judges, they are the most crucial part of the show. For example, the global annual show event schedule is organized according to their availabilities.

I try to say 'hello' to some people, but as always, even though I had longer conversations with some of them in different contexts, nobody seems really interested in talking to me. So, when another group immediately dispersed after I tried to get in contact with them, I decide to take a look at the seating area and somehow find a place at a table. The main area on the ground level is divided into three sections and there is an upper level with a long terrace equipped with chairs, right next to the stairs is the technical command center for the video live-stream via Internet. On the ground level, there is a simple rule defining the table politics: size, fame, status, and wealth is directly correlated with proximity to the show ring. In other words, Egypt's biggest and most established breeders have their tables in the first section closest to the show ring, then comes the middle area of breeders with still big and good breeding programs and in the last section are seated the newcomers, underdogs from the province and visitors. Having booked a table for 2500 EGP (ca. 142 US-Dollar), the name of the farm is displayed on a card on top and it works as a symbol of membership; pragmatically and more importantly, it allows one to invite people to sit at the table and offers space for interactions.

Before coming to the different factions of breeders, let us take a final look at the show ring and the other surrounding corners. In the right corner is the merchandise booth section, which is manageable and consists of a few exhibitors for mainly equine supplementary food, veterinary and grooming equipment, bridles, bits and other horse and riding accessories. In the right corner of the ring is a lounge for the VIPs and photographers. Next to it, in the opposite side's center stands the main judging office where the judges remain during the classes who are, for reasons of impartiality, not allowed to interact with participating horse owners on the other side. Farther down, the announcements for points and classes are made and the DJ plays the music. To complete the circle, in the opposite left side, is another seating area for yet another class. Here the local grooms, farm hands, their friends and families from the surrounding villages of Abu Sir and Shabrament sit and enjoy the show. This area is sealed off from the rest of the show grounds and there is no connection to the main section without passing the second security gate at the entry. Nonetheless, both areas maintain an indirect but lively communicative relation through cheerful and supportive shouting, clapping or simply making noise at the ring's rails for particular horses (and which often causes enough problems because it can also work as a distraction). After some time of observing the dynamics between the two areas, it becomes clear that some of the breeders brought their fan groups. From time to time, they give instructive signs indicating which horses they should support.

For around half an hour, I pushed myself to engage with one of the breeders organization's board members and show organizers sitting at one of the central...

Figure 2. The show ground and processual line of showing an Arabian horse. (Own design; adaption of the Breeding & In-Hand Class Conduct-Diagram provided by the Arabian Horse Breeders Alliance (AHBA: http://www.arabianbreedersworldcup.com/scoring-system)
Table in the middle section close to the main entry to the ring together with some of the renowned breeders. Even Sheikh bin Laden passed by for a moment. But again, every attempt at communication fails. The people are generally polite but nothing develops beyond introductory small talk; my faint hope that this time everything will turn out differently disappears with every minute. More and more people arrive, mostly Egyptian breeders with their families and friends, and are immediately escorted by the staff to their tables. Or they check for themselves the farm names on top to find their table. There are also a few Europeans, some who have lived in Egypt for quite some time and have their own horse farms and breeding programs. Others just came as visitors but all of them are breeders, owners, or judges, or they have an Arabian horse-related background. Some of the new arrivals are directly invited for a seat at ‘our’ table and suddenly it becomes crowded. Chairs are shuffled around and I am being asked to change seats, so that one of the newcomers can talk directly to the board member whom I had earlier approached to gain a seat at the table. Slowly and silently, I am being pushed out of the group, culminating in the moment when the organizers distribute VIP-badges for the table and only the anthropologist comes away empty-handed. I leave unnoticed with an excuse of taking an exploratory walk. After calming myself with a few cigarettes outside in the garden, I return to a still empty table with no农场 on it in the back section and start compensating for the feeling of helplessness and incompetence at communication. Very early during my first show, I decided to adapt as much as possible to the observable practices of the show participants by basically pretending to be a full-blooded Arabian horse enthusiast. The easiest way to do so is the extensive study of the show program and the hundreds of horses it includes (see Figure 3).

In this year’s program there are a total of 212 registered horse entries which are going to be shown one by one in the coming two days in different classes sorted by sex and age; the third and last day is reserved for the championships of the earlier classes. So, I start scanning the horse entries for their breeders and owners, the number of horses with whom each of them is going to participate, for national and international breeding organizations, hoping to find out any hidden patterns. Furthermore, to test myself and see how much I have learned so far, I mark promising champion horses by genealogical superiority, which means, horses with a sire or dam that traces back to one or more of the famous elite stallions and mares in the contemporary and early Arabian breeding history. Knowledge of pedigrees proves always handy when I get involved in horse talk. But basically, I do all this just to regain control of the situation, to blend in and not to attract further attention.

Figure 3. The show program as the anthropologist’s anchor and example how scaling the event works through standardized documentation and scoring system. The colt No. 128 Assef Albedia reappears in the show sequence (Figure 4) below. (Source: private scan of the original program/field material)

The show starts with the national anthem of Egypt, and therefore everybody stands up. At this moment the main seating area is a bit more than half-full, and finally I had managed to find a group of rather young and small-scale Egyptian breeders, who share a table in the back section. Some of them I know from encounters at the state stud, the racing stables, or through the time I spent in the provincial district of Sharqiya in northeastern Egypt.

The show follows a highly standardized pattern of performance, which repeats each class of horses (see Figure 2). As said above, the classes are divided by gender and age-sets: yearlings, one to two year-old fillies/colls, two to three year-old fillies/colls, three to five year-old mares/stallions, and mares/stallions five years older. Each class is also divided into sub-groups, so that no more than 10-15 horses compete against each other. Traditionally, the Friday program starts with the classes for the fillies and mares, on Saturday the colts and stallions will be shown, and on Sunday the show concludes with several championships. All in all, this national championship show at Rabab consists of 10 classes plus the championships. Before the presentation starts, the five judges move into the center of the ring and wait for the horses. Each class opens with a collective presentation of all...
the class' participants, the horses led by their handlers walk slowly in a circle from the entry point until they are assigned to a waiting position by the ring master or one of the judges. This first stage is important for the judges because it is the moment where they get a comparative overview of the overall quality of the class/sub-class' participants. The following individual presentation is the central stage of the performance (see Figure 4: step one and two).

Figure 4. Three steps of interspecies interaction (left to right): presenting movement in hand—performing the stand-up—if successful winning a ribbon or even trophy. (Photos and design: C. Lange)

The horse enters trotting or galloping always led by its handler and accompanied by extremely loud and energetic electronic Western dance music and/or mixed with Arabic sounds that after a while create a soundscape of its own. The horse performs a circle up to the stand-up presentation area, which includes some turns and changes in direction to give an impression of its moving abilities. Reaching the central area, the big moment is close: horse and handler stand in front of the judges and perform the so-called 'hard stand-up.' Basically, the horse has to 'open up' and stretch its body, standing with accurately positioned straight legs, slightly leaning forward and while doing this, stretching its neck and head forward to the handler's hand and bottom of the whip. At this moment equally important to the overall body's stance is the position of the ears, eyes and structure of mouth, nostrils and muzzle. Horse and handler work together in full concentration. After the first stand-up session is a small moment of relaxation: Horse and handler slowly walk a line in the central area and return for a second stand-up session, giving the judges another possibility to closely examine the movement. If the choreography ultimately succeeds, the audience starts to applaud and congratulate horse and handler by loudly cheering and shouting their admiration. This is also the moment when the judges write down their points according to a 20 point-system given in half-points in five categories: 1. type; 2. head and neck; 3. body and topline; 4. legs and 5. movement. This moment marks for me (and the participants) the situational climax of the interspecies performance, which results in the composition of the Arabian horse as living sculpture: the moment when, for less than a second, time freezes, everybody holds their breath and is focused on the concrete situation of horse and handler, the moment, when both appear to fall into a state of abeyance. Afterwards, the ringmaster gives a signal to the handler and he walks the horse out to the collecting ring. The next horse-handler-duo already waits to enter the ring. This performance continues until all horses of a class or sub-class have been shown. At the end of each, the five best horses are awarded and the official results are captured in a group photo with the horse, handler, and the owner/breeder with her or his family, close friends, and allies. The first and second placed qualify for the championships. There are four championships: two junior (one to three year old) championships for fillies and colts and two senior championships (four-year old and older) for mares and stallions. In the championship, all qualified horses are collectively presented in the arena and placed in two rows according to their previous scores.

With time, one will recognize that the winners’ trophies and ribbons are not evenly distributed among the participants. In fact, most of the titles are found on very few tables in the first section and directly correspond with the big farm names and breeders of Egypt. Among breeders and professionals, the results of a class are seldom seen as a surprise but rather as confirmation of the expected. Consequently, if results differ too much from the collective expectation this always and immediately causes some upheavals, which in the majority of the cases are blamed on the misconduct or incompetency of the judges or judging system. This also happened several times during this show. These moments are crucial because one can observe how alliances and enmities between different breeders are played out during the situation of crisis and following commentary.

One last point: not everybody in the audience is equally drawn to the event. When I first started my fieldwork on these shows in 2014, I imitated the group of breeders with whom I was sharing a table at that time. Already back then, I realized that their professional interest in nearly every horse and class, expressed by writing down the results in the program’s tables (see Figure 3), is more exceptional than ordinary behavior. The above described critical moment and climax of performing the living sculpture involves first and foremost the actors co-present in the ring: horse-handler-judge(s). The extension of this situation into the audience is relatively limited and encompasses in most cases the horse’s owner/breeder and his or her peers. Exceptions are made in the case of exceptional horses, which are immediately recognizable by their entry into the ring by all participants. For the rest of the time, the audience and so-called participants of the show as social event remain tendentiously passive towards the horses and actual situation in the ring.
Many are involved in private conversations with no or little horse-related background (and how successful I was at entering these conversations is already described above). Seriously, this poses a problem for the anthropologist whose participant observational approach places him in a passive position of watching horses, and which led more than once to sole boredom, caffeine intoxication, and frustration, compensated only by an eagerness to mimic an active engagement with the situation which was shared only by a minority of the present community.

4. **Situational analysis: The interspecies performance of the Arabian horse as “living sculpture”**

The following “situational analysis” does not claim to be exhaustive, nor does the previous description of the situation. Rather, both serve as a conclusion to this chapter. Therefore, the four extensions of the extended-case method described in the first section—reflexivity, space-time, power, and theory—shall serve as guiding clues to analyze parts of the situation.

4.1 **Reflexivity**

The description above might have shed some light on the tensions, which I was confronted with when it comes to a call for change of status from observer to participant. First, after three years of research and extensive fieldwork, I would still consider myself a stranger to the situation. This is not meant as an expression of self-pity but rather to highlight the specific relational situation of the anthropologist among the wealthy and powerful elites of Egypt and elsewhere. Obviously, the classical asymmetrical power relation of the anthropologist and subjects of research is inverted; I have simply no weight in this situation, which radically limits the basis for cooperation. On the contrary, I had to learn that my presence raised suspicion and mistrust. For the majority, breeding Arabian horses is a fancy hobby; their way of expressing a unique fascination for these animals through an artful, creative and loving practice. At the same time, for a small minority, Arabian breeding is also a lucrative international business full of accusations, rumors and tales of corruption, under the table deals, money laundering, fraud and the extensive abuse of horses for mere profit. And just writing these vague lines could be to the extreme dislike to those who invest and try to maintain the former, brighter image of Arabian horse breeding as the official and only existing one. I am not an investigative journalist or federal agent who seeks to uncover criminal acts or to blow up clandestine practices and networks, but an anthropologist who seeks to understand how the global community of breeders and its interplay with local manifestations work. This poses a similar and understandable threat; of course, given that the rumors and tales hold a little truth. But it is not the place to elaborate on this topic further. I brought it up to show that the situational and directly experienced rejection and lack of interest among the members should potentially be explained by an extended perspective on the often shrugged social-economic involvements beyond the actual communicative situation (ignoring the fact that I may just be bad at small talk and networking). This is especially evident when compared and extended to other situations: living and experiencing Egypt in many settings got me very used to being the center of attention. So, besides the whistleblower risk, in the community of (cosmopolitan) elites, the luxury of being the entertaining exotic other, which honestly has been one of my most reliable and secret fieldwork virtues, does not work at all. The fact that only a very limited number of people were interested in me and my project may also be due to suspicion and mistrust; but that is not important. In order to develop a constructive approach, the situation raises the awareness for significant questions of fieldwork cooperation, its potentials and limitations. Asking the question what makes the few interlocutors different from the rest opens up not only the possibility of understanding their motives but also gaining a more comprehensive image of the community’s diversity. The second point I would like to stress in regard to situational reflexivity was already present in the closing paragraph of the last section: frankly speaking, I got bored of watching for hours and hours the repetitive performance of showing horses and frustrated with the practical challenge of participating as part of a passive audience of spectators with no direct interaction with the central performance. To make necessity a virtue, the hours I spent watching Arabian horses were most of the time driven by two motives: first, to reach the point of immersion in the situation at which I could finally understand what drives the underlying fascination for this passive activity, and second, to learn, study and practice in situ to become an accepted member of the Arabian horse community. In other words, to become an apprentice by training my vision

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10 A year later during a similar show event at Kuwait’s Arabian horse state stud an Egyptian breeder in a private conversation revealed to me that during my time in Egypt the rumor circulated that my research is only a cover for my spy and intelligence activities. Breeders were warned by phone calls not to engage with me because I could pose a threat. During the whole period many similar episodes happened.
to recognize difference; the same process all my interlocutors and all Arabian horse people went through (inspired by Grasseni 2007, 2009 and Ingold 2000).

4.2 Space-time-extension

The description above was intended to show that the Egyptian National Arabian Horse Championship at Rabab Stud from March 31 to April 2, 2016, as a particular event, already has multiple spatial and temporal dimensions, without which it could not have existed as it did. In this sense, the particular show event and situation are not simply a part or cutout of the global Arabian horse community but they are the condensed community in this particular moment. Theoretically, it is possible to take any of the present actors or any element from the show choreography and trace their relational existence back and forth through time. Unfortunately, this is an endeavor for another place and time. To give a limited number of examples, most of contemporary Arabian horses bred and shown in Egypt at the show have in their pedigrees a sire or dam traceable back to ancestors outside of Egypt somewhere in Europe and the US. The question concerning how specific blood lines of Arabian horses left the Arabian region some 150 years ago and why they relatively recently returned to their ‘homeland’ is, on the one hand, crucial for understanding transnational relations brought into being by cooperating breeders, and on the other, for understanding which status specific bloodlines hold in the contemporary Egyptian breeders’ community. Therefore, the historical circulation of spatially distant Arabians informs contemporary breeding decision, and finally, it determines which horses show up in the program of the show. With respect to the handlers and trainers and the overall conduct of show presentation, the embeddedness is more than obvious: most of them are western professionals hired and paid for services, which themselves emerged during 1970/80s in the US and spread over the world, nowadays forming rigid regimes of influential transnational organizations (like the ECAHO—the European Conference of the Arabian Horse Organization) which license, document and oversee every official show through their defined rules of conduct. This also includes the judges who receive their judging licenses and statuses on ECAHO-led or at least approved educational courses and seminars. Trying to grasp the specificity and constantly ongoing adaptations and manipulations of shows in Egypt presupposes the knowledge and influence of these regimes. Furthermore, considering this framework of international experts and rules leads to the only possible understanding of how various local and regional factions enforce their particular interests. This being said, the call for an ethnographic extension and inclusion of various show events might be immanent, not just for a comparative approach to single out local specificities but quite the opposite, namely, to experience the homogenizing impact of these standardization regimes through their limitations.

4.3 Extension of power and theory through the living sculpture

In closing, I shall return to the Mancunians. In one of his essays on ‘extending’ ritual performances to “social dramas” Victor Turner relates in a remarkably fitting way the politics involved in social dramas of all kinds to the above described situation, when he states that “the winners of social dramas positively require cultural performances to continue to legitimate their success” (Turner 1980: 155). What Turner here calls ‘cultural performance’ is nothing other than the set of situated practices, institutionalized and standardized in the rules of conduct during the show event; or in other words: the condensation of these practices in the composition of the Arabian as living sculpture. Furthermore, Turner underlines the necessity of continuous ‘competition’ to legitimate and confirm the fact that whoever has been a winner before will also be a future winner (which equally counts for all three involved main actors: Arabian horse, handler and owner/breeder). In this respect, Garfinkel’s “ongoing accomplishment of organized artful-practices of everyday life” (Garfinkel 1967: 11) comes to mind and explains, on the one hand, why the show event and its space-time-extension into international annual show schedules are of critical importance for the constitution of the global breeding scene; because precisely in the critical situation of the competition the global community is each time reborn and forced repeatedly to perform its self-legitimization. On the other hand, it is likewise the critical situation of the Arabian horse, the moment of birth of its ephemeral existence as champion during the stand-up and freezing of space-time in the center of the show ring: written down by the judges in a set of numbers, calculated by an arithmetic formula, and uploaded as a final result; all of it streamed in real-time via the Internet to the extended audience of the global breeders community. Thus, this twofold concrete situation presents itself as one of the central “generic moments” that opens up to the multiplicity of the global community’s social life. The moment’s concrete process of composing (or: interspecific assemblage of) the ephemeral living sculpture of the Arabian horse—less as an object but rather as an individual subject in its full sense—seems to summon as well the analytical singular subject of Humphrey’s “decision-event.”
REFERENCES


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**On Horseback**

**Horse-Human Situations in Trail Riding**

**Tanja Theissen**

**Abstract:** This article examines how mutual understanding between horse and human in trail riding is possible. Based on fieldwork data, different situations in trail riding are analyzed from a phenomenological perspective highlighting concepts of embodiment and emplacement. The new approach of "situationality" broadens the question of horse-human relationships. Namely, a description of the human-animal engagement in trail riding as a fixed or static relationship is shown to be insufficient. In trail riding, horse and rider are exposed to environmental influences which play an important role for the mutual understanding of horse and rider. Therefore, a horse-human situation in trail riding consists of the bodies of horse and rider as well as the environment ridden through. This article analyzes three different types of horse-human situations which are very common in trail riding and therefore significant: relaxation, exertion, and anxiety. To handle different situations, skills involving the proper responsivity of the body are essential for both horse and rider. The article concludes that the feeling of mutual understanding is primarily situational. That is what is at stake if horse and rider aren't able to jointly respond to a situation. Skilled horses and riders are more likely to establish and experience the feeling of mutual understanding during a trail ride.

1. **Introduction**

When considering horse-human situations in trail riding, first of all we have to distinguish between two senses or notions of 'situationality.' The first sense of these terms refers to a broader context for particular instances of situationality, i.e., a certain historical or local situation which is fundamental for understanding