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Improvising *Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork* Theory

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Allaine Cerwonka, Liisa H. Malkki : Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork
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helps me to calm my mind down when i come across frustration during research. See other people going through this kind of similar experience gives myself a break from pushing myself to the edge.

Scholars have long recognized that ethnographic method is bound up with the construction of theory in ways that are difficult to teach. The reason, Allaine Cerwonka and Liisa H. Malkki argue, is that ethnographic theorization is essentially improvisatory in nature, conducted in real time and in necessarily unpredictable social situations. In a unique account of, and critical reflection on, the process of theoretical improvisation in ethnographic research, they demonstrate how both objects of analysis, and our ways of knowing and explaining them, are created and discovered in the give and take of real life, in all its unpredictability and immediacy. *Improvising Theory* centers on the year-long correspondence between Cerwonka, then a graduate student in political science conducting research in Australia, and her anthropologist mentor, Malkki. Through regular e-mail exchanges, Malkki attempted to teach Cerwonka, then new to the discipline, the basic tools and subtle intuition needed for anthropological fieldwork. The result is a strikingly original dissection of the processual ethics and politics of method in ethnography.

Improvising Theory represents the stupendous outcome of what should be an ordinary procedure—the interaction between a faculty member and her advisee in the field. What makes this book so remarkable is that both sides to this correspondence maintain a tone that is richly literary. Moreover, the exchange is a model for the kind of pedagogical relationship we should all aim to have with our students.