Distribute 2020 is a virtual and distributed anthropology conference, with streaming audio-visual panels and live nodes. The theme — Distribute — attends to contemporary practices, theories, and forms of distribution and redistribution; and seeks to re-distribute the conventional conference format, promoting knowledge as a rhizomatic network of exchange. Distribute 2020 is a low-cost, highly accessible, carbon-neutral conference that might pave the way for rethinking the mega-conference model. It is a hybrid experiment in creating community through a combination of virtual conferencing and in-person nodes. Distribute 2020 is organized by the Society for Cultural Anthropology (SCA) and the Society for Visual Anthropology (SVA) in the United States. In Vienna, the Ethnocineca International Documentary Film Festival and the Vienna Visual Anthropology Lab of the University of Vienna, organize a local Vienna Distribute node on May 8th.

The Vienna Distribute node is an interactive live video session for anthropologists, anthropology students, filmmakers, festival organizers, and film producers. This is a publicly accessible session, and everyone is invited! Our goal is to keep building a Visual Anthropology community within Vienna, and internationally, despite the current situation of social distancing. In this one-hour video meet-up, we will share experiences about a topic that concerns us all: the distribution of anthropological knowledge through ethnographic films.

Ethnographic film festivals have long been the most important venue for the selection and screening of films produced by and with anthropologists, and for organizing discussions between anthropologists and wider audiences. In the current time of new media, digital networks, and ‘anthropology at home’, the ways in which anthropologists interact with audiences have been changing. With the new COVID-19 reality of mounting insecurity on the one hand, and closed theaters and university buildings on the other hand, we ask: for whom is anthropology? How does anthropological knowledge reach audiences? And, what is the enduring as well as changing role of ethnographic film festivals in this process?

Organisers:
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Katja Seidel and Marie-Christine Hartig, Co-directors of the Ethnocineca festival