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European Ethnology as Engaged Toposophy

The paper explores whether and how the perspective of European Ethnology might make a useful contribution to the study of contemporary issues, raising the question of what kind of ethnology – in terms of research practice and its theoretical foundations – would be the most appropriate and useful in this context, and what is needed to achieve this. A brief sketch of the current position and problems of the field is followed by an examination of three interconnected types of ethnology, which leads to reflections on processes of understanding and interdisciplinarity, and finally to consideration of what ethnologists can and should do, why, and how they might go about it.