



CALL FOR PAPERS
International Symposium
June 29 & 30, 2026



FICTION
& SOCIAL
SCIENCES 2

Espace Saint-Charles University Montpellier Paul-Valéry
71 Rue du Professeur Henri Serre, 34090 Montpellier
Information on: <https://santesih.edu.umontpellier.fr/congres/>

This symposium is a direct extension of the "*Fiction & Social Sciences*" meeting organized in May 2024, dedicated to contemporary articulations between fiction devices and social science methodologies. The exchanges initiated on this occasion made it possible to deepen already long-standing reflections on the relationships of competition, tension, but also complementarity between academic and fictional writing, paying particular attention to emerging practices such as fictional investigation. The central challenge was to analyze how the hybridization between the documentary and fictional genres shifts the ways of investigating, writing and re-producing research results.

The 2024 edition thus highlighted the emergence of a real "language community", bringing together researchers, writers, and artists around shared issues. It emerged that fiction cannot be reduced to a simple aesthetic ornament; it constitutes a powerful methodological and epistemological approach that allows us to explore reality in a different way. Through a reflection on "alternative writings" (comics, literary narratives, hybrid forms), we also questioned the academic legitimacy of these practices, which are capable of making visible parts of the social world that are often difficult to access through classical methods. Ultimately, this work, which led to the writing of a collective work published by Éditions Effigi, in the *In Situ* collection (to be published in June 2026), laid the groundwork for a renewed dialogue where fiction becomes a laboratory for rethinking the boundaries of sociological, anthropological and historical knowledge.

The "*Fiction & Social Sciences II*" symposium, which will be held on June 29 and 30, 2026 in Montpellier, will be an opportunity to extend this chain of thought by highlighting concrete cases of fictional investigations, while questioning their uses, their conditions of existence, their forms of dissemination and their effects. This second edition will also pay particular attention to the diversification of alternative literature, to the new publication spaces offered by the digital age, as well as to the offer for thematic workshops and performative conferences, in order to bring out collaborative exchange formats related to the themes of this symposium.

Main research questions

In France, the work of Éric Chauvier occupies an important place in the contemporary reflection on the relationship between fiction and the social sciences. It invites us to no longer think of fiction as a simple literary supplement that comes after the investigation, but as one of the very modalities by which the investigation can be written, moved, and produce intelligibility. From this perspective, the investigation is not only presented in a narrative form: it can, in some cases, be fictional in its mode of deployment, without renouncing the requirements of rigour, attention to reality and demonstration.

From *Anthropologie* (2006) to *Somaland* (2012), from *Plexiglas mon amour* (2021) to *Laura* (2020), Chauvier has contributed to opening up a workspace in which fiction no longer appears as the reverse side of the investigation, but rather as one of its possible extensions, especially when it comes to capturing experiences, experiences of language malfunctions, areas of uncertainty or forms of life that withstand the most stabilized academic formats. In this sense, fictional investigation is neither a simple literary license nor an abandonment of reality: it is a way of working on the limits of investigation, of inhabiting its blind spots, and of exploring its descriptive and critical powers.

These considerations resonate with the work of James Clifford & George E. Marcus (1986), Clifford Geertz (1973), Kirin Narayan (2012), Ivan Jablonka (2017) and Marc-Henry Soulet (2021), each of whom has contributed, in different contexts, to the reflection concerning the issues of writing, reflexivity, authority, narration and restitution in social sciences. This symposium thus wishes to offer a space for discussion around the heuristic, methodological, epistemological, political, religious and public uses of fiction within social sciences.

In order to structure this reflection, the conference proposes three lines of discussion. The first will question the uses of fictional inquiry in the production of knowledge and the shifts it introduces in the ways of writing, describing and reproducing reality. The second will examine the conditions of publication, legitimation and institutional circulation of these forms of writing, which are still often peripheral within the academic space. Lastly, the third will focus on the public uses of fiction in the mediation of social sciences, as well as on the forms of collaboration that it makes possible between researchers, artists, and professionals in cultural dissemination.

Line 1. Fictional investigation, writing and knowledge production

The articulation between fiction and social sciences can be explored in several ways. Some works emphasize the resources of non-fiction literature to reinforce the reflexivity, description, and analytical scope of social sciences. Others, in the wake of Clifford or Geertz, invite us to think of the writing of the investigation as an operation of formatting, composition and narrative construction, without however reducing it to a lying fabrication.

The 2024 conference thus invited us to go beyond the classic opposition between scientific truth and narrative construction in order to consider fiction as a legitimate mode of knowledge. Beyond the debate on the veracity of the narratives, the aim was to analyze the heuristic gains of the "fictional investigation" (Soulet, 2022), understood as a device that allows the investigation to be pushed beyond strict factuality to better grasp the concrete experience, a place where the most traditional methods run out of steam. From this perspective, fiction can become, for Chauvier, a pragmatic necessity to combat spaces of non-knowledge, to work on uncertainty, to exemplify situations, or to approach what remains difficult to express in the social world. Other researchers use similar devices to circumvent the resistance of the field (Milhé, 2020; Jounin, 2021), to reconstruct sensitive experiences, or to extend empirical work in less conventional forms. The challenge of this axis will therefore be to discuss what such approaches imply in terms of writing strategies, relationship to materials, staging of characters, status of evidence, reception and scientific validity.

Proposals may include:

- contemporary forms of fictional investigation;
- the empirical uses of fiction in an investigation;
- the heuristic gains of fictional narration;
- the relationship between fiction, truth, verisimilitude and demonstration;
- the use of fiction to reconstruct experiences that are difficult to document;
- the ethical and methodological implications of these devices.

Line 2. Publishing fictional investigations: editorial spaces, legitimacy, dissemination

While fictional or hybrid writings now occupy a more visible place within social sciences, their forms still have difficulty fitting in with the ordinary procedures of academic validation. The standards for the presentation, evaluation and promotion of research remain largely structured by stabilized formats, which are often not conducive to the recognition of experimental narratives, uncalibrated writings or hybrid editorial elements.

This second axis intends to deepen a dimension that was still left unresolved in the discussions initiated in 2024: that of the editorial and institutional anchoring of this type of work. Writing against the dominant genres, disregarding expected formats or shifting the boundaries between research, narrative and creation often amounts to proposing a different division of the sensitive, but also to confronting specific constraints: difficulties of evaluation, uncertainties about the places of publication, tensions with career norms, institutional fragility of certain productions. The existence of the *In Situ* collection, published by the Éditions Effigi, which will host the work resulting from the 2024 symposium, testifies to this desire to open up publication spaces

for investigative narratives and alternative writing. But what are the other possible editorial avenues? What roles do publishing houses, journals, digital platforms, cross-disciplinary collections, and artistic or cultural structures play in the dissemination of this work? What forms of recognition — or marginalization — accompany these writing choices?

Proposals may question:

- the conditions for the publication of fictional investigations;
- the relationship between format innovation and scientific legitimacy;
- the institutional, professional and symbolic effects of these writing choices;
- editorial policies favourable to hybrid writing;
- concrete experiences of publication, reception and dissemination.

Line 3. Fiction, mediations and public dissemination of social sciences

This axis questions the uses of fiction in the dissemination of social sciences to non-academic audiences. Whether for sociology, anthropology or history, storytelling can be used as a powerful vector of mediation. During the May 2024 symposium, comics occupied an important place in the exchanges. However, other forms of valorization deserve to be explored further: theatre, cinema, sound creation, art exhibitions, performances, digital devices, podcasts, visual or scenic writing.

The aim here is to reflect on the forms by which social sciences circulate outside of the academic space, sometimes borrowing the codes of fiction or sensitive narrative. The symposium will thus make it possible to analyse the concrete modalities of collaboration between researchers and artists, between researchers and professionals in the world of theatre, cinema, publishing, museums or audiovisual sectors. Beyond the creative approach, the challenge will also be to understand the institutional devices, economic models, material constraints and forms of public reception that make these hybrid productions possible.

Proposals may relate to:

- the uses of fiction in the popularization and mediation of science;
- collaborations between researchers and artists;
- the scenic, visual, auditive or editorial forms of research dissemination;
- the institutional and economic conditions of these projects;
- the effects of these mediations on the very writing of research.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Oral presentations will be made in French. Each presentation will last 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes of discussion.

Proposals should include:

- the title of the communication;
- the name of the author(s);
- institutional affiliation;
- an email address;
- an abstract of 300 words maximum;
- 5 keywords specifying the themes and scientific fields concerned;
- where applicable, an indication of the axis in which the submission is based.

Applications should be submitted before **May 25, 2026** to the following email addresses:
eric.perera@umontpellier.fr ; yann.beldame@free.fr

Information: <https://santesih.edu.umontpellier.fr/congres/>

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

The International Symposium on "Fiction and Social Sciences" will be held **on June 29 and 30, 2026** at the MSH-Sud Montpellier. It is co-organized by the following HSS laboratories:

- SantESiH (Health, Education, Situations of Disability, UR_UM211, University of Montpellier) SOC division ;
- RiRRa21 (Representing, Inventing Reality, from Romanticism to the Twenty-First Century) of the Université Montpellier Paul-Valéry ;
- CRISES (Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences) EA 4424 of the Université Montpellier Paul-Valéry ;
- UMR SENS (Knowledge, Environment, Societies) of the Université Montpellier Paul-Valéry.

In collaboration with the Institute for Sports-Health Sciences of Paris (I3SP - EA 3625) and the support of the CONTACT association (association of young researchers of Montpellier)

The organizing committee is composed of:

- Yann Beldame: Associate Researcher - University of Montpellier
- Eric Perera: Professor - University of Montpellier
- Jérôme Soldani: Lecturer – Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 University
- Godefroy Lansade: Lecturer - Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 University
- Pierre Philippe-Meden: Lecturer – Paul-Valery University Montpellier 3

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE (provisional)

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