

BOOK REVIEWS

ANDERSEN, ASTRID OBERBORBECK, ANNE LINE DALSGÅRD, METTE LIND KUSK, MARIA NIELSEN, CECILIE RUBOW AND MIKKEL RYTTER (eds) 2020. *Anthropology Inside Out: Fieldworkers Taking Notes*. Canon Pyon: Sean Kingston Publishing. 227 p. ISBN: 9781912385218 (paperback); ISBN: 9781907774232 (E-book).

Some time ago I attended a course in creative writing where one of the exercises was writing a fieldwork note on a symphony concert as an alien anthropologist. After the feedback, I got a feeling that as a professional anthropologist I had a somehow different idea of writing ethnographical notes than expected in the exercise. My fictional note included impressions of a strange culture, but also key words, questions, and initial interpretations. Making purely objective observations seemed to be impossible to me. What kind of texts are fieldwork notes actually supposed to be?

Even though fieldwork notes are considered to be the basis of ethnographic methodology, or even anthropologists' professional identity, very little is written about the actual notes, or the process of writing them. *Anthropology Inside Out* aims to fix that. The book consists of ten chapters, in addition to an introduction and 'end notes', in which various anthropologists from Danish universities reveal pages from their notebooks, and the astonishingly personal stories and emotions behind them. Already the first research cases, an urban environmental project (by Fritsch, Hedegaard and Rubow) and a challenge with archived field notes (Pedersen and Rømer), reveal the variation of ethnographic studies. The next chapter (Ahl) presents an exhibition of original pages of notebooks, which turns out to be a surprisingly sensitive topic, as

the quality of fieldwork notes is found to be the mark of professionalism as an anthropologist.

The following chapters deal with seemingly insignificant experiences, such as watching movies with interlocutors (Frederiksen), dust in a Brazilian town (Nielsen), and Brazilian flip-flops as everyday footwear in a Brazilian favela and a fashion item in an European city (Dalsgård). However, all of them lead to further considerations of politics, power, and the material environment around the process of writing ethnography. The authors emphasize that material objects from the field are significant because they provide an alternative document of the material and sensory world whose rendition into writing is only ever accomplished partially.

Sensory and emotional aspects of ethnography are evident in drawings and video material, which are also covered in the chapters about participatory observation among a religious community (Schütt) and in a court in Uganda (Kusk). One of the chapters (Vium) deals with new interpretations of old, archived photos of Australian aboriginal women in a post-colonial spirit. In that study, old ethnography serves as a basis for the new one.

The book also considers ethical dilemmas of fieldwork. Especially thought-provoking is the chapter considering anthropological research in Egypt after the revolution (Thorsen). Thorsen feels that local people are suspicious

because they consider contacts with a foreign anthropologist to be a risk. People are arrested or even shot for no real reason. In those kinds of circumstances every field note could be dangerous for the participants of the study, which demands lots of consideration on how to write and store the notes. Finally, paranoia creeps into the mind of the ethnographer.

I think that Thorsen's experiences reflect the emotions and considerations of many researchers dealing with controversial topics. Even in democratic societies being associated with suspicious ideologies or counter-cultures may bring on serious consequences, which must be taken into consideration in fieldwork.

Anthropology Inside Out is definitely a book I would have loved as a student, but it also leads a post-doc to contemplate her established fieldwork practices. According to the introductory chapter, the editors aim this book to students conducting their first fieldwork just as well as more experienced fieldworkers. In my opinion, the book successfully reaches its goals. All chapters are thrilling, entertaining, and reader-friendly. In *Anthropology Inside Out*, ethnographical writing, or writing about ethnography, converges with literary prose.

Although I am ready to praise this book, it has some minor limitations. All the case studies in the book represent traditional fieldwork where the field is located in a specific geographical place and the ethnographer can follow the interlocutors in their everyday practices. These days, many anthropologists work, for instance, with virtual communities or hazy communities, which are actualized only on certain occasions.

The members of these communities do not necessarily know each other, but they know that there are others who share similar values and dreams. One example are so called neo-tribes.

Of course, experiences from fieldwork with traditional communities can be applied to online ethnography and new kinds of communities. However, I ended up contemplating where is the field in cases such as my recent anthropology-at-home research project which focused on modern meanings of traditional Finnish patriotic and military songs. Interviewing members of a choir about our wartime musical heritage during their gathering is a quite traditional way to work in the field. But, if I follow some of the choir members to their homes, I will see life of middle-aged, middle class persons, which do not differ very much from my own life even though I do not sing in a choir. What are the occasions where observations are made?

Anthropology Inside Out is a useful book for both students and their teachers. It gives very practical ideas on how to learn to do fieldwork. However, reading it arouses a feeling of envy. For instance, one chapter presented a huge fieldwork exercise project with a hundred ethnographers doing fieldwork for one day (instead of one ethnographer and a hundred days). This would not be possible at a university where the few colleagues just strive to survive all their everyday duties.

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