



Among “The Others”: Migration and Gender and the Ethnographic Approach

Prof. Karin Widerberg

University of Oslo

April 2007

Introduction	3
From “there, then and them”	4
Some characteristics.....	7
The male gaze of ethnography	8
The Second Ethnographer	8
The Gender Situation of Fieldwork.....	9
From How Culture does Gender to How Gender does Culture	10
Feminist dilemmas and challenges	11
Gender deceit – Knowledge deceit?	11
The Gender Gaze of Feminist Ethnographers	12
From Insider/Outsider to Both/Neither.....	12
Establishing a Non-Oppressive Research Relation.....	13
The Relations in and of the Ethnographic Text/The othering in and of the Ethnographic Text.....	14
Post-Ethnography? Ethnography in the post – era	15
Global Ethnography – Extending the Local	18
Global Ethnography – Migration Research as an Example.....	19
Institutional Ethnography – an Ethnography of Today?	21
A Method of Inquiry	22
The term Institutional Ethnography	23
Institutional Ethnography - a Solution to some of the Dilemmas Confronting Ethnography of Today?	24
Institutional Ethnography – an Approach open to (Post-) Modern Challenges; the Text, Technical Development, Global In-Equality and Postcolonial Critique.	26
The Importance of Being Earnest – Journalistic Uses and Misuses of Ethnographic Approaches.	29
The Bookseller of Kabul	30
Lessons for the future	31
BIBLIOGRAPHY	33

Introduction¹

Ethnography is an approach based on the idea that social processes should be studied and understood in their wider social and cultural contexts (holistic aim). By spending a considerable amount of time in a social setting, an inside description and understanding of the praxis of everyday life and the perspectives that this praxis generates is made possible. And in making sense of everyday life all kinds of sources, materials and methods should be used. Ethnography is accordingly an approach potentially encompassing all the methods described in the other chapters of this book. It is a way to go about describing and explicating a group or a culture, institution or society where a combination of methods, materials and analyses are recommended. As such it represents the ideal meeting ground for interdisciplinary research. In this chapter I shall focus my presentation of ethnography on this very issue; that is, on its possibilities as an integrative research approach. I shall discuss and illustrate – through examples of studies done, especially on migration - how it can be used within the Social Sciences and the Humanities, but also how the approach as such invites a borrowing of perspectives and methods from each camp, resulting in true interdisciplinary research.

The changes within ethnography have been paradigmatic, reflecting the global changes – economical, technical, political and intellectual – in which context it has evolved and developed over the last century. That fieldwork – of one kind or another - is at the core of the ethnographic approach has probably sharpened the debates on issues of general importance within qualitative research. The role of the researcher in the knowledge gained, the “othering” of the “others” and so forth, are issues less likely to be ignored when you are there on the spot and among your informants. But it is precisely these challenges that have made ethnography not only open to new perspectives and interdisciplinary thinking but also highly reflective as to its own endeavour. Here I shall briefly present this development so as to illuminate its possibilities as an integrative research approach, but also to demonstrate what it has to offer more generally to improve the quality of both qualitative research and ethnographically inspired journalism. In this overview the gendering of ethnography - making the gender of previous and present ethnography an issue - will be highlighted. As the “other”, feminist ethnographers are challenged to

¹ Ida Hjelde has written the section on Global Ethnography, and has assisted in proof reading and editing this chapter.

epistemological stances and explorations that further the development of ethnography as an integrative research approach. The theme migration illustrates how fruitful the feminist and gender perspectives can be as well as illuminating the new challenges and approaches – such as Global Ethnography - this theme generate. All this I aim to illustrate here, as well as presenting examples of research that can inspire to the use of the approach also on new themes and in new settings. As such Institutional Ethnography is finally presented as an approach developed by a feminist to meet the challenges from both the Humanities and the Social Sciences in developing “a method of inquiry” not about people but for people. In Institutional Ethnography the relation between epistemology, theory and method is clearly stated and the implications for empirical research accordingly drawn. Hereby the lack of such connections in most text-books in qualitative methods is also made both visible and problematic. Cases of ethnographic inspired journalism – one good and one bad example – closing the chapter, are presented as illustrations of the importance of the ethnographic know-how outside academia, especially to journalists.

From “there, then and them”

Ethnography is an approach used and developed by social science oriented researchers, predominately sociologists and anthropologists. But while other approaches have competed about the attention of the social scientists in general, ethnography was made the one and only method for the anthropologists. As its trademark ethnography is often equated with anthropology. Ethnography, as we shall see, is however an approach used by and profiting by the use of the social sciences and the humanities more broadly.

The more specific origins of ethnography are stated to be the writings of travellers wanting to inform their fellows about other societies and cultures (Hammersley 1998:2). The existence of such an interest in “the foreign” can in turn be traced back to the expansion of trade and colonialism. Anthropology as a discipline evolved and developed in the hayday of British colonialism when knowledge about the “foreign subjects” was of vital importance in the ruling of the colonies. How these relations have coloured - and yet may colour - “the gaze” of the ethnographer, that is, influence its founding traditions on how to go about “writing culture”, is a recurrent issue within ethnography, an issue I shall accordingly raise throughout this chapter. Before embarking on a brief overview of the history of ethnography, it is important to stress that the aim here is only to highlight some important characteristics and moments, traces that mark the ethnography of today.

In the nineteenth century anthropologists tended to rely on reports of travellers and missionaries. Since these reports seemed “flawed” by unsystematic methods and speculative analysis and evaluations, it became widely accepted at the turn of the 20th century that it was necessary for anthropologists to “gather” their own data (Hammersley 1998:3). In the beginning this took the form of expeditions where artefacts, both material and non-material (for example myths), were collected. With Bronislaw Malinowski (1922) - the founding father of anthropology and the ethnographic approach - came the requirement that to be scientific, the researcher had to live among the people being studied, learn their language and observe their lives firsthand.

Case study 1; Malinowski's Argonauts of the Western Pacific.

In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Malinowski 1922), an ethnographic classic and one of Malinowski's most famous works, he explicates and illustrates in great detail how to proceed to produce scientific ethnography and the kind of knowledge such an approach make possible. Over a period of six years, he made three “expeditions” to the Trobriand Islands, staying there in total about two years. He lived alone that is, as the only white, in a tent among the huts in the village, so as to have access to the daily life of the “savages”. He observed them and partook in their activities and learnt their language. The purpose was to understand their culture and social life from their point of view and not (re-)produce our – the Western – view. As a tool a scientific approach was elaborated and used; thorough descriptions of all activities but also verbal expressions were documented (in writing and through photos). And, he underlined, it is the everyday activities and not the spectacular events and actions, that were (to be) focused. All this material, together with field-notes and diaries have been systematized so as to make it possible for the reader to see and judge the researcher – in this case his own – interpretations, just like – he argues - you do in experimental sciences. In this book (of more than 500 pages) the material has been systematized so as to present “Kula” – the system of economic activities and gifts – the heart of the social life and culture of the Trobriands. He describes how “goods” are produced for exchange with other tribes and how this exchange implies far-reaching social relations, also geographically speaking. The goods can only be owned temporarily, they circulate between men, and they owe their very value to this circulation. It is the magic embedded not only in the goods as such but in all of its moments of production and circulation, that makes them so desirable. To possess these goods is “exhilarating, comforting and soothing in itself” (Malinowski [1922]1984:511). Revealing the intricate and complex system of Kula, Malinowski argues that many of our understandings of both them and us are challenged. The “savages” are obviously not primitive, in a cultural and social sense, they just do cultural and social life differently from us. The role of magic in economic activity among the Trobriands also generate reflections about the origin of wealth and value and of trade and economic relations in general. And the influence of various aspects of cultural institutions on one another, he claims, even calls for a new kind of theory” (Malinowski [1922]1984:516). But most importantly the knowledge presented is made an explicit argument for an epistemological approach with humanitarian aims.

“Though it may be given to us for a moment to enter into the soul of a savage and through his eyes to look at the outer world and feel ourselves what it must feel to *him* to be himself – yet our final goal is to enrich and deepen our own world's vision, to understand our own nature and to make it finer, intellectually and artistically... The Science of Man, in its most refined and deepest version should lead us to such knowledge and to tolerance and generosity, based on the understanding of other men's point of view” (Malinowski [1922]1984:517-518).

Such an epistemological approach, accompanied by such a scientific rigour, has set the standard and been the role- model within ethnographic research since then. But it is also this very approach, as we shall see below, that has been the foundation for the ever ongoing critique of its premises. What, more specifically, for example a gender perspective can bring to the above study by Malinowski's, is illustrated in the example on page 13.

When moving "home" to ethnographic studies of our own cultures in the 1920's, the same requirements were raised. The Chicago School of Sociology made ethnographic studies of the varied cultures of the town its trademark. Here case studies of areas of the city as well as city organizations and even individual people were performed with an ethnographic approach. So called "community studies" were another branch on the ethnographic tree in that period, implying the use of methods developed when studying foreign societies to the study of Western societies. The "Middletown study" by Robert and Helen Lynd, is the most famous example hereof (Lynd and Lynd 1929).

Under the influence of the increasingly prestigious and expanding "hard core sciences" the ethnographic approach developed to be more systematic and rigorous. More direct observations were emphasised as well as "objective" accounts and descriptions not coloured by one's own or the subjects' assumptions. And research techniques and analytical tools to make this happen were developed. A platform for doing "scientific ethnography" was developed which remained a resource even when its very assumptions about objective and scientific knowledge were challenged. Trying to be rigorous and systematic and be reflective about the endeavour, had made the quality of ethnographic research outstanding in relation to other kinds of qualitative research of that time.

Due to the quantitative turn within the social sciences after the Second World War, in which their surveys could prove them both legitimate (scientific) and useful in the development of planned economies and well-fare societies, ethnographic approaches lost some of their appeal both within and outside Academia. But with the 1960's and 1970's came the leftist and feminist movements and the critique of positivism. A qualitative turn within the social sciences now revived theoretical approaches such as symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and ethnomethodology, paving the way for a renewed interest in ethnographic approaches. Deviance, medicine and education were then the most frequent areas chosen for such studies.

Until the next turn – "the post-turn": poststructuralism, postcolonialism and so forth – ethnography was mainly used and influenced by the social sciences. So before focusing

on ethnography after the Humanities entered the scene, let us try to characterize the ethnography of yesterday and focus on the feminist use and critique of the approach up till then.

Some characteristics

The term ethnography relates both to the research process and to the product hereof. Although tightly linked and related, they can be analyzed and discussed separately. How traditions for writing, genres – such as for example travelling Writing – affects the research process of “writing culture” – is an issue I shall return to at the next bend. Here I shall focus on the research process since that was the main topic for debate before the “post-turn”.

When the dominant paradigms were positivism and naturalism (roughly until the 1960's), ethnographers developed fieldwork methods along those lines. As a positivist inspired ethnographer one would seek to produce objective accounts through scientific methods that imply a detachment between the knower and “the objects”. The knowledge produced should be replicable, “unbiased” by the researchers' views. Observation could accordingly not be participatory in a sense that implied that the researcher interacted (understood as interference) with “the objects”. Interviews had to be likewise designed and performed. The view that the social world should be studied in its “natural” state, undisturbed by the researcher, was shared by the naturalists. But where the positivists had their primary commitment to a conception of scientific method, the naturalists had their primary commitment to be true to the nature of the phenomenon under study (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 3-10). However, both appealed to the model of natural science, although in different ways, and as a result they were both committed to the idea that the social phenomenon under study could and should be understood and described as existing independently of the researcher.

Techniques and procedures developed during the dominance of these paradigms have survived but been given a new content when used under new epistemological and theoretical headings. Something most text books in ethnography is a proof of, just look at the table of contents! It should also be stressed that ethnographic researchers of the past quite often combined theoretical approaches (such as for example structuralism) with positivistic research methods and relations. But what they did not do and what in the 1960s and 1970s came out as new from the critique of positivism and the renewed interest in Symbolic Interactionism and Phenomenology, was the reflection on the researcher's role in

the ethnographic production of knowledge. A reflection intended to increase the quality of the research by shedding light at the very conditions of the production of knowledge. One such vital condition was of course gender, brought to the surface by the feminists with the aim to problematize the implicit or explicit gender of ethnography. To what extent had the male gaze affected not only what and who was studied but also how, that is the methodological and analytical tools? And if the male gaze was unreflectively used did this not lead to not only partial but falsely partial accounts since its gender context and relations were not made visible or thematized?

The male gaze of ethnography

Gender as a theme and relation has always been at the core of ethnographic studies of foreign cultures and societies. Alongside age, gender has been viewed as the founding organizing and structuring principle of most societies. And maybe it was this self-evident and vital role of gender in ethnographic studies that made a feminist and a gender perspective seem less relevant here than in other approaches. Yet it was to be the feminist critique of the gender of ethnography that was the forerunner of the issues raised through post-structuralism. So what then did this critique amount to?

The Second Ethnographer

First of all it is important to stress that there were female ethnographers from the very start of the discipline and even before then since women travellers were significant travelling writers. In fact it was a woman, Margaret Mead, who made ethnographic studies on gender relations publicly known to a degree that should have made her a “classic” (Mead 1949). But as the feminist history indicates, she - like quite a few of the female ethnographers - was silenced. Not being cited and/or devalued, female ethnographers have not made it into the Canon (Lutz 1990 in Behar 1995:26, note 26).

In *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Clifford and Marcus [eds.] 1986) this was blatantly visible. Besides having just one female contributor – out of eleven – the editor James Clifford managed to explain the exclusion of women ethnographers from the book by stating that their writings failed to fit the requirement of being feminist *and* textually innovative (Clifford 1986:19-20).

Since this book became a cornerstone in the ethnography of the post-modern era, a modern classic, feminists were mobilized to react. *Women Writing Culture* (Behar and Gordon [eds.] 1995) was one such response addressing this issue more directly. Here it is

argued that women had indeed written “experimentally” throughout the last century, crossing the border between literature and anthropology, but that this tended to be viewed as “confessional” and “popular” (Behar 1995:4). The personal voice was accordingly undermined when used by a woman but reclassified as “reflexive” and “experimental” when used in men’s ethnographic accounts (Behar 1995:4). It was further argued that the theoretical voice of women ethnographers had encountered the same fate.

The feminist classic *Women, Culture and Society* (Rosaldo and Lamphere [eds.] 1974) – paraphrasing the classic *Man, Culture and Society* (Shapiro [ed.]1956) – offering a major paradigm shift in the theorizing of anthropology as an intellectual, political and cultural practice, was deemed outdated and even conservative by the “writing culture gang” a decade later. The mark of theory seems ultimately male controlled and to be a woman writing culture accordingly a contradiction in terms: Women who wrote experimentally were not feminist enough, while women who wrote as feminists wrote in ignorance of the textual theory that underpinned their own texts (Behar 1995:5).

The Gender Situation of Fieldwork

The whole issue of the gender and gender situation of the ethnographer at fieldwork was not brought up until feminists used it as an illustration of the andocentric male gaze of ethnography. Being a woman defines the access to the field and the field as such quite differently from when being a man. Doing fieldwork implies stepping into and negotiating a gender structure. Different spheres and relations might be opened or “offered” for participation and investigation to the male and female ethnographer respectively. Representing mankind, also in the eyes of the “others” and writing about “general issues” (viewing women’s issues as specific issues or “just gender issues”) might explain why the gender and gender situation of the male ethnographer has not troubled them enough to make it an issue regarding the relations of the productions of knowledge.

It is however not just a question of restrictions and openings “over there” but also of restrictions and support at “home”. As the feminist history of ethnography suggests, quite a few of the male ethnographers had their wives with them while doing fieldwork (Behar 1995: 16-17). And their wives’ “support and help” often amounted to quite substantial work; doing interviews, observations, writing field-notes, reports and so forth. Men accompanying female ethnographers seem rather to have played the opposite role; they were door-openers or guards rather than an unpaid and officially and scientifically unrecognized labour-force (Wolf 1996: 8-9). Being “the other” it was accordingly

“natural” for the female ethnographer to force not just gender issues but the very issues of “othering” to the foreground.

From How Culture does Gender to How Gender does Culture

While traditional ethnography had focused on how culture does gender, feminists now also focused on how gender - men and women - does culture. This implied a rereading and a redoing of the classics - for example the study of Malinowski presented previously.

Case study 2; Redoing Malinowski – Weiner’s Women of value Men of Renown. New Perspectives in Trobriand Exchange.

In the beginning of the 1970’s, Annette B. Weiner did two expeditions to the Trobriand Islands, staying in total about a year. Just like Malinowski she lived in a tent in a village close to and quite similar to the one Malinowski had visited. And just like him it was the everyday life and activities that were in focus, implying that economic and magic activities, once again became the core issues. But being a woman she was both invited to partake in women’s activities as well as having as a goal of her own to make women more visible as subjects in the picture of the Trobriand community and culture. By observing and partaking in women’s activities, especially those around mortuary ceremonies, a system of wealth which the women both controlled and received public acknowledgement for, was unravelled. And not only that, it was found – and said - that the men worked for the women so as to enhance the wealth of the women (Weiner 1976:14). Women accordingly engage in both production and transaction - just like the men - and in these processes each gender rely on each other. But they do produce different kinds of values and accordingly exert different kinds of power (Weiner 1976: 120). While male valuables are significantly more politically charged than female valuables, her wealth exceeds explicit individual control because women control a cosmic sphere (ahistorical time) to which men are denied access (Weiner 1976: 120). By making women and their activities visible, a different understanding than Malinowski’s of both gender and culture is produced. Sex is for example not a “service women do for men” –as Malinowski put it - but something women initiate and pursue out of own interests and on their own accord. And making women’s power visible, male power over women – as Malinowski saw it – is reformulated to an issue of different kinds of power. Opening up for different kinds of power, the system of Kula, is also re-interpreted. The Malinowskian understanding of “giving for the sake of giving” has according to Weiner tended to obscure the nature of power and controls underlying exchange events (Weiner 1976: 220). The reason for this misunderstanding in its turn is most likely due to the fact that Malinowski avoided symbolic analysis, instead making the surface structure of what people said, the organizing principle for understanding the native’s world. But, Weiner, argues, exchanges given in the name of “love” and “generosity” are neither ideals nor norms but rhetoric devices. They serve as a disguise, presenting people with a degree of freedom in behaviour while simultaneously communicating the significance of the game without confusion in anyone’s mind (Weiner 1976: 223). The Malinowskian understanding of both the gift and the gender system have been the more or less unquestioned foundation for a vast majority of ethnographic studies (Weiner 1976: 211-236), hereby reproducing not only a male view of the world in which women and their role are made invisible but also a deficient understanding of culture. Male domination is perhaps not so general and pervasive as we have been made to believe?!

New questions and themes were also raised. One such example is the famous *The Traffic in Women* (Rubin 1975) focusing on women’s role in symbolic exchange transactions. The focus on how gender fashions culture implied - as stated above - a problematization also of the role of the gender of the ethnographer when writing culture.

And since these kinds of reflections played a major role in the development of the methodology of the approach I shall focus on them here.

Feminist dilemmas and challenges

Several feminists have expressed an “awkwardness” about the conjunction of ethnography and feminism. Some have related this to the difficulty in maintaining the premise of anthropology as a Self in relation to an Other in a context where the feminist researcher is herself an Other to Patriarchy’s Self (Behar 1995:14). Others have found the basic premise of ethnography, that the research product is ultimately that of the researcher, however modified or influenced by informants, incompatible with the feminist “power politics”. What feminists share is accordingly the focus on power. Power as a topic or dimension to make visible when investigating gender relations and culture but also as an issue to problematize regarding the very relations of production of knowledge. As such these two orientations inform each other. The way we do gender and power in everyday life, might also be done in the research relations and vice versa. And it is this productive reflection – being the other, seeing the other other – that is the feminist contribution to the development of the ethnographic approach.

Opting for equality and a knowledge promoting liberation, what dilemmas more specifically is it then that the feminists encounter throughout the research process and how do they try to solve them?

Gender deceit – Knowledge deceit?

Entering the field female ethnographers may be treated as androgynous, as honorary males, as children or as feeble-minded beings that need protection (Wolf 1996:8). Yet their race, class and/or Western culture might give them authority and privilege, thereby compensating for their secondary gender status. It is however believed that women researchers, regardless of race, are more pressured than men to conform to local gender norms (Wolf 1996: 8). The issue of dress – wearing for example a veil or a burka, or not being allowed to wear such outfits – and where, when and how to walk, talk and look – for example not talk to or meet the gaze of men or having to do the opposite – is maybe the most obvious but maybe not the most problematic issue when adapting to gender norms in the field. Expected to be married, to marry or to have sex, is even more troubling. Female ethnographers therefore easily end up lying about themselves, in more than one sense of

the word, so as to gain access to the field. They might draw upon patriarchal relations to gain access and play upon their race, class and gender when it is deemed helpful.

The awkwardness and ambivalence the female ethnographer feels when playing a gender role that is not hers, is one thing. The other thing is the ethical dilemma it generates, founding the relations with the subjects on a kind of deception. Finally, the very knowledge produced can also be questioned. What was her role actually, how was it perceived and how did it function as signal or stimuli for herself and to the subjects under investigation? How the female ethnographers have solved these kinds of dilemmas has of course varied with context and situation. The feminist perspective in and of their research has however made them more aware and reflective of these issues, and bringing them to the forefront in their writing, they have contributed to the general development of the ethnographic approach.

The Gender Gaze of Feminist Ethnographers

The impact of the gender and gender situation of the ethnographer can however also be exaggerated, if other structuring principles, such as class and race, are made less visible. Feminists have been criticized for interpreting things only in terms of gender when they can be interpreted just as much in class and race terms, or rather as illustrating the intersectionality of all these principles. That being a white woman is also to have a colour and a race, is a fact that of course also needs to be reflected upon regarding the relations of production of knowledge and the knowledge hereby produced. This is the core issue of the postcolonial critique and accordingly something I shall come back to when presenting the challenges of the ethnographic approach today.

From Insider/Outsider to Both/Neither

The whole issue of the productive role of being either “insider/outsider/both/neither” is of course also raised by feminists. Both insiders – studying a group one belongs to – and outsiders, can claim that their respective position has its merits. There are but few studies that have actually “tested” or explored both positions simultaneously. One study though, where an Anglo researcher and a Chicana researcher interviewed the same Chicana women with the same set of questions, found that it did affect what was being told and how (Tixier y Vigil and Elsasser 1976, referred to in Wolf 1996: 15). With the “white researcher” the Chicana women were more open about sex and bodily functions, while they spoke more freely about discrimination with the Chicana researcher. As such the study is an example

that is not just or even primarily about “right” or “wrong” gender, race, class - being insider or outsider - but about different kinds of knowledge gained through different positionalities.

Quite a few female ethnographers experience that they have been neither insider nor outsider but both simultaneously, having a dual identity either from education, living in two cultures or through family or marriage relations. This double gaze can be made into an epistemological position, enabling a critique of both positions and their knowledge outcomes. In the field, if used and explored, it can be a most fruitful tool for both insights and critique.

But being both insider and outsider of course allows the possibility of being “neither”. Reflections on these issues have illustrated the complexity of positionality and has led to a critique of the simplicity of the dichotomy of the insider-outsider category. “How native is a native anthropologist? How foreign is one from abroad?” (Narayan 1993, cited in Wolf 1996:17). Ethnographers exhibits a “‘multiplex subjectivity’ with many cross-cutting identifications”[....]”We are all incipiently bi-(or multi-)cultural in that we belong to worlds both personal and professional, whether in the field or at home” (Narayan 1993, cited in Wolf 1996:17). So maybe it is time within ethnography to shift focus from the “politics of positionality” to the “politics of intercultural perception and interaction” (Narayan 1993, cited in Wolf 1996: 18)? This is at least what the postcolonial critique aims at bringing forth.

Establishing a Non-Oppressive Research Relation

But what about the positionality and voices of the research subjects? In the discussion above it was the positionality and “gaze” of the researcher that was the focus. Even though this of course frames the relations to the research subjects, very different attempts can be made to try to establish a non-oppressive research relation. While some have argued for a down-playing of differences so as to reach a more egalitarian relationship, others argue that such an ideology of equality between the researcher and her subjects in fact “reintroduced the notion of value free science in a new guise, obscuring the differences of their roles and the power complexity of their relationship” (Gorelick 1991, cited in Wolf 1996: 19). A relation similar to friendship may end up being more manipulative than traditional positivist methods in which there is no guise of solidarity, empathy or friendship. It is not possible, some would accordingly argue, to write about the oppressed without becoming one of the oppressors. I would however argue - and do so later on in the chapter- that there

are ways out of this dilemma, presented by Global Ethnography and Institutional Ethnography.

Another way of dealing with the unequal research relation has been to engage in acts of reciprocity. But then it is more a way to express gratitude or rid oneself of guilt than a tool to improve the knowledge produced. Helping out - gifts, money, information and practical aid - might then even include sharing the book royalties the fieldwork may result in. It should however be stressed that the very study or interview in itself might be of benefit to the subjects, in one way or the other.

Reflecting on the power of the researcher in the research relation, should however not be interpreted as powerlessness on the part of the subjects. The subjects have the power to decide to participate and how. Their power accordingly needs to be reflected upon just as much when the relations of production of knowledge and its outcome are discussed. So far, this has not been focused enough, maybe due to the self-critical focus that some claim to be the “white self-whipping” response to the postcolonial critique. Paradoxically enough and once again even the critique then ends up being all about us.

“Empowering methods” might end up in the same trap. Designing methods so as to let the subjects define the topics, can be argued for both on political and knowledge grounds. But “letting” women speak might also suggest that First World feminists are once again wielding their hegemonic power to allow Third World subjects an audience (Spivak 1988). Consciousness-raising as one such empowering method can also be questioned when used in unequal research relations. Who are we – the researchers – to “raise” the consciousness of others?

The Relations in and of the Ethnographic Text/The othering in and of the Ethnographic Text

The issues of authorship, authority and representation of the Other, beginning in the field become even more problematic when it is time to write it all up. This has led to experimentation with sharing results, co-authorship, decentering the authorship of the researcher, and an increased sense that texts are “constructed domains of truths” and “serious fiction”. And it is here that the humanities have entered the scene, influencing how the ethnographic text can be interpreted and written and hereby also influencing how ethnographic fieldwork can be performed. By bringing in the humanities a bridge also was created for bringing the ethnographic approach to the humanities. This is a theme for the next section. Here I just want to state that these issues also were raised by the feminists

more generally. Several accounts have raised the issue of the subjects feeling robbed of their stories, it is not their story anymore, they do not recognize themselves, and so forth (Wolf 1996:32). The whole issue of representation - that we make the others visible through the themes that are important to us in our own culture (for example studying work and labour rather than family, children and friendship [Wolf 1996: 33]) - is taken up again and again. It is obvious that we as researchers must deal with two kinds of reflexivity - “the ‘self’ as both ‘object’ and ‘subject’ and the ‘other’ as ‘observed’ and ‘observer’”(Karim 1993, cited in Wolf 1996:34).

Post-Ethnography? Ethnography in the post – era

Many of the issues raised by feminists and presented above on “othering”, representation and so forth, are the very same as those we today connect with the post-structuralism. But while feminist politics and concrete power-relations (especially gender relations) were the foundation for the feminist worries and reflections, it is “the text”- as an epistemological and theoretical starting point – that has taken this role among the post-structuralists.

Postcolonialism and Institutional Ethnography are research approaches that offer a “third stance” in that respect, combining feminism’s focus on power-relations with poststructuralism’s insistence of texts’ crucial role as research material. I shall try to trace these paths here, focusing on what they have to offer to ethnography as an integrative and feminist approach. And we will start with post-structuralist challenges.

Post-structuralism has just as many roots, directions and practices as all the other “isms”, for example feminism. Roughly speaking, one could maybe say that post-structuralists share the aim of deconstruction. That is, the purpose of research is to show how meaning is constructed by deconstructing the meanings taken for given. All meanings are socially constructed, no meanings are inherent in physical objects or language. But in the social construction of meaning, language plays a major role. Or rather language is the tool, if not the driving force, of the social construction of meaning. And it was the focus on language and text that opened up the scene to the Humanities.

But it was also outside challenges -the aftermath of World War two and the breakdown of colonialism, socialism and so forth - that triggered a further theoretical development of its text traditions. How were socialism, fascism, Nazism and colonialism made true? What had been their rhetoric, narrative, textually inclusion and exclusion tools

and strategies? So ethnographers, troubled by their own othering practices, now also voiced by “the others” or through politics but also made visible through the critique of positivism, now turned to the Humanities in the search for tools that could sort it all out. And the starting point was the “simple” fact that writing is what the ethnographer does both in the field and thereafter. When there is no longer a belief in a transparency of representation and immediacy of experience, writing can no longer be reduced to method; keeping good field notes, making accurate maps, “writing up” results (Clifford 1986: 2).

In writing the ethnographer makes more or less conscious and reflected use of genres, metaphors, rhetoric and so forth. Literary processes affect the ways cultural phenomena are registered from “observations” to the completed book and the ways these configurations “make sense” in acts of reading (Clifford 1986: 4). The textual parallels between ethnographic description and the conventions of “travel” or explorers’ accounts, have been underlined (Pratt 1986, referred to in Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 244). The founding scholars of ethnography did accordingly not just carve out a discipline; they adapted and incorporated literary conventions from other genres to produce a new textual format. These traditions of how to write and consequently how to do ethnography are a foundation to explore and develop. And not only in praxis – blurring the boundaries between travel writing, biography or even the novel have made some characterize anthropology as a “discipline notoriously overcrowded with literary wannabees”(Behar 1995: 3) – but also theoretically.

Through the tools developed within the Humanities, especially within literature, these constructions can be made more visible and accordingly more consciously enacted. Other ways of writing/doing ethnography can then be the result. And in the increased interest in “culture” and quest for “understanding (others’) cultures” in the “multi-cultural” societies of today, the combination of literary theory and ethnography is deemed fruitful (Clifford 1986: 3). Already twenty years ago, ethnography was stated to be an emergent interdisciplinary phenomenon. It was claimed that “its authority and rhetoric have spread to many fields where ‘culture’ is a newly problematic object of description and critique.” (Clifford 1986: 3).

That ethnography is a textual enterprise demands a critical and theoretical orientation of textual practices. Rhetorical devices used in the production of ethnographic texts have accordingly encountered particular interest. The reflective ethnographer needs to try out figures of speech: testing them against data, searching not just for their power to organize data under a single theme, but also for their extensions and limitations

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 246). Here one might add that ethnographic writing corresponds to a narrative mode crucial to the organization of everyday life. At least, we should then add, in western cultures. And it is precisely this last point that illustrates that literary theory too needs to be problematized as to its positionality, and gender!

“Rhetorical processes [...] are deeply gendered” (Devault 1990, cited in Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 254). The issue of ‘topos’ in ethnographic accounts can serve as an illustration. It is a rhetorical device whereby the readers’ agreement is solicited through the use of widely shared opinions or well-known instances, for example by means of a “taken-for-granted reference” that “keys the particular ethnographic text to a background of shared knowledge” (Hammersley&Atkinson 1995:252). But as feminists state: “For a woman to do scholarly work means speaking in the manner of the disciplinary tradition. They learn that, if they are to be heard, their texts must enter a discourse whose contours reflect male perceptions and concerns. The readers whose judgements are influential - the teachers, editors, reviewers and colleagues who will incorporate and perhaps extend their work- have, in the past at least, mostly been men” (Devault 1990, cited in Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 254). If literary theory and its methods are androcentrically overdetermined then they need to be critically examined before being imported to ethnography.

That rhetorical processes are of course also deeply cultured, further strengthens this claim. An example is that the “visualism” of western cultures – the truth of vision – has predominated over the evidences of sound and interlocution, of touch, smell and taste (Clifford 1986: 11). “The predominant metaphors in anthropological research have been participant-observation, data collection, and cultural description, all of which presuppose a standpoint outside – looking at, objectifying, or, somewhat closer, ‘reading’, a given reality”(Clifford 1986: 11). And as “strongly visualist in nature, constituting cultures as if they were theatres of memory or spatialized arrays” (Clifford 1986: 12). Along these lines, Edward Said, in his famous *Orientalism* (Said 1978), identifies how Europeans and Americans visualized Eastern and Arab cultures. The orient is textualized as an Other of discrete identity by a knowing observer with a standpoint from which one can see without being seen, and read without interruption (Clifford 1986:12).

Looking at ethnography through the eyes of literature theory, its product might be called “true fiction” (Clifford 1986: 6), hereby suggesting the partiality of cultural and historical truths. Ethnographic truths are, as Clifford (1986: 7) states, inherently partial – committed and incomplete. This does not however imply that it is impossible to know

anything certain about people or to ethnographic self-absorption, he further continues. It just means that we have to reflect and experiment in new ways, when doing/writing ethnography. Examples, where researcher and subjects both participate and write, making use of different voices and perspectives, are given in his chapter and in the book as a whole.

The postcolonial critique, above voiced by Said, however both extends this issue and its suggested solutions, by insisting on the global as an analytical frame of reference. The questions raised by Clifford “who speaks? who writes? when and where? with or to whom? under what institutional and historical constraints?” (1986: 13), are then added by questions about “why” we do the research and who we write for, that is knowledge for whom? Ethnography assumes “community” but only certain communities have been studied and as such “exoticized”. And it has been the dominated groups, not the elites, that have caught the ethnographic gaze. The postcolonial critique in that sense seems to close the circle. Making use of post-structuralist approaches and methods but insisting on positionality, since the others’ stories have yet to be told by and for them as well as ours stories need to be told in a global framing, calls for yet another way of doing ethnography. Global Ethnography is one such answer.

Global Ethnography – Extending the Local

Describing the world as globalized has become a widespread fashion in the social sciences. This view of the social world is however rarely reflected in the way research of the social is being *done*. On the contrary one can say that the social sciences suffer from methodological nationalism (Beck 2003) – implying that most research is carried out with the nation state as the “natural” geographical frame of reference. In other words there is a gap between ontology and methodology: Our views and understandings of the world do not correspond with our research practices.

Global ethnography (Burawoy 2000) is a research method that challenges this, by truly acknowledging that we *are* living in a globalized world, and applying this insight on a methodological level through an ethnographic approach.

This is a perspective that views transnational relations as crucial for understanding the modern world, while equally emphasizing that our knowledge of the world must be grounded in local and concrete experiences. Doing global ethnography means exploring “the global in the local” – to look for how global social relations are interwoven in people’s everyday experiences. Global ethnographers believe that this “ground up”

perspective will “sharpen the abstractions of globalization theories into more precise and meaningful conceptual tools” (Burawoy 2000: xiv).

This method can therefore be seen both as a critique of the dominating methodological nationalism in the social sciences, *and* of theories that attempt to explain the globalized modern world with concepts that are not grounded in the local. This critique is in many ways, as we shall see, similar to Dorothy E. Smith’s feminist critique of “positionless accounts” of the society.

What is the implication of taking transnational relations into account? Does exploring the global in the local change the very experience of doing ethnography? (Burawoy 2000: xii)

Doing global ethnography means rethinking the concept of fieldwork, not confining it to a single place and time (Burawoy 2000: 4). It means to actively search for and track how the social relations the subjects of study are involved in can stretch the boundaries of the field across national borders, and consequently include these transnational ties as part of the research object. This might lead the ethnographer to conduct so called multi-sited fieldwork, as we shall present an example of, but not necessarily. Even in such studies there is always *one* local point of departure, and it is the researcher’s experiences in this local field that might direct her to doing further research in other geographical places, by following the flow of the transnational bounds that connects the sights.

Global Ethnography – Migration Research as an Example

Case study 3; George’s When Women Come First.

The study of Sheba George, *When Women Come First* (George 2005), illustrates many of the crucial points in global ethnography as a research method. It is therefore presented at some length below, with particular attention to how these perspectives can enrich studies of migration. Global ethnography is however a research tool that is not confined to migration studies - it can be applied in fruitful ways in many research fields. Aiming at extending the local to the global means looking for how global social relations are interwoven in practical activities on the ground, even when the relevance of these relations might not be immediately obvious to the researcher.

The Indian-American sociologist Sheba George has conducted more than two years of fieldwork among Indian immigrated nurses and their families in the US. This migration is characterized by a non-traditional migration pattern; the women move first and become the breadwinners of the family. The men come as secondary migrants, after their wives have established in the US, and become in most cases dependent on their wives work and income. On the personal background of herself being the daughter of a once immigrated nurse from the same area in India (Kerala), George’s research interest was to study what happens to gender relations among immigrants when women move first.

Sheba George started her fieldwork in a metropolitan city in the United States, with a large number of Keralite nurses. One of the theoretical assumptions for her study was that changes in gender relations must be understood as enacted and negotiated in the spheres of *work, community and family*.

Since most of the Keralite nurses in the US are Syrian Christians, she chose the church as a base for her fieldwork. After migration the community replaces many of the functions of the family network in Kerala for the immigrants, and much of the community life takes place in the church. Participant observation in the church was completed by in-depth interviews with the nurses and their husbands, as well as with families from Kerala who had followed a traditional migration pattern with the men moving first. Through her fieldwork George discovered the community sphere as an area of particular importance for exploring her research questions about changes in gender relations.

The migration of the nurses and their families follows a pattern that makes the women upwardly mobile – while leaving the men with less status than they had in their homeland. These changes in the work sphere threaten the traditional gender hierarchy, which is met with a complex and diverse set of strategies in the spheres of family and community. In many cases the work situation after migration enforces a change in the household division of the family. With the women working long hours, and without the help of the extended family, the men are forced to increase their share of the household. But Sheba George also shows how some families in this situation insist on sticking to a traditional sharing of house work and child care, which she analyses as a strategy for confirming the traditional gender hierarchy that are threatened by the status change of men and women in the work sphere. By doing traditional gender in the family, the men regain some of the status they have lost through migration.

George also found that men compensate for their loss of status in the work sphere by increased engagement in the community. Men of nurses, who have not previously been engaged in the church, very often become active participants and often take on leading roles in the church after migration. This can be understood as a strategy for increasing men's overall power and status in the immigrant community.

Initially George didn't intend to extend the fieldwork outside the United States, but through her fieldwork she discovered that all these spheres, of family, work and community, were connected with strong ties back to Kerala. In order to explore her research questions she had to take into account the meaning of the transnational ties between the immigrant and the sending community. It was this understanding that made George follow the flow of transnational bounds from the immigrants back to Kerala, and thereby extend the borders of her fieldwork.

In Kerala she pursued her fieldwork in the church congregation, and conducted interviews with the family members of the migrated nurses and their husbands. The ties connecting the immigrants with Kerala were only partly visible from the US. Going back to the sending community enabled George to explore these relations more fully, and get a deeper understanding of the importance of transnational connections for the immigrant community in their enactment and negotiation of gender and class relations.

These connections take diverse forms, such as visits for funerals, marriage and birth, holidays, money transfers, sending of videos, marriage partners, children and baby-sitters. This flow of money, people and meaning goes both ways. The Kerala community serves as an important resource for the immigrants, for example as baby-sitters, either moving to the US or taking care of children left behind by the migrated families. Many of the migrated families turn to this way of solving the care-problem that has been created by migration, which does not demand profound changes of the gender relations.

On the other hand the US migrants provide a resource for the sending community through money remittances and in helping out family members who themselves want to migrate. The importance of the economic bounds between the communities became clearly visible for George in Kerala, where she witnessed the high living standard among the families of the nurses compared to others.

The Kerala community is also however a resource in terms of *meaning*. George discovered that the sending community has an important function as a "status claim group", that legitimises and strengthens traditional gender relations within the immigrant community. Learning to know the Kerala community made George understand the stigma connected to the nurses and their husbands, which she saw but could not understand, in the US. In India, nursing is regarded as "dirty" work, with a low status. On the other hand nurses are privileged in having easy access to migration. This paradox becomes clear in the marriage market, where the nurses both are looked upon as "not

proper”, but still popular partners - because of the migration opportunities that comes with marrying a nurse. The stigma of nurses follows the families to the US, and is kept alive through the transnational connections.

The very same transnational ties do however also contribute to the *changing* of gender relations in the sending community: The migrated nurses are examples of how women not only can be economically independent of men – they are even capable of providing for them.

In many ways similar to, and very much in line with Global Ethnography, Institutional Ethnography offers a more developed “method of inquiry” where the openings also to its uses both from but also by the Humanities are more obvious. So let us then see what this approach has to offer. How does Institutional Ethnography propose we go about and how does it confront or solve the issues and dilemmas presented above? And in what ways can it be said to be a feminist and integrative approach open to and of interest to both women and men from both the Social Sciences and the Humanities?

Institutional Ethnography – an Ethnography of Today?

Institutional Ethnography takes as its starting-point a thorough critique of the conventions for how to “write the social”, resulting in a social science from a ruler’s perspective². The social science conventions, it is stated, are characterized by the establishing of a position within the text where the social as written is separated from the social as lived and experienced. This results in position-less accounts; all subjects are either given the same position or are absent. It is as if the society could be understood in its totality and from above, from the gaze of God, or rather, from the view of a bird but without the bird. This basic convention for “how to do social science” or more specific of “how to do sociology”, which is her main concern, is by Dorothy E. Smith – the founding mother of Institutional Ethnography - labelled as objectifying.

The text of social science is however not only to be understood as a result of social relations, that is of ruling relations. By placing the reader in a particular relation to the reality described in the text, the text is also made an active part in the ruling process. Through the objectifying convention, the reader takes the place of the ruler, she is offered

² Expressed in most of Dorothy E. Smith’s work, in depth in particular in her books; *The Everyday World as Problematic. A Feminist Sociology* (1987), *Texts, Facts, and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling* (1990a), *The Conceptual Practices of Power - A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* (1990a), *Writing the Social: Critique, Theory and Investigations* (1999), *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (2005).

"the gaze of God" where local positions, perspectives and experiences are not only subordinated but also made un-visible.

A similar critique of how social scientists tend to write the social is formulated by Pierre Bourdieu (See for example Bourdieu 1990). Just like Dorothy E. Smith he demands that the position of the observer (the social scientist) should be the object of the same kind of critical analysis as we embark on when investigating any other objects. Social science and its praxis has to be understood, he claims, in the context of the relations and positions within the academic field as well as in relation to the wider cultural and historical context this field is a part of. Otherwise there is always the risk that we read our own position - and ways of relating to and understanding the social - into "the object", as if it was a part of the object instead of a result of our relation to it. Just like Dorothy E. Smith Pierre Bourdieu accordingly advocates that we problematize the relations in which the social sciences have been developed and are being practiced today. If we do not, we most likely end up as non-reflective dealers for the ruling apparatus, making politically defined social problems (poverty, criminality and so forth) into social science ones. They both propose that it should be a proper method, in contrast to the kind of individualized introspection they claim dominates within social science self-reflective analyses of today.

A Method of Inquiry

So how do we then go about investigating and writing the social if we are not to start with concepts and a standpoint in a text mediated discourse? Dorothy E. Smith suggests that the following steps should be taken (Smith 1992: 91-94, Smith 1999: 5-8):

- The subject/knower of inquiry is to be approached as situated in the actualities of her own living, in relations with others and not as a transcendent subject
- Here the actual activities of actual individuals are focused as the ongoing concerting and coordinating of individuals' activities. The concern is accordingly not just with what individuals do, but with the social aspect of their doings. The social is hereby not conceived of as properties of the individual or as an entity separable from the actual people and the activities in which we find it. Rather the concept of the social directs a focusing on how people's activities are coordinated.
- Concepts to express these coordinated activities, like social relations and social organization, must then accordingly - just like the social - not be used as discursive entities that lift the phenomena out of time and place. A social relation or social organization is not a thing to be looked at or for when carrying out research but

rather what is used when we do the looking. Social relations should direct our attention to how what people in a give local site is doing and experiencing is hooked into sequences of action coordinating multiple other such sites.

- By addressing concepts, beliefs and other categories of thought and mind as people's actual practices the traditional theory/practice split is avoided. Locating the knower in her body, in a lived world in which both theory and practice go on implies an understanding of theory itself as a practice.
- Texts, text mediation and textuality hereby become central. The text is the bridge between the actual and the discursive, between the local actualities of our living and the ruling relations. As a material object it can be read in many settings, by many people at the same time or at other times. As such a text is foundational to any possibility of abstraction and hence for exploiting the power of the textual to analyze the actualities of living. In contemporary societies text-mediated relations are the forms in which power is increasingly generated, hence making the relations of ruling accessible for investigation in a new way.
- The politics of a method of inquiry of this kind is not to explain people's behaviour or in any other way make them the object of research. It is instead to explain to them and to ourselves the socially organized powers in which our lives are embedded and to which our activities contribute.

Summing up, by starting out in our actual activities the method of inquiry proposed by Institutional Ethnography will make the relational context of our daily lives visible in which the ruling relations also enter, often in text-mediated forms. The increased use and importance of texts as ruling devices, has made social science investigations of texts a key issue.

The term Institutional Ethnography

The term institutional ethnography was used by Dorothy E. Smith already in her early work (Smith 1987), but lately she and her followers have started to use it also as a kind of research program³. Herby an approach is proposed that explores the institutional order and the ruling relations from the point of view of people who are in various ways implicated in

³ In her article "Texts and the Ontology of Organizations and Institutions" (2001), Smith develops the perspective of institutional ethnography as well as gives empirical illustrations of its use. It is the very topic of her latest book, *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (2005)

and participating in it. It does not aim to understand the institution, organization, etc as such, like in system theory. It only takes the social activities of the institution as a starting-point. Hooking on to activities and relations both horizontally and vertically the approach is never confined to the very institution or organization under investigation. The purpose is rather to illuminate the connections between the local and extra-local, hereby making the workings of society visible. Exploring how texts mediate, regulate and authorize people's activities accordingly also expands the scope of ethnographic method beyond the limits of observation. It entails a proposition that text can be treated ethnographically, that is, that it is possible to explore the ways texts enter into the organising of any corporation, university, etc.

Institutional Ethnography - a Solution to some of the Dilemmas Confronting Ethnography of Today?

As to other feminists, power is the key issue also to Dorothy E. Smith and the very foundation for the development of Institutional Ethnography. Through ethnographic analyses of the sociological traditions and of how they are used when "writing the social" (Smith 1999) she could show how its relations of production of knowledge objectified not only the subjects of investigation but also the knower. By objectifying her as knower her local positioning is made irrelevant and even questionable. Instead she is offered a view from above, a ruler's gaze and perspective when studying the others. And the others are investigated so as to produce knowledge about them and not for them.

Such a relation of production of knowledge results in all the kinds of dilemmas presented in previous sections; insider/outsider, observation/visualism, voices of the subjects, reciprocity, empowering methods, authorship, fiction, subjective/objective accounts, and so forth. By doing research for and not on the subjects and by aiming at mapping the relations in which the activities of the subjects are linked to ruling relations, most of such dilemmas and ethical issues dissolve. Since the focus is not on the subjects as persons – their views, traits and so forth – but what they can tell us about the relations in which their activities unfold, quite a few of the dilemmas encountering other kinds of feminist research are avoided. By stating the position from which knowledge about the social is mapped, the whole issue of objective contra subjective accounts is reformulated. As a positioned map it is neither.

The issue of insider/outsider becomes likewise less relevant, the issue is rather how well you manage to do the linking and draw a map recognizable and useful to the subjects.

And you do not observe them but observe with and for them. In such a relation reciprocity is integrated – not something extra or a troubling issue - and aiming at empowering knowledge and “empowering methods” as an aim in itself seem both “less” and even questionable. Experimental writing or fiction can further neither be an aim nor a characteristic of such a product. And it is not a “partial truth” about this or that but a picture of how the social (society) looks from that position.

The textual turn and its challenges are also reformulated through the approach of Institutional Ethnography. Texts and rhetorics are here also seen as social practices. They happen, they take place in social relations and can be investigated accordingly. Rethoric is not only gendered – as claimed above – it is also racialized and classed and coloured by ruling relations. And studying how this is done in the everyday activities of the subjects as well as in the everyday activities of the researcher (when observing, interviewing, writing and so forth) should be a part of any ethnographic study. Intersectionality is accordingly part and parcel of the approach of Institutional Ethnography since the aim is to study all the “concerting” relations implicit in the activities of everyday life. Neither gender, nor class and ethnicity are then phenomena to study, but a location from which we can study the social.

The knowledge claims such an approach can generate will differ from most other qualitative approaches. While qualitative research ordinarily is treated as limited in its applications since statements are restricted in significance to the particular setting of the ethnography, institutional ethnography addresses explicitly the trans-local organization of the everyday activities. It illuminates how the local is penetrated with extra- and trans-local relations that are generalized across particular settings (Smith 2005: 43). As such it is an approach that not only solves the dilemmas related to qualitative research but also increases its very validity and legitimacy.

The discussion here is an illustration of the connections between ontology-epistemology-theory and methods. Methods should accordingly not be treated as just a matter of techniques, of doing the “right” thing or being smart. And ethnography should accordingly not be taught as a set of rules and techniques. The epistemological and theoretical starting-point will inform how the theme is chosen, the field defined, how observations and interviews are done and how the ethnography is written and which knowledge claims that are raised. If methods are just chosen and used without such conscious considerations, positivistic relations of production of knowledge will most likely colour the research since these are the foundation even of most qualitative research. Text

books in qualitative research, where the links between epistemology and methods are not made visible and exemplified, are most often sad examples of such implicit positivism.

Institutional Ethnography – an Approach open to (Post-) Modern Challenges; the Text, Technical Development, Global In-Equality and Postcolonial Critique.

The so called “textual turn” within the social sciences has implied using not only the theoretical but also the methodological approaches originally developed within the humanities. Not only seeing the text – in a social situation – but also seeing something *as* text (for example an oral statement) has implied a use of all the interpretive techniques developed for textual analyses. These are accordingly perspectives and methods that are possible to include and also partly expected to be included within ethnography of today.

The approach of Institutional Ethnography, however, brings forth a further use and understanding of text – in addition to the ones developed for textual analyses within the social sciences – by focusing on text as praxis, as something that happens in particular settings and relations and that can be studied as such. Here the focus on text is not only motivated by post-structuralist perspectives, but also by the facticity of the text and its use in ruling relations. It is the very replicability of a written text, that it is the same text no matter the varied interpretations (if it was not the same text it would not make sense to talk about different interpretations), that makes it useful as a tool of administration. In fact, texts are what make bureaucracy possible. And in globalized trade and ruling, texts are used as a standardizing device. The globalization of economy and politics alongside the technological development has implied that our everyday life today is infiltrated by texts, and not just in the West but to an increasing amount also in all the other parts of the world.

This fact, that texts today are everywhere, to an increasing amount and importance, challenges - or maybe rather should challenge - our understanding of ethnographic research. How for example to define the field, when the activities to describe does not happen face to face, in a local setting but “on the net”?

Case study 4; Garsten’s Apple world: core and periphery in a transnational organizational culture.

An example of such a study is the ethnographic study of Apple Computers by the Swedish anthropologist Christina Garsten (1994). She experienced several challenges to the fieldwork methods she had learnt, as the high complexity of the organization resisted participation at many of its central issues and as face-to-face interaction appeared not to be the primary means of communication. Electronic communication was widespread, and employees often moved from one

section to another, they generally travelled a lot and they also worked at home. It goes without saying that an ethnographer cannot keep up with all of these activities. All the moving about furthermore raised the question of where the “field” – i.e. the company – actually started and ended. How to define a field with the telling slogan “One World, One Apple”? New questions arose when it came to the data material. How can one make sense of a company which is multinational and where different organisational cultures may dominate in different parts of the world and where employees in highly specialized jobs can not be expected to share the same interests, economic and otherwise? Garsten first tried to study the local office as “one place” in its own right. However, she soon found that the multilocality was such a central element, that this would not produce an accurate description. Consequently, she decided to focus on what elements helped create an “imagined community” of such a complex organization; how does a basket of apples turn in to the One Apple? According to Garsten, this proved to be a fruitful approach, and one which called for text analysis as well as interviews and participatory observation. In other words, her data and early interpretations made her extend her method. Garsten’s study is also an interesting case concerning the process of analysis; how does it affect the research that most of the objects of study – the employees – are as highly educated as the researcher herself, and may ask about her findings and question her interpretations? Garsten experienced that one of her informants was in fact an anthropologist. She chose to see this as a resource, and her analysis came out of a dialogue between her and her informants.

Including the objects of study in the process of analysis and in the dissemination of the results is - as previous discussed - a central theme within feminist research. When doing research in modern organizations of high social prestige, such as in the example above, these questions might be solved out of pure necessity, as a precondition for entering the field. Using dialogue as part of the analysis, however, poses questions of validity; is it possible to study a famous company with no strings attached? And is the similarity of educational backgrounds between the researcher and her informants likely to make the former “home blind” to the extent that her analysis will lack analytical distance?

Such a field and theme as in the study by Garsten fits the method of inquiry proposed by Institutional Ethnography as a hand in a glove. But ethnographic studies within the humanities could also be informed by such an approach.

In a chapter by Rachel Alsop on the uses of ethnographic methods in English Studies (Alsop 2005), she lists ways in which ethnography can be of significance in their research. Besides studies of ethnographies, that is the texts of ethnographers, or literary works (novels, and so forth) inspired by ethnographic approaches or ethnographic texts, she proposes two approaches. The first is using ethnography as a research tool for writers. To be able to write well on a theme, one needs to have observed or participated in the activities described. One’s own experiences are not always enough. But although this need to be in touch with the field described is generally agreed upon, ethnographic approaches are rarely presented in books for writers about writing (Alsop 2005: 118).

The second approach, presented by Alsop, is when ethnography is used as a method when studying literary behaviour. Here one studies the social context in which literature is produced and consumed or the cultural framework of oral communication. In relation to the analysis of literary behaviour, ethnographic strategies enable in-depth and interactive analysis of the social conditions and aspects of literary pursuits.

Janice Radway (1991) sought in her study of the reading of romances by women to produce an ethnographically based account of that very activity. She found that just as important as the women's interpretation of the romances, was the very value given to actual activity of reading. She therefore made a distinction between the meaning of the text and the event of reading. She concluded that for the women the act of reading was "a declaration of independence" (Radway 1991: cited in Alsop 2005: 124), a way to resist the demands placed upon them as wives and mothers.

Another study by Lisbeth Larsson (1990) takes this situation of women as housewives and mothers as an explanation for the development of the "lady magazines". The outline of such magazines is made to fit the possibilities for reading open to women in this situation. Interruptions, short and long, break calls for stories of different length and depth. Ethnographic studies and insights in women's reading activities can accordingly also be made use of commercially.

In exploring the social context of literary production and consumption, the possible avenues of research mentioned by Alsop are "microethnographic studies of writers' colonies, reading groups, literary festivals, book signings, book clubs, English classes or poetry-readings as well as macroethnographic studies of literacy (or, indeed, oral forms and communication) within specific cultures and societies" (Alsop 2005: 119). By making use of the approach of Institutional Ethnography this split between micro and macro could be overcome. All the above mentioned microethnographic studies could be designed so as to link the activities in question with texts and activities on other levels, hereby mapping the terrain of writers' colonies, readings groups and so forth, from the bottom up. And as the study by Larsson exemplifies – in the example above – this can be done not only in research but is done all the time when a product is developed commercially.

Summing up, Institutional Ethnography constitutes an answer to the critique emanating from both postcolonial, post-structuralist and feminist perspectives. Feminist postcolonial researchers have in deed claimed Institutional Ethnography as a way to proceed (Mohanty 2003). As an alternative approach aiming at illuminating the role of ruling relations in "how things are done" or "put together", the focus on texts opens for the

contribution also from the Humanities. It is accordingly an approach that can be used to cross disciplinary as well as national borders, aiming at interdisciplinary as well as global understandings. And not only within the Academe but also – as I hope to illustrate below - among journalists.

The Importance of Being Earnest – Journalistic Uses and Misuses of Ethnographic Approaches.

To see things differently and to get “thick descriptions” ethnographic approaches and writing are used also outside academia, particularly among journalists and writers. By making use of ethnographic style accounts, these texts tend to receive an ethnographic function regarding truth claims. In Europe there is even a tradition, the so called Wallraff tradition⁴, that now and then give us accounts founded on approaches similar to the ones of Institutional Ethnography. *Nickled and Dimed. On (Not) Getting By in America* by Barbara Ehrenreich (2001) is such an account.

Case study 5; Nickled and Dimed.

For a period of two years Ehrenreich took different “unqualified” jobs; as a waitress, a domestic help, a cleaning lady and a sales-lady with the determination to try to get by on the salary she earned. The poverty of “the working poor”, as they are often labelled, was to be illuminated not with the intention to try to grasp how “poverty feels” or what it is really like to be poor. Rather, as Barbara Ehrenreich puts it, the goal was more uncomplicated; she just wanted to find out if she could make it even – salary and expenses – just like poor people have to everyday.

Each new job situation is described in detail, from the lengthy employment-process (reading advertisement, sending in applications, turning up for interview, taking employment- and drug-tests and so forth) which is both costly (transportation costs, for example) and humiliating, through the very process of acquiring the competence needed for the job in question and then to quitting it and looking for “a new start”. All the time the “ongoing concerting and coordinating” (using the wording of Institutional Ethnography) of her and her co-workers and bosses are focused giving us a picture of how it all comes together, in different levels and areas.

Having a low salary is expensive and put you at a constant risk. You cannot afford the down-payment for proper housing or even to pay the monthly rent, but have to rely on paying the rent weekly or daily which is always more expensive. And living like that, besides the fear and risk of assault from living so close to so many strangers, often implies that you do not have cooking facilities and have to rely on eating out, which even though the food might be both cheap and fast, is more expensive (not forgetting the transportation costs) than eating in. Such food also has health

⁴ Günter Wallraff is a German journalist who became well known in the seventies and eighties for his books on the life and situation of the people living at the bottom of the social ladder, for example G. Wallraff (1973) *Ihr da oben-wir da unten*. He lived like them, for example as a “guest-worker”, in disguise, and managed to give the most vivid descriptions of how they were treated. His method of dismantling the German well-fare society has been both appraised and criticized but his influence on investigative journalism hereafter is unquestionable. The term Wallraff – tradition is still used in the European context.

costs and health insurances or medicine or sick leave from work is something one cannot afford. So you have to work even though ill which increase the chance of further and more serious illnesses that might finally endanger the very chance for further or other employment. Due to the low salaries quite a few even have two jobs, which of course, considering the kinds of jobs, represent a further risk to your health.

Millions of Americans live like this, in a constant situation of crisis, as Barbara Ehrenreich (2001:187) puts it. Through her detailed and yet analytical description and her bottom-up approach Barbara Ehrenreich makes us see poverty differently. We see “how poverty is done, how it is put together” in the actualities of people’s everyday life where the local is hooked to the extra-local illuminating the role of ruling relations – mediated through texts and discourses, as it would have been formulated through Institutional Ethnography.

The Bookseller of Kabul

Quite another example of the use, or rather misuse, of an ethnographic approach is the study of the bookseller of Kabul (Seierstad 2004).

Case study 6; Åsne Seierstad’s The Bookseller of Kabul.

In the preface of her book Åsne Seierstad tells us of its background and aim. Travelling and writing as a journalist in Afghanistan, she had once ended up in a bookshop – the only proper one in Kabul – and become acquainted with its owner. She was invited to his house for dinner and there she soon noticed that the women did not say much. When leaving she said to herself: “This is Afghanistan. How interesting it would be to write a book about this family.”(Seierstad 2004: 2). Next days she proposes this idea to the bookseller:

- Thank you, was all he said.
 - But this means that I would have to come and live with you.
 - You are welcome.
 - I would have to go around with you, live the way you live. With you, your wives, sisters, sons.
 - You are welcome, he repeated.
- (Seierstad 2004: 2-3)

She describes how she moved in and was received “with open arms” (Seierstad 2004: 3) and that the bookseller had demanded that the family should adhere to all her wishes. As a guest and as a woman from the west, she was conceived of as “bi-gendered” (Seierstad 2004: 5), which allowed her to participate in both male and female settings and move in between without any hindrances. She was not obliged to wear burka or hijab and could go anywhere she wanted. Yet she often chose to wear burka so as to be let alone, have some privacy but also so as to feel what it was like to be a woman from Afghanistan and to be able to “observe the other family members” when they were out (Seierstad 2004: 6).

The genre she has chosen for the book, she says, is literary, but she stresses that its foundations are “real stories” that she has either participated in or been told of (Seierstad 2004: 3). “When I describe thought and feelings, the point of departure is what people told me they thought or felt in any given situation.” (Seierstad 2004: 3-4) They all knew, she claims, that the purpose for her stay was that she was to write a book. “If there was something they did not want me to write, they told me.”(Seierstad 2004:5) “Nevertheless”, she continues “I have chosen to keep the Khan family and the other people I quote anonymous. No one asked me to, I just felt it was right.”(Seierstad 2004:5) And then follows the book.

Each chapter has a theme, written like a story in the genre of a traditional novel. The feelings and thoughts of the persons are presented from the inside but even dialogues are used to make it all alive and present. The author is not made present in the text, as an I, or through reflections not stemming from persons described. Not until the afterword.

When the book came out it was extremely well received, got several prizes and was quickly translated into most western languages. It is well written and an easy read and it was praised for letting us really know what goes on in Muslim families. No matter that Seierstad had underlined in the preface of the book, that it was not a story of a typical Afghanistan family, quite the opposite, that it was just the story of one family. That is not how it was read and used and recommended.

The non-presence of her own voice, makes it all seem authentic. And it was not until the bookseller himself reacted that a more critical debate about the aim and ethics of the book was raised. First of all, it was not written for him or his family or for people in Afghanistan or in Muslim countries for that matter. It was meant for us equality-oriented westerners, it was our gaze on them and about them and for us. It demonstrated an oppression of women that was not only upsetting to us (men and women of the West) but clearly also to the women described. Seierstad's feminist eyes produced a persuasive argument for (our kind of) equality.

To "protect the bookseller and his family" Seierstad had decided not to allow any translations into their languages. But the bookseller not only reads English, pirate copies of translation into his own languages soon occurred. The book reveal not only sensitive but secret information which, it is claimed, if known locally might endanger the position and life of the persons portrayed in the book. There is no way the only proper bookseller in Kabul can stay anonymous. All this came to the surface when the bookseller came to Norway to get restitution. She had deceived them all, he claimed, and misused his hospitality and now their lives had become both problematic and endangered.

Lessons for the future

The two examples illustrate two different approaches of "ethnographic journalism", resulting in different kinds of knowledges and dilemmas. In the first study, by Ehrenreich, it is not "about them" but how it looks like from where they are. That is, what life is like when one takes that kind of position. It makes use of participant observation all through (24 hours a day) but what is being observed is the researchers own actions. Yet the focus is not on her, as a person, but on the social relations her actions make visible. The aim is to make structural relations visible. The result is a recognizable and useful "map" to individuals positioned like that and knowledge to the rest of us about such a position and its structural links also to our own positions. An approach like this also has the merit of not giving rise to ethical dilemmas or problems of the kind presented previously in this chapter and which the other study, by Seierstad, is so full of.

In Seierstad's study the ethical rules within ethnography are not obeyed. By blurring roles and techniques, both subjects and readers are deceived. We are all fooled to "believe in her". The subjects are objectified while being presented subjectively as subjects. A subjectivity the positionality of which is not reflected upon or discussed. The reader is accordingly not invited to reflect upon the authenticity of the account given. Who she writes for, why and how is not discussed. Hereby eurocentrism is reproduced and orientalism produced.

Summing up, using ethnographic approaches unskilfully results in both lousy knowledge and lousy ethics. Training journalists in ethnographic methods accordingly

seems a most urgent task. But, it should be stressed, methodological skills are not enough. As the postcolonial critique makes clear, the positionality of the gaze affect both the knowledge gained and the ethical dilemmas encountered. It is this connection between epistemology, theory and methods that I so strongly have argued for throughout this chapter that is illustrated also in the two journalistic examples presented above.

Bibliography

- Alsop, Rachel. 2005. "Ethnographic Methods for English Studies." in G. Griffin, ed. *Research Methods for English Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP.
- Beck, Ulrich. 2003. "The Analyses of Global Inequality: From National to Cosmopolitan Perspective." *Global Civil Society*.
- Behar, Ruth. 1995. "Introduction: Out of Exile." in *Women Writing Culture*. Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon (eds.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *In Other Words*. London: Polity Press
- Burawoy, Michael. 2000. "Introduction. Reaching for the Global." in *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*. Michael Burawoy (ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Clifford, James. 1986. "Introduction: Partial Truths." in *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds.) Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. *Nickled and Dimed. On (Not) Getting By in America*. New York: Owl Books.
- Garsten, Christina. 1994. *Apple World: core and periphery in a transnational organizational culture*. Stockholm : Almqvist & Wicksell
- George, Sheba Mariam. 2005. *When Women Come First*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hammersley, Martyn. 1998. *Reading Ethnographic Research. A Critical Guide*. (2nd ed.) London: Longman.
- Hammersley, Martyn and Paul Atkinson. 1995. *Ethnography. Principles in Practice*. (2nd ed.) London: Routledge.
- Larsson, Lisbeth. 1990. *En annan historia : om kvinnors läsning och svensk veckopress*. Stockholm : Symposion
- Lynd, Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd. 1929. *Middletown: A Study in American Culture*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and co.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. [1922] 1984. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. Long Grove: Waveland Press.
- Man, Culture and Society*. Harry L. Shapiro (ed.) 1956. New York: Oxford University Press
- Mead, Margaret. 1949. *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World*. New York : William Morrow
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2003. *Feminism Without Borders*. Durham&London: Duke University Press
- Radway, Janice A. 1991. *Reading the romance: women, patriarchy, and popular literature*. Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press.

- Rubin, Gayle. 1975. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." in *Towards an Anthropology of Women*. Rayna Reiter (ed.) New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge
- Seierstad, Åsne. 2004. *The Bookseller of Kabul*. London: Virago.
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic. A Feminist Sociology*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1990 a. *Texts, Facts, and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1990 b. *The Conceptual Practises of Power – a Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1992. "Sociology from Women's Experience: A Reaffirmation", *Sociological Theory* Spring 10:1
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1999. *Writing the Social – Critique, Theory, and Investigations*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Smith, Dorothy E. 2001. "Texts and the Ontology of Organisations and Institutions." *Studies in Cults., Orgs. And Socs.* 7:159-198
- Smith, Dorothy E. 2005 *Institutional Ethnography: a Sociology for People*. Oxford: Alta Mira Press.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. *In other worlds: essays in cultural politics*. New York: Routledge
- Wallraff, Günter. 1973. *Ihr da oben-wir da unten*. Köln: Kiepenheuer&Witsch.
- Weiner, Annette B. 1976. *Women of Value, Men of Renown. New Perspectives in Trobriand Exchange*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Wolf, Diane L. 1996. "Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork" in *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*. Diane L. Wolf (ed.). Colorado: Westview Press.
- Women, Culture and Society*. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (eds.). 1974. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Women Writing Culture*. Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon (eds.). 1995. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds.) 1986. Berkeley: University of California Press.