

CRITICAL JOURNEYS

The Making of Anthropologists

Edited by

Geert De Neve

and

Maya Unnithan-Kumar

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To Sanjiv Kumar and Grace Carswell for sharing our journeys

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The idea for the present volume originated in 2002 when both of us were involved in different pedagogical exercises to do with conveying to Sussex graduate and undergraduate students what ‘fieldwork in anthropology is all about’. There were MA workshops in the anthropology of development looking at practitioners in the field, there was a visual anthropology workshop about the role of film in anthropology, and there was a student led term-long programme which focussed on the less written about aspects of fieldwork conducted by anthropologists at Sussex. The conversations which followed these meetings made us realise that there was a lot to be gained from a more systematic reflection on our different field related experiences in ways that tie in with recent calls for theorising the field. At the same time we saw an opportunity to engage with issues stemming from the changing nature of fieldwork and the discipline itself and thus to break into areas which have hardly been addressed so far. We then decided to put out a call for papers on ‘anthropological journeys’ in 2003.

As it happened the ASA conference at Durham in early 2004 carried the theme of *Locating the field – metaphors of space, place and context in anthropology*, and provided us with an excellent opportunity to present our work and get responses from a wider audience equally engaged with the issues that we were writing about. We thank Simon Coleman for suggestions and advice. The title ‘Critical journeys’ reflects the underlying thinking which is shared by all contributors that, in anthropology, fieldwork is critical to the formation of both the discipline and its practitioners. We consider it therefore necessary that the processes and outcomes of such journeys be subject to critical reflection. It is precisely because fieldwork is so interconnected with the life and reflection of the individual anthropologist as well as the ‘collective conscience’ of the discipline, that it needs to be subject to systematic analysis. The metaphor of the journey represents both spatial and physical movement as well as shifts in ideas and imagination. Although it is difficult to argue that ethnography can be ‘taught’ in any obvious way, we hope that those interested in the practices of anthropology – be they undergraduate students, doctoral candidates preparing for the field or experienced ethnographers – may learn something from the journeys in this volume.

We would like to thank all the contributors for their generous sharing of time and ideas, Grazia De Tommasi at Sussex for her help in the production of this volume, and Mary Savigar at Ashgate for generous editorial support.

Geert De Neve and
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Chapter 1

Introduction: Producing Fields, Selves and Anthropology

Maya Unnithan-Kumar and Geert De Neve

Fields and reflexivity

The volume critically reflects on the shifting engagement of anthropologists with ‘fieldwork’, ‘field sites’, informants, and the discipline itself. It explores not only how ‘the field’ emerges or disappears in terms of a specific sense of place, but also how we as anthropologists connect our fieldwork and our life concerns to the anthropological knowledge we produce. The chapters in the volume seek to understand both the personal and the academic ways in which anthropologists’ engagement with the ‘field’ comes to shape the discipline as well as their own, multiple and shifting understandings of it. A particular interest thus shared by the contributors is the relationship between the agency of the anthropologist (the ways we act in and with respect to ‘the field’) and the nature of the discipline (what and how we contribute to anthropological understanding). The contributions in the present volume continue the recent concern with fieldwork and anthropological methods (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, Marcus 1998, Fog Olwig and Hastrup 1997, for example) that emphasise the processes of mutual engagement between people, locations, and representations. They also seek to relate this critical reflection on the field and fieldwork to the kinds of ethnographic writing and anthropological knowledge that it produces. Finally, we reflect on the use of anthropological knowledge not only within the discipline but also by those working in related fields and more distance professions. The main themes, set out in this brief introduction, indicate how the specific focus of this volume differs from and complements recent publications on anthropological methodology (Watson 1999, Dresch, James and Parkin 2000).

Gupta and Ferguson (1997), Marcus (1998) and others have noted how the idea of travel (or journeys) to different geographical locations is key to the notion of the ‘field’ and to the project of anthropology itself. In our volume we use the word *journey* to suggest that as anthropologists we ‘move’ between locations (including geographical ones), ideas and relationships. We use the word *critical* (journeys) in two senses. The first is to highlight the significance of ‘journeys’ to both the discipline and the self of the anthropologist. The second is to emphasise the need for a critical reflection and

evaluation of these journeys if we are to render them collectively visible and more comparable. In this sense we differ from those who trained us to believe that fieldwork is too complex, individual and personal to be reflected upon in any meaningful sense for the discipline as a whole, and that the reflections that accompany it are best kept distinct from the academic writings that are produced from it. Such ideas have rather contributed to a mystification of the discipline and its methods. In contrast, it is the connection between the personal domains of the anthropologist and the respondents, on the one hand, and the collective anthropological conscience, on the other, that we seek to explore in the pages of this volume.

As an area of enquiry, fieldwork has, until recently, been regarded as not methodologically rigorous enough a subject to lend itself to theorisation (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, for example). The specific details of field-generated material have been regarded as too localised, variable or anecdotal to speak to the generalisations sought by a positivist anthropology. There has been a strong tendency, both within and outside anthropology, to consider field data as valuable only when processed through analysis and writing. Contributors to this volume argue that we need to clarify the parameters within which field-generated knowledge is itself produced if we are to understand how anthropology as a discipline functions, reproduces itself and shifts over time. What we therefore need to understand is the historically situated interrelationship between the life worlds of the anthropologist and key persons in the 'field', and what we call the collective anthropological conscience.

The identity of the anthropologist as fieldworker has been neglected because for long we have avoided to engage with what Bourdieu calls 'participant objectivation', or the '*objectivation of the subject of objectivation*, of the analysing subject – in short, of the researcher herself' (2003: 282). What Bourdieu urges us to do more specifically is to critically examine not the anthropological self *per se*, but 'the social world that has made both the anthropologist and the conscious and unconscious anthropology that she (or he) engages in her anthropological practice – not only her social origins, her position and trajectory in social space, ..., but also, and most importantly, her particular position within the microcosm of anthropologists' (ibid: 283). Bourdieu, as we note, is working with a wide notion of the field, that is, the field as 'habitus', as structuring, generating, and orchestrating anthropologists' objective and conscious intentions. He distinguishes the reflexive analysis involved in participant objectivation from the narcissistic reflexivity of much post-modern anthropology, the point being that reflexivity is of interest if it contributes to our understanding of how the discipline functions, how anthropological engagements come about and how knowledge is generated.

Before we go further, let us turn briefly to examine some of the defining moments in terms of the rise of a disciplinary self-awareness, with which Bourdieu's critique engages. Although anthropology has recently been described as, among many other things, 'the study of reflexive debates within other societies' (Goodman 2000), reflection on its own disciplinary practices is of relatively recent origin. While the first momentous autobiographical accounts appeared in the 1950s (*Triste Tropiques*), 1960s (*A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*), and 1970s (*Reflections on Fieldwork*

in Morocco), it was not until the late 1970s that methodological issues were more systematically addressed in a number of edited volumes on the experiences of ethnographic work (Srinivas, et.al. 1979; Bétéille and Madan 1975). Revealingly, and unlike much of what was to be produced later on, these initial reflections centred on the ethnographer 'in the field' and on the tribulations of entering 'fields' and conducting fieldwork. Yet such discussions – however engaging they were – did not question the ways in which fieldwork was relevant to anthropology, nor did they address the particular position of the ethnographer vis-à-vis her field. Later, much anthropological writing was to be borne out of a reflexive awareness of the power differentials that shape the ethnographic encounter.

A relatively recent collective attempt to address the politics of this encounter arose in the postmodern anthropology of the 1980s led by Northern American scholars. The postmodern turn in anthropology (Clifford and Marcus 1986, Marcus and Fisher 1986) challenged the taken-for-granted authority of the anthropologist as ethnographer. Anthropologists' accounts were revealed to be at best partial and selective renderings of other societies (in that they often silenced and excluded certain perspectives). This view highlighted the power relations upon which anthropological fieldwork was based and, in turn, sought to undermine the authority with which ethnographies were presented. Fieldwork and ethnography were connected in predetermined ways as Clifford, Marcus and others showed us, in that the power differentials between anthropologists and respondents had significant implications for the manner in which we as anthropologists do fieldwork and represent the 'other'. Power relations underlying fieldwork became further 'fixed' in ethnographic writing. Literary processes were shown to affect the ways in which culture was rendered meaningful. The boundaries in ethnographic writing between the representation and the 'invention' of culture, as Clifford (1986) observes, were not always distinguishable. The critique of ethnography elaborated upon by Clifford, Marcus, Crapanzano, Rosaldo, Rabinow, Asad and other contributors to their volume has revealed the power and limitations of our own anthropological gaze. What we suggest, in addition, in this volume is the idea that ethnography is also significantly affected by the particular ways in which anthropologists engage with the discipline and 'do' fieldwork: what they choose to be their 'field' (as site and method), the kind of ideas and training that they come to the field with, and the events that occur during this time. Given the very different combinations of events and relationships that surround fieldwork, we also suggest that power relations are complex and may not always be stacked in favour of the anthropologist (for example, Srinivas, et.al. 1979).

In focusing on the academic habitus of the anthropologist we also pay heed to Fardon, Strathern, Tonkin and other contributors to Fardon's volume (1990), whose important critique of the Clifford and Marcus volume was framed in a call to acknowledge more fully the regional traditions of scholarship which have gone before and alongside any ethnographic project, and which have been instrumental in critically shaping the orientations of the anthropologist and her ethnographic writings. As De Neve elaborates in his contribution here, Fardon challenged the discipline's literary self-criticism of the 1980s and argued that in their exclusive

emphasis on text, style and form, the new critics have underestimated the importance of methodology, history, and theory, while simultaneously neglecting the relevance of specific (regional) contexts. Or, put differently, while the individual obviously plays a key role in the ethnographic enterprise, it is not only the personal life history but also the wider disciplinary, regional and epistemological traditions that guide engagement with particular fields and with the discipline more generally.

The contribution of feminist anthropology to the debates generated by postmodernist anthropologists has also been significant. As Moore suggests feminist anthropology has both widened the scope of the postmodern concern with power differentials at the same time as it has challenged the postmodern retreat from theory (1999). Early feminist anthropology in the 1970s and 1980s (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974, Ortner, 1974, Reiter, 1975, for example) made 'visible' the male bias that underlay anthropological methods and theorising. In its emphasis on the differences between men and women (stemming from a supposedly universal interpretation of biological differences) feminist anthropology also revealed differences within the category of woman: the historical, political and economic differences that separated women of different classes and races (Young, Wolkowitz and Cullagh, 1981, Hirschon 1984).

The internal critiques of the underlying assumption of the 'sameness' of women, which underpinned early feminist anthropology, also showed how limited its own and the later postmodern perspectives were by western cultural concepts (MacCormack and Strathern 1980, Strathern 1987, 1988, Moore 1988, Mohanty 1991). The subsequent work of feminist anthropologists around issues of gender, sexuality, class, race, kinship, and nation has shown precisely how these differences can be theorised and used as rigorous conceptual tools (Collier and Yanagisako, 1987, Caplan 1987, Narayan 1993, Strathern 1988, 1992, 1995). At this juncture, it is useful to remember, that feminist anthropology, as Strathern suggests, has an 'awkward' relationship with both feminism and anthropology. While with the former it differs, for example, in its categorisation of the 'other' as not only to be men, with anthropology the unease relates to its alliance with the feminist critique of the salience of the concept of society (Strathern 1988: 36, 1987). Nevertheless, one of the lasting conceptual contributions of the feminist strand in anthropology, also to have a major influence on fieldwork, has been the notion of gender, equipping field workers with the conceptual means to grasp the cultural construction and the operation of power differentials in the relationships between men and women (in this volume, discussed further in Unnithan-Kumar's chapter).

Relatively recently, Gupta and Ferguson's volume (1997) is another watershed in defining our self-understanding as anthropologists of the inequalities which frame our work. They highlight that it is not just the literary forms we employ which mask politics of power but it is the ways in which we perceive, talk about and 'construct' the field itself (as 'wild', local, isolated, bounded, and so on) which generates and fixes the inequalities in our representations of other cultures. What constitutes 'the local' has particularly been questioned from a transnational perspective, which has revealed that places have always been interconnected, and that boundaries are

therefore always constructed (Inda and Rosaldo 2002; Low and Lawrence-Zú iga 2003; De Neve and Donner 2006). Much has been written about the shifting conceptual boundaries of the discipline and the particular need for multi-sited and interdisciplinary approaches to field research. Yet, 'fields' too – whether thought of as 'local' or as 'multi-sited and transnational' – are always created, that is, the outcome of disciplinary shifts and fashions. Here, we argue for a need to extend the notion of 'fiction' from our writings to our fields: if the earlier notion of a local, bounded field is a 'fiction', the current multi-sited and transnational conception of research sites similarly runs the risk of becoming fictionalised. Even though the shift to multi-sited and trans-local approaches has considerably enlarged the concept of the 'field', in both cases, the field is the outcome of a web of changing epistemological perspectives, academic paradigms and hegemonic discourses of the world we live in. In this volume we elaborate these insights by examining the ways in which we construct fields and by unpacking the terms on which we engage with those in and of the field. Moreover, fields are shaped increasingly by changing audiences for our research and its products. As the awareness of anthropology grows amongst other disciplines, in professional contexts and among respondents themselves, our work also shifts to take into account their concerns and conceptions of what we are doing or should be doing. In this volume, both Good and Goberman-Hill describe in detail how their own work is viewed and commented upon by professionals and academics, in a legal and health professional domain respectively.

One of the main themes of this volume is to explore the negotiations in the production of anthropological knowledge in terms of the relationships between the anthropologist and their informants, research assistants, and their own wider networks within any locality. Anthropological fieldwork has never been completely determined by the researcher. This is as true of fieldwork conducted in the 1920s as it is today. Focusing on relationships in the field allows us to see how substantial learning takes place in this context. Accounts of fieldwork in this volume give us a range of instances through which knowledge is acquired in and through the field: through the co-operation and resistance of informants, through well-informed and vocal research assistants, through the anthropologist's learning of specific skills of work, behaviour and language – which generate an embodied sense of the field –, through strategies for co-production of information and representation, and through the anthropologist's own working and writing in different disciplinary contexts.

A second key theme in the volume challenges the idea of the field as a site of social relationships and experiences that is separate from the anthropologist's personal *habitus*. The personal and social boundaries between anthropologists and their respondents may be less distinct to start with and shift over time. Contributors to the volume reflect on the epistemological significance of the blurring of field boundaries. Boundaries between anthropologist and respondents may collapse through long and intensive engagement but may also be further permeated by myriad forms of social relationships (friendships, kin ties) and the connections of 'native anthropologists' that cross these boundaries. Another instance in which field boundaries may collapse is when the anthropologist works in several different field

sites, either simultaneously or successively. Here field experiences in one site may 'leach' into experiences from other sites. The analytical and methodological issues that arise from such overlaps range from questions about field practices and how different sites 'speak' to each other, to the ways in which anthropologists link their intimate connections with the field to the sense of anthropology they have gained through their reading and training. Bodenhorn, this volume, makes the point that while fieldwork has often been likened to a rite of passage, where the anthropologist is caught in a state of liminality, this is in fact a highly misleading image. Rather, most anthropologists become involved in social relationships that continue over time and that cross personal, academic and fieldwork sites. At the same time there is a liminality generated at the outset in the way the field is constructed as 'elsewhere'. The contributions in the volume reflect on how such social connections are made, negotiated, and how they direct and redirect the anthropological enterprise.

Learning in the field

Amongst anthropologists, anthropological knowledge is more often than not attributed to the scholarship and ingenuity of individual anthropologists rather than to the people whom they have worked with. Inherent to such an attribution is the idea that somehow what is 'out there' is raw material (beliefs, practices) to be processed, interpreted and converted into refined theory (knowledge) by the anthropologist. This idea of extraction is in turn based on a frequently reproduced dichotomy that contrasts the dominant presence of the anthropologist with the submissive nature of the informants. Accounts of fieldwork in this volume contest both ideas: that anthropologists construct theory themselves rather than slowly build upon the practical and theoretical reflections of their respondents, and secondly, that respondents are necessarily co-operative rather than challenging or negotiating the anthropologist's interventions and representations of them.

Increasingly, anthropology itself is a discipline which respondents have views about. Respondents' ideas of anthropology play a significant role in defining the ethnographic project as well as in enabling the ethnographer's access. Halstead's work on East Indians in Guyana and New York, this volume, points to the ways in which the anthropological gaze tends to 'other' its subjects of study as 'backward' or 'traditional', which in turn brings out resistance among those who are keen to present themselves as 'modern'. For the Guyanese living in Guyana, anthropology is a potential threat to their life projects, and it is their view of anthropology as a science of 'backward' people which makes them particularly suspicious about Halstead's presence and questioning. As 'modern' people, East Indians questioned why they are of 'anthropological' interest? Shouldn't the anthropologist search for a traditional community instead? The chapters of Mills and Donner reveal other ways in which anthropologists' access can be directed by informants. Although not openly resistant to anthropologists' enquiries, respondents may refrain from providing information because of the ways in which they perceive their own vulnerabilities and

insecurities. Mills, in his discussion of Tibetan Buddhism both in Ladakh and in the diaspora, describes how he struggled to get the monks of the Buddhist monasteries to talk about their role in everyday rituals relating to village deities. What they silenced in their discourse, as a means of protecting their authority, became also for the anthropologist harder to access and understand. Donner similarly shows how her own struggles of access into the lives of middle-class women in Calcutta were shaped by their politics of the urban neighbourhood and in particular the communal divide between Hindus and Muslims. Hindu Bengali and Muslim households rarely interact and as a result Donner's contact with some households directly precluded access to others.

There are nevertheless many instances when knowledge about a society is consciously co-produced by the anthropologists and their informants. As Bodenhorn tells us in her chapter, her doctoral project was designed in consultation with the Iñupiaq History, Language and Culture Commission in Alaska and with the clear Iñupiaq instruction that they wanted her to 'tell others about why it is important for them to whale'. Bodenhorn's long association with Iñupiat thereafter sees her working as director of social services, in the women's crisis centre, the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, and also as a teacher of a methods course at the local community college. In her chapter she reflects on how her collaborative relationships emerging from her work in these various contexts have helped her redirect her anthropological thinking as well as her understanding of Inupiaq life. She learnt, for example, that the way in which Iñupiat conceive of their relationship with whales was important to understanding gender relationships in the context of whaling, or how Iñupiaq ideas about 'rights' are informed by their notion of 'responsibility' in hunting, that is, the duty to give a share of hunted food. Donner, on the other hand, concludes her paper on fieldwork in middle-class Calcutta with a fine example of mutual reflexivity in the field. While Borsa Ganguly, a key informant, reminded Donner on a re-visit of how little she knew about Bengali culture when she first arrived in Calcutta and emphasised that 'I taught you all you know', she also admitted: 'I thought a lot about our conversations, the questions you asked, all the things we discussed – they made me think about my own life'.

A key field relationship, yet one that has received scant attention in critical literature, is that between the anthropologist and his/her research assistants. Research assistants are also informants but ones who play a very special role in facilitating anthropologists' access and advancing their insights. Drawing on his own experiences with different assistants during fieldwork in Tamilnadu, De Neve shows how the relationship between fieldworker and assistant can sometimes be fraught with tension and highly counter-productive, while at other times it is the key to social and cultural understanding. Being simultaneously language translators and cultural interpreters, local assistants are able to open up worlds which even the most linguistically and methodologically astute fieldworker might never be able to penetrate on his or her own. But the task of an assistant is certainly not an obvious one. It presupposes the ability to move between cultures and to reflect critically and consciously on one's own society in the first place. Such qualities are seldom recognised in representations that

depict assistants as mere 'aides' or 'data collectors'. The anthropologist's ultimate ability to understand and construct knowledge hinges on respondents' own reflections and interpretations of their society, and those of the assistant are crucial among these. While Rabinow (1977) suggests that those who are marginal in their own societies make the best assistants, De Neve reveals that this need not always be the case. An assistant's personal interests as well as the 'interpersonal rapport' between ethnographer and assistant are as essential to a constructive research relationship as social or educational background.

Another important yet less written aspect of how knowledge is gained in the field relates to the bodily and physical engagement of the anthropologist in the processes she or he writes about. In this volume Hsu discusses how her knowledge of Chinese medicine, particularly acupuncture was affected by her learning to be an acupuncturist. The learning of a practical skill provided her a deeper and more reflective means of reaching a cultural understanding of medicine. The learning of a new skill changed her own belief in the efficacy of her respondent's medical techniques. Hsu uses her embodied approach to cultural understanding to suggest that rather than participant observation, it is *participant experience* that needs to be privileged as an anthropological method. Unnithan-Kumar makes a similar point where she suggests that her research questions on caste/tribe and, later, on reproduction and health were crucially shaped by the fact that she shared a 'bodily-hexis' (following Bourdieu; contextually informed ways of presenting the body) with her respondents. Sharing similar processes of embodiment as her women respondents enabled Unnithan-Kumar to reflect more critically on the emotional (as communicated through the body) aspects of relatedness and healthcare: to understand women's agency in resort to healthcare services as connected with their relationships of intimacy and loyalty rather than as guided by their knowledge of medical expertise. It thus appears from these cases that anthropologists' perspectives on any particular social context will always differ according to their emotional and bodily engagements with their field; that is, by the ways in which they 'embody the field'.

Across fields

A dominant trend in ethnographic writing has been to exclude the anthropologist's self from field accounts and has therefore, more often than not, tended to sustain the idea of the field as a static entity which is set apart from the anthropologist. Yet, as several individual reflections on the field in this volume demonstrate, in reality such separations are unsustainable for a variety of reasons. Firstly, ethnographers often are or become 'related' to the field and their respondents in multiple ways of which the bodily connections mentioned above are only one (Bodenhorn, Hsu, Unnithan-Kumar, Halstead, this volume). The boundaries between anthropologist and 'native' become less apparent, either through long-term contact, as in Bodenhorn's case, or, for example, through childhood experiences in/of the places which they study (Unnithan-Kumar, Halstead, Hsu, this volume). Such webs of relatedness across

fields (both personal and academic) challenge the notion of a home-field distinction at the same time as they highlight the idea that one can never be fully at home, in the sense of 'knowing it all'.

Unnithan-Kumar discusses in her chapter that being regarded as a 'native anthropologist' is problematic as it is an imposed category which uncritically assigns the anthropologist to a specific place at the same time as it assumes a prior (deep) knowledge of the field on the part of the anthropologist. But being identified as a 'native', especially by one's respondents can also be a useful category as it provides both anthropologist and respondents with a point of contact and a means of relating to each other, which in turn has both practical and theoretical consequences for the way in which the field is constructed. The 'relatedness' of anthropologists to their fields of study makes a distinct contribution to the formation of their analytical models. As Coleman suggests (this volume), it also collapses the state of being 'in the field' (fieldworker) with writing about it (ethnographer). Halstead discusses how her identity in the field was constructed by her respondents through at least four perspectives: her Hindu Guyanese origins, her identity as a well-educated middle-class woman, her informants' ideas about the 'outside', and their perceptions of what anthropology is all about. Her case illustrates the more general point that people come to 'know' and to 'position' the researcher as anthropologist through varying identifications of difference and familiarity. With 'native anthropologists' the terms of difference and familiarity tend to be more ambivalent than those through which foreign researchers are identified.

The overlaps between the anthropologist as fieldworker and ethnographer are also experienced when the anthropologist works in a number of field sites. In his contribution Coleman discusses how field experiences may permeate into each other, prompting a more systematic consideration in the discipline regarding how different sites 'speak' to each other and how they may encourage similar fieldwork practices. Reflecting on the different sites and problematics of his own fieldwork – starting with a study of Pentecostalism in Sweden, followed by research on pilgrimages to Walsingham in Norfolk, and finally involvement with a National Health project on hospital space – Coleman shows how he sees these sites as both connected and differing, at the same time shaping and shaped by his intellectual concerns. Using three 'metaphors of connection' (trajectory, dialectics and deep structure), Coleman unpacks the links between these projects and field sites in terms of his own personal and academic life course (trajectory), how each of these sites 'speak to each other' (dialectics), and the underlying parallels in his choice of site (deep structure). What emerges from such an analysis of his material is, for example, the understanding that his work has been primarily in sites where the connections between culture, community and place appear deeply ambiguous.

Shifting field sites, moreover, can open up new perspectives and insights that allow the anthropologist to rethink earlier data in the light of new findings. This is illustrated by Mills (this volume), who explains how his own understanding of the embeddedness of monastic Buddhism in local ritual landscapes came about through shifting 'fields' in two senses. Firstly, Mills shifted field as *place* by moving the

physical location of his research from a Buddhist monastery in Ladakh to the Tibetan Government-in-exile in Dharamsala, North India, and secondly, he shifted field as *method* by complementing participant observation with discourse analysis, focusing on the public discourses of the Dalai Lama on modern Buddhism as a secular and disembedded religion. Shifting fields in this manner allowed him to gain insight into the dissonance between Buddhist practices of embeddedness in local rituals and public discourses of disembeddedness as a universal religion.

New field sites seldom appear as a *deus ex machina*, and several papers reflect precisely on how fields emerge and how shifts in fieldwork follow from both the life course and the academic career of the anthropologist. What is often overlooked in debates about fieldwork is that there are significant institutional factors that impact on fieldwork decisions. These include, among others, success in securing funding in an ever more competitive research environment and one's relative security of employment. Both Donner and Coleman (this volume) mention, from different positions, how a permanent job in academia takes away the pressure to conform to the 'classic' fieldwork approach and allows one to explore new spaces and approaches in a more creative way. With seniority the opportunity to experiment with new sites and methods also increases as does the experience of constraint generated from the 'audit cultures' in which we work.

The importance of institutional and disciplinary contexts also surfaces in another way. Anthropologists may be multi-sited not just in terms of where they do their field research but also in terms of the institutional contexts in which they operate. These multi-sited contexts are not just academic ones, in which anthropologists may talk to archaeologists or historians, but also professional ones, as an engaged anthropology increasingly requires the ethnographer to interact and collaborate with people from other professions. These commonly include development organisations and activists, medical practitioners, legal specialists and the media. While there is an established literature on how anthropologists engage with development (Crewe and Harrison 1998, Gardner and Lewis 1996, Grillo and Stirrat 1997), little thought has been given so far to how both informants as well as other professionals view, understand and regard anthropology and its particular approach. Yet the views that others hold of anthropology have serious bearing on how anthropologists present their own work to others, and is ultimately bound to affect how we reflect on our own methodologies. More generally, it is safe to assume that external judgments of the discipline will increasingly shape the way in which anthropologists working in different institutional and disciplinary contexts conduct research, organise fieldwork, interpret data and write texts.

Goberman-Hill and Good's chapters provide important insights into such interdisciplinary engagements. Goberman-Hill, for example, discusses the manner in which anthropological research skills are differently valued within the discipline itself than by those doing healthcare related research, an area in which also her current research is located. Whereas anthropologists may see fieldwork and thick description as the defining characteristics of their work and as their main contribution to other disciplines, healthcare researchers look to anthropology to obtain a more practical

set of skills, a tool-kit, which they expect to equip them with the necessary tools to 'do' qualitative research. Teaching qualitative research methods to health researchers, Goberman-Hill soon realised that her healthcare students had expectations that differed substantially from those of anthropology students, and that they were not necessarily interested in the theoretical or conceptual underpinnings of qualitative approaches. This has made her rethink how anthropology can contribute to multi-disciplinary projects in a more meaningful way.

In a particularly revealing chapter, Good similarly reflects on how different audiences such as development planners or judges in court engage with anthropology and on how they view the discipline. Having written for very different constituencies himself (scientists, anthropologists, developers, and courts), Good found that each group valued very different parts of anthropology. While anthropologists themselves care about the duration of time spent in the field and the quality of the data collected, development planners primarily value a notion of 'having been there' but are less concerned with the *quality* or *time* of that being there. Expert witness reports written for judges in court in turn derive their authority from being written by an *expert* (the anthropologist in this case) who has been there *recently*. Moreover, in his analysis of different kinds of writing that anthropologists produce in their different roles (such as development consultant or expert legal witness for asylum seekers, both roles he has occupied), Good shows how different kinds of writing about the same society also create diverse types of social knowledge. Through his own journey through anthropology and other disciplines, he underscores the need for anthropologists to think about fieldwork from the perspective of their writings, as these are the ultimate 'anthropological products' that pass hands.

Conclusion

Let us now sum up what this volume has to offer to further an understanding of anthropology, its professional practitioners and its particular relationship between method and theory. Here, we spell out the implications of our findings for the teaching of anthropology and for students at the threshold of the discipline. We suggest that there are three main areas to which our chapters speak:

- 1) the connection between the diverse experiences of anthropologists and the shared authoritative knowledge of the discipline;
- 2) the existence of increasingly diverse sub-disciplines within the discipline;
and
- 3) the diversity in regional scholarship within anthropology.

Speaking to a diversity of experience

As the contributions to the volume show, despite the idiosyncratic nature of fieldwork, reflection on our critical journeys allows us to make substantive observations about our disciplinary practice. All contributions reveal that although field experiences may not be comparable in terms of subject matter or focus, they can nevertheless be fruitfully reflected upon in terms of the ways in which events occur and shape our understandings of a society. This includes acknowledging the level to which chance figures in our work, leading to the realisation that fieldwork, like childbirth and pregnancy, can never be wholly predetermined and scientifically managed. The diversity in experiences documented here also allows us to reflect on the social, political, reflexive and experiential distance and proximity that connects respondents and anthropologist. Critical reflection on such processes reveals above all that knowledge is far more co-produced than is imagined or given its due. Moreover, it raises the need to recognise the considerable extent to which contestation (over meanings, classifications, and analysis) between anthropologists and non-anthropologists, and amongst anthropologists themselves, shapes anthropologists' work. Finally, the diverse experiences of some long-term practising anthropologists enable us to understand how shifts in disciplinary focus take place: shifts between geographical locations as well as between subject areas within defined regions.

This leads us to the issue of pedagogy and to the question whether anthropology's disciplinary practices can be taught: is the subject matter of this volume something that can be taught, and if so how? We would like to locate the teaching of anthropology between two extreme positions. The first is the position in which one can 'teach' a discipline such as physics or mathematics from a syllabus and a broadly agreed upon body of knowledge, the second is the situation in which one cannot teach at all, as explained in Elkins' critical writings on the teaching of art in which he maintains that 'the idea of teaching art is irreparably irrational. We do not teach because we do not know when or how we teach' (2001: 107). In this volume we suggest that while a course based on the idiosyncratic experiences of individual anthropologists can never be taught in the same way as physics, we none the less believe that anthropology is learnt through 'example': through an understanding of the ways in which social knowledge is constructed by the differing experiences of anthropologists. Critical examples, such as the journeys in this volume, help to promote an awareness of the diverse possibilities of learning, the dialectical nature of knowledge creation, and the embodied aspects of our discipline's engagement with its subject matter. From several contributions we learn that the field, with all its actors, constructs us as much as we construct the field. This understanding immediately calls into question the popular image – even in anthropological circles – of anthropologists as sole authors of ideas and knowledge, independently and heroically 'discovered'. Instead, the contributions emphasize the 'dialectic' interchange between people, places and projects (to borrow from Coleman, this volume), which lies at the heart of the anthropological quest. Above all, a useful lesson to be learnt from the following pages is not to expect closure in one's social analyses. There is never just one answer to an ethnographic