

Abstracts

Benefits and challenges in inter-disciplinary research

By Charlotte Jensen

The Brundtland report of 1987 with its emphasis on sustainability and human-nature-relations initiated a renewed interest in inter-disciplinary research in several fields of academia, not least, of course, among scholars interested in 'nature'-related issues. The understanding that life itself were under threat and that only inter-disciplinary research and co-operation could solve the complex problems facing humanity, also sparked a lot of political goodwill and secured funding for inter-disciplinary projects for years to come. Thus, in Denmark, as elsewhere in Europe and the United States, a number of research centres focussing on 'nature' and natural resources management were set up to deal with these questions in an interdisciplinary perspective. Often, however, these centres failed to go beyond mere co-disciplinarity, i.e. more disciplines working together along side one another, publishing in the same magazines, etc. but not reaching the point of mutual reflection and discussion of central scientific concepts and understandings. Taking this paradox as the outset, the article goes on to describe how, on the one hand, inter-disciplinarity carries with it the possibility of transcending existing scientific truths and ways of knowing about the world but, on the other hand, how this possibility is often not utilized due to different historical traditions of knowledge production and validation among disciplines as well as due to more practical concerns such as administrative rules, institutional affiliations and individual career opportunities.

Archaeology vs. ethnology - in the case of the cultural landscape

By Sofie Jensen

Archaeology and ethnology are both professions, which conducts research in the lives of people. The two professions therefore have many areas of study in common e.g. the cultural landscape.

In the study of the cultural landscape they both use the same main source – the landscape itself. The distinction between the two professions lies in the choice of time period, and that distinction results in a need for different methods to exam these periods of time. Ergo there are both resemblances and differences between archaeology and ethnology.

Both professions are affected by what Foucault calls the discourses, which give a line of resemblances in choice of theory and method. At the same time the professions have different practices, as Mol puts it, which shine through the ruling discourse and show the differences between the professions.

A time perspective shows the resemblances between archaeology and ethnology in a given discourse. As the discourses change the resemblances also change.

In the case of the 1970's versus the 1995-2005's differences in discourse can be summed up in these terms: essence versus construction. In the 1970's the discourse was characterized by essence thinking, units and the wish for objective research and communication, while in the 1995-2005's the discourse was characterized by thinking in constructions, wholes and subjective research and communication.

There is also a line of differences between the two professions, which is given by the characteristics of the practices in each profession. The differences in practice can be summed up in the terms reconstruction versus deconstruction. Archaeology is characterized by a wish to reconstruct the past and therefore chronology is an important aspect. On the other hand ethnology wishes to deconstruct the general way of looking at the past and therefore variety is an important aspect.

Knowledge of other professions gives the opportunity to work together and exchange ideas. One should not be afraid of other professions, but be inspired by them and let research and communication be interdisciplinary.

Between text and interaction - contributions to an inter-disciplinary discourse analysis

By Anders Horsbøl

Analysis of 'text' or 'interaction' play an important role in several methods within the humanities, and 'text' or 'interaction' are key concepts within many forms of communication studies. However, the interplay between text and interaction has received much less attention, even within communication studies and discourse analysis. This article crosses the divide between text and interaction studies, and argues that interplay and transformation between text and interaction can be regarded as a central characteristic of many social practices. In that sense, the article contributes to a transformational turn within discourse analysis, which focuses on the flows of meaning across time and (social) space, and which needs to be realized interdisciplinarily. The point of departure is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an interdisciplinary research field. Whereas interdisciplinarity in CDA often consists in an attempt to integrate close textual

or 'micro' analysis with 'social theory', this article aims to link different analytical 'micro' approaches, i.e. text and interaction studies, used in CDA. However, it is argued that this linking will provide a resource for CDA for further inter- or transdisciplinary research.

The argumentation unfolds in a mainly theoretical manner, supplemented by empirical examples. First, the concepts of text and interaction are discussed and redefined, drawing on discourse analysis, hermeneutics, history of media technology, and conversation analysis. A text is defined narrowly as a semiotic object, and an interaction, likewise narrowly, as a simultaneous co-construction of meaning. The distinction between text and interaction is shortly discussed in relation to 'neighbour' distinctions such as written-spoken communication, or different forms of semiotic modality. Secondly, a series of transformations between text and interaction is presented under the headings 'textualization' and 'interactionalization'. Thirdly, it is argued that many social practices can be regarded as constellations of interactionalizations and textualizations. This is illustrated with examples from organizational communication. Finally, a clarification of a prevalent CDA, i.e. Faircloughian, understanding of the relation between text and social practice is suggested, and further interdisciplinary implications are discussed.

Darkroom: Recollecting and developing - On poems and photography, memory and perception and the inter-disciplinary method of Psychology of Language

By Renate Recke

Psychology of language is an interdisciplinary approach which offers new views on genres that involve images and pictures as communication instruments. In 'The Darkroom - recollection and evocation', I examine the communication structures of poetry and photography and the cognitive dimensions of recollection and perception all within the cross-disciplinary frame work of psychology of language, which constitutes an adequate method within which to explore metaphors and schematas constituted by memory. Poetry and photography are snap shot-genres that capture images and perceptions of times past. Intersections between Pia Tafdrup's poem on Berlin: "Darkroom in Immanuelkirchstrasse" and non-commercial photos of the actual Immanuelkirchstrasse are discovered and presented. The parallel contrasts (up/down, out/in) and convergences between the metaphors in the Tafdrup-poem and the composition of the photograph are studied in detail through the lens of psychology of language.

The field worker as a tactician - Reflections from a fieldwork in post-Soviet Uzbekistan

By Maria Louw

With a point of departure in my fieldwork in Uzbekistan I attempt to pin down some of the challenges and predicaments which confront an anthropologist doing fieldwork on a controversial subject in an authoritarian society.

I proceed from the concept of the narrative plot and identify two narrative plots which had particular significance for my fieldwork: a plot, in which I was categorised as a guest, and a plot in which I was categorised as a radical 'Other'; that is, a possible religious extremist or spy. Initially I experienced them as plots which closed the doors to the more intimate aspects of peoples' lives: The guest-plot because it only allowed me access to the aspects of peoples' lives they found suitable for public display – the extremist/spy-plot because it denied me any access whatsoever. However, I came to realise that these plots were no less important parts of the culturally intimate than what they prevented me from knowing.

Doing anthropological fieldwork on a controversial issue in an authoritarian society, furthermore, one often finds oneself in the position of a tactician. For this point, I refer to the distinction made by Michel de Certeau between strategy and tactics as different forms of agency. Whereas strategies in de Certeau's sense belong to the relatively powerful, tactics are an art of the relatively weak. Without a proper locus that would provide the conditions necessary for autonomy and sustainable planning, tacticians must resort to isolated actions, tricks and rhetoric.

While authoritarian and politically tense contexts pose specific challenges to the anthropological fieldworker, in another sense it may also be argued that anthropological fieldwork in such contexts elucidates points which apply to anthropological fieldwork as such: That silence and closed doors can be important sources of data, and that the fieldworker has to adjust her research plan continuously – and tactically – when confronting the field and its often unforeseen challenges.