

Review of: "Is Fieldwork losing its grace? Encountering Western and Indian Experience"

Lisa Marie Borrelli¹

¹ HES-SO Valais-Wallis

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article provides a lively discussion of fieldwork as anthropological tool to study social processes and critique(s) of anthropological attempts to study societies as a natural container of habits and practices that can be explained rather than interpreted.

While the article brings up several interesting and relevant points and gives a brief overview of fieldwork-studies throughout "history", the main objective of it remains rather vague. It would help the reader if there is a clear outline on what the article wishes to contribute. For now, some varieties of fieldwork are discussed (what is the position of the author here?), ethics briefly mentioned (is this something to delve deeper into? I find this aspect particularly interesting and relevant, but it might not be the main aspect of this article), and some discussion on the way how phenomena are studied (nature versus society, empirical data and how to interpret it, fieldwork length, etc) are introduced.

One aspect that could be relevant for today's research is the brief discussion on the lack of thick description: reducing fieldwork to a mere obligation is a crucial disadvantage, but supported by short-ended funding schemes.

The article further takes up appearance and background of fieldworkers and collaborative fieldwork (conducting fieldwork alone or not), but only by citing other works and only briefly - what is the quintessence out of these observations, why is it brought up? How does it link to the other sections?

The sections of the article seem a bit disconnected and short in themselves. It remains difficult to understand what each section should do. At the same time it takes up a couple of questions that could be explored more in depth:

The barriers and the loss of it come up. This is a good question (→ to what extent one can emerge, given the short types of fundings etc.) - but I would critically discuss when and why it is needed to remain longer (e.g. in what moments; is it possible, etc.) - given that even deep immersion might not eradicate the fact that we are strangers in a place (at least at times).

That said, the starting question "Does fieldwork really receive less attention in academic contexts?" does not seem to be the main interest of this article.

One smaller comment: Much of the literature that is cited and criticizes the lack of fieldwork and its quality is not extremely up-to-date, which is why I suggest some more recent sources. Then again, it might be a too general argument, given that many fields are actually exploring fieldwork, e.g. see migration studies.

Some language suggestions:

- Abstract: field work is receiving less attention (rather than getting less importance) - or: is attributed less relevance...?

I hope this review provides some helpful feedback. The article brings sure up many valuable questions for the field.