

Abstract

Waiting. Ethnographic collage round an intervening space

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Summery. Mara Förlag 2009

This dissertation is about waiting. It's about what happens when an ethnographer goes into the field and asks people to fill a small and indeterminate word like waiting with thoughts, experiences and recollections.

The study is primarily based on twenty qualitative interviews with thirteen interviewees in Gothenburg. The interviewees were selected from the ethnographer's own circle of acquaintances and constitute a fairly homogenous group of individuals. They are early middle-aged, were brought up in Sweden during the 1960s and 1970s, belong to a relatively well-educated lower middle-class, have artistic/cultural interests and work in the public/cultural sector. In an attempt to put the interviewees' narratives into a wider context, I have collected and used supplementary material in the form of different narratives communicated, for example, through the mass media, fiction, DIY-books, popular science and art.

A central point of departure in the study is that the words we use are filled with meanings that we ourselves assign to them, and that an interview is a form of narrative in which knowledge is constructed at that particular moment in time. The aim of this dissertation is to study some of the articulations of waiting. What kind of waiting is highlighted in the narratives of waiting in every day life? Which words, themes, images, characters and motifs are available to use and grapple with? What is the purpose of waiting, and which ideals, norms and perceptions connected with waiting emerge?

By listening to and studying the articulations of waiting I capture a time-dimension – that is partly about an everyday perception and organisation of time and partly about a central aspect of becoming a subject at a more existential level. The aspect of time that has been captured here indicates that waiting is about *change*. When subjectivity is understood as something that happens, an activity, an action or a process, movement is at the core. Being or becoming a subject demands transition and change – the movement from one state to another. Fulfilling oneself means moving between the different positions that one seeks to occupy. Waiting can thus be said to capture the actual *passage*, which means that this state that we usually define as something stationary and uneventful is actually an important *productive mechanism*. This then constitutes the actual effort, attempt and charging up involved in being able to attain *something else*. The driving force in all these processes is different kinds of imagined needs – the need to become a subject and be fulfilled.

Key words: waiting, ethnography, narratives, cultural repertoire, emotions, subjectivity, women, time, every-day experiences, subject understanding, ambivalence, bricolage, experimental ethnography

Distribution: Mara Förlag. www.maraförlag.com

ISBN: 978-91-974674-4-5

Väntan
Etnografiskt kollage kring ett mellanrum

av
Anita Beckman

Akademisk avhandling som med vederbörligt tillstånd av
Humanistiska fakultetsnämnden vid Göteborgs universitet för
avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentlig
granskning fredagen den 12 juni kl.13.00 i universitetets
huvudbyggnad, sal 10, Vasaparken, Göteborg