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Title: Knowledge practice in development studies: Examples from ethnographies on civil society

Year: 2015

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Kontinen, T., & Oinas, E. (2015). Knowledge practice in development studies: Examples from ethnographies on civil society. In R. Kilonzo, & T. Kontinen (Eds.), Contemporary concerns in development studies : Perspectives from Tanzania and Zambia (pp. 178-193). Helsingin yliopisto. Publications of the Department of Political and Economic Studies, 23/2015. https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/154641

13 Knowledge Practice in Development Studies: Examples from Ethnographies on Civil Society

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Introduction: Ambiguities and Reflexivity in Development Studies

The diverse chapters of this book demonstrate the extremely wide range of concerns relevant to development studies. The variety and complexity of concerns result also in a need for a multifaceted pallet of research approaches and methods. Development studies (hereafter DS) as an interdisciplinary[1] research field is characterised by ambiguities in its methodologies and research conduct. In this chapter we argue that these ambiguities stem from an awareness of three different relations that characterise DS: its unique relationship with well-established disciplines, its status vis-á-vis development policy and practice, and its colonial, imperialist and neo-colonial legacies. Each of these aspects affect the methodological choices and research practice in DS which continuously seeks methodological inspiration from a variety of sources, covering social, political and economic sciences.

Not surprisingly, the ambiguous position towards other disciplines had led to re-occurring debates about the true nature and disciplinary characteristics of DS. The methodology of DS escapes clear boundaries, creating ambivalences of what constitutes discipline in terms of relevant knowledge and proper knowledge practices (cf. Latour 2004). In DS, the methodological choices are, by tradition, based on the nature of concern rather than a disciplinary canon. Such a practice enables a multidisciplinary approach to complex concerns, but it also creates a risk of promising more than can be delivered. When attempting to employ a holistic approach and embrace everything from individual consciousness via cultural aspects to global economic structures in

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[1] *A thorough discussion about disciplinarity is outside the scope of this article. For example Repko (2012: 16) defines interdisciplinary studies as "a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline, and draws on the disciplines with the goal of integrating their insights to construct a more comprehensive understanding". He distinguished (ibid. 18–21) interdisciplinarity from multidisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, where the former does not aim to integrate different disciplinary insights, and the latter attempts to go beyond the disciplines in search for unity of knowledge. DS, thus, is interdisciplinary since it tackles with "development" by integrating different disciplinary perspectives. However, many research projects in development studies are also multidisciplinary without an aim to integrate the perspectives.*

regard to a certain concern, we might set ourselves up for an impossible task that traditional disciplinary thinking protects the researcher from.

However, it is not only the disciplinary ambivalence that sets challenges for the methodological choices. Additionally, DS as a field of research is more or less committed to addressing global inequalities and social transformation, and thus, continuously encounters the question of policy relevance (Green 2012). In addition to academic endeavours, DS often explicitly discusses concerns relevant to development policy makers and other so-called stakeholders, who often expect to receive useful recommendations to facilitate and justify intervention designs (Kingsbury et al. 2012; Sumner and Tribe 2008). This commitment is often questioned, but nevertheless, has a strong hold of the field and offers a particular legitimacy in comparison to disciplines with longer historical legacies and clearer identity.

Finally, DS continuously constructs its identity vis-á-vis its ambiguous relation to colonial legacy. On the one hand, it reconstructs the colonial trusteeship and the normative commitment of "searching for the best for others" (cf. Cowen and Shenton 1996). On the other hand, it upholds the responsibility and capability of research in the global South to address relevant concerns with appropriate approaches. The need for balancing acts in addressing this legacy is required both in the academic North-South research practice (cf. Carbonnier and Kontinen 2014), and in the realm of development policy, rich with global agendas and conditionalities (Gould 2005). While development research is quite explicitly involved in both neo-colonial and anticolonial practices, it consequently discusses the notions of eurocentrism and coloniality more than other disciplines (e.g. Bhambra 2014). This can be seen as a particular strength of DS and its potential contribution to other fields.

These three ambiguities – the first related to interdisciplinary character, the second connected to the balancing between rigorous knowledge production and policy relevance, and the third requiring balancing with colonial legacies – result into a continuous identity work in DS. The multi-layered ambivalence leads to constant negotiations on boundaries of different epistemic communities (Haas 1992: 3) in the search for common areas. This negotiation includes, for example, accusations of simplicity and lack of rigour in knowledge production conducted for the purposes policy relevance, or the too complicated nature and "not-usefulness" of the academic research for policy-makers and development practitioners (Green 2012). Moreover, it sets particular challenges for reflexivity. If the practice of development searches for reducing uncertainty, and simple and implementable solutions, what is the stand of development researchers? How do we practice reflexivity if the field we study seems to refuse to?

Reflexivity is considered an inherent feature of academic research in general (Merton 1949; Popper 1957), and of anthropology in particular (Clifford 1986), especially since the "reflexivity turn" in the 1980s (e.g. Bourdieu 1992). For example in its Foucault-inspired take, reflexivity posits that there are no foundational truths to be taken for granted, but all factualized accounts about the social are to be opened for critical investigation as to their truth/knowledge claims, including scholars' own conceptual frameworks (Foucault 1972). Reflexivity concerns also the researcher's relationship to

the subject of research, including the power inherent in the research relations. For example, the discussion on the "ethnographic gaze" in post-colonial encounters rewards special attention to the conceptual and actual imperialism in research practice (Ahmed 2000). A parallel debate brought forth by the feminist theorists (e.g. Harding 1991) has drawn attention to the notion of positionality.

This view challenges the traditional virtue of objectivity in academic research and argues that research is always conducted from a number of positions which should be openly reflected upon. Additionally, the so-called practice turn in the social studies of science has shown how scientific knowledge is a product of certain knowledge practices, referring to conduct of knowledge production situated in particular knowledge communities and knowledge producing machineries (Knorr Cetina 1999; Longino 2002).

Taking reflexivity, positionality and knowledge practices seriously is of utmost importance for DS, especially since the stands taken are not only theoretical, but also political with specific interventionist goals (Kapoor 2008). The ethnographic methodology as currently used in DS provides an interesting showcase for a reflexive treatment of the methodological ambiguities in DS (see reviews in Gardner and Lewis 1996 Venkatesan and Yarrow 2012; Mosse & Lewis 2005; Mosse 2014). Ethnography subscribes to certain knowledge practices, somewhat different from the expert and participatory conducts that Green (2012) associates with development practice. However, the ethnographic knowledge practices in DS do not always coincide with those of anthropological ones. Especially, ethnography in DS constitutes its objects and fields in different ways. Moreover, its knowledge practices do not necessarily entail the "lone fieldworker" in a certain location, nor share the belief in the possibilities of producing knowledge on intellectual basis, distanced from power, like the ideals often attached to anthropology (ibid.: 54). Additionally, unlike anthropology which tends to distinguish between actors' and researchers' categories and thus enables new interpretations, DS faces the risk of merging these two (ibid.: 44).

DS works with conceptualised issues such as "inclusive development", "gender equality", "project impacts", and "household livelihoods" that have been already set at the beginning of the research process. Sometimes these categories also coincide with those produced by knowledge practices in development apparatus, which has the tendency to categorise the world through ever-changing "buzzwords" (Cornwall 2007). The ethnographic approach enables reflexivity on the buzzwords and opens space for the production of new categories also in DS.

For our purposes, a rough distinction can be made between ethnographic inquiries in locations where development takes place or is sought for, and ethnographies of development practice itself. The latter approach has examined how knowledge practice in the development industry tends to technicalize inherently political phenomena (Ferguson 1994; Grillo and Stirrat 1997; Li 2007; Gould and Marcussen 2004); often ignores the multiple interests, logics, interpretations, and consequent negotiations, and specific power relations in a process (Mosse 2005; Long 2001; Olivier de Sardan 2005); and has a habit of overlooking the power relations between different types of knowledge

(Ferguson, ibid.; Chambers 2014) and its very production of the "objects of development" in post-colonial contexts (Escobar 2011; Eriksson Baaz 2005).

The aim of this chapter is to provide personal reflections as senior DS researchers at Finnish universities on the ethnographic conduct situated in the territory between different epistemic communities, and suggest a few central elements about the DS profession. Oinas has entered development studies from a disciplinary background in sociology, and Kontinen from adult education and organisation studies. Kontinen's experience is an example of research within the so-called development machinery, especially in the international organisational system of development NGOs (cf. Tvedt 2002; 2006). Her reflection is based on two particular experiences. The first is a long-term, multi-sited ethnography on the collaboration processes of selected small Finnish and Tanzanian NGOs in Morogoro (Kontinen 2007): The second is a more hit-and-run organisation development work on the monitoring and evaluation at a Finnish NGO and its partners at different locations, including Finland, Kenya and India (Kontinen and Robinson-Mondaca 2014). Oinas's experience comes from her work on gender and health in Finland and, with more relevance to DS, HIV medicine. Here the focus will be on her latest study on voluntary HIV treatment counsellors in South Africa (Oinas 2012; 2014) with fieldwork conducted in 2009 and 2011, although backed with a decade's research experience mainly in the same neighbourhoods around the Cape Town metropolitan area. In what follows, we discuss the distinctive features of conceptual reflexivity, empirical sensitivity and political awareness as shown in our own research conduct. In conclusion, we reflect on the disciplinary nature of DS and maintain that it indeed has a specific character of its own[2], even if it also is unusually prone to borrowing from other disciplines.

The Interdisciplinary Ambiguity: Conceptual Reflexivity

Certain features of conceptual reflexivity are part and parcel of DS due to its habit of borrowing from other disciplines. Our specific conceptual reflexivity is needed, first, to position an individual research project vis-á-vis of the theories and concepts of other disciplines; second, to clearly distinguish between the analytical concepts and the "buzzwords" of the development apparatus; and third in investigating the ways the "alien" concepts are encountered in the field locations. The first aspect includes reflex-

[2] *With this article we, however, do not intend to close the debate on the more specific issue of what interdisciplinarity then means. The issue of whether development studies is an actual, even if broad, discipline of its own or just a space for scholars from diverse disciplines to meet, is an ongoing, unsettled, and in many ways fruitful open-ended debate globally. It was thoroughly discussed in the workshops of this project. Openness, of course, also is risky and leads to threats. For example, Rehema Kilonzo observes that Development Studies Departments/Institutes in some higher learning institutions in Africa are treated as coordinating units instead of academic institutions in their own right, unequal to more traditional disciplines defined in 1800th century Europe, even if since Julius Nyerere's rule Development Studies as a subject has had a firm standing – a few courses are obligatory to all students regardless of field - in Tanzanian universities.*

ivity when applying concepts from, for example, sociology, economics and political sciences, in the contexts different from those that the theories primarily address. DS has a tendency of applying existing categories and is interested in their manifestations in different contexts, clearly breaking from some of the most hard-core anthropological accounts on what constitutes good ethnography (cf. Agar 2006). The second aspect considers the reflexivity on the ways the notions used in development policy and practice circulate in research and practice, and how they are interpreted and used by different epistemic communities. The third challenge comes from the need to reflect the colonial legacy and the knowledge encounters between western academy, global policy, and the local contexts.

In civil society research, specific contextual reflexivity is needed when using categories such as "civil society", "NGOs", "social movements" and "rights", which are all embedded in certain traditions of political sciences and first-and-foremost used to analyse western, modern societies, and are not necessarily able to capture the dynamics of organisation, for example, in African ones (cf. Lewis 2002). At the start of Kontinen's PhD project in 1999, the notion of civil society and NGOs experienced their peak period in DS. A huge number of Northern researchers travelled to conduct fieldwork in Africa and Asia in an attempt to investigate local civil society. Many, however, encountered Kelsall's (2004) problem of not finding a *real* "civil society" to investigate when entering their field locations.

Civil society is a typical example of a concept central both to the academic community and development apparatus, gaining different meanings to those knowledge regimes, and, functioning as the basis of aid funding allocations in the era of "supporting civil society". In Kontinen's experience, in the late 1990s the momentum proved to be illuminating for an ethnographer interested in the practices within the aid machinery. The notion of "NGO" had just extensively arrived in the Tanzanian town Morogoro, and there was a lot of enthusiasm among educated people to establish one (cf. Gibbon 2001). The ideal category of "NGO" as a voluntary, non-profit organisation open for everyone willing, clashed often with the founding members' income aspirations in regard to the increasing aid funding available. The mushrooming NGOs combining development efforts with sources of income for the founding members, often consisting of same extended family, were soon condemned as briefcase NGOs and not "real" representatives of civil society. For a development researcher, however, proving the "genuineness" of civil society was not as important as examining how, by whom, and through which kinds of organising processes the "NGOs" and "civil society", were constructed and established.

Additionally, in our fieldwork both in Tanzania and in South Africa, it became apparent how people on the ground were highly skilful in appropriating and using the global terminology. It obviously fitted their claims and experiences, or was made to fit by local interpretations. For the analytical purposes, then, a clear division between the North and the South, jargon and lived experience, was not a useful interpretative dichotomy. For example, among the HIV activists the language of transnational alterglobalization movements, alongside the home-grown but internationally well-spread anti-apartheid

struggle discourse, was prevalent and well-integrated to personal life-histories (Jungar and Oinas 2011). The social movements language increasingly adopted also buzzwords from the then emerging human rights jargon. During the early 2000s' heated campaigning in South Africa, the HIV activists' language clearly distanced itself from the development apparatus and NGO jargon and used a political movement repertoire, but also took a depoliticizing tone when needed, for example for international funders.

Language travels well and seeps into everyday life practices and organisational culture. The researchers' task, then, may be not to simply identify categories and their origins used on the ground, but reflexively analyse the meanings generated through concepts in a contextualising reading. Conceptual sensitivity means reflexive analysis of the translation of a certain vocabulary, from the global academic, as well as development policy or funders' discussions, to local practices, and the shifting meanings the very same concepts generate in local practices[3].

Empirical Sensitivity: The Ethnographic Method as a Loose Principle of Conduct

In DS, as well as in any empirical social science, conceptual reflexivity is always geared towards not only disciplinary theoretical debates or development jargon, but also to the context. Conceptual reflexivity goes hand in hand with empirical sensitivity. As the notions and guidelines used in development practice and policy tend to universalise issues, development research should be attentive to the complexities of different contexts. Green (2012) argues that the contextualisation in development work is often realised through far too short a period of participatory knowledge creation. In participatory exercises, contra to the original epistemological aspirations of participatory development (Chambers 2008; 2014), the so-called beneficiaries and other stakeholders are invited to participate in the analysis of the needs and design of the interventions through pre-designed grids that often remain alien to the actual needs and wishes of local communities.

Green (ibid.) contrasts participatory practice with anthropology that is characterised by long-term fieldwork, including living with the research subjects for an extensive period of time. For non-anthropologist development researchers, empirical sensitivity means often ethnographically inspired methods which, consequently, create a need for continuous positioning vis-á-vis the anthropological ideals of fieldwork. For example, long-term participant observation may not be realisable for DS scholars, who often deal with a number of geographical locations at the same time. Is DS ethnography doomed to be a second class, failed anthropology?

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[3] *We should also remember that it is not only in the development apparatus where the politics of funding in regard to concepts is relevant. No matter how "neutral" and value free academia claims and wishes to be, the phenomenon of politics related to theoretical and methodological trends applies to it too. Engaging with more or less "trendy" theoretical debates may, no doubt, affect success in funding applications for researchers.*

We argue that DS considers the definition of the field and the kinds of fieldwork conducted, differently from classical anthropology. Therefore, it attempts to conduct its empirical work in a rather different manner even if drawing from the rich anthropological tradition. The traditional ethnographic approach presupposed living in a certain distanced location, "field", for a sufficient period of time. In contemporary anthropology, also, notions such as multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995) have challenged this prototype. In research on development NGOs, the approaches vary from close organisational ethnographies of selected organisations (Igoe 2003) to multi-sited ethnographies tracing the processes (Crewe and Harrison 1998) and networks (Riles 2001), embracing connections between the headquarters of international organisations and remote communities.

In Kontinen's PhD work, the "field" was defined as the international NGO development system, which was illustrated by four collaboration projects between Finnish and Tanzanian NGOs. The projects were understood as developmental trajectories (Hutchins 1995: 372) characterised by continuous co-construction of the object of collaboration (Engeström 2005, from the initial idea identification to planning and implementation in different locations in Finland and Tanzania. Therefore, the approach was ethnography of processes rather than communities, organisations or geographical places.

In Oinas's work on HIV activism the "field" could, in classic anthropological tradition, have been the activist organisation, its offices and demonstrations in Cape Town, with perhaps a focus on the leadership, or a few activists' everyday lives and life-worlds. But, it appeared to us that a more fruitful approach was to extend the "field" to the intra-agency of networks, ideas and practices, thus viewing the field as the shifting landscape of HIV policy, from the South African health minister's statements to global activist lobby, media and public campaigning in not only Khayelitsha and Muizenberg but San Fransisco, Geneva and Nairobi. This wider focus, or non-focus, was geared towards unfolding events that shape the social and material worlds of the epidemic, where activists are one crucial actor, but only one in a larger network (Oinas and Jungar 2009).

In both cases, the process and network type definitions of "field" led to messy and uncertain paths. Reaching the "saturation" point of data was difficult as the network of actors contributing to processes seemed to be endless. To reach full certainty on how activist politics are generated, what influences what and how agendas are developed is unattainable. In Oinas's case, there was a palpable risk of romanticising activist heroism and the leadership, especially as we consciously chose not to investigate internal struggles of the organisation, but focus on the public agendas of the movement (Jungar and Oinas 2010).

Consequently, the fieldwork in such cases did not consist of long-term participant observation and "going native", but rather visiting the field in various locations and working on the internet. Kontinen's "fieldwork" included staying altogether 11 months in Tanzania, and included interviewing a number of actors and participating in the practice within "development apparatus". This meant attending and recording hun-

dreds of hours of meetings and workshops typical to the apparatus, in various settings in Finland and Tanzania. Such luxury of time and resources to be allocated to fieldwork has never been realised in the more advanced stages of her research career. The second fieldwork under scrutiny here was conducted in a framework of a two-year research project funded by a Finnish agency, in between the duties of the senior lecturer at the university (Kontinen and Robinson-Moncada 2014). This "fieldwork" consisted of interviews and workshops organised by a Finnish NGO and its partners in Kenya and India. For practical reasons, the individual interviews were conducted during one-week "impact workshops" with those members of NGO staff who happened to attend the workshops, and took place during workshop breaks, breakfasts and evenings. The interviews were considered illustrative examples of the organisational culture of the international organisation, rather than representative of the national offices and specific locations. They also provided illuminating data, for example on how the Ugandan NGO staff attending a workshop in Kenya spoke about their work in a similar way with the Sri Lankan staff in the workshop in India.

A similar journey can be identified in Oinas's choices. The first post-doctoral study during 2002-2004 enabled eight months of intensive fieldwork in South Africa. That felt like too short a field visit at the time, yet, can be seen as a luxury compared to the available time later, as a more senior researcher. Oinas' data collection took two weeks in 2009 and one in 2011, meeting with the same voluntary HIV counsellors twice with a two year interval, and re-interviewing most of the original 20 women. An important backdrop is the decade of visits to the same neighbourhoods. The study does not qualify for any definition of proper "field work" but, importantly, especially during the second visit when the interviews reaffirmed the initial findings of the first round, it gave the strong feeling that interesting and informative data on an important development issue was being gathered even during these very short, haphazard visits. A short time frame can also mean intensity and focus.

Her approach departs from the ideal anthropological ethnography, yet, it has ethnographical elements. The data consists of short thematic interviews as well as daily visits to clinics and homes of patients. The interview study is informed by observations, embodied sensations, discussions with patients, activists, administrators and researchers during the visits, and hours of reflecting diary writing at night (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007). It focuses on HIV medicine, but attempts to follow the flow of events and the guidance given by the real experts, the people living in the community, as well as the experts and policy makers occupying the corridors of power.

The interviews are specific, very limited accounts that by no means bring out the richness of lives affected by HIV in a township. This was a conscious choice; an explicit wish to avoid pressure on the informant to tell an authentic, full biographic narrative about an experience of illness, but enable a focus on treatment practices that make HIV biomedicine possible, meaningful and successful (e.g. Oinas 2012). With a focus on the practical, the informants appeared as experts in everyday biomedicine rather than marginalised poor whose victimisation was (again) depicted by a scholar. The focus on practices of the research subjects to counteract victimisation and marginality

and engage in wider assemblages of HIV politics, including local, national and global networks of power was an outcome of both the research design and the content of the interviews (Oinas 2012).

The different conducts of fieldwork also pose different dilemmas in regard to the questions of *distance and proximity* in relation, first, to the subjects of research, and second, the development machinery. In Kontinen's PhD project, interacting with the same NGO activists in Finland and Tanzania for over three years inevitably led to delving, to some extent, into their personal lives. Living in a Tanzanian town with a husband and two small children, driving a torn-out Toyota Hilux and giving "lifts" to research subjects on the way to meetings and workshops, and spending time together in local restaurants opened entry points to everyday life. The individual interviews provided quite an intimate space where people told their life stories in connections with the NGO activities, and were sometimes full of laughter; sometimes tears. A close, trustful relationship with individual subjects enabled also access to information about disputes between different parties. The reflection considering distance became also relevant in occasions such as research participants asking for funding for their children's school fees, or NGO activists using research interviews as a cover story for an extramarital relationship. In such cases, a border of non-involvement in the personal lives of subjects had to be drawn.

Oinas's more distanced approach differed from Kontinen's; each approach representing typical, and justifiable, methodological paths in DS. In Oinas's approach inevitably a lot of interesting data was lost. Empirical sensitivity in Oinas's work, however, meant also reflexivity on what kinds of questions can be posed during fieldwork in order to maintain an ethical, rigorous yet ethnographic approach. DS tradition does not automatically serve us with a ready set of questions and angles, but it alerts us to sensitivity to a context; its clichés, history and multiple presents.

Political Awareness: Unavoidable Power of the Research

The third characteristic of DS, we argue, is political awareness. This means being conscious of the political elements at each stage of the research and development practice. With DS being unique in its more-or-less close connection with development policy-making, and the funding decisions made within the industry, researchers need to reflect on their position vis-á-vis the aid system at large, and the exclusions and inclusions in their research conduct. Development researchers are more or less part of the development system, travelling back and forth between the epistemic communities of the academy and practice.

In her PhD fieldwork, Kontinen explicitly attempted to take distance and remain somewhat of a neutral observer. However, being a researcher in between Finnish and Tanzanian NGOs and posing a working knowledge of Kiswahili, she encountered continuous suggestions to translate between the parties. Translation referred not only to the languages, but also to explanation of cultural aspects, donor demands, and in conflict situations, persuading the other party to understand ones viewpoint. These

expectations led to continuous reflection on how not to take sides, and how to deal with trust in multiple relations. In the beginning, Kontinen was at times considered merely a "spy" who should be talked to with cautiousness, and whose access to different meetings should be restricted, whilst later many actors started to view her as an ally who could be invited to join the "after meeting beer" with informal interaction.

Moreover, during the course of the research, the analysis of historically-formulated power relations and the notion of trusteeship as a legacy of colonialism became apparent (Kontinen 2007; 2003). This theoretical contextualisation enabled sense-making out of the sometimes quite absurd dynamics between the interaction of Finnish and Tanzanian partners. While scholars in other disciplines are probably likely to historicise and challenge silences and discourses in terms of violent legacies, in DS the awareness of history and multiple presences of a constructed past is constantly reminded and can be seen as a unique skill, an "attunedness" that comes through training.

Additionally, in DS there is a particular awareness of the politics of inclusion/exclusion when conducting research in locations that are traditionally marginalised as subjects of knowledge in global knowledge production. In very practical terms, reflection is needed about any potential advantages or disadvantages for those included in research, and the implications of the decisions. In Kontinen's PhD fieldwork, many NGOs were disappointed if not included, as they considered research as an opportunity to be involved in international networks. In the short-term staff interviews of her more recent project, she struggled in order to interview everybody attending the week-long seminars as all participants expected their points of views to be included.

In Oinas's research the question of how the researched communities benefited from the research was constantly present. At times, the participants explicitly asked: "Will you now go home and make a career of my suffering?" These neighbourhoods are saturated with celebrities and scholars, both foreign and local, creating tensions not only between locals and scholars, but different leagues of scholars too. Local academics try to remind well-funded Northern scholars that individuals cannot be rewarded for participation in research, as that distorts the possibilities of local researchers conducting research with small budgets, as well as pointing out the usual suspicion that monetary rewards in resource poor settings may distort information.

More often than not, the people we study live rather different lives from our own. Even in the case of someone studying her "own culture" often a class difference emerges due to her university education. Some suggest that scholars should engage the local communities in the research as much as possible (Appadurai 2006), while others argue that there is always an epistemic divide between the objects and subjects of research, and the task of the scholar is to acknowledge it and bear the responsibility for a careful, yet partial and inevitably limited interpretation (Lather 2007). Both approaches are possible, and in the concrete ethnographic work of DS, they probably overlap.

The inevitable inequalities when gathering data are painful to witness and embody, but cannot be wished away or changed by personal engagement however much one would like to be the case. Individuals can be temporarily compensated in terms of food, drinks and promises. For Oinas, the personal-political-ethical outcome of more

than a decade of reasoning during research visits to similar areas has been that scholars bear a political-ethical responsibility to conduct high-quality research with hopefully important outcomes on a much more general level than the acute needs of that particular community. The responsibility towards the community at a time cannot be more than what constitutes a reasonable attempt to be a decent human being. Acknowledging the desire to do more, and dealing with the emotional burden of not being able to, is part of the training to be a development scholar.

Finally, when engaged with organisations and individuals active within the development practice, development researchers inevitably encounter dilemmas related to representation and the potential consequences in research reporting. All writing has always an audience, and the message changes with the style. As development researchers the language of communication for these constituencies varies immensely. The practice of reporting back to the communities has gained ground recently, as well as the obligation to brief policy makers on our findings. These audiences require linguistic repertoires different from the academic style, and both have potential consequences in revealing in-depth analysis of the situations. At worst, the analysis of actual dynamics of aid interventions, for example, might lead to decisions by policy-makers to cut the funding because of the messiness and side-tracks reported. Therefore, in the specific field of DS there are situations where transparency in reporting might be compromised for reasons of consequences. One way of avoiding difficulties in being able to anonymise the organisation or individual at risk of exposure is to always collect data in multiple settings - leading back to the issue of depth and duration in ethnography.

The politics of writing have to do not only with ethics, as in for example guaranteeing anonymity, but writing and reporting involve also a more general attitude of respectful theoretical framing – tying back to the theme of theoretical reflexivity. For example, in Oinas' work about people living with HIV at a time when there was no medication available for the poor, victimhood was not to be sentimentalised or fetishised, depicted in such a way that it was attached to an individual as a personal trait. The promise of a DS approach to powerlessness, for example, is that it is not seen as a personal shortcoming, as in psychologising approaches, or a cultural trait as in ethnocentric approaches, but something to be carefully analysed, for example as an outcome of historical circumstances shaped by global political economy.

Conclusions: Epistemological Leaks as Part of the Profession

In this chapter we have reflected on the research practice in DS from the perspective of ethnographic research and our own research experiences on civil society. On a basis of our reflection, we argue, that the "disciplinarity" of development research does not consist of a certain set of theories and methodologies as is the case with traditional disciplines, but is related to the specific dilemmas, relations and questions – epistemological leaks – that the development researcher has to tackle in their research conduct.

While, for example, anthropology can limit its objective in a way that makes it possible to characterise difference between its epistemological conduct and that of de-

velopment practice (Green 2012), for DS this boundary becomes problematic. DS operates in the moment of change, and the typical epistemological mode of operation is an examination of fluidity and encounter. All research, of course, includes constant struggle to shift between rigid professional practice and an open, curious encounter with the unknown, which also profoundly challenges the researcher's knowledge and tools, but we argue here that these struggles are especially important in DS.

Disciplinary professional rigidity offers scholars representing more well-established disciplines a standpoint and a toolkit that creates a firm ground to ask certain questions – but then again, only these questions. DS with its multidisciplinary nature offers fewer boundaries compared to disciplines like sociology, anthropology, or economics. By its nature, DS demands us to tolerate the struggle between the limiting gaze of scholarly disciplines allowing casting scrutiny on certain objects and not others, and openness to what emerges in the "field". At times, when our work seems too all-embracing, we may envy the rigidity and toolkits of traditional anthropology or economy. However, in this chapter we wish to suggest that by remaining in the middle of the struggle, and enduring the balancing act, we generate different – not better but different – knowledge compared to the others in the fellow disciplines, working in the same villages or NGOs, for example.

When our rigidity leaks it makes us aware of the epistemological permeability on at least three levels. First, we often feel that we cannot gain full certainty and be rigorous enough in our own research practice. The ethnographies we conduct remain incomplete because we cannot capture it all: we witness histories of the present, past events re-emerging, and traditions invented. The constant flux of events escapes saturation of the data. But, importantly, despite the sense of not capturing a totally adequate data set, we more often than not find surprisingly interesting data relevant to our concerns. Second, due to multidisciplinarity, DS grids are multiple and conflicting. We have to choose, yet without much help from the DS canon. Third, our field leaks; in the empirical life of our informants few constants may be found. For example, in ethnography of aid the intervention lacks boundaries in both time and place. A narration that simplifies and structures is necessary, but in the actual unfolding of events little is clearcut. "Our people" change, both literally and metaphorically. In terms of individual experiences, every scholar needs to decide and justify in each project how intimate the relationships should be; how close to individuals one wishes to attempt to go.

Additionally, a DS scholar is obliged to take the political dimensions of her project seriously. It may not be evident in the data at face value. For example colonial legacy may need to be considered in the interpretation of the structures behind a failed development intervention or as a root for impoverished situation. However, even if preoccupied with social inequalities, it is important to resist taken-for-granted dichotomies of real local people versus the powerful policy makers. Rather, we can study the policy formation, lobbying, civil society agency and global connections as networks of power where there are no clear cut pre-existing divisions between the powerful and the underdogs, the good and the bad guys. This could even be seen in the HIV clinic setting, where one would assume educational and professional boundaries are at their clearest.

If DS does not prioritise one group only, but studies an entangled web of relations that constitute change in unexpected ways, we may study a focused phenomenon (e.g. HIV biomedicine). Yet the "field" inevitably leaks into other arenas, like the everyday lives in communities, the WTO decision processes, UN resolutions and global economy. We cannot allow ourselves to study the implementation of development projects only, or the view of the voiceless only, because our interest lies in a series of changes that are reflected in the scattered, sketchy data that consists more often than not of embodied awareness, observations, interviews, documents, websites and leaflets – the list goes on. The field is hard to define, and even harder to "finish".

In conclusion, in professional DS conduct, each researcher is obliged to build a unique personal professional identity with methodological skills from a variety of choices taking into consideration the need for reflexivity, positionality, and research practice. We work between epistemological and methodological camps. In this chapter, we have argued that the choices every scholar needs to make include theoretical reflexivity, empirical sensitivity and awareness of the politics of research and its outcomes. Since development research does not offer strict guidelines, the explicit awareness and ability to reflect on the above-mentioned elements constitutes an important professional skill in itself.

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