



Structural Change as a Motivating Factor for Introducing Blended Learning in Anthropological Fieldwork and Data Analysis

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Abstract

In 2012 the Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen decided to explore the reasons why our students are delayed during the master programme. Apart from thesis writing fieldwork which is a mandatory part of the MSc programme turned out to be key. Students thought of fieldwork as the test piece of their anthropological competence, a phenomenon we have termed 'The Tarzan syndrome'. For this reason students delayed fieldwork and/or extended the field work period. This has become unacceptable in a period with increasing pressure on University to ensure that students complete their studies in time. During the last year I have worked with colleagues and two groups of students exploring how we might change this state of affairs. Blended learning, I think, has something to offer.

Blended learning might help us to meet three challenges:

Students often feel isolated and insecure during their fieldwork leading to delays and even anxiety

Students often hesitate to begin data analysis and postpone this process

Changes in the course format must not lead to an increased workload of teachers.

During fieldwork students collect data to be able to answer the problem statement of their project proposal prepared before they set out (the problem statement are likely to be revised when students are faced with the world of their interlocutors). During fieldwork students will get a weekly individual online assignment which documents the progress of their fieldwork. Assignments include demand for written documents, photographs, video clips and sound bites. Students upload their response to a small group of fellow students and a Ph. D student who facilitates the ensuring forum discussion and chat sessions. Returning from fieldwork students attend classes on the different stages of anthropological analysis. They work on a series of practical exercises categorising their data and testing the relevance of different analytical approaches using peer-to-peer assessment supervised by the course teacher.

I currently develop the fieldwork and data analysis course in close cooperation with researchers at the University of Copenhagen in a cross-disciplinary teaching and research Online and blended learning project.