

Engaged Anthropology. A Poem.

Samira Klijnsma

Where I stand right now, is a difficult space to be,
As I do see the value of research in anthropology.
It is not that I dismiss it, in fact it is the core,
Of truly understanding people, an essentiality I can't ignore.

But my dilemma goes much further, as I like the hands and feet,
Of projects that are tangible and the needs that they can meet.
I am trying to navigate a complex space, where these two places merge,
Where research and the tangible no longer will diverge.

A question which has come up several times in these past few days,
So, it goes without a question, that I have not found THE way.
Nonetheless I find it necessary, to grapple with this tension,
So, for this I will list some challenges, which I think are worth a mention.

Let me start it really simple, a question I always faced,
What is this thing you study? Isn't that such a waste?
Ah you dig and analyse the ancient bones that's what you do,
No, I say to them, that's questions on which *archaeologists* tend to chew.

Let me take you one step further, and dive a little deeper,
A second dimension is added when we turn to subject 'keepers'.
With that I mean the subjects, like math and science too,
To which schools and everyday people stick to them like glue.

The rigid structure of education, allows little to no space,
Where anthropological thinking, would be welcomed and embraced
It's the traditionality of these subjects, that produce the valuable work,
And this anthropological nonsense, leaves 'scientists' with a smirk.

So, the challenge I grapple with, is as simple as it can be,
If I truly make a difference, is it ever with anthropology?
But my question has maybe changed, from my experiences until today,
Where I have reformulated the question in a much more productive way.

Instead of answering this question, in the binary yes or no,
I have come to find the engagement aspect will make this boundary flow.
It is not **either** science **or** anthropology that will lead the way,
But much more the ways in which these disciplines are willing to interplay.

It is not about **either** research **or** tending directly to different needs,
But much more again the ways in which these two domains will intercede.
I have become truly motivated, to recognise the fluidity of this space,
Where breaking down these ingrained beliefs, is a difficulty I *want* to face.

It is exactly the right time, to deal with these questions now,
And I have started to unpack the reality of the field I wish to plough,
A field where my academic know-how enriches the 'hands-on' part,
And will produce a fruitful harvest, which brings me back to the start.

I want to discover the ways in which structures can begin to fall,
Which have previously separated anthropology, from other subjects on the whole.
Studying cultural science as my major has opened many doors,
To see the *importance* of integration, instead of isolated knowledge drawers.

So, I guess what I have learnt in the time that I've spent here,
Is that I see the deep vitality of making these boundaries disappear.
Boundaries which have separated the research from meeting needs,
And set them in dichotomies, which bear no productive seeds.

Boundaries which have isolated the subject as discussed,
So, infiltrating in educative spaces among young learners is a must!
Not only in this perspective do I see the potential is great,
But also in my own future work, these boundaries I wish to break.

The ones which stop me from believing that it is an either or,
And much more recognising integrative engagement as THE essential core.