

## **Field work and research internship**

**Who is the author?** Cecilie Rubow, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology.

**Subject, course/other context, study level and number of students:** Utopia: collective field work at the Department of Anthropology and Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen. A total of 100 participants, including first-year students (the majority) who followed a methodology subject, research interns (Master's students) who have followed Utopia in two stages (7.5 ECTS points) as well as researchers and teachers at the Department of Anthropology and the Department of Sociology, who took part on a voluntary basis. Planned by members of Forskningskollektivet, the Department of Sociology and Ethnographic Exploratorium, and the Department of Anthropology.

**The motivation behind the activity:** Our motivation is to develop formats for collective field work, which can be included in teaching-based research, and through this examine how knowledge is organised and managed at the university.

**Key learning outcomes, focussing on the way in which the activity is research-based:** The key learning outcomes are that Bachelor's and Master's students, as well as teachers, together learn to develop new types of collaborative design, ranging from idea development to joint publication of analyses, including to draw up a methodological design, operationalise key concepts, carry out field work and organise the empirical material with a view to sharing. We have tried practising teaching *as* research.

**Description of the activity:** The methodological design is experimental: The classic ethnographic field work has been turned upside down. Instead of one person carrying out field work alone for 100 days, our plan is that 100 people could carry out field work for one day. The topic for Utopia has been utopias in metropolitan spaces: In specific parts of Copenhagen, we have visited more than 30 locations, one or several times during large coordinated field work days, or groups of students and teachers have visited these locations, and through special research internships, students have been able to carry out more extensive field work. This collective field work had up to 80 participants in one day. Through research internships (ECTS course), two groups of students as well as a small group of researchers (two of whom have participated in all activities) planned and conducted all elements together.

**Interplay between teaching and exams:** The exam for research interns (Master's students) primarily included short assignments in article format. Thematically, the articles are linked directly to the project through reports and analyses of the process, topic and further perspectives of the project.

**The outcome of the activity for the students:** Several groups of students are involved, and each of them have had a different experience. The purpose of involving a large group of first-year students was to introduce them to a key research tradition within anthropology by inviting them to *take part* in a research project with a relatively sharply defined assignment

and with the possibility of co-influence. The purpose of participation by research interns was for them to be active in all stages and aspects of the research project. All activities were conducted with a high degree of participation and commitment. The project has now been completed, and due to lectures, presentations, etc. in several fora, interest from academic circles is great, and this has resulted in several invitations to write papers for journals, etc.

**The outcome for research:** As the project has been completed, it is uncertain what to characterise as the research outcome. The first results have been of a methodological and didactic nature. The next stage will include analyses of the primary theme of the project: Green utopias in the urban space.

**Strengths and weaknesses of the activity:** One of the challenges in the collaborative field work has been to create space for the individual participants and fields, while maintaining a collective understanding that connects each field to the common project over time. Therefore, the project has included time-consuming idea development and testing of different methodologies to work collectively in a flexible and dynamic manner. This can be considered as a strength as well as a weakness. In this case it is primarily considered a strength, as we have not only succeeded in designing new, concrete formats, but also in raising ideas for further discussion regarding the methodology of the field work, the connection between research and teaching as well as how knowledge is organised and managed at the university and how this knowledge is exchanged with the surrounding community, including with the university's own close community.

**Further information (about the activity, links or other material):**

**Key words** (3-5 key words): Teaching-based research, collective field work