

Learning and working in the field: on belonging, identity and educational spaces

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Fieldwork is celebrated for promising high quality learning, creating potentials for students to connect theory and practice, and inherently create belonging and identity. Fieldwork is also a space where scientific cultures, history, safety measures, interests, practical and financial issues meet and collide. Researching fieldwork within the framing of ‘culture of power’ (Barton & Yang 2000) makes possible to critically assess the use of fieldwork as a pedagogical tool as well as evaluate taken-for-granted values and practices. Learning in the field further includes a series of embodied and tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1966) that is learned through conducting observations, handling instruments and interpreting data. Here, instruments and students’ bodies become entangled with the meaning-making and knowledge production (Barad 2007) and this adds to the complexity of the learning environment. Thus, learning spaces and the materials shape what is learned. In addition, the spatial dimension allows for understanding complex processes of inclusion and exclusion in education (Buchner & Köpfer 2022). Spatial patterns are always relational and socially produced, and consist of numerous social and fluid micro-spaces that are interlinked with broader social, societal and cultural dynamics. In this presentation, I discuss the spatial dimensions of mechanisms of in- and exclusion in fieldwork while drawing on my research of the intersections of disciplinary and cultural norms of fieldwork, learning in the field and students’ negotiations of belonging (Malm et al. 2020) and identity work (Madsen & Malm 2022).

References

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