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Rhubarb Cutting and Other Ways of Engaging in Tourism Research

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Title: Rhubarb Cutting and Other Ways of Engaging in Tourism Research

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Abstract:

Fieldwork is earthbound – intimately involved in the natural and social landscape (James Clifford, 1997).

Questions of politics of knowledge production and issues of engagement in the field of tourism studies have not been at the forefront but have, however, been duly dealt with in other related disciplines for some time already. It is a matter of concern how researchers in the field of Tourism Studies are often unreflexive about their position as researchers and approach the field in an uncritical fashion. This, I want to argue, limits the scope of generating wider and often alternative knowledge within the field. In this paper, I shall turn to anthropology, the discipline from which my educational background derives, and revisit debates about the value of the discipline, not least in relation to its main methodological approach, ethnography, that occurred in the wake of the postmodern turn during the 1980s and 1990s (see, e.g., Appadurai, 1991; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Gudeman & Rivera, 1990; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Marcus, 1998). By using examples and anecdotes from research I have been involved in for the last five years, I will examine fieldwork as an earthbound, but simultaneously spatially and temporally mobile, practice and question what constitutes the field in fieldwork as well as what constitutes a research process. The aim is to scrutinize how knowledge is generated through collaboration constituted by constant negotiation and improvisations of identities, reciprocity, and exchange between different actors, human and non-human. We thus have to acknowledge that research involves embodied social beings and that the generation of knowledge happens at the interface of self and other, where life is lived, or with earth.