

ETNOFOOR Call for Papers: Stories

Debates on the differentiation between facts and fiction seem to have gained a new momentum: of late, the President of the United States rejected generally accepted truths on climate change or global warming; extremism in different disguises thrives on propaganda machineries; ‘fake news’ is attracting much public attention; and even the practice of science itself is subjected to wide criticism, now that one after the other ‘corrupted study’ is unravelled. The next issue of *Etnofoor* picks up on these developments, yet rather than staging ontological discussions on what is false and what not, it encourages authors to explore the crucial role of storytelling, tales and narration in the anthropological profession – we are not so much interested in setting apart facts from fiction, but in the powerful social, political and cultural effects of circulating stories.

Firstly, as anthropologists, a large part of what we learn about the lives of other people is transmitted to us in stories. People, for example, explain to us how they organize their lives; how they see and understand the world around them; how they form and value their relationships with others; and how they try to cope with, or work on, the societal arrangements they are exposed to. After that, it is our job to translate these descriptions into a recounting of our own. During the research process, we make decisions on which details, or which overall outlines, we find most compelling, most illustrative, or most poignant – and the choices we make shape the stories we tell about others. As such, one of the questions that the next issue means to address is how storytelling can either do justice to, or distort, the lived realities of the people whom the anthropologist tries to understand.

Secondly, we are interested in the often all-too-real social and political impact of storytelling. How do the personal tales that come to us reiterate, or speak back to, other, often more dominant – or grand – narratives? And what roles do stories, whether their factuality can be traced or not, play in the production of social structures and communities? Both positive and negative shared experiences, ranging from solidarity and social cohesion to polarization and discrimination, are not only inspired by personal experiences and first-hand accounts: the level of trust that people have in each other, or in government institutions, is influenced by founding fictions, tales of belonging, rumours, urban legends and conspiracy theories. Of course, some may identify with certain stories while others feel alienated by them, depending on the degree of socio-economic stratification and structural mechanisms of in- and exclusion that contextualize the storytelling.

Thirdly, *Etnofoor’s* upcoming issue intends to examine the limits of the academic format itself. To what extent do the ground rules of scientific good behaviour, including, for instance, transparency or generalizability, enable only the representation of certain aspects of human life; and to what extent are other forms of writing, such as novels or poetry, better suited to give voice to the social complexities that we encounter in our fields? At the same time, we can turn this line of thinking around: should we not give novels and poetry that so aptly capture the spirit of a time, or a people, a more prominent place in our scientific analyses; what can we gain from seeking closer collaborations with other kinds of storytellers, such as writers, filmmakers or songwriters; and what do their interpretations tell us about the limitations of our own *modus operandi*? How could the fields of anthropology and cultural analysis, or narrative analysis more specifically, mutually inform and inspire each other?

The editorial board of *Etnofoor* invites authors who wish to engage with these issues to submit an abstract of no more than 200 words to editors@etnofoor.nl before 15 December 2017. The deadline for authors of accepted abstracts to submit their full paper is 1 March 2018.