Editorial Introduction for "The Lost Ethnographies: Methodological insights from projects that never were"

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This collection is an unusual addition to the autobiographical or 'confessional' literature by ethnographers: that is, those publications in which researchers report on what they experienced and learnt while trying to conduct a piece of ethnographic research. Our title 'Lost Ethnographies' is not to be taken literally. In this introduction we draw out the lessons of our contributions, 'trouble' the categories of 'lost' and of 'ethnography', and of the confessional genre of text itself. There are a good many collections of such 'confessions' and autobiographies, and the genre has been analysed by Van Maanen (1988), who contrasted three varieties of such *Tales of the Field*, while Atkinson (1992) and Delamont (2009) used the scholarly work on Russian folklore by Propp to convey the narrative structure of confessional tales about American urban ethnographies and fieldwork among feminist witches. However, the authors of the conventional autobiographical or confessional pieces choose to constrain their stories –and there are conventions which are widely observed – their authors are generally successful.

The conventions of the genre mean that the authors recount problems and obstacles that they overcame, on their way to their academic career. The ethnographer of the ambulance crew or the coven of feminist witches or the factory floor or the Newfoundland fishing village tells how she finally got good, publishable data: the scholar gets the PhD, publishes the book and the papers, obtains a job. Such accounts are always useful, and often entertaining. Readers learn about access, or field relations, or theoretical sampling, or handling 'trouble', or managing risks. They also learn that real researchers manage to do projects even though the methods do not proceed as the textbooks suggest they should. Dimensions of research roles, such as race, gender, age, class or

sexual orientation, are explored. Ward (2016) for example, presents ten papers that reflect on gender identities and research relations.

This collection is different. The projects described here never happened, or fell apart, or went seriously off track. The scholars reflect on what might have been. One recurrent theme in the book is absence, or absences. This has three meanings here. First there is an emphasis on the *lacunae* in the existing ethnographic canon: what has not been studied, written and remembered. Second there is a focus on the absences in the ethnographies that we do have: the taken for granted things the authors have not drawn attention to. Third there is the injunction that good research is frequently generated by focusing on what is absent in the fieldsite, in the narratives of our informants, in our own fieldnotes, our own writing. There is one general lesson: nothing is ever wasted.

We do not summarise our contributors' chapters in great detail in this introduction, because all our authors speak eloquently for themselves. The projects have been 'lost' in many different ways, and at various stages of their existence from grant application to publication. Some were never begun; some produced a thesis but had no life beyond that, others did not achieve the form their author wanted. The ethnographers have mixed emotions about them. The actual, or potential, projects were, or would have been done, in different settings from a swimming pool in the south of England, via the forests of the West Coast of the USA and the streets of Prague to South Auckland and the west coast of Australia. The key informants were, or would have been drawn from groups and settings across the age range, the class structure, the racial hierarchies and the political spectrum of their societies: marginal young people and affluent opera lovers. Some studies were, or would have been, close to the researcher's home, others distant, exotic and unfamiliar.

When we were recruiting potential authors we were pleased that everyone we approached thought the collection would be useful and entertaining. The refusers were of three main types: some

people said they did not have a lost project in their attic or biography, others told us that they did not want to publish about research they still hoped to do, and a few scholars told us privately of an eligible investigation that they did not want to discuss in print – those ethnographies remain 'lost', for now. Interestingly enough, one of the more senior ethnographers that fell in to the first category, noted that they did not have a lost ethnography, because in their day, they just 'did what they wanted to do'; we return to some of the constraints on the contemporary ethnographer below. Some people in the second category were prepared to write, but we mutually agreed that the future prospects for that study could be damaged by its inclusion here; that is we all agreed that we shared the hope they would be able to conduct that study in the future. "Call no project 'lost' until all hope is gone" was our philosophy.

Precisely because this is a rather different collection of confessional or autobiographical chapters, and because of those scholars who decided they did not wish to write about their last ethnography, we have thought carefully about the potential reception of the volume.

Reception(s)

One recurrent problem with the autobiographical or confessional tale from the field is the way(s) in which it is read. Long ago Becker (1967) warned that any study of a 'deviant' or subaltern population attracts the criticism that it must be both a study of an immoral or even wicked subculture and an inaccurate report, precisely because it does not repeat the majority view of the dominant culture (that is, the prisoners' view of prisons, the pupils' view of schools) rather than the prison officers' view of prisons, or the teachers' view of schools.   He focused in that famous, and much re-visited paper on settings that were then 'political' – such as prisons and policing, and posed the question 'Whose side are we on?' (See Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont, 2003 Chapter X for a discussion of that question).

Among the current issues raised by that fifty year old paper is that the sociological ethnographer is no longer the 'we' that Becker envisaged: straight American men who are white protestant or Jewish. Additionally there are no longer any research sites which can be treated as *not* politically changed. Since Becker's reflections on the politics and ethics of ethnographic fieldwork qualitative sociology has had the epistemological rupture or paradigm change, commonly called the literary or rhetorical turn precipitated by the publication of Clifford and Marcus (1986). The naïve ethnographer might believe that everyone's reading has become more self-consciously reflexive, and that autobiographical or confessional texts would be recognised and then read as rhetorical performances in a well-established genre. However the reception of Subhir Venketash (2008) and Alice Goffman (2014) shows that is not true. Our contributors have all recognised that their chapters may be read naively and literally, rather than by 'well-informed' or 'expert' readers.

The acceptable style and content of autobiographical or 'confessional' tales has changed over the past fifty years. Early autobiographies were rare, but those that did appear were published under pseudonyms and seen as quite separate from the academic literature even being sold as fiction. Laura Bohannon, for example, published her confessional autobiography under the pseudonym Eleanor Bowen (1954). Contemporary authors who choose to reach out to a non-academic audience with ethnographic novels and stories no longer feel they need to use pseudonyms. Laurel Richardson (1990, 1994) and Alma Gottlieb (2016) for example, both celebrate publishing in two genres. They both write conventional ethnographic texts, use alternative genres, and write novels, all with their real names on them. Richardson both writing alone and with her husband Ernest Lockridge, a novelist (Richardson and Lockridge, 1991, 1994, 1998). She has been an active campaigner for using more types of text as ways to communicate findings. Alma Gottlieb (2016) an anthropologist reports a similar collaboration with her husband, also a novelist, Phillip Graham (Gottlieb and Graham 1994, 2012) writing about the *Beng* people of the Côte d'Ivoire. The 1994 book with her husband sold many more copies than the monograph based on her doctoral thesis. It

is noticeable that these textual advances have occurred separately in sociology and anthropology and neither Richardson nor Gottlieb cites the others' publications.

In the academic reflections since the 1970s on what Coffey (1999) called *The Ethnographic Self*, the choices made about what to reveal about themselves and their ethnographic research has changed a great deal. Contemporary scholars feel much freer to reveal details of their lives, their dilemmas and their mistakes in public favour. This is particularly noticeable in the confessionals by ethnographers who have studied supernatural phenomena such as modern neo-paganism (Delamont, 2009) and the African-origin cultures of the Americas.

In the introductory essay for the four volume set on *Ethnographic Discourse* (2008a) Paul Atkinson and Sara Delamont (2008b) have illustrated the changes in what is "acceptable" when writing about fieldwork today, compared to the 1930s or 1950s, with a brief comparison of monographs about the African origin religions of Brazil, Cuba and Haiti (Candomblé, Santeria and Voudou) produced in the 1930s, 1960s and post 1986. That showed, among other things, that monographs published since 1986 all report that the ethnographer has been initiated into the religion, and therefore the authors ground their authenticity claims on their status as initiated believers and practitioners. Whereas the monographs published before 1970 reported the dispassionate, outsider, observations of first world white men about poor, black 'believers' in an alien religion. Ruth Landes' (1947) *The City of Women* is a notable exception to the work of the pre-1970 period, and her exclusion from the canonical texts of the 1940s reinforces our argument about that canon. Those published in the past 30 years are written by 'insiders', who share the possession experiences and ecstasy of the devotees. Thesse authors include women and men of colour, but the white men also describe their research in an entirely different way from their predecessors.

Rethinking 'failure' and the contemporary academy
This collection is also published at a moment when academics are re-considering 'failure' in the context of the increasing pressure on academics to 'perform'. For example, Johannes Haushofer, of

Princeton University, published a 'CV of Failures'[1] detailing posts he did not get, grants that went unfunded, and rejected papers. He begins the CV thus:

> Most of what I try fails, but these failures are often invisible, while the successes are visible. I have noticed that this sometimes gives others the impression that most things work out for me. As a result, they are more likely to attribute their own failures to themselves, rather than the fact that the world is stochastic, applications are crapshoots, and selection committees and referees have bad days.

Indeed. Haushofer's 'CV' captures something of a moment in academia – in no small way enabled by social media, and 'academic Twitter' in particular – when academics are far more openly 'outing' their failures and frustrations. The 'smooth narrative' of an academic career is now more visibly disrupted by public announcements of rejected papers, failed job applications, and unfunded research grants. Whilst *we* are not presenting ethnographic work gathered in this collection as failures, we recognise that they could be considered 'failed projects' in the current climate of metricisation and key performance indicators.

The intention of this collection is not to follow in Haushofer's lead by making failure visible, but, instead, to make visible some of the frustrations and challenges of ethnographic research through honest and open reflections drawn from research that never was. The chapters also describe the recovery of the seeds of research, that did not, for one reason or another, flourish in to fully-fledged projects and publications. Each chapter outlines how the ethnography in question, whether it be at the planning, fieldwork, or writing stage, was in one way or another 'lost'. Ethnographers have, of course, long recognised that any study is not the final polished version. The monograph, like the map, is not the territory.

Most readers of this book will also recognise how all ethnographies are replete with false starts, frustrations in the field, missed opportunities and missing data, and straight forward misfortune from which the ethnographer must 'make do'. Gary Alan Fine, for example, lost a month or two's worth of fieldnotes from his fieldwork with mushroom pickers (Fine, 1998) when he mailed them to himself after taking them to Europe for coding and had to reconstruct the detail contained therein. Edmund Leach xx, . It is said that Erving Goffman researched and completed an ethnography of gambling (and winning at gambling) in Las Vegas that was never published (a text we are sure many readers would love to read, and that Las Vegas house bosses would gladly see remain lost). There is

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[1] Haushofer credits Melanie Stefan (xx) with the idea to write the CV. He also points to other, pre-existing examples, in the full version, available here:
www.princeton.edu/~joha/Johannes_Haushofer_CV_of_Failures.pdf

also the 'lost' version of *Sidewalk* that sits in Mitch Duneier's archives, a version he rewrote in its entirety for the what became the published version. And there are the countless ethnographies that, in another sense, are lost due to being forgotten or subjected to disciplinary amnesia (see, example, the 'lost' study of Marienthal and its recovery by xx).

The projects in this collection – and the reasons that found them 'lost' – coalesce around key themes of thwarted fieldwork, the frustrations of funding, difficulties in writing up, and projects that simply had to give way to others. The difference, here, is that their 'lostness' is directly engaged with, rather than left as a footnote or anecdote. As noted above, we leave the telling of the specific reasons projects became 'lost' to the individual authors. There are, however, a number of key themes within and across the chapters the point to what we see as the pay-off from writing and reading about projects that never were.

Lost and Found

In introducing this volume, we suppose any (argumentative) reader might point out that none of the ethnographic studies described herein are 'lost'. They are, after all, now published. They are of a different status than the myriad other studies that have never seen light of day or, indeed, have been forgotten. Nevertheless, the inspiration for the collection was a discussion around the notion that there is something worth exploring, methodologically, in ways that the projects and their authors became lost, as well as the practice and experience of recovering and finding them again. We do not explore 'getting lost' as a methodology in itself. The Situationalists did this, physically. And Patti Lather (2007) does so epistemologically and politically, in her writings on feminist ways of critiquing certainty and mastery of knowledge. In that text, Lather is careful to avoid the discussion of getting lost as in some way providing a corrective, retaining the possibility of mastery through lessons learnt along the way. We think that the chapters in this collection echo something of that spirit in discussing 'loss' and being 'lost' in a humbler manner than claiming to prescribe mastery; we are hardly in a position to so, drawing on projects that did not take place or went wrong! We do, however, reflect here and across the collection, upon the some of the methodological insights to be gained from the relationship of doing ethnography to getting and being lost. Projects are lost in the sense of never proceeding past the planning stage, fieldworkers are lost (and sometimes literally), phenomena are shown to be lost in overly theorised existing projects, knowledge is lost through elements of projects that were not pursued or not written up, voices are lost in the writing.

On being lost

Something we might note, initially, is that for something to be considered lost it must, in some way, be considered owned in the first instance. And in this way, not all things can be considered lost and, or, be considered found when encountered. An attractive pebble on a beach – to borrow an example from Harvey Sacks (1995) – can discovered and picked up and put in a pocket, becoming someone's pebble. It could only *then* be lost. Conversely, something odd would be occurring if someone handed a pebble in to lost property. In this sense, then, objects are viewed in relation to persons and categories of persons. Certainly, here in this collection, there is a clear sense of ownership, of personal connection to the lost projects and, indeed, of the projects being lost as experienced as a loss. In this way, the chapters illustrate how ethnographies are not simple objects. A lost project is distinct from losing and finding a set of keys or a pair of glasses. A lost ethnography is a loss of potential knowledge, of new ground covered. And certainly, losing an ethnography, or becoming lost in the midst of an ethnography, can be a painful personal experience. The recovery of a lost ethnography can, as some of our authors note, be a difficult experience too. At the same time, there is also the sense of what is to be gained in becoming lost. Beyond any immediate difficulties or discomforts, getting lost can be an instructive experience. We do not want to over stretch the oft-repeated metaphor that an ethnography, and indeed an academic career, is a 'journey'. Engaging in a field work project, however, can be experienced as such. Perhaps David Calvey (this collection) is correct in calling it the 'academic adventure'; and the best adventures regular feature, or indeed begin with, getting a little lost.

In *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, Rebecca Solnit (2005) writes that to become lost is to have ceased paying attention to your surroundings, to the landscape you have moved through. The condition and experience of being lost is thus embedded within relations of movement (a journey *to* somewhere, physically or intellectually) and landscape (the context of the journey). Academic projects are, in this way, at risk of becoming 'lost' in the sense that they must get somewhere. Solnit observes how one cannot be lost on a journey without itinerary or defined end-point, or a fixed schedule and cites Daniel Boone, the American pioneer and frontiersman, who remarked he was "never lost in my life… although I was once confused for three days". The distinction, notes Solnit, between Boone's confusion and being fully lost is significant. Boone was comfortable with inhabiting that confusion and unthreatened by it. He was, as Solnit has it, literate in the language of the landscape in which he moved.

For ethnographers, many of whom operate at some form of frontier themselves, there are increasing and multiple pressures for projects to reach a destination, and a particular form of

destination, increasingly quickly. Patti Lather (2007: 6) notes how moves to certainty are spurred on within the audit culture. Time spend lost, or even confused, is judged to be wasted time. Yet, a sure way to lose your way, and your sense of direction, is to hurry so much that you cease paying attention to your surroundings. More haste than speed. Mountain Rescue teams call this 'target fixation'. It is a mode of movement that must be guarded against by search and rescue parties who, upon locating and hurrying toward one missing person or casualty, run the risk of not seeing others, and other hazards, along the way. We think that the papers in this collection show how an attentiveness through an ethnographic journey, and resisting fixation, is an important matter for ethnographers too.

Being lost is not simply a geo-locational matter, but is about becoming disoriented to the point where one is not simply a little confused but disconnected from where one is, and where one came from. Those reading this book at the early stages of their first ethnography may recognise well the feeling of not quite knowing where they are, or how to get to where they thought they were heading when they set out. Adele Clarke's (2005) situational mapping methodology is one way in which ethnographers can keep a sense of where they are, and where their field is, in the journey in and through a complex field. It is one way of becoming comfortable with being lost in data. There are also many tales of the field where the ethnographer has become lost in the world of their informants - one of the criticisms levied at Alice Goffman. Warnings of becoming 'too close' and 'going native' abound.

Those who have supervised budding ethnographers will recognise that something of the difficulty of teaching ethnography is bound up with helping the student become comfortable, for a while, with being lost. Indeed, Katy Vigurs (this collection) reflects on the entanglement of fieldwork experience with supervisory practice. Such work involves allowing, and perhaps even encouraging, the student to reach a point where they do not necessarily know where they are headed. Being lost in the early stages of a project - in reading, in data, in ideas – can be productive. The job of the supervisor being, later, when the time is appropriate, helping the student select from the diverging paths identified in the course of fieldwork.

Objects and things also become lost in relation the movements of their owner; unknowingly dropped on the way somewhere, misplaced or mislaid, or somehow hidden in plain sight – there all along, under one's nose. Oftentimes, an object only becomes 'lost' when one goes to use it. Other objects are 'found' in the course of a person's becoming lost; being lost means being somewhere new, or perhaps seeing somewhere one has been before in a new way. One inevitably encounters

new places, new people, and new experiences in being lost. Things can become discovered, 'found', things. Things that one was not aware one was looking for. This is the problem faced by the ethnographer and recalls Meno's Paradox (also discussed by Solnit (2005: 6)). Meno asks: "How do you go about finding the thing the nature of which is totally unknown to you?" We return to this paradox, from the perspective of the ethnographer below. Suffice to say, for now, that we intend the discussion of these lost projects as instructive in how 'being lost' figures in ethnographic work, and how lost things are and can be found. The collection provides less of a route map of the type found in most methods textbooks, and more of a rough guide of being lost. The discussion of these lost, and found, ethnographies is intended to throw some light on how to keep moving, how to recover one's self and one's projects. To assist in the work of becoming literate.

In different ways, the chapters gathered in this collection each address a different sense of 'lost' and, also, of things being found. The chapters reveal something of the penumbra of ideas and inspirations and failed attempts at projects that surround an academic career. In terms of the projects that never happened at all, traces of the sparks of the ideas that, for whatever reason, never caught alight, can be found in other forms, in other projects. In other chapters, projects are discussed that would have led the author down another path entirely. In other cases, the author discusses how they became lost in some way; in the course of fieldwork, or in the course of tackling the writing up of the data. In the following section, we outline something of the lessons that the papers gathered herein.

Imagined journeys and route planning

The first section of chapters in this collection focus on research that was planned but never happened at all. Across these chapters, authors write of research that never happened. Viewed negatively, and within the academic audit culture, these projects 'failed' before they began. They are projects that required funding to be carried out in the first place, due to demands on travel or time. Consequently, these planned projects made way for other research that took their place on the author's career path. Perhaps by virtue of them not having been completed, and thus only able to outline speculative findings and potential contributions, the chapters here, are better able to outline matters of inspiration and design that are often only briefly specified in substantively focused papers. These projects, as with a number throughout the collection, point to the kind of 'blue skies' ethnography that may struggle to gain funding. We see them less as 'blue skies' projects, and more as interesting ethnographic projects sparked by the intellectual curiosity of the authors and an awareness and attention paid to opportunities that emerge on a journey somewhere else. The lack of available opportunities for more speculative and exploratory research of that kind is, we suggest,

more to do with the narrowing of the imagination of funding bodies, than with the failing of ethnographers to produce 'meaningful' research. More positively, we hope readers will also gain something from the discussion of the emergence of projects and their initial conception in a way that goes beyond standard descriptions found in methods textbooks.

The chapter on 'Big Footing' by Lewis and Bartlett , in which the authors discuss the building of an ethnographic engagement with the practice and culture of 'Big Footing' is a case in point. The project is itself immediately intriguing and, yet, beyond any novelty factor, the project is clearly justified in and through a dialogue with STS and with 'normal' understandings of science and empirical reality.

Some of the lost projects here, make a case for worth of ethnographies of (marginal) leisure pursuits and the ethnographic study of cultural practices and contexts in their own right – in terms of the cumulative project of the 'ethnographic record' – and in terms of providing insight in to substantive concerns. Moreover, the authors in this collection reflect on the emergence of potential research projects and ideas developed in the course of doing something else. We might note, then, that these 'adventures' that were planned and yet not undertaken remain in some ways 'pure'. Like a imagined journey, they are not fettered by the contingencies and practicalities that come with the actual journey. At the same time, as noted by Delamont and Atkinson, a journey untravelled, leaves the horizons of the unknown unchanged. Still, we think there are many lessons to be learned in the planning, and no little amount of inspiration to be gained from engaging with the planned journeys of fellow travellers. In reflecting on these lost projects, we find ourselves in agreement with William H Whyte (1943) in emphasising the ways in which the "actual evolution of research ideas does not take place in accord with the formal statements we read on research methods. The ideas grow up out of our immersion in the data and out of the whole process of living…"

Forks in the path

We might also consider the ways in which the 'academic adventure' routinely encounters, follows, and ignores any number of forks in the path. As discussed by Katy Fitzpatrick (see also Delamont, 2016), ethnographies are always partial, and never finished. Those that are published - if not 'completed' - often represent a pragmatic choice as when enough is enough. We are less sure about claims of measurable 'saturation' (ref? Xx), but certainly whether the ethnographer feels that they have 'enough' materials or, for whatever reason, they are forced by circumstance to make do with whatever they have gathered, the journey of any ethnography is not easily mapped out from the

start. Indeed, quite *how* the ethnographer selects, and filters, and attends to some things, whilst letting other things slide is seldom discussed directly.

A number of the 'lost' ethnographies gathered here are not 'lost' in the sense of not being completed, or having vanished without a trace. A number of chapters do, however, highlight a number of what we might think of as 'lost' opportunities. Forks in the path of the ethnographic journey, that were available for exploration but, for a number of different reasons, ultimately not pursued. Again, the journey metaphor is apt, because, as noted above, taking different paths, and not travelling those outlined in this collection was not terminal for any of the contributor's careers. And, yet, in looking back at those projects, many contributors wonder what might have been. Ethnographies, and careers and lives, are not discrete objects but rather are xx Ingold xx.

Of course, ethnographers cannot hope to cover all ground. Total coverage is not, in any case, the goal of an ethnography but, rather, being able to provide a convincing enough account of an organisation or setting from the perspective of its participants and members (see Lemert's foreword to Liebow's (2003) *Tally's Corner*). And in this sense, the ethnographer, whilst, certainly, entering the field with foreshadowed ideas – a blank notepad, rather than a blank mind – must become attuned to which are the main paths of travel for their informants and which are tributaries and offshoots. There is an inherent tension in fieldwork between being alert and alive to the phenomena in the field, whilst also being able to let some things pass that are the margins of an inquiry or, perhaps, warrant a new study in their own right. An ethnographic attention, then, is a roving attention (Hall and Smith, 2017), rather than a blinkered vision. It is this roving attention that enables the contributors in this collection, and doubtlessly most of its readers too, to recall with clarity, the divergent opportunities and adventures that were passed by on the way through. Ethnography and ethnographers have, in this sense, always been mobile and on the move.

This is, of course, the nature of fieldwork. Ethnography is not a method but a sensibility toward the social. The 'next project' (and the next after that) regularly emerges during current fieldwork or the continued ethnographic engagement with everyday life. That roving attention is hard to switch off. And lost projects, and lost elements of projects are hard to leave behind. Often they are mothballed, or squirrelled away for later. They are mobile, and travel with the ethnographer and there can be a haunting of current work by past projects. In life and in the academic adventure, paths travelled, or indeed, left unexplored, can come to shape one's sense of academic self. In considering lost projects we might, then, engage critically with narratives of academic careers: as Susie Scott (this collection) puts it; "Who *didn't* I become through what I didn't learn, and who did I become instead?"

What the chapters also point to is the way that the ideas and inspirations and frustrations of ethnographic work are never really lost, but travel with the fieldworker. In this way, the experience of being lost, can itself be like a compass.

Retracing steps

One of the many ways in which people get lost is the result of an inability or reluctance to turn around, to head back the way they have already come, to work out the last point at which they were sure of themselves. Instead, they press on, sometimes covering miles, convincing themselves that aspects of the landscape are indeed what they were expecting to see and that they are on course. There is, of course, a demand on ethnographers and academics more generally to 'press on'. In hurrying along, the risk is missing what is most important and useful in finding one's way. Barry Brown and Eric Laurier (2005) begin an article on members' ethno-methods for the use of maps in the course of a journey with a poem by Miroslav Holub. The poem recounts the tale of a Hungarian Army unit lost for two days in the Alps. Feared dead by their commander, on the third day they returned to base. What saved them was the discovery of a map in the pocket of a member of the unit. The map 'calmed them down' and enabled them to 'discover their bearings'. On inspection of 'this remarkable map', the commander realised that is was not a map of the Alps, but of the Pyrenees. Perhaps this book, despite not marking the exact territory its readers are travelling, will have the calming effect of the map for those who are, at present, experiencing being lost? As with the Hungarian unit, pressing on in the face of being totally lost *can* be exactly the right thing to do. As summarised by someone in Brown and Laurier's data - "let's just drive, see what happens". It is the attention to landscape in and as movement that remains the issue, in being attentive enough to what is unfolding.

With all the lost projects that did begin and then were either lost entirely or dropped elements along the way, this collection demonstrates how and what might be gained through returning to those projects and writings that were left behind. This, in some ways, is not so very new as an ethnographic method. Michael Burawoy (2003), for example, recommends the revisit as a methodological strategy for a reflexive ethnography. Returning to a site, some years later, find both the site and the ethnographer changed, and a reflection on those changes can be analytically fruitful in connecting the personal, the social, and the historical. In the chapters in this collection, the return is not physical but intellectual. The impulse, however, is similar. The authors have changed in the course of their ongoing academic adventure, and now view those past projects in a different light. The encounter of the current academic self with these 'lost' materials has offered our authors a

good deal of food for thought. The rediscovery of what was lost along the way in the process of making field work decisions, or in writing up the ethnography, in selecting a version of the field and a voice, makes a strong case for occasionally looking back, if not fully retracing your steps. We wonder how many ethnographic projects have been lost and not returned to?

Several of our chapters describe, honestly and openly, not only the contingencies that lead to a project becoming lost but also the difficulties in returning to materials and experiences that were gathered in a project that did happen, but were, for various reasons, difficult to work with at the time. **D**ifficult fieldwork experiences translate in to difficulties in writing about them, ethnographically. We think this another contribution of the collection; the direct discussion of some of the emotional labour in writing-up. Again, in the traditional confessional literature, it is more often the case that challenges faced in the field are discussed from the perspective of a journey completed; that is, that the fieldwork gains an accountable progression to it, culminating in the work being published. In these chapters, the difficulties resided less in the fieldwork itself, than with the production of the ethnography. In many ways, the chapters here draw out the relationship between the personal and the political; a key aspect of the sociological and ethnographic imagination. In this way, several chapters discuss how elements of ethnographic projects can be hidden, if not lost altogether. Smith writes of how the very phenomena being studied - in his case a lost study of Parkour – can be obscured by the theoretical priorities of the researcher. Texts that write around or about a given practice, rather than *describe* that practice, despite being published, represent a kind of lost study in themselves. In a different sense, Robinson writes of how she felt her own voice, as a scholar and researcher, was 'lost' behind a pseudonym. The various chapters also demonstrate how lost projects can be experienced as a haunting, producing feelings of regret and, again, sometimes causing the reliving of difficult fieldwork experiences and encounters. More positively, what the chapters also demonstrate is that there is always *something* to write about even from projects that never were. Moreover, going back, retracing your steps, and writing is a good way to engage with what was considered lost, and, rather than an act of exorcism of a haunting, can help one discover where one is headed.

Absences and encountering the unknown

In this introduction, we have considered some of the ways in which becoming and being 'lost' features in the doing of ethnography. We have also outlined some of the ways in which ethnographies and ethnographers can become lost, at different stages of the journey, from conception to publication. We have located this discussion in the context of the contemporary 'accelerated' () academy, and the potential additional pressures on the ethnographer to hurry along

and produce. We distinguish this collection from previous 'confessional tales' and the sense of overcoming and triumph with which such tales are often tinged. Indeed, those tales are often aligned machismo driven versions of ethnography where the various trials and dangers faced by the fieldworker take centre stage. In describing projects that have been 'lost' in different ways, our authors consider challenges that have not been overcoming. We think the tales contained here are, in that way, instructive for others who themselves may be experiencing feelings of being lost in their current projects. The chapters being more about the experience of lostness, than prescribing ways to overcome it. Still, a lesson of the book is, we suppose, that that life goes on. Other projects *do* happen, and the 'academic adventure' continues.

In closing this introduction, we want to return, briefly, to Meno's paradox, and that question that often troubles the novice ethnographer in starting out, and, sometimes, the more experienced ethnographer in describing their project to funding bodies and institutional audiences such as ethics committees and review boards: "How do you go about finding the thing the nature of which is totally unknown to you?"

The ethnographer is not, of course, searching for something that is 'totally unknown' to them. As we and others (Atkinson, 2017) have noted, the idea that the ethnographer enters the field with a completely blank mind is a fallacy. There is, of course in the first instance, a 'field' for them to enter that has, for good reason, being selected. They will carry with them foreshadowed ideas (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), inspirations, priorities, and so on. Even in ethnomethodologically oriented ethnographies, the notion of 'unmotivated looking' is hard to accomplish in practice. The initial chapters in this book, point to how these foreshadowed ideas are developed; their status as not having happened meaning that remain in their pure form, untroubled by practical contingencies. At the same time, the chapters also demonstrate how the ethnographer does not know, or cannot anticipate, exactly *what* the thing that they are looking for will look like. Other chapters throughout the collection point to how ethnographers can be alert to opportunities encountered but not followed up, and how these things themselves, once found, can become lost along the path toward publication.

A contribution of the collection is to point to how ethnographers are, necessarily, practical experts in the working out of Meno's paradox. In pointing, in different ways, to three types of abscences described at the outset of the introduction, each chapter points to way that ethnographers funambulate between the known and the unknown. Rather than searching out a specific, predefined object, the ethnographer moves and sees with what a more general orientation to discovery; what von Uexküll (2010) calls a 'search tone' (and see Hall and Smith, 2017). Solnit notes that "That thing the nature of which is totally unknown to you is usually what you need to find, and finding it is a

matter of getting lost." (Solnit, p.6). The best ethnographies, and the most illuminating observations, then, emerge from the discovery of that which is hidden, and sometimes in plain sight. Being lost, for ethnographers, can mean finding oneself in situations or places that are unknown to social science. Or becoming lost in moving away from the confines of what is comfortably known or accepted about the social world, to see that world afresh. Ethnographers are, to adapt Solnit's words, literate in the language of the social. They may not know exactly what they are looking for when they head out, but, with the right skills and experience, they know how to recognise it when they see it.

Meno's paradox is, then, bound with a rendering of the world as either know, or not. Of objects and phenomena as recognisable, or, conversely, as absent both in presence and in knowledge. The paradox is resolved, however, when one reconsiders the knowing of the world as processual and emergent – not with a world known, and unknown, but a knowledge as accomplished in and through encounter, rather than bounded only to past experience. In this way, it becomes quite plausible to head out in search of something totally unknown to you, beyond the horizons of what is known and considered knowable. To move is to know. Equally, being lost, totally lost, results in stopping completely. Stasis is a sure sign of not just being unsure of where you are, but of being totally lost. Of being unable to retrace your steps, or plot some route, any route, forward toward where you were hoping to end up, for fear of things getting worse. We hope that the chapters in this collection will help the reader to keep moving.

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