

Etnologiska kompositioner

Orienteringar i yrkeslivet

Elias Mellander

Institutionen för kulturvetenskaper

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Opponent: Helena Pettersson, docent i etnologi, Umeå universitet.



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

Ethnological compositions

Work-life orientations

Using the discipline of European Ethnology in Sweden as a point of departure, this dissertation aims to examine graduated students' experiences of entering the labor market. The main line of inquiry is how an educational background without apparent professional ties shape skills, knowledge and self-image in relationship to work, as well as how this is expressed in terms of orientation towards personal or societal values. The empirical foundation of the study is interviews with twenty-four Ethnology graduates working outside of academia. They are employed at museums and archives, as public officials in municipal or state organizations, and as consultants performing qualitative research for businesses or public organizations in the private sector.

The dissertation follows the interviewees from their first encounter with Ethnology to their graduation and entry into working life, and onward into their everyday professional practices. In tracing the participants' career paths, the study touches upon a number of overarching themes. Among these are the conditions of knowledge work in the late modern era, the meaning ascribed to work and education as well as the ostensible crisis of the humanities.

The study argues that there is an affinity between the participants' educational background and their occupation, but that these lines of association are multiple and not always apparent. While Ethnology has had a marked effect on the participant's outlook on the world as well as on how they view themselves, their traversal into professional life has not been frictionless. The prevalence of precarious employment, the challenge of claiming expertise in issues pertaining to everyday culture, and working with a qualitative perspective in a quantitative framework are examples of this. In conclusion, the study shows that academic disciplines like Ethnology shape certain dispositions, skills and values that are put to work in society, through the hands of graduates.

Keyword: ethnology, ethnography, humanities, higher education, cultural analysis, career, knowledge work, precarious work, profession, enactment, orientation, lifelines, logic, affinity

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Dept. of Cultural Sciences, University of Gothenburg
PO Box 200, SE-405-30 Gothenburg

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