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Francisco MARTINEZ, Lili Di PUPPO, Martin DEMANT FREDERIKSEN (eds) | *Peripheral methodologies. Unlearning, not-knowing and ethnographic limits*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2021, pp. 199.

What is the centre and the periphery of what we do? What is the role in the social sciences for the unfinished, vague and messy and how can we comprehend modes of knowing that open up to an invisible realm? These are some of the questions addressed by Francisco Martinez, Lili Di Puppo and Martin Demant Frederiksen in their book *Peripheral methodologies*. The Authors have investigated how the concept of periphery poses methodological and theoretical challenges, and why it should be incorporated into ethnographic research. Moving beyond the established approaches in anthropology that treat reality as a repository of objects readily visible and available for analysis, *Peripheral methodologies* is a highly original work. The aim of the book is to open a conversation about the need to generate different ways of being attentive to the reality, transcending conventional divides and pushing methods beyond their traditional disciplinary constraints. The path toward this objective is filled with provocative insights and arguments that make this book a significant contribution to anthropology.

The main novelty of the book is to approach the concept of periphery as a methodological issue. Dispensing with the established anthropological approaches that essentialize clarity, fixity and visibility in understanding the social world, the Authors have examined hidden aspects of fieldwork, such as the boundaries between the known and the unknown, between reason and the senses and between analytical analysis and aesthetics. They argue that peripherality is not a marginal condition, but a form of theory and practice-making. However,

while peripheral wisdom is about engaging with indistinctiveness and discontinuity – the inherent vagueness of phenomena and field experiences, which seem to hang between the known and the unknown – it also brings about vividness and sharpness in the mode of attention that results from it (p. 173).



Therefore, the book emphasizes the need to develop a mode of being attentive to the uncontrolled, elusive and opaque aspects of the field that are constitutive of the knowledge production process.

Peripheral methodologies is divided into three main sections. In the first, “Suspension of clarity”, the Authors unpack the concept of ambiguity in field situations where “there is nothing but vagueness and doubt” (p. 10). For example, based on her study on Sufism in Russia, Lili Di Puppò describes her experience of a ritual ceremony that she cannot adequately express in words and therefore the ceremony escapes her attempts to capture and analyze it. In a similar vein, Martin Demant Frederiksen attends a Georgian wedding but chooses to reflect on the importance of “what goes on at the fringes” (p. 42) as he cannot understand some side events. The centrality in anthropological research of the notion of meaning is questioned as the world can also be based on not-knowing and non-meaning. This section invites readers to rethink how the un-articulated can be incorporated into ethnographic research, as the “elusiveness and incommensurability” of fieldwork “necessitates practicing a form of ethnography that allows the unknowable to remain” (p. 10).

The second section, “Unlearning”, focuses on different artisanal activities, such as knitting, potting and hammering. While ethnography usually entails studying a non-familiar phenomenon, Lydia Arantes conducted an ethnography on contemporary knitting practices, a traditional technique in her native country. She asks: How to conduct research on knitting when you know how to knit yourself? What kind of knowledge can you produce? Questions like these are part of her reflection and account of the difficulty of distancing herself from a familiar environment in order to analyze it. Ethnographers, just like artisans, learn by doing and by being led by their research participants. To embrace the concept of periphery means that the ethnographer must shift the horizon and include multiple perspectives and paths. This requires being open to the unexpected, hidden, unseen and peripheral. After having worked as an artisan apprentice in a Mexican coppersmith workshop, Michele Avis Feder-Nadoff concludes that “the wisdom of an artisan is more about reach than grasp, more about extending, than holding fast” (p. 107).

In the third section, “Absence of knowledge”, Waltrip in collaboration with an Afghan-Danish film collective ask how to let knowledge unfold and to embrace the process of unlearning. Through detailed descriptions of their work in the collective, they suggest that doing “research-through-filmmaking” and “making-together” invites collective knowledge to emerge.

Her example illustrates how knowledge unfolds between the actors involved and how it is informed “by the questions pursued as well as the infrastructure and media ecology which is part of the assemblage interrogated” (p. 127). The seductive power of periphery lies in seeing things “out of the corner of one’s eye” (p. 165), in the difficulty to catch it and to be understood through analytical notions or frameworks.

The moments, memories and floating impressions contained in the book disrupt the traditional methods of anthropological fieldwork by raising important questions, such as how to capture the periphery in an analytical way? How to adopt a methodology that can take into account peripheral wisdom? These questions resonate in the book, as all of the contributions relate to how unexpected episodes in the field can challenge research questions, methodological choices and disciplinary limits. While the contributors have reflected on these important questions, the book invites even more questions. How, for example, can researchers grasp the in-between, grayness of living societies situated at the peripheries? How to conceptualize the periphery at political, social and territorial margins? And how to conduct research in the peripheries of our interconnected world? Reflections on the ambiguity and opaqueness of fieldwork raises the further question of how researchers can catch a glimpse of “peripheral wisdom” in marginal spaces and develop the methodologies that will allow researchers to approach it. Nevertheless, the book provides a valuable and absorbing window into methodological issues that have rarely been discussed before.

The book’s reflection on the constitutive presence of uncertainty in the field and how the undefined areas of fieldwork challenge epistemological and ontological assumptions and methodologies can be particularly useful for early-career researchers looking for useful insights to unpack the messy challenges that arise when carrying out ethnographic fieldwork.

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