

Karen Waltorp

Collaborative Filmmaking as Isomorphic Anthropology

The presentation introduces the *ARTlife: Articulations of Life among Afghans in Denmark* a research project at Aarhus University. The project experiments with the methodological and conceptual affordances embedded within the technologies of photography, film, social media, theatre and material objects in an attempt to understand what recent arrived refugees and Danish-Afghans, that might have lived in the country for decades, themselves see as the challenges of everyday life in Denmark. The sub-project ARTLife Women Film Collective is a 'research-through-collaborative-filmmaking' project and this presentation takes its point of departure in its experiments with co-generating spaces of articulation beyond the verbal and that which can be grasped within discourse; and the collective conceptualization and practical efforts in the ARTlife group of four women of Afghan background, who grew up in Denmark, and one anthropologist of Danish background. In (planning of) filmmaking, in social media images shared through digital infrastructures, themes emerge that speak to the experiences of the women in the collective. The aim is moving towards an 'isomorphic' anthropology (Kohn 2018) where the representation of – and with - the women takes form after the themes and phenomena that are important in their everyday life. It is argued that this approach invites for the dialectic move between strict and loose thinking advocated by Gregory Bateson (2000); remaining systematic and rigorous *and* working open-ended with no pre-defined end-goal: Daring to stay in the space of the 'barely' (Trinh 2016) when researching and representing the experiences of young Afghan-Danish women.

Karen Waltorp is assistant professor of Anthropology and an award-winning film-maker. She is interested in people and their (digital) environment, focusing on how digital media afford new configurations of space and personhood related to new technologies. Her areas of expertise span the themes gender and kinship, Islam, mobility, and urban anthropology; and she works with visual anthropology, collaborative and experimental methodologies and has carried out recurrent fieldwork in South Africa (2005-06, '07, '09, '11, '15), Denmark (2013-14, 2018-) France (2010) Iran (2015) and Mauretania (2009-10). Her monograph *Why Muslim Women and Smartphones: Mirror Images* is under contract with Bloomsbury. The monograph is based on her PhD-dissertation, nominated for the Aarhus University Research Foundations PhD-prize 2017, it and adopts an 'isomorphic' strategy of displacing the focus on Muslim women in (anthropological) research in the West, to include issues of representation and knowledge-making as co-implicated. Her work has appeared in a range of anthropological and interdisciplinary journals including *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, *Visual Anthropology*, *International Communication Gazette*, *Journal of media and communications research* and in edited volumes *The Ethnographic Effect: A Companion in Analysis* (Duke, forthcoming), *Experimental Collaborations* (Berghahn, 2018) and *Anthropologies and Futures* (Bloomsbury, 2017), and she is co-editor of the forthcoming edited vol. *Contested Technologies: Future Anthropologies* (Bloomsbury). Waltorp is co-convenor of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) Future Anthropologies Network. She is currently part of the 3-year research project ARTlife: Articulations of Life among Afghans in Denmark (2017-2020).