



Engelstad, Ericka & Siri Gerrard (eds.). 2005. **Challenging Situatedness: Gender, Culture and the Production of Knowledge.** Delft, Eburon.

Cover Illustration & Graphic Design by Bjørn Hatteng

# Challenging Situatedness

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In cultural studies, including feminist approaches, researchers contribute to the construction of social and cultural realities through their production of knowledge about culture and society. Researchers' own experiences, roles and statuses, as well as their disciplinary perspectives impact on the production of knowledge, particularly when it comes to theory building, methodologies, and research practices. Today, many years after Donna Haraway first introduced her concept "situated knowledges", it is obvious that all aspects of the production of knowledge are situated and this situatedness must be taken into account.

Although Donna Haraway focuses on science and technoscience, in the present volume we are concerned with cultural studies, both in the humanities and the social sciences. These disciplines have been more favourable to the critique of positivism and critiques of the gendered nature of the research process than have "mainstream" scientists. However, there is still much non-recognition of the narrowly situated nature of much academic work. Taking the concept of situated knowledges seriously will open new possibilities of refiguring and reconfiguring what counts as knowledge.

## What is situatedness?

Donna Haraway started to develop her perspectives and the concept of situated knowledges in a period when feminists and others in the cultural disciplines questioned the ethnography of academic cultures. In anthropology, for example, Clifford and Marcus (1986) presented valuable contributions to the reflexivity debate in their edited volume entitled *Writing Culture*. In the introductory

chapter, entitled *Partial Truth*, Clifford (1986:2) emphasised that the essays in this book

[...] see culture as composed of seriously contested codes and representations; they assume that the poetic and the political are inseparable, that science is in, not above, historical and linguistic processes. They assume that academic and literary genres interpenetrate and that the writing of cultural descriptions is properly experimental and ethical.

This was written during a period in which constructivist thinking became more prominent in much social and cultural research. For social and cultural scientists their interest in constructivism was based on experiences from their own participation in their universities as well as their experiences from fieldwork. It became clear that producing knowledges is a part of, and is not separate from, the prevailing social relations and ideologies in research communities and society in general. In addition, we as researchers became more aware of the specificities of the lived lives of variously situated individuals and groups in particular social and cultural contexts.

This period also saw important developments in the field of social studies of science that paralleled the development of feminist critiques of science and academic work in general, including the social sciences and humanities. In contrast to “mainstream” social studies of science, feminist critiques began by pointing out the neglect of women, women’s perspectives, and women’s lives in scientific and academic work. Feminism demanded not only the recognition of women but also the inclusion of women’s perspectives and lives in research, analysis, and description in the natural, social and cultural sciences. Sandra Harding in *The Science Question in Feminism* discussed feminist theoretical and methodological engagements with science and elaborated three feminist epistemologies – feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint theory, and feminist postmodernism (Harding 1986). In addition, Harding viewed the perspectives of the oppressed as epistemologically better than those of white, patriarchal science. The production of scientific knowledge is not separate from the social and cultural contexts in which that knowledge is produced. To think otherwise is, as Donna Haraway (1988, 1991) argues, simply to play a “god-trick”, a “trick” that feminist critiques of science have revealed as dominating Western, white, male visions of science and research. Thus scientific knowledge, knowledge production based on research, is situated knowledge. Haraway’s initial presentation of the concept of situated knowledges, *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, was written as a response to Sandra Harding’s *The Science Question in Feminism* in the *Feminist Review* (Haraway 1988) and she later published a revised version of the article in a collection of her essays,

*Simians, Cyborgs and Women* (Haraway 1991). Donna Haraway's engagement with the feminist critique of science and with Harding's work on standpoint theory has led to a radical and politicised feminist critique. Haraway is critical of knowledge production that serves to maintain hierarchical structures not only within science, but also within the scientific practices that affect those concerned, those willingly or unwillingly regarded as research "objects", whether these are objects, nature, or people. She is particularly concerned with how knowledge production affects research objects and that knowledge practices should take the objects of knowledge seriously.

Situating knowledge production is not merely a matter of naming. It is not merely saying that scientific knowledge is "Western" or "Scientific". This is only a superficial naming and does little to contextualize that knowledge, its production, and the multitude of relationships and communities involved in that production. As Haraway (1992:298) states much exact, natural, social and human science decontextualizes the lives of those researched. Knowledge involves a complex of relationships and contextualizing knowledge production involves considerations of gender, race, ethnicity, class, location etc. It is perhaps just such contextualization that some scientists/academics would consider polluting, perhaps even threatening, since objectivity requires that research objects are abstract(ed) from context. As with Sandra Harding's (1993) concept of "Strong Objectivity", Donna Haraway (1991:188) wants an "embodied objectivity that accommodates paradoxical and critical feminist science projects: feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges".

The concept of situated knowledges recognizes science as culture and the idea of science as a social construction. The scientific and academic production of knowledge is a cultural production of knowledge that is not value neutral and objective in any way that can be regarded as being outside of culture and society. In what is often referred to as mainstream science/scholarship, partial perspectives are seen in negative terms since these are not considered to be objective. This is because objectivity is always associated with the ideals of neutrality – an objectivity that Haraway (1991) describes as being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere and a negation of the fact that all knowledge is produced somewhere, in some context. Rather, knowledge production is always situated, including that in the mainstream. Haraway speaks of partial perspectives and the locatedness of knowledge in positive terms, i.e., this is not to be seen as perspective in opposition to an objective, universal, un-located, un-locatable, impartial understanding. In contemporary society, science and academic research are powerful and their negation of location, activates this power and limits the possibilities of all others, all other situated knowledges, in doing, and negotiating with, what is considered to be good science. However, because partial perspectives are embodied and situated they are responsible and accountable; and they are objective.

The relationship between the researcher/the research subject and the researched/the research object must be reconfigured in order to avoid essentialism, universalism and the arrogance of the scientific research process. Thus it is important to recognize the researched as subjects. The researched should not be objectified whether they are objects, non-humans or humans. Objectification creates essentialist and monolithic categories that can in no way represent the diversity of the subjects being researched. The subject – object relation of traditional research is an asymmetrical relation and the concept of situated knowledges requires rearticulating this relationship. Haraway will give agency to all involved in the research process, particularly that which has been denied agency, the object of research. In this way research in all its aspects, especially analysis and interpretation, becomes a conversation between subjects/agents. The researcher is clearly and knowingly involved with the knowledge (texts) she produces and this requires that one involves other subjects, especially the subject of research. Thus one does not write for, but should, metaphorically and/or literally, write with the subjects of research (Brenna 1998:201).

As mentioned above, Donna Haraway's concept of situated knowledges was initially a comment on, and engagement with, Sandra Harding's views on science and feminism. Harding (1986, 1991) believes that only those in the margins, the subjugated, have the possibility of producing objective knowledge. Haraway sees partial and embodied knowledge as objective and, agreeing with Harding, sees good reason for trusting the vantage points of the subjugated and views from the margins. As she states: " 'Subjugated' standpoints are preferred because they seem to promise more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world" (Haraway 1991:191). But Haraway is unwilling to totally privilege this view, the view from this location, since she also believes that no knowledge producers, and no partial knowledges, are innocent. This again requires the continual need for critical enquiry with responsibility and accountability.

Research is traditionally based on an asymmetrical relationship between subject and object, which is infused with asymmetrical power relations that create dissonances between those involved. Baukje Prins (1997) views situated knowledges as a way of countering such asymmetrical relations since she believes that situated knowledges are for those who are in the margins, the "inappropriate/d others", and not for those in dominant positions; it is not for those who define themselves as being in the mainstream. However, working from the margins is a critical stance that must also effect changes in the mainstream. Partial knowledges are, of course, both contested and contestable, and therefore should be taken seriously. The conversations between situated knowledges that Haraway so fervently desires can only occur on the basis of mutual confidence and trust. Only by recognizing that science and research are situated can we become responsible and accountable for the research we do and the results and interpretations we produce.

Donna Haraway presents an extremely hard, and yet often ironic, critique of science in her writing. However, she certainly has not given up on the exact, natural, social and human sciences. The concept of situated knowledges takes science and research seriously. While Haraway is more radically constructivist than some other feminist critics of science, as for example Sandra Harding, she still sees the need for better knowledge. “We don’t simply need more stories that are equally true, what we need are stories that are interconnected with each other and in conversation with each other” (our translation) (Asdal and Brenna 1998:27). Thus, while she is critical of objectivity, that is “a view from nowhere”, she is equally critical of relativism. Both objectivity and relativism are totalizing ideologies:

Relativism is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally. The ‘equality’ of positioning is a denial of responsibility and critical enquiry. Relativism is the perfect mirror twin of totalization in the ideologies of objectivity; both deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective; both make it impossible to see well. Relativism and totalization are both ‘god-tricks’ promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully, common myths in rhetoric’s surrounding science. But it is precisely in the politics and epistemology of partial perspectives that the possibility of sustained, rational, objective enquiry rests. (Haraway 1991:191)

As Haraway challenges science, so were all the authors in this book challenged to consider what situated knowledges mean, and could mean, for their own research and academic activities. As these essays show, accepting the challenge of situated knowledges, of the situatedness of knowledge production opens new and exciting perspectives on producing and practicing, as well as sharing, situated knowledges.

Researchers’ positioning makes a difference, not only to what we are interested in, which research problems we choose, but also to how we collect and analyze data, how we relate to informants and research objects, and how we interpret our results. This is both theoretically and methodologically important. Norwegian feminist research has been traditionally, and is still, strongly based on empirical data as a foundation for theory building. This orientation has made feminist researchers aware of differences, including gender differences, among those being studied (Lotherington and Markussen 1999:19). The concept of situated knowledges is concerned with dialogues and conversations between different epistemic communities, and however difficult this can be in practice, a basic assumption is that such conversations are not only possible but also productive, stimulating, inspiring, and that they will lead to better knowledge production. Exactly how this is done in practice and how this relates to the research process

are themes to which Haraway gives little attention. Lotherington and Markussen (1999) have worked to develop what they term “critical knowledge practice” (kritisk kunnskapspraksis), which we consider to be a way of further developing situated knowledges. Critical knowledge practice takes as its starting point that science/research/scholarship is based in the diversity in nature, culture, and society and does not function to subjugate any part of this diversity. This means that researchers must be critically aware of their working methods and the network of meanings and power that are tied to these. In other words, it requires reflexivity. In addition, it requires that researchers work to find methods that take into account such a critical and contextualizing vision (Lotherington and Markussen 1999:10).

Situated knowledge production requires that it is not only the researcher who is responsible and accountable but it is also the research community that is responsible and accountable. This is a clear recognition of the fact that all research is embedded in a wider context that is equally as responsible and accountable as the individual researcher. One recognizes and accepts that knowledge production is situated and produced from a particular position, but that does not mean that our subjective and particular understandings of the world can be freely and uncritically expressed. This means, rather, that one must be acutely aware of, and critical to, one’s situation/position and how research is coloured by all of the contexts in which it is done (Lotherington and Markussen 1999:22). As Haraway states:

Positioning implies responsibility for our enabling practices. It follows that politics and ethics ground struggles for the contests over what may count as rational knowledge. That is, admitted or not, politics and ethics ground struggles over knowledge projects in the exact, natural, social, and human sciences. Otherwise, rationality is simply impossible, an optical illusion projected from nowhere comprehensively. (Haraway 1991:193)

Baukje Prins (1997), whose work Brita Brenna discusses in the first article, sees situated knowledges as a multifaceted concept, which is made up of at least three “levels”. The first level is a descriptive level in which all knowledges are assumed to be partial and situated. The second level is a normative and critical level that, in conjunction with Harding’s strong objectivity, sees the view from below and from the margins as offering the better vantage point for seeing the world and that sees partiality as important in that the knower deliberately sides with what falls outside of the norm, with inappropriate/d others such as women, blacks, gays, the working classes, and indigenous peoples. Finally, the third level is a vision of the future in which situated knowledges do not only stand in critical opposition to dominant forms of knowledge, but also involve the active construction of

knowledges that recognize “the always contested and limited nature of who or what they represent” and that will offer new structures that transgress the traditional boundaries of knowledge production (Prins 1997:104-106). Situated knowledges are not built from one particular standpoint and are collectively more inclusive since, as mentioned earlier, they include the multiplicity of both the knowers and the objects of research.

Becoming situated:

### Gender and production of knowledge in Tromsø<sup>1</sup>

What, then, inspired the feminist community at the University of Tromsø to challenge situatedness and invite the authors of this volume to present their experiences, reflections and visions on how to produce knowledge? There is no simple answer to this question, but challenging situatedness in different ways has always been a part of the Tromsø feminist research environment. What we have been challenging and the way it is done have varied since the University opened its doors in 1972. The university’s location as the northernmost university of the world and its size as a small university that started up in period when many of the women at the university were active in the feminist movement, gave room for new thoughts and for women’s and feminist initiatives. The majority of the students at this new university came, and still come, from the region and staff and students have often North Norway and its challenges as the main inspiration for their research. This was also in accordance with the first objectives of the university, which were to develop knowledge relevant for the region. Interest in North Norwegian themes and closeness to informants, students and other people that were interested in books and articles that are written, created possibilities for many to fulfil one of Haraway’s “claims”, namely that of being in conversation with the readers. Often informants and students with their diverse experience and knowledge gave interesting corrections to the analyses that were made about Sami questions, women’s and men’s lives in fishery or other professions dominant in the area. Such historical events are some of the specificities that can be said to form the context for *Challenging Situatedness* and the selection of the topics that are elaborated in the various articles of this book.

International and cross-cultural interests have also been present among many of the feminist scholars in Tromsø. Some of the graduate students and staff came to Tromsø with experience from studying women and gender in villages on the African and North American continent, and after some time students and staff who had done research in Latin America and Asia also were recruited. Therefore, over time many acquired experience from research in North Norway as well as from research in countries in the southern hemisphere and developed the philosophy that experience from peripheries and marginal areas in the North as well as the South

is a valuable basis for exchange of knowledge between researchers (Holtedahl et al. 1999). This philosophy also led to research contacts, projects, and collaborative efforts of many kinds with universities in the South, such as the arrangement of *Women's Worlds 1999* – a large conference that gathered women and some men from many countries (Bjørhovde, Kvist and Nordbrønd 2000, Valestrand 2000). The fact that the present volume: *Challenging Situatedness* has contributions from “peripheries” as well as from more “central” places of academia, from areas and research in the southern as well as the northern hemisphere, and from several cultural and social disciplines is not incidental and can be related to these aspects of situatedness.

During the years, concepts, theories and models were developed and interdisciplinary efforts were made in order to meet the challenges in the areas we studied. From the beginning of the university to the present, female students and staff initiated collaborative seminars and meetings resulting in many co-edited books, journals and occasional papers (Andersen et al. 1979, Andersen et al. 1980, Andersen et al. 1982, Andersen, Bjørhovde and Lervik 1985, Bratrein et al. 1976, Gerrard, Dahle, Seim and Valestrand 1985, Gerrard and Balsvik 1999a, Gerrard and Balsvik 1999b, Granquist and Spring 2001, Kvinneforskermaraton<sup>2</sup> 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, Lervik et al. 1978, Lotherington and Markussen 1999, Ottar 1982, Ottar 1983, Svenneby 1992, Valestrand 2000, Wegener and Wynn 2002, Women's Studies International Forum 2000). “The Women's Research Marathon” (Kvinneforskermaraton) is an event where women come together for a 12 hour seminar or a “marathon”, starting early in the morning until late evening. In these “marathons”, which have been arranged eight times, 18 – 40 female students and staff present their research for a larger audience and thus try to be in conversation with women and men, high school students and seniors from the city of Tromsø. With the written publications these events also have potential to reach a wider audience. Such collaborative arrangements also indicate that research and the mediation of research is more than a responsibility for individual researchers. It should be, as Haraway indicates, a responsibility for the whole research community. In Tromsø there have always been women and institutions that have taken this responsibility. Since it was founded in 1995, Kvinneforsk, The Centre for Women's and Gender Studies has been a driving force in this work.

Studying women in many and different contexts led us to appreciate, very early, what Donna Haraway, many years later, called “partiality” (Gerrard 1976, Holtedahl 1976, Haugen and Holtedahl 1984). Many of the articles and books written by the Tromsø researchers (See, for example: Andersen et al. 1979, Andersen et al. 1982, Brantenberg and Holtedahl 1974, Bratrein et al. 1976, Flakstad 1984, Flemmen 1999a, Flemmen 1999b, Holtedahl 1986, Larsen 1980, Lervik et al. 1978, Rudie 1984, Svenneby 1992, Valestrand 1995) also revealed

what Donna Haraway (1992), following Trinh Minh-Ha (1989), has named “the inappropriate/d others”. Many of us discovered early the importance of speaking about women in the plural and focusing on both women and men. Through our studies we realized that women’s living conditions were different and that women’s and men’s situations often were interrelated (Gerrard 1976, Holtedahl 1976, Haugen and Holtedahl 1984). Looking back, we can say that we crossed academic borders, contributed to widening the academic disciplines, developed new concepts, and questioned traditional gender perspectives. Theoretical inspiration came from collaborations with feminists at the other Norwegian universities (Holter 1982, Rudie 1984) and from trying to gender the texts used in curricula in the different disciplines. Feminist literature from abroad, like Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974), Reiter (1975) and, a little later, Harding (1986) Butler (1990) and Moore (1994) were among those feminist writers who inspired many of us. The contribution from many of Tromsø’s female researchers has been, and still is, developed through theoretical reflections based on fieldwork and comprehensive interviews in combination with perspectives from feminist, and more generally oriented, social and cultural research. Many of the theories and concepts that were developed were based on “grounded theory”. Theories and concepts were in other words developed inductively from a corpus of data (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Our interest for the more constructivist feminist texts, among them the texts written by Donna Haraway, started to develop in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. At that moment it also became evident that questions raised by feminist researchers in Tromsø, especially by Lisbet Holtedahl (Holtedahl 1976, Haugen and Holtedahl 1984), were similar to some of Donna Haraway’s questions: How do established traditions in the disciplines have impact on our texts? Who do we write for? How are our analyses received? How can research from different disciplines be developed with a feminist perspective (Svenneby 1992)? More emphasis was also put on the other aspects of feminist research, for example the body (Flemmen 1999a, Flemmen 1999b). Questions were also asked about the learning and teaching conditions of third world students and researchers (Balsvik 1999). In this way our own knowledge production and our writing about women and men in North Norway, Latin America and Africa were challenged. More emphasis was put on situating ourselves and the knowledges we produced in formal arenas and in writing (Altern and Holtedahl 1995, Valestrand 1995, Gerrard and Valestrand 1999). Many reacted to the well-known talk about transfer of knowledge and tried to strengthen alternative models where exchange of knowledge was in focus (Holtedahl et al. 1999). The relations between the different knowers were further elaborated, particularly, researcher – informant relations, the relation between the researchers and the readers of their texts, and between the informants and the readers (Holtedahl 1998). In this way some tried to deal with the different partners in research as more equal partners.

Our understanding of situated knowledges was also influenced by a group of researchers and PhD students at the Centre for technology, innovation and culture (TIK) at the University of Oslo. In 1991, they started working with Haraway's texts, sometimes with her, and this resulted in the book *Betatt av viten: bruksanvisninger til Donna Haraway* (*Facinated by Knowledge: A Handbook on Donna Haraway*) (Asdal et al. 1998), which helped many to understand that Haraway's perspectives were also "good to think with" in social and cultural studies. This was particularly true of the concept of situated knowledges, because of what we will call the concept's varied simplicity, in that it gives us associations to many theoretical challenges expressed only in two words. We discovered that Haraway's work supported and legitimised our own thoughts and at the same time opened up for new ways of thinking and challenging the research process that were also relevant in the study of societies and cultures. Some of these new perspectives are presented in the book already referred to, *Kritisk kunnskapspraksis* (*Critical Knowledge Practices*), edited by Ann Therese Lotherington and Turid Markussen (1999). In this book researchers from various disciplines challenge the production of knowledge in their disciplines, as well as in feminist research, in terms of theorizing, the conceptualization of research questions, and research practices.

This present volume on *Challenging Situatedness* thus stems from different contexts and perspectives: On the one hand it stems from the 1980s reflexive, and 1990s constructivist debates, both within and outside of feminist studies. On the other hand it stems from our own lived and varied experiences situated in time and space in North Norway and other places, and from studies carried out in different corners of the world far from the centres of academic debate. In order to clarify and develop the potentials that the concept of situated knowledges represents, some of us decided to hold a conference where researchers from Tromsø, as well as from other universities in Norway, the United Kingdom, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Uganda<sup>3</sup>, could discuss with Donna Haraway. Since she was unable to come, this book can be said to give examples of how other researchers are in conversations, not with her, but with her texts.

The authors of the articles in this volume took this challenge. They are critiquing previous traditional and positivist research at the same time as they are offering new visions of how academic work is done and how it is a part of society and culture – how the production of knowledge, including science is infused with society and culture.

## Situatedness and the production of knowledge

The concept of situated knowledges opens a space for communication between different knowledge producers and different ways of producing knowledge. It serves to break down the boundaries within the scientific production of

knowledge, within the physical, natural, social, cultural and human sciences, and it also serves to break down the boundaries between scientific and non-scientific knowledge production. The concept does not make these boundaries disappear, that is too utopian a vision, but rather makes the boundaries porous, allowing for communication and understanding between different situated knowledges. Obviously, this cannot be achieved without respect and trust in the relations between knowledge producers, knowledge communities, and the various subjects of research.

*Porous boundaries: new stories produce new knowledge*

Breaking down boundaries makes new possibilities for new knowledges. In her concern to go beyond endless critique, Brita Brenna (*From Science Critique to New Knowledge Practices*) comments on some important aspects of Donna Haraway's thinking on the perspectives and uses of situated knowledges. She shows the comprehensiveness of this concept and its concerns for nature, environmental issues, and scientific practices. Brenna particularly emphasizes that our representations are dependant on the metaphors we develop as researchers and these metaphors are important for our understanding of, and relation to, nature. The metaphors we use in describing and interpreting our data can give what we study a voice, and with situated knowledges, we can insure that this voice is never muted. Science has been, and can still be, a practice that can consider its research objects as "lively entities" in themselves. How we represent and present our research, the choice of metaphors, the choice of concepts, and how data is categorized and named are concerns that should be given considerable importance in cultural studies and the social sciences, as well as in the so-called "hard" sciences.

Cathrine Holst (*Towards a New Way of Constructing Knowledge?*) is particularly interested in the convergences between the most common feminist epistemologies—feminist postmodernism, feminist standpoint theory, and feminist empiricism - despite their obvious differences. The situatedness of knowledge production is important in all three feminist epistemologies. As a feminist, she is concerned with the gendered situatedness of the production of knowledge and in countering critiques that would consider this to be simply value-laden inquiry, relativist, and/or bad science. Holst also sees situated knowledges as a way of breaking down boundaries between perspectives and opening up not only for "collective processes of criticism and dialogue", but also for reconstructing a more democratic production of knowledge, one that takes differences and individuals into consideration. Holst acknowledges the concept of situated knowledges because it accepts difference and forces us to make demands on society, but she also challenges Haraway to present a clearer and more detailed justification of the concept.

Both Holst and Brenna recognize that there are no simple answers to the challenges of situated knowledges and each of them finds different paths in their partial engagements with creating new knowledges. Brita Brenna is particularly concerned with telling many and diverse stories about nature and stories in which all aspects of nature, human and non-human, are lively and respected actors. Kikki Jernsletten (*To Look From a Fell: Where do I Come From?*) plays with language and perspectives, and mixes ways of telling stories in her own writing. She develops these perspectives, and the different situated knowledges from which these perspectives come, to give new possibilities for thinking and writing about the world, in her case the Sami world. To look from a fell is a vision metaphor and a metaphorical location, as are many of the metaphors that Haraway uses in discussing situated knowledges. Kikki Jernsletten takes in other peoples' texts as they are, giving these texts respect in allowing their voice to remain as the authors intended them to be. By doing so, she also gives them a new context and a new life. The other authors' texts are "lively entities" in Kikki Jernsletten's combination of the literary, visionary, and analytical. They flow in the rhythm of her text and present an interesting example of how conversations with, and articulations of, different perspectives/situated knowledges can change ways of writing and understanding the world. She listens to the stories/tales of others, accepts these with respect and openness, and acknowledges their source and their relevance for her analysis of textual production. We view this as parallel to the relationships that the concept of situated knowledges makes between subject and object, between researcher and informant, between researcher and the data collected and studied, whether it be, as Haraway writes, humans, animals or objects.

*New relationships – new methodologies and new theoretical perspectives*

All of the articles in this volume discuss how changing relationships offer new possibilities for not only changing and nuancing methodologies, but also for developing new theoretical perspectives. This is, perhaps, most clearly presented in the articles on ethnographic films by Lisbet Høltedahl and Bjørn Arntsen (*Visualizing Situatedness: The Role of the Audience/Reader in Knowledge Production*), and Rossella Ragazzi (*Living with Camera in between Barn and Kitchen: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Making of the Ethnographic Film "At Home in the World"*). In addition, the articles by Percy Oware (*Situated Development: A Policy-Planning Option for Ghana?*) and Léonie Tatou-Métangmo (*Situated Knowledges and Varying Standpoints about Language, "Mother Tongues", and Power in Africa.*) give us insights into how new perspectives based on situated knowledges are fashioned.

In producing a text, a film or a story, Bjørn Arntsen and Lisbet Høltedahl argue that while the role of the researcher and the researcher's situatedness have

been discussed in anthropology for some time, we should now start to focus on the role of the recipient, the “third man”, who can be a listener, a reader or a viewer, as in the case of anthropological films. One must consider and reconsider the situatedness of the anthropologist, the informant and the recipient of anthropological descriptions. Although recipients are often in the minds of the producers of knowledge, there has been little discussion of how we should deal with recipients as situated actors. Arntsen and Holtedahl present scenes from two films, on different Fulani/Fulbe persons and situations, as examples of their theorizing around the interrelationships and negotiations between researcher, informant and recipient. In both films, the influence of those being filmed is important to the process of filming and the result. It is clear that both Arntsen and Holtedahl are open to, take into account, and negotiate with those being filmed. They state that through the process of negotiation a fusion of horizons may occur and the perspectives of both parties are widened.

Else, an elderly woman and healer, is the central person in Rossella Ragazzi’s film and article. Ragazzi is concerned with the relationships between filmmaker/researcher, informant/producer of knowledge and recipient/audience in the same manner, as were Arntsen and Holtedahl. She explicitly acknowledges the subjective in the relationships between the filmmaker and those being filmed. She is, therefore, reluctant to use the word “documentary” since this neutralizes and objectifies the processes and relationships involved. Ragazzi’s view of visioning comes from phenomenology and implies a movement toward others that must be made visible and audible. The filmmaker is thus clearly situated in the act of filming and in the film itself. In this way ethnographic films may become a less objectifying medium, which is a view similar to that of Bjørn Arntsen and Lisbet Holtedahl. Ragazzi’s film was part of a project to give medical students a better understanding of their patients’ everyday lives and her conception of “documentary” film gave them a new way of knowing and understanding their patients. Ragazzi emphasizes the inter-subjectivity of filming and her article clearly shows the close relationship that developed between herself and Else, a relationship that is clearly expressed in all its situatedness.

For Arntsen, Holtedahl and Ragazzi one of the most important recipients of their films are the informants/actors themselves. This philosophy, as well as the technology of filming and the possibility to review what is happening while filming, helps the researchers to “see”. Perhaps we can say that the making of the film forces the researchers to pay more attention to future recipients and the knowledge they might have. They argue that communication and mediation in all disciplines would be better if these thoughts were applied from the very first day of planning research.

Taking situated knowledges seriously offers not only new ways of theorizing the multitude of relationships in research, but also new ways of theorizing and

developing new models of social, cultural, and economic processes. Percy Oware, re-visions Western thinking about development by taking the relations between different situated knowledges seriously and by not privileging a particular (Western) form of situated knowledge. Oware deconstructs the development models of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and builds up a new model, which he calls “situated development”. He contends that if the development models of Western economic thinking are to work successfully they have to be situated. Situated development makes a demand on those concerned with implementing “development” in various parts of the world to take into serious consideration the knowledges and understandings of the local communities. What is new with this concept is seeing local cultures as producing knowledge that must be considered and that cannot be ignored. Situated development is a compact concept, which should lead to development policy being “unpacked” so that the local partners are involved in all aspects of development. Oware’s model breaks down the boundaries between different situated knowledges, between different ways of producing knowledge, between different ways of implementing that knowledge, and between different understandings of the consequences of that knowledge. Oware’s example shows the possibilities of the concept of situated knowledges and the ways in which it can be used to develop new theories and models in other disciplines and fields of study.

The same can be said about Léonie Tatou-Métangmo’s contribution. Through linguistic research in a Cameroonian context, where several languages are simultaneously in use, she shows how the concept of situated knowledges is relevant for understanding the diversified language situation in both Cameroon and similar contexts, and the position of languages as official, un-official and vehicular languages. She is concerned with developing new theories about the relationship between languages and language change where gender is a significant factor in innovation. She relates today’s linguistic situation and lack of research to colonial and post-colonial challenges. With this as a basis, she also demonstrates how the African linguistic situation can be a fruitful starting point for further development of overall perspectives of socio-linguistic research.

### *The past is not a fixed entity*

Much recent feminist theorization and discussion has been concerned with discourses that have constructed, and construct, the world as we know it. However, social, cultural and feminist studies are not only concerned with words and concepts but also with the materiality of our lives; and several articles in this book discuss the importance of the materiality of the past. Museums and museum collections, as well as cultural heritage and craft production, are important locations in the production of knowledge – for telling about the past and for telling about

phenomena and processes in the present. Both Gørill Nilsen (*Museums, Gender and Knowledge*) and Hamadou (*Handicraft, Society, and the Challenges of Knowledge Production*) are concerned with the relationships between the material cultures of the past and how these are understood and (re)used in the present. Nilsen discusses three very different local museums, each of which is concerned with different periods and aspects of the past – the Vikings, the indigenous Sami, and the Second World War. All of the museums are concerned with involving different knowledges of/about the past in the present, particularly in relation to their respective local communities. Thus the three museums are differently situated in terms of both theme and time, and how they represent the past shows that these representations are clearly based on, and must relate to, juxtaposed situated knowledges. The museums' goals and reasons for doing this are quite different in terms of the different publics they are intended for, reach out to, and impact on. The museums activate contrasting images and knowledges of the past – more or less academically, more or less tied to original things, both artefacts and structures – and situate these in relation to different audiences or recipients. Interestingly, their concern with recipient/audience is in many ways similar to that discussed by Arntsen, Holtedahl and Ragazzi in relation to the making of ethnographic/documentary films. Museums in their relation to things and the public are themselves producing new knowledge of the past. A strong contrast between the three museums which Nilsen studied is how their representations of the past are related to, and coloured by, gender and how this is, or is not, taken into consideration.

Hamadou also shows how material culture studies are important for researching the past as well as for understanding the present. He describes how changes in the significance and meaning of handicraft production are integral to social, cultural, economic, and political developments in a town, in Cameroon. Much knowledge is produced through handicraft traditions and Hamadou gives us good descriptions that are necessary for theory. In this way, we, as outsiders, can better understand the contexts in which this knowledge is produced. In addition, his descriptions seek to fulfil narrative traditions of knowledge and understandings of how knowledge should be presented, as these are considered to be important locally. In doing this, Hamadou also gives us insight into some current academic African traditions of studying the past. An important aspect of both Nilsen's and Hamadou's work is that it is tied to particular geographical locations, where they have studied how things/artefacts are used in situating representations and socio-cultural change in these particular places. Indeed, situatedness is often tied to location, but these locations should not be misconstrued as monolithic and unchanging entities, but rather as fluid, changing, and made up of a web of relations with others, whether one is discussing individuals or communities.

Alison Blunt (*The Spatial Politics of Situatedness: Feminist and Postcolonial Perspectives*) challenges situatedness by confronting it with new understandings of spatiality and the spatial production of knowledge. She shows that despite the frequent use of spatial metaphors, situatedness is not merely context, neither for the researcher nor for those studied. Blunt considers the interrelationships of space and power and how these are played out in colonial and post-colonial India. She is especially concerned with “race”, gender, home and identity in her research on Anglo-Indian women and uses these to theorize the relationships between identity and space. Both her theorizing and her empirical study involve not only location, but also movement, connections and the crossing of thresholds. Her critique of situatedness as location and its relation to both power and knowledge in traditional thinking opens space for considerations of the production of situated knowledges which are partial, decolonised, dynamic, and often contested. Both Alison Blunt and Gørill Nilsen remind us that it is always important to remember that the past was not a fixed entity, a bounded place in space and time, but also an arena of diverse and often contested situated knowledges.

Erling Sandmo (*Thinking in the Ting: Violence, Discourse and Truth in Early-Modern Norway*) is also concerned with the past as well as the present. He discusses situated understandings of how conflicts and deviations from the norm were handled differently on the local level by traditional courts and a more formalized, hierarchical legal system headed by a scribe who gradually took over. While the traditional courts produced knowledge based on narrative understandings of “what had happened”, the newer court system beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, also within the period of the beginning of the Western scientific tradition, produced knowledge based on the determination of facts. The traditional courts were made up of elite groups of men who interpreted the meaning of events through religious narratives and metaphors in the local context, while what was at stake in the new courts, was the definition of truth. These two legal discourses constituted different cultural understandings, different situated knowledges, not only of what was right and wrong behaviour, but also what were appropriate sanctions and how “wrong” behaviour should be judged and punished. Thus, meaning and understanding were replaced over the course of a few centuries by justice and the “letter of the law” - a change that laid the groundwork for a “new equality before the law and a new degree of safety for the weak - for outsiders”.

### *The personal, political, and scientific*

One of the well-known concepts of feminism and feminist theory was that the personal is political. Feminists were thus among those who early critiqued science for de-situating the producers of scientific knowledge and the view that subjectivity should be omitted in the research process. Feminists clearly opposed the view of a

researcher as an idealized, objective, uninvolved, and un-affected person. Four of the articles in this book explicitly challenge our understandings of the situatedness of research and researcher and how different ways of being involved can have consequences for the production of knowledge. As stated earlier, discourse has been central to much recent feminist theorizing and language is especially central to these discussions. In her article, Léonie Tatou-Métangmo also reveals in her work with the Fulani language in Cameroon how the personal, political and scientific is weaved together. Most researchers are not interested in vehicular language, while Tatou-Métangmo, from her position as woman, researcher and outsider, is interested in exactly this because women have been important in developing this new and dynamic form of Fulani. Tatou-Métangmo's personal experience and her own engagement in her research allow her to better see and understand gendered language patterns and power relations that are not considered to be objects of research by male linguists.

The production of knowledge is an ongoing process that can both cement traditions and initiate changes that challenge these traditions. Mairama Haman Bello (*Fulani Women of North Cameroon: Learning and Knowledge Production*) discusses her strong personal and academic engagement in researching the contradictory role Western education plays in the changing lives of Fulani women. This “new” education opens new ways to emancipation for women, at the same time that this creates enormous contradictions in women's lives. Of particular importance are their possibilities for learning and the conditions for learning, in addition to building up confidence, particularly among men, that learning is important in women's lives. Bello has produced knowledge on how a new educational system and schooling could be formed by combining the situated (partial) knowledges of both Fulani tradition and Western education in order to open up new educational possibilities for women. However, as Bello acknowledges, conflicts and male opposition to change remain; and the often-contradictory processes of knowledge production “pull the mind in two directions” and create a “dilemma that is not easy to solve”.

Both Hanne Haavind (*How my Texts are Situated in Time and May Change the Future*) and Karin Widerberg (*Situating Knowledge - Liberating or Oppressive?*) explicitly discuss the intertwined and changing contexts - personal, academic, professional, cultural, social and political - of their production of knowledge that impact on what and why and how knowledge is produced. Both Haavind and Widerberg tie their own concerns directly to their research and writing. Karin Widerberg, a sociologist, considers four contexts: feminist academic knowledge and milieus, feminist activist knowledge and milieus, academic sociological theories, and the realities of everyday life. Crosscutting these contexts are the contents and consequences of three paradigm shifts: feminism, Marxism, and post-structuralism. Widerberg describes an almost constant uneasiness with

the contradictions between feminism on the one hand and Marxism and then post-structuralism on the other hand. In addition, she acknowledges a constant nagging dissatisfaction with both Marxism and post-structuralism as these fail to relate to the everyday and diverse lives of women. Thus we see that these dogmas do not include considerations of their own partiality and inadequacy as all inclusive knowledge systems. Widerberg relates the existence of feminism directly to situated knowledges and at the same time she acknowledges that situating knowledge can be both “liberating and oppressive” depending on where and how knowledge is situated. Thus, for Widerberg, all knowledge production should be challenged and we can see that the contextual tensions in her life and work have made new possibilities for the production of knowledge. Motivated by work within and between different contexts/arenas – family, feminism, academics, psychology, and inter-disciplinary feminism – Hanne Haavind has been both inspired and challenged, and opposed and supported, by the processes of knowledge production across contexts. Haavind is a feminist psychologist particularly concerned with the lives of women and men as couples and gendered parent-child relationships in families. Haavind’s research and writing are situated in her own interests and initiatives as well as the interests and initiatives of others. Situatedness is a prerequisite for connecting the different contexts in which all knowledge is produced. Importantly, the “relational and occasional character of [her] writing” is what situates her texts in time. Recognizing situatedness, however, does not make scholarly texts “nothing but personal experience”. Texts are not bound to one’s own experience, but can often exceed it. Her texts are multi-dimensionally situated to the changing contexts of life and work and only by accepting this situatedness, while at the same time using it to challenge and transform understandings, can research contribute to changing the future.

So far we have been focusing on the many theoretical and methodological aspects that can be highlighted by means of the situated way of thinking. However, for many scientists, including feminists, there are also practical aspects related to the situatedness of the production of knowledge. By that we mean we are producing knowledge not simply for our own interests but also for the interests and needs of the public and civil society, both within and outside of academia. Thus the question is how can we, and they, make use of and practice situated knowledges.

## Practicing situated knowledges inside and outside academia

The concept of situated knowledges, although focusing on the relationship of researchers/scholars to the production of knowledge, is itself also a practice. Most of the authors in this volume show how practice is effected; and how both their lives and work are involved in the practice of communicating between and within situated knowledges. We are producing knowledge in/of the world, as we are

concerned with phenomena and events that relate to our lives and the lives of others.

Here we want to focus on how situated knowledges can be practiced, how taking situated knowledges seriously can affect how we use knowledge, how we can gain new knowledge, and how we can gain new insights that are relevant for our lives and the lives of others, both inside and outside of academia. The concept of situated knowledges deals not only with methodologies and theories that relate to the physical, natural, social, cultural and human sciences, but also gives important insights into the production of knowledge in everyday life. These knowledges can lead to new practices and new processes of change, preferably changes in favour of the subjugated or inappropriate/d others. Several of the articles in this book directly take up themes relating to how knowledge can be practiced and how the consequences of such practice can lead to change in the circumstances of everyday life.

Practicing situated knowledges opens up for focusing on the relationship between the producer and the recipient of knowledge, between the writer and the reader of knowledge. Donna Haraway discusses the relationship between the producer and the recipient of knowledge in her critique of science, but she does not elaborate on how this relationship may be improved (Haraway 1991, 1997). The communication of research is a question of which audiences we want to reach and for whom are we writing. Above we have pointed to the fact that there are different kinds of challenges, which are related to the location of the reader and the various ways the reader is situated. One aspect of practicing situated knowledges within academia is the implication that the knowledge of the audience, colleagues and students, should be taken into consideration in the process of communication. This, of course, means that we should develop different modes of writing and different forms of communication, including those of technoscience. Too often our texts are written only for a narrowly defined community of peers. Indeed, Haraway has been criticized for a writing style that reaches out to only a few, and in particular, many non-English speakers have often wished that Donna Haraway's texts were easier to read and comprehend. One solution to such challenges in communication is the practice of writing in the particularly important genre of the "reader for beginners" in various fields of study. An example of this is a new Haraway reader (Haraway 2003) with reprinted articles and an interview with her by three Danish scholars – Nina Lykke, Randi Markussen and Finn Olesen (Markussen et al. 2000, Lykke et al. 2000) – well versed in her publications and thinking. A particularly important work on understanding Haraway is the book already mentioned, *Betatt av viten: bruksanvisninger til Donna Haraway (Fascinated by Knowledge: A Handbook on Donna Haraway)* by Asdal et al. (1998). *Fascinated by Knowledge* was successful as a medium for "translations", reflections, and interpretations of Haraway's work, at the same time that it shared

the authors' understandings, doubts, and challenges to Haraway; and presented Haraway's perspectives for a Scandinavian audience (See Brita Brenna's article in this volume). For those Scandinavian researchers who try to apply Haraway's perspectives in different disciplines, this book broke down many barriers to understanding the concept of situated knowledges and is an excellent example of conversations between situated knowledges in practice.

Acknowledging the situatedness of the production of scientific knowledge will change practices not only within research communities but also in the ways the consequences of research are implemented in society. In her article, Hanne Haavind gives examples of the mutually productive relationship between the production of knowledge by therapists and academic psychologists. Karin Widerberg's and Cathrine Holst's discussions are relevant for the feminist movement and gender policy. Percy Oware most clearly shows how incorporating the situated knowledges of local communities can change economic models of development. His new model of situated development can change the practice and management of development, but only if global institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund begin to take situated knowledges seriously and incorporate them in their policies. Mairama Hamran Bello shows how education policy can be improved by turning directly to local communities instead of demanding totally new and foreign (Western) learning structures. She shows how such localized learning practices can make new possibilities for women to learn Western knowledge taught in schools. Léonie Tatou-Métangmo gives good arguments for focusing on vehicular languages, both in research and in education, while the work of Bjørn Arntsen, Lisbet Holtedahl and Rossella Ragazzi opens new possibilities for us, the readers of this book, to reflect upon our own views on social and cultural realities that are unknown to most of us.

Hamadou's example of the revitalization of gender dependent art, artefacts, buildings and traditional ceremonies shows how knowledges from certain local and traditional vocations, which are a part of everyday practices, can be made relevant for planning and development. Ancient traditions of handicraft combined with new initiatives can be transformed to commercialised tools, material, souvenirs, and performances/events, which are given new meaning for both the local population and foreign visitors. Thus local knowledge of handicrafts is given new social and economic meaning and represents new potentials for local development. From a similar situation in Norway, Gørill Nilsen shows how both general and specific knowledges of the deep past can be combined with traditional knowledge and skills in the development of new institutions, in this case three local museums. Not surprisingly, the museums turn out to be very different, serve different purposes, and relate differently to their various publics and to the communities of which they are a part.

Using situated perspectives, Alison Blunt, reveals the experiences of Anglo-Indian women during the colonial period as well as in the present and shows how official policy has had, and still has, impact on the construction of both home and identity. She directs much of her concern toward her Anglo-Indian informants and their community; and this has consequences for her research practice. Her work is presented for both the research community and the Anglo-Indian community; and the material from her interviews will form the basis of oral history archives in diverse Anglo-Indian communities. In this way she opens up possibilities for the further production of knowledge and a stronger grounding for policy and understanding the construction of identity.

As we can see from these examples, challenging the situatedness of knowledge in practice can have many consequences, from new psychological therapies to the revitalization of local economies. Thus the situatedness of knowledges and conversations between knowledges result in both new semiotic practices, but equally as important, they result in new material and political practices that can lead to change.

## There will always be new challenges in knowledge production

Feminist critiques of science and social studies of science have shown the constructed nature of Western science. Feminist critiques of science have also shown that a set of binary oppositions with science/non-science, man/woman, and rationality/emotion are particularly characteristic of Western science. In addition, Western science developed in a time when Europeans “discovered” other areas of the world with all their wealth. Thus, scientific literature is often characterized by metaphors of domination and control, and images of Western science as all knowing. The Western sciences have indeed done much for our understanding of the world, but it is now time to recognize that Western science is a partial knowledge and that science and the production of knowledge is situated in particular contexts. All of the articles in this volume are concerned with cultural studies and gender and all have tried to integrate and challenge the situatedness of knowledge production. In addition, they also give examples of the varied, complex, and rich approaches represented by this way of thinking.

Diverse structures of power and gender are present in the production of knowledge. While Haraway critiques Western science for unacknowledged power plays and gendered locations, she seems less concerned with power and gender within and between other situated knowledges. Neither does she elaborate on the almost universal dominance of Western science when in conversation with other situated knowledges, nor consider the difficulties non-Western scholars face in almost all phases of producing knowledges. Thus we are left with unequal access

to power and un-equal gendered understandings across situated knowledges; these are situations that are challenged by all of the articles in this volume. A particularly cogent example can be seen in the possible scenarios of how Percy Oware's model of situated development may, or may not, influence the work of global development agencies. We will argue that taking account of the situated knowledges of "others" – practicing situated knowledges – is an effort to diminish power differentials, however tentative that is at the present moment. This is obviously an enormous challenge for the future of situated knowledges, as theory, methodology and practice.

As the articles in this volume show, producing knowledges is related to social ideologies and relations in research communities as well as in prevailing ideologies in society. In addition, the authors examine the specificities of the lived lives of variously situated individuals and groups in particular social and cultural contexts. They also include consideration of the situatedness and relationships of not only humans, but also of non-humans and objects. While the articles reveal the usefulness of the concept of situated knowledges, they also show that there is much more to be done. By elaborating the challenges of the situatedness of the production of knowledge, we hope that this volume can inspire future work and conversations within and between the various multivocal communities – academic and non-academic, in the South as well as in Western countries – that work with the production of knowledges in general and the production of feminist knowledges in particular.

### *Acknowledgements*

We want to thank Elisabeth Sandersen, Lise Nordbrønd, Brita Brenna and Gerd Bjørhovde for comments on an earlier version of this article.

### *Endnotes*

- 1) In this text we build on research that easily can be related to Donna Haraway's ways of thinking (See also Gerrard and Valestrand 1999). In order to get a full overview of the feminist research in Tromsø, one must go into the various disciplines.
- 2) Since 2001 the publications from the Kvinneforskermaraton are published as internet publications.
- 3) Tromsø researchers in women's and gender studies have different kinds of collaborations with colleagues at universities in among others: Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Uganda and South Africa. Researchers from Uganda were also invited to the conference, but unfortunately, at the last minute, they were prevented from coming.

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