Curare Editorial Team

Curare Corona Diaries Project

Call for Diaries in the Strict Sense of the Term

In the meantime the diaries are published at:
https://boasblogs.org/curarecoronadiaries/

The editorial board of "Curare. Journal of Medical Anthropology" is planning a special issue on the current corona pandemic. For this purpose, we are collecting ethnographic material written down as (auto-)ethnographic diaries, which record what is happening in one's own environment.

This is perhaps a unique opportunity to generate ethnographic material that makes it possible to reconstruct collectively, in retrospect, what is happening right now and what we cannot comprehend at this moment of crisis. The situation in individual countries is developing differently, and countries are increasingly closing their national borders, which makes it interesting and important to look from a comparative perspective at what is happening in similar and different ways in individual countries.

The retrospective interpretation of what has happened will probably be quite controversial in the public sphere when it later comes, among other things, to assessing how this situation was handled and the consequences of crisis management, as well as drawing lessons for the future. This kind of daily ethnographic recording will be all the more important for this discussion.

Therefore, we are looking for correspondents from different countries who observe their own everyday life and that of others, who follow media coverage, save media documents, and record everything in a diary.

Most important: We are looking for records of your own reactions and those of your

environment on a daily basis and not retrospectively, to ensure that parts of the „indexicality" of the process can be reconstructed later.

We are looking for diaries "in the strict sense of the term" (cf. Bronislaw Malinowski). You don't have to be a trained anthropologist. Important for us is the daily or almost daily protocol based on the current state of knowledge, practices, and experience. This protocol does not necessarily have to be long – short and very short notes are also okay. They can be descriptions of situations, descriptions of one's own behaviour and the behaviour of others, notes of conversations, reflections, fragments of thoughts. The diary can be kept like an anthropological field diary and therefore can have the character of a collage and need not but may not only contain texts, but also other media such as pictures, videos, screenshots, drawings, forms etc.

The diaries should give room for ambivalences, paradoxes, uncertainties, confusion, messiness. They should focus on the everyday life, i.e. on ordinary affects (Kathleen Stewart) under extra-ordinary circumstances. As a medical anthropological journal, we are mainly interested in medical aspects of this crisis and their social embeddedness. What ideas about the cause and effect of the corana virus are there? How do you and your environment assess the risk? Are there any worries associated with the pandemic for you and your environment, and if so, which ones? What is the mood of you and your environment? What are your current ideas about how to counter the virus? What types of prevention in the form of behaviour or drugs are recommended, and what are they? Which therapeutic measures are recommended and which are taken? In other words: what are theories of healing on a daily basis? But the diaries should not only focus on expectations and ideas but also on practical everyday affairs, i.e. hygiene practices, greeting behavior, change of routines, etc.

As medical anthropologists, we are of course also intrigued by how the public health and (bio)security measures taken in individual countries, regions and homes affect not only everyday life, but also the possibilities of social and political action or collective action more generally. Which novel forms of solidarity have emerged in

your environments? Which political actions are rendered impossible? Are forms of civil disobedience to security and confinement measures emerging and for which reasons? What are the economic impact of the biosecurity measures, not only on national economies, but also on household and grassroots economies. On which evidence or data or lack thereof are public health measures taken in "your" countries or regions?

And of course we are interested in the sinister side of events, because they may erupt any day or week in the coming course of events: rumors, scapegoats, the uncanny side of contagion in blaming and shaming. Please write down things you observe even if you feel this is irrelevant or an embarrassment for you and your community. We have already heard for example of Chinese people being suspected in the US of spreading the virus, and we should not expect this to be the end of such false claims. Of course we will not spread any of these rumors, but we ask you to consider them in your protocols if they occur (at all).

Regarding the media: It is not necessary to save all the media coverage. It is rather a matter of paying attention to which reports you encounter yourself, which are pointed out to you, which have meaning for you and which for others. And then it would be good if you could store these reports, in a form where the source can be traced – for example as a PDF where you write down the source, for example a URL, and the date of access. But you don't have to be encyclopedic or strive for completion in any sense – it is neither possible nor a goal for our enterprise. Documentation should be for documenting your experience and observations, that is all.

It is primarily a matter of collecting ethnographic material. The texts sent to us will be circulated among the Curare corona editorial team. The way of interpretation and reconstruction is still open at the moment. The material is supposed to be made available to a public. Of course only what you want to be published will be published – anonymously if you wish. And we will have to think of protecting other people's

rights as well as in any ethnographic text.

Some of you have asked if they can write in their mother tongue because of the intimacy of a diary. This is of course fine and we encourage this intimacy of expression, but for a publication we might have to think about a translation. We publish texts both in English and German.

We cannot say anything about the duration of the project at the moment. We will start it first and see how things develop. Follow the crisis is the mode we propose. After all, we are all participants in a historical process that challenges our understanding of participant observation.

We aim to bring together various diary entries in an upcoming special issue of Curare. Since we have received an overwhelming response to our first call on March 18, 2020 we will in addition offer to publish many of the diaries later on boasblogs.org — of course only with your permission. We will keep all contributors updated on this opportunity.

But the diaries must be distinguished from a blog. The idea of the Curare corona diaries project is to write a diary in the strict sense of the the term to record what happens in your understanding of the crisis as it develops on your local (and global) basis. This is about ethnographers and anthropologists and some others documenting the „ongoing accomplishment“ of the crisis or rather crises. Our understanding is, that a blog, or a daily published diary entry, is NOT a diary, because that would mean writing for the public and with and against and within the public, but that a diary (in the strict sense) or a fieldwork diary is an irreplacable genre of experience, observation and reflexion, that we should cherish in its own right, and that we want to give a chance. Apart from this assumption, there are no limits and no rules as to what you may write.

Before the diaries are published all authors can look back on their diaries and decide

what to do with the texts. There are several options for this:

- 1) The diaries can be published completely or in extracts.
- 2) The complete or selected entries can be published under your own name or anonymously.
- 3) The complete or selected entries should not be published, but may be evaluated and cited anonymously by the Curare corona editorial team.
- 4) No entry may be published and no entry may be evaluated by third parties. We will of course delete everything that the authors want to have deleted.

In case of publication each author will be responsible for making all data in his or her text anonymous in such a way that all described are sufficiently protected or have given their permission.

Please send us your diary entries daily or at least at brief intervals in a text-document, which you will add entries to on a regular basis (e.g. every two days, once in a week or so), so that we can see, who is on board and how the project develops

Please describe yourself and your situation at the time you started the diary at the beginning of the document. Who are you, what is your profession, how did you get into the current situation, with whom are you staying, etc.

If you link in the diaries to articles on the internet, we recommend to save the respective pages with URL and date of access. You can also use screenshots and include them into the diary.

Please always use the same sender address when you send us the documents and always start with your full name in the subject line in the same way. Please send your entries to the following email address: curarecoronadiaries@agem.de

If you have any questions, please write an email to: curare@agem.de – if we do not

answer, please ask again.

Independent of your participation in the Curare Corona Diaries Project you are welcome to write alternatively or additionally contributions to the „Witnessing Corona“-blog which we just started in cooperation with the Global South Studies Center Cologne and the blog medizinethnologie.net. In this case please send your contributions to: witnessingcorona@boasblogs.org

The future is unwritten, but at least we can write down the present. And let’s hope for the best. We are looking forward to your participation.

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AIMS & SCOPE

Since 1978, Curare. Journal of Medical Anthropology, has provided an international and interdisciplinary forum for the scientific discussion of topics in medical anthropology, understood as encompassing all aspects of health, disease, medicine and healing, past and present, in different parts of the world.
After a first, internal review by the editorial team, all research articles are subject to a rigorous, double-blind external review procedure. All other submitted manuscripts are internally reviewed by the editorial team. In addition to research articles, the journal publishes conference reports and book reviews. Furthermore, the journal's forum section offers space for essayistic contributions, interviews and ethnographic vignettes.
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