

Abstract

This thesis deals with the phenomenon of sleeping and its variations. It is the outcome of long-term field research and participant observation. At the core of my research is a sleep laboratory from which I freely venture into other fields. I draw not only on a number of interviews and observations but I also reflect upon my own physical experience with various sleeping modes or gained from the position of both the subject and supervisor of sleep medicine. By way of employing qualitative research methods I map the sphere of sleep as a social construct and its embedding as a value. I furthermore try to see how much the social construct of sleep can be influenced. I focus on the issue of the current value of sleep and the impacts on the formation of the social construct of sleep by society and a specific time period. I try to switch the perspective, too: my goal is to identify whether sleep is such a resistant phenomenon on the grounds of its biological essence so that it can withstand or at least moderate these forces.

I take a theoretical recourse to medical anthropology and use it as my initial perspective. I employ the concept of biopower and risk society, as well as the methodology of carnal anthropology. Due to its inconspicuousness and hiddenness, I consider the phenomenon of sleep and other modes of narrowed consciousness, normally regarded as passive and unproductive, to be a “spy” that can give evidence of meanings and attitudes and allow us to look at reality from a different perspective.

Key words: sleep, biopower, medical anthropology, autoethnography, anthropology of body