
Abstract deadline: Sunday 29th November 2015.
Proposed abstracts should be 500-words long and should include title, keywords, author(s) name, affiliation and full contacts to Chiara Basile (chiara.basile@polito.it).

Beginners’ queries: Researchers’ design and ethical questions when first approaching ethnography as methodology

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When first designing a research project and particularly when drawing the linkages between the theoretical, philosophical and empirical approaches on which the research will be grounded (Ward 2014), methodological questions often constitute the most compelling challenges for early-stage researchers and Ph.D. candidates.

Qualitative methods and specially ethnographic investigations are gaining momentum also among geography scholarships as they are increasingly seen as a way to commit to in-depth understandings of the processes and meanings that undergird socio-spatial life (Herbert 2000), to engage with the complexity of cities and city-life (Simone 2010), to adopt a relational view on scale and on global–local interconnections (Hart 2004, Robinson 2011), to fruitfully dig through the spatial connections of social relations (Anderson 2012), to account for cultural structures of the discourses producing and reproducing specific spatialities (Gowan 2010). Indeed, recent situated inquiries in geography studies have distanced from straightforward ethnographic narratives based on prefixed social categories. Instead, they adopt processual and in-becoming conceptualizations of the everyday agencies occurring in urban spaces, possibly to contest given social classifications. This way, they problematize socio-spatial articulations relationally, for how they are produced and reproduced in relation to one another (Hart 2004, Anderson 2012). To do so, they often favor the use of mixed methods to investigate socio-spatial interrelations, and specifically, the use of ethnographic methodologies combined with discourse analysis and scrutiny of spatial representations.

Nonetheless, the long-standing debates on the effectiveness and scientific legitimacy of ethnographic approaches are still animite. Concerns of power, ethics and positionality are particularly vivid for a researcher when first approaching a long-term fieldwork; issues of consistency, accuracy and accountability of narrative-making methods along with questions about the scientific rigor of the production of this type of knowledge often emerge and need to be confronted and worked out. Furthermore, there is usually a latent eagerness for producing transformative actions and for generation of alternatives (McFarlane 2011) that spurs the researcher to go beyond a purely descriptive sphere through the use of storytelling and instead demands from her/him to engage politically with the situated accounts that the researched contexts could open.
This Call for Papers aims to further explore the mentioned dilemmas and seeks especially for Ph.D. candidates and young scholars contributions to expand the reflections. In particular, the objective is to address these basilar research and ethical questions in the light of approaches that could unravel them, such as the concepts of phronetic approach to social science (Flyvbjerg 2001, 2004) and of positive generative critique (Latour 2004, McFarlane 2011b).

Abstracts might surf the following aspects:

# theoretical baselines to inform situated inquiries and value-based interpretations of research’s findings
# ethnographic inquiries putting at the center socio-spatial urban processes, not taken as pre-given
# assessments of self-positionalities and usage of auto-ethnographic methodologies
# gender influence and gender-based trade-off in ethnographic work
# power and agency issues framed as research questions
# potentialities of using mixed methods and techniques in generating ethical and politically sensitive understandings
# ethnography in geography. Adopting space as a lens of inquiry in ethnographic work.

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