**Winter and Summer School series**

**Ethnography in Co-operation**

Summer 2019 Theme: Ethnographies, digitized environments and the proliferation of big data

May 27-28, 2019

Leuven, Belgium

The Winter and Summer School series “ethnography in co-operation” are a joint initiative of the Methodology of Educational Sciences Research Group (KU Leuven, Belgium) and the collaborative research center Media of Cooperation (SFB 1187, Siegen, Germany). The aim of the series is to bring ethnographers from different research areas in social sciences together in interdisciplinary, two-day events. In these events, the concrete doingof ethnographic research is emphasized: instead of focusing on the variegated empirical results that ethnographic studies yield, the Winter and Summer schools aim to demystify the process of conducting ethnographic research, and attempt to explicitly address all the challenges that are coupled to doing ethnographic research (e.g. research design, data collection and interpretation, writing up the study,…).

In this year’s Summer School edition, we focus on one specific current challenge that has emerged in various ethnographic fields, namely *the rise of digitized data and methodologies*. A considerable amount of everyday practices are being mediated and configured through digital infrastructures and online platforms, which document, trace, and record data in different domains. For instance, the recent focus on big data and learning analytics has engendered new methodological challenges for social sciences. On the one hand, new natively digital methodologies are being developed to scrutinize and analyze different research questions. On the other hand, however, the newness and qualitative significance of these methodologies is equally contested by various commentators and scholars (Marres, 2017).

In this regard, the rise of digital data invokes similarities with the ways ethnographers have always been working with piles of data. As such, it could be stated that, for ethnographic researchers, ‘big data’ are nothing new and thus do not pose a particular genuinely new sort of challenge. However, at the same time, digitally generated big data are highly quantified and this quantification embarks new challenges for ethnographers and the way they construct their research design (e.g. data collection and analysis). Yet, which challenges precisely? Are the newly emerging ‘digital’ big data truly different from the big data ethnographers have always been forced to deal with? Are digital big data a concern for ethnographers (and should they be)? How can ethnographers probe and/or deal with this proliferation of big data, and do we need ethnographies *of* (rather than merely ‘by means of’) big data (and if so, how would these look like)?

This doctoral Summer School aims to address these questions and challenges in a twofold way: On the first day, we will discuss how qualitative research design in various rapidly digitizing fields (such as schools, professional organizations, the family, and the socio-cultural sector), and in particular ethnography as a qualitative research method, undergoes specific adaptations in regard with the digital datafication of various sectors of social life. We will do this by giving the floor to emerging ethnographers who are still in the early stages of their research and in the process of designing their ethnographic study. On the second day, we explore what existing ethnographic approaches have to offer qualitatively as an intervention to the increasing emergence of datafied methods. The second day starts with specific interventions from ethnographers who are presently completing, or have just completed, an ethnographic study. Starting from their ethnographic research, they will specify strategies and possibilities for researching (both qualitative and quantitative) big data in ethnographic studies.

The workshop is organized by Mathias Decuypere & Samira Alirezabeigi (KU Leuven, Belgium - Methodology of educational sciences) and Inka Fürtig & Marén Schorch (University of Siegen, Germany).

Marres, N. (2017). Digital sociology the reinvention of social research. Cambridge: Polity.

**More information?**

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**Program**

**Day 1- May 27th**

11:30am Lunch and coffee

1pm Welcome

1:10pm Opening session by C. Courtois

2pm Presentation and collaborative work on emerging ethnographers’ research design and specific tailoring of the design with regards to digital data

4pm Break

4:30pm Continued: Presentation and collaborative work on emerging ethnographers’ research design and specific tailoring of the design with regards to digital data

6pm Wrapping up and conclusion

7:30 pm Drinks & dinner in the city of Leuven

**Day 2 - May 28th**

9:30am Arrival and coffee

10am Reading seminar

11am Workshop (methodological interventions by experienced ethnographers)

12:30pm Lunch

1:30 pm Workshop (continued)

3pm Short break

3:15pm Discussion of outcomes (e.g. special issue?) and future events (e.g. venue of Winter and Summer 2020)

4pm Closing and goodbye