

CHERCHEUR-SE

Immersion par Corps, Normes et Déviances

In Situ

International symposium May, 21th, 22th and 23st 2014 Espace Saint Charles - University Paul Valéry

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- OVERVIEW -

The scientific field is considerably enriched by the micro-sociological view, which confers complexity and nuance to analyses by questioning the usual categories of our societies. Generalising into global knowledge certain spaces in which complex interactions are at play does not impose boundaries on reality in itself, which deserves to be more closely examined, from the body¹, in order to identify social ties that are acted out as a ritual delimitating what is happening on the inside and then on the outside (Augé, 1992).

Certain research studies involve the « researcher's body » (Wacquant, 2003; Andrieu, 2011), which is understood as a physical (corporeal) filter, that grasps and renders « cultural intimacy » (Herzfeld, 2004). Over long periods of time, s/he learns, from the body, the reality of the group that is approached by deliberately taking part in its interactions. The ethnographic relationship that takes shape pertains to a social experiment which has been learnt through immersion. Learning, as a technique for ethnographic production, implies that the researcher becomes intimate with the phenomenon under study. He/she *fits* (Wacquant, 2004) into networks of social and symbolic relations.

In a quest for research fields, the researcher tests, negotiates, makes strategic choices, improvises, explores from the body, and “affects” (Schwartz, 1990) the interactions, motivated by an ever finer comprehension of social reality. However, this approach which consists in taking an interest in the *in situ* « manières de faire (ways of doing) » imposes, from entering the field until leaving it, a set of methodological constraints that question the conditions in which the investigation work is carried out.

¹ Bernard Andrieu lists the new anthropo-sociology research in which “the corporal agents, researchers and athletes, interact in order to produce new models through physical normativity” (2011, p .84). This line of study, in which the researcher's engagement is of utmost importance, “delivers the subject's knowledge in the constitution of its object through an experiential ecology” (Ibid., p.78).

Interdisciplinary communication propositions will look into the terms of the ethnographic relationship along three lines of inquiry:

Line 1: Concealing or declaring the researcher's body

This line of study looks into the way in which the researcher enters into groups or collective organisations which are made up of people with incapacities or with outstanding and/or deviant capacities, and whose functional characteristics are different from those of groups or organisations considered as being « ordinary ». This distinction will induce different approaches to circumvent the reluctance or plain refusal of certain milieu to be the focus of research. In search for authenticity in interactions, the researcher is sometimes led to dissimulate his/her status and become a hidden or clandestine observer (Homan, 1980; Lapassade, 1991). If the clandestine approach has its utility, depending on the case, how is the access to fieldwork organised when the people under study belong to deviant groups or are in specific states (deficiency, dependency, etc.), and are socially building a different body? How then can a group or an organisation of people marked in such a way be observed *in situ*? What roles can be played by the equipment (new technology used for recording data), which is more and more admitted in ethnologic fieldwork?

Others do not hesitate to openly declare their researcher status, conscious that their position as observer, as well as their identity, will influence the observer-observed social relation and thus bring up the issue of control of the data collected. What can be the effects of a difference, which can be visible or not, between the bodies and/or identities of the researchers and those of the subjects on their social relations?

Line 2: Transformation in situ...

This line of study focuses on the researcher's physical transformations that can take place when an immersion is too much of a success. Indeed, what characterises anthropology and sets it aside from other fields is that it is not a "study of" but a "study with": "It rather educates our perception of the world, and opens our eyes and minds to other possibilities of being" (Ingold, 2007, p.82). Our capacity for "being with" implies the possibility for the researcher to be seen as a member of the group and, depending on the groups studied, physical modifications (sometimes painful) are undertaken as « identity signs » (Le Breton, 2002) or as a rite of passage and of integration into the group. Moreover, new fields of research emerge, with the recent progress of modern medicine, which strengthens the belief in the body's malleability, and renews the subject's sensory coordinates as well as his/her action possibilities. Andrieu (2008) speaks of a body that becomes « hybrid », bodies that are technicised but also, bodies that are artificially increased.

Faced with the violence of certain investigation fields, the researcher exposes him/herself, puts his/her integrity at stake and may even jeopardize his/her health. Indeed, long term immersion leads to a transformation that tends to bring the researcher closer to the group under study, but also to make him/her more vulnerable. In the face of this situation, which can be at the same time both disconcerting and a reason to put an end to the research, how can the researcher guard against this? In what measure is the researcher's transformation fundamental to understanding the "manières de faire (ways of doing)" *in situ*? The question of the distance between the researcher and the community s/he is studying emerges, and only this will permit the analysis...

Moreover, the success criterion for any ethnographic field investigation is long term immersion. However, the current situation in SHS (thesis carried out in 4 years maximum, everyday multiple tasks imposed on the professor-researcher, and publication criteria) leads to tight scheduled fieldwork. How can research of quality be carried out in these conditions?

On the other hand, beyond research conditions, short term immersion investigations are carried out. In what measure are they instigated and what value can we bestow upon them?

Line 3: Write the body...

Textual transcription or reconstituting the practical -physical- comprehension demands a very specific form of writing that deserves to be the focus our attention in this third line of research.

A log book is generally held at each encounter with the field studied, and contains the greatest amount of information possible. All these notes will begin making sense when the researcher leaves his field of investigation and looks upon it with retrospect. But is the body writing itself or is it the consciousness of this body? The body writing itself supposes that the body living in the first person would produce the text within us (Keep, 1995); the conscious hand would incarnate what emerges from our flesh, in the lived body of the first person. The body is written through incorporated techniques (Granger, 2012), through frequent gestures and everyday postures (Bert, 2012), but our conscience only gains knowledge of this when it is transmitted to a third person, as is the case in teaching or education, for instance. Is the memory of the body the one that we transmit without a work of codification, of transcription, of our body into an account in the first person? How to transcribe the sensitive experience, both “flavour and pain” (Wacquant, 2007) of the social world, lived by the researcher?

MODALITIES FOR SUBMITTING

The abstracts (300 words) need to be submitted before **15th December 2013** and go by the following guidelines:

- specify the line or lines chosen for your study (Arial 12, left-aligned);
- title of the proposition, (Arial 12, left-aligned);
- name of the author(s), function(s), laboratory(ies), email address (Arial 10, left-aligned);
- abstract 300 words maximum and 5 keywords (Garamond 12, justified).

To submit, send to the following email address: chercheur.insitu@gmail.com

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The propositions are to be presented as oral communications (20 minutes and 10 minutes discussion).

Submission of the texts (30.000 signs) 15th July 2014

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Table-ronde autour des Conditions du travail ethnographique 1/2 - Wacquant (2004) :
<http://www.diffusion.ens.fr/lemonde/index.php?res=conf&idconf=386>