Mid-term conference of the ESA Qualitative Network [RN20]. Copenhagen, Denmark. 24. -26. August 2022

**Contemporary challenges for qualitative sociology:**
**Digital developments, ethical requirements, quality standards**

Qualitative research has a long tradition of exploring alternative and new explanations to the ever changing social worlds that we are part of by developing and applying timely methodological tools. This mid-term conference of ESA’s Qualitative Research Network (RN20) contributes to this methodological tradition by exploring how qualitative sociology today offers new insights and perspectives to both known and unknown contemporary challenges. To do so, the conference focus on three themes that are central to qualitative research and that qualitative research seeks to influence in different ways: 1) how do qualitative research respond to digital developments, 2) what role does increased ethical requirements play in qualitative research, and 3) how do quality standards (within or outside the field of qualitative research) influence qualitative research.

**Digitalization of societies and qualitative research**
Since the invention of the micro-processor in 1971 (and the phasing out of the good-old punched Hollerith cards), qualitative research – and the rest of society – has been influenced by on-going technological developments and digital advances, including online communications and social medias. Today, digitalization and online universes are integrated parts of most people’s everyday lives, in ways that qualitative researchers are increasingly obliged to describe, understand, and explain to understand modern life. Researchers use tools such as social media, mobile phones, webcams, video-cameras and different forms of software to collect and analyze data. These new media have created easier ways to obtain data but also increased the complexity of data collection and analysis. Digitalization thus presents qualitative sociology with both new challenges as well as new possibilities.

**Contemporary ethics and ethical requirements**
Research ethics, ethical standards and moral codes are pivotal to qualitative research. However, researchers now face more formalized ethical requirements in order to do their research and produce new knowledge. Therefore, there is a need to address how these formalized requirements affect qualitative research and how researchers apply them in practice. At the same time, field specific discussions about how to conduct ethical research are as pertinent as ever, for example, when exploring the role of gender and ethnicity in qualitative research but also increasingly raised in fields classically not considered ethically challenging. Ethical dilemmas arising in the research interactions thus persist to be of great relevance for qualitative researchers.
Quality standards of contemporary qualitative research
How to define high quality qualitative research is a topic that most researchers engage in. Throughout the history of sociology, many qualitative researchers have had to argue hard to find their work accepted and recognized. Today, research comes in a multitude of shapes and forms and qualitative epistemologies, theories, and methods make up part of the core of sociology (and most other social sciences). However, this success does not mean that debates about “quality” in qualitative research have become irrelevant. Indeed, such debates are prevalent to many contexts among qualitative researchers, together with quantitative researchers, or as part of interdisciplinary research teams. However, the “quality” of qualitative research is conceived and treated in different ways and at different levels. Therefore, we invite qualitative researchers to discuss and engage in creating viable standards for qualitative research.

Submit an abstract before 15 April 2022
We call on students, researchers, and everybody with an interest in qualitative sociology to submit a research abstract. Abstracts consistent with one of the three themes described above are prioritized, but all types of papers engaging with qualitative research are welcome. Abstracts are limited to 250 words.

Link to conference homepage: Contemporary challenges for qualitative sociology
Contact email: nnha@vive.dk
Organizing committee: Associate Professor Jakob Demant (Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen), Professor Tea Torbenfeldt Bengtsson (VIVE—The Danish Center for Social Science Research), and Senior Researcher Lars Fynbo (VIVE—The Danish Center for Social Science Research).

Venue: University of Copenhagen, City Campus (CSS), Øster Farimagsgade 5, 1353 Copenhagen K, Denmark.

Pre-conference PhD course on ‘Harms, crimes and social problems: Ethical data collection and analysis in contested fields’
Dates: 22–23 August 2022
Venue: University of Copenhagen, City Campus (CSS), Øster Farimagsgade 5, 1353 Copenhagen K, Denmark.
See more on the conference homepage: Contemporary challenges for qualitative sociology
Confirmed keynotes

Gendered violence in digital society: Challenges for the field and research

By Associate Professor Anastasia Powell (Criminology & Justice Studies, RMIT University)

Anastasia Powell is Associate Professor in Criminology and Justice Studies at RMIT University (Melbourne, Australia). Her research examines the intersections of gender, violence, justice and technology, and features in over 80 scholarly publications, including her recent books: Image Based Sexual Abuse (2020), Digital Criminology (2018), and Sexual Violence in a Digital Age (2017). Anastasia also serves on the board of directors of Our Watch, Australia's national organisation for the prevention of violence against women, and is a member of the National Women's Safety Alliance; providing expert advice on policy and prevention of gendered violence to government and non-government organisations.

Being ethical?

By Professor Malin Åkerström (University of Lund)

Malin Åkerström is Professor Emerita at the Department of Sociology, Lund University, Sweden. Her research focuses on ethnographic studies of social control and deviance. Her many publications include Suspicious Gifts: Bribery, Morality, and Professional Ethics, Hidden Attractions of Administration (with Erika A. Cederholm, David Wästerfors, and Katarina Jacobsen), Betrayal and betrayers: The Sociology of Treachery, and the 1985-classic Crooks and Squares. Åkerström has also published several research articles in, for example, The Sociological Review, Social Problems, Symbolic Interaction, Qualitative Research, and Sociological perspective.

Doing quality in qualitative data production, analysis, and generalization through multi-methodological strategies

By Professor Bente Halkier (University of Copenhagen)

Bente Halkier is a professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. Her research focuses on developing qualitative methodology, including focus groups and qualitative interviewing techniques, and how to use qualitative methods to study ubiquitous themes such as diets and eating habits from an everyday-theory perspective. Halkier's latest research project is “Food, mobility and housing in the sustainable transition of everyday life”. She has written books about qualitative methods and her many research articles are published in, for example, Qualitative Research, Qualitative Inquiry, Cultural Sociology, Journal of Consumer Culture, and Sociology of Health & Illness.
Other events
Parallel sessions with paper presentations from participants.
Panel debate on ethical dilemmas of digitalization in qualitative sociology.
Lunch session on ethics in ethnography.
Book event with new books on qualitative research.
Welcome reception with biodynamic wines and other fruit juices.
Conference dinner (optional).

The conference is supported by the following institutions

VIVE—The Danish Center for Social Science Research
Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen
European Sociological Association (ESA)
Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAGW)