Invitation: Seminars on visual and sensory ethnography
Speaker: Prof Sarah Pink
Professor in Social Sciences in the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University, UK

Visual Ethnography: (audio)visual methods and media in ethnographic practice
31 March 2009 (Tuesday)
1.00pm-2.30 pm
Faculty of Education (Pedagogen), House B, room BE 036
A visual ethnography involves re-thinking conventional (and new innovative) ethnographic practice through attention to the visual culture, media and practices that form part of the social, cultural and material contexts in which we do research. In this presentation I will introduce the key theoretical and methodological principles that inform this approach to doing ethnography. In doing so I reflect on a series of case studies in visual ethnography practice that illustrate how it has been realised through the application of contextually appropriate and project specific developments. The case studies to be discussed will include examples from academic and applied research drawn from my visual ethnography practice in public and domestic contexts as well as examples from the work of other scholars working in areas such as health.

Sensory Ethnography: sensory experience and knowing in ethnographic practice
19 May 2009 (Tuesday)
1.00pm-2.30pm
Faculty of Education (Pedagogen), House A, room A1 338
A sensory ethnography approach invites us to re-think the ways that we know and communicate about our own and other people’s experiences, through the senses. In this presentation I will introduce the key existing approaches to understanding sensory perception and experience and the implications of these for how we understand the senses in ethnography. I will suggest a set of principles and theoretical understandings that inform a sensory ethnography. To demonstrate how this might be applied in the practices of doing and representing ethnographic research I will discuss and reflect on case studies from my own work and that of other leading scholars in this field. The case studies discussed will include examples from my research about the ‘sensory home’ and the Slow City movement as well as themes such as the use of walking as a method in sensory ethnography.
Background
A heightened interest in the role of the senses in society has been sweeping the social sciences, supplanting older paradigms and challenging conventional theories of representation. Sensation is fundamental to our experience of the world. Shaped by culture, gender, and class, the senses mediate between mind and the body, idea and object, self and environment. This revolution in the study of perception highlights the fact that the senses are constructed and lived differently in different societies and periods. The perceptual is cultural and political, and not simply a matter of cognitive processes or neurological mechanisms located in the individual subject.

Visual ethnography involves attending to the visual throughout the ethnographic process. This includes not only recognising the role played by visual culture in the lives of ethnographic research participants but also its role in academic culture. It also involves reflexively exploring the roles and potentials of visual methods and media as part of the research process. As such not simply using video and photography as means of recording data, but understanding their roles in the production of knowledge through an intersubjective and mediated research encounter.

Visual ethnography practice has particular relevance in the contemporary turn towards the senses across the social sciences and humanities, and for a ‘sensory ethnography’. It invites us to consider the relationship between the visual and the other senses in the ethnographic process and to account for the ways in which (audio)visual media can be used to research and represent other sensory modalities through an appreciation of multisensoriality.


For more detailed information see www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ss/staff/pink.html or please contact Vaike.Fors@gu.se

Organized by The Linnaeus Centre for Research on Learning, Interaction and Mediated Communication in Contemporary Society (LinCS) in collaboration with the Ethnography and Education Colloquium at Gothenburg university.