

perconductivity – p. 205) not only report the weakness of a system that must come to extreme measures to defend itself, but show how scientific certainties are constructed through non-linear paths and contingencies.

The author proposes some interpretations on the *ethos* of scientists citing the well-known contribution of Merton. However, we do not find in the text references to the decisive contributions made by Latour (1999), Barnes (1974) and others who have proposed the need of a new process of self-reflection, given that: “scientists are more like players in an intense, winner take-all competition for scientific prestige and the resources that follow from that prestige” (Goodstein 2002, 31).

As demonstrated by scientific fraud analyses, the scientist is not a disinterested servant of the public good nor his/her activities could be fully transparent. Rather, scientists are restricted by instruments, money and attitudes of their colleagues (Feyerabend 1975). At the same time, the key role of science and scientists in contemporary society need to develop a reflexive attitude towards their own activities, questioning things we have always taken for granted.

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Fare ricerca situata in psicologia sociale [Performing Situated Research in Social Psychology]

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The book – *Performing Situated Research in Social Psychology* – written by four members of the LIInC (Laboratory of Interaction and Culture, at the Department of Psychology of Development and Socialization Processes, Sapienza University of Rome) maintains the promise announced by the title and stated in the introduction. The book in fact narrates, in a very vivid and detailed way, the *situated practices* of doing ethnographic research by retracing its various steps – from the negotiation of access to the field to the construction of empirical data, analysis and presentation of results to research participants. Through a dialogic and reflexive approach, this text reveals practices and empirical solutions, tricks of the trade, precautions, problems and mistakes that are re-situated and adapted to the local context of the empirical study carried out in a wide range of fields.

The book is not simply a manual for novices, even if it thoroughly describes skills, methods and instruments needed for this kind of research. Any chapter and situated practice characterising the research activity is illustrated by the inclusion of: episodes and anecdotes coming from the field, photos of people working together, maps of workplaces, multimodal transcriptions of conversations between social actors, letters obtaining permission and authorisation to enter the field. The examples included in the book reveal the importance of detailed descriptions of sociomaterial practices occurring and performed by actors as observed while carrying out their daily activities, as well as by researchers doing research. The first chapter of the book begins with a three-surgeon team involved in an operating practice. This emblematic situation allows the revelation of the main object of interest in this kind of research. The interactions among the tree surgeons in fact make it possible to grasp the organisation of social action and cognition in action, both taking place in the interaction between the social and material world. Revealing more or less the same ethnomethodological perspective adopted by *Workplace Studies* (Luff *et al.* 2000), authors state that it is only by resorting to publicly accessible configurations of various *semiotic resources* (language, gesture, glance, body position, instruments and artefacts) that actors successfully carry out joint actions (empirically observable and understandable by the co-present colleagues as well as researchers in the field).

In the same way, the second chapter of the book starts with the narration of an episode occurred to one of the authors during a university seminar on social interaction. Through video-sequences showing a discussion among training course participants, students learn (step by step and under the professor's supervision) to acquire the professional vision (Goodwin 1994) to look at (and see) the multimodal resources (speech, body movements, mediating artefacts such as slides, notes and notebooks) used and emerging during the interactions between the actors of the video. Chapter two announces and plays the role of a theoretical manifesto of the book, by arguing and legitimizing an interesting interpreta-

tion of science for STS scholars, which permeates throughout the book as I will now try to demonstrate.

Even if the authors situate themselves within the cultural and interactionist perspective of social psychology, by referring to major scholars (Mead, Vigotskij, Hutchins, Suchman) and to key-concepts (interaction and culture, community of practices, language as social action, cognition in practice, the mediation of artefacts), they show *de facto* how their perspective and practices are shaped with other disciplines. While they are inviting to overcome the vision of psychological and cognitive process (to collaborate, to take decisions, to learn) as purely mental and individual phenomena, they show how to empirically investigate, within the material world, the connection among cognition, interactions and mediated actions. However, they also exhibit the commonality with similar approaches and scientific practices performed in sociology, language and visual anthropology and STS studies. This proves the blurring of boundaries between disciplines sharing similar ways of doing research and reveals a community of research practices.

Moreover, authors demonstrate coherence in maintaining the same theoretical view both to study the practices carried out by actors within technologically dense environments (see the Conversation between Bruni, Pinch and Schubert in this issue) – by stressing the collaborative dimension and the role of mediation of artefacts – and to narrate and reflect on the sociomaterial practices of their research. By referring to a study conducted in an IT company in order to analyse the activities of a team of web designers (Zuccheromaglio and Alby 2005), they show how the researcher's interpretation can change depending on whether the attention is only focused on discursive practices or also on the role of objects and technological artefacts (boards, web pages, monitor, sheet of papers) mediating and organising daily work. The epistemological posture of the book is also well argued by stating that the empirical material is always constructed not only through the mediation of a heterogeneity of instruments allowing its "collection", but also through the mediation of the researcher's theoretical view, which allows the material to emerge as significant, salient and interpretable (p. 30). The ethnographic observation once again emerges as a peculiar form of professional vision (Goodwin 1994) and the researcher sees through an externalised retina (Lynch 1988), i.e. the research instruments constructing the phenomena to be observed and allowing these phenomena to become visible. By referring to the pioneering video-based studies conducted by Goodwin (1994) about an expert archaeologist teaching the professional vision to a novice, and by Mondada (2006) on the co-design performed by a group of architects, authors narrate the potentialities and risks of using video. By focusing on otherwise little-known or non-visible "objects", while neglecting others, video-based research implies both the choice of one perspective framing the event and the use of various cameras (mobile and/or fixed) to grasp and make visible actors movements, orientation, deictic gestures and glances

directed toward some pertinent artefacts (maps, pens, trowel, Munsell's colour graph) and places. Authors also give advice on how to do multimodal transcriptions of these video-data, which are not faithful and objective reproductions, but constructions implying choices about what is relevant or not for both the theoretical perspective of the researcher and the actors involved in their activity. They graphically reproduce the principles of transcription of the Conversation Analysis stated by Jefferson and present an example of multimodal transcription taking into account turns-talk, prosodic and sequential aspects, gesture, glances and speeches emerging in the interactions. Finally, they illustrate the tricks used by Goodwin (such as photos and arrows indicating the direction of a glance or gesture) to highlight all the pertinent and multimodal resources used in interaction.

The choice of research topics is oriented by theoretical, epistemological and methodological choices and there is neither a unique method nor a methodology. Authors describe all research steps, showing that the ethnographic methods must be flexible in adapting to the variety of contexts. The attention given to the delicate and time-consuming step of entering the field reveals all the precautions the researcher has to take to formulate the request (an exemplary request letter is shown) and stipulate the informed consent (by indicating the respect of some ethical principles, the aims, instruments, methods of research, as well as the treatment, use and restitution of results). By doing so, authors show that participants – and not simply passive 'research subjects' – are interlocutors and legitimate partners of the knowledge process production (p. 56). At this step, researchers should also be able to understand and overcome the "boundary-making artefacts" (work schedule, badges, doors and gates) and negotiate with gatekeepers, intermediaries and guarantors to obtain the authorisation for access to the field by ensuring the anonymity of actors. At this first step, the research has already started since the fieldworker can familiarise with the context, the participants linguistic repertoires and practices, while trying to identify informers and mediators (who introduce him/her to the actors and accompanies him/her on a tour), and acquire the trust and reciprocal understanding that needs to be renegotiated along the field research. The quotation of a text message used by an informer to present the research in an IT company, and the humour characterising the reactions of the web designers, reveal from the beginning of the fieldwork the informal and humorous communication in this community of practices.

Authors empirically demonstrate how this kind of research is also *emic*, since instead of imposing the researcher's meanings and interpretations, it considers those of the community members and invites the evaluation of the quality of this situated research by criteria substituting traditional ones: reliability, validity and repeatability. They instead propose to evaluate the situatedness (methods, results and interpretations situated in the specific domain where the research is carried out), contingency (as-

assessment of the values of research results in this particular community and for these social actors) and reflexivity of the researcher. “The researcher is not a miner who extracts the data which until that moment was deeply hidden, but more of a traveller who searches significant stories to tell upon his return, to recount stories and voices he needs to hear and communicate with the people he met during his travels” (Kvale 1996, cit. p. 35). The authors, throughout the book, take reflexivity as a research practice, by critically monitoring their practices and being aware that interpretations depend on the researcher’s position. The researcher is also situated within his/her own history, gender, social and professional origin. It is only by narrating in a reflective way how the research object is constructed (according to his/her own biography, his/her belonging to particular professional and interpretive community, his/her ethical values) that s/he becomes aware of his/her own perspective in viewing the phenomena. This reflexivity is also based on the confrontation with the practices of other researchers, on the discussion of empirical material and interpretations of phenomena, and is carried out by the authors in their encounters within the laboratory. Subjectivity in research, often lived as a threat (or obscured), is transformed into a resource to improve the quality of the analysis. Research processes are not linear, logical or rational. They do not follow the models written in the scientific papers, which are purified (Latour and Woolgar 1986) and intended to perform an ordered, rational rigorous and systemic reconstruction of knowledge. Research processes are instead situated, dialogic, social and mediated by instruments and local artefacts. In the same way, the researcher’s team jointly constructs situated interpretations of data. The principles of this research step are: the recursiveness (to frequently repeat the analysis of the same corpus of empirical data to highlight various aims and topics); *the construction of situated interpretations* (respecting and using the participants’ points of view and interpretive categories, with an ongoing analysis that implies a skilful and time-consuming practice of “sticking with the data”); the public and sharing nature of practice (jointly carried out by more researchers confronting a plurality of voices, views and interpretations of the phenomena,). This is an internal research group validation of interpretations, even though there are some analytical traps the researcher can fall into during the data session. Just to name the most common: detailed summary of what participants are saying instead of grasping how they produce meaning; use of ethnographic excerpts isolated from the interactive context; temptation to adopt an impersonal and universal style of scientific writing by extracting the observations from the local context of their production to generalize them.

Finally, the restitution of research results to participants, frequently neglected in the manuals, is not an occasion to communicate already closed and sealed results, but rather a way to reward and recognize their collaboration and to confront and share situated interpretations, by trying to use the words of practitioners and answer their doubts in order to acti-

vate a reflexive process on what is taken for granted. This implies the risk to be overcome by the “predatory nature” of data collection in scientific research (Cannella and Lincoln 2007) and to change the analysis by considering interpretative categories (maybe neglected at a first glance) suggested by practitioners.

The book is truly rich and my review, also situated, cannot represent its richness. My intent was to narrate the theoretical concepts and the relevant details of situated research practices – by quoting some significant ones and neglecting others – in order to meet the interests of the professional vision of STS.

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