07 / Hybrid governance: Studying governance critically across online and offline worlds

Topic : WORKSHOPS

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Workshop description

‘Online’ and ‘offline’ spheres of social, political and urban life are increasingly intertwined. Public services are delivered through digital infrastructures, citizens interact with governments through online platforms, and policy conflicts unfold simultaneously in physical spaces and across digital environments. At the same time, democracies are increasingly challenged by digital technologies that reshape participation, public debate, and state authority. Public governance therefore no longer unfold in either online or offline arenas, but across both simultaneously. Yet, much interpretive policy research continues to privilege either "the offline" or "the online", rather than examining how these spaces continuously constitute one another. The interactions that take place and the relationships that develop ‘offline’, on the street’, and ‘online’, on the screen, do not exist isolated from one another (Przybylski, 2020; McLean, 2020). Rather, they are part of one ‘hybrid’ reality.These new, ‘hybrid’, realities ask for new research methods and for new conceptual lenses.

This workshop explores the study of hybrid governance as both a methodological and conceptual challenge for interpretive and critical policy studies. Rather than treating digital and physical spaces as separate domains, hybrid ethnography starts from the premise that contemporary policy processes, citizen-state interaction, and everyday experiences are fundamentally hybrid. Studying these processes therefore requires both methodological approaches capable of following actors, meanings and power relations across multiple sites and forms of interaction, and conceptual lenses capable of making sense of how these elements come together.

The workshop aims to bring together scholars working with ethnographic and interpretive methodologies who are experimenting with, or critically reflecting on, hybrid ethnographic approaches. We welcome empirical studies exploring hybrid ethnography in different policy domains, as well as methodological and theoretical contributions that reflect on questions of access, researcher positionality, ethics, field boundaries, digital infrastructures, and data management. In addition, we invite theoretical and conceptual papers that develop new concepts or sensitising devices for understanding hybrid governance, hybrid publics, hybrid citizenship, hybrid conflicts, or other phenomena that emerge across online and offline worlds

Beyond discussing individual papers, the workshop seeks to develop a shared methodological and conceptual conversation around doing critical-interpretive research in increasingly digital societies. Participants will jointly reflect on common challenges, identify emerging research directions, and explore possibilities for continued collaboration through a special issue or other collective outputs.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We particularly welcome papers that address questions such as

- What does a hybrid ethnographic field look like in contemporary governance?
- How can researchers follow policy practices across digital and physical settings?
- How do digital technologies reshape ethnographic access, relationships and researcher positionality?
- How should interpretive researchers navigate questions of ethics, surveillance, consent and data management in hybrid environments?
- How can studying the hybrid contribute to critical studies of democracy, digital governance, inequality or sustainability?
- How do hybrid conflicts, publics or forms of citizenship challenge existing concepts in policy studies and public administration?

We welcome contributions from public administration, policy studies, sociology, anthropology, geography, STS, organisation studies and related interpretive traditions.

Workshop outcomes

The workshop aims to:

- Provide detailed developmental feedback on participants' papers;
- Advance methodological and conceptual understanding of studying the hybrid within interpretive and critical policy studies;
- Identify shared challenges and future research directions in the study of hybrid governance;
- Develop concrete collaborative outputs, such as a special issue, edited volume, collaborative grant proposal or ongoing research network.