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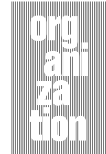

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Theorizing affective ethnography for organization studies

Silvia Gherardi
University of Trento, Italy

Abstract
This article introduces a new label, 'Affective Ethnography', and grounds it within the debates on post-qualitative methodologies and affective methodologies. Affective ethnography is theorized as a style of research practice that acknowledges that all elements—texts, actors, materialities, language, agencies—are already entangled in complex ways, and that they should be read in their intra-actions, through one another, as data in motion/data that move. I discuss three pillars for affective ethnographies that relate to researchers' presence in doing fieldwork and their bodily capacity to affect/be affected. The first is embodiment and embodied knowing. Doing fieldwork implies the ability to resonate with, becoming-with, and the capacity for affective attunement. The second aspect relates to place as flow, and process—to placeness. The third relates to affect as the power to act and therefore to the presence in the fieldwork of the capacity to 'make do', either intentionally or unintentionally.

Keywords
Affect, affective attunement, affective ethnography, affective methodologies, performative interpretation, placeness, post-qualitative methodologies

Introduction

Organizational ethnography seems to be in fashion, and its present triumph has been explained (Czarniawska, 2012) by a general enthusiasm for opening black boxes. Nevertheless, the growing appeal of ethnographic studies in/on organizations is often accompanied by a sort of innocence that overlooks the crisis of representation that grew out of a literary turn in the 1980s concerning textuality, disciplinary history, critical modes of reflexivity, and the critique of realist practices of representation (Clifford, 1983; Marcus, 1994). There is an enduring need to rethink organizational ethnography, and I argue that it may be done by opening the black box of affect in ethnographic

Corresponding author:
Silvia Gherardi, Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento, Via Verdi 26, Trento 38122, Italy.
Email: silvia.gherardi@unitn.it

practices and theorizing affective ethnography as a style of being in the field, being with and becoming-with others, and writing ethnography.

In the past 20 years, practice-based studies have contributed widely to bringing ethnography back to the fore, and we see that their main methodological suggestion for studying and representing practices is ethnography (Gherardi, 2012; Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Nicolini, 2012). For example, Annemarie Mol (2002) proposed to follow a patient's body and its disease ethnographically by moving from one hospital ward to another to see how they become different objects. She coined the term *praxiography*—which unfortunately was not widely taken up—to denote ethnography as 'a story about practices'. Praxiography is a method to 'stubbornly take notice of the techniques that make things visible, audible, tangible, knowable' (Mol, 2002: 23). A similar concern is expressed by the term 'ethnography of the object' (Bruni, 2005), which, in following the trajectory of a clinical health record in a hospital, incorporates Latour's (1987) methodological injunction to 'follow the actor' and translate it with respect to the agency of the material actant. Practice-based ethnography (or praxiography) responds to two needs in doing fieldwork: (1) describing a practice—including the ethnographer's practice—as a pattern of activities and (2) assuming practice as an epistemology that decenters the human subject and makes it possible to focus on how humans, materialities, and discourses achieve agency in their being interconnected within a practice.

While I acknowledge the richness of practice-based ethnography for addressing the question of what people actually *do* while working, organizing, innovating, and learning and for representing the situatedness—in time and space—of the ethnographers' working practice, I wish to trouble the narrative of a linear methodology for doing it with insights from feminist studies and in relation to the turn to affect and the debate on post-qualitative methodologies in general.

We have to consider that during the 1980s, feminist ethnography was very active in critiquing the modes of knowledge production and proposing various experiments in writing 'differently'. Feminist ethnography was also highly critical of its own methods for restoring lost voices, and Visweswaran (1994: 98) recognized the loss of innocence of feminist methodology in negotiating the crisis of representation, the loss of faith in received stories, and predictable scripts. In taking Marcus' (1994) question 'What comes (just) after Post?' seriously, Patti Lather (2001) proposed to 'work the ruins' of feminist ethnography by looking for an epistemology 'where the text becomes a site for the failures of representation, and textual experiments are not so much about solving the crisis of representation as about troubling the very claims to represent' (p. 201). This phrase expresses the sense of what I want to do by introducing a new label, 'Affective Ethnography', and grounding it within the debate on post-qualitative methodologies and within the turn to affect in practice theory (Gherardi, 2017; Reckwitz, 2017). The particularity of a practice theory perspective on affect is the focus on becoming, the central place attributed to the body and aesthetic-embodied knowing, and sociomateriality. Within this perspective, affect is defined as the 'capacity to affect and be affected' (Massumi, 2002: 5), following the Deleuzian tradition in feminist methodologies (Coleman and Ringrose, 2013; Lenz Taguchi, 2012) and in organization studies (Carter and Jackson, 2004; Lawley, 2005; Linstead and Torkild, 2007; Thanem, 2004).

I define affective ethnography as a style of performative ethnographic process that relies on the researcher's capacity to affect and be affected in order to produce interpretations that may transform the things that they interpret. I stress that I do not intend to discuss an ethnography *of* affect, but rather to theorize affective ethnography as a style of research practice that acknowledges that all elements—texts, actors, materialities, language, agencies—are already entangled in complex ways and that they should be read in their intra-actions, through one another, as data in motion/data that move. In working the ruins of feminist ethnography, the traditional categories are troubled, and in asking 'what count as ethnographic data', I join Benozzo et al. (2013) in considering 'movement-data' and 'data-movement'. I am interested in data that move as we move in doing fieldwork

as a joint 'becoming-with-data' in the intra-action of what can be lived and sensed by researchers, and how data make us as researchers.

Here, affect will be discussed as a resource for ethnographic practice—a resource enacted through the researcher's embodiment. The article is structured as follows. I shall first illustrate the breeding ground for the term 'affective ethnography' within the debates on post-qualitative and affective methodologies. I shall then describe affective ethnography as a style of conducting field-work based on three pillars. The first is embodied knowing and refers to the body's capacity to experience itself as always 'more than one', more than itself, and open to affective resonance with other human and more-than-human bodies. The second is affective placeness as the collective capacity to feel and to produce affective atmospheres that enable and constrain the array of activities and practices potentially enactable within a place. The third is the power of affect in performing the *agencement* of all the ethnographic practice elements: from the bodily knowing to the material–semiotic–affective staging of events and/or provocations in writing that 'make things happen' and in so doing question, provoke, interrupt us, and what counts as ethnographic 'data'. I shall conclude by discussing how affective ethnography makes troubling contributions to organizational ethnography by representing elusive kinds of knowledge and forms of not knowing.

The breeding ground of affective ethnography: post-qualitative and affective methodologies

I shall briefly sketch the origins of the so-called 'turn to affect' in order to provide a compass with which to navigate through the complexity of how the turn to affect influences the debate on ethnographic practices and how affective ethnography should be considered part of the wider movement of post-qualitative methodologies.

The turn to affect came about in the mid-1990s, when critical theorists, cultural critics, social geographers, and other social researchers urged a turn to affect (Blackman and Venn, 2010; Clough and Halley, 2007; Gregg and Seigworth, 2010; Massumi, 1995; Sedgwick and Frank, 1995; Thrift, 2004). Nigel Thrift (2004) outlines four translations of affect in different theoretical traditions: one translation arises chiefly out of the phenomenological tradition and also includes traces of social interactionism and hermeneutics, and it conceives affect as a set of embodied practices that produce visible conduct as an outer lining; a second one is usually associated with psychoanalytic frames and is based around a notion of drive; the third translation of affect is naturalistic and hinges on adding capacities through interaction in a world which is constantly becoming, in the Deleuzian interpretation of Spinoza; the last one is Darwinian, since for Darwin, expressions of emotion are universal and not necessarily unique to human beings, and other animals have some emotions that resemble our own. I shall follow the Deleuzian interpretation of affect, as it is elaborated by Massumi and widely followed within post-qualitative methodologies, where a precarious consensus on the meaning of 'affect' is constructed around the idea that it is processual, relational, and situated.

The turn to affect has assumed a stable discursive position on its importance and in relation to the literature on emotion.[1] As Thrift (2010) has argued 'we are in the moment after the affective moment' so that the issue is not whether affect is important, but why and how (p. 289). The invitation to move forward is particularly important in organization studies, where the turn to affect is quite recent. In fact, we find some sparse pioneering work (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; Borch, 2010; Iedema and Carroll, 2015; Iedema et al., 2006; Kenny, 2012; Kenny et al., 2011; Vachhani, 2013) and two recent special issues (Fotaki et al., 2017; Karppi et al., 2016). On the contrary, cultural studies have a longer experience in affective methodologies, and recent collection by Knudsen and Stage (2015) deals explicitly with strategies for empirical research on affect.

The authors outline three meta-strategies: (1) the creation of inventive experimental milieus, (2) the rethinking of traditional fieldwork techniques such as observations and field notes, and (3) the collection of often overlooked forms of existing textual material or development of new approaches to text and writing in order to grasp their affective dimensions (Knudsen and Stage, 2015: 3). I am highly sympathetic with their suggestions on how to cope with the challenges of 'doing empirical research on affect'; nevertheless some caution is necessary in constructing 'affect' as a research object. In the first article in Knudsen and Stage's collection, Lisa Blackman (2015) poses the question of what might count as 'empirical' within studies of affect:

> It is not a method that proves or provides evidence for what affect is, as I do not believe that affect is an entity that can be capture as an *it* or a thing. Affect, for me at least, refers to entangled processes, which are not easily seen and which extend across time and space, and confound many of our inherited disposition. (p. 40)

Like Blackman, I am not arguing for a study of affect as a content. I therefore propose to switch the question from 'what affect is' to 'what affect does' to us in ethnographic practices and to what we can do with our embodied capacity to affect and be affected. In so doing, we can experiment how affect works and how to work affectively. This shift may be better understood once we place affective ethnography within the frame of post-qualitative methodologies.

The debate that coalesces around the label 'post-qualitative methodologies' has already a consolidated tradition. We can position it at the end of the 1990s with a search for post-positivist ways to produce and legitimize knowledge and a search for counter-practices of writing and expressing authority adequate for emancipatory interests (Lather, 1993; Richardson, 1994). What characterizes this debate is the attempt to use post(s) theories to critique, to deconstruct, to 'work the ruins' (St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000) of 'conventional humanist qualitative methodology' (St. Pierre, 2011, 2013) or '1980s qualitative methodology' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Included among the Post(s) are postmodernism, poststructuralism, posthumanism, and other approaches to which St. Pierre (2014) refers in order to put aside conventional humanist qualitative methodology. What is common to a post-humanist qualitative methodology is the aspiration to performative methodologies that 'produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently' (St. Pierre, 1997: 175).

This call for a different knowledge has been very well received, judging from the numbers of special issues that appeared since then (Childers et al., 2013; Koro-Ljungberg and MacLure, 2013; Koro-Ljungberg and Mazzei, 2012; Lather and St. Pierre, 2013; Lenz Taguchi and St. Pierre, 2017; St. Pierre et al., 2016; St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014). Nevertheless, when we consider the ensemble of the contributions that have tried to experiment with the 'posts' in post-qualitative research, we understand that what may happen to inquiry in post-inquiry is not at all clear.

The 'post' is not only what comes after neopositivism, interpretivism, and linguistic turn; rather, it refers to the ongoing process of deconstruction of many of the key concepts of the neopositivist and interpretative frameworks: what counts as 'data', 'the field', 'interview', 'observation', and so on. There are multiple answers that trouble what counts as data. For example, in the special issue by Koro-Ljungberg and MacLure (2013), some authors encourage us to abandon the concept of 'data' altogether (Denzin, 2013); others pronounce data dead, illusionary, decaying, or disappearing (Gildersleeve and Kuntz, 2013; Holmes and Jones, 2013; Nordstrom, 2013); other contributors put data under erasure, considering the concept to be useful but inaccurate (Hofsess and Sonenberg, 2013); some other authors propose that data are always in the making and can only be found in their becoming, wondering, doing, or materialization (Amatucci, 2013; Banerjee and Blaise, 2013).

In what counts as ethnographic data, we can consider 'aflow of (dis)connected thoughts, relationships, interactions, and events in the context of research' (Benozzo et al., 2013: 309) and look at data for what it produces, how it moves, and how it can be lived and sensed by researchers.

What is clear is that 'posts methodologies do not and cannot offer an alternative methodology, a corrective or a fix' (St. Pierre, 2011: 613), nor a recipe for another handy research design. Rather, what the posts offer are a series of uncanny questions that may be summarized by the one that follows: 'If we give up 'human' as separate from non-human, how do we exist? Can there be there an instituting 'I' left to inquire, to know?' (Lather and St. Pierre, 2013: 631). This question almost impossible to answer reminds us that it is not a matter of looking harder or more closely, but of seeing what it is that frames our seeing spaces of constructed visibility, following Derrida's (1978) and Foucault's (1972 [1971]) recommendations to look for what constitutes power/knowledge.

That question shows us that what frames the question is a post-epistemology *à la* Barad (2007, 2013) and the new feminist materialism that Haraway (1997, 2008b), Alaimo and Hekman (2008), Coole and Frost (2010), Braidotti (2013), and Grosz (2000) contributed to developing around terms such as 'affect', 'sociomateriality', 'entanglement', 'intra-action', and 'becoming'. The diffusion of Karen Barad's work and vocabulary outside feminist theory can be considered the beginning of a conversation among separate fields of research. In writing about the shift from 'inter' to intra-thinking, John Shotter (2013) notes that 'small changes in words can provide big changes in our orientations' (p. 41). This is the case of Barad's neologism 'intra-action' in place of interaction, which makes it possible to see that individuals do not pre-exist their interactions; rather, individuals and objects emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating. Therefore, my invitation to position the roots of affective ethnography within post-qualitative studies follows Shotter's note on small changes in words, since the 'posts' may open up a different sensibility toward old questions such as what counts as data, author/ity, the body, and sociomateriality. In ethnography, it means being aware that the 'crisis of representation' is not the end of representation, but the end of pure presence. Therefore, this entails a shift from the traditional 'being there', which has been harshly criticized (Watson, 2012), to the 'being with' and 'being in-between' that I shall explore in the following section as a distinctive trait of doing affective ethnography.

Affective ethnography as a style of research

In defining affective ethnography as a style and not a method, I wish to refer to John Law (2004) when he asks how can we 'move away from the idea that research method is a technical (or moralizing) set of procedures that need to be got right in a particular way' (p. 143). While 'method' brings with it the idea of a systematic and established procedure, style inclines toward aesthetics, something that you recognize when you see or hear it. For example, when we attribute a building to a certain architectural style, it is because we 'read' the features that make that building historically identifiable. Moreover, a style is also 'on the move' since in its being practiced, and as long as it is practiced, it changes. Those features have been performed in the process of creating a building that could have been designed otherwise. In using the term 'style', I wish to retain these three ideas: that you recognize it when you see it (or read it), and the characteristic features are performances that could have been otherwise.

John Law (2004) stresses the idea of 'otherwise' when he writes that research is 'craft arrangements and gatherings of things—and accounts of the arrangements of those things—that could have been otherwise' (p. 143). When ethnography moves away from the very truth of the ethnographer(s) who has 'been there', then any ethnographic account could have been otherwise (independently from matters of truth, authority, or legitimacy). In the idea of a craft, there is the image of something done artfully. In fact, in this presentation of affective ethnography, I wish to

maintain the dual meaning of ethnography as a style of doing fieldwork attending to 'ordinary affects' and informed by 'being with', 'being in-between', and 'becoming-with' and ethnography as the craft of writing an affective and performative text, since both activities are invented while being done.

The concept of ordinary affect has a specific meaning that has been defined and illustrated by Kathleen Stewart (2007: 4): 'Ordinary affects are the varied, surging capacities to affect and to be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies and emergences. They're things that happen'. Their significance lies in the way they pick up the intensities that they build and in the thoughts and feelings that they make possible, rather than in 'meanings' encapsulated in an order of representations. Therefore, the question is where they might go 'and what potential modes of knowing, relating and attending to things are already somehow present in them in a state of potentiality and resonance' (Stewart, 2007:6).

In an encounter, a vibration, or a rhythm, we may feel affect, and we may use affect as a resource for being in the field and for writing affectively. To illustrate what I consider a relational epistemology,[2] I present a situation where the intra-activity of a human being and a more-than-human being—a cat—exemplifies the relational post-epistemology common to post-qualitative and affective methodologies.

At the beginning of her article, Ann Game (2001) presents us with the following situation:

> I half wake to the feel, the soul, of a cat's tongue in my hair. He's grooming. Methodically, smoothly, he's moving back and forth between his fur and mine, soothing me with the rhythm of his rough tongue. Close to my face on the pillow, does he think that he is human or that I am a cat? But this is to ask a human-centered question that this experience defies, a question that presumes the separation of entities, cat and human, as well as the primacy of thought. For in that unintegrated state between sleep and wakefulness, when I forget borders, forget where one begins and the other ends, I am experiencing cat and human as part of each other, as indeed they must be for this grooming to be possible. (p. 1)

This narrative can be considered as an example of ordinary affect, since Game (2001) is interested in 'the particular spatial and temporal qualities of such experiences, which are *lived* not in conventional Euclidean space and linear time but, rather, in relational or in-between time and space' (p. 1). We may say that the activity of 'grooming' is co-produced in the space in between a woman and a cat, and it is their collaborative encounter in 'grooming' that produces that woman and that cat within the sensation that the woman-and-the-cat are part of each other. It is in this relational and in-between time and space that I position my take on affect and I consider affective ethnography grounded in the intra-action of doing and being done.

In attending to ordinary affects and to what counts as 'being with', we can also follow Donna Haraway's (2008b) concept of 'becoming-with', which conveys the sense of a process instead of a method as a set of procedures. Initially, the 'with' of becoming-with was directed toward species other than human, and the use of the term 'more-than-human' (Braidotti, 2013) operated as a corrective to the dichotomist separation (and connection) of human and non-human deriving from Actor–Network Theory and the wide acceptance of the materiality of the world in which we live. Haraway's work dislocates the centrality of the human in favor of the in/non/post-human and of bio-centered egalitarianism. In fact, what we call a 'body' is a multispecies crowd if we consider that human genomes can be found in only about 10% of cells, while the other 90% of cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, and other tiny messmates. And she concludes by saying that 'to be one is always to become with many' (Haraway, 2008b: 3). The image of the companion species (Haraway, 2008b) links to the idea of otherworldly conversation (Haraway, 2008a) in which various non-human entities participate as subjects. It opens the possibility of multispecies ethnographies (Kirksey and Helmreich, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2016; Tsing, 2015) and the

possibility of a shift in the way that fieldwork is conducted, as Banerjee and Blaise (2013) illustrate through becoming-with the air of Hong Kong.

More importantly, becoming involves a metaphysics that is grounded in connection, challenging delusions of separation, and as Haraway underlines becoming is always a becoming-*with*. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987 [1980]) observed, becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, and one does not 'really' become an animal any more than the animal 'really' becomes something else. In the above example of the cat and Ann, through their encounter, both became attuned to a multiplicity of worlds within a new relational context—a cattish *umwelt*.

Similarly, our becoming-with data imply a presence situated in the interstices of entangled encounters since the process epistemology of becoming-with implodes all the boundaries between ethnographer and other more-than-human subjects, nature and culture, 'my body' and 'other bodies'. In this process of partial connection, reciprocal capture, or symbiotic agreement, I shall now illustrate how we can position an ethnographic practice sensitive to affect and open it to an engagement with affecting and being affected. I shall start from 'embodied knowing', from what counts as a body when it is considered as resonant materiality, and from bodily encounters.

Embodied knowledge and the body that is always more than one

It should be self-evident that the ethnographer has a body, a gendered body, and through the body she or he gains sensible-aesthetic knowledge (Strati, 2007). I am not repeating this point here, also because sensory ethnography has been growing since Sara Pink's (2015) book and the acknowledgment of the 'sensuousness of practice' (Thrift, 2007), meaning that the skills and knowledges that people obtain from being embodied beings can be considered the first step in studying situated practices. Moreover, technologies such as video recording, photo-voice, and mobile digital technologies for real-time ethnography are expanding the possibilities to record and analyze the entire range of what Toraldo et al. (2016) have called 'elusive knowledges' comprising tacit, aesthetic, and embodied aspects of organizational life that are difficult to articulate.

Although the body, the gendered body, and embodied knowing are very relevant for practice-based studies (Yakhlef, 2010), the turn to affect problematizes 'what counts as a body', noting that the word 'body' refers not only to human, individual bodies but also to any other living and non-living ones. The relations between body and affect have been depicted (Seyfert, 2012) in the following three ways: (1) affect is located within an individual body; (2) affects are collective and atmospheric forces operating externally to the body; and (3) affects are the effects of interactions among individual bodies. I am nearest to the third position, but I consider bodies as the effects of intra-connecting activities, rather than being pre-existent to their relationships and only later interacting. Embodiment is thus multiple, embodiment is trans-corporeal, and embodied knowing has a multisited positioning, at the same time in individual bodies and their senses, and also in materialities and discourses.

In blurring the boundaries of the individual body and—following Merleau-Ponty (1962)—by saying that we *are* bodies, rather than having bodies, I want to draw attention to embodiment as an affective experience below the threshold of articulated meaning. The notion of 'affective body', in contrast to the body image, is a body without a clearly defined image (Featherstone, 2010), and more importantly, as Erin Manning (2010) writes, the body is always collective, *more than one*, 'more assemblage than form, more associated milieu than being' (p. 118). By stressing that affect is not situated in the individual, Manning elaborates on Deleuze's (2007) concept of 'life', which goes beyond any lived experience. From this perspective, life expresses itself when it goes beyond what has occurred, when it overcomes experience, doing so as resonance, as affect. The body, as

resonant materiality, becomes collective in a process in which affections translate into an affective wor*l*ding.[3]

In fieldwork, in the intra-acting of affect/be affected and in using embodied knowing as a research resource, we may learn to resonate as a collective body. In fact, Latour (2004) writes, ‘to have a body *is to learn to be affected*, meaning ‘effectuated’, moved, put into motion by other entities, humans or non-humans. If you are not engaged in this learning you become insensitive, dumb, you drop dead’ (p. 205). The dual movement between being affected and affect is also a movement between the voluntary and the involuntary implicated by affect. We can train and entrain ourselves to recognize affect in the intensity of encounters and to enact ‘affective resonance’ as an active form of attunement, when we activate the process whereby bodies resonate when the intensity is transmitted between affective bodies, discourses, and different social worlds.

I propose a short story that may give an idea of what I mean by affect as something ‘in excess’ of the speaking subject (in Deleuzian terms) or something left out. This is ‘the elevator story’:

> I, one of the authors, recall an incident when I found myself in an elevator with my boss. He blatantly ignored me. Eye contact was averted. He acted as if I was not there. I felt awkward. I knew he could see me, just as I could see him. I was silent. It was clear he wanted no interaction. My spine shrank as I wanted to melt away into the floor, and yet I forced my neck stiff to ensure that I did not appear intimidated. My body shook with subdued anger and my stomach churned. I simultaneously wanted to avoid him and to speak out in resistance. Remaining silent, my body pulsated uncontrollably. I looked to the floor for a moment, and my foot was tapping anxiously. I could feel my face get warmer, as the blood rushed through my veins. The corners of my eyes started to squint as I focused on waiting for the doors of the elevator to open. (Pullen et al., 2017: 106)

The authors of the article in which the elevator story is presented are two men and one woman, and the article gives no clue as to whether the narrator is the woman or one of the men. The reader of this text may ask what her or his first impression was and how she or he made a gender attribution. How was she or he affected by the text? How did she or he see gendered organizations as affecting people’s subjectivity?

My intention in narrating the elevator story is to negotiate with the reader their participation in the creation of a text and to establish a common ground before proceeding. When I write about affective ethnography, I assume that (1) we take gendered organizations and gendering practices for granted and (2) that bodies matter and bodies affect and are affected by other bodies. These two simple things, which are usually omitted from most organizational ethnographies, talk about affect in performing it in the style of writing. The elevator story is intended to provoke affective resonance if it worked in connecting the reader, the authors of the article, myself re-telling the story as a presence in the text, within a collective body enclosed in a narrow space and experiencing the intensity of a distasteful and unsolicited intimacy. I argue that affect passes, travels, circulates, and connects across time and space and in the transmission of affective intensity from one body to another rests in the transformative potentiality of lived experience.

While affective resonance carries the sense of something affecting the bodies that involuntarily resonate with each other or resonate collectively in crowd-like processes of contagion, the activity of affective attunement carries with it the image of a voluntarily ‘being with’ and an intentional disposition to affect and be affected. Stern (2004) employs the expression ‘affective attunement’ to describe the preverbal and corporeal relation between mother and infant—on which basis Hansen (2004) has developed the concept of ‘affective contagion’ and used slow motion film technologies to represent it. In doing fieldwork to learn to affect and to be affected means both to be aware of how bodies enter into affective resonance and to cultivate the capacity of affective attunement to

the situations. Affective contagion is pervasive, and we may ask why contagious feelings, which are so common, ordinary, and pervasive, are usually left out of ethnographic accounts, and we may wonder whether including them in our being in the field, being with other resonant materialities, authoring an ethnography, is going to produce a difference in us, in the others we meet, and in the readers.

Anna Gibbs (2001) opens her discussion on 'contagious feelings' with the following words:

> Bodies can catch feelings as easily as catch fire: affect leaps from one body to another, evoking tenderness, inciting shame, igniting rage, exciting fear—in short, communicable affect can inflame nerves and muscles in a conflagration of every conceivable kind of passion. (Quoted in Gorton, 2007: 337)

To conclude, affective resonance, affective contagion, and affective attunement may be considered as relational affective practices in and for becoming-with data. Doing fieldwork is always a situated practice, and in what follows, I shall discuss what affect 'does' in the 'placeness' of fieldwork.

Affective 'placeness'

Organizational spaces and spatial organizing are dynamically transformed into places by affect and practicing. Space is a particularly important vehicle for the transmission of affect: 'Transmission is a property of particular spaces soaked with one or a combination of affects to the point where space and affect are often coincident' (Thrift, 2007: 222). Within a relational post-epistemology, in fact the objectified history of a space, inscribed in the durability of materials, is transformed by affect and practice into flow and movement. Thrift conceives affect at the center of questions of space, governance, and power and considers affect as a kind of semiconscious knowledge of our world that primes us for action since one experiences affective responses even if one is not able to consciously describe or explain them.

The lived sensation and affective resonances of places inspire diverse affective atmospheres and shape the experiences of places, their 'placeness'. While the idea that spaces evoke affective responses is quite common, affect scholars elaborate on the way that affect actively constitutes a place and how the place thus produced enables and/or constrains the potential activities enacted in it.

Affective atmosphere is perhaps the most widely known concept from affect theories since it easily conveys the idea of affect as coming from outside and as a collective experience of being affected. Brennan (2004) broadly conceptualizes 'affective atmosphere' as the shared ground from which affect emerges. The expression denotes an experience that occurs before and together with the construction of subjectivity across human and non-human materialities (Anderson, 2009; Sedgwick, 2003). 'Atmosphere' has been defined as impersonal or transpersonal intensity (Stewart, 2007), mimetic wave of sentiment (Thrift, 2007), or a sense of place (Rodaway, 1994). Atmospheres surround people, things, and environments: on entering a room, we can feel a serene or a tense atmosphere; an atmosphere 'surrounds' a couple, or one finds oneself 'enveloped' by an atmosphere; atmospheres 'radiate' from one individual to another; atmospheres appear and disappear. Anderson (2009) stresses that

> atmospheres are interlinked with forms of enclosure', and for him 'the term atmosphere presents itself to us as a response to a question; how to attend to collective affects that are not reducible to the individual bodies that they emerge from? (p. 80)

Therefore, in attending to placeness in ethnographic practices, researchers become attuned not only to the affective atmospheres generated in place but also to the sociomaterial relationships, the actions, powers, and discourses thus supported. In fact, an affective atmosphere contains both the sense of the place and the potentialities for action and dispositions enactable in that place.

Empirical research on affective atmosphere may be found in the case of a night out in a Jamaican dancehall as vibration and kinetic dance rhythms (Henriques, 2010) or in dynamic dance floor and drunken subjects and desires in Copenhagen (Bøhling, 2015). The awareness of being enveloped in affective atmospheres is ordinary for an affective ethnography, and I have developed it elsewhere (Gherardi and Strati, 2017). Here, I want to link the account of affect as affective atmosphere to affective placeness as performative, that is, framing the array of activities and practices potentially enactable within that place. To experience a place means to learn to be affected by place, and therefore, also placeness becomes a resource for conducting an affective ethnography.

In fact, a place may be understood as an affective way of relating to a space, a dwelling in it, and as a collective capacity to act, having an active and generative role in the transmission of affect and in the power to enable and constrain emplaced relationships. To illustrate this two-sided effect, we can consider common experiences in fieldwork like walking, alone or with others, within organizational spaces and along material and spatial organizing processes. The bodily collective experience of sensing a place and producing the sense of that place may be called 'kinesthetic sympathy', to stress the becoming-with and the affective attunement to other (human and more-than-human) bodies and histories, and the material-semiotic construction of place.

The walking/talking practice in ethnography has been formulated as 'go-along' (Kusenbach, 2003), as commentated walks 'on the move and walking with' (Raulet-Croset and Borzeix, 2014), in ethnomethodology as an intertwined practice reflexively organized, one revealing what the other is performing and vice versa (Mondada, 2017), and as a post-qualitative technique for 'intra-views' rather than interviews (Kunz and Presnall, 2012). As means to elicit the sense of place, these methodologies have been employed especially in relation to art or architecture in urban spaces (Latham and McCormack, 2004; Michels and Steyaert, 2017; O'Doherty, 2008). Nevertheless, their focus is mainly on the narratives thus produced, without questioning the subjectivities of the researchers, other people in the field, and other materialities. My question here is this: Can affect theories add something once place is seen as a process?'

An example comes from an ethnographic study of young people in Vancouver, an episode in which one triad spoke of their effort to appropriate a corner in the campus and Duff (2010) describes the agency of affect in what has been called 'the art of place-making':

> The three of us want to hang out, but we don't belong to any of the school clubs, so we can't really get to hang out there. Then one day I saw that this little corner looked like no one was around or could see you properly from the stairs, so we sat there with our lunch. And like it's a really great place to hang out and talk 'cos it's close to the lockers and that but no one bothers us. We can just do whatever, like no one is around us. (p. 889)

When ethnographers 'hang out' in the fieldwork, they may easily see places where some people gather to smoke outside the building, or on a construction site where some workers sit together to have lunch. Not everybody is entitled to smoke or have lunch with everybody else: not every similar place has the same affective intensity, and not all encounters are the same as in the previous day. Not only are spaces negotiated and do bodies shape spaces while they are shaped by spaces (Acarón, 2016), but spaces and bodies are transformed by affective experiences and their intensities. The focus of an affective ethnography becomes the degree of affective intensity that composes the geography of organizing and the inclusion and exclusion practices materialized in a space in relation to the researchers' embodiment and the body as an activator of place-making.

New technologies, digital spaces, net-ethnographies, and affective intensities in non-traditional spaces enable interesting experiments about the affective experience of placeness. The concept of wearable space (Hansen, 2003) is grounded in experiments like the Blur Building (where an equipped raincoat is worn to move around in a fog) or the Arakawa and Gins architectures, and it is the body in relation to the media that allows use of the sensory excess of its movement in this non-space to generate a profoundly intensive spatial experience. Hansen reflects on physical situations conceived as 'pure atmosphere' that 'integrates the two dimensions of wearable space […] the prosthetic extension of the body's contact with the environment, and the affection of space itself as a medium of sensation'. Arts and architectures have been particularly active in decentering the body from the dominance of the visible and showing how the body is always a body in the space and the space is an interiorized space. Hansen (2003) expresses this changing idea of body-space as 'the body's capacity to act is never simply a property it possesses in isolation; it is always a recursive and continuously modulated function of its embeddedness within a rich texture of sensation' (p. 334).

We can think about affective intensities in organizational digitalized spaces in the same way that we think of living with an economic capitalist system variously defined as neo-liberal or affective capitalism. Both may be conceived as wearable spaces. Together with Seigworth (2016) we ask,

> In what ways then does living-with-debt gradually and continuously alter the atmosphere of existence, weaving through and between bodies as a garment to be rhythmically engaged—worn loosely or tightly—and never too easily shrugged off? How should we understand the contact zones, infrastructures, and interfaces where credit and debt are managed, habituated, eluded? (p. 15)

We may answer that globalization is about place-making for living-with-debt, about making our place in-between the capacity of affective capitalism to envelop our body, and our capacity to wear it comfortably like an old and familiar garment. Seigworth's metaphor of 'wearing the world' may have the meaning of having something over our bare body and also destroying it by use.

To conclude, we may say that the intensity of placeness is artfully produced, that affective atmospheres are a relational accomplishment, and that their emergent properties are unique to each occasioning of place. This view of placeness is reminiscent of the 'vital topology' of Deleuze (1988: 104–122) and his formulation of the fold, in which the 'inside' is always yet another fold of the 'outside', just as the outside is always a folding of the inside.

The power of affect in *agencement*

In the two previous sections I stressed the capacity of 'being with' and 'becoming-with' while conducting affective ethnography. Now I shall address the capacity of acting within (and together with) all the elements of the ethnographic practice: other humans, other more-than-humans, materialities, discourses, ordinary affects, the very presence of the researcher, and the writing of an ethnographic account. All these elements are always and already entangled, none of them has a priority, and they form an *agencement*,[4] that is, they acquire agency in their connecting and intra-acting. Therefore, I shall follow what Deleuze (1988: 27)—after Spinoza—calls 'the power of acting' and not only being acted upon.

Affective ethnography implies a further switch, moving ethnography away both from the discussion of the position of the researcher 'as a fly on the wall' and from the position of the interactive researcher as active and passive at the same time, as somebody who follows Kurt Wolff's suggestion to 'surrender and catch' (Gherardi, 2015; Whitaker and Atkinson, 2017). In fact, affective methodologies pay attention to affect as the power of acting through two concepts that have in common a performative epistemology: experiment and performative interpretation.

The motivation to 'experiment' with and through affect moves away from the positivist experimentation aimed at proving or falsifying hypotheses in favor of experimenting as a material–semiotic–affective staging of events and/or provocations that 'make things happen' and in so doing question, provoke, interrupt us, and what exceeds current understanding. Affective ethnography presupposes a power of acting and 'making do' the social world in order to produce performative interpretations—as Derrida (1994: 63, quoted in Blackman, 2015: 38) defines 'an interpretation that transforms the thing it interprets'.

Art, aesthetics, and creative and inventive practices have being deployed in order to think of affect as affective pedagogy, since 'experimental practices mean embracing the unknown and sitting with the discomfort that the unknown can bring' (Hickey-Moody et al., 2016: 214). For example, affect-as-method (Hickey-Moody, 2013) has experimented with dance and has written about young people's individual and group subjectivities becoming through dance practices, since dance allows pasts to be folded back into presents in unexpected ways. Creative practices have the power to affect and surprise in relation to materiality (Carter, 2004) and the production of knowledge in action. As Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford (2012, emphasis in original) affirm, inventive methods 'enable *the happening* of the social world—its ongoingness, relationality, contingency and sensuousness—to be investigated' (p. 17). Their inventiveness takes place in relation to two moments: the addressing of a method—an anecdote, a probe, a category—to a specific problem, and the capacity of what emerges in the use of that method to change the problem.

Writing ethnography has been the object of many experiments for communicating attunement, resonance, and rhythm (Gibbs, 2001, 2015). In particular, performative writing is an integral part of affective ethnographic practice, extending the meaning of writing to other forms of visual or other media tools for representations. The sociomateriality of writing is just another element in the *agencement* of the elements of ethnographic practice and not a separate (or final) step.

Many experiments have been conducted to trouble conventional humanistic qualitative research in fieldwork and in its writing (Ellingson, 2009; Guttorm et al., 2016; Pullen, 2018; Rhodes, 2015; Ståhl, 2016). An example is 'crystallization' as a style of writing that has been used by Tallberg et al. (2014) in an ethnography of euthanasia in an animal shelter. Writing is considered in the entanglement of the social, the material, and the affective, instead of writing being viewed as an external imposition of categories upon a stable material world that awaits description and interpretation. The authors represent 'data that move' in dialogues, narratives, and a poem in the attempt to visualize those marginalized by society: the animals and those caring for them. At the same time, they focus on the 'lived experience' in the texts to create a more complex reflection on euthanasia. As Ellingson (2009) also explains, crystallization assumes no authority over reality, but is a representation of a partial understanding stressing the researcher's positionality and the critical role of the researcher. In fact, crystallization challenges the notion of a single 'fixed truth' and requires combining a variety of perspectives on the same event to allow the reader to examine one event from a more holistic approach.

A similar experiment in addressing the question of how to represent the lives of others (humans and more-than humans) in ways that do justice to their alterity and their intimacy with the researchers is 'vulnerable writing' as a postcolonial and queer practice (Page, 2017).[5] Page reflects on the documenting and telling of a partial narrative of a Syrian woman who left her country and arrived in Lebanon and who set herself on fire outside the United Nations Refugee Agency office in Tripoli. The term 'vulnerable writing' describes the process of explicating and recognizing vulnerability in writing and in representing the fragility of knowledge assembly. A feminist vulnerable methodology is closely positioned with questioning what is known and what might come from an opening to not knowing. This involves ethical questions in modes of telling, the sensory and affective responses to the material production of research, and the forms of violence committed in narrating

the stories of vulnerable others. This form of vulnerable writing involves being receptive to the limits of knowing, since comprehending different lifeworlds requires (1) dislocating the certitude of one's own epistemological projections and remaining hesitant as to how and why we are moved affectively, (2) being vulnerable within research places to unexpected affective and sensorial demands upon researchers in representing the lives of others, and (3) becoming and remaining open to responding to what is not understood, to what unsettles existing knowledge, and to that which cannot be explained easily through causal relations and claiming to know another person's intention.

The power of affect in the *agencement* of ethnographic practice is particularly stressed both in crystallization and in vulnerable writing as textual strategies that acknowledge the potential of knowledge as a falling short, as not knowing in advance how to respond to the unpredictable demands of the encounters in fieldwork. The quality of the presence of the ethnographers in the field, together with their writings, is a distinctive trait of an affective ethnography that attempts to communicate and involve the readers in the capacity to affect and be affected. The episodes of the cattish *umvelt*, the placeness of the elevator, the young people creating the atmosphere of their private space, the evocation of animal euthanasia, and the Syrian women who set herself on fire have been attempts to transmit affect in the *agencement* of the elements of a practice.

Conclusion

Affective ethnography may be conceived as a way to move away from 'matters of fact' to 'matters of concern'. Matters of concern have to be liked, appreciated, tasted, put to the test. Matters of concern are disputable, they move, they carry one away, they *matter* (Latour, 2004). The so-called 'turn to affect' may have an impact on ethnographic practice as an invitation to pay attention to embodied knowledge and to all the small things that happen, as the surging capacities to affect and to be affected. Affective ethnography relies on the capacity to enact embodied knowing, while attending to data in motion and data that move, and producing experiments and texts troubling with elusive and vulnerable knowledges they claim to represent.

Affective ethnography should be considered part of a wider debate on post-qualitative and affective methodologies that discuss both the limits of conventional (humanist) qualitative methodologies and the challenges of a post-humanist epistemology that decenters the human subject as the only beginning of inquiry. What is distinctive of a post-qualitative movement is the aspiration to performative methodologies that produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently. They give to ethnography the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies, and emergences in which researchers are immersed and entangled with other humans, more-than-humans, texts, discourses, knowledges, and various other materialities. Therefore, ethnographic practice can be seen as an *agencement* of all those elements that collectively acquire agency in their becoming and intra-acting. Affective ethnography troubles also the categories through which order is produced in ethnographic practice: what counts as 'data', who is the subject and who is the object, what is a body? Whose body? The boundaries are imploded when we look at data on the move/data that move. This means the end of ethnography as pure presence, in favor of an epistemology of 'being with', 'being in-between', and 'becoming-with', leaving behind any pretension to a fixed truth, authority, or legitimacy. Any ethnographic account could have been otherwise, and combining a variety of perspectives on the same event makes it possible to write and to read a text in which one event is always more than one.

I have theorized affective ethnography as a research style and not as a method because I ground affective ethnography within the debate on post-qualitative methodologies that aim to discuss and experiment with what may come 'after method'. In using the term 'style', I wish to retain three

ideas: (1) that you recognize it when you see it (or read it), (2) and the characteristic features are performances that (3) could always have been otherwise. And I base affective ethnography on three pillars: embodied knowing, affective placeness, and the power of affect in *agencement*. They are related to the presence of the researchers in fieldwork and their capacity to affect/be affected.

The first pillar is embodiment and embodied knowing. The body is always 'more than one' when it is conceived as resonant materiality. The body, as resonant materiality, becomes collective in a process whereby bodies resonate when the intensity is transmitted between affective bodies, discourses, and different social worlds. Doing fieldwork therefore implies the capacity to resonate with other materialities, to become capable of affective attunement to other bodies and situations and not to be afraid of affective contagion. Knowing in affective ethnographic practices is therefore a collective, material, and embodied activity that articulates dynamic intra-actions between the human and more-than-human forces in the fieldwork, and affective resonance, affective contagion, and affective attunement may be considered as relational affective practices in and for becoming-with data.

The second pillar is constituted by placeness as flow and as the process of co-construction of situations and feelings of dwelling in a place and being at the proper place. Affective atmospheres are performative since they frame the array of activities and practices potentially enactable within that place. To experience a place means to learn to be affected by place, and therefore also placeness becomes a resource for conducting an affective ethnography. Placeness operates a closeness of spaces and situations that are not external or given; rather, they are affectively constructed as a fold, in which the 'inside' is always yet another fold of the 'outside', just as the outside is always a folding of the inside. The focus of an affective ethnography becomes the degree of affective intensity that composes the geography of organizing and the inclusion and exclusion practices materialized in a space in relation to the researcher's embodiment and the body as an activator of place-making.

The third aspect relates to affect as the power of acting and therefore to the presence in the fieldwork as the capacity to 'make do', either intentionally or unintentionally. Here the idea of affective ethnography is discussed in relation to performative 'experiment' (creative or inventive) as a material–semiotic–affective staging of events and/or provocations that 'make things happen' and in so doing question, provoke, interrupt us, what exceeds current understanding, and conventional ethnographic writing. Affective writing is part of affective ethnography not only because it belongs to the same *agencement* but also because it makes the style of affective ethnography recognizable to the readers when it affects them. To experiment in writing—for example, in crystallization or vulnerable writing—serves the purpose of offering to the reader those performative interpretations that transform the things that they interpret.

When we take these three pillars together, we can see how affective ethnography is a style of a performative ethnographic process that relies on the researcher's bodily capacity to affect and be affected and to focus on the intra-action between the production of 'data' by the researcher and how 'data' produce the researcher.

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Notes

1. In my opinion, it is useful to keep the category of affect separate from that of emotion, even if there is no agreement about this choice. Some authors employ them interchangeably, while others try to draw a

distinction that has been misinterpreted (Gorton, 2007). I refer to Elspeth Probyn (2005: 11), for example, who describes affect as biology and emotion as culture, which creates a 'basic distinction' between biology and culture. It might be useful to challenge this distinction in order not to reproduce a nature/culture dichotomy and rather to explore how culture and biology are mutually implicated, how neither are given, and how they shape and inform each other.

2. I do not enter into a detailed discussion of different relational epistemologies, such as performativity, new materialism, Actor–Network theory, and affect theory. For a detailed discussion, I refer to Fox and Alldred (2016) and Kuhn et al. (2017).
3. 'Worlding' is a term used in several social sciences disciplines. It is a way to approach wholes, systems, networks, or culture in ways that account for emergence, the assemblage of disparate entities, and the experience and situation of being in-between something and being in the world.
4. The word *agencement*, which has the idea of agency in its root, is currently used in French as a synonym for 'arrangement', 'fitting', or 'fixing', and it has been used as a philosophical term by Deleuze and Guattari (1987 [1980]) with the sense of 'in connection with'. The problem, however, is that its translation into English as 'assemblage'—that is, a final state—has changed the original processual meaning of acquiring agency as an ensemble of elements. I have explained the reasons for returning to the French term elsewhere (Gherardi, 2016).
5. I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer who pointed my attention to Page's article.

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Author biography

Silvia Gherardi is a senior professor of sociology of work and organization at the Faculty of Sociology of the University of Trento, Italy, where she has been Director of the Research Unit on Communication, Organizational Learning, and Aesthetics (www.unitn.it/rucola) since 1993. Her last book (*How to conduct a practice-based study: problems and methods*, Edward Elgar, 2019, 2nd edition) is devoted to the discussion of methodologies for the empirical study of learning and knowing in working practices. A companion to the book has been published, co-authored with Antonio Strati (*Learning and Knowing in Practice-based studies*, Edward Elgar, 2012), and it proposes a selection of empirical papers from RUCOLA.