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UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI SALERNO

ILIS
INTERNATIONAL LAB FOR
INNOVATIVE SOCIAL RESEARCH

AIS
ASSOCIAZIONE ITALIANA DI SOCIOLOGIA
Metodologia

II International conference
International Lab for Innovative Social Research (ILIS)

Research Methods in the Digital Society: challenges and opportunities
25-26 November 2020
University of Salerno

Doing research is an ever-changing challenge for social scientists. This challenge is harder than ever nowadays as the current societies are changing fast and in many, and sometimes conflicting, directions. Social phenomena, personal interactions, formal and informal relationships, are becoming more and more borderless and disconnected from the anchors of the offline "reality". These dynamics are heavily marking our time and are suggesting evolutionary challenges in the ways we know, interpret, and analyze the world.

Internet and computer mediated communication (CMC) are being incorporated into every aspect of daily life and social life has been deeply penetrated by the Internet. This is due to recent technological developments which increase the scope and range of online social spaces and the forms and time of participation such as the web 2.0 which widened the opportunities for user-generated content, the emergence of an "internet of things" and of ubiquitous mobile devices which make it possible to be always connected.

This implies an adjustment to epistemological and methodological stances for doing social research and an adaption of traditional social research methods to the specificities of online interactions in the digital society in all its definitions such as "society of the digital", "digitized society", "society on the digital", and so on.

There is no way to object that the traditional social research methods at governing the study of rooted societies are losing ground in favor of innovative, sometimes extemporaneous, methodological proposals. On the one hand, scholars and professionals transposed the classical social research method in order to be implemented online; on the other hand, the growing pervasiveness of the digital in our lives required the development of methods more suitable to address the challenges of studying the digital society.

In this latter sense, digital methods imply embracing the natural logic of online communication affordances in gathering, ordering, and analyzing data—as with tags, links, or hashtags.

Methodological reflections about digital and digitized methods are impervious in our scientific community and applications to the most disparate objects are now the subject of numerous publications. We have witnessed the succession of web methods, virtual methods, digital methods, and many other definitions of what should be doing social research "with" and "on" the Web. However, there is still no agreement on a shared definition of what it means and how to implement the empirical study of the digital society; there are not paradigmatic definitions so solid as to redefine the field.

This apparent methodological Babylon has found a possible solution in the application of the mixed methods approach. The hybridization of the methods ended up being reflected also in the desire to make the methods more and more disconnected from the disciplines and approaches. The search for integration, the mix that solves every cognitive and research problem, the all-embracing openness that challenges theories and broad visions within which social research fits today, are only few of the elements that are actually pushing social research methods in unpredictable directions. But where will this ambition lead us? How much have we reflected on this fast spread? How much did we metabolize the change of a method or how

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1

only we simply idealized it in a different context? And how much all this becomes truly appropriate in the study of contemporary phenomena? These, as well as a flood of other questions can arise if only we stop for a moment to reflect on what the social and human disciplines are called to do today.

In this conference we would like to bring together researchers from different disciplines who engage in wide forms of reflection on the future of the research methods in the study of the digital society in its broadest sense. The overall aim is to start a debate that covers not only the different strands of methods most affected by change, but above all to develop a broader theoretical reflection on the future of social research in its challenge to always be fitting, suitable, adaptable and pertinent to the society to be studied.

This call welcomes contributions without any restriction in terms of topics, subjects, objects or methodological approaches.

The only requirement is to develop the proposals taking into consideration these perspectives:
- Theoretical, epistemological, and ontological reflections about the digital research methods;
- Innovative methods and tools to collect, analyse and interpret data;
- Ethnography goes online: theory, methods and research;
- The rebirth of Content Analysis in Digital Era;
- The contribution of the Mixed Methods to the Online Social Research;
- The new imprint of the Social Network Analysis in the Net scenario.

Contributions to theoretical discussion as well as empirical research are welcome as long as they keep a critical dimension as central in the discussion of perspectives, implications, opportunities and new challenges for Social Research Methods in the Digital Society.

Conference organisation

The conference is organised by the International Lab for innovative social research (ILIS) (see previous editions of the conference at http://www.labilis.org/1st-conference-ilis). The lab is an interdisciplinary centre for social research established within the Department of Humanities, Philosophy and Education. It aims to stimulate theoretical and methodological discussions, as well as empirical studies, on emerging trends in social research: from theoretical challenges faced by new social issues to innovative methodological approaches to understand them. The lab's mission is to promote theoretical, epistemological and methodological advances in the social sciences through continuous exchanges with national and international scholars.

The research interests focus on social processes ranging from educational, migratory, identity and cultural processes, to gender, generational and health issues drawing special attention to the social research methods. The main goal is to offer an integrated research system to direct scientific actions towards an innovative theoretical and empirical knowledge of the processes transforming our societies.

From the scientific point of view, the centre aims to combine the understanding of contemporary social processes with emerging trends in social research methods which have innovated traditional approaches and have introduced alternative data collection and analysis methods together with new methods for representing information (such as in the case of e-methods and big data analysis).

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2

The conference will be held on the **25th and 26th of November 2020**.

Conference board

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Call for abstract

Deadline to submit abstracts: 20 July 2020

Author Notification: 31 July 2020

Deadline to submit papers: 31 October 2020

Conference dates: 25-26 November 2020

Best papers will be published in a book edited by the conference organizers and five of them will be considered for a publication in an international scientific review.

Abstracts need to be limited to 500 words and include goals, research methods and main findings. Please use the **abstract form** and send it as an attached file to: labilis@unisa.it

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3