

A Critical Reflection of Ableist Methodologies: Approaching Interviews and Go-Along Interviews

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Abstract : Based on a research project studying the experience of visually disabled people with urban space in the Czech Republic, the conference contribution discusses the limits of social-science methodologies used in sociology and human geography. It draws on actor-network theory, assuming that science does not describe reality but produces it. Methodology connects theory, research questions, ways to answer them (methods), and results. A research design utilizing ableist methodologies can produce ableist realities. Therefore, it was necessary to adjust the methods so that they could mediate blind experience to the scientific community without reproducing ableism. The researchers faced multiple challenges, ranging from questionable validity to how to research experience that differs from that of the researchers who are able-bodied. Finding a suitable theory that could be used as an analytical tool that would demonstrate space and blind experience as multiple, dynamic, and mutually constructed was the first step that could offer a range of potentially productive methods and research questions, as well as bring critically reflected results. Poststructural theory, mainly Deleuze-Guattarian philosophy, was chosen, and two methods were used: interviews and go-along interviews that had to be adjusted to be able to explore blind experience. In spite of a thorough preparation of these methods, new difficulties kept emerging, which exposed the ableist character of scientific knowledge. From the beginning of data collecting, there was an agreement to work in teams with slightly different roles of each of the researchers, which was significant especially during go-along interviews. In some cases, the anticipations of the researchers and participants differed, which led to unexpected and potentially dangerous situations. These were not caused only by the differences between scientific and lay communities but also between able-bodied and disabled people. Researchers were sometimes assigned to the assistants' roles, and this new position - doing research together - required further negotiations, which also opened various ethical questions.

Keywords : ableist methodology, blind experience, go-along interviews, research ethics, scientific knowledge

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