Accessing the Backstage: Ethnographic Research Methods in Resistance Studies[1]

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Abstract

This article aims to critically discuss particular advantages, disadvantages and challenges concerning ethnographic research within Resistance Studies. By so doing, four methodological aspects of ethnography will be scrutinized in depth. These are epistemological assumptions referred to as the ethnographic stance, the practice of doing participant observation, the emic-etic distinction, and the emphasis on thick description. Fusing James Scott's notion of hidden resistance with Erving Goffman distinction between the frontstage and backstage of self-presentation, this article suggests that ethnographic research methods could be particularly useful to access backstage spheres, and thereby a useful tool for observing hidden resistance practices. As hidden resistance draws its strength from the virtue of being disguised, ethnographic resistance studies imply ethical challenges particular to Resistance Studies. This is especialy relevant in research contexts characterized by high levels of violence and repression.

Introduction

Several useful works are available on research methods and methodologies, some of which are particularly relevant for Resistance Studies. Some examples are Linda Smith Tuhiwai's account on decolonizing methodologies (Smith Tuhiwai, 2012), various works on feminist research methods (see e.g. Ackerly, B. and True, 2010; Laliberté & Schurr, 2016; Reinharz &

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Davidman, 1992; Wibben, 2016) and feminist epistemologies (see e.g. Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Doucet & Mauthner, 2002; Grasswick, 2011), Leslie Brown and Susan Strega's edited volume on anti-hierarchical and resistance-based research methods (Strega & Brown, 2005), Donatella Della Porta's volume on methodological practices in social movement research (Donatella Della Porta, 2014), as well as Stevphen Shukaitis, David Graeber and Erika Biddle's book on militant activist research methods (Shukaitis, Graeber, & Biddle, 2007). However, none of these works scrutinize the particularities of ethnography for its potential usefulness in resistance-related studies.

At the same time, Susan Seymour argues that anthropology has played an instrumental role for the emergence of the field of Resistance Studies (Seymour 2006), partly due to the influence of the works of James Scott, seen by some as 'a catalyst for resistance studies' (Kastrinou-Theodoropoulou 2009). Ethnographers and anthropologists have, since the 1980's, '…actively sought "cracks" in systems of dominance and "sites" of resistance by subordinate groups' (see e.g. Abu-Lughod, 1990b; Colburn, 1989; Hoffman, 1999; Kastrinou-Theodoropoulou, 2009; Ortner, 1995; Scott, 1985, 1990; Seymour, 2006). Despite what appears to be a strong anthropological influence in Resistance Studies, Sherry Ortner argues that '…. the most influential studies of resistance are severely limited by the lack of an ethnographic perspective' (Ortner 1995:173).

Much could be said about this proposed deficit, but the aim of this article is not to investigate the extent to which this critique potentially holds water, also for more recent Resistance Studies literature. Nor is the aim to scrutinize the ramifications such a deficit would potentially entail for our understanding of resistance practices and movements. Rather, this article embarks on a critical investigation exploring potential advantages, disadvantages and ethical dilemmas that may emerge in ethnography-based resistance studies projects. The aim of the present article is to answer the following research question: what are the particular advantages, disadvantages and challenges concerning ethnographic research within Resistance Studies? By so doing, I apply Sandra Harding's useful distinction between methods and methodology, viewing the former as 'techniques for gathering evidence', and the latter

more related to epistemology and ontology as 'a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed' (Harding, 1987:2-3). Similarly, I understand anthropology on the one hand and ethnography on the other in line with Tim Ingold as two intimately connected yet distinct endeavors, where the latter is more closely connected to the methodic tradition of doing participant observation. Ingold suggests:

> The objective of anthropology, I believe is to seek a generous, comparative but nevertheless critical understanding of human being and knowing in the one world we all inhabit. The objective of ethnography is to describe the lives of people other than ourselves, with an accuracy and sensitivity honed by detailed observation and prolonged first-hand experience (Ingold, 2011:229).

Whereas there are various sub-approaches to ethnography, including auto-ethnography (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011), collaborative ethnography (Lassiter, 2005) critical ethnography (Madison, 2012), feminist ethnography (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Davis and Craven, 2016), and multi-cited ethnography (Marcus, 1995), I will in this article approach ethnography as it conventionally has been done within the traditions of social and cultural anthropology.

I will scrutinize four defining aspects of ethnography in depth from a theoretical framework, fusing Erving Goffman's conceptualization of the frontstage and backstage of self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) with James Scott's notion of hidden resistance (Scott, 1985, 1990). Firstly, I will discuss the epistemological assumptions guiding much ethnographic research, what Sherry Ortner termed 'the ethnographic stance' (Ortner, 1984). Secondly, I will address the concept and practice of 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973). The third aspect will be the emic-etic distinction and the risks of 'going native', while the fourth and dominant aspect I will discuss is the practice of doing participant observation.

I will start this article with a section clarifying what I mean by Resistance Studies and mapping out the theoretical lens I will apply in the following analysis of this article. After that, I will describe the four above mentioned aspects of ethnographic research methods and methodologies. This will be followed by a reflexive discussion where I grapple with some

of the pros and cons, as well as some of the ethical implications these methodological aspects may imply for Resistance Studies in the light of my theoretical framework. The article concludes with a summary of the main findings.

Resistance Studies and the Nature of Resistance

Much resistance-related literature has emerged in recent decades (see e.g. Amoore, 2005; Duncombe, 2002; Hoffman, 1999; Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; Juris, Jeffrey & Sitrin, 2016; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014; Scott, 1985, 1990; Seymour, 2006; Vinthagen, 2015). In line with Anton Törnberg, I see Resistance Studies as a relatively young but rapidly growing field of research (Törnberg, 2013), as well as an interdisciplinary and multilayered academic pursuit (Baaz, Lilja, & Vinthagen, 2017), which takes inspiration from, and sometimes overlaps with, related fields. Some examples are contentious politics (see e.g. McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001; Tarrow, 1994; Tarrow & Tilly, 2007), social movement studies, and literature on civil resistance and nonviolence (see e.g. Chenoweth & Cunningham, 2013; Chenoweth & Stephan, 2008, 2011; Nepstad, 2011; Roberts & Ash, 2009; Schock, 2015, 2013, G. Sharp, 1979, 2013; Vinthagen, 2016). I do not find it fruitful to narrow down the definition of Resistance Studies too radically, fearing this could lead to the exclusion of potentially valuable resistance perspectives. However, when I refer to Resistance Studies as a distinct and particular field of study in this article, I refer particularly to the post-structuralist-inspired Resistance Studies research tradition (see e.g. Abu-Lughod, 1990b; Hoffman, 1999; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016; Lilja, Baaz, & Vinthagen, 2013, 2015; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014; Ortner, 1995; Seymour, 2006; Sharp, 2000; Vinthagen, 2007; Scott, 1990, 1985).

In my reading, what distinguishes Resistance Studies as a distinct academic pursuit is its particular concern with what I here choose to term the ontology of resistance. With this, I mean the philosophical and empirical inquiry of the nature of resistance itself, both in conceptual and empirical terms. Resistance Studies asks what constitutes resistance, how resistance could be classified, and how do and could acts of resistance negotiate with, (re)produce, or undermine power (see e.g. Dahl, 1957; Foucault, 1980; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014; Sharp, 2000) in its various

multilayered forms, expressions and manifestations. Resistance Studies tends, in this tradition, to be approached in an agency- and subject-oriented manner, in line with Lilja, Baaz and Vinthagen, emphasizing an interest in 'the resistance act, the agency itself or the way of acting' (Lilja, Baaz, & Vinthagen, 2015:416).

The way we understand resistance potentially could lead to methodological consequences; therefore, before I embark on my ethnographic journey it is crucial to clarify how the concept of resistance is understood in this article.

Resistance, its Hidden Forms, and the Importance of Accessing the Backstage

Resistance studies is often criticized for its confusing definitions, or lack thereof (see e.g. Juris and Sitrin, 2016). Hollander and Einwohner argue that 'everything from revolutions (….) to hairstyles (…) has been described as resistance' (2004:534). However, in post-structuralist inspired accounts of resistance, the term is seen as closely connected with the concept of power, seen as productive, entangled and mutually constituted (see e.g. Sharp, 2000). Common to all acts of resistance is that they are undertaken by individuals or groups in a subordinated position in terms of power, or alternatively on behalf of, or in solidarity with, such groups, what Mona Lilja, Mikael Baaz and Stellan Vinthagen have termed *proxy resistance* (Lilja, Baaz, & Vinthagen, 2015:416). I find Stellan Vinthagen's definition particularly useful, viewing resistance as 'a subaltern practice that might undermine power' (Vinthagen 2015:7). Resistance could be conducted individually or collectively, take overt and covert forms, occur on macro as well as micro levels, and should be understood as connected both with *action* as well as *opposition* (see Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; Juris & Sitrin, 2016). Resistance could be undertaken either with the conscious aim to, or/and with the possibility of, undermining dominating forms of power.

In his work from 1956 'The presentation of self in everyday life', Erving Goffman used the metaphor of theatre and dramaturgy to make sense of human interaction and presentation of the self. Seeing the individual as 'an actor', and society as a 'stage', human beings, argued

Goffman, could be understood as to be playing several different 'roles' in their everyday lives. The roles or masks that individuals take on depend on the 'audience' who observes, as well as social factors like class, social hierarchies, and social norms. By making a distinction between what he saw as 'the frontstage' and 'the backstage' of human self-presentation, he demonstrated how subjects may present one image of one's self in public (frontstage), and a different one in private spheres (backstage).

If we now take a deeper look at the work on 'hidden resistance' by James Scott, the methodological implications of Goffman's observations described above become evident. In his works, James Scott (1990, 1985) calls to the surface how resistance practices do not need to be conducted openly and visibly on the 'front stage'. On the contrary, he argues, resistance might just as well be 'disguised, low-profile, [as well as] undeclared (…)' (Scott, 1990:198). What he terms 'the public transcripts' could be defined as '(…) a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate' (Scott, 1990:2-5). The so-called 'hidden transcripts', on the other hand, could be found in the 'discourse that takes place "offstage", beyond direct observation by power holders' (Scott, 1990:2-4). Furthermore, such hidden forms of resistance could be found when assessing the discrepancy behind '(…) what is said in the face of power and what is said behind its back' (Scott, 1990:2-5). Or in other words: hidden forms of resistance could be traceable through assessing the discrepancy between backstage 'the hidden transcripts', and frontstage 'public transcripts'.

Fusing Scott's notion of hidden resistance with Goffman's proposition of a backstage of self-presentation, I suggest that the way we frame resistance potentially entails methodological consequences. In order to study hidden forms of resistance, it seems necessary to obtain access to the research subject's private spheres of resistance – the disguised backstages of resistance movements.

This leads to a section in which I seek to describe and discuss four aspects of ethnographic research methods and methodologies, which will later be analysed for Resistance Studies through this theoretical lens.

Ethnographic Epistemologies

Sherry Ortner defines ethnography broadly as 'the attempt to understand another life world using the self – as much of it as possible – as the instrument of knowing' (Ortner, 1995:173). Ethnography furthermore refers to qualitative interpretations of data with the aim to understand other life worlds from the position of the people living them. Rejecting essentialist epistemologies, ethnography does not center on an interest in the scrutiny of things in themselves, but in how things are subjectively experienced by individuals and groups. Central to how Sherry Ortner understands ethnography is what she refers to as *the ethnographic stance* (Ortner 1995), seen as 'much an intellectual (and moral) positionality, a constructive and interpretive mode, as it is a bodily process in space and time' (Ortner 1995:173). In my reading the epistemological starting point here rests on the emphasis on subjective experiences representing what James Davies and Dimitrina Spencer see as 'opportunities for understanding' (Davies and Spencer, 2010:3). According to this view, subjective reactions, perceptions, experiences and emotions are seen as implicit components of ethnographic methodologies (Davies and Spencer, 2010:3).

Epistemologies of emotions and epistemologies of subjective experiences have also been a central component of feminist research methodologies (see Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2016), as well as researchers affiliated with the turn to *affect* and *the emotional turn* in various social science disciplines, which have increasingly gained influence across the specter of the social sciences since the 1990s (see e.g Ahmed, 2013; Clough & Halley, 2007; Flam & King, 2005; Gould, 2009; Thompson & Hoggett, 2012; Wetherell, 2012). Arlie Russell Hochschild proposes that emotions have what she calls a 'signal function', in the sense that it is from 'feeling we discover our own viewpoint on the world' (Hochschild, 2003:17). Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, researching wartime rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) launches what they term a 'methodology of unease', suggesting how emotionally disturbing (and unexpected) experiences and findings during field research became a useful methodological compass which, in turn, paved the way to a deepened and enriched understanding of the use of violence and rape in wartime DRC (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2016:129). This approach

resonates with the methodological concept of 'revelatory moments' in ethnographic research traditions, referring to unexpected or unplanned situations during fieldwork that evoke emotional reactions in the researcher, such as discomfort, unease or surprise, which eventually triggers new insights (Trigger, Forsey, and Meurk, 2012). Lynne Hume and Jane Mulcock (2004) show how experiences of discomfort and awkwardness during field research offer new courses of insights and revelation. Linda Green (1999) argues that her own experience of fear during fieldwork became a way of understanding the fear of her Mayan widowed interlocutors in Guatemala.

The epistemic value given to emotions, subjective and embodied experiences and encounters influence the research methods associated with ethnographic research. As a result, in the section below I seek to discuss one of the main methodic features defining ethnographic research methods – the practice of doing participant observation as a mean to collect empirical data.

Participant Observation

Within anthropological research traditions, ethnographic fieldworks are characterized by their emphasis on participant observation, often framed as a defining feature of ethnographic research methods (see e.g. Balsinger & Lambelet, 2014; Hylland Eriksen, 2010; Geertz, 1973; Malthaner, 2014). Thomas Hylland Eriksen defines ethnographic fieldwork as 'a thorough close-up study of a particular social and cultural environment, where the researcher is normally required to spend a year or more' (Hylland Eriksen 2010:4). This is related to what Sherry Ortner referred to as 'using the self' and 'a bodily process', as discussed above; the researcher, by doing participant observation in prolonged ethnographic fieldworks, uses herself in a way in which '(…) the whole self physically and in every other way enters the space of the world the researcher seeks to understand' (Ortner 1995:173).

Participant observation hence refers to a method of collecting empirical research material wherein the researcher seeks to understand her research subject(s) as far as possible from the position of the interlocutors themselves. This is done through prolonged participation in the everyday environment of the interlocutors. This also often includes learning the

local language, as well as embedding oneself in local customs, traditions, social practices, and ways of socializing. This is seen as related to the efforts of interpreting human perceptions, reflecting an '(…) interest in what people do and in understanding the meaning they give to their actions' (Balsinger and Lambelet, 2014:145). In that sense, ethnographic research methods could be seen as bottom-up and human-centered, but also inherently time-consuming. In ethnographic research methods, the researcher is thus not constrained to the more distanced, self-contained methods like interviews with individuals representing her research environment. The participatory aspect in ethnographic research methods relates to the embodied, subjective, prolonged and active participation in whatever activities the interlocutors are doing. The idea here is that through shared and embodied experiences, subjective encounters, and 'revelatory moments', the researcher gains knowledge and insights into the empirical context which constitutes her research field. The assumption is that participant observation enables a deeper, or different, insight into the research subject. It could be argued that participant observation leads a different type of empirical data to be gathered, which could become more holistic and rich in detail. This leads to the next defining feature of ethnographic research methods discussed below, namely the importance given *to context*, what within anthropology and ethnography is known as thick description.

Thick Description

Clifford Geertz suggested in 1973 that the act of doing ethnographic research should not predominantly be defined by methodic technicalities like '(…)establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on' (Geertz, 1973:2). Rather, a defining feature of ethnography, he proposes, '(…) is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle, "thick description" (Geertz, 1973:2). Ortner (1995) understands 'thickness' broadly as '(…) producing understanding through richness, texture, and detail, rather than parsimony, refinement, and (in the sense used by mathematicians) elegance' (Ortner, 1995:175).

The ethnographic idea of 'thickness' has been understood and operationalized in anthropological research since the 1960s, and could be

seen to have gone through three major orientation shifts (Ortner, 1995). During the first years after the idea was introduced to anthropological theory, thickness came to mean 'exhaustiveness' which produced 'the almost unreadably detailed descriptive ethnography' (Ortner, 1995:174). Later, the term came to be associated with holism, assuming that the object of research was '"a" highly integrated "culture" and that it was possible to describe the entire system or at least fully gasp the principles underlying it' (Ortner 1995: 174). After extensive theoretical debates and critiques of the limitations and weaknesses of these framings of thickness, in recent times, thick description still remains at the center of the ethnographic stance, but is now primarily understood as synonymous with *contextualization* (Ortner 1995:174). In my understanding, thick description could be seen as the consideration for, and the spelling out of, detailed descriptions of contextual aspects of our empirical research field, as well as our interlocutors. This could include sayings, descriptions of particular locations, situations, emotional reactions and responses, signs of affect, family backgrounds, religious beliefs and customs, social status, class backgrounds, smells, tastes, sensations, atmospheres, moods, symbols, as well as cultural and social codes and practices. Within ethnography, all these aspects would be seen as relevant for the understanding of the phenomena and practices of people in question.

Due to the richness of the empirical data gathered throughout participant observation, combined with the prolonged participation in the everyday lives and activities of our interlocutors as discussed above, ethnographic research methods and methodologies may enable researchers to gain a deeper, or different, understanding of the subject of our research.

However, before I introduce the analysis of the advantages, disadvantages and ethical challenges that may arise when applying these methods within Resistance Studies, I will below discuss the fourth aspect of ethnography that will be incorporated in this analysis: the ethnographic striving towards what is termed *emic perspectives*.

The Emic Perspective

Ethnographic research aims towards capturing the subject of research as far as it is possible from the perspective of the subjects involved. Clifford Geertz argued in 1975 how cultures often are expressed and

reproduced in symbols, and that in order to understand how symbols express culture, it becomes necessary to strive towards understanding a given society as much as possible from the point of view of the people representing that particular cultural context themselves. This is what he termed "emic perspectives" (Geertz 1975). Lassiter translates the emic perspective as an insider's view, as opposed to an "etic perspective," or outsider's view (Lassister, 2005). That is not to say that all ethnographic studies only capture or deal with emic perspectives. For instance, when James Scott argues that acts of hidden resistance are not necessarily seen or experienced as resistance by the people understood to be undertaking these forms of resistance, he is applying an etic perspective. However, the ideal of altering the emic perspectives of our research environments,

> '(…) does not imply that we must get "into people's heads". What it means, very simply, is that culture is a product of acting social beings trying to make sense of the world in which they find themselves, and if we are to make sense of a culture, we must situate ourselves in the position from which it was constructed' (Ortner, 1984:113).

Below I will critically discuss advantages, disadvantages and ethical challenges concerning ethnographic research within Resistance Studies, building upon the foundations of the earlier discussions.

Ethnography in Resistance Studies: A Critical Reflection

Participant observation is time-consuming. Establishing rapport, building up new social networks from scratch, building trust and acceptance, and learning new cultural and social rules – takes time. When the research context additionally requires the acquisition of new language skills, the time-aspect becomes even more pressing. Questions thus arise as to whether or not the added value that ethnography potentially has to offer Resistance Studies outweighs the additional time invested it the process.

Goffman's distinction between what he sees as the frontstage and the backstage of human self-presentation (Goffman, 1956) illuminates how individuals may present different images of themselves in public versus private spheres. By taking part in the everyday activities of our

interlocutors, participant observation enables resistance researchers to gain access to backstage spheres of resistance movements and practices. This may enable critical insights into internal contradictions and conflicts, as well as potential (re)productions of power and hierarchy within resistance communities, which resisting subjects themselves would otherwise be inclined to conceal, or alternatively unable to point out.

In cases where there are clear discrepancies between what is being done (practice) and what is being said (discourse) within resistance communities, ethnography offers methodological tools wherein these discrepancies could be revealed to a larger degree. Such revelations may offer original, nuanced, and illuminating insights for Resistance Studies. From this perspective, ethnographic research methods could become a tool for critical resistance analysis, hence reducing the likeliness of what Lila Abu-Lughod criticize as overly-romantic narratives of resistance communities within resistance studies (Abu-Lughod, 1990b).

However, the opposite argument could also be made. For instance, it could be argued that precisely because of that long-term participation in the everyday lives of our research subjects, there is a risk that ethnographic resistance researchers 'go native' with their resistance community. This refers to a loss of emotional and analytical distance to the study subject due to excessive identification and sympathy stemming from taking an active part within the studied community, a methodological challenge which has been widely observed and discussed in anthropological and ethnographic literature. In my view, this occurs when the boundaries between the emic and the etic becomes so blurred out that the researcher loses ability to see her research field from the outside. It could be argued that such deep, personal 'embeddedness', identification, involvement, and sympathy with the resistance community in question is more likely to develop with lengthy participant observation, striving towards capturing the insider's view.

However, precisely because participant observation enables access to backstage spheres of resistance communities, it becomes particularly useful for projects aiming to understand covert, hidden and everyday resistance practices which, as argued above, occur precisely in backstage spaces. Participant observation thus becomes a especially useful research

method to broaden our understanding of the manifestations, dynamics, meanings, and implications of hidden resistance.

At the same time, this also poses crucial ethical challenges. For instance, if, as Said (1989) suggests, hidden resistance takes its strength by virtue of being hidden, would not the practice of illuminating such resistance potentially reduce these practices' potential of undermining power? Resistance Studies could be seen as a field of research driven by solidarity with subordinated groups, movements and individuals who struggle to increase their space of maneuvering where such spaces are limited, or who struggle to reduce oppressive political and cultural structures, and thereby creating different forms of societal change. If resistance researchers then produce texts which potentially enable powerful institutions, companies or State representatives to more effectively weaken the resistance we claim to support, I argue that this would undermine an important aspect of the ethos that gives rise to Resistance Studies. To put it in other words: if our research could weaken rather than strengthen the resistance of the subordinated communities we seek to understand, could such research ever be ethically justified from Resistance Studies perspectives? Some may counter this proposition by arguing that an academic publication, with its inaccessible language and style, unlikely will be read by anyone other than fellow academics, and as a result will pose minimal damage to the research communities in question. Whereas the inaccessibility of much academic research could hardly be denied, it becomes dangerously simplistic to dismiss a potentially-complex ethical issue based on assumption that nobody will read it. After all, as researchers we write because we hope to be read, and we hope to be read because we believe that our research has some kind of societal relevance. For Resistance Studies as an emerging academic field, as well as for the individual researcher in question, publishing peer reviewed articles in academic journals is clearly a fruitful, expected and necessary endeavor to pursue. At the same time, from an ethico-political point of view, I suggest that publishing should never be done at the expense of the communities with whom we study. While I agree with Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, drawing from feminist ethnographic research traditions, that while critical self-reflexivity is of crucial ethico-political importance while conducting research, it is also important not to fall into the pitfalls of

'navel-gazing' (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2016:118). One example of navel-gazing could be to ascribe too much importance to our own research. At the same time, I still suggest we should take Said's critique seriously and subject any resistance research project, whether based on ethnographic methods or other methods, to thorough ethical scrutiny and critical self-reflexivity. Furthermore, it may be that not all forms and practices of hidden resistance in all contexts take their strength from being hidden, but some may. Hence, if we use ethnographic methods as tools to access backstage resistance spaces, spaces which reveal structures and resistance practices that otherwise would have been hidden to the general public, it becomes particularly crucial to critically scrutinize the potential consequences our published research may entail, rather than turning to the convenience of simplistic ethical reasoning.

Participant observation could pose particular emotional, psychological and security-related challenges to resistance researchers in a more direct way than less-embedded, more emotionally distant methods of empirical data collection. This is particularly the case in conflict-ridden, repressive regions where participant observation may raise suspicion from repressive authorities due to what could be perceived as ambiguous boundaries between the researcher on one side and the resistance community on the other. I argue that this challenge becomes even more likely in resistance research projects wherein participant observation includes actively taking part in resistance practices themselves such as demonstrations, the process of organizing events, political meetings, etcetera. In extreme cases, ethnographic Resistance Studies may evoke serious practical challenges, where destructive outcomes or obstacles could include detentions or arrests, denial of official research permits, as well as deportations and country-bans.

Furthermore, because resisting subjects in Resistance Studies are often in subaltern positions in terms of power, while also acting in opposition to power or directly challenging power, interlocutors in Resistance Studies are often in a vulnerable position. The nature of Resistance Studies as an academic pursuit makes us as researchers inclined to engage with individuals and communities with a higher likelihood of being subjected to arrests, and in some cases even torture and other types of violent treatment by individuals and institutions in

power. Whereas this is not particular to ethnographic resistance research in itself, it could be argued that the prolonged and visible appearance of an (ethnographic) resistance researcher who participates in the day-to-day activities of individuals active in a resistance community may draw additional attention from local authorities to the resisting subjects in question. This could potentially create additional ethical challenges to ethnographic resistance research projects, compared to resistance research based on other research methods.

Since the 1990s there has been a boom in the interest in subjectivities, affect and emotions in various social science disciplines, what has been termed *the emotional turn* (see e.g Flam & King, 2005; Gould, 2009; Thompson & Hoggett, 2012) and *the affective turn* respectively (Ahmed, 2013; Clough & Halley, 2007; Thompson & Hoggett, 2012; Wetherell, 2012). This reinforces the argument that resistance studies needs methodological perspectives which adequately capture subjectivities, as well as emotional and psychological dimensions of resistance (see Seymour, 2006). In a comparative ethnographic and linguistic study, James A. Russell shows how language used to describe and understand emotions differs widely across cultures and across linguistic groups (Russell, 1991). Illustrative of these differences could be the Arabic word tarab, used among other things to describe the particular feeling of ecstatic joy in personal encounters with music (Racy, 1991; Shannon, 2003), a feeling uncovered by words available in Indo-European languages like English. Other examples could be the Norwegian word *skadefryd* or its equivalent in German *schadenfreude*, describing the feeling of pleasure from another person's displeasure, another emotion word with no equivalent in English (Russell, 1991). Whereas most languages have lexical or conceptual equivalents to the English word for anger, there are some which do not, and others again – such as the case with Samoan and Biblical Hebrew – have several (see e.g. Fontaine, Scherer, & Soriano, 2013:337). In some languages, the word to describe anger is the same as the word used to describe *sadness* (ibid). What these studies illustrate is that words for emotions should be understood as cultural artifacts within their particular linguistic-cultural context without objective, essential meanings which could potentially be more easily translatable across languages. This, I would argue, indicates

that interview-based fieldworks in resistance studies in linguistic and cultural contexts, which differ from those of the researcher, could lead to insufficient or inadequate representations of precisely the subjectivities, experiences, narratives, emotional expressions and experiences of our interlocutors, which seem so important for resistance studies:

> (w)hen we talk about emotion terms cross-culturally, it is crucial to describe what they actually mean for representatives of a different cultural or linguistic group – or, more specifically, what kind of appraisals, subjective experiences, action tendencies, expressions, and body changes accompany them (see e.g. Fontaine, Scherer, & Soriano, 2013:337).

Furthermore, because resistance cannot be adequately understood without understanding its relation to power, resistance studies requires methodological approaches that consider, as broadly and holistically as possible, the contextual particularities within which the practices understood as resistance occur. As Hoffman argues, power and resistance are '…shaped by cultural context and informed by assumptions that are both culturally particularistic and highly divergent' (Hoffman 1999:673). Thus, both power and resistance is culturally, socially (and thereby also contextually) situated, making the thickness of ethnography particularly useful for understanding power and resistance. To illustrate my point, I would like to illuminate the case of 'foot-dragging' (see e.g. Colbourn, 1989), an act often referenced in resistance studies to illustrate how resistance can take covert forms. It is clear that the act of foot-dragging in itself does not necessarily need to bear direct relation to power or resistance. Rather, such an act becomes resistance due to those particular circumstances within which the foot-dragging occurs: for instance, when undertaken by a person or group of people in a subaltern position in terms of power, with the aim to undermine power or domination.

Conclusion

This article has critically investigated some of the advantages, disadvantages and ethical challenges concerning the application of ethnographic research methods within Resistance Studies. Four ethnographic aspects have been explored in depth. These have been the ethnographic stance,

thick description, the emic-etic distinction, and the practice of doing participant observation. By so doing, the aim of this article has been to broaden the understanding of research methods and methodologies from, and for, Resistance Studies perspectives.

Through long-term participant observation in the everyday activities of resistance communities and movements, resistance researchers become equipped with methodological tools which are useful for gaining insights into the long-term processes of movement driven social change, but also their challenges, deficits and the internal contradictions. Participant observation provides resistance researchers with methods that potentially give access to backstage spheres of resistance. This makes ethnography particularly useful in projects concerning hidden resistance, occurring precisely in such backstage spaces. However, as I have argued in this article, this also evokes a number of complex ethical challenges, requiring careful consideration from resistance researchers.

Ethnographic research methods also enable researchers to actively engage in resistance practices as a method for empirical data collection. In this way, ethnographic research methods could be seen as useful tools for bridging the academia-resistance/theory-practice divide which still characterizes resistance studies.

At the same time, ethnographic methods are time-consuming, could be emotionally and psychologically challenging, and potentially put both researcher(s) and interlocutors at additional risk, especially in repressive contexts.

This article concludes that ethnography has much to offer Resistance Studies. At the same time, it is of crucial importance that research ethics, security, future research possibilities, the likeliness of obtaining research permits, and potential unforeseen consequences of publishing research results are carefully considered before potentially embarking on ethnographic Resistance Studies research projects.

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