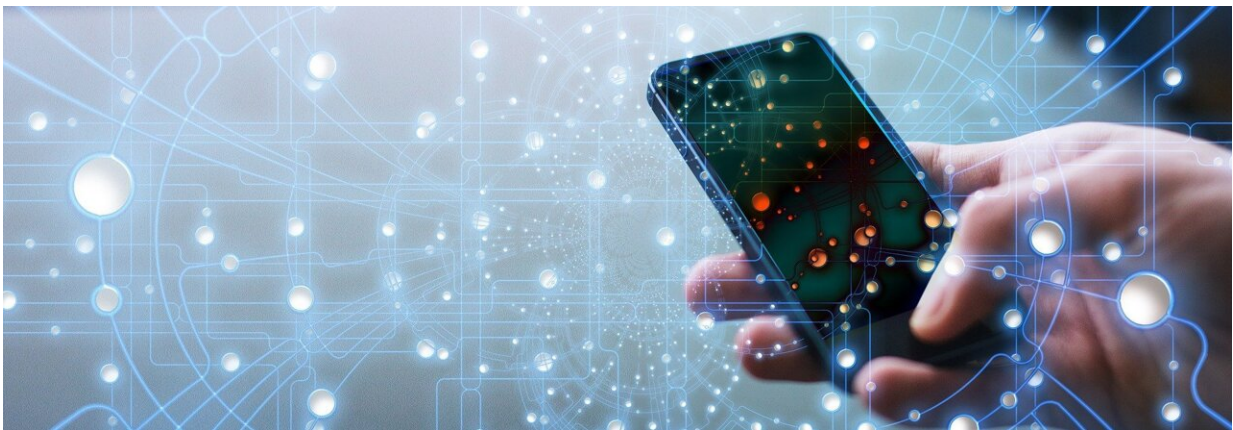


Review of education highlights network ethnography in researching global education policy

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The word "mobility" conjures up images and ideas of the movement of people, capital, and things from one place to another. The globalized world of the 21st century has ushered in an era of "new mobility" studies fronted by sociology researchers and human geography scholars. It encompasses not only the diverse movements of people, including tourists and corporate elites, and the associated regulatory policies like border control but also the flow of finances across various sectors and the transportation of goods and services, spanning from waste disposal to organ transport.

In an [article published for a special issue of the *ECNU Review of Education*](#), Dr. Diego Santori from the School of Education, Communication and Society at King's College London and Dr. Jin Jin from the School of Education at East China Normal University charted the landscape of [network](#) ethnography in education [policy](#) studies and highlighted the researchers breaking new ground in the field.

What exactly is network ethnography? It is a method that combines ethnographic methods with [social network analysis](#) to understand mobilities and dynamics in a policy network. The interactions within the network, their evolution, and their movement are analyzed to determine how policy shapes and changes.

The two main elements in a social network include the nodes and the edges—the nodes include individuals and organizations, and the edges link them together. The researchers focus on exploring what is shared through the networks, such as schemes, programs, artifacts, techniques, or technologies. Thus, network ethnography requires extensive internet searches on the actors, organizations, events, and their connections, sifting through material such as newsletters, press releases, videos, and speeches, among others, and attending conferences where network participants often come together.

For Dr. Santori and Dr. Jin, defining what is included and excluded in the policy network is a critical challenge for conducting network ethnography. "When conducting this searches on key organizations, we usually look at 'about us' tabs to access information about the governance structure of the organization, as well as 'our partners' tabs, which generally include information about associated organizations and business," they say.

"Thus, it is often difficult to make decisions about what nodes are beyond the scope of the network ethnography and hence to draw the

boundary around the network."

Another challenge for conducting network ethnography is their ever-changing nature. The time between recording and transcribing patterns of interaction and their dynamics, followed by the subsequent analysis and discussion in publications, might mean that the information has become outdated as policymakers and organizations change priorities. Dr. Santori and Dr. Jin suggest that improvising and planning simultaneously can help mitigate some of these effects.

"Network ethnography requires space for the unknown and the flexibility to navigate emerging data collection opportunities without diverting from the research aims and objectives," they say. "Those opportunities can look like accessing a partner organization that was not originally included in the [research design](#) or attending a network-related event that was not apparent when the project was conceived."

For Dr. Santori and Dr. Jin, shedding light on the varied relationships between policy mobilities and moorings in different contexts will propel the field forward. The researchers of this special issue by the *ECNU Review of Education* are grappling with unique and varied questions, such as "the structure and dynamics of the global education policy field, the divergences of policy networks in traditionally different policy spaces, the politics within policy networks and possibilities of reflexivity and resistance," they say.

In summary, the authors in this special issue deployed network ethnography in different countries. They also addressed different kinds of policy actors and investigated the effects of the related labor and social relations in shaping policy networks and [education](#) reforms. This work will potentially spark new ideas and conversations among researchers and stakeholders.

More information: Diego Santori et al, Globalization, Policy Mobilities, and the Method of Network Ethnography, *ECNU Review of Education* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/20965311231198254](https://doi.org/10.1177/20965311231198254)

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