

Call for Papers *FQS* Special Issue

"Qualitative Approaches in Social Network Analysis"

Guest Editors

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1. Focus of the Special Issue

Social network analysis (SNA) is one of the most promising and flourishing strands of research in social sciences. A variety of methodological traditions and theories have enabled this research to evolve, including conversation analysis, ethnography, small story research, field theory, *social world theory* and interactionism. Researchers apply a diversity of qualitative methods in empirical studies, which rely on different kinds of qualitative data collection including interviews, observations, and visualizations. While SNA is a research program that has advanced by applying and revisiting (quantitative) methods, in recent years the reflection, explicit elaboration and discussion of qualitative approaches has gained traction in social research literature.

In this *FQS* Special Issue on "Qualitative Approaches in Social Network Analysis", we engage with the rapidly growing field of expertise on qualitative methods in SNA. In particular, we are interested in stimulating and progressing the discussion in this field between "classical" SNA-approaches on the one hand and qualitative approaches (methodology, heuristic, method, etc.) on the other. Furthermore, we would like to systematize current approaches in the field of qualitative methods in SNA and offer different solutions for methodical and methodological challenges.

We invite contributions from all kinds of research traditions, theories and disciplines, which may address but are not restricted to one or more of the following topics:

1.1 Data collection

To date, the discussion on qualitative methods in SNA primarily concerns questions regarding the collection of qualitative network data and particularly how network maps are incorporated with qualitative interviews. The use of other qualitative data collection methods, such as observation, group discussion, document analysis, etc. has attracted by contrast, much less attention. Moreover, there is little systematic discussion on how the epistemological implications of qualitative methods can be combined with SNA research interests or on how qualitative methods are conceptually compatible with SNA research questions. We invite contributions from researchers in which questions of qualitative network data collection are addressed from a methodological perspective.

1.2 Data analysis

The question of data analysis is far less prominent in methodical and methodological debates than that of data collection. While current research practice appears to utilise general procedures such as content analysis or grounded theory, little is known about how qualitative network data analysis procedures. At the same time, analytic solutions and methodical innovations often develop "along the way" and within empirical research studies. In this Special Issue we would like to give room to the practice of working with qualitative network data. We particularly invite contributions which offer insight into the compatibility of qualitative methods and SNA-style research and how epistemological and methodological issues are resolved. Additionally, we invite contributions in which applications of established methods to qualitative SNA, or that detail methodical innovations are presented.

1.3 Qualitative methodology in social network analysis

Qualitative research ideally integrates epistemology, theory, methodology and analysis in a consistent manner (i.e. methodological holism). Against this backdrop, qualitative network analysis faces the question of its theoretical foundation. Theoretical premises permeate the research process from the research question to research design to techniques and methods of analysis. Thus, using or combining of network analytical perspectives with methods of collecting and analysing qualitative network data not only raises issues of research practice but also has theoretical implications. To date, the theoretical foundation of qualitative network research has been discussed in terms of relational approaches, qualitative approaches, or combining/integrating theoretical references. In the light of that, we call for contributions in which the implications of methodological holism for qualitative SNA are explored and resolved.

1.4 Reflexivity and research practice

Finally, SNA based on a qualitative perspective provokes reflexivity in different ways. One issue is to address the discussion on standards of qualitative research. What lessons can be drawn from the debate on quality criteria for qualitative social network analysis? Again, we think that this is important but largely undiscovered terrain of qualitative methods in SNA. Furthermore, qualitative network research addressing questions of reflexivity, also needs to reconcile issues of ethical standards, the role and function of participatory research elements, teaching, data security and the possibilities of the secondary use of data.

2. Timeline

- September 30, 2018: Deadline for abstracts
- October 15, 2018: Decisions with invitation for handing in a manuscript
- May 31, 2019: Deadline for article submission (first draft)
- June 2019: Review Workshop (peer review among authors)
- September 1, 2019: Deadline article submission (*second draft*)
- September, October 2019: minor revisions (if necessary)
- Until November 1, 2019: Delivery of all articles (*final draft*) to the guest editors
- March 2020: Publication of the Special Issue

3. Submission of Abstracts

Articles may be written in German or English language. Abstracts and contributions should follow the FQS guidelines for authors (<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>). Each submitted abstract should be between 400 and 500 words in length. The abstract needs to present a rationale for the proposed article that is grounded in background literature before outlining the main discussion points. In addition, authors need to submit a short biography of no more than 200 words, corresponding author contact details including their e-mail address.

Inquiries and proposals should be sent to the guest editors via e-mail until **September 30, 2018**:

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