

Symposium

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC TURN: PRACTICE AND POSSIBILITIES

**Engaging Lived Worlds Through
Reflexive and Critical Inquiry**

Call for papers



Vidyashilp University,
Bangalore



November, 2026

VU Ethnography Lab



**VIDYASHILP
UNIVERSITY**

THE SYMPOSIUM

This symposium aims to create a space for critical engagement, dialogue, and practice-based learning around ethnography. It seeks to support late-stage PhD scholars and early-career researchers in developing a grounded understanding of ethnographic methods while also engaging with contemporary debates.

We posit that while research across disciplines continues to expand, it is through sustained engagement with lived realities that knowledge gains depth and meaning. Ethnography offers a way to bridge this gap by situating inquiry within everyday life, relationships, and social contexts.

The symposium will bring together researchers, practitioners, and graduates to reflect on the question:

Why ethnography?

Concept Note

The use of ethnography has expanded significantly across disciplines in recent years. However, this expansion has often led to its use as a shorthand for qualitative research, and without adequate engagement with its methodological training in the interdisciplinary context. Ethnography is not merely a set of tools for data collection; it is a mode of inquiry grounded in immersion, reflexivity, and an attentiveness to lived experience.

These shifts are shaped by sociocultural transformations, institutional frameworks, digital environments, and deeply personal narratives. Understanding such complexities requires research approaches or practises that can engage with nuance, ambiguity, and context—qualities that are central to ethnographic practice. Despite the use of ethnography by several disciplines, its expansion is not seen in the methodological training. Many young and early-career scholars, especially in an interdisciplinary context, encounter ethnography without engagement with its theoretical grounding or practical application. This results in a gap between methodological aspiration and practice.

The Ethnography lab at Vidyashilp University invites submissions from late-stage PhD Scholars and early career researchers for a symposium that seeks to explore and address this gap by foregrounding ethnography as both a method and a way of knowing.

Some of the Key Concerns that Guide this Symposium

01 Ethnography as Theory

Ethnography is not merely a method but is deeply embedded in theoretical traditions that shape how social reality is understood and interpreted. From interpretive and symbolic approaches to feminist, critical, and decolonial frameworks, ethnography is intertwined with ways of knowing that foreground meaning, context, and lived experiences. This symposium seeks to revisit ethnography's theoretical foundations and examine how theory informs ethnographic practice and analysis.

02 Ethnography as Practise

At its core, ethnography is a practice grounded in immersion, observation, and relational engagement. It involves sustained interaction with people, spaces, and contexts. This raises important questions about fieldwork, methods of data generation, modes of documentation, and the craft of ethnographic writing. The symposium aims to create space for reflecting on the everyday practices, challenges, and learnings of doing ethnography.

03 Ethnography as a Philosophy

Beyond theory and method, ethnography can be understood as a philosophical orientation towards the social world—one that values openness, attentiveness, and humility. It requires an engagement with ambiguity, contradiction, and complexity, and resists reductive or extractive forms of knowledge production. This perspective foregrounds ethnography as a way of being in and engaging with the world, rather than simply a research technique.

04 Ethnography in Multidisciplinary contexts

Ethnography is increasingly being adopted across disciplines, including law, education, public policy, health, and the social sciences. While this expansion creates opportunities for methodological innovation, it also raises questions about adaptation, translation, and the limits of ethnographic approaches in different disciplinary contexts. The symposium will explore how ethnography can be meaningfully situated within and across diverse fields of inquiry.

05 Challenges of Ethnography

Ethnographic research is marked by complex ethical and methodological challenges. Researchers must navigate issues of consent, representation, and responsibility, particularly when working with vulnerable or marginalised communities. At the same time, ethnography demands ongoing reflexivity—an engagement with how the researcher's own identity, location, and power shape the research process. The symposium seeks to foreground these challenges as central, rather than peripheral, to ethnographic work.

We invite scholars to engage critically with ethnography as a mode of inquiry. Selected papers will contribute to deepening its conceptual clarity, methodological rigour, and relevance in understanding contemporary social realities.

THEMES INCLUDE, BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

- 01** Ethnography as Theory
- 02** Ethnography as Practise
- 03** Ethnography as a Philosophy
- 04** Ethnography in the multidisciplinary context
- 05** Challenges of Ethnography

DATES:

Abstract submission deadline: 8th September 2026

Announcement of selected submissions: 22nd September 2026

Full paper submission: 22nd October 2026

Symposium Date: 12th and 13th November 2026

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

We invite contributors to prepare abstracts in accordance with the guidelines outlined below:

- Word limit for abstract: 300–350 words (excluding references)
 - Word limit for full paper: 6000–8000 words (including references)
 - Please mention the full paper title, and authors' names and affiliations
 - Clearly outline research focus, methodological approach, and relevance to the symposium
 - Complete referencing required (APA style preferred)
 - Any illustrations, tables, or images must be numbered and sources mentioned
 - Please submit your abstract in Word file format
-

SUBMIT TO:

Please note once accepted, a registration fee of Rs. 1000 should be paid and guidelines for full paper submission will be shared. For out-stationed participants, accommodation for two nights will be provided, and reimbursement for 3AC train fare will be provided.

<https://forms.gle/BnDd52L8NckqdnxP8>

ABOUT US

The VU Ethnography Lab

The Ethnography Lab at Vidyashilp University, housed within the Vidyashilp Research Centre, is an interdisciplinary initiative dedicated to advancing ethnography as both a method and a mode of inquiry. It brings together faculty and students to engage critically with sustained fieldwork, reflexive practice, and lived experiences. The Lab fosters collaborative learning communities and situates ethnography within broader academic and public conversations.

Abhishek B S, Organiser

Abhishek B S is an Adjunct Faculty member and Ph.D. Scholar at Vidyashilp University. With a background in Media and Cultural Studies, his research focuses on migration and everyday life in Bangalore's urban peripheries.

Gaana Reddy G S, Organiser

Gaana Reddy G S is a Ph.D. Scholar at Vidyashilp University. With a background in Forensic Psychology from Sheffield Hallam University, she engages with survivors' lived experiences and conducts virtual ethnography on digital discourses surrounding narcissism, bringing together psychological inquiry and socio-cultural analysis.

Muralidhara T R, Organiser

Muralidhara T R is a Ph.D. Scholar at Vidyashilp University. Drawing from extensive teaching experience across multiple educational boards and the corporate sector, his work examines innovative approaches to learning and seeks to bridge theory and practice in educational spaces.

Ranjana Raghunathan, Adviser

Dr. Ranjana holds a Ph.D in Anthropology from the National University of Singapore. From establishing the Ethnography Lab to co-founding the VU Wellness Centre at Vidyashilp University, she has contributed immensely to holistic student engagement. Her methods bridge the gap between research and pedagogy, fostering critical reflection and real-world inquiry.

For further questions:

ethnography@vidyashilp.edu.in

or Visit our Ethnography Lab page on vidyashilp.edu.in