

Making the familiar strange. Autoethnography and reflexivity in the cultural analysis of home

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Cultural researchers are supposed to be able to look at familiar phenomena with 'new eyes', turning the mundane into the exotic. A good training in making the familiar strange is looking as an autoethnographer at your own home. For most of us, it is something so well-known that it is a real challenge to see it in a new light.

In my presentation, I will use the home as a case to develop analytical strategies to problematize what is taken for granted. Is it possible to discover something new and strange in your own place of living? It means to start thinking reflexively about your home as a cultural construction, a set of symbols and an embodied way of living.

To make oneself strange to the familiar and become surprised by the ordinary is a demanding task that calls for practice as well as unconventional methods and analytical tools. You have both to be prepared with well thought-out questions and to make yourself wide open to the unexpected.

In the following, I will try some approaches for exploring different kinds of homes, both those you already are acquainted with and those you have never seen before. What kinds of symbolic expressions, personified experiences and emotional manifestations are produced inside the walls? How may a home be used to create and maintain cultural identity?