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‘Critical places’ as a method to ethnographically study health, body and accessibility

12. Health Matters - Culture, Health and Body in Medical Humanities

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Abstract

This is a conceptual paper trying to present and develop the concept of “Critical places” and how it can be used when studying the everyday experience of living with long-term sickness or/and disability. I developed the concept a couple of years ago in a chapter about young men living with asthma and allergy (2007). The concept analyse the duality of both physical risk and social benefit and how they can collide in one specific place and create a bodily situation where the individual need to act. “Critical places” focus on the phenomenological thought about doing and what happens in the specific situation, in this way the concept can also be seen as an ethnographic method. As a more theoretical concept “critical places” can be used for a hermeneutic analyse of risk-taking, hiding from stigma, identity formation, power relations in a specific place, highlight limitations of accessibility and so on. I have also used the concept in a couple of chapters concerning disability (Hansson 2009, Hansson 2013, Alftberg, Apelmo & Hansson 2016). The concept have also been used by Cridland (2017) in here ethnographic study of eating communities and by Hagen (2012) in his study about people living with Huntington’s disease. In this paper I will develop the concept with my new research project about limitations of accessibility for people living with disability.