THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Edited by
Raza Mir and Sanjay Jain

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

10

BRICOLAGE IN THE FIELD

Experimenting in Ethnography

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Ethnography seems to be in fashion these days (Van Maanen, 2011, 2015; Jarzabkowski et al., 2015) as suggested by the proliferation of ethnography-inspired or ethnography-labeled studies in organizational and information systems research. Some might argue, however, that many of these studies do not rely solely on ethnography's characteristic fieldwork. Long immersions have become rare, and some studies do not involve participant observations at all. Instead, they have been replaced with a mix of interviews, videos, texts, archival data, and online data. While these changes call into question whether such studies are ethnographies, I argue and try to demonstrate that ethnography is more than a set of methods; it is an epistemic stance that can be enacted through different practices. What makes a study ethnographic is not so much the methods but the stance that the researcher enacts.

It is important to remember that, in essence, ethnography demands continuous experimentation or ongoing bricolage in the field, where the ethnographer adapts her methods to the phenomena she studies. Hence, while the essential skills of observation and of uncovering patterns remain relevant, ethnographers today are required "to understand very complex, rapidly changing settings, where multiple activities are carried out by multiple actors with multiple agendas, relying on multiple, complex technologies" (Jordan, 1996: 201). These changes call for revisiting the traditional notion of the field and what it means to do fieldwork. I make no claims here about adequately describing new methods used in ethnography and its evolution. I present a personal vantage point deeply influenced by the various studies in which I have been involved and have always experimented.

Ethnography as an Epistemic Stance

Instead of seeing ethnography as a given method or specific type of study, I view it as an epistemic stance,[1] a way of knowing enacted in practice and the kind of knowledge that results from that practice. Ethnography is about understanding others' perspective by attending to their context and practices as much as what they say. By developing "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973), ethnographers attempt to explain how these experiences represent a "web of meanings" (Geertz, 1973: 5) or the "cultural understandings" (Fayard et al., 2016a) in which people live. The encounter with the "foreign" is the very essence of ethnography (Agar, 1980), and this encounter is dynamic and iterative. We go and spend time in the field observing and asking

questions. We then leave to reflect on the experience; we write memos and refine our questions. We then go back in the field to ask more questions and observe yet again before leaving to reflect even more.

Ethnography is experimental and deeply improvisational. Going in the field requires embracing ambiguity: We start by not knowing which questions to ask and by being ready to be surprised, and we continuously evolve and fine-tune our questions, poised to challenge our interpretations. It's in the field that we come to understand what we will need to learn next. There are neither recipes nor procedures for successful ethnography; at best, there are tricks of the trade (Becker, 1998) to help decide, depending on the study's specific context, how to proceed.

Ethnography aims to identify and uncover the emergent and local meanings of behaviors, interactions, and work practices, and this happens by "being there" through fieldwork or participant observation. At the core of ethnographic practice is fieldwork:

> Fieldwork usually means living with and living like those who are studied. In its broadest, most conventional sense, fieldwork demands the full-time involvement of a researcher over a lengthy period of time (typically unspecified) and consists mostly of ongoing interaction with the human targets of the study on their home ground.
>
> *(Van Maanen, 2011: 2)*

The ethnographer becomes the research instrument as she partakes in the daily activities and interactions of a given group or organization (Mauthner and Doucet, 2008; Van Maanen, 2011; Gluesing, 2013). Hence, doing ethnography is always personal because the data collected are dependent on the ethnographer's own experience (Van Maanen, 2011).

And time is of the essence for ethnographic understandings to emerge (Cefkin, 2013). Being there in the field and for an extended period of time is particularly important because what people say they do and think they do versus what they actually do are usually not the same (Geertz, 1973; Forsythe, 2001). It is only with systematic participant observation that these disparities become visible; it is only with long immersion in the field that tacit beliefs and knowledge may be uncovered (Gluesing, 2013; Forsythe, 2001). It also takes time to learn how to "see" and "hear," as well as to unlearn all we might believe as "outsiders" or what we might start to believe (and think we understand) when we begin spending time in the field.

Hence, traditionally, the ethnographic stance is associated with a view of ethnography (somewhat idealized, many would say, and increasingly difficult to enact, as I will argue) where the ethnographer, a lone wolf, immerses herself for a lengthy period of time within a specific community, group, or organization to do fieldwork. Some exemplary ethnographies are the fieldwork of anthropologists such as Geertz and Malinowski who spent an extended amount of time in "exotic" communities in Bali and Trobriand Island. In organizational studies, fieldwork is still presented as the lengthy immersion of a sole researcher in a somewhat "foreign" organizational context (e.g., Dalton, 1959; Kanter, 1977; Kunda, 1992; Orr, 1996; Weeks, 2003; Bechky, 2003; Anteby, 2008). However, such ethnographies are less frequent, and when they happen, they tend to be singular – "once in a lifetime," so to speak, and typically take the form of a dissertation.[2]

Beyond personal and institutional constraints (e.g., family life, tenure requirements, and the need to publish), changes in the phenomena that ethnographers of organizations study also explain the evolution of ethnographic practice and fieldwork. The field is no longer a single, local site but one that expands across multiple boundaries of geography, time, occupations, media, and technology. Ethnographers now study work distributed around the world across

numerous teams and organizations whose many interactions are mediated by technology. Even when collocated, work heavily relies on communication technologies that limit what ethnographers can observe. Work in action often becomes invisible, and other data need to be collected, analyzed, and interpreted (Riopelle, 2013). If, in traditional ethnography, the primary research instrument is the ethnographer, it becomes harder to rely just on one individual and solely on participant observations because interactions are distributed and mediated by technology. This challenge becomes even more salient when the interactions studied take place (mostly) online.

The Ethnographer as *Bricoleur*

Because ethnography is a local method that looks to uncover emergent local, emic meanings and work practices (Van Maanen, 2011), it cannot be procedural. It is more of a toolbox of methods that need to be adjusted, evolved, and adapted to a specific context. Methods are not fixed in stone but evolve over time in the field and across sites (Van Maanen, 2015). The ethnographer is a bricoleur, a Jill-of-all trades who engages in bricolage, defined by Lévi-Strauss as the process of creating or making from a diverse range of available things. She must creatively use and develop tools and methods that allow her to understand interactions and practices, uncover meanings and patterns, and make sense of them. As the phenomena that ethnographers study become more complex, more distributed, and less visible, they have to become more creative, even if it means moving away from what is thought of as the core practices of ethnography, such as observation and lengthy immersion. It might mean using video or other technology, collecting data from social media, having teams of ethnographers instead of a single individual, or shortening time spent in the field. In the following sections, I discuss three methodological adaptations – the use of video, team-based ethnography, and virtual ethnography – that have emerged in response to changes in the field. The list is not exhaustive; it reflects trends in the new methods and tools used by ethnographers, as well as some of my own experiments in the field.[3] (See Table 10.1 for a summary of the advantages and challenges of each adaptation and a description of the different forms they can take.)

Bricolage with Video

More and more, video has become an investigative tool used by researchers in qualitative studies, particularly those that seek to understand multimodal interactions (Jewitt, 2012). Its use is not new:

> Ethnography has always been carried out with technology support, from Margaret Mead's notebook and film camera and the 40 pounds of video equipment I used to drag into the field in the 1970s and the 1980s, to the ubiquitous tape recorders that still allow us to catch interactions but now with increasing granularity.
>
> *(Jordan, 2013: 15)*

And, with the low cost of video cameras that have become lighter and less bulky, as well as the availability of video features on mobile phones and easy-to-use cheap or free editing software, the use of video in research has become more accessible (Jewitt, 2012). Researchers have used video for many years, especially in workplace studies (e.g., Jordan, 1996; Heath and Luff, 1992; Suchman and Trigg, 1991; Goodwin, 2000). For example, Jordan and her team (1996) used video to track communication between airlines' operations room and flight personnel, customer agents, baggage crew, etc. at a West Coast airport. They used seven cameras running at the same

time in order to investigate how activities in each location affected those in others (Jordan, 1996). Communication scholars and other researchers interested in discourse analysis have also used video extensively to analyze ongoing communication processes and their role in organizations (Cooren et al., 2007; Goodwin and Goodwin, 1992).

The use of video in workplace studies has been particularly productive for researchers seeking to design new technologies and tools that support collaboration and communication (e.g., Jordan, 1996; Suchman and Trigg, 1991; Heath and Luff, 1992; Mackay et al., 1998). Many of these studies embrace the interaction-analysis approach, an interdisciplinary video-based analysis "for the empirical investigation of the interaction of human beings with each other and with objects in their environment" (Jordan and Henderson, 1995: 39).

Video analysis usually involves video recorded in conjunction with ethnographic fieldwork. During a preliminary fieldwork phase, researchers identify "interactional 'hot spots'" (Jordan and Henderson, 1995: 43) that they then record. In my own experience with video, I always combined it with participant observation. For the first six weeks of a study of air traffic controllers in Athis Mons air traffic control center near Paris's Orly Airport, for instance, we simply observed the controllers at work (Mackay et al., 1998). We then began to systematically videotape. We also took copious notes and asked the controllers many in situ questions during the taping and outside of it. These field notes proved to be crucial during the analysis of the video, and they were key to developing a cultural understanding of air traffic controllers' work practices.

The combination of videotaping and traditional fieldwork allows for a dialogue between the ethnographic data that provide general background and framing and the microanalysis of video that informs general ethnographic understanding. This approach is inductive and deeply empirical, following Geertz's advice (1973: 24) that theory should stay "rather closer to the ground than tends to be the case in sciences more able to give themselves over to imaginative abstractions."

Video data provides data that ethnographers may not have been able to capture in their notes, thus alleviating concerns about not being able to capture "everything." Video also invites experimentation with data analysis because it allows for multiple viewings[4] where other researchers can be invited to share different perspectives, thus enriching the interpretation. Study participants may also be invited to review the tapes or collages of video segments and to provide their own interpretations. For example, during our study of air traffic controllers, we edited video segments to reflect our interpretations of the resulting patterns and categories and shared them with participants to elicit their interpretations. This led to very rich conversations about work practices, and associated assumptions emerged. It also gave us the opportunity to ask for clarification and to gather complementary contextual information. Video can thus become a tool for engaging participants and articulating tacit knowledge.

While video has a lot of potential for ethnographers because it allows them to collect data simultaneously in different places and to create a shared repository that can be revisited and analyzed, it has, like any tool or method, limitations.[5] The representational bias of video has been discussed at length. Video is always a *re*-presentation; it is not an emic perspective. Participants do not necessarily see what is "shown" on the video nor do they see what researchers view when they look at it. It always requires some – in fact, several – layers of interpretation. Goldman and McDermott (2009: 101) argue that

> the power of video is not in what [the tapes] make easily clear, but in what they challenge and disrupt in the initial assumptions of an analysis. They are a starting point for understanding the reflexive, patterned ways interactions develop.

Video data becomes data through the interpretative act of researchers, similar to the interpretative act of the ethnographer making sense of her observations and field notes.

The representational bias also stems from the fact that videos always show just one aspect of the situation recorded from a certain perspective dependent on the camera's positioning. What might seem like researchers' technical decisions (e.g., where is the camera located? Is it a wide-angle view or a zoom? At what level is the audio set? Are there just one or several cameras?[6]) are far from insignificant because they define what is visible and what is audible. All the studies in which I used video (Mackay et al., 1998; Fayard, 2006; Fayard and Weeks, 2007) involved a lot of tinkering with the camera locations and angles. In all cases, the choices we made meant that some interactions were visible while others were hidden.

To address the representational bias, an option could be to have the actors carry the video. This was the aim of the SubCam ("subjective"[7] camera), a miniature, wearable, wide-angle video camera clipped onto a pair of glasses (Fayard and Lahlou, 1998) that recorded individual activity from the point of view of the user wherever he or she went. It was developed as part of a study of the impact of information technology on office work (Fayard and Lahlou, 1998). Originally, the research team experimented with fixed cameras but soon realized that the resulting videos mostly captured empty offices because the managers they studied were often outside their offices. To replicate Mintzberg's (1970) structured observation while being less intrusive, the SubCam was developed to collect participants' perspective.[8] Yet, even in this case, the videos were only a partial representation. Moreover, to be able to make sense of the videos, observational data were collected. Other researchers (Cooren et al., 2007; Meunier and Vasquez, 2008) have experimented with video shadowing[9] as another way to stay close to participants' perspective.

In video-based research, as in any fieldwork, researchers always have to play, improvise, and experiment with the use of videos, depending on the specific site or sites of their study. While the medium provides rich data (different and/or multiple perspectives), it becomes meaningful only during the interpretative process that occurs as a result of observations and interviews collected during the study.

Teams for Studying Distributed Organizations and Phenomena

While ethnography was originally conceived as the act of a lone fieldworker, ethnographers have increasingly experimented with teamwork to develop deeper understandings of growing global, complex, and distributed phenomena (Marcus, 1995; Van Maanen, 2006; Jordan, 1996; Jarzabkowski et al., 2015). For example, to follow the rollout of programs and technologies from headquarters into different field organizations, Jordan's (1996) team chose to have two-ethnographer teams in a number of field sites simultaneously and a permanent team at headquarters. Similarly, Barley and Kunda (2006) teamed up in their multi-sited study of the market for temporary professionals when they studied contractors, clients, and three staffing agencies. This allowed them, they claim, to access "the global."

Jarzabkowski et al. (2015) experimented further by conducting global fieldwork in 25 organizations across 15 countries with a team of up to five members to explore the "global practice of reinsurance trading" (p. 9). They reflected on the challenges that emerge from global, team-based ethnography,[10] especially when it came to sharing data and developing a common understanding that went beyond each individual's perspective on the phenomenon. Team sharing is particularly difficult because it involves reflection, which is usually seen as a solitary activity (Barry et al., 1999; Jarzabkowski et al., 2015). To support team-sharing and collective reflection, Jarzabkowski et al. (2015) developed various practices, such as sharing in the field (via emails,

Skype, etc.), creating a common repository of data as well as norms and codes for note taking and analysis.

My personal experience with team-based ethnography originally began as a single ethnography of the culture of an international company, which grew into a project lasting seven years and including 30 studies of various geographies and units (Fayard et al., 2016a; Fayard and Van Maanen, 2015). As the original study expanded to include various sites, several post-docs[11] joined as research assistants involved in field and analytic work. These post-docs were involved in a company-wide comparative study across different geographies and segments that we conducted as part of this overall research project. That specific study lasted two years and involved 17 sites and more than 220 interviews, complemented by site visits and observations (at ten sites). Team ethnography in this case allowed us to have breadth. Like other team-based ethnographies (Jordan, 1996; Jarzabkowski et al., 2015; Barley, 1996), we met regularly, communicated frequently and reliably, developed codes and norms for team sharing, and established a common repository. Our meetings were essential in helping us share interesting hunches and predictions that we could then check in the field. They also helped us revisit our individual and group assumptions about the culture of the different sites we were studying.

Barley (1996)[12] also reported a team-based, multi-site ethnography where eight researchers (a sociologist, an anthropologist, five doctoral students, and an undergraduate) developed ethnographies of technicians' occupations. In that case, team ethnography did not aim to understand a distributed phenomenon. The goal was to develop a deep understanding of technicians' work by comparing and contrasting multiple occupations. The team chose "to emulate [a project overlay] structure by becoming experts in particular occupations within the context of a team that could bring individual ethnographers' expertise to bear on an array of comparative inquiries" (p. 414). Two products emerged from this collaborative work:[13] "emic ethnographies of individual occupations and etic analyses grounded in the comparison of emic data collected across multiple occupations" (p. 415).

In the cases discussed above, team-based ethnography emerged to develop a rich understanding of a phenomenon (e.g., distributed or global) that called for more than a solitary researcher. But collaborative ethnography does not completely erase the personal nature of ethnography, which always requires each ethnographer to, in some ways, "subject … the self – body, belief, personality, emotions and cognitions – to a set of contingencies that play on others" (Van Maanen, 2011: 219). From the coming together of multiple selves emerges various points of view that allow for rich and deep understanding, but this variety also makes reflection and sense-making more challenging (but not impossible) and, in some ways, more interesting as it becomes a collective practice. Team research and the use of communication technologies to support the work have substantially transformed ethnographic practice. The distinction between data collection, analysis, and write-up are blurred, and feedback from others is included from the beginning unlike traditional ethnography, where the ethnographer does not receive much feedback on her insights and interpretations until long after the fieldwork has been completed (Jordan, 1996).[14] In that sense, some might argue that these new practices have allowed "'sense-making conversations' [to] become more inclusive and more substantial" (Jordan, 1996: 205).

Virtual Ethnography

With the growing ubiquity of technology and the development of new media, technology-mediated communication has moved to the foreground of work even when collocated, thus making a large part of the work invisible (Riopelle, 2013: 39). In order to observe work in action, ethnographers need to pay attention to technology-mediated interactions and communications.

Moreover, the development of the Internet and new media has led to the rise of novel forms of organizing, especially for online communities such as OpenSource, Wikipedia, and online forums (O'Mahony and Lakhani, 2011), where technology is the main medium for interactions. Consequently, studies relying heavily on online data have flourished (e.g., Fayard and DeSanctis, 2010; O'Mahony and Ferraro, 2007; Scott and Orlikowski, 2014; Schultze, 2012; Vaast, 2007; Nardi, 2010), and a new form of ethnography – virtual or online ethnography (Hine, 2000) – has surfaced. These developments raise several issues for ethnography, particularly in terms of how the "field" – now mostly or partly text on a screen produced by collocated or distributed members – and "being there" are defined.

Being there is challenging even for ethnographers studying work in organizations where organizational members are collocated, because they often inhabit both physical and digital spaces, making it difficult for an ethnographer to observe work and interactions. Riopelle (2013) addressed this challenge in his study of a product innovation team in an automotive company composed of 298 staff distributed in various locations worldwide by combining conventional ethnography methods (i.e., observations and interviews) and those based in technology (emails, analytics). He reviewed 45,000 emails and created a dashboard of indicators that made the characteristics of virtual work among 2,000 people around the globe "visible." These insights then informed interviews and observations. Likewise, in a study of service designers, we complemented our interviews and observations with ongoing monitoring and analysis of service designers' websites, blogs, Twitter accounts, and LinkedIn groups (Fayard et al., 2017) to better understand the phenomenon at the community level (e.g., What issues were discussed? What stories were told?), as well as how service designers presented themselves to the public and potential clients.

Being there seems even more challenging when studying online communities where technology-mediated communication is the main form of interaction. *Virtual (or online) ethnography* has emerged as a new method, but it is more than that, I would argue: The qualifier "virtual" emphasizes the role of technology as the primary medium of interaction and the consequences it has for fieldwork.[15] Virtual ethnography, like traditional ethnography, consists of deep, long-term immersion in an online environment where the ethnographer seeks to understand the phenomenon from the point of view of the "natives" and to develop a rich account of a specific online world. But the "context" here is not a collocated, physical world. It is usually a web platform or virtual environment where people can create avatars, as in World of Warcraft or Second Life. For example, through long-term immersion as a participant observer in the community, Rheingold (1993) was able to provide a thick description of the WELL's (one of the first virtual communities) culture and norms of interactions. In his book, Rheingold describes his experience as one very similar to anthropologists who explore exotic places with fundamentally different communication norms. In her study of a discussion group used by soap opera fans, Baym (1995) started as a group member and was a participant observer for three years. She collected messages that she later analyzed; she also conducted interviews with other group members. Akin to any ethnography, the research focus continuously evolved as Baym spent time "in the field" and reflected on her insights, which led to a deep understanding of the social life and assumptions of the community. In another recent virtual ethnography, Nardi (2010) spent more than three years as a participant observer of World of Warcraft games in the United States and China. Nardi quickly realized in this case that she needed to mix observations of online interactions with observations of the offline interactions of players in Internet cafes in China.

My own study of the OpenIDEO community,[16] an open social innovation community (Fayard and Metiu, 2012; Fayard and Levina, 2015), nicely illustrates how "being there" can become multi-formed. The fieldwork for this study was originally online: I was a participant

observer on all 22 challenges posted on the platform for nearly three-and-a-half years. I complemented those observations with interviews (formal and informal) with community members, sponsors, and members of the OpenIDEO team. I realized after a year that, as with other virtual ethnographies (e.g., Nardi, 2010), I needed to engage in offline observations to develop a broader understanding of the online community's context. For instance, when meet-ups inspired by OpenIDEO challenges sprang up in various cities, I participated in those in New York. As I regularly reflected on my participation in the community, it became clear that "the field" was amorphous and not tied to a specific "geography," even a virtual one. "Being there" therefore means "experiential rather than physical displacement" (Hine, 2000: 45). It is an engagement in a place constructed through the sociomaterial practices and interactions taking place in and afforded by the community's environment (Fayard, 2012). Being there still matters[17] in studies of online interactions and communities, but what "being there" means is hazy and open to constant redefinition, which does not necessarily mean being only online.[18]

Virtual ethnography is not a stable form but an evolving one that is adapting to new forms of online interactions. It began as text-based interactions and moved to include many forms of online engagement, such as multiplayer online games (e.g., World of Warcraft), a graphical world such as Second Life, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace), blogging, and online forums (Hine, 2008). Being flexible and agile – important in all ethnographies – is crucial in virtual ethnographies because the notion of the field itself is radically altered: Its definition and how you get there are blurry and need to be continuously constructed and refined. For example, researchers often assume that there will be *one* online location, "the field," where interactions take place. Yet, they often end up realizing that the field expands offline (e.g., Internet cafés or other venues where people play World of Warcraft (Nardi, 2010), or meet ups where community members met to work on OpenIDEO challenges) and/or though the use of other media (messaging, Skype, Yammer, etc.). It is therefore important to keep in mind that "'the field' is an epistemological rather than an ontological category: It is a state of mind" (Hine, 2004: 8). In response to changes in organizations that increasingly rely on technology, the emergence of new forms of organizations such as online communities, and the muddying of the physical and the virtual, "ethnography today is becoming a hybrid methodology" (Riopelle, 2013: 38).

Concluding Remarks

Bricolage in the field has always been an important element of ethnography; today it is more essential than ever. As the phenomena studied by ethnographers become more global and distributed and thus less "visible" to the traditional lone observer, and as technology becomes as ubiquitous for those we study as for us, ethnographers have experimented with new methodological adaptations in the field. As with any method, each experiment has advantages and challenges (see Table 10.1). Rather than quibble over methods and tools to determine if they belong or are aligned with conventional ethnography, however, it is more fruitful to think of all methods as complementary to and supportive of enacting the ethnographic stance understood as improvisational and experimental.

Instead of trying to sort different methods and approaches – individual or team-based, handwritten or video-based observations, collocated or virtual – that may be seen as polar opposites, it is more productive to consider whether they allow us to enact an ethnographic stance, i.e., being there, being open to surprises, improvising and experimenting in response to hunches that surface in the field, and continuously engaging in the interpretative process. The generative power of the multiple experiments, tools, and formats we see emerging should be evaluated not

Table 10.1 Three Forms of Bricolage to Adapt to Changes "in the Field"

Methodological Adaptations	*Advantages*	*Challenges*	*Different Approaches and Exemplary Papers*
Video ethnography	• "Seeing more" than what one can capture in one's notes. • Capturing interactions from different angles or at the same time in different places. • Data can be analyzed multiple times and by different people.	• "Sensory" overload including data management, coding, and sampling. • Representational bias: Videos always show one aspect of the situation recorded. They need to be complemented with observations (and interviews). They become meaningful data only through the interpretative process central to ethnography.	• One or multiple fixed cameras at various locations (Jordan, 1996; Suchman and Trigg, 1991; Heath and Luff, 1992; Goodwin, 2000; Mackay et al., 1998; Fayard, 2006; Fayard and Weeks, 2007). • Mobile video. • Shadowing: The first author spent 12 days in the field with a camera held at belly level, shadowing the head of the MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières) mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Cooren et al., 2007). See also Meunier and Vasquez (2008). • Embarked video: Participants were asked to wear the SubCam for several days (Fayard and Lahlou, 1998).
Team-based ethnography	• Developing a deeper understanding of global distributed phenomena through multi-site ethnography. • Multiplicity of perspectives that allows comparison of and contrast across cases.	Difficult to share data and develop a collective reflection and common understanding that goes beyond each individual's perspective.	• Multi-site ethnography with studies done by several individual researchers (Barley, 1996; Fayard et al., 2016c). • Pairs of researchers engaged in a multi-site ethnography of a global phenomenon (Jordan, 1996; Jarzabkowski et al., 2015).
Virtual ethnography	• Access the invisible work and interactions that have become part of everyday life at work (even when collocated) and in occupations and communities. • Study new forms of organizing, such as online communities.	What "being there" means can be amorphous because people use multiple communication media and as the boundaries between physical and digital spaces are increasingly blurred.	• Analyzing "invisible" work done online (Riopelle, 2013; Fayard et al., 2016b) • Participant observation in online communities (Rheingold, 1993; Baym, 1995; Nardi, 2010; Fayard and Metiu, 2012).

(solely) by their ability to address different questions more or less adequately but by the presence of the adventurous spirit of discovery offered by ethnography.

Current trends in organizational and information systems research and the questions they prompt are nothing new. They simply invite us as ethnographers to keep being reflective and remember that the field is always constructed through a social process. The field is similarly constructed during the research stage. Being in the field is not a stand-alone activity that takes place at the beginning of the project; rather, it is through the interpretative process that the scope of the project arises. This ongoing interpretative process (in and outside of the field, on the way, and in between) allows us to go beyond explaining the "results" of cultural production and to explain, or at least illuminate, the process of how a given state of affairs (the production) has been achieved and is sustained.

Acknowledgments

This essay has emerged from ongoing conversations with my co-authors, research collaborators, and students, who have all helped me reflect on my research practice. Our research collaborations – explicitly mentioned or not in this chapter – have led me to better articulate my epistemological stance. In particular, I would like to thank Beth Bechky, Manos Gkeredakis, Austin Henderson, Natalia Levina, Wendy Mackay, Anca Metiu, John Van Maanen, and John Weeks. I am grateful to Wendy Mackay with whom I had my first experience of going into the field and who taught me many tricks of the trade. Austin Henderson was a great mentor in particular when it came to video analysis and being playful with different forms of ethnography. A special thank you to John Van Maanen, who has always been supportive of my experiments and who has pushed me to always be curious and reflective. Of course, a big thank you to all the people who I met, observed, and interacted with in the field. Without them, there would be no fieldwork!

Notes

1 See Fayard et al. (2016c), for a discussion of ethnography as epistemology. For a definition and discussion of epistemic stance, see Fayard et al. (2016a: 3–5). While the notion of epistemic stance in that case is understood at the organizational level, the different elements of the concept are still useful to the argument presented in this chapter.

2 John Van Maanen made this point several times at conferences and in seminars.

3 I have also experimented with what we call "contract ethnography." For a discussion of this form of ethnography, see Fayard et al. (2016c).

4 For more on the practice of interaction analysis, see Jordan and Henderson (1995). On group analysis in particular, see pp. 44–47.

5 An important limitation that has been raised is what Snell (2011) calls the "sensory overload" of video data, which includes data management, coding, and sampling. Video-based research is indeed very time-consuming, and it is important to be well organized while collecting data. Another issue often discussed is the camera effect or the notion that the camera influences people so that they don't behave and interact "normally." In fact, as noted by Jordan and Henderson (1995) and Heath et al. (2010), and as I observed in all my studies involving video, people grow accustomed to the camera surprisingly quickly. It is also important to note that manipulating and controlling one's behavior can't be done at length without seeing how microbehaviors like head turns and gazes are often unconscious (Jordan and Henderson, 1995).

6 When studying a distributed MBA course between France and Singapore, I recorded what happened at both sites. Because I spent half the course at one location and half at the other site, this allowed me to "see" what happened in the location where I was not. Besides tinkering with the location of the camera, I also made the decision to start the video 40 minutes before the beginning of class, to keep it running during the break, and to leave it on for at least 15 minutes after class ended. I reasoned that

"the class" was not necessarily beginning (or ending, for that matter) at the time I officially "started" (concluded) it as per the official class schedule. Instead, it might start before, when students began arriving at both sites. The video link between the two classrooms was also started earlier and maintained during the break. Similarly, interactions during the break were considered class participation.

7 If arguably not "subjective," this point of view is a mobile one that allowed us to follow the journey of individual knowledge workers and to better understand their interactions. While it did not follow the wearer's gaze, the SubCam told us the direction that his or her head faced.

8 At the beginning of each study, I spent about half a day observing the work of a manager. Afterwards, I would give the SubCam to the individual, who would keep it for two weeks and who was instructed to wear it during the entire workday. Participants could switch off the audio recording or both the audio and video when issues of confidentiality arose. In this case, the video allowed us to follow the individual managers in a way we could not before, while giving them a sense of privacy.

9 For more on video shadowing, see Cooren et al. (2007), and Meunier and Vasquez (2008), who provide detailed descriptions of shadowing as well as insightful methodological and epistemological reflections on video used this way.

10 See Jarzabkowski et al. (2015) for a detailed discussion of the challenges faced by researchers engaged in team-based global ethnography.

11 Several post-docs joined and then left, so team composition shifted. It evolved to include two, three, and up to four members.

12 As noted by Barley (1996), there has been prior experimentation with teamwork, with occasional collaborations between ethnographers studying the same site (Becker et al., 1961; Strauss et al., 1964).

13 For specific details about the ways of working and tools used, see Barley (1996: 414–418).

14 See Jordan (1996) for a detailed discussion of the methods she developed with team members on various projects.

15 See Metiu and Fayard (2016) for a discussion of the consequences of virtual ethnography for the analysis and interpretation of data.

16 As of the summer of 2016, OpenIDEO has about 100,000 members in more than 150 countries, with 7,000 ideas posted (for a total of 36 challenges) and 50 local chapters distributed worldwide.

17 Hine (2008) reports distinctions between two possible methods for conducting virtual ethnographies: distanced or involved. Distanced ethnography is based only on the qualitative analysis of texts, images, and the observation – without participation – of social interactions in online environments. In contrast, in involved ethnography, the researcher actively participates in the community she studies.

18 The role of offline interactions for OpenIDEO illustrates the blurring of the virtual and physical noted in other studies of online communities. See O'Mahony and Ferraro (2007), and Fayard and DeSanctis (2005).

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