



**CULTURAL  
HERITAGE**

# **INTRODUCTION TO ETHNOGRAPHY FOR ART ORGANIZATIONS**

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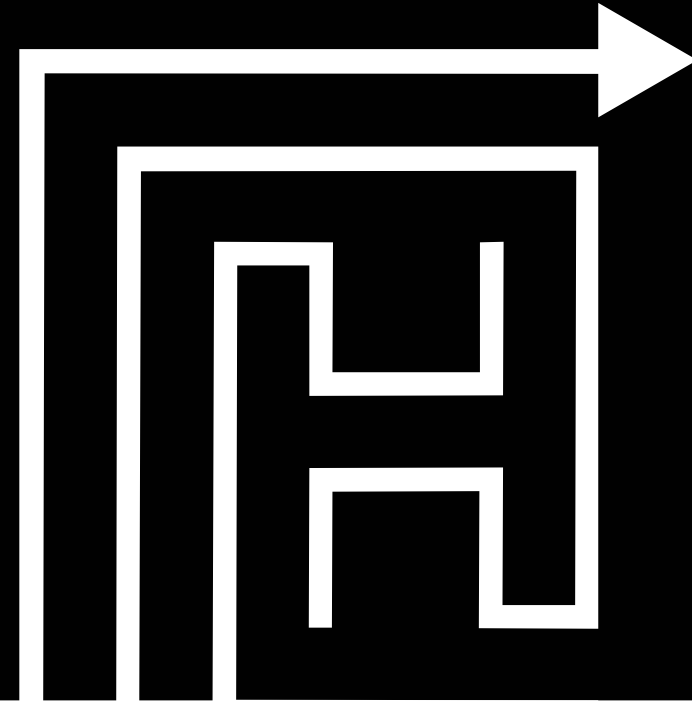


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**Exploring**

**Understanding**

**Managing**



How to manage cultural organizations without understanding what is really going on within them?

How to understand what is going on within them without having the appropriate approach and tools for exploration - **observing, inquiring, being curious.....-?**



**Exploring**

**Understanding**

**Managing**

For these reasons, getting familiar with **qualitative research** is an asset.

More in particular, **ethnography** can be particularly useful when it comes to understand how things work!



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This programme as been funded with support from the European Commission. The author is solely responsible for this publication (communication) and the Commission accepts no responsibility for any use that may be made of the information contained therein 2021-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000032050



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# 01



**QUALITATIVE  
RESEARCH IN A  
NUTSHELL**

# Qualitative research is...

«a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible.»

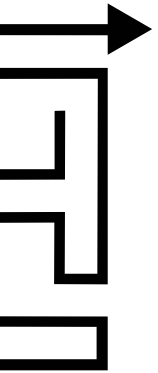
(Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 3)



# Why qualitative research

Both quantitative and qualitative methods are important, but they serve different purposes.

For understanding **how organizations work** and **the point of views of those who live in organizations**, qualitative research offers valid approaches and tools.



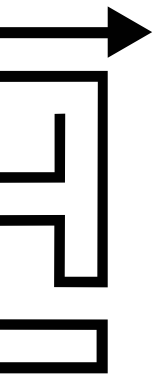
## Some qualitative research methods

### -**Interviews** (e.g., semi-structured, unstructured)

Interviews are not surveys. The value of interviewing rests in the possibility of engaging in a conversation, capturing how the interviewees interpret the world in which they live, discovering instead of confirming.

### -**Observations** (participant, non participant)

Observing implies being there, being in the field. The researchers can both take part to the activities they are observing – participant observations- or not – non participant observation-.





# 02

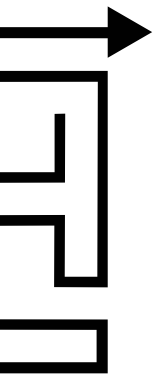


**WHAT  
ETHNOGRAPHY IS**

# Defining to use it

It is necessary to understand what ethnography is in order to:

- (i) **evaluate** if and when to use it,
- (ii) **exploiting** its potentialities
- (iii) being able to «**tailor**» it according to the necessities and contingencies



# Ethnography is...

«the study and representation of culture as used by particular people, in particular places, at particular times»

(Van Maanen, 2011, p. 221)

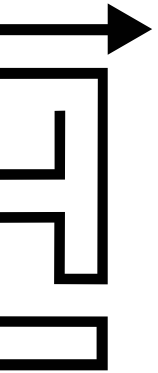


# What ethnography implies

Ethnography implies studying:

- Rituals
- Artifacts
- Practices
- Language
- Culture

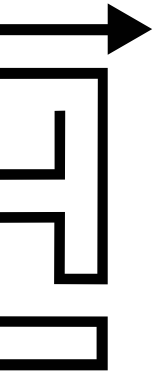
that characterize a certain community – – including organizational communities, even art organizations.



# Why doing ethnography

To understand:

- How things work (Watson 2011; van Maanen 2011)
- The meanings that people associate to how things work (Van Maanen, 2011)
- Human experience (Cunliffe, 2010)



# 03



**HOW TO DO  
ETHNOGRAPHY**



**“One becomes**

**an ethnographer**

**by going out and doing it**

**(and writing it up).”**

**(Van Maanen 2010, p. 242)**

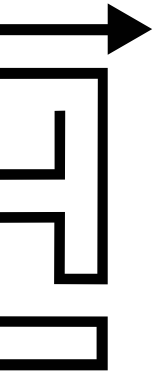
# The fieldwork – Being there

Going in the field, **being there**, is fundamental to have access to what is going on in an organization.

Being there implies:

- Listening
- Observing
- Being curious
- Deciding what to observe and how

Fieldwork is thus a *sine qua non* condition of ethnographic work, as taking notes about what happens in the field.



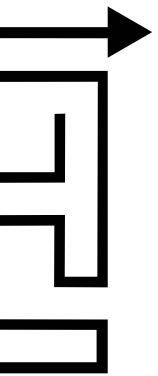


# The fieldwork - Having a routine

This is an example of the routine of being in the fieldwork, observing, and taking notes:

«My typical routine was to arrive on site between 8 am and 9 am, spend six to seven hours accompanying technologists or radiologists as they went about their day's work, and then leave by 3:30 pm when the day shift ended. In the evening after each day's observation, I expanded my field notes at a typewriter. On average, 20 pages of single-spaced typed field notes were compiled each day, yielding a total corpus of slightly over 2,500 pages for the entire project.»

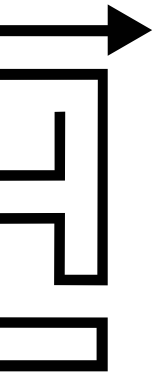
(Barley 1990, p. 228)



# The fieldwork - Immersion

Immerging in the field requires:

1. **Involvement** □ participating to the core activities, experiencing the routine, establishing a social role
1. **Engagement** □ embracing what participants think (their beliefs, interpretations, ...)
1. **Duration** □ understanding how long the ethnographer should stay in the field, aligning with the rhythm of the field
1. **Sites** □ being able to create a space for social action



A hand holding a pair of glasses in a library setting. The background is a blurred bookshelf. The text is overlaid on the image in white font on black rectangular backgrounds.

**Which**

**type**

**of ethnography**

**do you need**

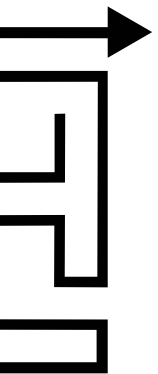
**?**

# Ethnograph...IES

There are different forms of ethnography (Rouleau et al., 2014)

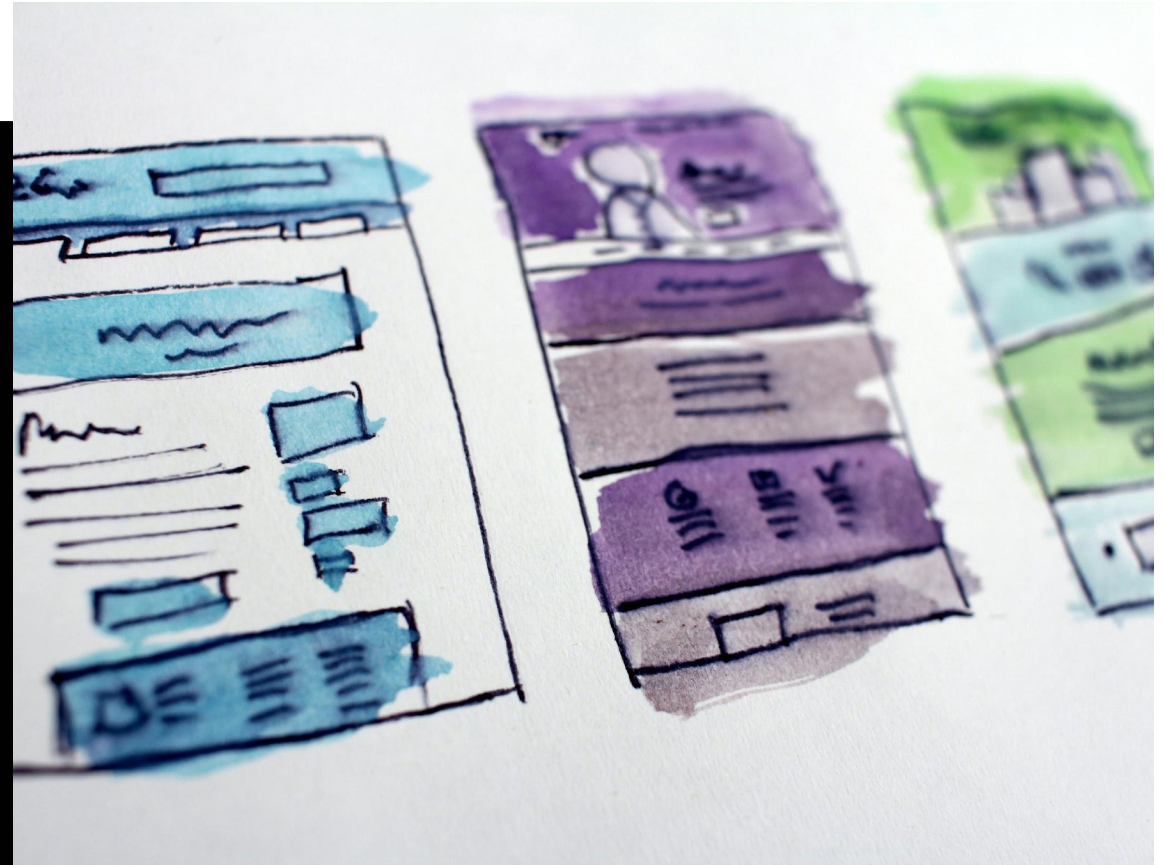
- Multi-sited ethnography
- Network ethnography
- Self-ethnography
- Critical ethnography
- Institutional ethnography
- Visual ethnography
- Digital ethnography
- ...

In what follows, we better understand a couple of forms of ethnographic work:  
multi-sited ethnography and digital ethnography



Nowadays, organizational practices may happen outside the boundaries of a single context:

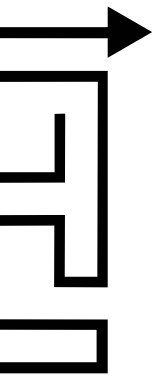
**How to do ethnography in more than one site?**



# Multi-sited ethnography

Multi-sited ethnography moves from the ethnography of a site, to the ethnography of a system, and focuses on the circulation of cultural meanings, artefacts, identities (Marcus, 1995)

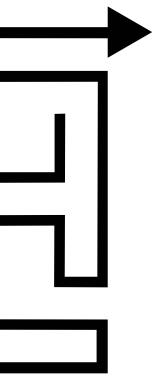
Example: «how different units of multinational or multi-disciplinary organizations relate to each other (e.g. Bechky, 2003; Smets et al., 2012)» (Smets et al, 2014, p. 16)



# How to do multi-sited ethnography?

- Following people
- Following objects (e.g. works of art)
- Following symbols, signs and metaphors
- Following the stories, the plot
- Following the parties of a conflict
- Following the story of the life of a particular individual

(Marcus, 1995)



Especially nowadays, the organizational practices are not carried out only in the physical space:

## How to do ethnography in the digital space?





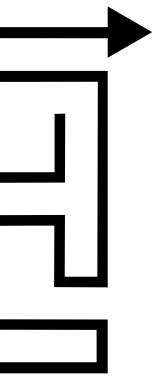
# Digital ethnography

Digital ethnography «encompasses all forms of ethnography mediated by digital technology (e.g. taking field notes on a smartphone for a conventional ethnography).» (Tunçalp & L. Lê, 2014, p. 61)

Examples of digital ethnography: doing conventional ethnography using a mobile device, exploring the digital experience of a museum

Using the digital while doing ethnographic work can let emerge some issues. More in particular, it could put at risk (Akemu & Abdelnour, 2020):

- The authenticity
- The ability to report multiple voices

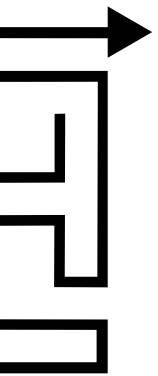


# Doing digital ethnography

In doing digital ethnography, it is particularly important defining the boundaries of the field (Tunçalp & L. Lê, 2014)

The researcher, in dealing with the digital, can (Akemu & Abdelnour, 2020):

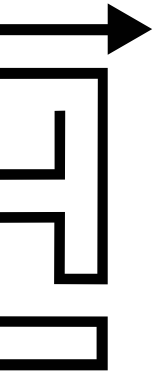
1. Follow participants' digital interaction
2. Exploit the digital to identify marginalized voices
3. Find new evidence



# Using videos

Videos present some advantages and opportunities for researchers, among which:

- «zooming in», «zooming out», «zooming with» – «zooming with» refers to the possibility of watching the video with the individuals who are in that video and exploring their interpretations (Jarrett & Liu, 2018)
- Slowing, and replaying (LeBaron & al 2018)
- Examining repeatedly (LeBaron & al 2018)
- Verifying (LeBaron & al 2018)



# 04



**CONCLUSIONS**

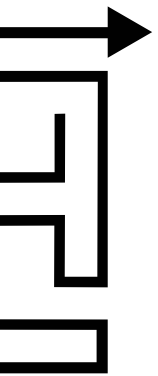
# To sum up

There are different ways and approaches to investigate organizations.

Selecting which ones to use is driven by the objectives and purposes that an investigation aims at reaching.

To access organizational complexity and disentangle it, to capture organizational culture and understand it, to really get what is going on in an organization, the ethnographic work can come in handy.

Ethnography implies doing fieldwork and writing about it.





**Are you ready**

**to explore**

**and discover**

**through ethnography**

**?**

## Examples of ethnography and qualitative studies in the cultural sector

### Ethnography

*Film production:* Bechky, B. A., & Okhuysen, G. A. (2011). Expecting the Unexpected? How SWAT Officers and Film Crews Handle Surprises. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(2), 239–261.

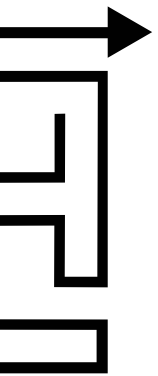
*Music recording:* Siciliano, M. (2016). Disappearing into the Object: Aesthetic Subjectivities and Organizational Control in Routine Cultural Work. *Organization Studies*, 37(5), 687–708.

*Music production:* Lingo, E. L. (2020). Entrepreneurial Leadership as Creative Brokering: The Process and Practice of Co-creating and Advancing Opportunity. *Journal of Management Studies*, 57(5), 962–1001.

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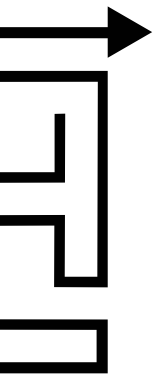
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*Orchestra:* Glynn, M. A. (2000). When Cymbals become Symbols: Conflict over Organizational Identity within a Symphony Orchestra. *Organization Science*, 11(3), 285–298.



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