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CHARTING NEW TERRITORY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY: INSIGHTS FROM A TEAM-BASED VIDEO ETHNOGRAPHY OF REINSURANCE TRADING IN LLOYD'S OF LONDON

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CHARTING NEW TERRITORY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY: INSIGHTS FROM A TEAM-BASED VIDEO ETHNOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

An increasing interest in "bringing actors back in" has raised ethnography to unknown prominence in the field of organization studies. What people *do* in their organizational roles, who they interact with, the spaces they interact in, and the tools they use have come to fascinate scholars from strategy-as-practice (e.g., Jarzabkowski, 2005, 2008; Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2011; Vaara & Whittington, 2012) to technology studies (e.g., Leonardi, 2011; Orlikowski, 1996, 2007) to institutional theory (e.g., Kellogg, 2009; Smets, Morris, & Greenwood, 2012; Zilber, 2002), and the sociology of finance (e.g., Knorr-Cetina & Bruegger, 2002b; Preda, 2007, 2009). Yet, calls remain that ethnography should "play a much more central role in the organization and management studies repertoire than it currently does" (Watson, 2011: 202). Ironically, the organizational realities that ethnographers are called to examine have at the same time become less amenable to ethnographic study.

"Being there", the traditional hallmark of ethnographic study, has become increasingly difficult given the increasing fragmentation, complexity, mobility, pace and technological intermediation of organizational life. Where do ethnographers have to be, when, for how long, and with whom to "be there"? In this paper, we address these growing challenges and corresponding calls for new forms of organizational ethnography (Van Maanen, 2006; Watson, 2011) in two ways. First, we report on a year-long, team-based video ethnography of reinsurance trading in London. Second, drawing on these experiences, we propose a framework for systematizing innovative ethnographic methods and visualizing the ways in which they extend more traditional approaches.

In doing so, we contribute to the ethnographic literature in three ways: First, we develop a framework that highlights the different dimensions – *site*, *instrument*, and *fieldworker* - along which methodological innovations are pushing the boundaries of traditional ethnography. Second, we identify some promising methodological configurations for enhancing its relevance for understanding contemporary organizational realities. Third, we critically appraise the benefits and challenges of these extensions for the practical "work" of ethnography (Van Maanen, 2011).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Traditionally, ethnography was primarily concerned with understanding humans as cultured beings and recording their activities, norms and values in a way that provides rich insights into the social fabric and cultural framework of their lives. Whether following in the footsteps of those who study "strange" rites of distant tribes in exotic locations (e.g., Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Malinowksi, 1922), or those who find strangeness closer to home (e.g., Park, 1915; Whyte, 1955), the intellectual mission of ethnographers has always been to "render the actual – and to do so persuasively" (Van Maanen, 2011: 232).

Organizational ethnographers have taken this mission from the societal to the organizational domain. In doing so, they adopted urban anthropologists' search for "strangeness" in the mundane, but not necessarily their sensitivity to the need for, and methodological challenge of, capturing dispersed and fragmented social realities (e.g., Park, 1915). Assuming that partiality, specialization and unifying goal commitment make formal organizations less varied and complex than the societies they serve (e.g., Rosen, 1991), they followed the Malinowskian tradition of immersing themselves in a single setting for an extended period of time, recording their lived experiences in fieldnotes, and sharing them in a monograph (e.g., Abolafia, 1997; Hunt, 2010; Orr, 1996). Recently, however, changing organizational realities have been straining these assumptions and accentuating three problems associated with using a single site, instrument and fieldworker (e.g., Yanow, 2009).

First, while the traditional strength of studying individuals in their natural setting remains, questions arise as to where ethnographers have to be to "be there" and experience the practical and cultural fabric of complex organizations (Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995; Van Maanen, 2011). The increasing fragmentation of organizational communities of practice (e.g., Bechky, 2003; Smets et al., 2012), growing internationalisation (e.g., Kostova & Zaheer, 1999; Morgan & Kristensen, 2006), and increasing prevalence of remote, virtual interaction (Hine, 2007; Howard, 2002) raise questions as to where it is that the social fabric of an organization is being produced and repaired – or whether, in fact, *the* social fabric even exists. In either case, it appears unlikely that the small scale, single-site ethnographies that have produced "some of our most revered truths about the realities of work in organization and management" are able to realistically capture the "polyphonic pluralism of meaning and interpretation" that characterizes modern organizations (Van Maanen, 2011: 225-226).

Second, shifts in the purpose of organizational ethnography have imposed new demands on its conduct and output. Traditionally, organizational ethnographers were solely concerned with documenting and interpreting what they found. Recently, however, more instrumental ethnographic work has emerged under the banner of "micro ethnography" (Streeck & Mehus, 2005). Academics and practitioners alike have recognized that the microscopic analysis of naturally occurring human practices can help understand big organizational issues (Anderson, 2009; LeBaron, Glenn, & Thompson, 2009). While the fundamental ethnographic interest in "how things work" (Van Maanen, 2011: 219) as well as the traditional interpretivist epistemology (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Denzin, 1997) are fit for purpose, two important new demands are imposed on the craft of doing and disseminating ethnography.

For one, there is greater demand for "work of an abstract and analytic sort" as well as practical solutions for practitioner audiences (Van Maanen, 2011: 222; Watson, 2011). In this vein, anthropotechnologists use ethnography to understand working practices from an emic perspective and suggest improvements that directly benefit their research participants (e.g., Geslin, 2004; Wisner, 2004); micro ethnographers explore how people use technology and other tools at work (e.g., Lahlou, 1999; Streeck, Goodwin, & LeBaron, 2011; Streeck & Mehus, 2005) or the meanings they attribute to it (e.g., Rouleau, 2005). That means, ethnographers no longer just produce reports *about* participants but also, and sometimes primarily, *for* them. Second, and relatedly, this new audience does not typically endorse extensive monographs as a suitable format for communicating research results. Hence, while practitioners, traditionally the subjects rather than consumers of organizational ethnography, increasingly recognize the value of this method, they also drive changes in the way it is done and disseminated. Ethnographers should lend an open ear to those demands in order to protect their newly staked claims in the management field.

Finally, the complexity and pace of contemporary work is increasingly stretching the ethnographer as the data collection "instrument". They are increasingly difficult to accurately record given the natural limitations of human senses and cognitive abilities. Leveraging new technologies, such as high-quality, portable video recording equipment, can lift some of these sensory and cognitive constraints. Video recording presents an unprecedented opportunity for capturing the minutiae of social practice, rendering fast-paced organizational life more amenable to rigorous analysis, and producing audio-visual outputs that are more accessible for non-academic audiences (Clarke, 2011; Lahlou, 1999; LeBaron, 2005).

To summarize: The research focus of ethnography is shifting from understanding relative homogeneity to capturing dispersion, fragmentation and complexity; from rendering reality to contributing to problem-solving; and from reliance on the fieldworker's own senses to leveraging technological innovations.

THE CASE STUDY: REINSURANCE TRADING IN LONDON

In this section, we share techniques and ethnographic experiences from a year-long, team-based video ethnography of reinsurance trading in the London marketplace. We consider our study of this particular setting particularly suitable to address the challenges organizational ethnography currently faces, as trading activities are complex, fast-paced and dispersed across geographical and virtual spaces. We draw on our personal experiences to (a) outline the opportunities and challenges of conducting a team-based video study as a new form of ethnography and contribute to emergent protocols of collecting and analysing this type of data; and (b) develop an initial framework in which new forms of organizational ethnography can be charted against three dimensions: site, instrument, and fieldworker.

Context: Reinsurance trading in London

For three centuries, the London marketplace has practiced a tradition of face-to-face interaction between reinsurance brokers and underwriters in the assessment and placement of reinsurance risks. Reinsurance, simply put, provides insurance for insurance companies who seek protection from large claims arising from catastrophic events, such as floods or hurricanes. Brokers help insurance companies structure a policy which they then try to "place" in the reinsurance market. Reinsurance underwriters analyse the broker-provided information on these policies on behalf of their syndicates. They negotiate specific terms, decide the share of the policy they want to accept, and agree the fee they receive in return. These negotiations unfold at the underwriter's desk, his "box" on the trading floor where, during specific trading hours, brokers come to present new deals, negotiate terms, and have contracts signed. These types of 'face-to-face' exchanges were at the centre of our study. However, they were supplemented with and informed by other information exchanges, analyses and judgements that occur in the privacy of the office, in client meetings, at trade conferences, or over a Pint in the pub.

Data collection: Possibilities, practicalities, and politics

Over a twelve-month period, we recorded approximately 400 hours of video on the trading floor and spent about 100 hours in back-office settings, not counting social occasions[1]. We sat with underwriters or brokers in their offices in the morning, accompanied them on their walk to the trading floor, and sat in the chair normally occupied by their assistants to experience live trading as it unfolded. We recorded, on video and in fieldnotes, the arguments put forth, the body positions assumed and the grand gestures made. We felt the building buzz with activity as trading heated up near the end-of-year deadline, smelled the freshmints of underwriters returning from client lunches, and tasted the canapés offered at their annual conferences in Monte Carlo and Baden Baden.

We were granted access to all of the above-mentioned settings, across eight firms operating in the London marketplace. Access was facilitated by a UK research council grant with an industry consortium as the designated research partner. The industry-commissioned project to study the full gambit of trading practices, and the steering group of senior reinsurance executives who oversaw the project, bolstered our legitimacy in the market and provided high-level introductions to participating firms. This deep access opened up lots of possibilities for data collection. Exploiting these, however, critically depended on effectively managing the practicalities and politics of maintaining access and using it to its full potential – with close attention to the ethical implications of capturing audio-visual records of large, commercially sensitive transactions. Here, we focus on four specific challenges: Continuous access negotiation, setting-up useful yet unobtrusive observation positions, the appropriation of video equipment by participants, and research team coordination.

Continuous Access Negotiation

Access to underwriters was formally granted at top executive level. Building rapport and getting their permission to be observed and later video recorded, however, was then the research team's responsibility. We addressed this challenge by first observing without video for approximately six weeks and getting participants used to our presence. Once a sufficient level of comfort seemed established, we trialled video recording with those participants who appeared most comfortable and eventually included all participants in all companies. Importantly, we found that even those participants who were generally happy to be video-recorded could occasionally become reluctant when they felt momentarily self-conscious of

[1] We supplemented our observational data with 150 interviews, audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, and a plethora of documentary evidence. However, for the purposes of this paper we focus on the observational and, specifically, video-ethnographic elements of our study.

their appearance. For instance, looking less than perfect after a stint at the gym during the lunch break, a lingering cold, or an overdue hairdresser's appointment affected participants' acceptance of the video camera. In these instances, we respected participants' requests for privacy and selected other participants from the same company instead. We did note, however, that similar fluctuations did not occur when observing without video, suggesting that having one's visual image, rather than a verbal record captured makes an important difference for subjects to agree to participation - or not.

The need for continuous access negotiations was exacerbated by the nature of the work observed. While underwriters agreed to participate in the full twelve-month period of the study and were usually stationary at their desks, brokers were mobile, coming to see underwriters in our study for business. Especially in the early stages of the study, brokers had to be briefed and give their informed consent to be observed at the underwriter's box before starting their business discussion. This placed high demands on the fieldworkers, which we tackled in two ways. First, we placed a one-page outline of the study in the broker's designated space at the box or passed it along the queue of waiting brokers to familiarize them with the study before starting business. Second, we "hung around" in the quieter summer months so that when trading volumes increased, the large majority of brokers had already become familiar with, and accepted, our presence.

Observation positions

The box localizes interactions in a confined space, which facilitates setting-up video recording equipment. Yet, while finding an unobtrusive "fly-on-the-wall" spot for an observer could be difficult enough, finding an equally unobtrusive camera and microphone position to capture the full repertoire of actions and interactions created additional complications. Specifically, creating enough distance between camera and subjects to capture both underwriter and broker, while remaining close enough to record confidential discussions in hushed voices was difficult. We addressed this issue by placing the observer in the underwriting assistant's seat, from where he could operate the camera, positioned on a small tripod on the desk approximately 3 metres away from the interaction being recorded. Sound was captured by a separate microphone, placed right at the place of the conversation.

These complications were further exacerbated when brokers and underwriters were not stationary at a specific box. They regularly move back and forth between their respective offices and the trading floor, but also meet in more casual settings such as cafes or pubs and

sometimes very spontaneously so. On our part, following subjects "on the move" required constant re-arranging of observation schedules, preparation and flexibility to adapt to different observation settings, but especially the ability to pack up and set up recording equipment in no time.

Equipment appropriation

Despite being positioned unobtrusively, the camera would still occasionally not just be noted, but even appropriated by participants. Underwriters would use the camera and our study to open conversations with brokers or brokers would use it in their pitch, for instance by claiming underwriters would play particularly "hard to get" when on tape. Importantly, however, when spoken to privately, participants confirmed they did not notice a change in behaviour in their counterpart, which leads us to conclude that in transactional settings such as the one observed, "acting up" is difficult because the other party has experience with and clear expectations of their counterpart and would be able to identify deviations, which would jeopardize the deal at hand. Rather, it seems that observer and camera were becoming normalized as part of the setting and occasionally appropriated as props in the discussions between brokers and underwriters. This may mean that, while at face value video ethnographic data may appear less valid and reliable than traditional fieldnotes, the eventual taken-for-grantedness of camera and observer make reactivity issues less problematic than expected.

Team coordination

Lastly, performing these research tasks in a team added another layer of complexity. Individual activities needed to be coordinated in order to be able to assemble our individual observations into a coherent mosaic of the London community, rather than disjointed impressions of eight independent reinsurance companies. We addressed this challenge by communicating continuously and jointly developing observation protocols. Specifically, we exchanged 386 emails over the course of the study, which spontaneously shared our in-vivo impressions, helped establish common foci and labeling protocols during observations, and coordinated observation schedules. Coordinating observations ensured that firstly, we would capture how different companies approach the same risks, of which they all may choose to underwrite a share, and, secondly, cover the full range of typical underwriting practices relatively evenly. Additionally, researchers concurrently in the field shared experiences over lunch or after work and the entire team debriefed more formally during regular meetings.

CHARTING NEW TERRITORY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Based on our personal experience of a team-based video ethnography, we propose a framework for systematizing new forms of organizational ethnography, summarized in Figure 1. We argue that traditional approaches are being extended along one, or several, dimensions of *site*, *instrument*, and *fieldworker*. These dimensions, which we explain individually below, are chosen deliberately to emphasize that "ethnography is not a method but an activity" (Editors, 2011: 199), and that there are options of how to perform it. Turning these dimensions into axes of a three-dimensional space helps us systematize these options, identify configurations that promise more fruitful approaches to studying the complexities of contemporary organizational life; and chart new territory for organizational ethnography.

Site: Being 'there' – being where?

The increasing local, international and disciplinary fragmentation of organizations raises questions of where ethnographers have to be to effectively witness the production and repair of their social fabric. As noted, in our study relevant loci included the trading floor, offices, boardrooms, and glamorous conference locations. Missing any one of them would have produced a severely incomplete understanding of reinsurance trading in London.

While traditional ethnographies were bounded *single-site* explorations, characterized by deep immersion, recent calls for and moves towards *"multi-site"* ethnographies (Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995, 1999) indicate a broader range of choices researchers have available. These range from taking a single-site approach, to "shadowing" participants across the multiple sites they inhabit (Czarniawska, 2007), to studying as many discrete sites as the fieldworker considers feasible and useful. At a micro-level, multi-site ethnographies allow insights into how different units of multinational or multi-disciplinary organizations relate to each other (e.g., Bechky, 2003; Smets et al., 2012) or allow for the explanation of variation through multi-case studies (e.g., Kellogg, 2009). At a macro-level, opportunities for ethnographies of industries, markets, and occupations arise, which would illuminate "policing", rather than the practices of a specific police team (Hunt, 2010; Van Maanen, 1973), or "Wall Street", rather than the practices of a specific Wall Street firm (Abolafia, 1997; Ho, 2009). Notably, in our digital era, ethnographic "sites" can even be in the virtual world, producing insights into how people interact, relate and trade online or between the real and the virtual world (e.g., Hine, 2000; Hine, 2007; Howard, 2002).

Instrument: Being there – but how?

Given recent advances in technology, "being there" can arguably take a number of forms these days. Traditionally, ethnographers were the research "instrument" which, despite combining their six senses, biography, and predispositions, essentially functioned as a unit, which is why we label traditional ethnographies as *single instrument* ethnographies. The recent availability of affordable technology, however, can mediate, enhance, or replace personal presence in a situation and give rise to multiple forms of "being there".

In select situations, such as online worlds, electronic trading, or remote working, electronic forms of "being there" are the only option for all participants, both native and academic (e.g., Hine, 2000; Knorr-Cetina & Bruegger, 2002a). In those instances, *multi-instrument* ethnographies that afford a technologically mediated presence, such as in virtual ethnographies are without alternative.

More broadly, though, ethnographers use *multi-instrument* ethnographies to technologically enhance their presence in the field, the "thickness" of their descriptions and the analytic rigour of their interpretations. For instance, observers can use data collection tools such as audio- or video recorders to enhance their ability to capture minute details of what is happening around them. Whilst it is far beyond a fieldworker's physical and cognitive ability to note all nuanced and rich expression cues *in situ*, video recording significantly enhances the quality of data and analysis. It does so in two ways: First, it captures small interaction moments with their associated expressions, body positions, spatial arrangements and other non-verbal cues *in vivo* (Clarke, 2011; Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002; LeBaron, 2008). Subject-mounted cameras can extend this benefit by not only capturing more fully what ethnographers can see, but taking the "situated subjective perspective" (Rix & Lièvre, 2008: 228; see also: Lahlou, 2011) , which non-participant observers never could. Second, like any form of visual ethnography, it keeps a faithful record of the data long after the fieldwork is finished (e.g., Pink, 2001). Permanently available, rich, audio-visual data reduce the reliance on fieldworkers' or participants' memory and allow repeated scrutiny of important episodes by the fieldworker and potential co-authors (Armstrong & Curran, 2006; LeBaron, 2008).

In extreme cases, collaborators in data analysis may not just use technology to enhance, but even to replace their personal presence in the field with accessing rich renditions such as videos (Armstrong & Curran, 2006; Liu & Maitlis, 2013), some of which may even have been captured from the participant's perspective in the absence of any ethnographer in the field (Lahlou, 1999, 2011). The extent to which the latter studies subscribe to an ethnographic sense of "fieldwork" (Van Maanen, 2011) is debatable.

Fieldworker: Being there – Who? Me?!

While the presence of a single fieldworker in a situation can be technologically enhanced, mediated or substituted, it can also be complemented with the presence of another fieldworker. The traditional "'I-witnessing' ideal", based on "personalized seeing, hearing, and experiencing in specific social settings" (Van Maanen, 2011: 222) is increasingly unlikely to capture the full complexity of fragmented and dispersed organizations. Moreover, as even the most skilled ethnographer can only be in one place at once, it constrains the extent to which ethnographies can capture simultaneous engagement of different entities with identical phenomena. For instance, being present in several reinsurance syndicates pricing the same deal at the same time provided invaluable insights into the functioning of the London market as a collective entity. Such simultaneity can only be achieved as a team effort between closely coordinated individual observers. Such *team ethnography* promises to be particularly valuable in the study of multinational or virtual organizations, or markets relying on remote interaction.

New Forms as Configurations

As alluded to throughout the previous sections, some configurations of these new choices - single or multi-site ethnographies, single-instrument or multi-instrument studies, sole or team efforts – promise to be more fruitful than others. For instance, a sole fieldworker conducting a multi-site ethnography is likely to be stretched. Video-recorded data is undoubtedly useful for sole fieldworkers researching a single site, but its potential is used to the full where members of a team share impressions from dispersed sites they individually studied or where these impressions can be shared with collaborators who bring a "fresh pair of eyes" to the data.

Importantly, new forms of organizational ethnography need not stretch the boundaries of traditional ethnography along all of these dimensions. Different combinations fit different objectives, place different demands on the fieldworker(s), require different resources and skills, and are targeted at different questions. Our framework for systematizing existing options, and those yet to be developed, helps to make more informed choices in research design. These choices, however, also have to be sensitive to the implications they entail for the "doing" of organizational ethnography.

NEW FORMS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR "DOING" ETHNOGRAPHY

The origin of our framework captures the traditional practice of ethnography, an individual immersing itself in a particular community for a sustained period to study, reflect and represent its culture. Each step away from the origin expands the territory of organizational settings, interactions and research questions that organizational ethnography can proficiently cover, but also stretches established methods of organizational ethnography. This section, thus, considers both the benefits and challenges of new methodological options for the "fieldwork", "headwork", and "textwork" of ethnography (Van Maanen, 2011).

Fieldwork

As all the new options we outlined primarily play out in the collection of ethnographic data, they are likely to most directly challenge established concepts of fieldwork.

As pointed out above, individual, multi-site fieldwork is likely to be a problematic configuration as the fieldworker naturally gets stretched, trying to cover multiple sites by herself. The "large number of events, persons, acts, and interactions observed, people spoken with, documents read; minutes, hours, days, weeks, and months, if not years, spent on site" (Yanow, 2009: 191) that underpin the credibility of narrative accounts are likely to be compromised. Hence, it is important for fieldworkers to be realistic about their capacities and to resist temptations of broad access or exciting complexities to explore, if they are likely to overstretch them and yield superficial data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Based on their assessment of their own capabilities, ethnographers should retrench their research endeavour, secure sufficient resources for their sustained immersion in different sites, or engage a team of ethnographers. This will strengthen individual outputs, but also protect ethnography's new territory in management studies against less naturalistic methodologies.

Team-based fieldwork makes multi-site ethnographies more viable, but does so at the expense of increasing coordination demands. These trade-offs need to be carefully considered, as coordination needs to be planned and may be time-intensive to implement. Failure to give sufficient thought to this task may result in incoherent or incommensurable data, which complicates subsequent analysis.

Use of multiple instruments in general, and of video technology in particular, enhances fieldwork in several ways. It can capture fast-paced sequences of material, spatial and bodily interactions in minute detail, offer perspectives that non-participant observers never could, and keep faithful records of the actions and interactions observed. Yet, again, these new

benefits come with new challenges, which ethnographers need to consider when choosing their position on the "instrument" dimension of methodological options.

As our case illustrated, utilizing videos of real-time, real-world interaction places high demands on fieldworkers and poses new ethical issues. When entering the field, fieldworkers must obtain informed consent, sometimes *in situ*, and manage anxieties video recording creates for research participants. When commercially sensitive transactions are being recorded, data ownership and protection must be unambiguously clarified and may have to be defended by researchers in the field. While in the field, observers must navigate practical problems with positioning cameras, following subjects on the move and dealing with issues of reactivity. When leaving the field, ethnographers have to reflexively assess their level of theoretical saturation. Where, previously, ethnographers had to remain in the field and observe many instances of the same situation to appreciate, record, and understand its intricacies, they also developed a sense of its prevalence. As new technologies remove some of these burdens, fieldworkers may be tempted to move on prematurely, based on a false sense of prevalence. Relying on re-watching the same situation repeatedly in the comfort of the office, though, precludes the discovery of its possible variations *in situ*. While some of these challenges may be suddenly sprung upon researchers in the field, they are to some extent foreseeable. It is therefore essential to anticipate these kinds of challenges and develop commensurate responses that can be activated quickly to preserve the integrity of fieldwork.

More profoundly, using video recording also raises ontological questions about the nature of presence, reality, and ethnography itself. In the past, ethnographic fieldwork has been firmly associated with "subjecting the self – body, belief, personality, emotions, cognitions – to a set of contingencies that play on others over time" (Van Maanen, 2011: 219). Personally using audio or video equipment in the field follows this definition. It enhances the "personalized seeing, hearing, and experiencing" (Van Maanen, 2011: 222) of traditional fieldwork by helping record and store accurate and compelling audio-visual data. What, however, about the data that are not seen through a camera lens or heard through a recorder? The question about what is "real" in multi-instrument studies needs to play prominently on the fieldworker's mind so she can consciously manage the selectivity of what is caught on tape – or not. Reflexivity about the choices made and the reasons why are critical, so as not to privilege audio-visual recordings as more "real" than other data (Bell & Davison, 2013). Traditional notes or other sensory perceptions, such as touch or smell support ethnographers' cultural understanding and still have a critical role to play in video-based

"headwork". Leaving recorders on site or mounting them on subjects without a fieldworker in attendance may minimize reactivity and generate rich data, but not the broad, multi-sensory impressions that are essential for contextualizing and interpreting them. We therefore advocate that new forms of ethnography should continue to rely on the central principle of fieldworkers' physical presence in the field.

Headwork

Headwork, "the conceptual work that informs ethnographic fieldwork and its various representational practices" (Van Maanen, 2011: 222) is affected by the methodological options we charted through the questions ethnographers ask, the analyses they undertake, and the partners they engage in them.

New forms of ethnography can tackle new research questions. To date, methodological innovations have been pragmatically developed in light of research questions and organizational realities that were deemed unsuitable for existing approaches. While there is nothing wrong with this, our overview of methodological innovations that are bubbling up in different areas of ethnography and our demonstration of how different aspects of organizational life can be made ethnographically accessible, may inspire the pursuit of bolder and more complex research questions.

For instance, multi-site, team-based ethnographies enable researchers to ask new questions about how cultured practices operate across organizational units, organizations or even industries. Where teams comprise members from different disciplinary background, they can tackle new questions that span multiple theories. Interpreting data from their respective understandings, they can generate new theoretical insights and meet demands for more theoretically informed ethnographic findings (Van Maanen, 2011; Watson, 2011). Alternatively, video ethnographies can foreground those socio-material environments that have recently come to fascinate organizational scholars (Orlikowski, 2007), zoom in on verbal, material, spatial, symbolic and bodily cues, and ask new questions about how their interactions shape organizational practice (e.g., Clarke, 2011; Streeck et al., 2011).

Team-based headwork not only affects the nature of possible insights, but also their analytic rigour. If we accept Geertz' (1973) "thick description" as "a well-versed interpretation […], which usually comes after exploring a whole variety of possible descriptions" (Editors, 2011: 199), then engaging team members with diverse biographies and theoretical understandings increases the odds that "a whole variety" of descriptions is

explored, and less convincing ones are dismissed. Team members can validate, critique and develop each other's individual interpretations to produce narrative accounts and theoretical insights that are naturalistic, credible, and trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Developing stringent protocols for doing so is critical for organizational ethnography to counter scepticism regarding the rigour of ifs theorizing and to defend its territory against less naturalistic methodologies (Watson, 2011).

Video-based headwork can produce more detailed, rigorous and defensible insights. This is because, for one, video records faithfully capture all the detail of even the smallest interaction moments, some of which even the most skilled ethnographer is bound to miss. Secondly, electronic audio-visual data also makes these rich details permanently available for analysis, even long after fieldwork is finished. Repeated viewings of video material enable researchers to re-experience their "moments-in-the-field" and "thicken" their descriptions. Importantly, with video data, this process need not follow a "more of the same" pattern. Instead, fieldworkers can attend to different modalities across numerous repeat viewings, and layer multi-modal descriptions and explanations (Armstrong & Curran, 2006; Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002; LeBaron, 2008). These are not only more trustworthy, but also more sensitive to verbal, bodily, material and spatial cues and their interactions in situated conduct. However, to fully grasp those opportunities, methodological extensions are required, as there are currently no established methodologies for transforming raw audio-visual data into rigorous analytical insights.

While the above benefits all accrue to individual researchers, additional ones accrue to research teams. Specifically, video data cannot only be re-watched by those who collected them, but also by co-authors who never entered the field. This option extends the benefits of team-based headwork outlined above to external data analysts. They can use rich video excerpts to validate original interpretations or, in the spirit of an "insider-outsider" approach to data analysis supplement an external perspective to further enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of emergent interpretations (Liu & Maitlis, 2013).

Again, however, these options must be embraced with great caution, for two reasons specifically. First, as video recordings only capture a small frame of reality, there is a constant risk of using them out of context and without sufficient cultural insight. "Outsider" analysts, therefore, have a great responsibility to acknowledge this limitation, remain sensitive to the "socially embedded nature of images and their framing in cultural contexts" (Bell & Davison, 2013: 170), and be reflexive about what they do and don't know about the field. Second,

despite these limitations in cultural understanding, insiders should not dismiss outsiders' interpretations as inherently inferior to their own. Instead, they need to find ways of balancing and reconciling their perspectives.

One way of achieving this, is the involvement of a completely new set of data analysts to the table, namely the subjects who were originally observed. In joint headwork sessions, they can supplement the cultural understanding that "outsider" analysts lack and help reconcile competing interpretations. Engaging practitioners in data analysis by playing back videos recorded in the field to those who feature in them, however, can reap even broader benefits (e.g., Lahlou, 2011). Essentially, it allows practitioners to watch themselves in the process of being themselves. This perspective shift provides empirical prompts for analytic conversations, and in doing so foregrounding what was previously taken-for-granted, making natural behaviour appear "strange" and helping practitioners articulate and explain actions they were originally not even aware of. In return for offering participants a new perspective on themselves, researchers are also afforded a new perspective on the data, that of an expert who points and explains.

Textwork

The traditional textwork of writing ethnographic narratives already involved a near limitless choice of how to use "voice, authorial presence (or absence), analogies and metaphors, allusions, professional dialect and jargon, imagery, interpretive moves, tone, empirical or theoretical emphasis, truth claims, figures of speech, and so on" (Van Maanen, 2011: 224). Team-based and especially video-based textwork expand these choices even further, providing new options, but also challenges for representing organizational realities, articulating interpretations, and communicating with different audiences.

Team-based textwork logically flows from team-based headwork insofar as collective data analysis is likely to drive the representation of results. Beyond this direct link, collaborative writing can provide a collective remedy against "writer's block" and simply distribute the burden of textwork on more shoulders. As tempting as this is, though, team ethnographers have to be mindful of the challenges that finding the required unity may pose. Practically, settling on a uniform writing style may not be an easy task given all the available choices listed above. More profoundly, different researchers unavoidably try to tell the story through the particular lens of their own conceptual perspective. These tensions have to be addressed constructively in the interest of both, the quality of ethnographic outputs and good relations among team members. Practical solutions may involve composite monographs with

different chapters giving voice to different team members, publication series with each output focusing on a different perspective, or centralized editorial responsibility for smoothing stylistic differences in a final draft.

While team-based textwork produces some variation on the established theme of "writing narrative", video has the potential to dramatically change the nature of textwork altogether. Ethnographers can use video as a powerful communicative device to let their audience, literally, "see for themselves"[2]. By contrast, letting images "speak for themselves", is not an option, as they do not represent any form of inherent truth or reality. Ultimately, using video data changes textwork, but does not replace it. Fieldworkers must still contextualize and interpret their data, and convince their audience of the trustworthiness of their interpretation. Intriguingly, the old adage that "seeing is believing" is a double-edged sword in this regard.

On the one hand, the multi-modality and richness of videos help transport audiences – conference delegates, journal readers, research subjects – into a situation in ways that written texts rarely do. Technological options such as muting, zooming, freeze-framing, or overlaying graphics, akin to the above stylistic options for written textwork, allow ethnographers to focus their audience on specific aspects, and to layer interpretations and explanations onto the videos/images the audience can see. Hence, using videos reduces the narrative burden of "showing" data and convincing others *that* the instances ethnographers claim to have happened, actually did. On the other hand, the pressure to convince others of suggested explanations as to *why* they happened, remains; or even increases. We foresee that sharing raw video data invites audiences to contest the proposed interpretation and possibly impose their own, based on their personal reading of the recorded situation. The positive corollary of this augmented contestability, of course, is that ethnographers are pressed to make their interpretive textwork more rigorous and compelling. This could involve marshalling multiple types of evidence to justify their interpretations or team-based approaches to headwork in order to develop and validate a defensible, shared interpretation before communicating it to external audiences.

Finally, video data not only changes how textwork is done, but also for whom. Specifically, it can support engagement with practitioner audiences by making ethnographic insights more accessible and compelling for them than books ever could (Rouleau, 2005;

[2] As we discuss below, questions of confidentiality and anonymity need to be carefully considered before sharing visual data.

Streeck et al., 2011; Streeck & Mehus, 2005). By presenting snippets of video data, researchers can quite literally hold up the mirror to research participants, help them see their own taken-for-granted practices as strange, and lead them to reflect on their own activities. Practical applications include the use of video excerpts as prompts for exploring psychological states during particular activities (Lahlou, 2011), or articulating the tacit knowledge that practitioners deploy to resolve challenging situations (Rix & Lièvre, 2008), both concepts that are not easily articulable for practitioners without the visual aids afforded by video data. Importantly, these practical applications remain firmly rooted in the interpretivist paradigm insofar as they engage the research subject in the interpretation and resolution of the documented situation. The production of such outputs that research participants can readily engage with and use to their benefit enhances opportunities for generating tangible impact, a key concern for an increasing number of research funding bodies. More broadly, beyond generating practitioner interest in ethnographic research, including video data in academic publications, while still rare, can help overcome ethnography's confinement "to the ghettos of specialist 'qualitative research' journals or to series of heavily priced hardback monographs" (Watson, 2011: 214) and enhance the relevance of ethnography for addressing issues of direct organizational concern or public interest.

An important caveat to remember in light of these opportunities, is that confidentiality and anonymity need to be carefully considered before sharing visual data, even with those on record. We urge ethnographers to consider a variety of aspects from the discomfort participants may suffer when forced to watch themselves in action, to the possibility that confidential information is captured where the fieldworker did not expect or notice it, to the possibility that despite efforts at anonymization, surroundings may give away the identity of those recorded on tape. Only when they are satisfied that all conceivable precautions have been taken, all necessary permissions have been obtained, and all remaining risks are negligible, should video ethnographers share their material beyond their research team.

CONCLUSION

Drawing on our personal experience of a year-long study of reinsurance trading in the London marketplace we have shared our experiences of conducting team-based video ethnography. Based on these experiences, we have developed a three-dimensional space for charting new territory for organizational ethnography. New forms of organizational ethnography push the boundaries of traditional approaches along one or several of three

dimensions: site, instrument, and fieldworker. Therefore, we have considered the implications of these new options for the practical "doing" of ethnography through its constitutive tasks of fieldwork, headwork, and textwork. In doing so, we have consciously highlighted that new opportunities come at the cost of new dilemmas that ethnographers have to carefully navigate. These must not be overlooked in the initial excitement over the new questions we can address and the new audiences we can engage with new forms of organizational ethnography. While a plethora of suggestions exist about how such issues can be managed in more established methodologies, there are few protocols for balancing the opportunities and challenges of multi-site, video, or team ethnography. We are under no illusion that much work remains to be done, but are hopeful that our framework will help to systematize and advance it.

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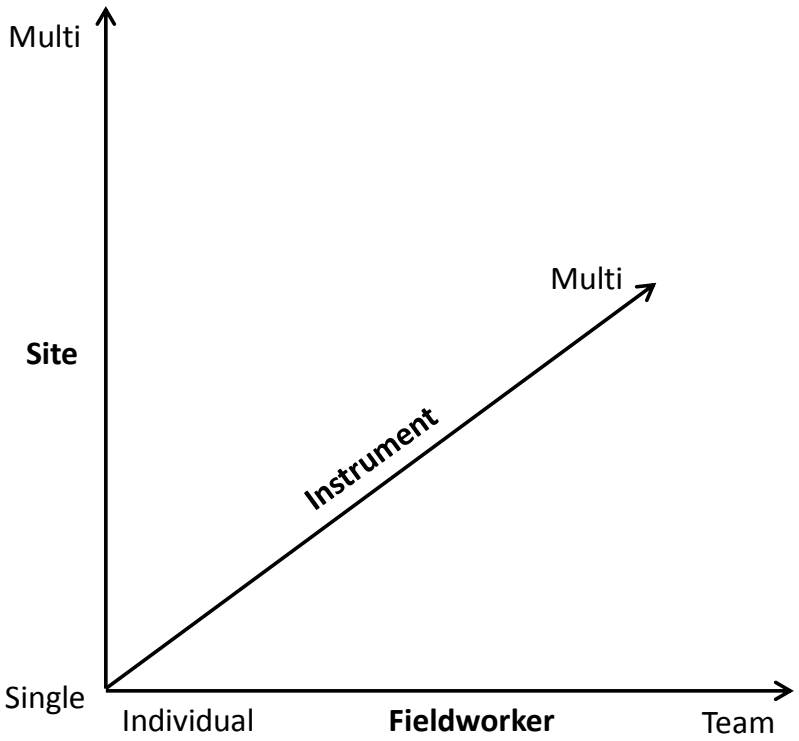
FIGURE 1


Multi
Site
Single
Multi
Instrument
Individual
Fieldworker
Team