M@n@gement
2019, vol. 22(1): 92-129

Unplugged - The Critical Corner

Stéphane Jaumier ● Hélène Picard ● Gazi Islam ● Olivier Germain ● Carine Farias ● Fabien Hildwein ● Marie-Astrid Le Theule

The critical corner welcomes transcripts of roundtables, symposiums, interviews, keynotes speeches organized within conferences but also book reviews essays or provocative ideas in the field of critical management studies.

IN THE FIELD: CONDITIONS, VALUE(S) AND STAKES OF EMPIRICAL INQUIRY IN CRITICAL RESEARCH

Stéphane Jaumier
Grenoble Ecole de Management,
Univ Grenoble Alpes ComUE
stephane.jaumier@grenoble-em.com

Hélène Picard
Grenoble Ecole de Management,
Univ Grenoble Alpes ComUE
helene.picard@grenoble-em.com

The 7th Doctoral Workshop on Critical Management Perspectives was held in March 2018 at Grenoble Ecole de Management (GEM). The workshop was organized by the Alternative Forms of Markets and Organizations (AFMO) Team at GEM. This annual meeting aims to bring together the francophone community of critical management researchers to discuss ongoing doctoral projects. It provides a forum for our community to debate current critical management issues. This issue of M@n@gement Unplugged revisits the 2018 workshop, which was dedicated to the relationship between researchers and their research fields in critical management studies.

Matters of empirical inquiry are more relevant than ever for our community's young doctoral students, many of whom undertake ambitious field research every year inspired by ethnographic approaches, in particular (Alvesson & Ashcraft, 2009). As this observation was made at previous workshops at the Catholic University of Louvain in 2012 and 2015, the Paris-Dauphine University in 2013, the University of Montpellier in 2014, the emlyon business school in 2016 and the Paris-Est University of Créteil in 2017, we designed the 2018 workshop as a discussion space for PhD students to address the particular issues that arise when they are working in and around the research "field".

At the 2018 workshop in Grenoble, we had the pleasure of hosting 20 PhD students and 22 professors representing 15 institutions in three countries. The richness and intensity of the two days of exchanges demonstrated the diversity of perspectives on, approaches to and experiences of field research, as well as the great dynamism of our community, which will meet in Montreal on October 2 and 3, 2019 for its next workshop.

In the remainder of this introduction, we provide a perspective on the fieldwork issues that are specific to critical approaches, before giving an overview of the work presented by the doctoral students. We then introduce the three contributions to this issue, referring to the workshop's keynote speech and the round table discussions that took place.

The recent controversy, which extended well beyond the academic field, surrounding the publication of sociologist Alice Goffman's (2014) ethnography *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* serves as a reminder that the relationships researchers have with their objects or fields of study can be extremely complex.

Drawing on six years of ethnographic work, Goffman (2014) studies the consequences of police repression on and mass incarceration of black youths in a poor neighborhood in Philadelphia. She shows how the ongoing interactions of these young men with the police and justice system negatively affect their daily lives and their trajectories, as well as those of their loved ones and their entire communities, to the extent that all their social relations, whether relating to love, family or friendship, are irremediably tinged with uncertainty, secrecy and suspicion.

While, initially, Goffman's book was positively received both by academic circles and by a wider audience, it soon became the subject of strong criticism (Flaherty, 2017; Lubet, 2015). Goffman was criticized, in particular, for placing too much blind trust in her informants and for getting too close to them, even to the extent of possibly being complicit in an attempted murder. She was also accused of perpetuating African-American stereotypes and sensationalizing their criminality. The question this ultimately raised is whether it is possible for a white upper-class woman to be able to transcribe faithfully the experiences of a group of poor black men.

On the Run is an extreme example, and researchers, especially in the field of management, rarely face such levels of physical violence, danger and illegality. However, these experiences and the debate around them raise questions that are relevant to management studies about the relationship of any researcher to their object of study.

As in the example of *On the Run*, conducting and writing about fieldwork is not unproblematic. As well as epistemological and methodological issues, which are most frequently covered by the literature (Beaud & Weber, 2010; Cefaï, 2006), there are often also ethical (Roulet, Gill, Stenger & Gill, 2017) and legal, identity (Avanza, 2008; Essers, 2009) and even emotional (Devereux, 1967; Gilmore & Kenny, 2015) dimensions. These problems, which sometimes become the theoretical focal point of the work (for example, the place of emotions in militant work analyzed by Erika Summers-Effler, (2010)), therefore continue to feed the debate and practice of fieldwork.

In recent years, we have also seen the emergence of in-depth inquiries by journalists who use methods that are similar to ethnography, the results of which are published in the form of books that have achieved notable public success. These inquiries give us access to the embodied realities of present-day work, in its most precarious, painful and dehumanizing forms (Aubenas, 2010; Le Guilcher, 2017; Malet, 2013) or to some of the cogs of globalized capitalism (Malet, 2017). As such efforts inform the fields of study of management, work and organizations, they may in turn invite us to reflect on the distinctive aspects and value of academic fieldwork.

In light of the issues and controversies these works raise, we wanted to invite the participants of the 7th Doctoral Workshop to reflect on the relationship researchers have with their research objects and, in particular, their research fields. The contributions put forward by these early-career researchers (whose contributions are all referenced at the end of this introduction) were rich and diverse in terms of the objects, perspectives and methods used, as well as the underlying intentions and motivations they expressed.

In their work, several researchers question, for example, how they can balance their feminist militancy with the requirements of academic research. Caroline Demeyere and Marianne Strauch consider some of the advantages and disadvantages that stem from their dual roles as activists and researchers. Léa Dorion endeavors to show that a feminist ethnography transcends this apparent contradiction by affirming its own epistemological foundations. Other contributions address the ambiguities of fieldwork from other angles. Adélie Ranville, for example, reflects on how the researcher can incorporate a democratic dimension to an action-research project that focuses on a democratic organization. David Sanson shows how the multiple identities developed by the researcher can be used in ethnographic work to expand access to data. Finally, Mahaut Fanchini, drawing on her research on whistleblowers, challenges the validity of the criteria used to delimit her field of inquiry.

As is customary for the Doctoral Workshop, the call for papers was largely open and therefore the selected contributions were not all directly related to the chosen theme. Nevertheless, in addition to those related to our theme, we were pleased to receive an abundance of papers with in-depth qualitative methodologies in ambitious and exciting research fields. These papers raised many questions that enriched the discussion over the two days, enabling critical management researchers to share various concerns related to their fields of study.

This was particularly the case for the discussions that focused on alternative organizations, social movements (Yousra Rahmouni El Idrissi), new forms of activism (Mickaël Peiro) and emerging cooperative movements (Alban Ouahab and Olivier Gauthier). Ethnographic methods were generally favored, and it was interesting to note that the doctoral students had no hesitation about displaying their proximity to their research object, with their choice of research field and the way it was approached obeying most of the time affinity and identification logics.

Other contributions further enriched the discussion by studying how new organizational practices and technologies (digital platforms, participatory techniques, CSR policies) re-examine some of the central themes of critical management research: control and power (Clarence Bluntz and Pénélope Van den Bussche), work practices (Michel Ajzen and Chloé Jacquemin), organizational democracy (Margaux Langlois and Vincent Pasquier), diversity and discrimination (Pascale Caidor and Samia Saadani), and spaces and bodies in organizations (Marie Antoine and Géraldine Paring). In this context, it was striking to see the emergence of new understandings of what may constitute a research field and the methodologies that can be associated with it. Specific examples of this were the analysis of the conversation in targeted meetings (Pascale Caidor) or the analysis of discussion threads on a social network (Vincent Pasquier).

As well as participating in sessions dedicated to the presentation of their doctoral work, those attending the workshop were also invited to take part in discussions about issues related to the theme of fieldwork in critical management studies. Three sessions were devoted to these exchanges and constitute the core of our Unplugged issue.

The workshop's keynote speech by **Gazi Islam** is the first highlight of this special issue. He first challenges us to ponder the meaning of the French word "terrain" and the subtle differences that separate it from the English word "field". He then suggests three possible ways for qualitative research to consider a field: as limit (researchers define themselves as observers looking to reduce the distance between their concepts and their field); as politics (researchers put their concepts at the service of the

expression of the different voices that populate their field); and as imaginary (researchers invent their field and thus open the way to new possibilities). It is this last perspective, that of the field as imaginary, which leads him to finally consider the field to be an object that is necessarily contested, and whose constitution requires the reflexive engagement of the researcher.

The second part of our Unplugged issue transcribes the conversation between **Geoffrey Le Guilcher**, an independent journalist who wrote the book *Steak Machine* in 2017, and **Olivier Germain**, a researcher who is particularly interested in the linkages between academic work and other forms of writing such as fiction or journalism (Allard-Poesi, Germain, Huault & Koenig, 2016). Based on an extensive investigation in a French slaughterhouse, *Steak Machine* highlights the physical and psychological suffering caused by slaughterhouse work and how this manifests itself in the daily lives of the workers. In the dialogue which is transcribed here, Geoffrey Le Guilcher revisits the choices, adjustments and strategies that marked his immersion in the slaughterhouse. While this is an opportunity for a conversation between a journalist and a researcher, it also provides the opportunity to reflect on writing, the relationship established with the research field and with those who inhabit it, and all the stages that mark the experience of an inquiry, from entry *into* the field to the writing *about* it and public discussion *of* it.

The final section of our issue expands upon the round table discussions involving three ethnographers who shared their own field experiences. These experiences were marked by the initial distance of their "milieu" (academic, especially managerial) or their identity (professional, gender) from their research object. In their texts, they each consider ethnographers to be an "intruder" when they invite themselves into organizational worlds from which they are *a priori* remote or even excluded.

Carine Farias revisits her ethnography of an autonomous community, carried out as part of her PhD thesis, which she defended in 2015. In her text, she highlights the difficulties posed by her necessary intrusion into the intimacy of the members of the community she studied and by her affiliation to a business school. She then goes on to discuss some of the dilemmas raised as she continued to negotiate the resistance to her presence in the field. For his thesis, defended in 2016, **Fabien Hildwein** conducted an ethnography of the feminist activist group La Barbe, whose spectacular performance and organizational mechanisms he studies. In his text, he questions the limits to the integration of a man into a group composed exclusively of women. In the end, he proposes the concept of "honorary female" as a way of describing the status he gradually achieved through the trust of the activists. Finally, **Marie-Astrid Le Theule** tells us about her immersion in an acute and palliative care unit as part of a research project to better understand the impact of a new public accounting system on the daily reality of hospitals. Among other things, she explains how her initial status as that of an intruder was replaced by the more satisfactory status of a witness dedicated to shedding light on situations that were being overshadowed by accounting systems.

In conclusion, we can say that the 2018 meeting of the Doctoral Workshop confirmed that field issues remain one of the major challenges in critical management studies. The various doctoral presentations and plenary discussions showed that pluralism of perspectives and inter-disciplinarity are more necessary than ever in meeting this challenge. The

texts published in this issue are intended as examples that demonstrate the reflections and the efforts made towards this end.

REFERENCES

Allard-Poesi, F., Germain, O, Huault, I. & Koenig, G. (2015). La théorie des organisations est-elle bien inspirée? Quatre regards. *Économies et Sociétés. Série K, Économie de l'Entreprise*, (23), 111-140.

Alvesson, M. & Ashcraft, K. L. (2009). Critical methodology in management and organization research. In D.A Buchanan & A. Bryman (Eds.). *The SAGE handbook of organizational research methods*, (pp. 61-77). London: Sage Publications.

Aubenas, F. (2010), *Le quai de Ouistreham*. Paris: Editions de l'Olivier.

Avanza, M. (2008) Comment faire de l'ethnographie quand on n'aime pas « ses indigènes » ? Une enquête au sein d'un mouvement xénophobe. In D. Fassin & A. Bensa (Eds.). *Les Politiques de l'enquête. Épreuves ethnographiques* (pp. 41-58). Paris, Éditions La Découverte.

Beaud, S. & Weber, F. (2010), *Le guide de l'enquête de terrain*, Paris: La Découverte, Collection Guide Grands Repères.

Cefaï, D. (2006). Une perspective pragmatiste sur l'enquête de terrain. In P. Paillé (Ed). *La méthodologie qualitative: Postures de recherche et variables de terrain* (pp. 33-62). Paris: Armand Colin.

Devereux, G. (1967), *De l'angoisse à la méthode dans les sciences du comportement,* Paris: Flammarion, Collection Champs essais.

Essers, C. 2009. Reflections on the Narrative Approach: Dilemmas of Power, Emotions and Social Location While Constructing Life-Stories. *Organization*, 16(2), 163-181.

Fassin, D. & Bensa, A. (2008), *Les Politiques de l'enquête. Épreuves ethnographiques*, Paris: Éditions La Découverte.

Flaherty, C. (2017), "Past as Prologue". *Inside Higher Ed*. Unpublished document, Available at www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/04/25/controversy-over-alice-goffman-leads-pomona-students-say-her-alleged-racial.

Gilmore, S. & Kenny, K. (2015) Work-worlds colliding: Self-reflexivity, power and emotion in organizational ethnography. *Human Relations,* 68(1), 55-87.

Goffman, A. (2014), *On the run: Fugitive life in an American city,* Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.

Le Guilcher, G. (2017), *Steak machine,* Paris: Editions Goutte d'Or.

Lubet, S. (2015), *Ethics on the run*. Unpublished document, Available at newramblerreview.com/book-reviews/law/ethics-on-the-run.

Malet, J.B. (2013), *En Amazonie : infiltré dans le « meilleur des mondes »*, Paris: Fayard.

Malet, J.B. (2017), *L'Empire de l'or rouge : enquête mondiale sur la tomate d'industrie,* Paris: Fayard.

Roulet, T., Gill, M., Stenger, S. & Gill, D.G. (2017) Reconsidering the value of covert research: The role of ambiguous consent in participant observation. *Organizational Research Methods,* 20(3), 487-517.

Summers-Effler, E. (2010), *Laughing Saints and Righteous Heroes: Emotional Rhythms in Social Movement Groups*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

LIST OF DOCTORAL WORKS PRESENTED DURING THE WORKSHOP

Michel Ajzen (Université catholique de Louvain) : Processus de régulation sociale et dynamique des conventions autour du télétravail. Une étude de cas.

Marie Antoine (Université catholique de Louvain) : Effect of an offices reconfiguration on the construction of an organisation's identity – Illustration by the DOMO project in the company ORES.

Clarence Bluntz (Université Paris-Dauphine) : La hantise de l'expertise. Construction des rôles et émancipation en comptabilité socio-environnementale.

Pascale Caidor (Université de Montréal) : « Attends, on ne va pas commencer à exiger moins… » ou : une étude de cas sur l'implantation d'une initiative de diversité ethnoculturelle.

Caroline Demeyere (Université Paris X) : Militante féministe et chercheuse : difficultés, gestion et valorisation scientifique d'une « double casquette ».

Léa Dorion (Université Paris-Dauphine) : Feminist organizational ethnography: when the epistemological is political.

Mahaut Fanchini (Université Paris-Dauphine): The co-construction of whistleblowing cases. How expectations of the recipient frame 'acceptable' whistleblowing narratives.

Olivier Gauthier (Université Paris-Dauphine) : L'émergence d'un « entreprendre en commun » : une étude du processus de création d'une coopérative de consommateurs.

Chloé Jacquemin (Université catholique de Louvain) : Transformation du travail des managers dans un contexte de digitalisation. Une approche par le travail vivant basée sur les pratiques dans un contexte de digitalisation du secteur bancaire.

Margaux Langlois (Université Paris-Dauphine) : Sociocraties et holacraties: comment ces organisations interrogent la démocratie?

Alban Ouahab (ESCP Europe) : Emancipating shelf: Organizing working shifts in a food cooperative.

Géraldine Paring (Université Paris-Dauphine) : *Animal subjects in organizational research.*

Vincent Pasquier (Grenoble Ecole de Management & Université Clermont Auvergne) : Democratic organizations and their monstrous digital self: the use of Facebook by a labor union.

Mickaël Peiro (Université de Montpellier) : Activist Works - From Protests to Professionalizations.

Yousra Rahmouni El Idrissi (emlyon business school) : Body pedagogics in the French climate justice movement.

Adélie Ranville (Grenoble Ecole de Management) : Democracy and growth within a worker cooperative: A participatory action research.

Samia Saadani (Université de Montpellier) : « Je lutte contre l'islamophobie » : genèse d'un déni collectif et stratégies d'action directe.

David Sanson (emlyon business school & École Normale Supérieure) : Engagement et distanciation en terrain familier : (Dé)jouer des effets d'enquête ?

Marianne Strauch (ESCP Europe) : Les études féministes et le terrain institutionnel : la question du rôle des chercheur.e.s.

Pénélope Van den Bussche (ESCP Europe) : « Ça leur fait plaisir en plus » : contrôle et valorisation du travail gratuit des utilisateurs dans le digital, le cas des plateformes collaboratives.

THE FIELD AS LIMIT, POLITICS, AND IMAGINARY: A REFLECTION ON QUALITATIVE INQUIRIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Gazi Islam
Grenoble Ecole de Management,
Univ Grenoble Alpes ComUE
gazi.islam@grenoble-em.com

It is an honor and a pleasure to deliver this keynote speech to open the 7th annual CMS doctoral workshop, and my special thanks to Stéphane Jaumier and Hélène Picard for their work on this initiative. I will give my presentation in French, given that one of the most admirable aspects of this conference is its bringing together of the francophone community around topics which, after all, have been deeply (although not exclusively) influenced by French thought. I do so with some trepidation, however; as a non-native, I wonder about my choice of words, my elocution, and my accent. But in a conference whose key theme focuses on the conditions of inquiry in different locales, questions of articulation, translation and accent may have an allegorical function.

The questions of "who should speak, on behalf of whom, and in what language" are as present today as ever, and are key questions for qualitative researchers in the field. These are questions about the legitimacy of our research vis-à-vis the world that surrounds it – can we speak for this world, or to it or with it?

Research is largely a process of translation, either between different languages or dialects of the same language, and our efforts to speak the language of the other have always been marked by elisions, mistakes, and accents; they are full of modulations and noise. Do these modulations delegitimate our communications about a world whose fidelity demands hegemonic adherence?

Do the gaps between the heterogeneity of the field and our stylized version of it serve to colonize the colloquial everyday speech with a more rational, formalized speech – the speech of those whose profession is to profess? Or does the gap in translation itself open a space of value, where new worlds can appear in the interstices between our misguided theory, and the world's misguided practice. Maybe these accents, by their very strangeness in the face of normal speech, can gesture toward possible new ways of being.

When beginning to think about how to translate my thoughts about the field into French, I immediately fell upon the curiosity of this word, "terrain", a word that seemed foreign to me and somewhat opaque, figuring research in a different way than the Anglo-Saxon notion of "field".

Why, for example, "le terrain" and not "le champ"? Both translate "field", and yet their differences are revealing. In qualitative research, especially of the ethnographic variety, one is immersed in a space: "dans le champ" rather than "sur le terrain". A "field" is a place where things grow, are cultivated, like a "champ de maïs", but also a place where competitions are held, like a "terrain de foot". Are the places we study more like sites of growth, where seeds germinate and ecosystems arise, and where the researcher takes the role of a botanist or an ecologist? Or are they more like arenas where sports are played, and we are the commentators, analysts or, sometimes, coaches?

The idea of "field" in the sense of "champ" is something that wants to be filled, populated. Wind blows through fields. Things grow in fields. When this does not happen, we can speak of an "empty field" or a "deserted field", but we do not speak of a "full field" – they are presumed to be full. A field is a space in which things happen, enter and exist.

By contrast, a "terrain", it seems, implies something of a ground, a base where the flight of our ideas can rest on the solid earth, whereas "field" connotes extension, a spreading out that can be in any direction.

"Field" does not give the comfort of a base. Perhaps for that reason the notion of "le terrain" fits the empiricist paradigm more faithfully than the idea of "field", which is neither theory nor data, but an opening, a place in which to work and to live.

"Fields" are also, closer to home, places where we develop our own disciplines, where our ideas come into contact; viewed in this way, our "field of research" would translate as "domaine de recherche". The idea of domain suggests something between domestic and domination, as the sense of home, of control, of *"être chez soi"*. But it would be a poor empirical researcher who saw his/her research as an act of domination, and so the confusion of "champ, terrain, domain" in the term "field" bleeds together, for English speakers, a concept that could, perhaps, gain greater clarity in French.

In reflecting on these possible uses of the notion of terrain, it is also obvious that the notion of what a field is has varied widely over time and across disciplines. What counts as a field, how near or far it must be, who must live there and how different from you they must be, have been the terms of methodological debates but also go to the core of how we conceive of ourselves and our jobs as researchers. In recent decades, perhaps due to globalization, but also because of increasing pressures on our ivory walls, the field has become closer to home, has become more unstable, has taken on different kinds of epistemic authority and, in many cases, has been populated by the very subjects who sit in our classrooms, learning how to act like the natives that we will then study.

The distinction between theory and the world has always been a relative one, and one worth putting into doubt. In a so-called information society, the relation between concepts and the world is further blurred, with ever-quickening feedback loops from experimentation to conceptualization to implementation to feedback. Fieldwork becomes ever shorter, and theoretical frameworks simplified for easy digestion and visualization, as the mutual demands of academy and economy shorten the space between theory and field. In this context, it is worth pondering the different notions of the field that permeate our conceptions of qualitative research, what each allows us to see, and what each obscures. The list I will give is short and not exhaustive; its goal is to highlight some possible ways of imagining the field, among others.

FIELD AS LIMIT

The first conception of the field that I would like to discuss is in certain respects the classical notion of the field as a source of data about the world. Rather than data, however, I would like to use the term "limit", for several reasons.

First, whereas data is something that is given, the idea of empirical verification relies on a notion that our theories are tested by, limited to, and constrained by the world. The world, in this view, resists our ideas until we find the right combination of words and concepts. Nothing is given; data resists. From the earliest days of ethnography, the relation between discovery and conquest was omnipresent. The establishment of a science of culture and society was always coextensive with the establishment of political order. Kant, in his aesthetics, refers to sensory data as the masses that must be governed by reason; however, unlike the subsumption of such masses within an *a priori* idea, the enlightenment treatment of data would be one of representation, and not pure domination. Neither the dominance of reason by the rationalists, nor the *tabula rasa* of the empiricists – the Kantian synthesis bound together reason and experience in a relation in

which it was often difficult to know who was on top. As Kant (1781/1996) noted in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, "*Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.*"

In our own fieldwork, we can often feel the vestiges of this tension. Our Anglo-Saxon colleagues may reflect at times the inheritance of English empiricism (but seem less like the more radical and subversive Scottish or Irish variants, represented by David Hume and George Berkeley, respectively). They ask us to stay close to the data, use more induction, and draw together associations between corpuscles of texts to formulate emergent concepts. The Gioia method, with its concepts of first and second order, evokes the primary and secondary qualities of John Locke and his *tabula rasa*, and the arrows always move from the more concrete to the more abstract. By contrast, our colleagues from the French research tradition sometimes offend their anglophone reviewers with too much a priori theory and an emphasis on theory that sticks too close to its origins, signaling an over-adherence to a preexisting theoretical program. These aspects raise suspicion in part because they seem to suggest a homunculus behind the curtain, a rational subject that projects its own ideas onto the screen of the world, rather than enacting onto itself the screen upon which the world projects. Both of these orientations describe the field in terms of limits; the former, the limits we must impose upon ourselves to faithfully transmit reality; the second, the limits of a chaotic world that needs our schema to provide order.

The critical synthesis of bottom-up empiricism and top-down rationalism, introduced by Kant, originates in a disciplinary move that combines the limits of the world and the limits of our mind under a single threshold of awareness. Like Lewis Carroll's (1898) hunters of the Snark, we begin with an empty map which is filled through experience, but rather than discover the outside world, we progressively discover ourselves, in expanding circles of reflexivity. Lévi-Strauss (1964), in his *Tristes Tropiques*, moves from the relatively civilized Caduveo, toward the interior to the Bororó, and finally to the anarchic Nambikwara, who sleep naked and show him the bare humanity at his core. This trope repeats itself throughout the history of ethnography.

The myth, which we can no longer hold, is that on the other side of that limit we will find ourselves. Rather, following the wisdom of Lewis Carroll, the driver of theory was not the subject of the researcher, nor the reality of the field, but the very limit that separated the two. The moment of discovery of the Snark, that mythical creature that is the goal of the voyage, entails the discovery that it is in fact a Boojum, a horrifying creature to catch sight of which is to vanish into thin air. To enter the field completely is thus not the moment of self-discovery, but of dissolution. Thus, the field always requires us to constitute an outside, and to remain there, looking in.

FIELD AS POLITICS

Thinking of the field in terms of epistemology leads us to ask the question of how our ideas can correspond to the world. A separate way of thinking about the field is to imagine it as a field of politics. In this view, there remains a gap that is constitutive for our theorizing. However, it is not only an epistemological gap. While epistemology presumes a gap between our knowledge and the reality we attempt to understand, a political view assumes that the gap is in the structure of the world itself. As researchers, we are not outside the world, but embedded within it; yet, it is a world that is fragmented, marked by antagonisms and relations of domination. Theory

is an attempt to reconcile and organize the world, but it is not a reconciliation between knower and known, rather a reconciliation among forms of life.

Theory, to be faithful to the field, must try to account for the different forms of life and framings of the world that exist within a field. Yet because different forms of life, and their associated worldviews, coexist in ways that cannot easily be subsumed into a larger scheme, theory's attempts must always remain incomplete.

When the field seems like a unified whole, we often give it names like a culture, an organization, or a logic. But the existence of those logics may signify a hegemonic project, where certain ideas have become intuitive at the expense of others. Theory, in articulating and describing those ideas, reinforces the idea of their unity and their appropriateness to a field. Seen only in this light, all empiricism is a conservative exercise, an exercise of power.

Yet not all approaches to the field fall into the trap of reinforcing dominant narratives. The danger of doing so is greatest when the empirical approach focuses on establishing regularities, generalizations, and paradigmatic codes. Dominant norms are reflected in theory when it is the norm, and not the outlier, that is represented in theory.

What is often most interesting, theoretically and politically, are those moments within a field that seem disjunctive, aberrant or out of order. Moments in which different ways of life grind against each other in day-to-day practice. In such situations, the field is revealed as heterogeneous, and culture is revealed to be only an unstable moment in an ongoing struggle. Rather than as outliers, the researcher should take these moments as signs of an underlying political struggle, and reinterpret more commonly observed phenomena appropriately. This suggests that it is not only the frequency and prevalence of a phenomenon that dictates its importance for understanding a field. As Feyerabend (1975) put it in *Against Method:* "*No theory ever agrees with all the facts in its domain, yet it is not always the theory that is to blame. Facts are constituted by older ideologies, and a clash between facts and theories may be proof of progress*."

This paradoxical relation between the researcher and his field suggests that it is not in the representation of the field that the researcher's most important work is done. Rather, it may be in identifying the key moments, and in helping to articulate those moments, that the central task lies. This suggests that the message must not only be directed to the academic community, but to the field itself, to help those on the ground articulate the proto-worlds that are being born in the field.

Literally, the researcher helps to create his data, not by inventing it *ex nihilo*, but by helping to craft a language and vocabulary with which non-hegemonic groups may describe, and thus consolidate, their own worlds. Speaking in terms of normal and prevalent data, the traditional empirical task is thus both useless and counterproductive; the elite already have many words with which to describe themselves. It is when those from below find the right words that social changes are possible. As James Clifford (1986) describes in *Writing Culture,* "*The ethnographer is the midwife, as it were, who delivers and articulates what is vernacularly expressed in working class lives, and for that matter, middle class lives.*" By crafting the symbolic and conceptual tools of struggle, the field researcher can build a bridge between the sociology of critique and a critical sociology, which, if executed well, should be identical.

FIELD AS IMAGINARY

The political view of the field problematizes the perspective of the fieldworker as an outsider, suggesting that any work of conceptual synthesis and articulation, whether from within or without, involves participation in the phenomenon at hand, and thus that all fieldwork is to some extent that of an insider. Where viewing the field as limit takes reality as a given, and viewing it as politics takes reality as a struggle, both of these perspectives presume that the field to be studied is the here and now, the phenomenal world experienced and described by informants.

A third view of the field, however, sees it as a utopian point, not a reality constituted from the past, or a struggle occurring in the present, but as a regulatory idea that anchors meanings in a projected future and that is ultimately validated not by what is, but what will be. For instance, the recent turn toward performativity in theorizing recognizes that acts of integrating and articulating ideas about reality in effect constitute new realities.

The relevant term here, taken from Castoriadis (1975/1987), would be to think of the field as a kind of imaginary, a landscape of collective aspirations – or, more to the point, aspirations of a collective. That is, the way that our theories imagine, and thus constitute, notions such as the human, the agent, the organization, the bearer of rights and responsibilities, the society within which organizations function, even the geo- and ecological spheres which form the backdrop for organizing processes.

The multiple threats and destabilizations of the 21st century put into doubt our prevailing ideas of what constitutes a "field". As Erving Goffman, in his presidential address to the American Sociological Association in 1982, stated about his discipline of sociology: "*We do not have the esprit that anthropologists have, but our subject matter at least has not been obliterated by the spread of the world economy.*" But that was in 1982, and progress has been made since to obliterate even the objects of society. Not only does it now seem naïve to discuss the idea of a self-contained culture, but also notions central to social thought, such as the nation-state, the individual, the family, gender, ethnicity and class, the organization or bureaucracy, even nature, earth and ecosystem, have been revealed less as matters of fact than as matters of concern. The above-mentioned anthropologists, understanding the emerging global order as a time of disciplinary reimagining, were at the forefront of this rethinking of the field; they had no other choice.

In the field of science studies, Bruno Latour led the march with the reconsideration of scientific practices as a series of rituals and transmutations, while the study of global culture became the study of imaginings of the global, leading to hybridizations, readaptations and ironic consequences. Perhaps most famously, Arjun Appadurai and his journal *Public Culture* tried to reconceive of anthropology as a field in the making, an imaginary field studying imaginary fields. In his *Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy* (Appadurai, 1990), he explains:

> *The image, the imagined, the imaginary - these are all terms which direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is elsewhere), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people) and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination*

> *has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (both in the sense of labor and of culturally organized practice) and a form of negotiation between sites of agency ('individuals') and globally defined fields of possibility.*

To paraphrase Appadurai, the imaginary is no longer supplementary to the real, but has become the mechanism of reality itself. Another way to put this is that if "reality" is what we call the stable categories of an unquestioned social order, then the tumultuous social changes of recent decades naturally call into question those categories and what was once seen as only imaginary can now be brought into reality.

This opens up possibilities for new voices, new identities and new hybrids, but it also opens possibilities for established forms of resistance and politics to be captured, commodified and spectacularized. The question in such a scenario is, how to acknowledge the imaginary nature of social reality without succumbing to spectacle, a softening of the hard core of reality whose new pliability can be used to thwart efforts at social change?

Although the view of the field as imaginary may seem, to some more hardcore critical theorists, as an escape into musing, science fiction, or relativism, it is worth noting that, in our current conjuncture, classical notions of society, even the critical ones, may be unable to help us. Faced with the possibility of massive species extinction via climate change, in a period often described as the Anthropocene, many social theorists have suggested that basic categories of social thought, such as nature and humanity, must be reimagined to permit cohabiting across species and nations.

Further, technological changes in our basic modes of communication have transformed the temporalities and spatialities of human language and interaction. Governing is carried out by tweet. Our identities circulate mimetically via selfies and emojis across circuits we cannot control or predict, creating flows of social information unimaginable even 10 years ago. In the day-to-day life of an organization, so much of what is seen is backed up by an enormous infrastructure of emails, messages and non-human workers that add an ontological layer to interaction that is unprecedented in human history.

In such a scenario, what can we possibly mean by "field"? The use of the imagination in such situations is not an option; it is the only conceivable way to do research in 2018. We no longer go to the field, but must construct the field as a stage on which we perform. Perhaps the biggest challenge is no longer to understand our field, but to constitute a field that is a viable project of understanding.

Each of these three ways of describing the field carries with it premises about why we do research, our epistemological and social positions as researchers, and the challenges and limits of field research. In the first perspective, that of field as limit, research is an attempt to overcome a barrier to connect theories to the world, an act which frames the researcher by definition. In the second perspective, that of politics, research is an attempt to create conceptual supports for a field that is itself fragmented, doing justice to the diverse voices present while helping the field articulate itself. In this perspective, the researcher is never an outsider, but an insider of a different, and more ambiguous, type. In the third perspective, that of the imaginary, the field itself is not given in advance, but rather is constituted in the activity of research, opening the possibilities for imagining new organizational and social alternatives and possibilities for utopian (or dystopian) thinking. In this perspective, the

researcher is, to paraphrase Donna Haraway (1991), a builder of political myths that allow different kinds of beings to inhabit the world together.

To sum up, far from the background or container of research, the field has increasingly become itself an object of inquiry, contestation and debate. We do not only begin research once we are in the field; the choice, and indeed the creation, of a field are fundamental parts of research itself. In a world whose boundaries are fluid and yet, once established, can have deep consequences, finding the space in which to establish fields will be an ever more important component of social practice. The more we are able to think about the field in reflexive ways, the greater our chances are to establish fields that are consistent with our scientific, social and ethical imperatives.

REFERENCES

Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. *Public Culture*, 2(2), 1-24.

Carroll, L. (1898), *The Hunting of the Snark, an Agony in Eight Fits*, London: Macmillan.

Castoriadis, C. ([1975] 1987), *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Clifford, J. (1986). On ethnographic allegory. In J. Clifford & G. Markus (Eds.), *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography* (pp. 98-121). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Feyerabend, P. (1975), *Against method: Outline of an anarchistic theory of knowledge*, New York, NY: Humanities Press.

Goffman, E. (1982). The Interaction Order: American Sociological Association, 1982 Presidential Address. *American Sociological Review,* 48(1), 1-17.

Haraway, D. (1991). A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century. In D. Haraway (Ed.). *Simians, cyborgs and women: The reinvention of nature,* (pp. 149-181). New York: Routledge.

Lévi-Strauss, C. (1964), *Tristes Tropiques. An Anthropological Study of Primitive Societies in Brazil,* New York, NY: Antheneum.

IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM AND ACADEMIC INQUIRY: A DIALOGUE WITH GEOFFREY LE GUILCHER, AUTHOR OF *STEAK MACHINE*

Olivier Germain,
Université du Québec à Montréal
germain.olivier@uqam.ca

INTRODUCTION

Geoffrey Le Guilcher is an independent journalist and a co-founder of Editions Goutte d'Or, a publishing house created in 2016 to deliver works of non-fiction and fiction that have the common wish to "immerse" readers in "marginal, little known or fantasized" worlds[1].

In February 2017, he published *Steak Machine*, the story of his forty-day immersion in a Breton slaughterhouse. He writes about the daily lives of the workers on the "beef" line, on which he was hired as a temporary worker, drawing an intimate and political portrait of these "Wretched of the Meat"[2], whose working conditions are marked by suffering and taboo, as well as by strategies to "forget" and to (perhaps) distance themselves from such extreme conditions.

In this interview with Olivier Germain, professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal who in his work explores the links between fiction and investigation as well as issues specific to journalism, Le Guilcher revisits the choices, adjustments and strategies that marked this immersion. While this is a dialogue between journalist and researcher, it is also a reflection on writing, the relationships one has with a "field" of research and with those who inhabit it, and on all the moments that mark the investigative experience, from "entering" the field to writing "about" it, and, later, to publicly discussing it.

HOW TO TELL "THE TRUTH" ABOUT A SUBJECT MATTER? WRITING ABOUT REALITY…

Olivier Germain: There is currently a debate in the social sciences about the tension between fact and fiction. This tension can also be seen in journalism. On the one hand, there is a pragmatist tradition, a type of journalism that raises facts to trigger public debate and is a kind of citizens' activism – as represented today, for example, by Mediapart. On the other hand, fiction can be used to address organizational phenomena and facts in a different way. Ethnography, in turn, may lie between fact and fiction, and thus may bring other truths to light. Immersive journalism echoes this approach, to help bring out the truths about actors, especially those in marginalized populations. What are the contributions of immersive journalism compared to other types of journalism?

Geoffrey Le Guilcher: The genre of immersion is different to the journalism of "disclosure", which tends to have a strong technical dimension with little attention to form and a very clearly articulated democratic role. As a more narrative style of journalism, it doesn't only deal with the experts of a topic, it borrows from literary codes to bring the readers closer to reality—perhaps more so than in more distanced, more technical reporting. This requires a deeper reflection about the relationship

1. Editions Goutte d'Or website: www.editionsgouttedor.com/goutte-d-or

2. In reference to Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre*, 1961).

we have with the field, since there is an additional human dimension: we are not "drones". The idea of trying an immersion came to me when I was reading *Ten Days in a Mad-House*[3] by Nellie Bly, who immersed herself in a women's asylum. We follow the stages of her reflection and the different narrative threads: what's going to happen to her? We are with her, with her subject matter, in her thoughts.

ENGAGEMENT AND DISTANCE: TAKING A STEP BACK?

OG: On the one hand, there is an engagement in the process of immersion, where the author's subjectivity becomes part of the narrative, and where matters of objectivity are not central. And then there is the more political engagement, which is also present from the beginning in immersive journalism. Your initial argument, in that sense, may then be that human suffering and animal suffering are intertwined. Is that how you would explain your engagement and your motivation, and also perhaps how you would differentiate it from a researcher's position?

GLG: Well this "argument" is not strictly mine; it really stems from existing work on the topic, for instance in the research by the French sociologist Catherine Rémy[4] and in the novel *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair[5], who wrote an epic tale of the Chicago slaughterhouses at the beginning of the 20th century, or in more recent French and European parliamentary reports.

What all these accounts highlight is that we must distinguish between violence against animals—which we see in the videos of the L214[6] association, most of which are taken in the most taboo area of the factory, called "the killing" zone [*la tuerie*], where we see workers commit sadistic acts—and the systemic violence that is legal and inherent in the slaughterhouse and the meat industry.

Workers are placed in an untenable situation, as Catherine Rémy affirms. The two kinds of violence are in fact linked; they are intertwined, and they often clash. This becomes obvious when you study the subject; it is not an "argument".

As for the issue of what one may call objectivity, I simply do not believe it exists! I would rather say right away, "Here I am, a '*viandard*' (meat-eater); I was born into a family where we didn't have the cash to go on vacation, but the motto was 'at least we eat meat every day'!". Today, I live in a neighborhood where I used to eat meat every day, perhaps have a kebab, hit the Indian grill, or any other restaurant in my neighborhood. Basically, at any meal, in order to feel full, I needed to have meat. That's how I start the book, and then I talk about how, after a while, I obviously changed my relationship with food, because leaving the slaughterhouse, with all the smells lingering in my nostrils for hours afterwards, I had no desire to eat meat or, to put it more simply, to consume animals.

Why not share all this personal experience regardless of your job, whether you're a journalist or a researcher, since it does have an influence on your work... When you think about your topic, when you "conceptualize" it as you say, it inevitably has an impact on you. Before you go to work, you eat, you have a concrete relationship with the chicken on your plate, and thoughts come to you about what is around you, sometimes arising from a

3. Bly, N. (2009), *Ten Days in a Mad-House. 1887,* Cedar Lake, MI: Feather Trail.

4. Rémy, C. (2009). Tuer sans émotion? Réflexions sur la mise à mort des animaux à l'abattoir. *Critique*, (747-748), 691-701.

5. Upton, S. (1906), *The Jungle*, New York, NY: Doubleday.

6. L214 is a French not-for-profit association founded in 2008, that fights against animal exploitation and for animal rights. It is most famous for the infiltration videos of slaughterhouses in France, which activists post on their website: www.l214.com

chance encounter, or from a conversation. For me, it is very important for this to be set out at the beginning, as long as writers don't do it to frame themselves as the super heros of their own work, which is often the case in journalistic work... But if it really serves the efficacy of the narrative and even the investigation, then it's interesting.

And my approach to formulating concepts (in the absence of an argument) was to use different levels of observation, to borrow different "magnifying glasses". I met Olivier Falorni[7], the MP in charge of the parliamentary inquiry committee, who told me that "it's easier to get into a nuclear submarine than a slaughterhouse...". And that is exactly what motivated me to try to get into a slaughterhouse. And then I also talked to the slaughterhouse's press office and to anti-speciesist associations, each with their own views and differences. And that, that interests me a lot—immersing the reader immediately in the experience, without any distance, and then changing it round a bit to explain what I observe.

Two major concepts that I emphasize in my study are pace and taboo, and that's really what I learned from my experience. And together they are explosive. If there were two things that should be changed, immediately, starting tomorrow, it would be to reduce the pace of the production line, which creates many problems and, with regard to the taboos, to make slaughterhouses and their environment much more transparent, so that it becomes possible to bring together all the actors who may want to change this context.

CHOOSING THE IMMERSIVE METHOD, AND A FIELD THAT JUSTIFIES IT

OG: What's the starting point for choosing a field? What's this process like?

GLG: I wanted to do an immersion; that was the starting point. I really like Joe Sacco's stories in comics[8], where he is part of the story without being heroic, or what Nelly Bly or even Albert Londres[9] have done. So the immersive approach interested me, and then I looked for a suitable topic. And actually, I am not the one who found it; Clara [Tellier Savary] who is the editor and co-founder of Editions Goutte d'Or, had the idea of "sending me to the slaughterhouse". The idea was not to do it at all costs. It was only because we had found it to be a taboo place and thought we could have a point of view that had not been shared yet that we felt it was worth it.

And this wish to do an immersion coincided with the increased public discussion, highlighted by the work of the L214 association, in particular the videos they shoot in slaughterhouses and the debate that had emerged around them, which triggered a parliamentary inquiry committee. Over the past 5 years, the L214 association and other anti-speciesist activists have constructed this agenda, essentially bringing the slaughterhouses out of the shadows and out of the taboo area where they were located. Literally, as well, since these are places that were removed from cities and urban centers in the early 19th century, for sanitary and hygiene reasons, and because governments believed that it was necessary to hide them away to avoid showing violence. And little by little, we have forgotten about these places... and about the workers there, who are all demonized, used as scapegoats, called "psychos", sadistic people. And ethnographers, in

7. Falorni, O. & Caullet, J.-Y. (Rapporteurs). (2016). Rapport de la commission d'enquête sur les conditions d'abattage des animaux de boucherie dans les abattoirs français, Paris, Assemblée Nationale. www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/rap-enq/r4038-ti.asp

8. Sacco, J. (2009), *Footnotes in Gaza: A graphic novel,* Basingstoke: Macmillan.

9. Londres, A. (2012), *Le chemin de Buenos Aires*, Londres: Les Editions de Londres.

particular, have described this job as the "worst in the world"—and so I was interested in understanding this job.

Actually, in my work (and in my previous experience as a sociology student, carrying out participant observation among the young communist movement), I like being close to the people I study, and close to them on many different levels... as close as possible, and I also like to reflect on this proximity... That doesn't mean that I only go to places where I have ideological or other affinities. On the contrary, I find it interesting to get myself into a little bit of trouble, and to get close to people whom I would normally feel averse to.

CONSTRUCTING THE FIELD AND ITS BOUNDARIES

OG: Your approach is therefore to take the place of the oppressed, the invisible oppressed, who are the slaughterhouse workers. How did you construct your field? All at the same time, you had to pick an organization and carry out the work to construct your field, since you extend its boundaries beyond that of the organization to show the reader the daily lives of workers, the local fairs, the passage of time outside the factory walls...

GLG: It should be noted at the outset that there are two types of slaughterhouse in France. There are the small municipal ones that survive on subsidies and exist to support local breeders who totally depend on public funding. And then there is the system of gigantic industrials, which are responsible for France killing 1 billion animals each year. From this observation, my goal was to focus on the industrial machine that made this situation possible. So, I targeted slaughterhouses in Brittany, and then I asked L214 for help, as they know the slaughterhouses by heart. They gave me five names, among which I spotted the largest one, which belongs to a multinational chain of supermarkets. Then, I initially wanted to start on the pork line, because the plant I had chosen kills 2 million animals a year, the majority of which are pigs—15,000 pigs a day and 600 cows. But the employment agency that recruited me assigned me to the cows. This was part of the investigation and I had to improvise. And so, I found myself on the beef line, and in the end I stayed there.

IN THE MARGINS, ACCESSING THE TRUTH OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

OG: In your text, what we also perceive is that in the marginal spaces, in the slaughterhouse's underground, things are organized around the human suffering...

GLG: A study was conducted[10] from 2001 to 2004 of almost all the Breton slaughterhouses by a team of researchers including psychologists, occupational physicians and ergonomists, which the manufacturers who sponsored the study ended up censoring. Initially, the goal was to understand the causes of the huge turnover in their factories. Researchers had access to the slaughterhouses, but in addition to being censored, they themselves noted that it was very hard to get people to talk even when you have official permission, because they were meeting them within the space of the slaughterhouse, and because it's a job that people do not talk about.

My own uncle worked in a slaughterhouse, and I still do not know what his position was. There is a taboo around this job: people will say that they work at the factory, maybe at the meat factory, but saying "the

10. Morisseau, P. & Pornin, A. (2011, May). Stivab, une étude pluridisciplinaire sur la santé et les conditions de travail dans la filière viande bretonne. In Troisième Congrès francophone sur les troubles musculosquelettiques (TMS). Échanges et pratiques sur la prévention/Organisé par l'Anact et Pacte.

slaughterhouse" casts a chill. Based on this observation, I very quickly understood that observing the plant alone would stop me from understanding the lives of the people there. Picture a day on the line: we would spend eight hours standing on a platform; I had to dissect one cow per minute; the half-carcass would arrive; I would remove all the fat, going up and down, then wash my hands and change my knife, and start again.

So in order to get these stories, I settled myself in, and my goal was very quickly to party with them, to do the same drugs, and to look for stories at night—the back-street tattoo artist, fights with the foremen, all the clandestine stories that suddenly come up, since it's all that people talk about. It's their life, they live at the foot of the monster that is the slaughterhouse, and everything in their lives is necessarily linked to it.

This proximity is important for finding more of these "hidden" stories, such as the story of an accident that turned a worker into a "vegetable" for a few months, and which the psychologist who had conducted the study a few months earlier had not heard about. On a psychological level, it's very hard to make people talk. When you are a worker, you are in a mess, you feel pain all over your body, and so at night you go out with only one desire, that is to "get high" and forget about this "imprisoned" body and about what happened during the day. That is when and how the stories circulate.

ENTERING THE FIELD: BODY AND TIME AFFECTED

OG: What we can see through your lived experience is that your relationship to your body, to your pain, evolves. For example, you learn from other workers how to limit certain gestures, such as stretching, that would increase the pain. How were you able to release yourself from this intense physical dimension later on?

GLG: I had lost 7-8 kilos by the end of that summer— there had been heatwaves, I was sweating all the time, and I was also no expert at cutting and carving meat, so I was forcing a lot... so just physically freeing myself and getting away from the place was a relief. However, the cathartic aspect, mentally, it's never been... I never thought it was problematic.

OG: And what about your relationship with time?

GLG: What we tried to do was to make time disappear through games. We worked on a line of platforms that were 6-7 meters high. The carcasses were hung up and moved along the line, which had platforms on either side of a corridor through which the animals passed and where each worker was in charge of a different step in the process. So even when we were up there, we could talk: we had conversations; we got to know people. Another trick was not to look at the numbers on the cows or at the time; there were plenty of strategies. My first my goal was really not to be rejected. I wanted to keep to my plan to stay several months, so I really wanted to be accepted. I wanted to write a book, and I was preparing a documentary on this subject at the same time. So, I wanted to be a model worker, to stay as long as possible. Adopting these strategies was also a way for me to stay.

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTATION IN A "MOVING" FIELD

OG: How did you maintain flexibility in your investigation, especially in the face of unforeseen events such as the construction of a wall between the "killing" zone and the rest of the factory?

GLG: This is unavoidable, really. You start off with ideas, things you want to see, and then you see what happens. You have to accept that you

need to rethink some things, to change your mind, it's also something that I want. I know why I'm there: it is a taboo place that people and society want to hide, so that alone justifies the immersion method. I chose this abattoir because there was no wall between the factory and the animal "killing" zone, but in the month between my visit and when I started as a temp, a wall had been built around the "killing" area. So, this created another issue: I wanted to go behind the wall, which meant that I needed to develop new strategies since you would normally have to have spent a year in the slaughterhouse before you could be put there. Now, I also wanted to question the killers, ask them about their relationship with death, with killing sentient beings all day long. That's also what I was aiming for. I did not want only to tell what life was like in the middle of the production line; there were several goals that I wanted to achieve. But I also bounced back when one of these goals did not work. What I really wanted, more than testing one theory or creating another, was to recount what I saw.

OG: So, you write about the daily life on the line, but this taboo "killing" space that you wanted to get into, you end up talking about it more or less indirectly. How do you perceive this approach, is it biased?

GLG: One of my objectives was to get to see this place that was hidden from me, the "killing" zone. From the moment there was a wall, I was not allowed to go there, and in any case I was pretty far from the "dirty zone", working in the "clean zone". I was 40 carcasses away from it, so if I went there and someone saw me, I really had no business being there. And, if I did get into the "killing" zone, and recount what I saw, an animal being slaughtered, would it be interesting? Among the studies that interested me was the work of Catherine Rémy, a sociologist who carried out research on the killers in slaughterhouses and was interviewed by the parliamentary commission. She says that everything in this industry is done to make man the enemy of the animal. It is already a Herculean task, impossible to fulfill, and in addition to the workload there is an animal struggling that further complicates the task. The animal then becomes an enemy, and since it is easier to kill an enemy than a friend, it also has a symbolic role. The idea for me is to understand how these "killers" experience it.

So, I found a much more effective way to bypass this wall—even though I was also to do it in person later—which was to manage to talk to the killers. I began by arriving 2 hours before my starting time and ate my sandwiches inside the plant, in front of the line, which made me look very weird at the slaughterhouse. The first day, they asked me "What are you doing here? – I have an appointment at the infirmary", and I began to talk to them that way, and was able to ask lots of questions in a nice way. I collected a lot of testimonies from the killers that week. Towards the end of the week, they were growing suspicious, but they never thought that I was an undercover journalist, just a weirdo...!

THE LANGUAGE OF THE FIELD: DESCRIBING AND RECOUNTING

OG: From the first chapter on, you use a particular vocabulary, which you draw from your own perception, but also perhaps from how people speak. Either way, it is set out very quickly and is very visual, and really conveys the way in which you describe and approach this field, the truths lived. You speak for example of the "crab-men", of an "enclosed space", of a "planet"...

GLG: I use "crab-men", which I introduce at the beginning to describe some of the people, because they have such huge arms that when they shake your hand they might break it without meaning to! This

jumped out at me when I got there, and even going for a coffee in the towns around the plant, I'd spot them right away because they have these huge forearms. The women have rosacea because they work more often in the cold areas of the factory. In fact, the line is largely organized according to gender: the bigger the animals, the more men there are; the closer you get to the "killing" zone, the more men there are; and the closer you get to the packaging sections, the more you find women. Of course, there are lots of exceptions, but that's basically how it is organized.

WRITING AND REFLEXIVITY

OG: After a working day, the evening is party time, but it was also for you the time for reflexivity and writing. How did you balance the work of note taking and writing at the same time that you were experiencing your immersion and its evolution?

GLG: Writing played a kind of cathartic role. I forced myself to write out all my notes of the day every day, which took me about two hours a day. There was only one time that I did not do it, and it piled up the next day. I told myself not to do this again because it was exhausting, and it also had a negative impact on the accuracy of my notes. In the evening, when you reflect on what you experienced that day, you see why you are there; you better understand the meaning of your approach.

I spoke about it later with Sébastien Arsac (co-founder of L214), who carried out a lot of undercover infiltrations, until his face became too well known, and I said, "You are an anti-speciesist so going to a slaughterhouse may be the same for you as going inside a concentration camp, how do you manage to spend your life there?". We reached the same conclusion: in the evening, when he reviews his footage, he knows why he is there. It's also cathartic; this is when it makes sense. Many workers on the line are there because they have no choice; they are there because they have no other job, although normally they are gardeners, or masons. Most are there because of a lack of choice, except for a few of the older workers and some migrants (Malians and Romanians when I was there).

APPROACHING TRUTH THROUGH NARRATIVES

OG: We say that it is the fact of seeing, of observing, that gives us access to facts, but actually, in the work of the narrative journalist (as in ethnography), what matters more is the reconstitution, the piecing together of truths... We are not always in a direct relation with reality.

GLG: Yes, but that's why we must work out what we want to see before we get to the field. For example, something that has been well studied by scientists is the moment when the animal technically dies. It dies by anoxia: when you cut the two carotids (in big animals), the blood flows and the brain is deprived of oxygen, and then the animal dies. Well, that's the theory. In practice, what happens for 20-30% of the animals is that they have a false aneurysm (a clot or arteries swell up and become blocked), and the animal can still be alive for up to 14 minutes for a cow and up to 11 minutes for a pig. Knowing that in the slaughterhouse, every minute we advance from a post on the line and we remove a piece of the body.

So, there is a kind of ping-pong game that goes on between narrative, journalistic and academic work. The world specialist on the issue of the killing of animals is Temple Grandin[11], an autistic woman who was

11. Grandin, T. & Johnson, C. (2006). *Animals in translation: The woman who thinks like a cow*. London: Bloomsbury.

ranked by *The Times* as one of the 100 most influential persons in the world, and who has set the rules for most of the world's slaughterhouses, first in the United States and then in Europe. But I can confirm that all the protocols that have been set up are not respected because of the frantic pace and the taboo, which enable and maintain non-compliance with the norms. So, you go back and forth between observations, stories and research, to write a story that people will want to read and learn about the situation. But at the same time, the writing must be informed. If you go there like some war reporters, to "hear bullets whistle" but without understanding the geopolitical situation, then it won't be interesting. Research is a rich source for that. Moreover, "research" can take very different forms—some researchers publish their work in the form of novels, such as the historian Pierre Serna who has published a political history of animals during the French Revolution[12].

Overall, I think that the fundamental difference between researchers and journalists is the desire of journalists to make an impact. Going to see something that will get people interested. And also the willingness to be criticized, once it is public. I do not want my findings to stay within a circle of specialists! This is a real difference, but also one which is becoming outdated because I now have researcher friends who have published excerpts from their dissertations or published them as books. Provided that it is rewritten, it can give a very good result. We may ask ourselves the same questions as researchers in terms of methods, yet the way we disseminate our work, both how and to whom, still makes a real difference[13].

My goal was to avoid making a collection of 15 portraits of sick slaughter workers and their miserable lives. First of all, it would not have interested anyone, and it would have been totally out of touch with reality. There are some good times, moments of joy, they are alive! That's why I'm wary of "drone" approaches that say *a priori* "it's the worst job in France, so I'm going to illustrate that". I really wanted to talk about the people I had met. This is why I focused on my experience in and around the slaughterhouse, and corroborated it, weaving in anecdotes and facts, with evidence.

OG: The narrative is also a way for you to reconstruct fragments of your experience. When you're reconstructing or constructing the data, you notice certain elements that aren't always crucial but that relieve the banality of daily life, while being part of it. You are not always looking for meaningful empirical evidence, for important moments, you're also looking for things that restore the grain of everyday life. I think it's important too: to pick up the signs of banality and the ordinary.

GLG: There is also in writing, a transverse approach, or in any case a logical approach. I ask myself a question, or what I am writing raises a question, so I try to get an answer, not to leave it open. For example, I was talking earlier about anoxia and false aneurysms. I wanted to get the statistics: how many animals are affected? Because something else surprised me in the L214 tapes: whenever they went to a slaughterhouse, they almost always came back with terrible scenes of violence, or a lot of bad things, bad treatment. And in fact, I came across statistics from the Ministry of Agriculture—which is perfect because they're from the industry side, so they're not numbers that will be challenged—that say 20 to 40% of animals are badly killed. They drop it like that, into the middle of a report,

12. Serna, P. (201, *Comme des bêtes. Histoire politique de l'animal en révolution (1750-1840),* Paris: Fayard.

13. Fassin, D. (Ed.). (2017). If truth be told: the politics of public ethnography. Durham, CA: Duke University Press.

but it shows the enormity of the reality: that's 1 animal out of 4 or 5, and 500,000 animals out of the 2 million killed each year in the abattoir where I was.

For each of these elements, I ask myself: "Does that raise another question?". I try to make such detours quite short and effective. As a neophyte, what do I ask myself if I am told about this scene? You have to try to change the lenses you look through. After I finished writing, there were maybe twenty reviewers—university buddies, journalist pals, my parents—and each reader spotted something missing! If I receive a comment back, it inevitably raises something.

OG: Your writing is interesting because it combines lived experience and explanatory elements. But there is always an issue about keeping the narrative style of lived experience. How do you work on this dimension?

GLG: Really, to begin with, I try to "cough it up" without thinking too much. Then I notice some repetitions, banalities, so I cut them out. There is much more work involved in editing than in writing. Once I get something a little more polished, I send it to a first circle of friends, and I know they are going to "take it apart". But that's what I expect because I know that it will allow me to settle important questions.

For me, the simpler the form—focusing on my immersion, how I join the slaughterhouse, etc. —the better it will work. And the steps of the narrative are imposed in the same way, following a chrono-thematic logic: the moment when I enter the "killing" zone is symbolic, the first day on the line too, etc.

BUILDING ONE'S CHARACTER: BEING AN "INTRUDER", "BETRAYING"... THEN LEAVING THE FIELD

OG: You build your character, and you seem to master this construction pretty well since you were not found out. On the one hand, there is this "useful" lie that allows you to enter the field, and then there is another type of lie, perhaps more troubling, which you repeat daily and which creates a relationship with people that is both fake and real. It's real because you manage to create a mutual relationship, as if you were one of them; but you also have this worry about your identity, that you experience during the day.

GLG: I didn't actually feel it so much during the day. It was more intense in the evening, when I was invited to their home, and when I started to develop friendships with a couple of people. Some of them would be dealing cocaine, marijuana... so I'd think to myself I will have to change their first name, address. You would think about that. And when I developed friendships, what troubled me most in the end was whether they would remember my betrayal—since using a false identity is betrayal —or the message to emerge from my work. And that's pretty haunting.

OG: A question that we may ask, at the end of our discussion, is a question about small betrayals, restitution, loyalty—to whom, and to what? To the project, and to the people whose truth you approached in your work and your writing? When do you consider this question ?

GLG: It comes up before the project, since you already know that you will be in a position that will give rise to it. You have to be careful not to lie to yourself. You can tell yourself that you will fight social injustice, but you will also betray people you will meet. You can easily hide behind legal arguments—journalists are very well protected—or the public interest, saying "it is not my fault if corporations wreck people and animals…". But if your reporting worsens the lives of people you've talked about, that is a very real consequence. We worked a lot on this problem with a lawyer who

also reviewed the text. To anonymize those involved, for example, I switched some tattoos—putting the tattoos of some bosses on the workers. I changed all the names—about fifty—and the name of the slaughterhouse. The lawyer wondered if we should say that it was in Brittany; I wanted to, so we did not indicate which department it was in. This can lead to you not telling certain stories if there is a risk that the person will be recognized. You are not going to sabotage someone's life for a "good" anecdote. These are judgments we make.

OG: So, there is this loyalty to people and also to what you have lived: producing a story that gets close to the truth of your experiences. But how do you anticipate the publication, the fact that the people with whom you have had a close relationship, of complicity, of friendship, will read your work?

GLG: It was one of the things that worried me the most. There were three people I'd had been hanging out a lot with outside the slaughterhouse. I said to myself: how will they receive the fact that I'm not Albert, a mason from the suburbs who wants to settle in the region, but Geoffrey, a journalist? So, the day before the first article came out in *Le Monde*, before the media coverage, I called these three people. Their reactions were rather encouraging. They were happy that these anecdotes exist somewhere; it was a relief. In fact, these three people had known me as I am. Sure, I did not have my real CV, or my real name, but once you know the person, you forget about that. We got to know each other, we told each other things, it's "you" who are there. Then, after publication, a dozen people contacted me via Facebook—people I would see on the line all the time… We chatted a bit, they asked me for an autographed copy of *Steak Machine*... They were glad that for once they did not look like psychos or executioners who take revenge on animals.

OG: And the plant's management?

GLG: The management of the temporary employment agency called me: they were panicking because they had not done their job of checking who they were hiring! The slaughterhouse's legal expert also called me. I told her that my lawyer had asked me not to talk to her but she said that she just wanted to know if I was going to do TV interviews, particularly because among the rounds of media coverage, a journalist had figured out what chain of supermarkets it was. It turned out to be a chain that also owns most of the book outlets in France. The journalist noticed that the book was no longer available on their website the day after its release. The chain's bookseller reacted on Twitter, and this triggered a bunch of new articles all over the place. This was perfect for me because if we ever had a problem with anonymity, it was them who'd broken it. In the end, they were among the top sellers of *Steak Machine*…

THE ETHNOGRAPHER AS AN INTRUDER: NEGOTIATING THE BOUNDARIES OF INTIMACY IN AN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

Carine Farias
ISTEC Paris
c.farias@istec.fr

LONGO MAÏ: AN ACTIVIST NETWORK OF INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

As a PhD student in organization studies, I was interested in exploring alternative organizing processes that could potentially lead to social change. With this idea in mind, between 2012 and 2015, I carried out a qualitative inquiry of Longo Maï, a politically engaged network of intentional communities, using ethnographic methods of participant observation. I was particularly interested in understanding the way they organized their work, economic exchanges (Farias, 2017a), and socialization processes (Farias, 2017b) while following a democratic praxis. Fieldwork was carried out in sequences of two to fifteen days, which allowed time to organize data before proceeding to the next step (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). A total of 49 days and nights were spent in four intentional communities in France and Switzerland. This experience raised my awareness of and triggered my reflection on the intrusive character of ethnography. In order to relate this feature of my ethnographic journey, I will first further introduce the context of Longo Maï and then convey a sense of the main intrusive elements of my fieldwork, before I eventually share my thoughts on how I dealt with these.

The Longo Maï group was created in 1973 and, in 2015 it had about 250 people distributed across nine places in Europe – including five in France. Its participants collectively attempt to prefigure an alternative lifestyle by constituting themselves into small social and territorial units that are kept at a distance from governing institutions. In that sense, Longo Maï can be defined as a network of intentional communities – or communes (see Miller, 2010). Generally speaking, the group's political project is articulated around a radical critique of the industrialized and globalized capitalist system. However, participants hold heterogeneous claims, ideas and beliefs about what this entails. These intentional communities are organized in rural territories that belong to Longo Maï – not to its participants. In order to align their daily life with their political vision, the participants endeavor to support most of their collective needs by developing diverse streams of production. Daily life and production in the communes are organized through processes of direct democracy. All decisions are made jointly, and the group pays equal attention to the needs of each of its members, regardless of individual contributions to the collective good. The political engagement of Longo Maï's participants goes beyond the "boundaries" of their communes, as most of them regularly take part in wider social movements and political actions, principally related to refugees, agriculture, and freedom of speech. Remaining open to and active in "the outside world" constitutes the principal way in which they maintain a sense of relevance.

A BUSINESS-SCHOOL RESEARCHER IN LONGO MAÏ

Two main factors made the intrusive character of ethnography salient in this field. First, an intentional community is above all a home; conducting research in such a field implies an intrusion into participants' intimacy. Second, my status as a researcher affiliated to a business school was at odds with the field's political project.

As a scholar of organization theory, I am interested in working and organizing practices. In Longo Maï, however, such practices are intertwined with participants' privacy – or rather, there is no distinction between the personal and public spheres of activities. Understanding Longo Maï's organizing processes hence entailed an immersion into the intimacy of its participants' daily lives. I was not necessarily prepared for that. Staying days and nights in the field meant that I shared rooms, breakfasts, dinners, parties, discussions, fights, etc. with participants. I was both a spectator of interactions that were – most of the time – none of my business, and an actor reciprocally observed on a day-to-day basis. The boundary between (field)work and personal life quickly became blurred on my side as well. In this sense, there was a reciprocal invasion of privacy, which was particularly salient in smaller communes.

For practical reasons, I sometimes did my fieldwork with my daughter, who was under three years of age at the time. On one occasion, we spent fifteen days in a secluded commune on a mountain slope surrounded by forests and composed of ten adults and eleven children. This was a case in point. We arrived there at around 7pm one evening in August 2013 and were invited to sit at the kitchen table in the farm's collective house. There were three women in discussion there while performing their activities. When I tried to talk to one of them, she told me abruptly that it wasn't the right moment. They had more important matters to talk about that were linked to an event they were preparing for the following week. I felt completely out of place and didn't know how to make myself useful for several hours. It was literally like staying with a family one doesn't know at all and observing the unfolding of their life. The sense of intrusion was particularly strong because they were a tight-knit group and we were the only visitors. Conversely, spending fifteen days in close proximity to such a small number of people helped with developing ties and a sense of belonging. After a few days, we kind of knew each other's character, sense of humor and habits. My daughter and I became integrated into their routine and non-routine activities, jokes and concerns.

In the largest commune, the sense of privacy invasion was mitigated by the presence of about a hundred people living together – including recent settlers and transient visitors. However, my position as a researcher from a business school was particularly problematic there. Even though I had obtained "formal" consent via email exchanges from one participant to do fieldwork in Longo Maï, I realized the ambiguous character of this consent (Roulet, Gill, Stenger & Gill, 2017) once I started. As I had not been formally introduced to the whole group on my arrival in the largest commune, I had to introduce myself and present my research project to everyone I met, following the principles of an overt research design. Several participants shared skepticism about scientific research. For instance, Elisa[14], a 25-year-old participant born in Longo Maï and in the process of settling in another intentional community, once told me: "If you want to understand Longo Maï, you have to be a part of it: understanding comes from practice, not from intellectual reflections". For her and many other participants, trying to understand a social phenomenon "intellectually" was absurd and useless. Research was seen as an activity which implied a separation between thoughts and actions. As such, it conflicted with the prefigurative praxis that characterized the group's everyday life (Farias, 2017b).

My affiliation to a business school also provoked a great deal of reluctance towards and suspicion of my research project. On my second

14. Names have been changed.

day of observations, Thomas, a participant on his fifties and settled since the inception of the movement, advised me: “Here, you shouldn’t say that you come from a business school. ‘Management’ is our pet peeve, you know!”. However, I couldn’t imagine myself lying about my affiliation when the question was asked. But this sense of honesty triggered mistrust. To quote some participants (including Elisa), my research project was “funded by a business school”, and as such its results would “serve the interests of big corporations”. The projected use of my research results for the benefit of corporations made my endeavor appear antithetical to the group’s political project. By letting me in, some participants felt that they were participating in the appropriation of alternative practices by mainstream corporations. In this sense, my presence was putting the group at risk of undermining their radical critique of neoliberal capitalism. This fear was exacerbated in the largest commune because it was a kind of hub for Longo Maï’s political actions. There were more activists there defending their clear political claims, and more time was needed to interact with all these participants and to develop trustful relationships. However, and despite these suspicions, it is important to note that I was never kicked out of the field, but instead was invited to share the group’s everyday life.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE INTRUSIVE CHARACTER OF ETHNOGRAPHY

This overview of my fieldwork experience in an activist intentional community highlights two forms of intrusion: a reciprocal invasion of privacy and perceived meddling by a “business-school researcher” in their political vision and project. The unease associated with the reciprocal invasion of privacy acts as a reminder that what we call a “field” is primarily a space in which life unfolds (Islam, this volume). Ethnography involves a form of symbolic violence, which is, during the observation period, reciprocal. While the violence of research lies in the process of making sense of idiosyncratic behaviors (Fine, 1993) through note taking, our position as a stranger in the field puts us at risk. In such a position, the hospitality of the host is always ambiguous and can easily drift into hostility (Derrida, 2000). In this sense, doing fieldwork implies dealing with the complexities of contextual hospitality politics.

Put differently, this is mainly a relational activity (Bruni, 2006). Like other researchers, I developed friendly relationships characterized by integrity and reciprocity (Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016; Tillmann-Healy, 2003) to deal with the challenges of privacy invasion. That is, I agreed to participate in the field not only as a researcher but by involving my whole self in the ongoing interactions that constitute fieldwork. Yet, ethnography is often perceived as a traitorous activity, because the researchers use the knowledge gathered through “friendly” interactions in the production of their work, making such relationships appear artificial and manipulative (Essers, 2009). For my part, even though most of the relationship ties were loosened once data collection had been completed, I went back to the field and kept in regular contact with some participants. Despite a rather high level of opposition to my project throughout the fieldwork, I have not heard of any negative reaction to my writings from the group (yet?).

I was mainly seen as an intruder by the participants because my position as a researcher from a business school was at odds with their beliefs and political projects. Consequently, I repeatedly faced instances of field resistance – that is, “any reaction that field participants collectively deploy to resist a research inquiry into their social world” (Anteby, 2015: 197). In this sense, “field access” was not a bracketed moment negotiated

at the inception of the fieldwork but rather a trajectory that needed to be constantly re-negotiated (Bruni, 2006; Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016). While it is commonly accepted that the more difficult the access, the more interesting the findings might be (MacLean et al., 2006), I still wonder whether any obstacle to accessing data *should* be overcome. Is it ethical to stay, explore and report our results when some of the field participants feel uncomfortable with our presence? In my case, most of the participants "tolerated" my project after a quick chat, others fully opposed it, some didn't really care, and some were in support of it. Yet, I couldn't grasp with certainty how many of them were uncomfortable with it. When confronted with instances of field resistance, researchers have to decide how to react and whether to stay in the field or not, on their own. This entails a huge ethical responsibility that is rarely openly addressed.

The decision we make depends on our moral engagement with the field. Shedding light on social groups and organizing dynamics that are generally misrepresented and/or stigmatized is socially and politically relevant. Ethnography remains the most suitable approach for offering such a nuanced representation of idiosyncratic cultures. Its intrusive dimension might actually help the observed organization to re-affirm its cultural and moral boundaries – as fuzzy as they might appear – by challenging the researcher and her/his worldview.

REFERENCES

Anteby, M. (2015). Denials, Obstructions, and Silences. Lessons from Repertoires of Field Resistance (and Embrace). In K. D. Elsbach & R. M. Kramer (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative organizational research: innovative pathways and ideas* (pp. 197-205). New York, NY: Routledge.

Bruni, A. (2006). Access as Trajectory: Entering the Field in Organizational Ethnography. *M@n@gement*, 9(3), 137.

Cunliffe, A. L. & Alcadipani, R. (2016). The Politics of Access in Fieldwork. *Organizational Research Methods*, 19(4), 535-561.

Derrida, J. (2000), *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond*, Stanford University Press.

Essers, C. (2009). Reflections on the Narrative Approach: Dilemmas of Power, Emotions and Social Location While Constructing Life-Stories. *Organization*, 16(2), 163-181.

Farias, C. (2017a). Money is the Root of All Evil – Or Is It? Recreating Culture through Everyday Neutralizing Practices. *Organization Studies*, 38(6), 775-793.

Farias, C. (2017b). That's What Friends Are For: Hospitality and affective bonds fostering collective empowerment in an intentional community. *Organization Studies*, 38(5), 577-595.

Fine, G. A. (1993). Ten Lies of Ethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 22(3), 267-294.

Islam, G. (2019). The field as limit, politics, and imaginary: A reflection on qualitative inquiries in the 21st century. *M@n@gement,* 22(1), 1549-1555.

Jeffrey, B. & Troman, G. (2004). Time for ethnography. *British Educational Research Journal*, 30(4), 535-548.

MacLean, T., Anteby, M., Hudson, B. & Rudolph, J. W. (2006). Talking Tainted Topics. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 15(1), 59-68.

Miller, T. (2010). A Matter of Definition: Just What is an Intentional Community? *Communal Societies*, 30(1), 1-15.

Roulet, T. J., Gill, M. J., Stenger, S. & Gill, D. J. (2017). Reconsidering the Value of Covert Research: the role of ambiguous consent in participant observation. *Organizational Research Methods*, 20(3), 487-517.

Tillmann-Healy, L. M. (2003). Friendship as Method. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(5), 729-749.

THE ETHNOGRAPHER AS AN INTRUDER: BECOMING AN "HONORARY FEMALE" WITHIN A FEMINIST COLLECTIVE

Fabien Hildwein
CEPN, Université Paris 13
fabien.hildwein@gmail.com

The feminist activist group La Barbe represented the field of my PhD thesis, which took the form of a twelve-month ethnography of the organization (July 2011 to July 2012). The ethnographical data collection was composed of observations of actions and meetings, in-depth interviews (with activists and also with journalists and members of the targeted organizations), a reflexive effort about my position in the group and a very large collection of data (pictures of actions, documents produced by the activists and journal articles about the group).

The need to negotiate access to a social group is a common issue in ethnography; in my case, my gender identity as a man immediately raised questions from the activists, which led me to reflect on my position as an intruder in the group. This text focuses on the difficulties I encountered in relation to this and my efforts to overcome them.

THE FEMINIST ACTIVIST GROUP LA BARBE

Founded in 2008, La Barbe is a French feminist activist group that aims at "making visible the invisibility of women in positions of power; motivating women to take power; and establishing 'gender confusion"[15] through innovative performances. It has approximately 30 active members, aged between 25 and 65 who are all female and mostly white. The majority of them share a high level of education (Master's degree or higher). A high proportion of La Barbe's members are openly lesbian (and sometimes bisexual and transgender), and take part in movements defending the LGBT+ rights, consonant with research that highlights the importance of lesbians in radical feminism (Taylor & Whittier, 1992).

La Barbe's most important performances involve ironically "congratulating" an organization for being able to keep women out of positions of power. La Barbe's activists interrupt one of their target's public events (conference, general assembly, round table…): they stand on the podium, facing the audience; they adopt a "dignified demeanor" by remaining still and silent; and they all wear fake beards symbolizing the link between masculinity and power, with the underlying idea that "if one has to be a man to reach a position of power, we are willing to be men". One or two activists remain in the audience to take photos or to shoot film footage. An activist reads out text that is prepared before the action and distributed afterwards to the audience, in which they ironically congratulate the targeted organization for being able to keep women in subordinate positions and make sarcastic references to virility and archaic symbols of power. The activists then leave the event quickly. These performances stem from an important symbolic reflection by the founding members of La Barbe and are inspired by their previous activist experiences (Hildwein, 2016). They also contribute to the recruitment and the long-term mobilization of activists (Hildwein, 2017).

INTRUSION: A MAN IN A FEMINIST GROUP

While the activists were always quite friendly towards me, my presence as a (heterosexual) man rapidly raised some questions.

From the beginning, I had to negotiate my presence during the performances. La Barbe never defined itself as a women-only group, but

15. In French: "*rendre visible l'invisibilité des femmes dans les lieux de pouvoir, donner envie aux femmes de prendre le pouvoir et instaurer la confusion des genres*".

its performances can only work if performed by women, as men putting on fake beards would not have the same symbolic power. Activists needed someone to take pictures of the performances, which I offered to do and thus found a role in the group. Thanks to this position, I was also able to attend the group's internal meetings and most of its festive events.

Later, I was asked to not participate in the online spaces where activists discussed and took decisions; the founding members, in particular, did not want any male eyes looking at those spaces, even if I remained silent. I was able to participate in the internal meetings but one activist, Anne-Louise, insisted I should not record them. I was not invited to certain meetings (for instance one on drag-kings and another on queer identities). Many activists did not share these concerns, and it caused some debate among them: some welcomed my presence as a researcher and felt that it would give recognition and visibility to the group; others felt that I should be able to participate in the group if I wanted to, no matter my profession or my gender identity. The activists who were the most critical used the argument that the presence of men (albeit of goodwill) tended to repeat dominating patterns and to hinder the speech of women and their emancipation. There was also an objective to be autonomous from men in organizing La Barbe. These views about the effects of the presence of men are reinforced by one of La Barbe's inspirations, the sociologist and economist Christine Delphy who criticizes the discourse and positions of men in the feminist movement (Delphy, 1979b).

Throughout my ethnographic work, in routine interactions, activists would often remind me of my position as an intruder. For instance, after the first action I witnessed, everyone was asked how they felt, as a sort of debriefing. I genuinely said that I had been worried for the activists, because of insults and violent behaviors from the audience. One activist, Claudia, immediately reacted, quite seriously: "Ha, that's the reaction of a protective male!"[16], which caused some laughter and was not commented on further. I was surprised, as initially I did not understand where it came from and kept to myself; this was one of the first events that sparked my reflection about my position in the group.

In the middle of my ethnographic work, a timely but telling event reminded me of my presence as an intruder and again initiated some debate. During an internal meeting on 12 January 2012, after discussing common topics of the group, one activist, Anne-Louise (who did not want me to record the internal meetings), warned the other activists against relying too much on my photographs. She thought that this went against the feminist principle of seeking autonomy from men, and that photographs should be taken by activists. More importantly, she saw my photos as "a man's photo"[17]. According to her, I focused too much on the activists and not enough on the men in positions of power. She concluded by saying that "Fabien is in a position where he feels less of the effects of domination"[18].

It is worth mentioning that this activist was in general always quite friendly towards me, although she remained vigilant. Some weeks later (on 2 February 2012), during an interview with her, she commented on her intervention:

> "That evening I told you that you have to frame groups of men by showing men among other men. Take a picture of a small woman among men and show the contrast. You can even always take the same picture: women with fake beards and men as men. That's

16. In French: " *Ah, c'est un réflexe de mâle protecteur !*"
17. In French: "*des photos d'homme*"
18. In French: "*Fabien est à une place qui fait qu'il ressent moins fort la domination.*"

> what strikes the press, visually. That's a way to show how men unite and it's really simple. And there was also the question of empowerment and nobody would offer to take the photos and I felt that this was regrettable: one learns by doing."

Her intervention reactivated the debate from the beginning about my presence. Some activists felt that I had always been loyal and did not share her analysis of my pictures. It was finally decided that I could continue to take photographs, but that other activists should also take pictures of the performances. I had feared that I would be excluded from actions, and this decision was a relief to me.

Reflecting on this incident, I wonder to what extent my otherness was really that of a man and to what extent it was that of an ethnographer. While I do not dismiss the accusation of holding a dominant position, I firstly took pictures of activists because they were what interested me as a scientist; the tension between what activists expected of me and what I expected from these pictures as an ethnographer may also have contributed to this episode.

BECOMING AN "HONORARY FEMALE"

My first reaction to these manifestations of mistrust of my presence and identity was to remain as silent and as withdrawn as possible, intervening only when forced to and expressing my thoughts as little as possible. Since my difference to the activists could not be erased, I assumed the position of an outsider.

Over a longer time span, I reflected on my position. Initially, my intention had been to understand the framework of the activists, namely their theoretical inspirations, whether material feminism (Delphy, 1979a) or queer feminism (Butler, 1990, 1993). But these readings progressively affected many aspects of my life: my interactions with others, particularly women; my political opinions; my views of sexuality and the heterosexual couple; my behavior in public places; my humor, etc. "The private is political": I experienced this feminist slogan directly as political ideas changed my life at an intimate level. I also reflected on my position as a white, heterosexual man, notably through readings on subverting traditional masculinity (*Refusing To Be A Man* by John Stoltenberg, 1989) and by attending an academic seminar on critical approaches to masculinity (Connell, 1995; Halberstam, 1998). I also reflected on my position as a male academic and how one's standpoint affects how knowledge is produced (Espìgnola, 2012). I believe it is because these readings changed me at a deep personal level and affected my ordinary behavior that I was able to build trust with the activists.

The activists never stopped reminding me of my position as an intruder, but their comments became more humorous and showed some kind of complicity; activists would also insist that I belonged to the group when counting the number of members who participated in actions or sought my opinion on given issues. Towards the middle of the ethnography, one incident demonstrated how normal my presence had become for them. A journalist and his cameraman came unannounced to an internal meeting, asking to film the meeting. The activists hesitated and finally, one of them, Babette, told him that men would not be allowed to take part in their meetings; I was sitting in the same room a few chairs away, taking notes in plain sight. Of course, this was a way of getting rid of an unwanted external intervention, but the fact that my presence did not need to be justified showed the kind of invisibility and trust that I enjoyed.

In her work on male-dominated police patrols, Jennifer Hunt (1984), describes how she became an "honorary male", that is, how she became accepted among the policemen she studied, meaning that, although they were always conscious of her gender, they treated her as their equal and behaved accordingly. I believe that during my ethnography in La Barbe, I managed to become an "honorary female", as I was accepted (and almost invisible as shown earlier) in the day-to-day interactions, although my identity as an outsider was never forgotten. Being an "honorary female" made my observations easier. It encouraged the activists to explain their behaviors, both during observations and interviews. Since activists felt that I could understand their motives, and I did not always have all the information on a given subject, they would often make an effort to clarify the situation for me. In the same way, the activists would often provide me with alternate interpretations of a situation during a performance, drawing my attention to aspects that I had not seen. This position led to richer data than I could have expected otherwise.

In conclusion, I must say that I never expected to be changed so deeply by my ethnographic work, but in the end, I feel that it was inevitable as, as I believe, being able to change personally is at the heart of the ethnographic approach. Not only does it build trust with the members of the field, it also helps us researchers to gain a better understanding of our worldviews, to avoid misinterpretations, and thus to build a more faithful representation of our field.

REFERENCES

Butler, J. (1990), *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1993), *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, New York: Routledge.

Connell, R. W. (1995), *Masculinities,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Delphy, C. (1979a), *L'ennemi principal. 1 Economie politique du patriarcat* (Vol. 1), Paris: Editions Syllepse.

Delphy, C. (1979b), Nos amis et nous. Fondements cachés de quelques discours pseudo-féministes. In *L'ennemi principal. 1 Economie politique du patriarcat* (Vol. 1, pp. 159–205). Paris: Editions Syllepse.

Espìgnola, A. F. (2012). Subjectivité et connaissance: Réflexions sur les épistémologies du "point de vue." *Les Cahiers Du Genre*, *53(2)*, 99.

Halberstam, J. (1998), *Female Masculinity,* Durham: Duke University Press.

Hildwein, F. (2016). How a feminist activist group builds its repertoire of actions: a case study. In C. Schwabenland, C. Lange, S. Nakagawa, & J. Onyx (Eds.), *Women's emancipation and civil society organisations. Challenging or maintaining the status quo?* (pp. 113–134). Bristol: Policy Press.

Hildwein, F. (2017). Mobilisation au travail: l'apport de l'étude des groupes activistes. *Revue Interdisciplinaire Management, Homme & Entreprise*, 2(26), 49-72.

Hunt, J. (1984). The Development of Rapport through the Negotiation of Gender in Field Work Among Police. *Human Organization*, 43(4), 283-296.

Stoltenberg, J. (1989), *Refusing To Be A Man: Essays on Sex and Justice*, Portland: Breitenbush Books.

Taylor, V. & Whittier, N. (1992). Collective Identity in Social Movement Communities. Lesbian Feminist Mobilization. In A. D. Morris & C. M. Mueller (Eds.), *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (pp. 104-129). London: Yale University Press.

THE ETHNOGRAPHER AS AN INTRUDER: BEARING WITNESS TO INVISIBILITIES IN AN ACUTE AND PALLIATIVE CARE UNIT

Marie-Astrid Le Theule
Cnam, Lirsa
marie.letheule@gmail.com

For the past 20 years in France, public hospitals have been the target of successive rounds of reforms. These measures are in part managerial and more specifically dedicated to accounting. The 2007 reform (known as the 2007 Hospital Plan), which introduced medical act-based pricing, provoked very strong pushback from hospital staff (Le Theule, Lambert & Morales, 2017). After listening to the voices of protest from a number of department heads, I produced in collaboration with a documentarian an ethnographic account in an acute and palliative care unit; moreover, we filmed continuously for a 15-day stretch. Was this approach intrusive or in fact necessary? Was I, or rather we, intruders or simply witnesses? And perhaps vulnerable witnesses at that?

FROM NECESSITY TO INTRUSION

When I prepare for a field study, the question of necessity immediately comes to mind. Is what I'm doing necessary? Do I feel the underlying need? When I initiated this hospital study, I had already spent 10 years thinking about the subject. I was and still am outraged by what statistics imply and what they overlook. This outrage only intensified when the focus turned to calculating patient costs. Soon, I imagined, we'll be told how much a sick person costs society and then inform this person of the amount, as if the illness was the patient's own doing. The feeling of outrage first stirred then gave way to a feeling of responsibility. As a research professor, I felt responsible for the emphasis being placed on analytics. It struck me as crucial to undertake this investigation. I heard the calls from a number of department heads (Professors Grimaldi, Bensman, Lyon-Caen, etc.) and could identify with their concerns.

In responding to these voices of protest, I conducted a series of interviews with hospital unit heads, who raised two main points: the disconnect between administrative personnel and care providers regarding hospital matters; and the lack of exposure, or "invisibilities", for work performed by nursing staff. To better understand these points, I decided to proceed with an ethnographic approach in a geriatrics unit offering both acute and palliative care.

Very quickly, I had to face life-and-death issues (Le Theule, Lambert & Morales, 2018). Death, which permeates this unit (to be expected when dispensing acute and palliative care), is absent from hospital considerations. Efforts were deployed to better understand nursing activity, patient treatment protocols and costs, but nothing specifically surrounding death. Accounting matters are closely examined but no discussion held regarding death. This ethnographic investigation led me to ponder end of life in a hospital setting, which goes unspoken at the hospital itself (Sicard Report, 2012). Such a taboo could lead to limiting a patient's treatment to merely biological considerations. Nursing staff consistently insisted on the widespread extent of these invisibilities. But what exactly are they? During my field work, I pursued this exploration; this cloak of invisibility is in fact technical and human queries shrouded in a culture of doubt. They relate not only to a given state of knowledge but also to a state of being. The patient is thus considered in a strictly political context (human, social, legal status, etc.). For care providers, this political construct proves to be fundamental.

The unit is composed of two floors with 22 beds each. A total of 33 nurses and orderlies staff the two floors; they are supervised by a senior nurse. Three doctors and two interns are also on hand. Initially, six researchers were assigned to the project, but five left the team after just a week due to the difficult on-site conditions. For two years, we (i.e. the documentarian Carine and myself) shadowed two of the physicians, both interns and the unit manager two days a week. We shadowed each of them for three months while adapting to their schedules. We introduced ourselves as management researchers. From day one, the doctors outfitted us with white lab coats and we pursued our shadowing exercise (Czarniawska, 2007; Le Theule, 2014). We also attended administrative meetings held between the ward director and management, in addition to receiving training in cost evaluation. Since nurses often spoke to us about on-the-job invisibilities, we also decided to film our sessions. After a year, we filmed for two weeks straight, with a simple set-up: one cameraman and one soundman. In all, we monitored six patients. We knew that by wielding our camera we would be intrusive. But necessity dictated, the camera would provide us with an outline of these invisibilities. The film offers tangible proof of this state of being, which necessitates so much time and training. We wanted to produce a film for the general public as we were looking to contribute to the societal debate.

FROM INTRUDER TO WITNESS

The methodology adopted is qualitative, of sociological inspiration in accordance with the Chicago School model (Hughes, 1996; Becker, 2009). We subscribe to this tradition of *in situ* observation within hospital settings, as developed by Strauss and Glaser (1970), Glaser and Strauss (1965), Hughes (1996), Becker (2002) and Peneff (1992), among others. This method is driven by asking "why is it that?", showing empathy, accepting to be interrupted or even disrupted, being attentive to what is important for the party being observed. So if someone tells us "that's important for me", we would listen, we would seek to understand why it's important, without jumping to the next question. Patients and nursing staff both shared with us the keys to their life. How then not to betray those who provided us with such valuable information?

The first day when we started up the investigation, a doctor named Izabel gave us a doctor's lab coat. I was faced with a choice: either I consider myself an impostor and refuse to wear the lab coat or I wear it and follow Izabel around to discover the invisibilities she was telling me about. I introduced myself to caregivers and patients alike as a researcher in management sciences. I realized that the coat definitely altered my status. Was I being an intruder? I played Scrabble with some patients and participated alongside nurses in assessing the patients' condition. Was I an intruder? I played Scrabble with some patients and participated alongside nurses in assessing the patients' condition. Was I an intruder?

The initial scene we filmed went like this: Izabel on the phone; the first responder having to perform a rescue after an emergency call. An "emergency" situation is unfolding. Firefighters arrive on the scene; the SMUR Intensive Care Service is in action; Carine is filming; I'm holding the sound boom. I'm embarrassed to be doing this. Carine tells me: "Now's the time." So, I move into position with the boom. Izabel and the intensive care physician discuss; Izabel explains that she's "unable to revive the patient". They consider whether to proceed with resuscitation. The patient is Mr. K., an 80-year-old who's lived with his wife since the age of 17. Izabel says

they're both still autonomous. "I cannot not bring him back", Izabel informs. I record the sound, no one's paying attention to me, neither the first responder nor the intensive care specialist nor the nurses nor the patient. I learned that the decision of whether or not to resuscitate stems from negotiations that encompass both medical and social considerations. I also learned that Izabel was the one defending this patient. She had to be convincing, come up with the right arguments, she needed to reason beyond the number of beds already occupied in intensive care. And this power of persuasion can never be reflected in measurement and control tools. It's invisible. So am I an intruder or a witness of their invisible efforts? (I use the subject "I" here since I'm reflecting on my own, at the beginning of the film).

Madame C. is approaching the end of life, her two daughters are by her side day and night. The unit head explains to them that the antibiotics need to be continued but they'll be shutting off the oxygen. Technical issues come up for discussion: Why maintain the antibiotic treatment? How to ensure she's not in pain? Human considerations are also raised: Should the other family members be notified? Did we have enough time to cover everything? Have we said everything there is to say? And all the while we're filming. We understand the importance of taking the time to explain to the patient as well as to the visiting family. In these instances, the notion of time is not the same. The intensity of the present moment shapes time. Are we intruders? Or witnesses?

How to process all these elements that patients and caregivers have provided us? (Here I use "us" since I'm engaged in a collective review, at this point we've been filming for 10 days).
We wanted to record on film these invisibilities for 15 days round the clock; paradoxically, they became visible through the camera lens. We gradually discovered them and came to understand them. We understood the full importance of time allotted to technical matters and human considerations, as the incompatibility of this effort with control and measurement instruments came into sharper focus.

A VULNERABLE WITNESS

During the second day of laying out this study, the unit head told us: "I ask my interns to enter into patients' rooms exposing their own vulnerability, as the sole means for making contact, the only way to reach out to patients in all their end-of-life frailty". “How else is it possible to understand?", he concluded. We were struck by Aurore, an intern, seated in the hallway listening to a patient moan. From her seated position, she could hear this patient suffering: "What do these moans mean?". She sat there and listened for at least 30 minutes and then spoke with the physician Christian. They discussed the situation and found the health problem needing to be treated. Aurore was listening to and thinking about her patient. She understood that a health problem needed to be addressed. Embedded in this unit, we too were there, with our own set of vulnerabilities. We had to come to terms with it, experience it.

The time allocated to our study has elapsed and yet I'm still left pondering this notion of vulnerability. I'm replaying the doctor's words in my head: "The only way to reach out to someone is with one's own vulnerability". But what does this mean? Butler (2014: 93) explained that "any manner of availing oneself of an outcome is both the cause and effect

of vulnerability, whether it be the ability to open up and listen to a story not yet told or receptiveness to what another body has endured or had to endure, even when this body no longer exists. A good dose of what a body can sustain lies in embracing the body of someone else or multiple bodies".

The fact that the patients accepted to be filmed surprised us. We failed to understand how we were actually able to film. But afterwards, this understanding came to light. We had reached a paradox: nursing staff, patients and families had all agreed to allow us to film such intense moments in life. I could have been and should have been an intruder; Carine and I should have been considered intruders. Through this study approach, I was or we were, along with the patients and caregivers inside this arena. Because the caregivers and patients invited us inside – well not us *per se*, but someone who could see, hear, maybe even understand their questions, their pain, their distress and their hopes. This arena is not ours to appropriate, the various participants (caregivers and patients) granted our use of it. As "vulnerable" patients, nurses and researchers, we were all looking in the same direction; symbolically, the camera served to focus this common point of reference. We had to accept the meanderings of this arena, allow ourselves to be guided by this shared perspective. We had to trust our vulnerability in order to discover the invisibilities the caregivers had exposed to us.

During this ethnographic account, we sought to discover and reveal these invisibilities that lie beyond any measures of size, efficiency, performance; they are technical and human challenges, back-and-forth exchanges between patients, caregivers and families. Caregivers and patients enlightened us to the fact that we are all connected one to each other. An intruder is someone from the outside. Being vulnerable is knowing that we're all vulnerable at certain times of our life. Paradoxically, it's our vulnerability that binds us to one another, and it's what we have in common. The boundary between intruder and witness is a tenuous one. I discovered that as a vulnerable researcher the role of witness is played on behalf of someone unable to testify: "The witness's authority lies in his/her capacity to speak solely on behalf of an inability to speak" (Agamben, 1999: 207). In reality, patients, caregivers and ourselves all had a common need: expose these invisibilities wherein the patient's political life is central.

REFERENCES

Agamben, G. (1999), *Ce qui reste d'Auschwitz*, Paris: Rivages.

Becker, H.S. (2002), *Les ficelles du métier* - (The University of Chicago Press, Ltd London l998), Paris: La Découverte, collection Repères.

Becker, H.S. (2009), *Comment parler de la société*, Paris: La Découverte.

Butler, J. (2014), *Qu'est-ce qu'une vie bonne* ? Paris: Payot & Rivages

Czarniawska, B. (2007), *Shadowing and other techniques for doing fieldwork in modern societies,* Liber: Copenhagen Business School Press.

Glaser, B., Strauss A. (1965), *Awareness of dying*, New York: Aldine Publishing Company.

Hughes, E.-C. (1996), *Le regard sociologique,* Essais choisis et présentés par J-M Chapoulie, Paris: EHESS.

Le Theule, M.-A., Lambert C. & Morales, J. (2018). Governing Death. Organizing End-of-Life Situations. *Organization Studies*, 29, 1541-1563.

Le Theule, M.-A., Lambert C. & Morales, J. (2017) « Accompagner la mort, négocier la valeur de la vie : ethnographie d'un service de soins aigus de gériatrie », *Revue Française de Gestion,* 43(262), 105-121.

Le Theule, M.-A. (2014) « Comment mourir dans un service hospitalier: Champ et hors champ ». *La Revue Internationale de Psychosociologie et de gestion de Comportement Organisationnel (RIPCO),* L'ethnographie organisationnelle, Pratiques émergentes et contributions à la compréhension des organisations, Supplément (HS), 179-194.

Peneff, J. (1992), *L'hôpital en urgence*, *Etude par observation participante,* Paris: Métailié (Leçons de choses),

Sicard, D. (2012), Rapport élaboré par la Mission présidentielle de réflexion sur la fin de vie, Unpublished document, France.

Strauss, A., Glaser B. (1970), Patterns of dying. In O. Brim, H. Freeman, S. Levine, N. Scotch (Eds.), *The dying patient* (pp.129-155). NewYork: Russell Sage Foundation.