



At first sight...

Ethnographic design,
or
ethnography applied
to the design and development
of products and systems.

- « Ethno » is of practical use to **refine** the production of **objects** or the working of **systems**.
- Ethnographic design is not rewarded to build theories, but to **provide support to the design team**.
- The delivery of ethnographic work can be :
 - Design or Procedures recommendations;
 - Proofreading of functional specifications;
 - Life stories of a product or process by its users;
 - Contextualize a chunk of Big Data;
 - Innovation and Trends workshop, etc.

Ethno –what ?

- ἔθνος : the people; γράφειν : to write.
- The ethnographer moves around, stands on the front line and immerses into the group he studies : it's **participant observation**.
- It's about analysis of field(s) data to find **social invariants, norms of group dynamics, hypotheses for a better understanding, including for apparent contradictions**.



It's not marketing
= it's not about selling more.
It's not about participatory
design
= it's not about stacking
'requirements'.

It's about **understanding how people give meaning to their lives.**

Objects and artefacts are only the visible layer. There are others.

Ethnography links the visible and the invisible domains of symbols, values and tacit agreements.



Understanding context

- A product or service does not come from nowhere and is not used in the void : it depends on the social references existing at that moment, in this context.
- The context is not only what we see and what can be measured : it's **what gives a meaning**.

→ to which extent a product or process converges toward the rituals of daily life, *from the user's point of view* ?



A prime objective :

→ Improve the attendance of the world

Understand the life experience of a group *and then* think **how a product or system converges** (or interferes) **in that experience.**

- What softens the feeling of « dirt » in a public transport ?
- When starts the feeling of frustration in a waiting queue ?
- What kind of working sound should we add to a perfectly silent electric car ?
- How to design the interior of a men's retail shop ?
- How to change a procedure that is not applied by users ?
- What makes a smartphone « easy » to use ?
- How to identify informal experts in an organization, their field of knowledge and network them altogether ?

The pinpad of an ATM cash machine in France



The pinpad of an ATM cash machine in Bali, Indonesia

Oops, i did it again (wrong button)

- 5 minutes before the vote of a law at the french National Assembly, a bell calls the deputies at their seat. Sometimes in a rush.
 - During 30 seconds, three buttons flash together : tagged Yes, No or Abstention. The keyboard looks like an administrative form because this is the idealized experience in the mind of designers. But at *each* vote there are mistakes.
 - No manager in the organisation has ever joined the **users** to understand the **needs** induced by the real experience, in the **context of action**.
- An ethnographer would suggest to better mark the buttons by form, color, texture and to only flash the choosen button until the MP pushes it again to validate his choice. And why not in braille alphabet ?
- The study would also mention that the poverty of the Human-Machine interface is counterproductive compared to the symbolic richness of the gesture, for the daily life of about 70 millions citizens in the country.



http://www.salon.com/2013/04/24/confused_anti_gay_marriage_politicians_accidentally_vote_in_favor_of_gay_marriage

SALON NEWS POLITICS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE TECH BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, APR 24, 2013 08:15 PM +0200

Confused anti-gay marriage politicians accidentally vote in favor of gay marriage

Four members of France's UMP party were confused by "flashing lights" and "activity" when they cast their votes

KATIE MCDONOUGH

A tool for serendipity

(or how to discover things you were not searching for...)

- 3 usual consequences after an ethnographic study :
 - results will contradict the common opinion about users.
 - managers are going to see the world with new eyes : those of their clients.
 - results will provoke reality-based innovation.

At first sight...

Find the social rituals where your products, systems and processes should converge.

Your specifications must be *the consequence* of an in-depth understanding of the context of use.

Find the rituals.

Blend in the rituals.

