TELEVISION PRACTICES – ETHNOGRAPHY, TELEVISION AND USER PRACTICES

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Television Practices
Ethnography, Television and User Practices

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“The manifold scrambled, manipulated, and converged ways in which we produce and consume information worldwide are gradually changing the way people interact and give meaning to their lives” (Deuze, 2006:66, our italics)
Abstract

This thesis explores television practices in a time when new technology has made it possible to interact with and create your own TV content. The work is focused on how user practices need to be understood in a context of changing technology. The practices studied also show the relevance of ethnographic methods, and especially the wide spectrum of these different methods within the field of Human-Computer Interaction. We distinguish between sociologically informed ethnography and anthropological ethnography. Two questions are addressed: how can new forms of television practices be understood by means of different ethnographic methods, and, on a wider level, what method can we use for analysing methods in ethnographic research? Because ethnographic methods are qualitative, we have also chosen to use an open and qualitative approach when analysing them. Through comparing our different methods – their data and findings on one specific topic – we have discovered the differences between the methodological approaches.
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Introduction

If ever there has been a time when television viewing and production were seen as simple practices, it is certainly not the case at present. Television practices have been transformed by the advent of technologies such as VCRs, TiVo and, more recently, video-on-demand, enabling programs to be recorded and watched whenever it suits the viewer. Viewers are thus being given the possibility to interact with the actual content not only in terms of when to watch a specific content, but also how to watch it.

There have been two clear developmental paths in what appears to be a change in television practices. First, there are several systems that focus on how future viewers could potentially interact with televisions. In our own research, for example, we have been focusing on the experience of a new kind of television content, an interactive panoramic view (Zoric et al. 2013). Choi et al. (2011) suggest that “[t]he TV in the future will become a terminal for many interactive applications” and in relation to this it is suggested that research needs to find substitutes for standard interactive techniques such as remote controls. In line with these changes, the technology of gesture interaction has been proposed as a new technique for television viewers after its success within the game industry.

The second development path is focused on user-generated content and the creation of live video productions by ordinary people. One need only to look at the large amount of live video that is being broadcast by amateurs today to see that a promising area for the development of television content has emerged. Within the fields of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and media theory, there are recurrent discussions about different shifts in the technology development, when it comes to the production of television or live broadcasting (Engström, Juhlin, Perry 2008, 2012, Reponen 2008, Dougherty 2011, Zoric 2013). More advanced and also simpler equipment for recording video, for example with mobile phones, has made amateur productions and producers more common. Engström argues that “people leave the traditional consumer role and enter more complex mixed roles involving production, viewing, and participation” (Engström 2012:13). But as we have seen in recent studies, there are still limits for people using the new technology on a more regular basis and without technical struggles (Juhlin et al. 2010, Dougherty 2011). The new technology has thereby highlighted a
literacy problem. As Gillmor (2010:60) suggests, media literacy is “about creating, contributing and collaborating. In the Digital Age, participation is part of genuine literacy.” This further implies that technical barriers for participating also stand in the way of people’s development of their skills and literacy. We propose that a deeper understanding of people’s practices could provide essential insights for developing the technology for TV viewing and production even further.

Our research is thus looking more deeply into both these developmental paths. In all, we seem to be living in a time when the strict formats of consumers and producers are being questioned, and this is related to both technology development and changing user practices.

In most HCI research there is an interest in humans’ relationship with things (computers). Researchers suggest widely varying ways to gain knowledge about this. Ethnography, and especially its methods, have had an impact on many areas of HCI research because there has been an interest in studying natural interactions and what takes place during them as a way to better understand how new technology should be designed and developed. By ethnography we mean, “[t]he research practices involving the collection and processing of basic research materials for the analysis of social and cultural structures and processes” (Ovesen 2013). As researchers, we need to understand people as well as the complex situations they face, in our case situations involving television. Brown suggests that social scientists are required to combine knowledge about people with knowledge about technology when doing research to inform design. “If we do not, then technological decisions, and therefore technological predictions will be based on the options of those who know the technology intimately, yet know little of their use” (Brown, 2001:5–6). The usual approach among ethnographers is to study social connections and how things are done in natural situations. This leads to an understanding of user experience and what is happening in real settings. But again, many different approaches have been used to do this. We believe it is beneficial to compare the pros and cons of such approaches or methods.

The main goal of this thesis is to examine new emerging television practices and the different things we learn by studying them with various methods within the ethnography area. We make a distinction between sociologically oriented methods and ones based on anthropology. The sociological approach, as it is mainly deployed within HCI, consists of looking at situations as very complex forms of social interaction. The emphasis is on how people’s mechanisms organize this context. The anthropological approach focuses more on the value of looking at a field over a longer period of time, and in this way getting to know people and their structures, cultures and ways of expressing themselves. Briefly put, with sociologically oriented
methods we can see how people create meaning in specific situations, while the anthropological methods, with their emphasis on norms and systems, are more focused on holistic views of social situations. We believe that we can understand the kind of impact ethnography could have within HCI by comparing these two different aspects of ethnography.

We also focus on what can be learned by reflecting on our own methods. This thesis is thus influenced by two research areas: ethnographic studies of user practices and television development. Television use is especially interesting because it is connected to ordinary and everyday experiences of technology. We therefore focus on research on ethnographic methods within HCI, but also look at how ethnography is practically applied in different types of television studies, both sociological and anthropological. One paper provides background to how new technology could change TV viewing and production, whereas the other two develop an understanding of different practices related to television content in both production and consumption contexts, as well as different ethnographic orientations.

The thesis is structured as follows. In the first chapter, we present a description of ethnography that unpacks user practices with a special focus on research within HCI. We distinguish between sociologically oriented ethnography (in this case ethnomethodology, interaction analysis and conversation analysis) and anthropological ethnography. The paragraphs have been organized under three different headings: first, a general description of the types of ethnography; second, how the methods have been used within HCI; and finally, their use within television research. The chapter ends with a discussion of the differences between the methods. The second chapter deals with our own methods for the studies presented in this thesis. We follow a social science research tradition of focusing on ethnographic data-gathering in television production and viewing settings. Our results are presented in chapter three, and the final chapter contains the conclusions as well as summaries of the papers.

Summary of the research questions

When investigating television practices, and in particular the qualitative aspects of these developments, the following questions are raised:

*How can new forms of television practices be understood using different ethnographic methods?*

We examine what are commonly thought of as traditional television practices as well as emerging television practices, but with an emphasis on what is happening with new technology entering the area. By comparing different
methods used with different cases, we attempt to find out what these ethnographic methods can bring to the table.

*What method can we use for analysing methods in ethnographic research?*

This second question is of another kind. We are interested in exploring and discussing the differences between ethnographic methodologies on a general level, and their value in light of the question above. Although closely linked to the question above, this question emphasizes our interest in the contribution of ethnography and its different uses depending on research focus. It also acknowledges the importance of reflexivity within research, and thus is our way of being aware of our own methods. This question should thus be seen as a starting point for a discussion on a meta-level.

The answers to these two research questions can contribute to the understanding of new television practices as well as qualitative ways of studying them.
Ethnography that unpacks user practices

Our research is motivated by a desire to understand changing user practices in consumption and production of television content. We are interested in how new forms of television practices can be understood with different ethnographic methods. We also have a particular interest in HCI research on television.

As mentioned, we suggest that ethnography could be described as a research practice that focuses on understanding the formation of structures among people. This implies that the methods and the way the data is analysed also are focused on exactly this. To be more specific, we also propose that ethnography should contain members’ perspectives, participant observation (flexible research design), and holism. Bryman suggests that ethnography also has to avoid “early use of theories and concepts: rejecting premature attempts to impose theories and concepts which may ‘exhibit a poor fit with participants’ perspective’” (Bryman as quoted in Silverman 2001:46). We are focusing on two different forms of ethnography: sociologically oriented ethnography and anthropological ethnography. In our own studies, we also use these two different approaches in two case studies to show how the choice between these diverse ethnographical approaches has implications for how situations are understood.

Ethnography was introduced into HCI research at about the same time as the CHI conference in the 1980s (Dourish 2012:1). It was originally used as a critical counterpart to the design work that was being conducted within HCI (Dourish 2006:549). Since the 1980s, it has become more widely used in the whole design process, and has thereby become a valuable source for understanding human factors.

In the following we present a set of ethnographic approaches that all share an interest in accounting for ordinary user practices, namely ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, interaction analysis and anthropology. The methods emphasize, “exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them” (Atkinson and Hammersley, as quoted in Silverman 2003:56). The data is usually “unstructured” with a “small number of cases”, and the research interest usually concerns the “meanings and functions of human action” (Ibid. 2003:56–57). What seems
to distinguish them is that sociological studies focus on detailed accounts of how situations are produced by people, while anthropological studies focus more on long-term field studies to understand people’s cultures and norms. In the following section we will look more closely at these two approaches.

Sociologically oriented ethnography
Sociological approaches differ widely, and we will here concentrate on just a few methods: ethnomethodology, interaction analysis and conversation analysis. We will first present some general background about the different methods, then research using them that has been done within HCI, and finally how the approaches have been applied to account for user practices in television research.

Ethnomethodology
According to Silverman (2003:3), ethnomethodology “encourages us to look at people’s everyday ways of producing orderly social interaction”. Weilenmann (2003:36) suggests it “was termed ethnomethodology, for its concern with people’s methods for making sense of the world around them.” The focus thus lies on the mechanisms through which people act in situations, i.e. how people employ specific techniques to organize themselves and achieve a common understanding. According to Suchman “the organization of situated action is an emergent property of moment-by-moment interactions between actors and between actors and environments of their action” (Suchman 2007:177). What Suchman here emphasizes is the ongoing formation of an activity. What is suggested is that situated action is not totally accidental but is connected to “resources and constraints afforded by material and social circumstances” (Suchman 2007:177). Ethnomethodologists are therefore more interested in considering the actual work or practices that are performed than focusing on manuals or how the work is supposed to be performed.

Since situated action is viewed as being created in every ordinary context, the focus is sometimes on quite short moments in time (minutes or seconds). Specific moments and changes within them are of extra importance, which makes audio and video material the most common form of data (Silverman 2003:39). Ethnomethodology is the most widely used ethnographic approach within HCI, and is therefore also the form of sociological ethnography to which we most often will refer.
Interaction Analysis and Conversation Analysis

Interaction analysis (IA) is also widely used among researchers connected to the HCI domain, and conversation analysis can be described as the historical background of IA. Conversation analysis focuses primarily on ordinary language use and the formation of our way of speaking. Harvey Sacks is said to be the first researcher to have formulated a specific interest in understanding social interaction through language (Schegloff 190):

[T]he idea is to take singular sequences of conversation and tear them apart in such a way as to find rules, techniques, procedures, methods, maxims (a collection of terms that more or less relate to each other and that I use somewhat interchangeably) that can be used to generate the orderly features we find in the conversations we examine. The point is, then, to come back to the singular things we observe in a singular sequence, with some rules that handle those singular features, and also, necessarily, handle lots of other events. So, what we are dealing with is the technology of conversation (Sacks 1984:413, our italics).

The method thus focuses on people’s situated ways of handling situations, but conversation analysis also investigates what are seen as general structures that many people use in various different situations. According to Silverman Sacks suggests that conversations are not about individuals’ inner thoughts, but are formed according to a certain economy where the speakers engage in a give-and-take (Silverman 2003:125). Conversations are built upon structures of power that, for example, determine who is allowed to speak. There are also certain rules within conversations that direct participants how to speak. Humming and nodding can be seen as means for implementing the mechanisms involved in a conversation. According to Weilenmann (2003:38), conversation analysis “is a highly empirical and practical approach, rather than a theoretical attempt to understand the nature of conversation.” The data is therefore very detailed and based on shorter or longer fragments of conversation.

Conversation analysis has been criticized for how it always handles conversations as “situated” (Silverman 2003:163), thereby leaving out other aspects that could affect the conversation, e.g. things that are not physically present. Therefore, just like ethnomethodology, conversational analysis is very focused on how conversations appear in specific situations. According to Silverman Sacks suggests that it is not the setting that is the most important factor, but how the people in an environment express that they, for instance, are in a hospital or at an art gallery (Ibid. 2003:165). “We cannot explain people’s behaviour as a simple ‘response’ to some context when that context is actively constructed (and reconstructed)” (Ibid. 2003:165). There is more interest in how people themselves form the situation than how the situation
forms them. Interaction analysis focuses on how language, as well as gestures, form situations. Video analysis is widely used to understand and analyse this interactive context. This also highlights how methods can transform when technology makes it possible to collect new forms of data.

Jordan and Henderson define interaction analysis as an “interdisciplinary method for the empirical investigation of the interaction of human beings with each other and with objects in their environment. It investigates human activities, such as talk, nonverbal interaction, and the use of artefacts and technologies, identifying routine practices and problems and the resources for their solution” (Jordan and Henderson 1995:39). The method has a clear connection to ethnography with its emphasis on observing the naturally occurring social environment. It also has an ethnomethodological focus on details and social organization. Interaction analysis is primarily a video-based method (Ibid. 1995:39). Most of the analytical work is done through frequent video-analysis sessions, where interactions in the videos are identified and discussed within the group.

Interest in Interaction Analysis increased with the founding of the Interaction Analysis Laboratory in 1975 by Harvey Sacks (Ibid. 1995:79). A theoretical cornerstone of this approach is its focus on learning processes. In line with interaction analysis, learning was understood as “a distributed, ongoing social process, in which evidence that learning is occurring or has occurred must be found in understanding the ways in which people collaboratively do learning and do recognize learning as having occurred” (Ibid. 1995:42). The emphasis is on how learning is constantly under negotiation, just like other aspects of social interaction.

Jordan and Henderson (1995:51) describe how different methods for collecting data can affect the outcome of the fieldwork, stating that “[u]nlike field notes or stories that highlight ‘important’ aspects and pass over ‘unimportant’ ones, video records social events as they occur and with a level of detail that is unattainable for methods that rely on reconstruction. The camera’s bias is consistent.” They acknowledge that both data collection and its methods are always biased in one way or another, but suggest that the camera affects the situation less than methods that rely on the researchers’ own ability to depict events. The authors highlight that only things that can be seen and heard in the video material can be studied (Ibid. 1995:46). Such things as participants’ intentions or feelings can, but need not always be examples of unattainable phenomenon. This can be contrasted with the anthropological approach, where the understanding of people and their context is the main focus. We will return to this in the second part of this chapter.
Sociologically oriented ethnography within HCI

In this section we give two examples of studies that use sociologically oriented ethnography within HCI: Mårten Pettersson, Dave Randall and Bo Helgeson’s study of emergency centre operators and Lucy Suchman’s study of the use of photocopying machines.

In the paper “Ambiguities, Awareness and Economy: A Study of Emergency Service Work”, Pettersson, Randall and Helgeson present a detailed study of how telephone operators at an emergency centre handle complex situations that arise as part of their daily work. They mainly focus on how “an emergency is identified and dealt with” by the operators and how they handle unexpected situations, which are viewed as areas where they express their expertise. The methods used belong to the area of fieldwork, e.g. “note-taking, video-recording, asking questions” (Pettersson et al. 2002:288). They recommend video data because “events can unfold with great speed, and in parallel” (Ibid. 2002:288). Pettersson et al. suggest that it is essential to find out what is important to the people in the context: in this case, handling and resolving incoming calls (Ibid. 2002:294). They suggest that it is especially interesting to look at ambiguous situations and how these are resolved (Ibid. 2002:288). For example, emergency operators sort out whether there are multiple accidents, or several calls from the same accident, by repeating the callers’ information out loud to the rest of the room (Ibid. 2002:290). Pettersson et al.’s choice of focus and their findings can be seen as expressing the ethnomethodological concern for how situations are handled by people, and their mechanisms for doing so.

In her classic work on the effort involved in learning how to use photocopying machines, Suchman (2007) focuses on the interaction between a machine and its users, as well as how the latter handle the instructions given by the “intelligent” machine. She suggests that “the new user of a system (…) is engaged in ongoing, situated inquiries regarding an appropriate next action” (Suchman 2007:167). She examines how the ordering of a chaotic situation takes place, i.e. what mechanisms the users have for coming up with a solution to a troublesome situation.

Sociologically oriented ethnography of television practices

In ethnomethodological studies of media, features of everyday life such as, in our case, television practices are viewed as containing social structures (Sharrock and Coleman 1999:2). Ethnomethodologists believe, however, that theorizing what is known as “commonsense knowledge of social structures” only creates a misrepresentation (Ibid. 1999:29). Ethnomethodologists are therefore less interested in explaining their findings in terms of broad models
that are less connected to the local context. Data is usually explained in much detail and through descriptions of moment-to-moment interactions.

Oskar Juhlin, Mark Perry and Arvid Engström have written several articles about professional TV production and how producers are forming a specific work-language, as well as how amateurs are affected by their own involvement in the context. Those studies diverge from the most common approach used in media studies, namely to focus on how regular people watch television and how changes in technology gradually change the interaction between the viewers. In the following we will present some of their articles.

In “Lean collaboration through video gestures: co-ordinating the production of live televised sport”, Perry, Juhlin, Esbjörnsson and Engström present their research on professional TV producers by examining “the work and interactions between camera operators and a vision mixer during an ice hockey match” (Perry et al. 2009:2279). Here the authors are using a classical ethnomethodological approach. They provide specific and detailed accounts of professionals’ ways of producing video. The data consists of ethnographic observations, though it is primarily the video material that is used (Ibid. 2009:2282). All the professionals involved in the production seem to be oriented towards the same goal, which is to follow the pattern of the game. This “ongoing collaborative achievement” is formed through the camera operators’ way of filming certain topics, as well as the vision mixers’ way of using the portions of the material identified by both as “relevant topics” (Ibid. 2009:2284).

In another article, “Amateur Vision and Recreational Orientation”, Engström, Juhlin and Perry (2012) study amateurs’ relations to video production. Here it is important to point out that we see this live video production as a form of TV-production, because the material is being shown (live) for an audience. Engström, Juhlin and Perry’s understanding of professional TV-production enables them to point out differences and similarities between the practices performed by professionals and by amateurs respectively. They describe their method as follows: “Using an interaction analysis of physical interactions and orientations to the work of others, we examine their choice of camera angles and positions in their filming as they attempt to provide interesting visual content and a coherent narrative” (Engström et al. 2012:651). Engström et al. show how people filming this specific event physically move and thereby engage in the amateur production. In this study they highlight what is specific for the amateur producers, for instance that amateurs more easily can switch between production roles and have a more ad-hoc collaboration than professionals, who specialize in certain fields (e.g. camera work or mixing). They also show that the “specifically temporal aspect of live video requires extended attention on its production, and that this
is at odds with the ‘recreational orientation’ of amateur film crews who simultaneously participate in events for their own enjoyment and film them on behalf of other viewers” (Ibid. 2012:651). The existence of this ‘recreational orientation’ is supported by observations of activities that demonstrate how amateur producers are more likely to interact with the event as such. Engström et al. show how the amateur producers, through their physical movements, act as live producers, which has an impact on how they form the content (by filming) and how they act in a physical space.

In their article “Watching Television: The Dilemma of Gaze”, Gerhardt et al. focus on the “gaze behaviour of television viewers” (Gerhardt 2007:91). They present a “micro-analytic description of what viewers do linguistically when they are watching television”. It is argued that by looking at the interaction (mostly the gaze) the researcher can understand what is important. Gerhardt et al. propose that the images on the television are central to the way the viewers interact with and affect each other. As researchers, they are not physically present in the context. The material consists of video analysis where the participants have been responsible for gathering the data (setting up the equipment).

Anthropological ethnography

Although anthropological ethnography has not been as widely used within HCI as sociologically oriented ethnography, it is claimed to have specific benefits (Räsänen and Nyce 2006, Dourish 2012). Ethnographic methods are considered to first have been developed by anthropologists during the time of the colonial powers (Hylland Eriksen and Nielsen 2001:17). The main goal at that time was to understand the cultures and traditions of colonized people. Since the late 19th century, anthropology and its methods have been transformed by many periods of internal criticism and theoretical development (Ibid. 2001).

Fieldwork and participant observation

Anthropological ethnography draws upon a number of qualitative methodological tools, of which participant observations and interviews (structured, semi-structured and unstructured) are the two most common. Ethnographical fieldwork, i.e. spending a lot of time among the people being studied, is the main way of collecting data. This data is analysed and then related to theories, which results in the written research product, i.e. an ethnography.

One way of finding out the “meanings and functions of human action” (Silverman 2003:57) is to use the method of participant observation. In order
to understand such meanings among groups of people, the Norwegian anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen suggests it is necessary for the anthropologist to “remain in the field until his or her presence becomes ‘natural’ for the natives” (Hylland Eriksen 2000:25, our translation). The skill of the individual researcher is hence very important. Hylland Eriksen proposes that “[f]ieldwork is a method in which the researcher’s most important scientific instrument is him or herself” (Ibid. 2000:27, our translation). The main goal is to learn and understand how this typical world or culture is created. This is also why the long-term stay is so important. The way a culture is created usually manifests itself on many different levels, and some things are not accessible for researchers until they become a part of the context. Mead suggests that anthropology, or ethnographic fieldwork, should be performed with an “open-mindedness with which one must look and listen, record in astonishment and wonder, that which one would not have been able to guess” (Mead 1950:xxvi as quoted in Boellstorff 2010:71).

Maynard, on the other hand, criticizes anthropologists precisely because they

…are still trying to picture how people see things rather than focusing on what is observable. (…) In doing ethnography, researchers attempt to draw a picture of what some phenomenon ‘looks like’ from an insider’s account of the phenomena and for some audience who wants to know about it. The ethnographer, in general, is in the business of describing culture from the members’ point of view (Maynard as quoted in Silverman 2003:75).

Anthropological ethnography within HCI

In this section we give two examples of studies that use anthropological ethnography in HCI research, one about young people’s mobile Internet use in India, and another about differing phone use in a Mexican village.

In their study of mobile Internet use among teenagers in India, Rangaswamy and Cutrell (2012) focus on young people’s “motivations, engagements, and adoption of the mobile internet into the everyday”. They describe their study, with a small sample of users, as being based on a “deep engagement with a set of users” and they use traditional ethnographic methods such as open-ended interviews, observations etc. (Rangaswamy and Cutrell 2012:87). They suggest that the results give a “‘thick’ description of contexts of technology use” (Ibid. 2012:87). Their interest lies therefore not in the actual use, but in the processes of engaging with the technology and the feelings connected with its use. The findings contain many extended descriptions of

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2 By culture we imply, among other things, all the structures (such as gender, morality, customs) that are constantly being formed through people’s interactions and actions.
the context, with the researchers providing their own interpretations of the
practices, such as the following:

Many of these youth lumped all the activities derived from the mobile In-
ternet into a single expression, ‘doing the internet’. This expression went be-
yond strictly online activities to include the consumption and sharing of
downloaded content and social activities associated with discussing tips and
tricks, shared gaming, etc (Ibid. 2012:89).

Their ethnographies also contain a large collection of stories from people in
this context, which gives insight in these people’s own view of their prac-
tices. This includes data that was not generally connected to one specific
time of technology interaction but could extend over a longer period of time.

Wang and Brown (2011) studied the everyday use of both mobile phones
and standard phones by the inhabitants of a Mexican village. The fieldwork
was done over three years. The data was collected through interviews, ob-
servations and participation in family life. The interviews were also used to
confirm things that Wang and Brown had seen in their observations, and the
authors conclude that

[a]s with any ethnography, however, its value rests not on the simple typi-
cality of Bicuhuini and its youth, but rather in how we can use the specifics to
draw insights broadly – drawing lessons for understanding how technology is
used in a variety of settings (Wang and Brown 2011:43).

In addition to the two afore mentioned studies, Räsänen and Nyce have pr-
posed a larger role for anthropology in HCI research. They suggest that
“[c]ontext is usually equated with the immediate activities such as work
tasks, when and by whom the task is performed. This tends to under repre-
sent some fundamental aspects of social life, like culture and history”
(Räsänen and Nyce 2006:175). According to them, we need to look further
than just to the actual context to understand how things unfold. In the paper
they present a study of a police contact centre where the telephone operators,
with their displays, could monitor the workload of other operators in a dif-
ferent geographical area. Räsänen and Nyce state that a sociological ethno-
graphic approach might lead us to “neglect and underestimate the influence
of others who are not present” (Ibid. 2006:176).

Anthropological ethnography and television

Anthropological studies of television generally focus on a wide social con-
text (Spitulnik 1993:293). This not only takes daily practices into account,
for example, but also considers the broad role of media in society. Anthro-
pology and its methods have played an important role in understanding new
media, for example, and how they emerge in social contexts. For example, Thais Marchado-Borges did fieldwork among soap-opera viewers in Brazil in the late 1990s. The description of her methodological and theoretical standpoints clearly shows the importance of looking beyond the immediate situation, and extending one’s focus to include common values:

I decided to investigate when, why and how themes related to telenovelas spontaneously came to the fore in everyday situations. By taking such a standpoint, I moved my focus away from the moment of broadcast (or from ‘immediate’ reception and interviewing) to streets, parties, and everyday conversations and interactions (Marchado-Borges 2007:7).

Through traditional anthropological methods such as informal interviews and participant observation, Marchado-Borges interacts in situations which are not always connected to the direct situation of TV watching. During the six-month period of fieldwork, her focus was instead on spontaneous discussions of the themes in the telenovelas (soap-operas). According to Marchado-Borges, the best way to study this was through participant observations, because it appeared that many of her informants otherwise gave “official answers” to her interview questions (Marchado-Borges 2007:9). One example of the data that she presents in this paper is a conversation between three women who are discussing the best time to watch telenovelas, plots of shows and actors’ possible plastic surgery. Marchado-Borges suggests that “viewers engage with the telenovela flow as a means to position themselves as subjects within the Brazilian society” (Marchado-Borges 2007:11).

Oliver Thalén’s article about the practices of Ghanaian entertainment brokers (TV producers), focuses on how the entertainment business in Ghana has changed with the privatization of state media (Thalén 2011:227). Thalén’s 12-month-long field study centres on young media producers, also referred to as “entertainment brokers”. Besides the classical methods of semi-structured interviews and participant observation, Thalén also analyses the TV programs that they produce. What Thalén’s research highlights is how (economic) changes in a society create new practical possibilities for people, in this case young media producers in Ghana.

**Differences between the ethnographic approaches**

In this section we will comment on the differences between the ethnographic methods described.

Engström suggests that media studies’ interest in television technology and new formats has “largely been concerned with its text and audience, and cul-
tural topics such as effects on lifestyle and identity” and not with “how collaborative production of moving images is practically achieved” (Engström 2012:14). This clearly illustrates the difference between looking at television practices with an interest in their implications for a wider topic, such as “identity”, or examining the practices with a narrower focus on how they are actually formed. This takes us back to our research question of how new forms of television practices can be understood by means of different ethnographic methods. We will also present the differences between sociologically informed ethnography and ethnography based on anthropology.

Understanding the context
If the main focus of sociological ethnography is on situations and how people use social mechanisms to organize specific contexts, then the anthropological approach is to understand how people in different situations live with norms and systems. The difference is also one of time. An ethnomethodological study could, for example, easily be done of a historical situation or practice, provided there was enough data (video and audio), while an anthropological study depends on getting to know living people and understanding their stories and experiences. This requires the researcher to spend more time in the field. Within anthropological ethnography, there is of course also an interest in practices in specific situations. These are connected to other situations, which create a web of social understanding. This is another reason why it is essential for anthropologists to spend considerable time in the field, in order to be able to study a number of situations and get an emic understanding of how the people experience them. Like ethnomethodologists, anthropologists suggest that so-called normal practices (like watching television, in our case) do not occur naturally, but are shaped in constant processes among a group of people.

Theory – ways of seeing the world
Jordan and Henderson suggest that one difference between anthropologists and interaction analysts is that “[w]hereas social theorists and social historians concentrate on macroscale temporal patterns in the activities under study, IA examines the temporal organization of moment-to-moment, real-time interaction” (Jordan and Henderson 1995:61), which results in a focus on the strategies and mechanisms that people use. This could be seen as an example of a more widespread split within the social sciences between whether the importance lies in what you can say about wider analytical issues (gender, class etc.) or in a detailed analytical focus on how situations are organized. Suchman suggests that “ethnomethodological studies radically

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3 We use the term emic to refer to the internal way of understanding practice.
problematize conventional assumptions regarding the relation between theory and its object” (Suchman 2007:177). Thus, an ethnomethodological focus allows us to re-think the production of social situations as something primarily connected with structures and norms, and instead view situations as interesting in their own right.

Reflexivity among the researchers

One difference between anthropological ethnography and sociologically informed ethnography (within HCI, mainly ethnomethodology) is the position of the researcher as either engaging with the culture to understand people or observing situations where people form their strategies, respectively. The researcher is either someone who is personally involved in the context, and therefore needs to have a very reflexive approach to the formation of the data, or someone who does studies mainly on the basis of video data from a past event. Dourish (2012) has suggested that reflexivity, or knowledge about the effects researchers have on their research subject, should be addressed more in HCI research. The effects of this reflexivity could be seen in relation to Schön’s description of “design as a reflective practice where designers reflect back on the actions taken in order to improve design methodology” (as quoted in Zimmerman 2007:22), that is to say, as a way for researchers to become more aware of their own effects on research results and contexts.

Varieties of ethnography and criticism of them within HCI

There has been prolonged internal discussion regarding ethnography within HCI. One of the criticisms concerns the differing varieties of ethnographic research. Many of the ethnography-based studies have traditionally focused on work-related environments, but it has been suggested that today’s society cannot easily be divided into work and leisure. Sociologist Andy Crabtree and colleagues argue that the way ethnographic methods have been deployed previously has a bearing on these new topics (Crabtree et al. 2009). They suggest that earlier research, which focused on control rooms and hospital environments, did not have work as its main interest. Instead it focused on how people create and shape their own positions in a certain context (Ibid. 2009:880). Crabtree et al. further propose that this structure looks the same in both work and leisure environments (Ibid. 2009:881). Dourish (2006) and Räsänen (2006) suggest that structures can also be found on a wider level than just in a specific situation. In anthropology, this is referred to as holism, a concept implying that a phenomenon cannot be seen as separate from the society or culture where it arises.
Digital anthropologist Wesch suggests that anthropology can become central for studying the digital development. He proposes that “[i]t is not just the mediascape that is transforming, it is human relationships, (…). Understanding human relationships within this new mediascape will require us to embrace our anthropological mainstay, participant observation” (Wesch 2007). Regarding the main method within ethnography, participant observation, Wesch suggests that to understand how human relationships are forming and how interaction is altered in a context of new technology, researchers need to be in the context. To make it possible to compare between different contexts, which is important in anthropology, data also needs to be comparable and in some sense possible to generalize.

Returning to our research area, television practices, Jenkins suggests that “(t)he new media literacies should be seen as social skills, as ways of interacting within a larger community, and not simply an individualized skill to be used for personal expression” (Jenkins 2009:21). This can be seen as a justification for why it is interesting to look at television practices from many different ethnographic perspectives.
Methods

We have discussed how diverse ethnographic methods provide different insights into where the theoretical benefits of an ethnographic study might be found. Jordan and Henderson (1995:40) write that “[n]o method is without theoretical assumptions. Methods, far from being neutral tools, promote both concrete working practices and theoretical ideas.” By comparing sociologically informed ethnography with anthropological ethnography, we show their specific working practices as well as how theoretical ideas about people’s practices are formed. This chapter is dedicated to our own methods.

How do you study the pros and cons of different methods? Obviously, it is impossible to set up an experiment where everything is controlled except for the methodological approach. Here, we instead propose to raise a discussion based on a comparison of different methods applied to different cases within the same area of research, namely television practices. The attempt to show the applicability of the different methods is also the reason why we selected different ethnographic methods for our cases. What we want to show are new TV practices and how these are formed and created in practices among TV viewers and TV producers. Therefore, it is time to concretize our own methods and what we have learned from using these particular versions of ethnography. First we give a general description of the methods in terms of study setup, data collection and analytic methods, and then we discuss the different methods to see what we can conclude from this.

The first study was conducted in several sports bars in the Stockholm area. We participated in the activities that can be considered the main event, watching sports on a screen. The video analysis that serves as the basis for the paper in this thesis is based, however, on a filmed sequence of four individuals having dinner and watching sports together. What needs to be mentioned here is that these people were unaware of the filming, and this is also one of the reasons we believe that the reactions and gestures analysed by us were not affected by the presence of the camera (in this case a mobile phone). The selection of this particular video is based on several viewings of different part of the material. This author was in charge of going though all the video material to find interesting shifts, turns, etc., and then discussing this in the group of researchers. This is precisely in line with Jordan and Henderson’s description of how interaction analysis is performed on a group
level (Jordan and Henderson 1995:43). The analysis of the video material was then performed in the same group using an ethnomethodological analysis of how these TV viewers were watching TV, with a specific focus on their gestures.

The main goal of the second study was to understand the relation between identity and learning among professional-amateurs (pro-ams) who regularly used live video-production tools. The aim of the data gathering was therefore to get personal and descriptive information about both their motivations and their practices in a broad sense. The method used to acquire this information was to stay with them for as long as possible, or at least as long as the production was going on. It is important to stay with the people being studied also when they are not actively performing their production (Marchado-Borges 2007). During the events before or after a broadcast, we can also find interesting information about the activity. We collected photos, interview recordings, and field notes for this study. Some videos were shot, but most of the data consists of audio files. All of the interviews were done with key people, i.e. people who were mainly involved in producing the broadcast. We did both traditional interviews and unstructured interviews during the participant observation. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. We also used audio recordings of interactions between people in the context.

In this study, as researchers we were more involved in our main topic of interest – the pro-ams’ identities and learning processes. The intention was not to study their practices in a detailed manner, but to get a wider sense of who they were and how the identities of pro-am producers were shaped in a local context. This also suggests that the data was collected with a more anthropological focus, namely by getting to know these people and how they experienced their practices. The data was again analysed through a group effort. The data collection and transcriptions were conducted by this author and then read through several times by other researchers.

The third study is another example of how studies within HCI can focus on understanding users or people. In this paper the methods are not ethnographically informed, but have more of a traditional computer research set-up, with focus groups and studies of interactions with systems, as well as interviews with the users. This paper is included because it was the motivation for the main topic of this thesis, namely changes in television practices and technology. The third article can be seen as a pre-study of how viewers might understand and interact with a more advanced television in order to have a richer viewing experience.
Results

The results from our studies of different television practices such as TV viewing (consumption) and pro-am live broadcasts (production) are all connected to new ways of watching television. We have decided to concentrate this last section on the first two papers, which present the results about emerging television practices with a focus on the methods used in the different studies. This is a way to answer the research question: How can new forms of television practices be understood with different ethnographic methods? We will then reflect on the methods used, i.e. on what have we learned using the different methods. In doing so, we will consider the more general foundations of the methods. Finally, we will end the results section with a discussion of how these methods can be understood as having the common goal of making HCI more inspired by human factors.

Television practices through the ethnographic lens

The first paper is an interaction analysis of an event in front of a TV screen in a sports bar. The focus is on the role of gestures in interaction. We have looked at how these overlap each other and also are negotiated among a group of TV viewers. The technical development of gestures as means for interaction with devices demands knowledge about how gestures are formed in natural co-viewing settings. We see gestures as a naturally occurring element. Gestures are thus part of a very complex social situation where elements of body language overlap and are directed towards both the television and other viewers. This suggests that gestures are social expressions that are also interactionally negotiated within the group.

Our data shows how the screen is used as a point of reference for interacting with both the content (on the screen) and with other viewers. This paper shows how the technology and the social sphere are constantly affecting each other. Gestures can be used as ways of interacting with a technology, as exemplified by successful examples in games. They can also be part of spontaneous situations in a sports bar or at home. In these cases, gestures can become means of negotiating the proper way of acting in a collective situation. Our analysis of the data shows how the interaction between bodies is per-
formed in a sequential way, where gestures and talk are interrelated and also affect the shaping of the interaction.

The importance of studying the social situation of television viewing is also something that we want to highlight. Researchers within HCI (Barkhuus and Brown 2009, Geerts 2009, Bernhaupt 2007) have referred to the television as a social tool, and while situations of television viewing might vary, we believe that in many cases television viewing is a social event and therefore something that needs to be studied in a context of more than one user, which is not the case in many HCI studies of technology development for television (Choi 2011, Hopmann 2011, Kray 2010).

Our studies of gestures in a TV-viewing situation show how difficult and complex the forming of gestures is. Building a system that understands this interaction is therefore extremely challenging. We suggest that one source of inspiration for design could be the relationship between the gestures in the television content and the ones being performed in the context, where the latter seems to mirror the former.

In the second paper, we study how skills and identities among professional amateur producers are developed in practice. We follow the interest in these amateur productions that has emerged within media theory and HCI. While previous research on this has centred around the motivations and skills of the producers, we are further interested in qualitatively studying how these practices emerge and develop in a social context. Therefore our data primarily focuses on the practices, but it also includes how these amateur producers reflect on themselves and their activities. In comparison with the first article, the focus of the second paper is more in line with anthropological ethnography, something that will be discussed below.

While we mainly focused on the practices of the amateur producers, it also became clear during our fieldwork that they were dependent on existing social structures, such as the small sports organizations. Thus, the context in itself was not new, and needed to be acknowledged to develop a broadcast that could attract viewers.

In analysing our data, we discern certain learning strategies. First, there is a community-oriented learning that stresses dialogical interaction, where rules and instructions are communicated between the instructor and the amateur. This also highlights the community and the common goals. Second, there is a learning strategy that takes influence from professional role models by mimicking their kind of work. This suggests that there are specific ways of being a person in a context. Social negotiations are therefore important. Third, following up on the previous strategy, there is organizational situ-
ational learning, which makes it clear that learning and identity development are dependent on the broader social organization. Thus, decision-making depends not only on one pro-am producer, but also on the other people involved.

**What we learned from the methods**

With new techniques for television consumption and production, such as gesture interaction and live broadcasting on the Internet, we have seen new practices emerge but also apparent struggles with their use. The aim of this thesis has been to understand different television practices as well as what kinds of material and results we could get with ethnographic methods. We also believe that a comparison between different ethnographic methods is important.

During the first round of fieldwork we collected video samples and developed an ethnographic understanding of the setting. The main method, however, was interaction analysis consisting of a video analysis that in detail describes how gestures unfold during the watching of a sports event on television. The context is described and interpreted by the researchers with reference to the fieldwork where the data was collected, but this only plays a small part in the actual analysis of the data. There the focus is instead on the video content itself, and the analysis is therefore highly dependent on good video quality. By good quality, we mean that researchers should have a broad overview where it is possible to see the people’s hand movements and faces, as well as the technological devices with which they are interacting. The analysis is based on how they bodily interact in front of the screen, something visible to both co-viewers and researchers.

What we cannot find out from this material is how the people experienced this situation or why they acted in a certain way. The analysis can therefore mostly be performed on the basis of what is clearly visible, which is also something that researchers in interaction analysis consider important (Jordan and Henderson 1995). Even if ethnomethodology, as an example of sociologically informed ethnography, is interested in people’s own methods for organizing and understanding a context or situation, this does not imply that people need to be asked.

The methods used for the second round of fieldwork were based on anthropologically inspired ethnography, and the focus was on understanding identity and learning strategies among pro-ams and how this was manifested in their practice. Attention was given to the whole context, i.e. not just to their practices but also to their motivations and the surrounding situation.
The methods used were interviews and participant observations. The author of this thesis was present during set-up, breaks and after broadcasts, i.e. for a much more extended time than just during the actual broadcast. We also collected data over a longer period of time then in the first paper. The analysis is performed on the transcripts of the taped interviews and participant observations. It is thus conversationally oriented, whether they were communicating aloud with others in the context or with each other. Participating in this way also gives the researcher the possibility to ask the studied person about things that happen. Getting the information straight away makes the interpretation and understanding of the situation more direct. What we cannot find out from this material, on the other hand, is the precise details of how these professional producers are forming the practice, because attention also needs to be given to the whole context.

In all, we used separate ethnographic methods for the separate occasions of data gathering to get different views of how emerging television practices can be studied. The differences between our methods make it possible to study how diverse ethnographic methods can be used for studying new television practices. The main difference between the ethnographic methods has to do with how they focus on social mechanics. Ethnomethodology and interaction analysis concentrate on television practices as based on a specific situation. The aim of anthropological ethnography is to understand how television practices work in real time, and also to form an understanding of the people in the context. This has an impact when it comes to the collection of data. The data used in sociologically informed ethnography can cover a much shorter time span because the emphasis is on what is happening during a specific period of time. In anthropological ethnography, data usually contain more variation in order to form a more “holistic” account and understanding of a phenomenon.

The meeting point of the methods

Within HCI there has been interest in people and their use of technology in ordinary life, but, as mentioned, there are many different ways to study and understand people. What is similar between such approaches is their interest in the processes by which people shape situations. Attention is given to ordinary things in which a certain amount of organization can be seen. Research on naturally occurring situations also contains unexpected things.

The differences lie in how much of the shaping of the situation depends on the individuals’ ways of (intentionally and unintentionally) acting and how much depends on the situation itself. The anthropological approach focuses
on how peoples’ actions are situated in relation to broader structures. From an ethnomethodological point of view, structures are rather understood as acted out by individuals and their social mechanisms. Ethnomethodologists are also generally more critical of data that cannot be witnessed by more than the researcher. Field notes and observational aspects are used more for the sake of broadening the data, to give it a more trustworthy quality.

In this thesis we have asked ourselves what we can learn about television practices through ethnography in different forms. We were also hoping that this focus could show how the diverse forms of ethnography also can inform and broaden research within HCI. Our intention has not been to determine whether sociologically informed ethnography or anthropological ethnography has a brighter future within HCI, but rather to show that the complexity of human interactions with things (technology, television, etc.) requires us to be receptive to both branches.
Conclusions

The ongoing development of television can be viewed in the light of the technical development of interactive television and mobile phone technology on the one hand, and changing user practices on the other hand. What the new television makes visible and demands of us as design-oriented researchers is an understanding of how the practices are formed among people. By using different ethnographic approaches and methods we have studied three different case studies that highlight these issues. The variation of data also demonstrates the wide spectrum of ethnographic work.

By studying TV viewers at a sports bar, pro-am producers at small local events and interactive TV systems for users, we have shown current and developing practices among users of these new forms of television. We also examine how the choice of ethnographic method gives different kind of data depending on how the methodology is formed.
Summaries of the publications

Three papers are included in this thesis.

Paper I

In this paper we present a detailed video analysis of how viewers in front of television screens in a sports bar form gestures while watching the content. The analytical focus is on how gestures can be understood as elements of conversations, which also highlights interesting challenges for introducing gesture interaction techniques. Although services such as gesture interactions for games etc. are becoming ever more popular, we show how gestures in front of a television are a part of viewers’ social interaction, and that certain techniques might lead to viewers having to adapt their behaviour. In this paper we also draw upon how gestures among viewers are influenced by the television content and can be seen as offering design opportunities.

Both authors did video collection and fieldwork. The analysis and writing were shared among the authors, who are listed in alphabetical order.

Paper II

This paper focuses on a typical group of media content producers, namely professional amateurs (Pro-Ams). We have done ethnographic studies with three different Pro-Am producers who repeatedly produce live video from smaller sports events. Our analysis of the Pro-Am producers is meant to build on the work that has previously been done in HCI and Media Theory regarding motivations and skills. We argue that we also need to see this production as shaped by organizations. We use several examples to show how
learning, identity and motivations among these Pro-Am producers also are collaboratively shaped. Our analysis widens the understanding of the barriers to more widespread use of live video as a new social medium.

This author did the fieldwork and data collection. The analysis and writing were shared among the authors, who are listed in alphabetical order.

Paper III

In this third paper we explore viewing and interaction in relation to an emerging type of interactive TV. Viewers are here given the possibility to be more active because they can interact more with the content. What we show in this paper is a specific design challenge that comes with multiple production choices being given to the viewer. User studies were done of two systems for interacting with a panoramic video, one based on tablet interaction and the other on gesture interaction. Focus groups, lab-based studies and interviews were methods used. Our findings reveal a number of design challenges concerning properties specific to panoramic video. Based on findings from the user studies and the design challenges identified, we have compiled a set of the design recommendations for how to support interactive viewing of panoramic content.

This author conducted the three initial focus groups together with Goranka Zoric, as well as some of the tablet-based screen-interaction studies. The analysis and writing were partly shared among the authors.
References


The papers