

# Action Research / Case Studies

October 10th

Feed-back on 1 draft of research proposals

Silverman (8, 9, 10)

Presentation on Action Research by group 1

# INFO

- The lectures (slides) are up on the INF5220 page
- Keep in mind that discussions of the content of the slides provide contextualization and understandings of them, which is not covered on the slides
- We talk 'out side' the slides, bringing different perspectives, issues and topics up than covered by the course book.
- Partaking in the discussions is important both for understanding the content of the course, but also, **VERY IMPORTANTLY**, in terms of you developing a language to talk about qualitative methods and articulate arguments about the methods in relation to your research.

# Feed-back, 1st draft RP

- 'Methods' for conducting qualitative research, what have we come across?...
  - Observation
  - Texts
  - Other methods..... (discussion)
- How do the methods support each other?
  - E.g. Say / do .... (discussion)
- Strengths and limits of the methods (discussion)
- What kind of study (positivist, interpretive, critical)?
- How would ethnography\*, GT\*\*, AR\*\*\* go within your study, what have you chosen (discussion)?
- Research questions..... Any examples?
- Remember permission to conduct research from the organization in which your study takes place

\*.....discussion

\*\*theories are grounded on peoples (observational) experiences, researchers add their own insights into how it can be that (the observed) experiences exists...

\*\*\*mixes praxis and research, deeply interventionist, researchers have a helping role.

# On writing research proposals - continuing the feedback on your drafts.....

Silverman Chap 10

1. *What?* What is the purpose of my research? What am I trying to find out?
2. *How?* How will the proposed research answer these questions?
3. *Why?* Why is the research worth doing (and/or funding)? What will we learn and why is it worth knowing?

Silverman p. 140.

- Plan before you write (what's gonna happen, how, where, when)
- Be concerned with a practical problem
- Make broader links - show that understand the broader implications of your research.

Silverman p. 145

- Questions relating to your research proposals?

# Silverman Chap 8

On choosing a methodology

## 1. Make an early decision about which methods to use

*No prior instrumentalization*: you, as a fieldworker, must be open to unsuspected phenomena = think about how we have talked about *apriori*. Be open, do not take things for granted. Open questions

*Considerable prior instrumentalization*: you need to be focused - what are you studying (questions from p. 140)

*An open question*: we do need strict guidance when conducting an exploratory study

# Silverman Chap 8

On choosing a methodology, p. 111

- Understanding the link between methods, methodologies and society... What does this mean (discussion)?

	<b>Methodology</b>	
<b>Method</b>	<b>Quantitative research</b>	<b>Qualitative research</b>
Observ	Preliminary work	Fundamental to understanding
Textual	Content analysis, researchers categories	Understanding participants categories
Interv	Surveys, fixed questions	Open-ended
Transcr	To check accuracy of records	Used to understand how participants organize their talk and body environment

# Silverman Chap 8

On choosing a methodology

## Appreciate how models shape the meaning and use of different methods

- Last week we talked about the relationship between theories, methodologies and methods (also discussing Silverman's ditto categories).
- Silverman suggests that 'deeper' understandings of phenomena (often claimed to arise from qualitative studies) are connected with the applied model (of how social reality works). Research activities, as such, are not neutral.
- Silverman sketches four models or idioms.....

# Silverman's basic research terms (from chap. 7 (on Oct. 3rd))

HOW WOULD YOU CATEGORIZE THE BELOW 'FRAMEWORKS' IN TERMS OF SILVERMAN'S FOUR IDOMS? - discussion:

Naturalism (behavior, beliefs, values):

Emotional (experience):

Ethnomethodology (how people make sense, interaction):

Post-modernisme (deconstruction, sign systems):

- **Model** = An overall framework for looking at reality, could be:
  - **Ethnomethodology**: Concerned about how people make sense of their social world(s). Rather than assuming the social as orderly ethnomethodology rests on the assumption that the social is dynamic and unpredictable - within this unpredictability, social order is established by continual “repairs” in accordance with the ongoing activities. (e.g. Suchman & Trigg 1991)
  - **Phenomenology**: Concerned with understanding phenomena from the perspective of the participants (in a society/culture) and describe the environment (surrounding world) as it is experienced by the participants. Focus on the knowledges and meanings of the participants (e.g. Thoresen 1999)
  - **Hermeneutic**: Concerned with interpretation and the hidden or deeper meaning of texts (culture can be read as texts). The relationship between researcher and texts is a dialog in which the researcher seeks the meaning communicated by the texts. Phenomena can be read in different ways (e.g. Geertz 1972)

## Silverman's basic research terms continued.....

HOW WOULD YOU CATEGORIZE THE ABOVE IN TERMS OF SILVERMAN'S  
FOUR IDOMS:

Naturalism (behavior, beliefs, values):

Emotional (experience): **phenomenology, hermeneutic**

Ethnomethodology (how people make sense, interaction):  
**ethnomethodology**

Post-modernisme (deconstruction, sign systems): **hermeneutics**

As we talked about at the lecture on Oct. 3rd, I suggest you take the outline posed with a grain of salt - it's a way to categorize / to talk (analytically) about concepts like method, theory, etc. + as Silverman shows throughout his book, phenomena do not always fit into tidy boxes (such as categories). Also, in mapping the above 'theories' into the categories they have been *worked*. Discussion....

# Silverman Chap 8

On choosing a methodology

- Choosing method(s) appropriate to your research topic

How would you describe your study...

Naturalism (behavior, beliefs, values): choice on observation

Emotional (experience): choice on interviews

Ethnomethodology (how people make sense, interaction): choice on notes, audio / video recordings

Post-modernism (deconstruction, sign systems): choice on texts

But again... take it with a grain of salt - might be overlaps

# Silverman Chap 8

On choosing a methodology

## Naturally occurring data (vs. artificial research environments like interviews, focus groups, experiments, survey questionnaires)

- Study what people are up to without being asked by a researcher
- Can show us things we could never imagine

But also remember that

- Naturally occurring data are also coined by what you want to do with them
- No data can be 'untouched by human hands'
- The difference between what is natural and non-natural should be investigated rather than used as a tactic research resource.

# Silverman Chap 8

On choosing a methodology

- **Triangulation (multiple methods)**
- You can examine where the different data intersect
- but then again, if you're a constructionist (working over different contexts) it might be difficult to find a phenomena represented in all you data
- be careful about assuming that you can aggregate your data and arrive at an overall truth or whole picture

Discussion... How can that be?

# Silverman Chap 9

## On Case Studies

- What is a case study?

One case or smaller number of case studies in depth (for different types of case studies see p. 127).

- Can you say something general from a small case?

Combine it with quantitative data

Representativeness -- theoretical propositions

Appeal to possibilities (what can others in a similar situ, as described, do?)

# Silverman Chap 9

## On Case Studies

- Choosing a case in terms of theory

*Setting*: where to study - you can choose a case on theoretical grounds

*Research focus*: what do you want to follow (elements, process, phenomena)?

*Further generalizations*: develop further theoretical propositions

# Silverman Chap 9

On Case Studies, p. 127

## CS research

1. Each case has boundaries which must be identified at an early stage of the research (e.g. if you are studying a school, does this include classroom behaviour, staff meetings, parent-teacher meetings, etc?)
2. Each case will be a case of something in which the researcher is interested. So the unit of analysis must be defined at the outset in order to clarify the research strategy.
3. Case studies seek to preserve the wholeness and integrity of the case. However, in order to achieve some focus, a limited research problem must be established geared to specific features of the case.

Discussion: is there a relationship between CS and GT?

How are we to talk about CS, AR, GT?

# READINGS FOR.....

## Oct. 17th on “Internet Research” by Gisle Hannemyr

OPTIONAL: Silverman, D. (2005): Naturally Occurring Talk. In Silverman *Interpreting Qualitative Data. Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interactions*. Saga Publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Chap 6, pp. 159-192. (On analyzing and interpreting field material) (Handout. Available at the library).

## Oct. 24th on Analysis and generalization in interpretive research

Silverman chap. 22, 23, 24

Walsham, G. (2002): Interpretive Case Study in IS Research. In Meyers and Avison (eds) *Qualitative Research in Information Systems*. Sage. Chap. 6. (Describing the interpretive approach, which is the focus of this course. About interpretivism and case studies. Discusses four ways of generalization). (Handout. Available at the library)

OPTIONAL: Walsham, G. (2006): Doing interpretive research. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 15, pp. 320-330. (On the nature of interpretive case studies and methods for carrying them out) (Available online).

OPTIONAL: Walsham, G. and Sahay, S. (1999): GIS for District Level Administration. *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 39-66. (An example of an interpretive case study, also containing a description of how the write up the case) (Available online).

OPTIONAL: Flyvbjerg, B. (2006): Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 12, no. 2. Sage Publications, pp. 219-245. (Defending case study research) (Available online).