OPEN DATA ETHNOGRAPHY

Time Needed:
1 month or longer

Materials Needed:
- Field Notes template
- Analysis template

Difficulty Level:
Moderate

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TOOL PURPOSE:

This tool can help you understand in-depth and context-specific experiences of individuals in seeking, accessing and using information. This granular understanding is important for designing relevant interventions that speak to user needs (community or individual) and their social and cultural context.

In comparison to other social research methods, ethnography provides an opportunity to gather extensive data about a social phenomenon at a micro-level of analysis (i.e. individual level) over a certain period of time. Ethnographic data is needed in order to understand the opportunities and challenges to reach specific individuals, and engage them in an open data project in ways that are relevant and meaningful to their lives. Failure to understand and appropriately engage the end user can lead to project failure.

PREREQUISITES:

To use this tool, we recommend that you have:
- Knowledge of relevant languages.
- Flexibility and openness to learn and debunk prior assumptions .
- Excellent skills in note-taking and analysis of field notes in order to record and draw meaning from observations.
- Interview skills to create the opportunity for participants to speak openly and share their thoughts without feeling judged - it's important to highlight to interviewees that there are no right or wrong answers. As part of the interview, the interviewer should also discuss with the participant whether they wish to remain anonymous, or have their name attributed in the output (e.g. a report or audiovisual).
- Self-awareness: the willingness to reflect upon and attempt to understand the role of oneself as a researcher, and how that influences the data collected.

Some additional pre-conditions for this tool are:
1. You have assessed the ethical implications of doing ethnography. This involves a risk assessment with the following steps:
   - Identify any possible risks
   - Assess if the risk is likely or unlikely

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- Assess if the consequences are minor, moderate or high
- Develop a risk mitigation procedure for each risk identified

2. You have obtained informed consent. Participants should be informed of:
   - The purpose of the study
   - Their role in the study
   - Any benefits or risks to their participation in the study

If the participant provides consent to be interviewed, this should be explicitly recorded and documented. The participant should have the opportunity to withdraw from the project at any time.

3. You have developed your research question(s)
   - What do you want to learn?
   - Where will you investigate this?
   - Who do you have to speak to in order to answer your research questions?
   - Why is this important?

4. You have considered zooming in and out on historical and global factors and how they contribute to the questions you have and the story you wish to tell.

5. You have adequate time.

WHO TO INVOLVE:

Community leaders, main points of contact on relevant topics to facilitate.

STEPS TO TAKE:

1. Refine the purpose of the ethnography and identify the problem to be solved.

2. Identify participants based on research objective and research question in step 1 (i.e. "who do you want to study?") - start by identifying community leaders who can direct you to other key informants. Ethnography often relies

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on "snowball sampling", where existing contacts or research participants recruit or make referrals to other participants based on their own social networks or community knowledge.

3. Develop field notes template (included in this tool) including headings:
   - Details (who, what, when, where, why),
   - Set the scene/background,
   - Description of activity,
   - Reflections.

4. Participant observation ("Deep Hanging Out") and open-ended interviews.

5. Interpretative analysis of themes including Seek, Access, and Use (an analysis template is included in this tool).

6. This will be unique to each case, but will often take the form of a case study report which outlines the background, purpose, research questions, ethnographic findings and applicability of the findings to the specific project.

RESOURCES:

1. Our suggested Field Notes template can be found find on the succeeding pages. We've provided guiding questions for the different sections, but feel free to tailor and adjust it to your project needs!

2. The Data Analysis template can be found after the Field Notes template.

SOUTHEAST ASIA OPEN DATA INNOVATION WEEK

This tool was created by participants of the Southeast Asia Open Data Innovation Week event held last November 2016, as part of the Open Data Innovation Toolbox. There are more tools to check out and use on our website!

Visit http://labs.webfoundation.org/projects-2/open-data-innovation-week/ to read about the project and see the other tools. For more information on the event, you can also get in touch with us by email at info@labs.webfoundation.org.

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FIELD NOTE TEMPLATE

Set the Scene/ Background Story	Background information about the event, including some historical context.
Description of Activity	This is for describing what happened - try to stick to "facts" rather than "interpretation". At this stage it is important to keep descriptions separate from analysis.
Reflections	This is where your own personal interpretation comes in: What surprised me about my participant observation? How might I personally have influenced events? What went well and what went wrong? What could I do differently? What progress have I made in my understanding?
Emerging Questions/ Analysis	This is the "so what?" of your observations. What do the activities observed mean in the social context in which they happened? In trying to understand your observations - try thinking about what is the role of the political economy, or wider social, economic, and political structures on the outcomes at an individual/experiential level.
Future Action	Create a "to-do" list of actions based on emerging analysis. Include timeframe and strategies alongside each point.

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DATA ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Theme/Code	Properties/Qualities	Example from participants words/actions	Interpretation/ What is the importance? (Linked objective/ purpose)
Seek	• Type of information that the individual is seeking or has sought • Purpose of their seeking this type of information • Factors influencing individual seeking the information *(Can be grouped into several categories)*		
Access	• Time and frequency of access to the information *(Real-time, daily, weekly, etc.)* • Place of access to information *(Online/offline and name of place/ platform.)* • Barriers to information access both online and offline *(Can be grouped into several categories.)* • Networks for seeking other types of information *(Individuals, groups, communities.)*		
Use	• Purpose of use of the information • Methods of use of the information *(Cite, extract, transform, etc.)* • Challenges in using the information *(Categories include social/cultural, etc..)*		