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ECSCW 2022 Masterclass ‘Qualitative Methods in CSCW’

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Abstract. Qualitative methods like open or semi-structured interviews and participant observation, focus groups, design workshops, or cultural probes have been essential parts of many research and design projects in CSCW. Most of these methods have their origins in sociology, social sciences, and anthropology. In contrast to quantitative studies, the aim of qualitative empirical studies is not to test a theory or hypothesis but to openly explore and meet the complexity of cooperative and collaborative practices in the respective setting. Doing qualitative research in CSCW is exciting but time-consuming and demanding, especially if such methods have not been part of your academic curriculum. Since the Covid19 pandemic started, the basic premise for fieldwork “on the ground” has also been challenged. Over time, we had to adapt and expand our methodological spectrum with online interviews, cultural probes (Gaver et al. 2004), etc. This masterclass aims at imparting knowledge about qualitative methods, related frameworks such as ethnography (among others Randall et al., 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) and Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), and explicitly diverse options for data collection, preparation, and data analysis. We will discuss a larger spectrum of possible methods and how to take one’s pick, depending on the respective research and design interest.

Format and schedule

The masterclass is planned as an on-site event at the University of Coimbra, San Francisco Convent, Coimbra, Portugal, on **Tuesday, 28th June 2022**, from **9:30-12:30 UTC+1**.

Outline:

1. Welcome & introduction
2. Basics of qualitative methodology
3. Qualitative research as a process and sequence of decisions
 - Epistemological frames: Grounded Theory (GT) (Glaser & Strauss 1967) and ethnography (i.a. Randall, Harper and Rouncefield 2007)
 - Contextualisation, research agenda, ethical issues, etc.
4. Doing qualitative research in CSCW
 - Data collection: e.g., different forms of interviews, participant observation, video interviews, virtual ethnography, cultural probes, design workshops, etc.
 - Data storage and preparation: transcription, anonymisation
 - Data analysis: GT, content analysis, triangulation
 - Data analysis groups, collaborative work
5. Wrap up (how to face some of the challenges)

Target group

Students of CSCW or HCI on Masters or PhD level who are interested in an overview of qualitative methods applicable to empirical projects in our fields of research and development. You are welcome on any level: novice and with basic knowledge. And as always in qualitative research: being curious and open-minded is very helpful.

First recommended reading:

Blomberg, J. and Karasti, H. (2013): 'Reflections on 25 Years of Ethnography in CSCW', *Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW)*, vol. 22, no. 4-6, pp. 1-51.

Organiser's short bio

Marén Schorch is a PostDoc researcher with a PhD in Sociology and specializing in qualitative social methods, preferring ethnographic approaches. She was the leader of the interdisciplinary junior research group "KontiKat" at the University of Siegen, Germany (2017-2021). Using her long-term experience in multidisciplinary research projects and settings in CSCW, she has been involved in

multiple participatory design projects at the University of Siegen and international partners since 2013. Her PostDoc research focuses on the interplay of continuity and (digital, social, economic) change in the context of crisis, the construction of “safety”, and its impact on cooperation and collaboration in small and medium-sized companies and society. More particularly, she has conducted multiple empirical studies dealing with risk awareness, crisis experience, and practices of (emergency) preparedness as part of the resilience of people and organisations. She has published many articles on her varied research and co-organized several CSCW-related workshops such as ECSCW 2011, 2020, 2021; CSCW 2014 and CSCW 2017; COOP 2016, and GROUP 2016. She has been AC for CSCW 2021, CHI 2018, and 2020, chair for the track “Exploratory papers” at ECSCW 2019 (with Ingrid M. Erickson), and regularly reviews for ECSCW, CSCW, GROUP, CHI, etc.

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