



**Ricoeur's Triple Mimesis as a Hermeneutic of the
Ethnographer's Work in CCO**

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Figure 1: Video: the Femmes prévoyantes socialists speak at the meeting (image taken by the researcher).



Figure 1: Video: the Femmes prévoyantes socialists speak at the meeting (image taken by the researcher).

Figure 2: Video: the project manager speaks at the meeting (image taken by the researcher).



Figure 2: Video: the project manager speaks at the meeting (image taken by the researcher)

Vignette 1: Excerpt from the narrative interview between the researcher and her supervisor

Line	Excerpt showing how the researcher frames the plot of the narrative relating her experience in the studied territory of Cuesmes.	Identification of the narrative structure
1	The thesis supervisor	Narrative incentive
2	I'd like you to tell us about your experience of this territory as a researcher. We'll	
3	see how to move forward in this territory.	
4	The researcher	Introduction of the story based on a production by the actors studied
5	When we did the first interview on Jemappes, I showed you the event brochure.	
6	They called it an "eight-page spread," like the Grand Huit. I'm sharing my screen	
7	with you, along with the Cuesmes brochure. I'll come back to the little text written	Framing the story
8	here because I think it's a good introduction to my personal story. It says: "From	
9	the bottom of the mines to the summit of Le Levant, at 2015 meters. The rise of the	
10	continents has made these slag heaps grow. Belgium is discovering that it is a	Development of the plot around the first meeting the researcher attends
11	mountainous land, with all the culture that goes with it. Tales and underground	
12	tours, breakfast at sunrise, Tyrolean yodeling, horse shows and country music,	
13	alpine descents, torches, and hiking trails are all on the program for the new Borean	Identification of communication event 1—emergence of the need to move away from historical facts in the project
14	Alps, entirely concentrated on the Le Levant domain. Swiss and Catalan artists	
15	bring the mountains to the table. Humor, cows, and spit-roasted pigs are also on the	
16	menu. I promise because the mountains make you hungry. Don't forget your hiking	
17	boots, carabiners, ropes, and thick sweaters at 2015 meters, as the nights are chilly	
18	(our translation)."	
19	That pretty much sums up all the meetings. Right from the start of this Grand Huit,	
20	during the very first meeting I attended, it was in February 2014, and it was at "La	
21	Cour des métiers des arts du Hainaut", so it's an arts school. And there were a lot	
22	of people at that meeting. And the mountain theme had been negotiated beforehand.	
23	In fact, in Cuesmes, there's a slag heap called Mont Héribus. It's one of the highest	
24	slag heaps in the Borinage. We wanted to work around this mountain. So, the	
25	project is called "2015 mètres d'altitude." It's also a way of playing with the idea	
26	of "Mons 2015, European Capital of Culture." In fact, at this first meeting, it was	
27	really a <i>tour de table</i> , a chance for people to get to know each other. And so, all the	
28	projects they're already talking about, in this little text, there are plenty of nods to	
29	the project that were going to see the light of day. Literary projects, more artistic	
30	projects, a lot of stuff around gastronomy. I'll come back to that later. So, it's a	
31	roundtable discussion where everyone presents their project. And very quickly,	
32	discussions turn to Italian immigration. Which is very important in this town and	
33	is linked to the coal mining issue. And of all these meetings, this was the only time	
34	we talked about all these issues. The fact that Cuesmes is a town still stigmatized	
35	by its industrial past. And in fact, very little will be done about it afterwards. It was	
36	as if it were the basic premise, as if everyone knew that was the starting point. But	
37	very quickly. The speech given by the Mons 2015 project manager at the first	
38	meeting I attended. There were two meetings before that where the mountain theme	

39	had been decided. But I hadn't yet started my thesis. And so, at this meeting, the	Identification of communication events 2—emergence of the mountain's structuring imagination
40	project manager said that yes, the mining past is there, but we need to look at the	
41	bigger picture. And so the theme that concerned the group was the mountains. And	
42	in all the meetings during the year and a half of design, the Mons 2015 project	
43	manager will remind us that the main theme is the mountain. It's the project	
44	manager who will defend and remind us of this imaginary mountain and alpine	
45	world at every meeting. In fact, every time someone proposes a new idea or project,	
46	they'll come up with the question "What's the link with the alpine world?" At	
47	times, you might get the impression that it's he who's defending this imaginary	
48	mountain world, rather than the participants who negotiated this theme in advance.	
49	From meeting to meeting, there will be fewer and fewer people, and fewer and	
50	fewer participants.	

Vignette 1: Extract from the narrative interview between the researcher and her supervisor

Vignette 2: First design meeting in Cuesmes (February 19, 2014) extract from the analytical section of Joanne's thesis

Grand Huit project management assistant: So, the idea behind this project is to emphasize European history and show that Mons was "European" during the European Capital of Culture.

Sculpture teacher at La Cour des Métiers d'Art du Hainaut: Mons did not have much significance before. In the past, there were Jemappes and Flénu.

Grand Huit project management assistant: Yes, but Mons was built on European history. This includes the mining heritage and history of Italian immigration. So, it is about us, the people, not just history. We do not want to get bogged down in the historical past. That is very important, but the history is there. However, it is made up of people who have also arrived, and we have to create links.

Vignette 2: First design meeting in Cuesmes, extract from the analytical section of Joanne's thesis

Vignette 3: Design meeting in Cuesmes (April 2, 2014) extract from the analytical section of one Joanne's thesis

Excerpt from the annex of the thesis showing how the researcher analyzes the conversational data to compare her own understanding with the actors' statements	Identification of iterative event highlighted during the narrative interview (vignette 1)
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Grand Huit project manager: Okay. So, there are at least three [...]. On the courses, there is what you need, and we will discuss it later. About the kitchen, was there a project on gastronomy? Volunteer with Socialist Provident Women: So, I spoke with someone yesterday or the day before who lives in Cuesmes and wants to make pizzas. Grand Huit project manager: <u>No pizza; it is not mountainous. You will have to consider Italian mountain gastronomy and Tyrolean gastronomy.</u> Volunteer with Socialist Provident Women: It is in Italy, in the mountains in the north. Grand Huit project manager: Absolutely. You can see this kind of thing if we are in the mountains. Volunteer with Socialist Provident Women: In any case, she is willing to lend her strength. Grand Huit project manager: We plan to do that. Don't worry. We are going to organize it, but for it to work, you have to come up with ideas, and if it is Italy that you really want to promote, it is mountain Italy. <u>Please do not bring me pizza.</u> Volunteer with the Socialist Prescient Women: <u>Pizzas are not mountains.</u> Grand Huit project manager: <u>Pizzas can be found everywhere.</u>	Reiterating the importance of remaining ideas into an alpine imaginary. The alpine imaginary is shared and approved by the participant. Reiterating the importance of being grounded into the alpine imaginary.
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Vignette 3 : Design meeting in Cuesmes (April 2, 2014) extract from the analytical section of one Joanne’s thesis

Vignette 4: Design meeting in Cuesmes (September 15, 2015), extract from the analytical section of Joanne’s thesis

Excerpt from the annex of the thesis showing how the researcher analyzes the conversational data to compare her own understanding with the actors' statements	Identification of iterative event highlighted during the narrative interview (vignette 1)
Assistant—Manager of participatory workshops of the Grand Huit: So, there will be a dressing room provided where you can change and a designated time to rehearse just before the concert, between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. I contacted Maria; she will have a road map. She will inform you. Grand Huit project manager: How will you be dressed?	

Volunteer with Socialist Provident Women: We will only have one outfit.	
Grand Huit project manager: No, <u>you will have something; you will at least be a walker or hiker. It does not matter if it is not Tyrolean.</u> I will reserve this outfit for myself, but I do not want to have “Rocking Chair’Choir” dressed normally; it is special, so have fun.	Reiterating the importance of remaining ideas into an alpine imaginary
Volunteer with Socialist Provident Women: Yes, but uh...	
Grand Huit project manager: Walker outfit, I am sure you all have big shoes and a hat, so have fun.	
Assistant—Manager of participatory workshops Grand Huit: How many songs will you perform at the end?	
Volunteer with the Socialist Prescient Women: We will sing for half an hour, but I am not exactly sure what we will do since we will have only one rehearsal. However, Vincent Lattier will be there.	
Grand Huit project manager: Does Vincent sing?	
Volunteer with the Socialist Provident Women: No, but he has clothes. In fact, I went to see Julien to get some mountain gear.	
Grand Huit project manager: <u>Mathilde had a good suggestion, though.</u>	The alpine imaginary is shared and approved by the participant.
Grand Huit production manager: <u>Each person will have a hat and gloves.</u>	
Grand Huit project manager: Everyone, a hat and gloves are enough. No, but seriously, the very first member of this table who is not in uniform then! [laughs]	Reiterating the importance of being grounded into the alpine imaginary.

Vignette 4: Design meeting in Cuesmes (September 15, 2015), extract from the analytical section of Joanne’s thesis

Table 1 – Corpus of 15 articles

#	Articles	Research Question / Problem	Methodology	Choice / Selection of Data Extracts	Status of Data and Modes of Presentation
1	Robichaud D., Giroux H., & Taylor J. R. (2004). The metaconversation: The recursive property of language as a key to organizing. <i>Academy of Management Review</i> , 29(4), 617–634. https://doi.org/Article	How does the organization constitute itself through metaconversation?	Observation of a consultation process in a midsize town’s administration.	Analysis not explained; referred to original dissertation for details.	Two examples: a meeting extract and an interaction between a citizen and the mayor.
2	Cooren F. (2004). The communicative achievement of collective minding: Analysis of board meeting excerpts. <i>Management Communication Quarterly</i> , 17(4), 517–551. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318903262242	How does the “collective mind” manifest in interactions?	Notes and recordings of a board meeting at a drug rehabilitation center in New York. In-depth interviews conducted.	Extract selected related to the problem.	Conversation vignette illustrating the phenomenon under study.
3	Grosjean S., & Bonneville L. (2009). Saisir le processus de remémoration organisationnelle des actants humains et non humains au cœur du processus. <i>Revue d’anthropologie des connaissances</i> , 3(2), 317–347. https://doi.org/10.3917/rac.007.0317	How does organizational recollection occur through linguistic and non-linguistic practices?	Ethnography in a 911 emergency center with recorded conversations, notes, and photos of equipment.	Conversations transcribed and analyzed, including observation notes of other artifacts.	Data demonstrate the process of recollection.
4	Cooren F. (2010). Comment les textes écrivent l’organisation. <i>Figures ventriloque et incarnation. Études de communication</i> , 34, 23–40.	How do texts write the organization?	Ethnography in Médecins Sans Frontières, Democratic Republic of Congo, 2005.	Justification based on the postulate of selection.	Data (conversation vignette) illustrate theoretical proposition.
5	Robichaud D., & Benoit-Barné C. (2010). L’épreuve de la conversation: Comment se négocie la mise en œuvre des normes dans l’écriture d’un texte organisationnel. <i>Études de communication</i> , 34, 41–60.	How do writing norms emerge and how are they negotiated in conversation?	Ethnography in a large organization over two years.	No justification for the choice of extract.	Data (conversation vignette) support theoretical proposition.
6	Jolivet A. (2010). Voir les normes comme un travail de sens: Le texte comme agencement de narrations. <i>Études de communication</i> , 34, 75–92. https://doi.org/10.4000/edc.1755	How does language activity in norm production create collective meaning in a hospital?	Observation and recordings of work meetings from January to June 2009.	No justification for the communication event.	Conversation vignettes illustrate polywriting in the organization.
7	Chaput M., Brummans B. H. J. M., & Cooren F. (2011). The role of organizational identification in the communicative constitution of an organization: A study of consubstantialization in a young political party.	RQ1: How do members negotiate and change consubstantialization? RQ2: How does this	Observation of elected officials over 12 months, mostly videography of meetings.	Selected meeting shows how organizational identity is negotiated.	Verbatim analysis of OI negotiation during the meeting.

	Management Communication Quarterly, 25(2), 252–282. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318910386719	process contribute to the organization's substance?			
8	Vásquez C., & Cooren F. (2013). Spacing practices: The communicative configuration of organizing through space-times. Communication Theory, 23(1), 25–47. https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12003	What does a spatio-temporal perspective add to understanding communication's constitutive role?	Video shadowing ethnography of "Explora" from July to October 2006.	Fifteen communication events selected after coding audio-visual material.	Data (conversation vignettes) illustrate spacing and synchronization in organizing.
9	Del Fa S., Vásquez C., & Plourde M. C. (2016). «Il faut que ça tienne!»: étudier le bénévolat à la lumière des dynamiques d'attachement et de détachement. Recherches en Communication, 42, 213–231.	How do volunteer attachment and detachment dynamics occur?	Ethnography for the Canadian Cancer Society on a cancer prevention project in Montreal. Manual data analysis.	Data from 22 interviews and ethnographic notes justified by the research problem.	Data (verbatim) illustrate volunteer attachment dynamics.
10	Vásquez C., Schoeneborn D., & Sergi V. (2015). Summoning the spirits: Organizational texts and the (dis)ordering properties of communication. Human Relations. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726715589422	How do order and disorder properties appear in organizational texts?	Selection of conversations from three qualitative studies.	Authors do not explain selection of communication events.	Written documents and conversation vignettes illustrate moments of order and disorder.
13	Cooren F., & Martine T. (2016). Matérialité communication et organisation: La vidéo-filature d'une idée. Revue française des sciences de l'information et de la communication, 9. https://doi.org/10.4000/rfsic.2065	How does the material turn in organizational communication occur?	Video-film of the Museomix event at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, November 2014.	No real explanation of the idea followed.	Email extracts and conversation vignettes show idea development.
14	Vásquez C., Bencherki N., Cooren F., & Sergi V. (2018). From 'matters of concern' to 'matters of authority': Studying the performativity of strategy from a communicative constitution of organization (CCO) approach. Long Range Planning, 51(3), 417–435. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2017.01.001	How do matters of concern become matters of authority through communication?	Ethnography over two years with participant observation by three authors.	Data selected through abduction and analyzed with input from the fourth author.	Vignettes illustrate the process of matters of concern becoming matters of authority through communication.

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Ricoeur’s Triple Mimesis as a Hermeneutic of the Ethnographer’s Work in CCO

Purpose

This article explores the interpretive process of ethnographic research within the framework of Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO) approaches. Specifically, it examines the role of Ricoeur’s triple mimesis as a hermeneutic tool in making sense of the extensive data gathered during a three-year ethnographic study of a cultural event, “Le Grand Huit,” part of the Mons 2015 European Capital of Culture initiative.

Design/Methodology/Approach

The research employs a filmed ethnographic methodology to capture the participatory processes of the "Le Grand Huit" project. The study is guided by CCO principles, focusing on communication events as the central unit of analysis. The interpretive framework of Ricoeur's triple mimesis is utilized to navigate and textualize the complex data collected, including fieldnotes, interviews, and video footage.

Findings

The study demonstrates how the process of textualizing ethnographic data through Ricoeur’s triple mimesis—prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration—unpacks the interpretative process of CCO ethnographers. The narrative construction not only aids in data interpretation but also establishes the authority of the ethnographic account by making the researcher's biases and preunderstandings explicit.

Originality

This article contributes to CCO scholarship by providing a methodological tool that integrates hermeneutic phenomenology into ethnographic research. It addresses the often-criticized vagueness of ethnographic methods and emphasizes the importance of reflexivity in legitimizing scientific knowledge. The application of Ricoeur’s triple mimesis offers a novel approach to understanding the constitutive role of communication in organizing processes.

Introduction

Together, regardless of where we come from, whatever our skills, and no matter our available time, we strive to create something in common. [...] And as we go along, we will progress so that during each period, from March to October, we have eight truly successful cultural events. And not just successful for those who created them, obviously, but above all successful for those who couldn't care less about how we've been working on all this for two years. (Emmanuel, project leader of "Le Grand Huit" project from Mons 2015, European Capital of Culture, during a meeting on February 10, 2014, at the Emmaüs community center in Ghlin)

Over three years, Joanne, a co-author this paper, conducted a filmed ethnography within the cultural event "Le Grand Huit" held in European Capital of Culture. The Grand Huit was a participatory project that offered the citizens of Greater Mons (a city in Belgium) the opportunity to create an artistic project within the official programming of "Mons 2015." It was composed of eight participative projects that explored the history and memory of several regions through a participatory creation process involving cultural professionals, residents, artists, and the local non-profit sector. This ethnography examines, as project leader Emmanuel expressed it, "how we've been working on all this for two years" as a participatory process through the lens of communicative constitution of organization (CCO) approaches. "Le Grand Huit" project is examined here as an organizing process in line with CCO approaches to better capture the dynamics of structuring at play.

At the conclusion of her fieldwork, Joanne produced a substantial amount of filmed and written data: hours of footage capturing interactions during conception meetings, field notes, and interviews. Joanne felt overwhelmed, lost in front of this mountain of data accumulated in notebooks and hard drives, ingrained in her mind and body. How to find a path through these different data? How to make sense of the internal dynamics of organizations we study while respecting the reality of those whose organizational practices we report?

CCO approaches place communication events as pivotal elements of analysis and a fundamental element of organizational reality (Cooren et al., 2011). A communication event is a "sequence of communication instances (e.g. texts, conversations) that are performed in a distinct space-time" (Vásquez et al., 2016, p. 634). These communicative events are constitutive because they

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are the (dis)organizing loci that make visible the (re)negotiation of meaning (Vásquez et al., 2022). This meaning negotiating process is crucial to “setting the organization in motion” (Vásquez et al., 2022, p. 124).

Many CCO scholars draw on ethnographic methods and aim to reflect on the communicative events that generate organization, organizing, and organizationality (Weick, 1993). However, few CCO scholars have explicitly outlined the process of ethnographic research (Wellman, 1994), from the fieldwork that results in a series of inscriptions (field notes, videos, and impressions of body and mind) to the selection of specific communicative events that are constitutive of organization. This process can be defined as textualization. For Clifford (1983, p. 130), drawing on Ricoeur, textualization of ethnographic research is understood as “a prerequisite to interpretation [...]. It is the process through which unwritten behavior, speech, beliefs, oral tradition or ritual, come to be marked as a corpus, a potentially meaningful ensemble separated out from an immediate discursive or performative situation.”

In this article, we propose to revisit this constitutive process of CCO research and the role of these different texts in the ethnographic writing process to discuss how ethnographers use CCO to explain constitutive organizing. Hence, *in what ways does textualization constitute CCO research practices and the scientific knowledge derived from it?* is the research question of the present article.

We pose this question as many ethnographers (Clifford 1983; Marcus and Cushman 1982) have reacted to criticism of the vagueness of ethnographers’ methods and the idea that *experiential authority* (*I was there, I saw it*) is sufficient to legitimize the scientific knowledge produced. In this process of interpretation, a dynamic interaction between the subject (researcher) and the object of knowledge (organizational reality) is at play, relying on reflexivity as a means to mediate and explicate the relationship between the researcher and their object of study (Gadamer, 1996). For them, reflexivity about the process of writing contributes to establishing the authority of ethnography. The legitimacy of this interpretive act, conceived as process of translation in “a continuing dialogue between the interpreter and interpreted, depends on the *explicit* examination of one’s bias and preunderstandings as a basic, positive step of analysis that moves forward in a dialectical way” (Gadamer cited by Marcus and Cushman, 1982, p. 38).

This interpretative authority demystifies the construction of narratives, observations, and descriptions and contributes to making the creative work of research visible (Clifford, 1983). The interpretative turn in ethnography that we refer to is rooted in Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology where he argues that understanding involves not only interpreting the immediate context or dialogue, but also paying particular attention to the role of text, defined as any discourse fixed by writing, as a mediator between explanation and understanding (Harada, 2005).

Our aim in this article is not to debate philosophically the nature of knowledge produced by CCO scholars but to draw links between hermeneutics and our research practice (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003). In the following sections, we first discuss how several landmark CCO works reflexively recount the ethnographic process. Second, we give more insights into Joanne's ethnographic work and the struggles she faced at the end of her fieldwork. Third, we outline Ricoeur's operationalization of his hermeneutic into the concept of triple mimesis, as the three steps of the interpretation act where mimesis II (textual configuration) mediates mimesis I (prefiguration of the text) and mimesis III (refiguration of the text). Fourth, drawing on this hermeneutic, we explain the ethnographic process in Joanne's research. In particular, we detail how Joanne and François (Joanne's thesis supervisor) created a narrative of her field experience and used this text as a mediator between field data and the interpretation of communicative events as constitutive of the organization under study. To conclude, we highlight and discuss how the textualization process constitutes CCO ethnographers' practices and contributes to the authority of such an approach.

How do CCO scholars reflect on their ethnographic practices?

To answer this question, we compiled a corpus of 15 articles, drawing on the Montreal School, that ethnographically investigated organizations. The so-called Montreal School is one of the schools in CCO research (Schoeneborn et al., 2014). Ethnography is the method privileged by Montreal School scholars who attempt to grasp what happens on the terra firma of interaction (Cooren and Fairhurst, 2008). For each article, we analyzed the methodological section for the type of data collected and how the authors reflexively recounted their ethnographic work process, from fieldwork to interpretation of communication events and their constitutive properties (see table 1 in the appendix).

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Two distinct groups of articles emerged. The first group (Chaput et al., 2011; Cooren, 2004; Cooren, 2010; Cooren and Martine, 2016; Jolivet, 2010; Robichaud et al., 2004; Robichaud and Benoit-Barné, 2010) pertains to more conceptual articles. They clearly mention that empirical data originate from ethnographic fieldwork. However, the choice of the verbatim statements or conversational vignettes are not justified beyond that the selected data serve an illustrative role supporting the theoretical proposition.

Articles in the second group (Del Fa et al., 2016; Grosjean and Bonneville, 2009; Koschmann and McDonald, 2015; Vásquez et al., 2018; Vásquez and Cooren, 2013) provide more details about the ethnographic path they went through from data collection to interpretation. Here, researchers explain how they conducted a more systematic analysis of the data to unveil the organizing patterns within the identified communication events. One article (Vásquez et al., 2018) stands out from this second group and closely aligns with what we propose to explore here. These authors employed abduction, going back and forth between the data and their interpretation. Three of the authors constructed a narrative based on their field experiences, which the fourth author subsequently analyzed to identify key areas for further analysis (Vásquez et al., 2018). Distanciation through storytelling and its confrontation with field data elucidates these researchers’ journey in identifying communication events and questioning their constitutive properties for the organization. This reflexivity, which is based on making the construction of empirical material and narrative explicit and confronting the narrative with data analyzed by other researchers (Rix-Lièvre and Lièvre, 2014), is an exception within our corpus of articles.

In their 2017 article, Boivin and colleagues revisited the institutionalization of CCO scholarship in the study of organizations. By working on a scientific corpus of articles and book chapters, they highlight several elements related to our reflection. First, the published articles and their theoretical contributions are empirically grounded. Yet, the authors point to a lack of clarity regarding data collection and analytical methods. Several recent contributions included in a handbook dedicated to CCO (Basque et al., 2022) develop methodological reflections aimed at bringing coherence between the empirical work of researchers in the discipline and the theoretical ambition of the approach. Two chapters, in particular, offer interesting insights about the ethnographic experience defined as a “participatory presence, a sensitive contact with the world to be understood” (Clifford, 1983, p. 130). For example, Nathues and van Vuuren (2022), who offer a precise and systematic method aimed at identifying, grouping, relating/interpreting,

and demonstrating different ventriloquial effects (Cooren, 2012) within empirical data, emphasize the significance of time spent in the field for identifying implicit figures in the interaction analysis. This field sensitivity enables the analyst to identify those implicit in the conversation. In the demonstration phase of their methodology, the authors acknowledge the inherent subjectivity in selecting illustrative vignettes. Reflexivity about the ethnographer experience is also found in Brummans and Vézy's (2022) chapter dedicated to the ethnographic analysis of micro-moments constituting the communication event. They stress the ethnographer's performative role in co-constituting the observed phenomenon: "you're not 'the primary data gathering instrument', but rather a vector that affects and is affected by the unfolding organizational field of relation you're trying to study" (Brummans and Vézy, 2022, p. 271).

Although this reflexivity is salutary, our aim is to propose a method that helps to integrate the ethnographic experience through its textualization in the interpretive process of fieldwork.

Textualization of ethnographic work through Ricoeur's triple mimesis

In his hermeneutic phenomenology, Ricoeur aims to reconcile two philosophies of science: one where meaning-making (hermeneutic) implies taking into account the subjectivity of the researcher, and the other where objectivity implies the researcher adopting some distance (critical consciousness) (Harada, 2005; Langdrigde, 2004). Ricoeur proposes paying particular attention to the role of text, defined as any discourse fixed by writing, as a mediator between explanation and understanding (Harada, 2005). This mediation connects explanation and understanding within the interpretative act.

Ricoeur relies on the written aspect of discourse to make it a defining element of the text. In contrast, CCO scholars do not make this contrast, as the text, for them, can be stabilized in forms other than the material aspect of writing. As outlined by Langdrigde (2004, pp. 247–249), Ricoeur makes a clear distinction between spoken discourse and written discourse. Dialogical (spoken) discourse creates an overlap between the world of the speaker and that of the listener. In dialogical discourse, it is possible to grasp the intention of the speaker. As soon as the discourse is fixed through writing, it becomes a text separated from the intention of the speaker. Through this inscription, *distanciation* occurs that is necessary to open up possibilities of new interpretations. The text thus operates as a mediator and offers new possibilities of *appropriation*, which are "the means by which the reader attempts to grasp the meaning of a

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text” (Langdrige, 2004, p. 248). For Ricoeur, the biggest danger of appropriation is subjectivism, where there is a projection of the reader’s self into the text. Hence, appropriation of the text also passes through the *disappropriation* of the self.

To operationalize his hermeneutic, Ricoeur proposes to articulate past time, narrated time, and interpreted time using the concept of “triple mimesis.” According to Ricoeur, narrative mimics experience, but the homology between lived time and narrated time is not “pure imitation” (cited by Carcassonne, 1998, p. 53). The narrative establishes a “creative imitation of the practical field” (Ricoeur, 1984, p.45).

Triple mimesis is composed of three steps: prefiguration, configuration, and reconfiguration. Prefiguration (mimesis I, M1) entails the origin of a text coming from a practical experience that predates language. Configuration (mimesis II, M2) is the author’s creation of a framework for organizing text and temporal experiences through reflexive action. With the production of this text comes the moment of *distanciation*, when the text becomes separated from the author (Langdrige, 2004). In mimesis II, plotting is the narrator’s process of selecting and ordering events, making it possible to “synthesize the heterogeneous” and “link the elements of experience together through a causality that defines their place” (Dubied, 2000, para. 26). Consequently, events in the narrative are defined by their participation “in the development of the plot” (Ricoeur, 1983, p. 127). Finally, refiguration (mimesis III, M3) denotes the reader’s reception of the text. It is the moment of *appropriation*, the means by which the reader attempts to grasp the meaning of the text. The reader does not seek to capture the original intention of the author but instead to expand their own horizons by actualizing the meaning of the text (Langdrige, 2004, p. 248).

In our application of the triple mimesis, prefiguration (M1) corresponds to the lived experience of fieldwork while the researcher still has access to the speaker and their intentions. The actions undertaken by Joanne during this practical experience involve taking field notes and capturing the action through video footage. Data are also captured through the body and mind of the ethnographer, through impregnation. de Sardan (1995) talks of impregnation, which occurs when a researcher observes and interacts with their field without overt attention. These observations are stored in the researcher’s subconscious and serve to familiarize them with the terrain. The prefiguration stage may seem incomplete and incoherent from an external viewpoint, as well as for the researcher in this stage. However, it takes on an authentic thickness

of lived experience within which the narrative can “compose multiple plots about the same incidents” (Ricoeur, 1985, p. 446).

Configuration (M2) includes two forms of textualization that help to distance the researcher. Field notes and video footage are, to some extent, a form of textualization (Foessel, 2007). These texts help to create a distance from the speakers participating in the conversations during conception meetings. Second, to grasp these embodied data and to create distance from the self, Joanne, in her research, felt the necessity to narrate the conception of the cultural project as it unfolded from her point of view. This narrative of the field provided another moment of distancing from herself and the field that reflected how she saw her experience. This modality of “seeing as” (Ricoeur, 1983, p. 336–338) enables us to understand the author’s viewpoint, their perspective on the depicted world. This perspective can be likened to a metaphorical interpretation of experience, as it is expressed in the form of an implicit comparison. In our case, “seeing as” refers to the researcher’s perspective as she constructs a plot, which is based on a selection of events supporting the plot: the narrative structure.

The third phase of mimesis relates to refiguration (M3) or the reception stage of the text produced in M2. The narration that Joanne produced through an interview with her thesis supervisor operates as a mediator as it guides the researcher through the data collected in the field in order to produce an interpretation. The text produced by the narrative (similar to the historical text) is subject to scientific scrutiny; that is, it can be compared with traces collected during fieldwork (produced in M1). Ricoeur (1983, p. 338) draws on Aristotle’s *lexis* to describe the process of “placing before the eyes” of the reader the elements that enable them to “see” how events unfolded. These are aspects of the statement that point to specific facts, dates, and places, but also elements, such as the repetition of statements in the discourse, or descriptive components that anchor the reception of the text in a realistic context.

This triple mimesis creates a movement of distancing and appropriation that articulates three moments or phases in the research process: the lived time of the research, the narrated time, and the interpreted time.

Backtracking the ethnographer’s path through mimesis: A triple mimesis approach to a CCO ethnography of participatory cultural projects

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Prefiguration - The lived time of the research field: Exploring constitutive processes from the inside

The European Capital of Culture program was introduced in 1989 to create a cultural dialogue among the countries of the European Union. Since 2004, each application has had to pay particular attention to the participation of local populations. The issue of participation, however, is either understudied or addressed from a macro perspective. Joanne’s doctoral research aimed to delve into a participatory project while the European Capital of Culture was hosted by the city of Mons, Belgium, in 2015. The research goal was to understand how people from the same territory, but with different backgrounds, come together around a participatory, collective, artistic, and cultural project to stage the story of their territory.

Following Latour’s (1984) thesis of association, as a CCO researcher affiliated with the Montreal School, Joanne analyzed events *from the inside*. She focused on the moments of collective creation among all participants to understand what unfolds when people narrate the history of their own place. The action-anchored orientation chosen “holds that structure is organized from within and endogenous to action (Garfinkel, 1967)” (Fairhurst and Putnam, 2004, p. 16).

This approach aligns with an interpretative paradigm and interactionist tradition dear to CCO scholars, especially the Montreal School. According to Bota (2009), interactionism allows “(1) accounting for human activity, (2) demonstrating that the universe is in constant material activity, and (3) illustrating that the world results from the collective activity of humans in interaction” (Bota, 2009, pp. 120–121).

Hence, Joanne chose a “shadowing” method (Vásquez, 2013) that aimed to capture the continuity of actions and trace the organizational work of the eight participatory projects labelled the Grand Huit over a period of three years (2012–2015). The key moments observed were primarily the creation meetings, which were dedicated to group progress and collective decision-making. These meetings began with a roundtable where each participant presented their progress, outlined their obstacles, and sought advice or resources. They took place in the evening at the premises of a participating group in a dynamic, yet relaxed, working atmosphere and focused on action and decision-making.

Figure 1: Video: the Femmes prévoyantes socialists speak at the meeting (image taken by the researcher).

Figure 2: Video: the project manager speaks at the meeting (image taken by the researcher).

During the fieldwork, Joanne's role involved capturing and analyzing interactions among actors engaged in a common pursuit, deconstructing social connections in filmed situations, and documenting organizational process. She listened to and filmed daily activities, and kept a detailed journal (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2008). Luff and Heath (2019) argue that video shadowing helps observers pay attention to details and moments of interaction that reveal the complexity of collaboration within organizations.

Lallier (2008, p. 11), an anthropologist, regards the filmed object as a representation of practice, "following in the footsteps of the other", and describes it as "the act of filming ultimately proceeds from an ethnographic gesture, in the sense of collecting and reporting data from the 'field' to represent singular ways of acting, thinking and living together (p. 12). It is crucial to move beyond the idea of the camera as a mere recording tool. In this research, filming means capturing ephemeral and unique moments that arise in "particular and historically situated" exchanges (Lallier, 2008, p. 12). According to Lallier, ethnographic film reveals the observed object as an outsider seen from within. Hence, *capturing* implies that Joanne recognizes her active role in the construction of reality "through meanings and understandings developed in social practice" (Bøe et al., 2016, p. 4).

All eight projects deserved to be recounted and formed an organization, the Grand Huit. However, recounting each of these stories distinctly was not feasible. Joanne had to make a choice. How to choose among the cases, how to articulate them, how to tell their stories that were both distinct and yet so closely related? During a research stay abroad, Joanne had the opportunity to take some distance and a common thread between the data became clearer. The geographical distance allowed her to reassess the territory she knew, where she had grown up, and which became the focus of her reflections. It was while walking through certain neighborhoods of Montreal that the connection between her narratives was woven. She was

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walking on the Green Bridge, with a sweeping view over the Mile End landscape. What once were textile factories had been transformed into a hub of creative industries. She was so far from home, and yet what she saw resonated with the urbanization she had studied in Mons. It was so far and so close at the same time. It suddenly struck her. It was in that moment that she understood the central thread of her thesis. A comparison between the territories, felt through the very experience of the streets and the history of the neighborhood, fostered a new perspective, a new angle to confront the data with a coherent vision. The city of Montreal seemed to be sending her a message. She realized that this thread revealed itself through the reflective process she was experiencing while walking, each step contributing to the formulation of her ideas and the structuring of her thoughts. This moment marked a significant milestone in her research journey.

The Mile End neighborhood had hosted a thriving textile industry during the last century until factories were relocated in the 1980s. The area then saw significant immigration and has since transformed, with factories giving way to technology and innovation hubs, coworking spaces, and entrepreneurial ventures. Affordable housing has attracted a younger, bohemian population, and since the 1980s and ‘90s, it has become gentrified. Joanne often wandered through this neighborhood, blending curiosity with theoretical reflections. Despite being far from Mons, there were many similarities: the rise and decline of industry, and a renewed vitality from creative initiatives. It was while walking in Mile End that the connection between her case studies became clear: her data speak to the memory of a territory. A memory that seeks to simultaneously remember and forget its past. A past to reinvent or honor. A past that blends nostalgia with a desire for change. The memory of social classes, industry, heritage: between pride and shame. The path was thus drawn into her reflections. Her task became to revisit each of the cases and unfold them as narratives.

Back from her research stay abroad, Joanne decided to focus on three projects within the Grand Huit. She explained this choice of reducing the case studies to the Grand Huit project leaders, who validated the decision. According to them, these narratives deserved to be highlighted for what they told about the mining industry in Belgium, its culture, and participatory issues. This agreement allowed her to progress in transcribing her video data and conceptual reflections. Three years of shadowing followed; she closely tracked this heterogeneous group as they projected, imagined, and narrated their story through cultural events. Three years of accumulated videos, notes, and a research path were traced. The three selected creation

processes recount how the working-class and bourgeois histories are narrated to better explain the present of the territory.

The researcher decided to transcribe all the design meetings of the three selected projects to remain consistent with the theoretical framework of CCO, and to stay closely aligned with the interactions and methods implemented by the groups over time. Thus, she chose to narrate the history of three different projects based on three territories in the Greater Mons area.

Narrated time—configuration: Producing a narrative of the field experience

After transcribing all the design meetings, Joanne was still struggling: How to tell these stories, from what angle, where to begin? How to systematically select the data from her corpus while being rigorous and avoiding the trap of selecting data that merely fit the theory? How to use the essence of the data, how to interpret the recorded phenomena? How to make the data speak and bring out the design history?

The researcher addressed this question during a meeting with her supervisors and fellow doctoral students. She needed to devise a data selection method that could capture and pinpoint the key moments of the projects they had followed. Thus, she decided to start with the researcher's narratives to revisit the trajectories of the projects and the actors, as well as revisit significant moments captured in video footage and field notes. The systematic process of revisiting the data would go from the narrative toward the data initially collected.

In collaboration with one of her supervisors, Joanne opted for narrative interviews. Thus, they met three times to conduct these interviews dedicated to recounting Joanne's research process. During these interviews, Joanne reflected on three main areas: the history of the Grand Huit projects, an explanation of his research approach, and the emotions related to ethnography and emerging theoretical perspectives. She recounted her fieldwork experience for each of the three chosen projects. For this article, we focus on the territory of Cuesmes, one of the cultural and participatory projects of the Grand Huit. Vignette 1 is an extract of the narrative interview conducted via video conference in May 2020 and which lasted 1 h 48 min:

Vignette 1: Excerpt from the narrative interview between the researcher and her supervisor

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The narrative reflects how Joanne saw her experience. It describes how a particular place is assigned to an observation and how, based on this observation, a plot is reconstructed. The interpretation of the narrative must identify how the researcher establishes associations between the various elements constituting the richness of the field experience: contextual information, collected documents, emotions, anecdotes, questions, etc. These heterogeneous elements are interwoven in and by the narrative, collectively forming a bundle of justifications that underpin the meaning of the constructed narrative.

In this extract (vignette 1), the researcher shows how the theme of “the mountain” emerged as structural imagery in the observed participatory project. Starting with the final product of the project studied—the brochure—she framed her narrative (lines 9–17) to illustrate how this brochure represents what occurred in the observed meetings. Indeed, it contains numerous references to the alpine lexicon, attesting to the importance of the mountains, as she recounts in lines 26–29. Then, Joanne plots (lines 36–48) around this question of the mountain imagery as a theme that will structure the design meetings until the end of the project. In so doing, she identifies several communicative events that contributed to making this mountain theme a structural one for the project. Thus, the researcher identifies events that warrant deeper exploration in their analyses (see mimesis III).

Interpreted time—refiguration: Reception of the narrative and analysis of communication events

The narration that Joanne produced through a narrative interview with her thesis supervisor operates as a mediator, as it guides the researcher through the data collected in the field, helps her to connect the dots and and, drawing on a CCO lens, develop her interpretation. It enables her to establish a relevant theoretical angle for interpreting the organizing process observed in the “Grand Huit” project. She views this theme of the mountain as a script that symbolizes and brings to life the social and historical pasts of the actors and the territory (lines 30–34, vignette 2). She justifies the structuring function of this theme by observing how the project’s actors, particularly the project manager, consistently defend and reiterate it, from one meeting to the next (lines 40–44, vignette 2). The concept of *script* (Gioia, 1984; Vásquez, 2012) is defined as an organizing actant intended to be both constitutive and performative. Through her analysis, the researcher aims to highlight how script will become a stakeholder functioning as an organizing actor (Vásquez, 2012) in the development of the cultural project.

From a CCO perspective, Joanne analyzed her data to identify the singularity of the moment that marks a *difference* in the continuation of exchanges and orients construction of the project with the creation of a script (the mountain theme). CCO researchers rely on a logic of *difference*, in which each event is considered discrete and singular but productive, and only tenuously and contingently linked to other events (Kuhn, 2012). The *difference* lies in how co-orientation of the associated objects and subjects produces or creates a connection with other events.

Vignette 2 dates to February 19, 2014, and corresponds to the first design meeting, where the mountain theme emerged in the transcribed conversational data. This extract highlights the intention of the project manager and his assistant to distance themselves from the city's industrial past, which stigmatizes its image, and come up with an offbeat artistic proposal that would serve as a shared vision for the group. This was the first time the need to connect with the mountain theme was emphasized. The idea was to reinvent the mining past and create an alpine universe.

Vignette 2: First design meeting in Cuesmes (February 19, 2014) extract from the analytical section of Joanne's thesis

The selection of the mountain theme is linked to the mining history of the region and the imposing slag heap in Cuesmes. Upon reviewing the data, the researcher observed that this was the only moment of justification of the mountain theme during the meetings. This particular moment is significant and unique because the decision is thereafter considered final. It makes a *difference* in the history of the project because the need to find a connection with the mountain theme is recalled and strongly recommended by the project manager to, on one hand, shift from historical facts and, on the other hand, reinvent an offbeat story of the city.

In order to show the constitutive role of the script, Joanne had to highlight the recursivity between one event and another. Recursivity created between preceding or succeeding events is essential for understanding an organization's continuity (Grothe-Hammer and Schoeneborn, 2019). This iterative/recursive character is a communicative attribute observable from one interaction to the next. Boden (1994) speaks in terms of the "lamination" of conversations "to explain how specific decisions, events or topics relating to a given meeting may be evoked or directed in subsequent encounters" (Cooren and Fairhurst, 2008, p. 122).

In the next two vignettes (vignette 3, dated April 2, 2014, and vignette 4, dated September 15, 2015), we observe how the mountain theme is evoked by the project manager to (in)validate very practical elements of the event depending on whether they match the theme: a proposed outfit (vignette 4) or the idea of pizzas (vignette 3).

Vignette 3: Design meeting in Cuesmes (April 2, 2014) extract from the analytical section of one Joanne’s thesis

Vignette 4: Design meeting in Cuesmes (September 15, 2015), extract from the analytical section of Joanne’s thesis

At a more abstract level, the recurring discursive practices in meetings, evoking the mountain theme as a script, contributes to the creation of a “uchrony,” that is, an alternative narrative of fictional events based on a historical starting point. Here, is an alternative history of Cuesmes’ migration and mining past, without ignoring it. As stated by the project manager (vignette 4): “We do not want to get bogged down in the historical past. That is very important, but the history is there.” The past is very present, as demonstrated by the slag heap that overlooks the landscape and echoes its mining past. However, instead of getting “bogged down in it”, the project manager evoked it as a gateway to the mountain theme. During a design meeting in 2014, the project manager’s assistant used words linked to daydreaming to talk about this uchrony and the scenography of the old mining site where the event occurred, through the imagery of the slag heap transformed into a mountain where one would admire the sunrise: “it becomes magical.” The mountain theme then is used to keep the past at a distance as reflected in the discussion about pizzas not fitting the theme, while recalling the past migration from Italy of some of the citizens of Cuesmes.

Conclusion: Triple mimesis as a process of creation and explication of coherence

If we ethnographers want to make our explanatory claims more transparent and disputable by readers, then we need to show readers how we came up with our interpretations, how we made mistakes and lucky guesses along the way to capturing other people’s meanings. That is what interpretive reflexivity discloses. A brief, closer look at the logic of interpretive explanation will help us understand why a fully interpretive reflexivity strengthens our invitation to readers to think critically about the explanations we offer. (Lichterman, 2017, p. 38)

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3 In this article, we postulate that CCO ethnographic researchers should pay more attention to
4 explaining the paths taken from raw data to interpretation (Rix-Lièvre and Lièvre, 2014). A
5 review of 15 articles by CCO scholars who adopted ethnography as a method highlights that
6 reflexivity is scarce within our corpus of articles (Vásquez et al., 2018).
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10 For many ethnographers (Clifford, 1983; Marcus and Cushman, 1982), the *experiential*
11 *authority of the ethnographer (I was there, I saw it)* is insufficient to legitimize the scientific
12 knowledge produced. For them, in order to establish the authority of ethnography, we need to
13 reflect on the textualization of ethnography that includes all forms of inscriptions from field
14 notes and footage to interpretive texts. This premise draws on Ricoeur's hermeneutic
15 phenomenology, which proposes paying particular attention to the role of text, defined as any
16 discourse fixed by writing, as a mediator between explanation and understanding (Harada,
17 2005). The word textualization for Ricoeur emphasizes the interconnection of three
18 temporalities of the research: fieldwork time, narrated time, and interpreted time. For Ricoeur,
19 the articulation of different temporalities (fieldwork and analysis) requires an intermediate step
20 in which the researcher produces the narrative. By establishing a relation of representation
21 between lived and narrated time, researchers construct a coherent narrative that brings data to
22 life and re-engages them in cycles of interpretation, enriching ethnographic textualization. As
23 Ricoeur (1983) suggests, the narrative establishes a "relation of representation" between lived
24 and narrated time by effectively transferring elements from one realm to the other. This step
25 ensures that the interpretation is not merely a retrospective account, but an ongoing movement
26 of distanciation–appropriation between the researcher and the organizational phenomenon they
27 have experienced. Furthermore, this approach can enrich collaborative research practices, as
28 research narratives, as data, are shared to be analyzed and integrated into the understanding of
29 the organization.
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46 Our article aimed to address the research question: *in what ways does this textualization*
47 *constitute CCO research practices and the scientific knowledge derived from it?* Drawing on
48 Ricoeur's hermeneutic helped us to reflect on the role of textualization as constitutive of CCO
49 ethnographers' work: an original *mise en abime*. We applied Ricoeur's triple mimesis to the
50 interpretive process carried out by Joanne, the ethnographer–researcher. In the first mimesis,
51 we explain why and how she observed and captured the organizational dynamics through field
52 notes, footage, and impregnation. A time of struggle followed the fieldwork when she was faced
53 with a large data set and had to make difficult decisions and re-enter the data captured. This
54 progressively led the researcher to distance herself from the field. Eventually, she decided to
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focus on three projects. In the second mimesis, she pursued this distancing process through the production of a narrative of her own fieldwork experience in the three different projects. As we illustrate through the Cuesmes project, the narrative helped her to plot and so problematize around the theme of the mountain as a script for the project. In the third mimesis, Joanne drew on this to navigate her data in order to identify the events that could highlight the constitution and the performative role of the script in the project.

Hence, our work complements the work of Boivin and colleagues (2017) with a method that helps to explicit how CCO ethnographers empirically constitute scientific knowledge. Developing methodologies that respect the key CCO premise – that place communication events as fundamental elements of analysis and a fundamental element of organizational reality (Cooren et al., 2011) - while providing tools for researchers in their analytical endeavors is a significant challenge. After experimenting with this method, we believe that hermeneutical tools, such as triple mimesis, can help to disclose the interpretative reflexivity of CCO ethnographers and open fundamental epistemological questions in our research.

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