



# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INDIRECT APPROACH

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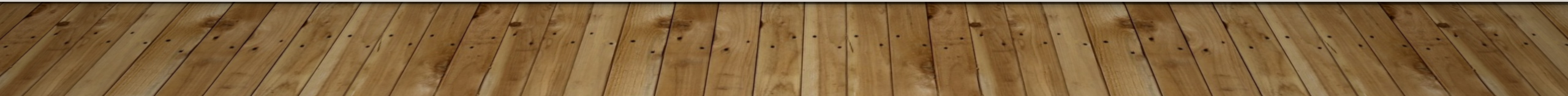
# ONLINE SESSION 4 – PART 1

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- The Indirect Approach – What is it?
  - The Happenstance – What is that? + an example...
- The Indirect Approach – A brief introduction on "How to..."
  - (This will of course be elaborated on when we meet in Norway in late October)

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INDIRECT APPROACH.

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- The indirect approach is a method for collecting research data.
  - The approach draws directly on a strict ethnographic framework.
    - Could be compared to unstructured interviews or “the walking interview”
  - The method has a place within **the qualitative** approaches in the social sciences that are thought of as **explorative**.



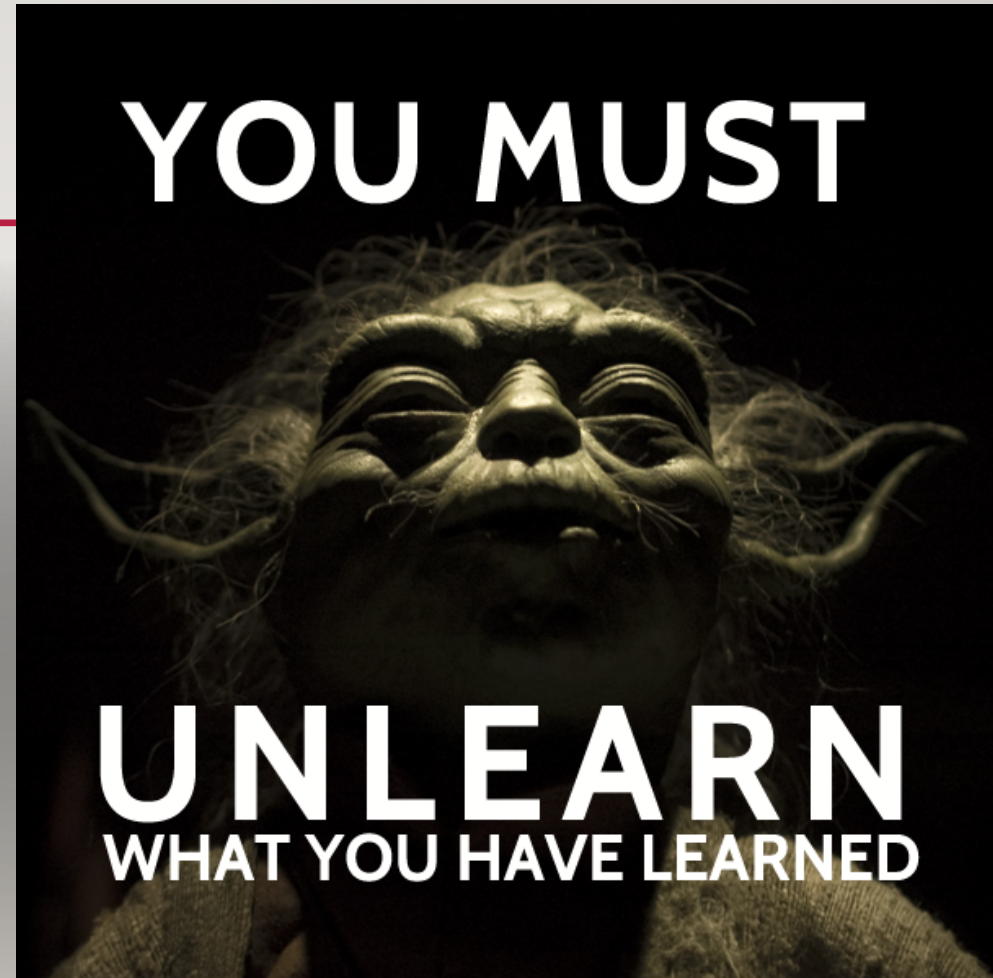
# YOUR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES?

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- ... doing semi-structured interviews? Or more structured interviews following an pre-prepared interview-guide...
- Or maybe doing questionnaires...

... Well... This is different...

We might need to put away what we already know for a minute...



## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INDIRECT APPROACH.

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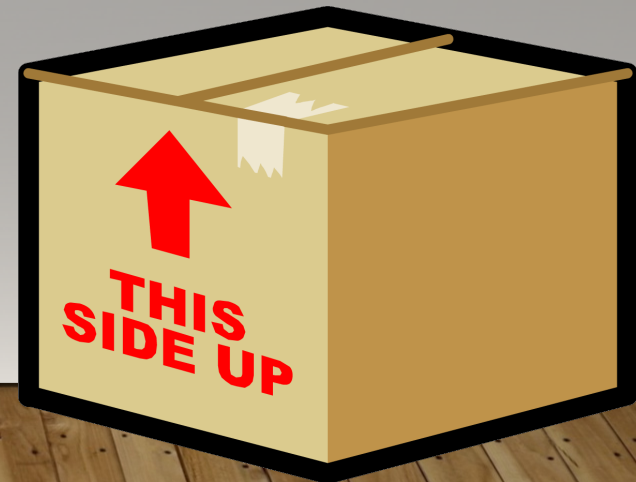
- The Indirect Approach is based on the idea that, **all social phenomena – take place within a certain context** – and we do research within these contexts.
- A key element in the approach is the researchers' indeed **indirect** way of approaching the informant.
  - We do **not** to introduce ideas... - unless the informant already presented them to us first.
  - Reading something into the conversation or introducing our own concepts or pre-understandings, would just be seen as polluting the conversation.



# WHAT WE SEEK

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- Ideally, what we seek is a conversation solely on behalf of the informant.
  - Whatever he or she chooses to emphasise becomes the main outset for a conversation.
- A key aspect of the approach is to **put away** everything we know – or think we know - about our informants!



# WHAT WE SEEK (AND NEED)

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- Through the indirect approach, we seek to position ourselves in a way where we may actually get answers to questions we do not ask!
- Getting people to tell stories through narrative approaches like this one, allow participants in conversations to fully occupy the position of **storytellers**.

**STORY**

- What we need to achieve this position is a good measure of **trust and confidence**.

# THE HAPPENSTANCE

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- A happenstance should be seen as an **unforeseen event**.
  - Something we do **not** plan for during our interviews with our informants.
- It is not quite an accident, but more a thing that we as interviewers hope to experience.
- While an accident is a waste of time, a happenstance, in contrast, is a shortcut into a more complex view of meaning, - a lucky path to extended contextual knowledge.
- A happenstance allows us to gather knowledge from a different angle compared to what we normally would do by asking pre-prepared “interview guide-questions.”





# THE HAPPENSTANCE

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- A happenstance is *something* that happens between the interviewer and the interviewee, that makes us change our approach to the interview.
- The goal of hunting happenstances is to escape – if only briefly – the researcher-status.
- The approach and the hope for happenstances – is to initiate a good story as we seek to build a personal relationship with our interviewees.



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# THE HAPPENSTANC E – AN EXAMPLE

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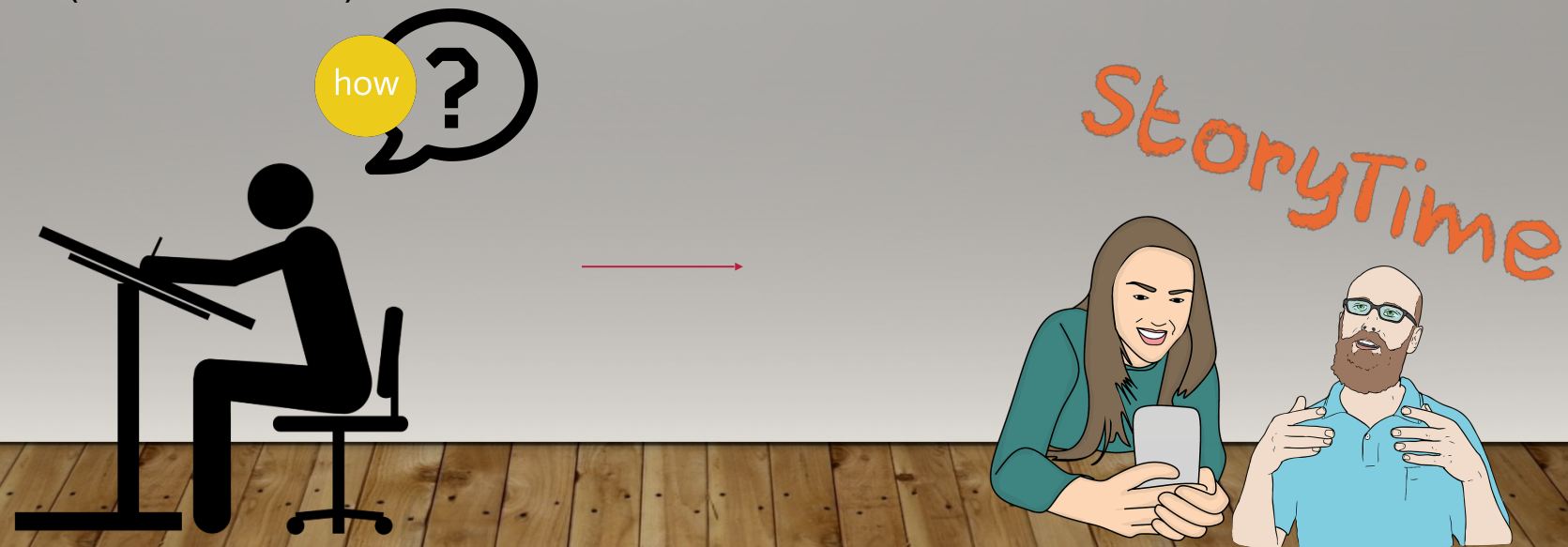


# THE HAPPENSTANCE

## CAN WE MAKE THEM OCCUR SYSTEMATICALLY?

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- We think so! - But to succeed the approach has to be indirect.
  - We cannot plan for accidents, but we can plan for **happenstances**.
  - We have to **design** the approach to facilitate for the happenstance to occur.
  - The design has to provide sequences intended to mimic events that inspire our informants (to tell stories!)



# IN SUMMARY:

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- Undertaking interviews through the indirect approach becomes a search for how any life makes sense within particular contexts of meaning.
- Our study object is to be discovered on its own premises, or within its own contextual frames and both our questions and their answers have to develop out of the context of the study object.
- We strive for equity in dialogue and as researchers we do not own the starts and the stops of the conversation.

# OUR AIM

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- It is our ambition to develop a thorough theoretical and methodological framework along the research undertaken in MaCE, as we seek young people's own experience in education – **without exactly asking for it.**



# HOW TO: PROCESS FOCUS - WHAT IS A GOOD START?

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- How to start a «normal as possible» conversation with an informant?
- How to create a sense of security in uncomfortable situations?
- How to use open non-verbal communication?
- The importance of clarifying expectations

# HOW TO: PROCESS FOCUS - HOW TO EXPLORE?

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- Inviting them to share their story – their narrative
- How to make them elaborate their narrative?
- Showing an interest
- What engages?
- To be in the process, more than seeking for answers to our assumptions
- Allowing periods of silence
- How to get answers without asking?
- Paraphrasing, mirroring and rephrasing by using the informant's language

# WHAT IS A GOOD ENDING?

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- Giving positive feedback and expressing gratitude
- Check out misunderstandings and wrong interpretations...
- What was it like to be interviewed like this?
- So what to do with all this «stuff»?





Thank you so much for your attention!

# AND FOR THE QUESTIONS...

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