# MTM Workshop 4 blurb / for sharing on Basecamp

Title: Making sense of field materials: Mobilising ethnographic methods to understand contentious heritage and creative co-production in trans-disciplinary heritage work Facilitated by: Marion Hamm, Arnd Schneider, Klaus Schönberger

This hands-on workshop introduces elements of ethnographic methodology to transform experiences in the TRACES research process into transferrable knowledge. This includes producing and analysing visual and textual fieldnotes including sensual materials and impressions, preparing thick descriptions and/or hybrid records, and dealing with ethical issues.

The focus of the work in small groups is to flesh out the TRACES concepts *contentious heritage* and *creative co-production*.

The workshop relies on real TACES field materials provided by CCPs and associated ethnographers and WPs.

## Workshop objectives

The workshop sets the path for the production of contributions to two TRACES publications, i.e. the WP 2 book on art and ethnography, and the WP ‘manual’ addressing other academics and practitioners working in contentious heritage settings. The practical objectives are a) to conduct exemplary analyses of field materials with a view to further development and b) to train TRACES members in using elements of ethnographic methodology to reflect upon their research processes with the aim to produce relevant, transferrable knowledge.

## Workshop preparation

The workshop relies on field materials mainly from CCPs and associated ethnographers. We would like to ask each CCP to share one or several documents about the research process so far. They can contain text and/or images, and can range from a paragraph to about 5 pages. They can be extracts from interviews, field diaries, visual diaries, or written retrospectively. What works best are materials that describe in detail a specific situation or setting, and contain interaction between the writer and the field. The materials should relate to “contentious heritage” or “creative co-production”.

## Workshop structure

1. Introducing aims, method and structure of the workshop (15 mins)

The introduction will highlight elements of ethnographic methodology as outlined in the hybrid record document

1. Small group sessions based on real field material from CCPs and associated ethnographers. A WP2/4 ethnographer will be present in each group (100 mins)

Results and follow-up steps will be documented.

1. Plenary session to collect points for discussion in 1h wrap-up session, including ethical points (30 mins)

## Workshop Rationale

The workshop mobilises the trans-disciplinary profile of TRACES. Artists, heritage workers and academics will work together on the analysis of their materials in an interactive group process drawing on ethnographic methodology.

All TRACES researchers have established relationships to their respective research fields. This process has brought up feelings of satisfaction, pleasure, empathy as well as irritations and frustrations. In ethnographic methodology, the perceptions and feelings of researchers are treated as important data, which can reveal deep insight into the symbolic structure of the research field. The workshop aims to demonstrate through hands-on group work how to make feelings of irritation productive, and how this situated knowledge can be turned into “thick descriptions”. The workshop includes:

* DATA: Focussed reflection on raw field materials in small groups and documentation thereof.
* CONCEPTS: Developing the concepts of *creative co-production* and *contentious heritage* using field materials
* CONTRIBUTIONS: Setting the path for the production of reflexive texts (e.g.thick description) on the basis of field materials and workshop discussions
* ETHICS: Dealing with ethical issues in the course of interactive field research

## Keywords for CCP-Presentations

For the CCP-presentations at the MTM, WP2 and WP4 would like to ask: Please tell us about your research process! Quite often, the journey towards a result/achievement includes things that may feel like failures or detours, complications that had to be dealt with, emotions, irritations and preconceptions. These things are often silenced, but for us as ethnographers, they are invaluable in understanding how the CCP – format in contentious heritage settings works. Please don’t hesitate to get back to us if you think we can help.

## Reflecting the research process (situations, emotions, irritations)

### Watching out for situations and emotions

When you prepare your presentation, and formulate hypotheses or results:

Could you also think about a specific situation that illustrates your idea, or the way you got there? Although you probably can’t tell all these stories in a short presentation, they would be very useful for workshop no 4 by WP2 and WP4.

Could you try to remember feelings/ emotions you had at specific points in the research process so far? We are asking this because in ethnography, the researcher’s feelings are treated as research data, and often lead to important insights. If you don’t want to include this in-depth in your presentation, you could write a note to bring to workshop no 4.

### Irritations in the research process so far

The WP4 overall TRACES publication aims to become “a honest account”. Is there any situation in your research process that you find irritating, embarrassing, dubious, uneasy, moving, surprising? Such situations may hold the key to an honest account.

Which issue, topic, concept or experience preoccupies you most in the TRACES context, positive or negative? Is there anything that you keep putting off, that never works out, frustrates you? Or are there things that make you happy, rewarded, satisfied, part of something? Can you describe such feelings/ settings a bit?

Examples:

CCP Belfast described in the research report how difficult it was to make institutional arrangements and find participants for their creative group work for a number of reasons. They ended the paragraph with the words: “such is the pace of things”. For WP4, this handle has become a major reflexive term: the situated rhythm in different research fields. Can you think about a situation that illustrates the “pace of things” in your CCP?

WP4: Before my first Skype conference with CCP3, I was very nervous, although I looked forward to it. I wanted to be seen as a competent colleague. Of course, everything went wrong. My equipment didn’t work, I couldn’t get the work-PC to transmit sound, then my laptop battery was running low, etc etc. I knew I should have checked all this beforehand, and was embarrassed. Thanks to patience and good will, we managed to have the meeting nevertheless. Paradoxically, this experience created an unexpected level of trust and motivation for me. Several formal and informal visits followed, way beyond the call of duty and all very productive. Can you think of a situation that illustrates communication practices/ trust building within your CCP?

## Best practice advice’ as Peer-to-Peer Conversation

TRACES promised to provide best-practice advice for other heritage practicioners from different fields. This will be done in the WP4 ‘manual’ publication. We prefer to speak about peer-to-peer conversation rather than using the rather patronising “best practice advice” formula.

Which of your perspectives, experiences and concepts would you like to enter into the overall TRACES publication?

Can you give an example for an experience (situation, encounter, event, setting …) or finding that would be of use for other creative heritage co-producers?

Have you encountered any ethical conundrums in your research process so far? Do you have any open questions or solutions? For instance, WP4 has staged a public event in a 50-residents village. We also interviewed almost a third of the inhabitants. When we publish research results, how do we anonymise, for instance, the only farmer in the village?

## Contentious Heritage

In which ways do you perceive the heritage you’re working with as “contentious”? What is contentious: objects/ buildings/ practices? The overall political landscape? A specific heritage setting? Contentious for whom? Which are the different positions in your heritage setting? Performing heritage: Are you aiming to “make heritage contentious”, i.e. to bring out contentious aspects? Or aiming to heal, to make heritage less contentious? Or something else?

For WP 4, the term “contentious” points to the politics of heritage, heritage as an issue in a democratic process where conflict and difference are inevitable, heritage as a terrain where important current political and social issues are being negotiated. Does this “agonistic approach” relate to your work?

## Creative Co-Production

Can you name one or several institutional logics (University, Museum, Archive, Art-Space …), and explain how it affects your work, how you deal with it, maybe make it productive? Can you give an example for a situation that illustrates this?

Are there preconceptions in your CCP about positions such as “the artist”, “the academic”, “the museum”? How do you deal with them? Is there humour, anger, jealousy, comradery, mutual admiration, others? Can you briefly describe a situation to illustrate this?

If you think about your research process, did you develop any strategies to organise your co-production? This could be simple stuff, such as “we eat together every Tuesday”. If your team is geographically dispersed, how do you deal with this? Did things get easier, or more complicated, over time? Can you describe a situation which illustrates how your strategies evolved?

## Reflexive Europeanisation -> Workshop 3

This question will be outlined in the blurb for Workshop 3: Local - regional - national - transnational - empire: Europeanising contentious heritage?