

# Qualitative Research for non-re- searchers

Doing qualitative research can be sometimes frightening and discouraging. Complicated research methods and complex deep analysis are presented as exclusive for researchers and professionals. Nevertheless, **with the right approach, simplified tools and realistic expectations, all of you can bring high quality and helpful database for your future projects.** Your motivation and attitudes can lead you to valuable results.

**LEARN** basic facilitation skills

**FOCUS** on your research question and the goal of the workshop

**BE CURIOUS  
& UNDERSTAND** positions, values and attitudes of participants

**REFLECT** on your own biases and participants biases

**BE NEUTRAL** listen carefully and leave space for ideas of others

# Before you start collecting your data through the presented tools, be sure you:

- **Understand the goal of the research/project and write clear research questions.**

E.g.: What are the needs of local creative businesses regarding their spatial and functional organisation?

You can also develop multiple research questions depending on the complexity of your project. When your goal and research question is specific and concrete, you will be capable of communicating the purpose of exercises and discussions to the group.

- » [How to develop a strong research question](#)

- **Aim for neutrality.** Try to understand the context beyond your own perspectives. Collect available data, reflect on its relevance (time, source, complexity), and implement them to your research.

- **Do your homework and read and learn different moderation, facilitation methods and group dynamics.**

- » [Seeds for Change](#)



- **Be prepared to record the content.**

Our brains are lazy and manipulative. Sometimes we forget, sometimes we make up information. During the session, you can either record audio or have a friend take notes from the session -

- » Note Taking Tips

- **Reflect on your potential biases**, write them down and reflect on them before and during the session and analysis. Avoid pushing your own understanding of the situation and intentionally put aside your ideas. **Train and apply to your meetings and own thinking the basic tool for information analysis - Turn It Around!**

### Turn It Around!

Phenomenology encourages us to **stop and reflect** on our thoughts and feelings but also on the situation itself and forces us to find out **why we hold particular views**. In this way, we gain curious insight into our thought processes and the whole situation around us. Moreover, such a round provides an ideal model for **understanding the complex situation and reality around us**, participants' statements, individual interviews and data analysis.





# 1st STEP

## Observe & do not judge/evaluate

Let's engage all of our senses to the best description of the reality in which we find ourselves. Without analysis, without evaluation, without emotion. Because it is emotions that can confuse us. Imagine that you simply want to describe a picture to someone who cannot see it. In this way, it is possible to tell a story or a process as it appears to us. Although, associations and explanations may immediately pop into your head at first. Try to control them deliberately so that they do not affect your observation. Avoid asking Why? It may be counterintuitive, but there you go.

This is how you train your mind, which helps prevent jumping to conclusions and encourages genuine curiosity and the ability to observe or listen.

*I see... specifically...*

*It seems to me...*

*I still see... in detail...*

*I hear ...*

*I perceive ...*

*If I look closely, I see ...*

*I feel ... I can't evaluate it clearly ...*

# 2nd STEP

## Recognise distortions & biases

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All of us live in a world full of biases. They exist because they help us make sense of the world, facilitate understanding, and help create value rankings or patterns of behaviour in practical life. We can never completely get rid of some biases, but we can deliberately control them, which is especially useful when we feel they may influence our judgment.

**Factors that influence our biases daily are:**

- demographics – age, gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality
- culture, music, choice of leisure activities
- special knowledge, talent, expertise
- significant life experience
- values, goals, aspirations, ideological anchorage
- external environment and choice of people, the current state of mind and body



From the backpack of factors that make up our distortions, we unconsciously pull out different combinations of these elements daily, which in turn determines our behavior and thinking. In any discussion in the pub, during an argument with your spouse, or when setting a corporate start-up strategy, it is important to be aware of this fact, as these are the ones that shape our perception of specific situations.

*My observation may be influenced by ...*

*I heard X ... over Y ... because ...*

*I can't stand this person because ... I should get rid of this feeling ...*

*I'm more focused on the solution XY because I may be influenced by...*



# 3rd STEP

## Analyse & explain

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At this point, you can start to form your first hypotheses, shedding light on the situation. Look for links in information, patterns in behaviour, try to get to the real problems and causes. Compose the information objectively. Beware, however, of your own brain, which often makes connections that have nothing to do with each other (haha! now you can because you are aware of your own biases!). Explain clearly what objective information you are basing your hypotheses on and what might influence them. Think about what types of evidence you need to confirm or refute your hypothesis. **At this point, the explanation still does not equal truth.**

### HYPOTHESIS – EXPLANATION – EVIDENCE

#### ✓ CORRECT

*It seems to me that X is related to Y  
... I don't know/can't back it up*

*These things may be related ... to confirm/  
refute, I need...*

*Can it be explained like this ... based on...*

*I can see a possible relationship between ...*

#### ✗ WRONG

*It will undoubtedly be ...*

*I'm sure ...*

*There is no other explanation than ...*

# 4th STEP

## Look for other explanations

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We can find out what perspective we are missing by changing our perspective. Let's be aware that the backpack I carry on my shoulders influences my own perception and perspective. It is therefore important to confirm it with other views.

We can change perspectives in different ways:

- **Be your own devil's advocate:**

*What I think is wrong because...*

*What I think may be quite the opposite, and it...*

- **Put on the so-called "hat" of another person/profession**

*Lawyer Jana would probably have a different take on this, namely ...*

*The person from the minority group has different priorities. He would probably argue ...*

- Invite a person with a different perspective who is willing to listen to other opinions

*Who do we miss in the research?*

- Be curious and do additional “research”:

*What other data is there?*

*From where is the information coming to us?*

*What are my sources?*

- Change location - change your position in space or time.

- Zoom in and out - analyse the details and the larger context - the picture/situation as a whole.

- Look for things that are invisible, not yet revealed.

*How might they have been “altered” along the way, and why?*

*What might be hidden from us and why?*

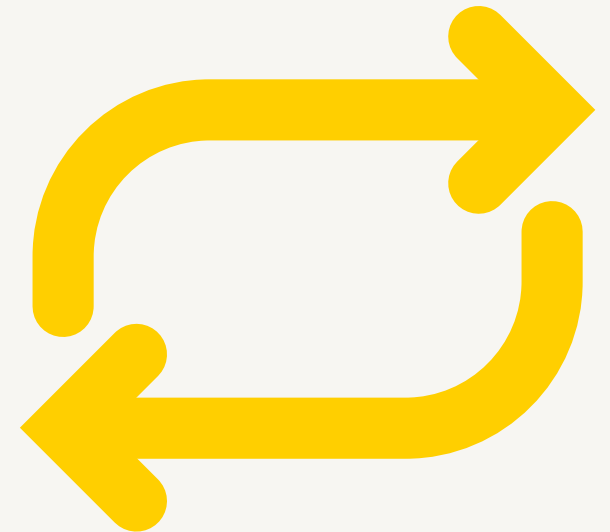
*How did the information get to me?*

# NEVERENDING STEP!

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**By doing this, you have taken an extra lap!  
For the curious, however, the circle never  
ends.**

When you come back to the beginning and start observing again, you will always find new connections. For the busy, all you have to do is think for a few seconds and avoid drawing conclusions and analyses. All they have to do is listen, observe and ask themselves: “How did I think of that? Why do I see it this way and not another way?”



## References:

⇒ Design Kit: The Human-Centered Design Toolkit

⇒ Moderating focus groups

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