



INTRODUCTION

This book is not intended to be a practical handbook, nor a purely theoretical work on qualitative studies. Its design plan does not follow classical logic. It is not determined by a concern for pedagogical explanation.

It was designed as a stroll within a vast territory, encompassing different disciplines, coming from psychology, anthropology, linguistics, cognitive science and, these days, traversed by neuroscientific research and by the dazzling development of new technologies.

A stroll throughout nearly fifty years of qualitative practice, since my first experiences as a facilitator of creativity group in business, to ongoing development of a new methodology based on mental imagery and the Internet, through the years I devoted to psychoanalytic experience and the creation of a psychotherapy centre.

A stroll marked by the setting up and management of several research companies, all human experiences and exciting commercial successes: Insight, QCG and Arteam. A journey also marked by heading up and directing qualitative studies in two major institutions: Ipsos, with memories of great personal and professional experiences; and Synovate, a multi-national experience replete with lessons. Finally, a stroll marked out by the new personal and professional adventure of the Franco-German “Happy Thinking People.”

A route also marked by more than ten years of teaching Master Marketing at Paris-Dauphine University, and interaction with business schools: exciting experiences, in contact with bright young students during their integration into companies.

Finally, a course alongside business leaders of the most prestigious brands across every sector: Food, Luxury Goods, Cosmetics, Automotive Industry, Bank, Health, Food, Distribution, and so on, in many cases with the pleasure of seeing a Research Officer or Product Manager become Research Director or Group Leader, sometimes Marketing Director or even CEO.

This is why dear reader I trust you will accept this roaming: it was the path taken by the Greeks, who taught while walking.

We have the sole ambition of endearing a profession often misunderstood and neglected by authors of marketing books, and by the great schools that train future business leaders; the hope of endearing a craft that, brings great personal satisfaction in itself, and ensures promising career development.

For our business affects people's sensitivity, their life experiences; individual values and aspirations, or those of the groups or the institutions that we research; and in the most diverse policy areas: leisure, health, sexuality, education, the economy, and so on. It also offers career plans, from an entry-level research executive to those responsible for a client portfolio, as Account Manager – not to mention, as Director of a Research Institute.

One last point to mention is that the qualitative profession is one whose raw material is language: language in all its forms, verbal and nonverbal, the language of reason and of the imagination. In this spirit, our reader will tolerate our references to literature and poetry: seeing writers, philosophers, artists and poets quoted may perhaps surprise, or irritate; but they know how to share part of themselves in their relation to the world; they know that “with words and images we can compose many more ideas than principles and concepts of understanding alone.”

We need the powers of the imagination, because our job consists not only of analysing speech and behaviour: the mission is also to open up new territories, find new insights and concepts, anticipate changes and discover new languages.