

INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY: THE MAIN ASPECTS AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS*

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ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates how institutional ethnography provides a way forward for social scientists to explore how social organization of work shape people's daily lives and transform their experiences into institutional knowledge. Institutional ethnography is a qualitative method of inquiry taking individual's experience and standpoint as a starting point and try to explore the textually mediated forms of coordination and control in institutional settings. According to this theory, institutional texts are tools that transform subjects' experiences into knowledge necessary for institutional functioning. Institutional ethnography claims that the transformation of knowledge leads the a bifurcation between the reality of the owner of the actual experience and the institutional reality. As a result, the individual whose experience is processed and transformed for the needs and priorities of the system is alienated from his/her own experience and becomes disadvantaged against the institutional system. Within this regard, institutional ethnography has a critical and activist perspective with its search for power relations and social inequalities within institutional organizations. In this paper, the theoretical and philosophical foundations of institutional ethnography, and its main concepts and principles as a research methodology are revealed by the systematic review of the relevant literature. In addition, the differences and common aspects of institutional ethnography from other sociological theories such as the feminist standpoint approach, Marxist theory, ethnomethodology and phenomenology have been tried to be revealed.

Keywords: Institutional ethnography, standpoint theory, ruling relations, bifurcation

KURUMSAL ETNOGRAFYA: TEMEL YÖNLERİ VE TEORİK TEMELLERİ

ÖZET

Bu makale, kurumsal etnografyanın, sosyal bilimciler için işin sosyal organizasyonunun insanların günlük yaşamlarını nasıl şekillendirdiğini ve deneyimlerini kurumsal bilgiye nasıl dönüştürdüğünü keşfetmeleri için bir yol sağladığını göstermektedir. Kurumsal etnografya, bireyin deneyimini ve bakış açısını başlangıç noktası olarak alan ve kurumsal ortamlarda metinsel olarak düzenlenen koordinasyon ve kontrol biçimlerini keşfetmeye çalışan niteliksel bir araştırma yöntemidir. Bu teoriye göre kurumsal metinler, öznelerin deneyimlerini kurumsal işleyiş için gerekli olan bilgiye dönüştüren araçlardır. Kurumsal etnografya, bilginin dönüşümünün, deneyimin sahibinin gerçekliği ile kurumsal gerçeklik arasında bir çatallaşmaya yol açtığını iddia eder. Sonuç olarak, deneyimi sistemin ihtiyaç ve öncelikleri doğrultusunda işlenen ve dönüştürülen birey, kendi deneyimine yabancılaşır ve kurumsal sisteme karşı dezavantajlı konuma gelir. Bu bağlamda kurumsal etnografya, kurumsal örgütlerin içerisinde güç ilişkileri ve toplumsal eşitsizlikleri araması ile eleştirel ve aktivist bir bakış açısına sahiptir. Bu çalışmada, kurumsal etnografyanın kuramsal ve felsefi temelleri ile bir araştırma metodolojisi olarak temel kavram ve ilkeleri ilgili literatürün sistematik olarak incelenmesi yoluyla ortaya konulmaktadır. Ayrıca kurumsal etnografyanın feminist bakış açısı yaklaşımı, Marksist teori, etnometodoloji ve fenomenoloji gibi diğer sosyolojik teorilerden farklılıkları ve ortak yönlerinin tartışılması amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kurumsal etnografya, duruş kuramı, yönetim ilişkileri, çatallaşma

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1. INTRODUCTION

Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith (1987), the founder of the institutional ethnography, encourages individuals to reveal their own experiences with their own words in her theory, which she put forward as a critique of mainstream sociology (cited in Kearney et al., 2019). As a critical qualitative theory and methodology, institutional ethnography aims to inquire people's everyday experiences and tries to make the hidden visible by exploring the institutional settings organizing the everyday life (Smith, 2005). Smith, who initially revealed an understanding of sociology for women with the effect of standpoint theory, gradually expanded her theory to an understanding of sociology for people (Walby, 2013).

Smith (1974) sees the focus of the inquiry as the social organization and production of the knowledge. She also states that the social organization of knowledge mediates the relation of knower and known, which she names as ruling relations. In this context, institutional ethnography inquires work settings to explore how knowledge of everyday life and power relations are organized by using qualitative data coming from the real owners of the experience rather than expert knowledge (Smith, 2005).

Institutional ethnography is not only a qualitative research method but also a form of sociology (Smith, 2005:2). Its main focus is a research and discovery process based on people's experiences rather than theoretical interpretation and testing hypotheses (Smith, 2005:2). Institutional ethnography claims that everyday life and activities are organized trans-locally through texts, and the main aim of the research is to reveal the link between micro and macro by trying to understand how regulatory frameworks such as concepts, theories, policies, laws, plans, etc. transform the experience to the forms of knowledge (Öztaş, 2013:44). Its purpose is to investigate how people's actions and experiences in their daily lives are shaped with invisible ruling relations embedded in institutional settings, how they are controlled and coordinated by them, and how people participate in these ruling relations (Smith, 2005: 36).

Institutional ethnography aims to research the network of ruling relations embedded in the institutional systems, which puts the original owner of the experience at a disadvantage against the institutional functioning. Institutional ethnography takes the perspective and position of a subject as the starting point in this analysis process and starts with analyzing his/her daily activities for work. In this way, it tries to reveal how people and their experiences are processed through documents, protocols, records and categories in institutional processes and how their experiences are transformed into a text (Pence, 1997: 35). As a result of this processing process, the gap and difference between the work produced by the text-mediated network of relations and the real life experience can be enormous (Pence, 1997: 35).

According to this theory, institutional texts are tools that transform subjects' experiences into knowledge necessary for institutional functioning. The transformation of knowledge causes an alienation to one's own experience and a bifurcation between the reality of the individual and reality imposed by the institution (Smith, 2005). As a result, the individual who is the actual owner of the experience becomes disadvantaged against the institutional system. Institutional ethnography aims to analyze people's daily lives in institutional settings and social organization of work which can become a tool of social control and power (Smith, 2005).

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In this paper, it is aimed to reveal the theoretical and philosophical foundations of institutional ethnography, and its main concepts and principles as a research methodology in the light of the systematic review of the relevant literature. It is also aimed to discuss the differences and common aspects of institutional ethnography from other sociological theories such as the feminist standpoint approach, Marxist theory, ethnomethodology and phenomenology.

2. THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

2.1. Standpoint Theory and Institutional Ethnography

Standpoint theory is first put forward by feminist thinkers in the 1980s to question the dominant, white, male hegemonic discourse that leaves women out, oppressed and silent (Abu-Saad, 2008:1906). According to them, actual relations between people are not visible from certain standpoints and the construction of reality and social relations is affected by power relations. The dominant and ruling group in the society accepts its point of view as real and ignores other perspectives. Standpoint theory was named for the first time by Nancy Hartsock in 1983 and many feminist theorists contributed to the development of the theory (as cited in Lenz, 2004:98). The theory argues that marginalized and disadvantaged groups, who have the least interest in preserving the current social situation, are able to see the society in a special way from their position and that these standpoints or experiences are important in understanding the society in a broader level (Lenz, 2004: 98).

Standpoint theory states that women's perception of the world creates a double vision or double consciousness due to their oppressed position in society, and therefore women's experiences will provide a strong point of view at the point of analyzing and changing society (Brooks, 2007:63). The disadvantaged and secondary positions of women make their daily life experiences and standpoints invisible, and the dominant worldview is imprisoned in the discourses and perspectives of men, who are the dominant group. However, women have many social roles inside and outside the home, such as a mother, a working woman, a worker, and they have to struggle with an active consciousness in these roles. For this reason, the visibility and prioritization of women's standpoints will provide rich and inclusive information for the evaluation of social reality.

Collins (1998:204-205) states that standpoint theory reveals shared stories of groups in common positions in unfair power relations and these shared positions and experiences make new perspectives on oppression visible. The stances and perspectives of marginalized groups provide a more complete understanding of reality and social relations than the dominant group because they are able to see both the hegemonic realities presented by the dominant group and the counter-reality they experience in their own lives. Dominant groups can only understand their own perspectives on social realities and social relations because other perspectives have been ignored, rejected, and silenced by those in power (Abu-Saad, 2008:1906).

In line with these thoughts of feminist researchers, the feminist perspective theory, which advocates the epistemological privilege of women, has emerged (Brooks, 2007:66). According to them, researches that take women's experiences as a starting point reveal a more accurate and realistic social knowledge that is necessary for social change. Feminist standpoint theory also states that there is not a single women's perspective, there are multiple realities and multiple perspectives and it is not correct to reduce women's experiences to a general (Brooks, 2007:70). Mainstream sociology is not a discipline accustomed to studying institutional relations and organization from the subjective

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standpoint of people. The subjective point of view is a new approach to sociology discourse that is based on the notion of objectivity. Standpoint theory argues that the dominant social science discourse that claims to be neutral in the sense of not prioritizing any social position is impossible revealing that unrejecting our epistemological and political position will contribute more to the development of objectivity and understanding (Adler and Jermier, 2005:941).

According to Sandra Harding (2004:1-9), who is one of the pioneers of the theory, standpoint theory is not only a theory that explains the social, but also a method to reach social knowledge and to understand different, diverse and even conflicting perspectives. According to the theory, each suppressed group has different experiences of suppression. For this reason, they present different critical perspectives on the social order from the knowledge of dominant groups, and these different perspectives enrich social knowledge, reflecting reality better and making it holistic (Harding, 1993:65). The experience of social oppression and marginalization leads to the production of different and significant knowledge and experiences (Mosedale, 2014:1119).

The concept of standpoint has started to be used from the everyday language, especially as a result of Harding's creative thoughts and criticisms. Harding uses the concept of standpoint to describe the social position of the subject as the owner and creator of knowledge (Smith, 2005:9). Along with Harding, names such as Dorothy E. Smith, Nancy C. M. Hartsock, Patricia Hill Collins, and Donna Haraway also studied power relations and the production of knowledge, and revealing the importance of multiple perspectives as a result of these studies contributed to the questioning of dominant paradigms regarding knowledge production (Moreton -Robinson, 2014:332)

Standpoint theory has its origins in other important theoretical sources as well as feminist approaches that emphasize the importance of knowledge provided by other perspectives and experiences versus the dominant source of knowledge production. One of them is Foucault's views on the production of power and knowledge, that knowledge always includes power relations, and that having knowledge creates a power and violence relationship based on imposing its own discourse on other objects and people (Ward, 1997:778). Another approach that have common grounds with the standpoint theory is the approach advocated by literary and philosophical deconstructionists such as Derrida, that reality is governed and even created by language and linguistic hierarchies (Ward, 1997:778). All these approaches contain similar ideas with standpoint theory in the way that we need multiple perspectives and experiences of knowledge in order to understand social reality and to get rid of the dominance of one-sided and incomplete discourses (Korkmaz, 2012:31).

With the necessity of reflecting the experiences and perspectives of disadvantaged and marginalized groups other than women, standpoint theory has been expanded and started to be applied also for groups such as poor, elderly, black, disabled, LGBT individuals (Swigonski, 1994). With the understanding that it is not possible to pretend to know and understand their aspects and struggle, it has been aimed to reveal the hidden aspects of the social relations between marginalized groups and the institutions that shape their lives (Swigonski, 1994).

In this context, Dorothy Smith developed the concept of standpoint, which she adapted from Harding, taking a new direction different from feminist standpoint theory (Smith, 2005: 10). Smith (2005:10) stated her understanding of the theory as by changing it to "sociology for people" rather than a "sociology for women". In her point of view, concept of standpoint does not define a position, gender, class or racial category in society, and it expresses the position of a subject position open to

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everyone who has experience and knowledge (Smith, 2005:10). Smith, unlike Harding, proposes to take the experience of the individual "not as a factual knowledge, but only as a starting point" (Öztañ, 2013:38). With this new approach she brought to standpoint theory, Smith introduced the institutional ethnography method, which is not monopolized by a particular subject position and where any standpoint can be the starting point and main source of information for research.

2.1.2. Other Theoretical and Philosophical Foundations of Institutional Ethnography

The institutional ethnography developed by Dorothy Smith for the analysis of people's daily lives in institutional settings reveals that the social organization of work can become a tool of social control (Pence, 1997:9). Institutional ethnography, which takes everyday life experiences as the starting point of research, tries to understand how the social processes and practices that people are involved in organize their experiences (Öztañ, 2013:37). Institutional ethnography seeks the source of knowledge not in the experts, but in the actual owners of the experience (Smith, 2005:1). Institutional ethnography creates a new entry point to explore the social, by not subjecting the source of knowledge (Smith, 2005:10). In institutional ethnography, every experience can be a subject and a starting point of inquiry. Relying on people's everyday experiences, institutional ethnography explores and maps the organization of the social in daily life (Smith, 2005:10).

Although it is an important feature of the theory to start the research from the standpoints of individuals, research is not limited to the experiences that make up this entry point. Institutional ethnography explores how and by which social forces and relations knowledge is organized (Selveraj, 2014). The theory also explores how socially organized ruling relations shape the daily lives of the individuals (DeVault, 2008: 5). Institutional ethnography differs from theory-dominated approaches, in which macrosociological debates shape microsociological findings, and rejects such a distinction (DeVault, 2008: 5). In another way, in institutional ethnography the theory and practice are intertwined,

Smith's institutional ethnography was influenced by her experiences in the feminist movement, the Marxist theory, the ethnomethodology approach based on the understanding that the experienced world is constantly produced and reproduced through human actions and the approaches of Foucault (Öztañ, 2013:37). The theory also has links with the work of George Herbert Mead and the Russian language thinkers, especially Mikhail Bakhtin, A. R. Luria, and Valentin Volosinov, with the importance it gives to language in the process of ethnographic exploration of how institutions are coordinated (Smith, 2005:2). In this context, the origins of institutional ethnography can be found on the feminist movement, Marx, ethnomethodology, and phenomenology (Grahame and Grahame, 2007). Institutional ethnography tries to establish a strong connection between micro and macro using a qualitative research strategy (Öztañ, 2013:44). It reveals an understanding of the social by investigating the ordinary actions of daily life, and unlike mainstream sociology, the social is not above the human, and the human experience is not simplified.

Institutional ethnography analyzes the social relationships that people constitute working together create while performing a job. These social relations express the connections between employees and work processes, as in the Marxist view (DeVault, 2008: 7). Institutional ethnography defines the institutional power created by textually mediated social relations as ruling relations (Smith, 2005: 277). The network of ruling relations, which is formed by academic, professional,

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bureaucratic knowledge and practices, constantly textualizes and objectifies real-life experiences by transforming them into categories and concepts suitable for the use of institutional processes (DeVault, 2008: 8). Ruling relations create a power relationship where inequalities are produced between internal actors and external subjects through the objectification of experiences and their textualization in a language foreign to the actual owner of the experience. Similar to the alienation of the individual in the Marxist analysis of labor relations, the person become alienated to his/her experience.

Rather than aiming for the construction or confirmation of a theory as in mainstream sociological research, institutional ethnography tries to reveal how things work in everyday life (Devault, 2008:295). It is a new method of connecting everyday life with sociology and social sciences (Öztan, 2013:36). Institutional ethnography, like other post-positivist approaches, puts language and discourse at the center of social organization (Devault, 2008:295). The institutional ethnography's perspective on power is similar to Michel Foucault's (1980) analyzes of knowledge, power and governmentality (as cited in Devault, 2008:295). Governmentality can be regarded as the process of transformation of knowledge into a tool for providing social control (Özçağlar Eroğlu, 2016:39). In another words, the owner of the power produces knowledge and reinforces its own sovereignty by holding the power of knowledge (Özçağlar Eroğlu, 2016:47). Institutional systems are examples where the relationship between knowledge and power can be observed. An important part of Foucault's analyzes includes institutional systems such as educational institutions, nursing homes, prisons, hospitals, mental health hospitals, which are directly or indirectly regulated by the state (Özçağlar Eroğlu, 2016:47). In these institutions, discipline and treatment procedures, or in Foucault's words the functioning of disciplinary power, are carried out through various forms of institutional knowledge (Özçağlar Eroğlu, 2016: 47).

According to Brenner (1994:692), Foucault's disciplinary power becomes functional in modern institutional structures such as hospitals, prisons, courthouses in which space, time, categorization systems and employee behaviors are highly organized. According to Foucault (2013), one of the ways to achieve modern power is to organize and compartmentalize space and time so that individuals can control their actions and enable them to act like functional machines (Brenner, 1994:692). When the whole organization, including the actions of the employees, becomes harmonious and functional, the institutional structure works most effectively. The priority of disciplinary power is to optimize this institutional functioning, and fulfilling the desired institutional functionality by ignoring the spiritual world of the human being, which is seen as a machine in this operation (Brenner, 1994:692).

The concept of disciplinary power has some similarities with the concept of ruling relations of institutional ethnography which claims that textually mediated institutional relations exert an invisible control over people and shape their daily experiences (Devault, 2008:295). Institutional ethnography aims to make visible the ruling relations embedded in the work processes by investigating the discourses in institutional texts and the daily activities of the employees who use them.

Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography deals with the connection between ruling relations and daily life, and points to a new form of social organization that is not visible and deeply embedded in our lives (Öztan, 2013:37). It provides a framework that guides the researcher to daily life in discovering the realities of institutions by focusing on the work done by the people involved in the institutional processes and how this work is done (Öztan, 2013:42). In this theory, the concept of

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work can be very diverse, such as mothers getting their children ready for school, citizens' collecting signatures for a park to be built in their neighborhood, and healthcare professionals' prescribing drugs and treatments. The definition of work in institutional ethnography includes all kinds of efforts and knowledge related to the realization of daily activities and everyone is seen as an expert with the knowledge of their own work (Grahame and Grahame, 2009).

When thinking about power and authority, it is necessary to take into account the different dimensions of the use of force in the modern state rather than oppression and the legitimate use of armed force (Pence, 1997: 36). The power of processing one's real life experience and transforming it into a different piece of knowledge is also a kind of power relationship. The product that emerges by processing and classifying the real life experience generally includes an ideological perspective and discourse that is not neutral in terms of race, gender and/or class (Pence, 1997: 36).

In Foucault's theory, modern power is productive, not prohibitive, and it works like a capillary system to the most extreme areas of daily life activities (Fraser, 1989:18). According to this viewpoint, power and authority in the modern state permeates people's lives through social practices (Fraser, 1989:18). In this context, institutions produce a hegemonic job based on knowledge and expertise, and one should understand how the power is created through the institutional language, network, structures and practices to be able to change the influences and forces that direct people's lives (Pence, 1997:36). Although these analyzes alone are not sufficient for change, creative and innovative steps can be taken to reshape institutional practices with the cooperation of actors involved in institutional processes, academics and activists (Devault, 2008:298).

3. THE MAIN CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES OF INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Institutional ethnography explores how everyday experiences are textually mediated and organized in work settings and organizations by relying on interviews, observations, and analysis of documents (Walby, 2013). The prominent aspect of institutional ethnography that differs from other qualitative research methods of social sciences is its emphasis on how organisational processes which are coordinated by texts organize everyday experiences. Institutional ethnography is used in a variety of academic fields such as sociology, health research, education, mental health and management (Walby, 2013).

The inquiry process starts with the investigation of people's everyday lives and their bodily experiences by exploring their standpoints (Walby, 2013). The standpoint of people in institutional ethnography is the experience of the embodied knower and to understand the standpoint of the individuals, one should try to see actualities of an individual that is situated in an actual context at a point in time (Walby, 2013).

Smith uses the concept of problematic to express that exploring the discourse and ruling relations of the institution, which is the subject of a research, is broader than a research question or problem (Smith, 2005:39). What is different in terms of institutional ethnography is that it presents a problematic regarding the realities of people's daily lives, not based on the propositions and imperatives put forward by the mainstream academy or those who dominate knowledge and power.

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Therefore, the starting point of research is not theories, abstract concepts and policies, but activities and actions embedded in daily life.

In institutional ethnographic research, questions and problems are addressed, but they do not determine the direction of the research. The main problems of the research are not finalized at the beginning, but can be understood and formed during the exploration of the field (Bisaillon, 2012: 45). In this sense, the researcher's questions are embedded in the realities experienced by the subjects. The concept of problematic also includes investigating the network of relations which shape and organize the everyday lives and which are partially visible to people. As a matter of fact, institutional ethnography sees everyday life as an unlimited field of exploration with the social networks behind it (Smith, 2005:40).

The institutional ethnographic problematic is not an obvious question. It is a field of discovery, and this field of discovery involves the exploration of the ways in which power permeates everyday life, through the study of institutions and the ruling relations within them. The starting point of the exploration of the social organization of the institution is the experiences of individuals. Investigation of what happens and how the work is done in the institutional process reveals the institutional order and organization (Smith, 2005:41).

The starting point of the problematic in institutional ethnography is the concrete human experiences lived anywhere in daily life. People's experiences are not the end but the beginning of a journey in which social networks are mapped (Grahame and Grahame, 2009: 298). It is possible to enter these social networks in different ways, and no entry way has a privilege over the other (Grahame and Grahame, 2009: 298). The starting point is a particular pattern of experience; this may be the researcher's own experience or the experience of a service recipient, worker, activist, citizen or another person (Grahame and Grahame, 2009: 298).

Institutional ethnography has two main purposes. The first is to try to understand how social organization shapes the knowledge and experience of the individuals, and the second is to reveal the power mechanisms embedded in institutional networks controlling and coordinating the work, which Smith defines as ruling relations (Selveraj, 2014). According to Bisaillon (2012: 618), the concept of ruling relations is an effort to go beyond concepts related to power and the state. Ruling relations arise from specialized systems formed by concepts, theories, categories and technical language and shape our way of perceiving the world (Smith, 1996:47). Ruling relations can also be named as a textually mediated social network that shapes the daily practices of institutional actors (Selveraj, 2014).

The concept of institution in institutional ethnography does not only mean specific institutions with a spatial domain and human resources. What is meant by the institution is the coordinated and intersecting work processes operating in many fields and places (DeVault & McCoy, 2006: 17). Institutional ethnography begins with identifying a standpoint within an institutional setting that provides a guiding point of view to begin investigating this institutional setting. In general, some of the concerns and problems that people actually experience in an institutional order determine the direction of this research (Smith, 2005:32).

Institutions play a hidden but widespread role in shaping and coordinating everyday life (Selveraj, 2014). Institutional ethnography provides awareness of how things really work and the unintentional consequences of what people do (Selveraj, 2014). The institutional ethnography

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introduces a new approach to the invisible and repressive aspects of ruling relations. Institutional ethnography approaches these ruling relations from a critical and activist perspective, examining social justice and social change and their intersections with the state, private companies, and professional forms of power (Grahame and Grahame, 2007).

The local fields in which institutional works carried out are shaped by broad social relations, and although these social relations have an institutional appearance, they contain the existing administrative, professional, academic and media-related power relations in society. Smith calls this wide and regulatory network of social relations as ruling relations (Grahame and Grahame, 2009:299). How ruling relations regulate and shape social relations is completely invisible on the local plane, and this deeply embedded network of ruling relations creates a decoupling between what is visible and what is actually experienced (Grahame and Grahame, 2009:299). In this context, institutional ethnography states that there is a “bifurcation” between the knowledge that coordinates everyday activities and the local knowledge of everyday life, which is shaped by ruling relations embedded in work processes (Smith, 2005).

In order to make a detailed analysis of an institutional process, it is very important to reveal the function of the texts in that process and to make textual analyzes. The texts are the main element that coordinates the people who perform the work in an institutional setting (Bisaillon, 2012: 43). Texts are active tools that define, prioritize, guide, program and shape the real life experiences (Pence, 1997: 91). Investigation of the language and concepts used in these texts and their circulation within the work process can help to understand how the daily experience is transformed into institutional knowledge.

The texts may include official documents, brochures, advertisements, films, official correspondence, legislative documents, job descriptions, application forms, medical records, layouts, appeals, documents relating to payments and judicial records. All documents used in the execution of a work process can be part of a text-mediated network of relations. In traditional field studies, insufficient attention is paid to institutional processes governed by texts. But when the focus is on making the ruling relationships explicit, it becomes imperative to pay attention to these texts.

Institutional texts move from one point to another through the so-called “processing interchanges” between the work steps performed by institutional actors and this transaction of texts takes place with a highly specialized division of labor that also reflects the work ideology of the institution (Pence 1997: 60). Nearly all processing interchanges are structured by various forms, administrative procedures, regulations or laws, and they are necessary for an employee to prioritize, shape, filter and store the information needed to produce files, reports or documents related to the work (Pence, 1997:55). Written or electronic texts and applications enable the organization of work and the compilation and collection of documents for processing interchanges (Daniel, 2008: 256). Textually-mediated social organization connects the actions of employees working in different places and times by creating an institutional language and network (Daniel, 2008: 254). Darville (1995) defines textually-mediated work processes as “organizational literacy” and states that the purpose of this work is to increase the efficiency of organizational processes (as cited in Daniel, 2008:252).

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, it is aimed to reveal the general characteristics and concepts of the institutional ethnography, which aims to make visible the textually mediated ruling relations embedded in social

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relations. Institutional ethnography begins with a starting point for research which is the experience or standpoint of the primary source of knowledge, and a problematic of a real institutional setting in which people work together (Smith, 2005). In the institutional ethnographic method, the purpose of the research is to explore personal experiences of the individuals, as well as to understand how the textually mediated processes and other procedures related to the work are activated (Daniel, 2008:255). The institutional ethnography, as a qualitative method of inquiry offers a comprehensive understanding of the organizational processes that shape the experiences of the individuals and the knowledge of the everyday life by mapping out the social relations that are often unrecognized even by those who performs it (DeVault, 2008).

Institutional texts are tools that transform subjects' experiences into knowledge necessary for institutional functioning and connect everyday practices within the institutional organization. Nowadays, texts such as statistical tables, reports, strategic plans, regulations are used as common tools for social control (DeVault, 2008: 6). This textual coordination connects institutional work processes. Institutional texts present a typical textualized view of the complex actions of everyday life (DeVault, 2008: 6). The information that people submit to the system is filtered by institutional actors, converted into institutional language, classified and transferred to other work steps as institutional texts. In other words, a real experience is transformed into information that is made useful for the effective running of work processes. This textualized experience may no longer be familiar to the actual owner of the experience, but it becomes useful for institutional system and the actors. This transformed knowledge leads to a bifurcation between the reality of the subject owner and the institutional reality. As a result, the individual whose experience is processed and transformed for the priorities of the system becomes alienated from his/her own experience and becomes disadvantaged against the institutional system.

With all these mentioned aspects, institutional ethnography can be a useful tool for exploring the embedded ruling relations in institutional settings for social scientists. It also offers a critical way of looking to the social organization of knowledge which puts the individual disadvantaged against the institutional system. Institutional ethnography does not only points out the textually-mediated power relations but also stands at an activist point that aims to bring a new perspective and awareness on social change to both micro and macro the actors of the institutional systems and policy makers. In this context, it is evaluated that institutional ethnography will have an increasing use and impact in the field of social sciences.

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Çatışma Beyanı: Bu çalışmada taraf olabilecek herhangi bir kişi ya da finansal ilişki ve dolayısıyla herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

Etik Kurul Kararı: Bu araştırma, Etik Kurul Kararı gerektiren makaleler arasında yer almamaktadır.

Destek ve Teşekkür: Çalışmada herhangi bir kurum ya da kuruluştan destek alınmamıştır.