

METHODS 1: OBSERVATION, INTERVIEW, NOTE TAKING, DOCUMENTS

INF5220

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Guri Verne, Design group

Based on Sisse Finken's lecture notes

OBSERVATION

- Observation is a way of generating empirical material in *naturally occurring settings*.
 - Note taking is important when observing
 - + photos, video, audio

Observation can be:

- Passive observation
- Participant observation

- Getting access
- Becoming an «apprentice»



(Crang & Cook 2007)

OBSERVATION 2

- What people say they do and what we observe them do is not the same (ideal and manifest behavior) (Blomberg et al. 1993 + Crang and Cook 2007).
- Where are we, weather, time of day, location, who is present (for full list see Crang & Cook 2007:51-52)
- Interviewing is part of participant observation
- Besides conversing with the one(s) studied, during participant observation, you can study/note the following when conducting observation – this also goes for interviewing:
 - Body language
 - Gestures
 - Cues that lend meaning to words
 - Setting of location
 - Other people present (The Sage Handbook 2005 + Crang & Cook 2007)
- No neutral positions
Stuart Hall: Media and The Representations
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sbYyw1mPdQ>)

OBSERVATION 3

- Targeted note-taking: Focus can be on objects, people, events, place (Blomberg et al. 1993) – could be on
 - human-artifact relation
 - concepts practiced (e.g. identity, cooperation, or e.g. users)
 - activities (planned, unplanned, where, how)
 - interactions (with whom/what, how, where, frequency, directions, forms of communication (formal, informal, silent, loud, noise, etc.))
 - patterns, deviations, routines, rhythms, etc.

(Crang & Cook 2007)

- It depends on your research question/topic.
- Be aware of *loaded categories*
 - instead provide detailed descriptions



INTERVIEW 1

- Not naturally occurring. ‘Constructed’ by researchers, and, as such, do not provide direct access to the experiences of the ones studied (Silverman 1998)
- Other artificial research environments:
 - group interviews
 - experiments,
 - survey,
 - questionnaires (Silverman 2005)
- Naturally occurring data is coined by what you want to do with them
 - no data is ‘untouched by human hands’ (Silverman 2005)

Interviews can be:

- Structured interviews (planned, strict procedure to be followed)
- Semi-structured interviews (few questions / a checklist)
- Unstructured interviews (open-ended, no planned topic)

(Sage Handbook 2005; Madden 2010)

INTERVIEW 2

How to ask questions

- 'Grand-tour': what, who, where and how?
-> their words, their version
- Wherefore:
 - What do you mean when you say..
 - Can you tell more about how it can be that you do this, not that
 - How did you get involved, interested, enrolled (Crang & Cook 2007)
- 'Why' questions can be asked within qualitative research, but avoid using them (or wait as long as possible)
 - they lead to a path of means and ends /
 - presuppose that the person knows why
(The Sage Handbook 2005 + Silverman 2005).
- Be aware of loaded/ directive questions (Madden 2010, Crang&Cook 2007)
 - Based on speculations or false assumptions



Intersubjective understanding between you and your interviewee

INTERVIEW 3

- Aim: The long stories of events
- “It is better to appear slightly dim and too agreeable than to give any sign of a critical or sardonical attitude” (McCracken 1988, in Crang&Cook 2007, p 69).
- Practical:
- Take care that your recording equipment is
 - with you
 - functioning
 - with batteries
 - enough memory
 - familiar to you
- Take notes in addition to taping
 - Note the time often



[Source: Warfieldian](#)
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Issues to consider

- Preparations / background research
- Information about your project
- Ethical considerations (informed consent – see course page for an example)
- Where (location, on the move)
- Who is present
- Transcribing
- E-interviews / Online setting (Gisle's lecture on Feb 16th)
- Follow the Norwegian rules from Datatilsynet
– see the course page for link



Datatilsynet (Personvern) informs us that

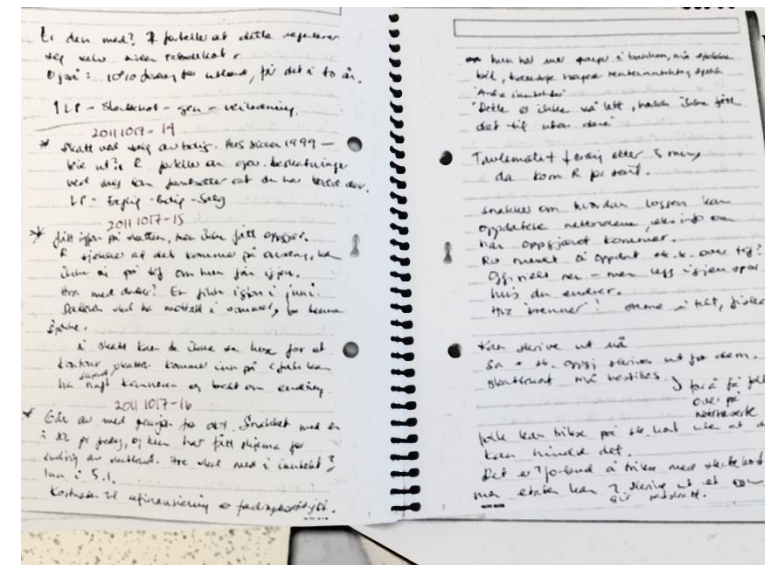
- as long as the interview stays on the (analog/digital) recorder
- not being transferred to a PC (computer)
- as long as you preserve the anonymity of your informants in your transcripts (personal data, places, etc. that leaves traces to who they are (aka Gisle's lecture))
- as long as you destroy the recording(s) after your exercise, you do not have to apply for their permission to conduct the interview.

Still use a consent form.

NOTE TAKING

- Used both within interview and observation
- Keep a journal, field diary or note book throughout the research process (Crang and Cook 2007).
- Jot down what you observe/ encounter/ hear/ smell/ engage in / non-verbal communication / tone of voice / etc.
Remember to note: date, time, place, persons present (roles, occupation, affiliation).
- Video, photos, tape recordings serve as good memorable, but remember to 'log' them (Blomberg et al. 1993).

Also, if you use a tape recorder and non-verbal communication happens (e.g. pointing at something, shaking head) make sure to take notes (Crang & Cook 2007; Madden 2010).



FIELD NOTES are notes you

- Jot down of impressions in the field while (participant-) observing, listening in, talking, asking, doing
- Write down (each day) after your empirical study – reflections, questions to ask, your reaction, etc. (these notes are “**fieldnote records**” Sanjek 1990).
- Take when you engage in direct conversations about a topic (interview) and write answers down verbatim away from ongoing activities (**notes of “transcription”**, Clifford 1990)
- For example:
 - what artifact is this, answer
 - what do you call it, answer
 - what do you use it for, answer
 - when, answer
 - how is it different from x artifact you use, answer
 - when do you use it, answer
 - do others use it, answer
 - for the same purpose as you, answer,
 - etc



DESCRIPTIVE FIELD NOTES

- When you write up your impressions or ‘verbatim’:
- make “a more or less coherent representation of an observed cultural reality. While still piecemeal and rough, such field descriptions are designed to serve as a data base for later writing an interpretation aimed at the production of a finished account.

[...] it involves [...] a turning *away* from dialogue and observation toward a separate place of writing, a place for reflection, analysis, and interpretation.” (Clifford 1990:51--52, original italic).

DOCUMENTS

- **texts already in the public sphere to serve as empirical material**

What and where to be found:

- Newspapers
- Libraries
- Local / state archives
- TV, radio, internet
- Screen dumps
- Letters
- Agreements
- Annual reports
- Marked surveys
- Brochures
- (see eg. Crang & Cook 2007:67)

St.meld. nr. 17 (2006-2007)

Eit informasjonssamfunn for alle

1 Målsetjingar og samandrag

1.1 Innleiing



Skatteetaten

Hvem ringer Skatteopplysningen

desember 2011

Analyseteamet, 20.12.2011

logien (IKT) har forandra
uli 1945 publiserte
As we may think». Han er
gen var slutt kunne
var å sikre tilgang til alle
gjennom hundreåra.
v kunnskap og
å halde oversikt over og
av tusenar av forskarar
mner han Mendels
m ein heil generasjon,
am til dei få som ville vore i
ush drøymar, i 1945, om å
nne informasjon, han
skal kunne lagrast i ei
n drøymar om at eit
ne lagrast i ei

Literature not listed on syllabus

- Clifford, J. (1990): Notes on (Field)notes. In Sanjek, R. (edt.): *Fieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology*. Cornell University Press. Pp. 47-70.
- Madden, R., (2010): *Being Ethnographic. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*, Sage
- Mautner, T. (2005): *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*. Penguin Books.
- Sanjek, R. (1990): A vocabulary for Fieldnotes. In Sanjek, R. (edt.): *Fieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology*. Cornell University Press. Pp. 92-121.
- Silverman, D. (2005): *Doing Qualitative Research*. Sage.
- The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research 2005

Oral presentation

Each group is responsible for presenting a paper to the class **and** questions to another group's presentation to be discussed in class

Today we distribute the papers