

Feedback on OBSERVATION 1

- * Drawing of the site (memory; has anything changed since last time?; is somebody/something present in drawing, which you haven't been paying attention to and which have an effect on your observations?; visual map for the readers)
- * Setting the stage: where are we, weather, time of day, location, who is present?
- * Be aware of loaded categories - instead provide detailed descriptions. E.g. if music is playing try to give a through description rather than stating that good or bad music is playing. Such statement does not tell much, but leaves the reader wondering what you mean and with little information about the site of immersion.
- * Explain in what way the setting is interesting for observation
- * Same time / same place but different observations –How come? What does it mean?
- * Jot down what you observe, then go through your notes.....
- * What do your observations tell?
- * What patterns do you see, what deviations?
- * Would it have been helpful to document the time when you began and ended observing various people? What would such take reveal / positioning your observations? (log time; different events/people/routines might be different at different times).

Analyzing field material you can ask the following questions:

- * What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish?
- * How, exactly, do they do this? What specific means and/or strategies do they use?
- * How do members talk about, characterize, and understand what is going on?
- * What assumptions are they making?
- * What do I see going on here? What did I learn from these notes?
- * Why did I include them? (Emerson et al. 1995:146)

Mol suggests that you aim at "explore what is being done, by whom, for whom, in which ways and to what effects." (2006:121)

PHOTOGRAPHS, VIDEO, AUDIO

"To imagine that behavioral patterns become visible and self-explanatory in a videotape is analogous to believing that a photograph reveals the diagnosis of a patient's illness. [...] the expertise is in the mind and technique of the analyst, not in the recording itself. [Conducting field work is a matter of] "selectivity and interpretation that go into the process of gathering ethnographic [material], writing useful fieldnotes [...], and analyzing the [material] in an appropriate and systematic way." (Forsythe 1999:132-133).¹

"Recent critical work has [...] highlighted three problematic issues regarding the 'reality' of photography, film, video and other visual media:

- First, photography can never show unmediated reality
- Second, still and moving pictures are often bound into existing discourses
- Third, such photographs were also used to help 'reconstruct' visions of the other (Crang & Cook 2007:105-106).

¹ Briefly: interpretation = explaining what an expression means. Analysis = breaking something down into smaller parts to gain understanding of it (Mautner 2005).

PHOTOGRAPHS

- * Take down observation “scratch notes” (so you know what’s on/behind/outside the photos)
- * Photos as documentation (complementing fieldnotes, memory, also in terms of what used to appear strange)
- * Photos as auto-photography
- * Photos as way of prompt reflections / memories
- * Photos can contextualize (visual documentation) and connect the viewer to the argument (vis-à-vis text)
- * Photos can be helpful in studies on social change
- * Photos as material objects – (to explore ‘social norm’ and/or partial truths)
- * Ethical aspect – seek informed consent and subject anonymity – research sensitivity: do not take photos if they violate norms or feelings.
- * Be aware that “photos are taken previously and displayed in contexts that can drastically alter their meanings” (Crang & Cook 2007:104) + The Sage Handbook 2005

VIDEO

Much of what goes for photos goes for video, but pay notice to....

- * Think about: framing, focus, distance, angle, point of view, shot duration, tracking, cutting, continuity between shots
- * Video can be transcribed into text and analyzed as such (but it depends on what you want to do – do you want to hand in a written thesis, an appendix with a movie, a movie) – see e.g. Suchman & Trigg (1991) for example of transcribed video
- * If you choose to transcribe, remember descriptions of setting, persons present, interactions, etc. as when you do observation/interviews.
- * Always take down observation “scratch notes” when you film
- * What kind of equipment (software) do you have to edit video? – what about hardware? – do you have the expertise to use editing software or do you know somebody who can help you?
- * Time consuming
- * Seek informed consent and preserve subject anonymity
(Crang & Cook 2007 + The Sage Handbook 2005)

AUDIO

Much of what goes for photos and video, goes for audio recordings (see also lecture notes on interview/observation), but pay notice to....

- * Make sure your equipment works and that voices can be heard on the recording
- * Take down observation “scratch notes”
- * Transcribing is time consuming, so if you do not have a lot of free time:
- * Write up / sum up – include examples by quoting
- * Organize the interview by themes or topics
- * A suggestion could be to use time as indicator if you’re not transcribing everything (e.g. something you might consider irrelevant at the moment (5.53 - 7.07 -> previous similar job)) and add a short sentence to indicate what has been ‘cut out’ from the transcript (see also Suchman & Trigg)
- * Non-verbal aspects can be noted during the interview
- * Seek informed consent and subject anonymity
(Crang & Cook 2007 + The Sage Handbook 2005)²

² Literature not listed on syllabus:

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) (2005): *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications.
Mautner, T. (2005): *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*. Penguin Books.
Mol, A. (2006): *The Logic of Care: Health and the problem of patient choice*. Routledge.