



## 4: Observational research and ethical questions

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[Introduction to Qualitative Methods]

# Roadmap

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Part I: **Interviews** – your research

Part II: **Participatory observation**

– what is it? When do we use it?

-> Examples: Applied readings

-> Exercise: How could you apply it in your study?

**PARTIII: Ethics in social science research**

Feedback

# Part I: Interviews

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- Get-together in pairs
- 15 min per project
  - Brief presentation including interview protocol
  - Then discussion along questions next slide
  - Collection of questions to be discussed
- Discussion of questions

# Group work: Your interviews!

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- (1) What is your research question?
- (2) What is your dependent variable, was is/are your independent variable(s)?
- (3) What was the purpose of the interview?
- (4) What type of interview?
- (5) Whom did you interview? Why?
- (6) What challenges did you encounter?
- (7) What would you do different next time?
- (8) Any questions?

## Part II: Participatory observation



Data collection methods - Two main categories

- Question based methods
- Observation based methods

**Discuss in pairs, 2 min**

- What can one find out with observations, that can be difficult to do with interviews?
- What CAN'T one find out with observations, that you can find out with interviews?



# Things you might have said ...

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- Questions ...
  - could disturb people's natural way of doing things
  - are often formulated based on pre-assumptions
- People ...
  - do not ask for solutions to problems that they know/ do not think can be solved
  - give poor accounts on issues to do with "everyday life", routines and habits
  - often provide the answers that are expected of them
- Through observations ...
  - one do not have to rely only on what is "reported" on actions, problems etc.
- Communication ...
  - is also non-verbal

# Observations are an efficient way to study situations



Migrants arrive at the port after being rescued by the sea rescue service at the Strait of Gibraltar near the coast of Tarifa, southern Spain, August 2014.

# What could be observed?

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**Actions** - what people do as well as what people do not do

- (Work) postures
- (Work) sequences of action and sub-actions
- Duration of actions and sub-actions
- Interaction(s) patterns
- "Compensating behaviours"

What could be observed?



# Different types of observations

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## **Direct observation**

Observation of something that takes place before our eyes

E.g. meetings but also migrants arriving and actions of rescue teams

## **Participatory observation**

Common in anthropological and sociological research

The observer/researcher takes part in the activities studied, e.g. the social system he/she is observing during a shorter or longer period of time



## Unstructured

- One tries to grasp “what is happening”
- Semi-structured

## Structured

- One studies something, e.g. according to a certain template
- One notes down action sequences, frequencies, durations, when and where something takes place, how something takes place

n other words: both qualitative and quantitative data  
may be elicited through observations

# How to carry out an observation study

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## Instruments and tools

- Video documentation
- Photo documentation
- Sound documentation (e.g. "think aloud" )

Always bring at least a camera! (if you are allowed to)

## (Field) notes

- Least structured way to record observations
- Observation guides
- Printed forms that provide space for observation
- Observation protocols/recording sheets/checklist
- Forms used to e.g. record observations in a YES-NO option (present-not present) or a rating scale

# Ethical issues

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Political scientists share problems in common with practitioners of other scholarly disciplines. They also frequently encounter ethical problems unique to their professional concerns.

## **At Warwick University : Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC)**

→ Guidelines for student research:

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance\\_ethics/research\\_code\\_of\\_practice/researchethicscommittees/hssrec/student](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance_ethics/research_code_of_practice/researchethicscommittees/hssrec/student)

# Roadmap

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## Part I - RESEARCH DESIGN

- Causal thinking and research designs
- Comparative analysis and case selection

## Part II - DATA COLLECTION

- (Semi-)Structured Interviews
- Observational research and ethical questions
- Qualitative text analysis

## Part III - DATA ANALYSIS AND CAUSAL INFERENCE

- Case studies and process-tracing
- ~~▪ Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)~~
- The mixed-methods approach
- ***Your research project***

# Remember....

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<b>Steps / Requirement</b>	<b>Submission Date</b>
(1) Formative essay	Nov. 12th
(2) Mini symposium	Dec. 2nd
(3) Summative essay	Jan 14th

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[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/q-step/currentstudents/qs103/overview/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/q-step/currentstudents/qs103/overview/)