BlueUrban Methodology Workshop
Universitas Indonesia, PPRW – June 2, 2022

FIELDWORK IN PRACTICE

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BLUEURBAN

Towards Blue Urbanism for Sea Level Change Adaptation: Global Trajectories and Speculative Futuring in Island Southeast Asia

A German Science Foundation (DFG) funded SPP initiative "Regional Sea Level Change and Society" (Phase II)

Universität Bremen*   Leibniz-Gemeinschaft   ZMT   UNIVERSITAS INDONESIA

Icebreaker

What is research to you?

Epistemology?

Critical debates

Research itself described as a <u>world-making</u> process:

- *Postivistic paradigms: (re)searching, discovery, refining...*

- *An act of reinterpretation, an act of debunking, sociological research as a "combat art"* (Bourdieu) -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9PCp9oKPRw

- *A colonizing construct?* (..."they came, they saw, they named, they claimed...research is one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), e.g. "data plantations"
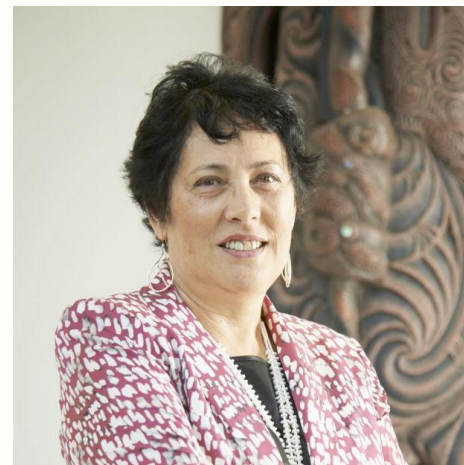
"Research is a formalized curiosity. It is poking in prying with a purpose"

Zora Neale Hurston

(1891-1960)

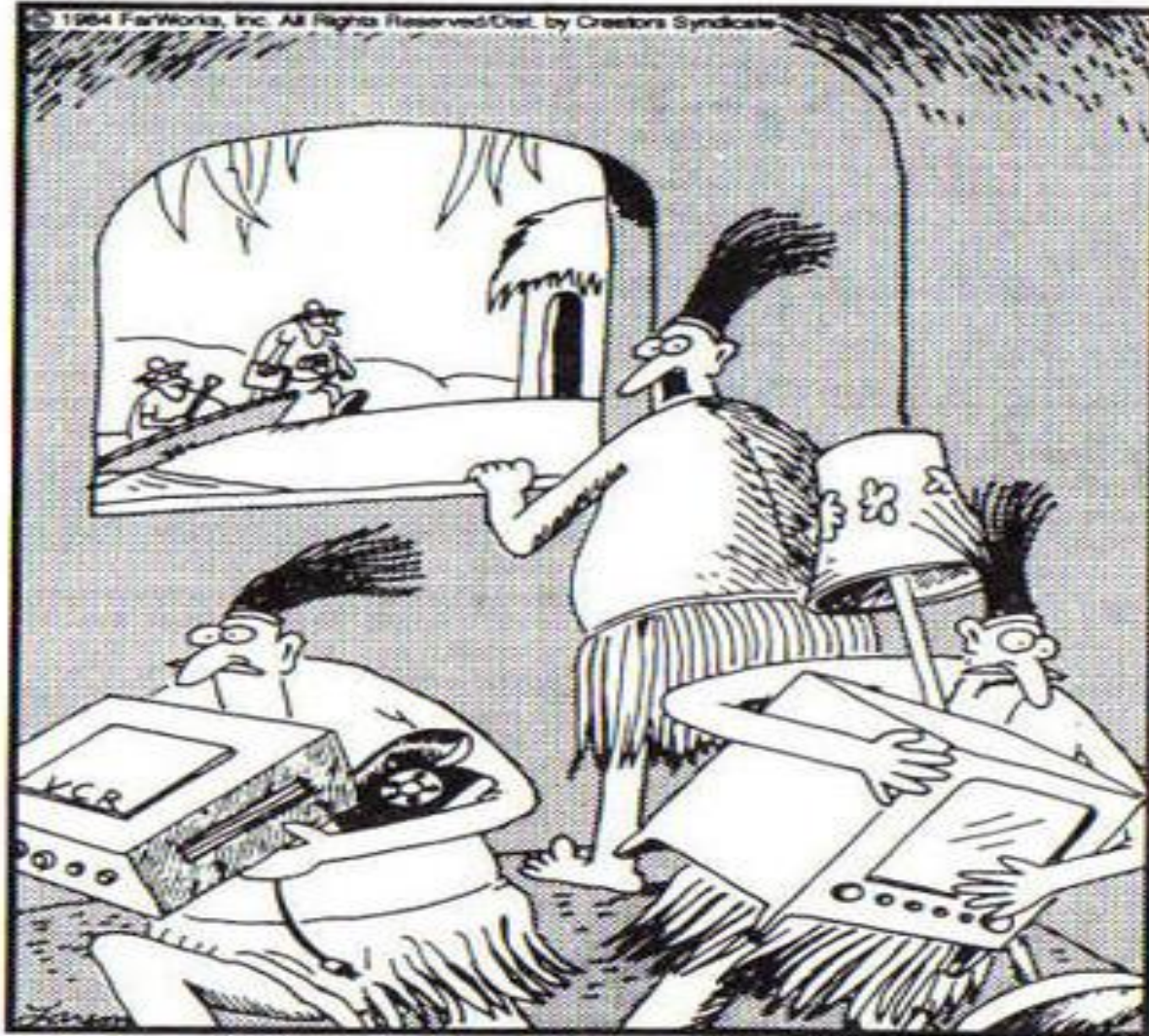From *Dust Tracks on the Road: An Autobiography*

Neale Hurston

Immersive interpretative inquiry

Ethnographic Research

- Ethnographic fieldwork was developed originally by anthropologists to study a society, culture or group in depth.

- The approach depended heavily on observation and in some cases integration into the society.

- Participant observation enables researchers to share the experience of their subjects.

Critiquing The "Exotic Other"

THE FAR SIDE® By GARY LARSON

"Anthropologists! Anthropologists!"

Critiquing "Parachute Science"

Video link:

Stefanoudis, P. V., Licuanan, W. Y., Morrison, T. H., Talma, S., Veitayaki, J., & Woodall, L. C. (2021). Turning the tide of parachute science. *Current Biology*, *31*(4), R184-R185.

Immersive Fieldwork – "Being there…"

- Diversity (quantitative and qualitative)
- Bearing witness/observational, critical creative, reflexive
- Interpretative – challenging the 'taken for-granted'
- Thick description (Geertz, participant-observation, emersion) – "everything counts"
- 'Etic' versus 'emic' perspectives
- "Recalcitrant data" – research not a form of disembodied "nut-gathering" (Whatmore, 2006)
- Reflexive practice: positionality, power & situated ethics
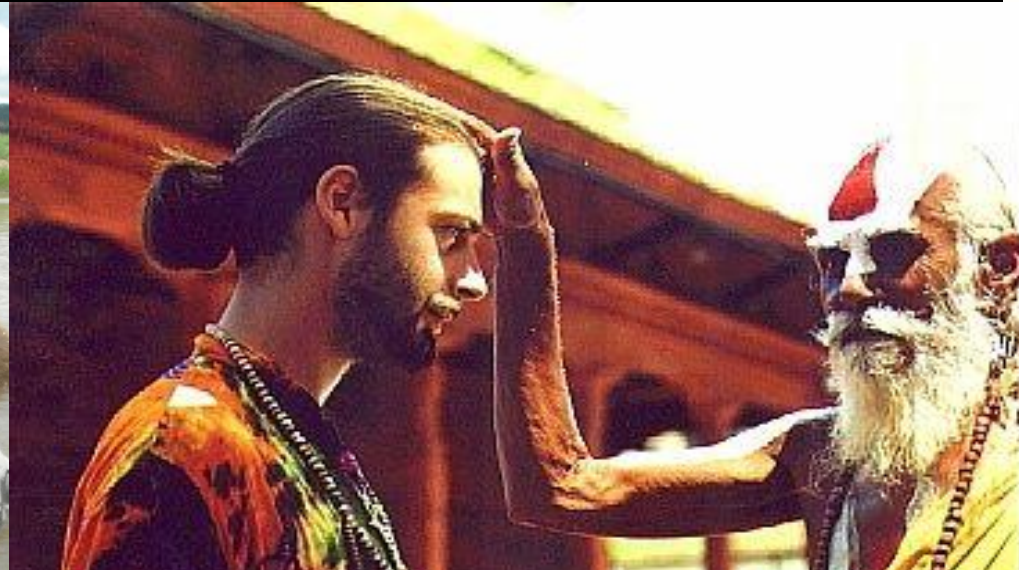
HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY · VOLUME 1

OBSERVERS OBSERVED

Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork
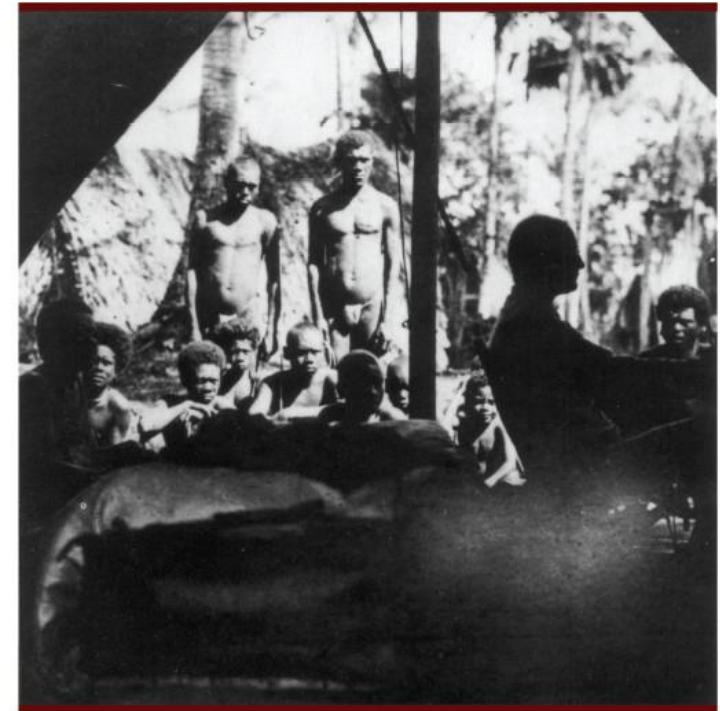
Edited by George W. Stocking, Jr.

Problematizing the mystique of 'fieldwork'

Imaginaries of the 'field'

Demystifying the 'field' – old conceptions

Conventionally what is the "field" in fieldwork been taken to mean?

  - The act of getting there/arriving (a situated place)

  - A socially <u>bounded</u> place (e.g. a village, particular identities etc.)

  - A <u>'field' of relations and encounters-</u> clear entry points, ways of being, people who allow access (gate-keepers)

  - A place of <u>legitimate</u> interpretation, knowledge gathering (e.g. rite of passage?)

  - A place that could be left behind? (rules and rituals of exit)

  BUT these dualisms offer more questions and dilemmas ….

B. Malinowski

A field of practice/praxis?

- Where does the "field" begin and end? (migratory routes, diaspora networks…)

- As researchers can we think of "insiders" and "outsiders" experience (the death of the 'native')

- Even if "emic" – what do you put in and leave out (the power of the authorial voice is highly edited)

- Where does the notion of "work" sit during fieldwork?

Conducting a health screening at a local secondary school (Backe, 2015), link: https://thegeekanthropologist.com/2015/07/24/playing-along-fieldwork-emotional-labor-and-self-care/S

"Refusal as research method in Discard Studies"

Stop the Dump Fires' group in the Arctic community in Nunavut. It features a pregnant Inuk woman and activist, and was taken during a four month long dump fire that occurred during the summer of 2014. During the fire, pregnant women and women of childbearing age were warned not to go outside due to risks caused by dioxins. The Inuktitut syllabics written on her hand read 'Taima' or 'enough', referring to the decades of government underfunding that contributed to this and many other dump fires.

https://discardstudies.com/2016/03/21/refusal-as-research-method-in-discard-studies/

- Uncovering painful and sensitive info (e.g. people, places, animals that might be contaminated) bear very real material consequences...so how to we proceed if we say we're doing action research?

-**ETHNOGRAPHIC REFUSAL** –as a practice in which researchers and participants together decide what kinds of information to withhold and make available for use within the academic and policy community. Purpose – "not to bury info, but to ensure that communities are able to respond to these issues on their own terms. Intended to redirect academic analysis away from harmful pain-based narratives that obscure slow violence, towards structures and institutions that engender those narratives"

BlueUrban Methodology Roundtables

LIFEWORLDS: WHOSE REALITIES, WHAT STORIES?

The interconnectedness of meaning, motives

and action as basis for the meaningful construction of the social

THE ‚LIFEWORLD'

"province of reality which the wide-awake and normal adult simply takes for granted in the attitude of common sense"
(Schütz/Luckmann, 1974: 3)

Oberkircher/Hornidge 2011: 398

"[A]n adequate understanding of the 'reality sui generis' of society requires an inquiry into the manner in which this reality is constructed."

(Berger/Luckmann 1966: 17)

Processes of Construction:

- Externalization: idea, interpretation of reality, repeatedly told

- Objectivation: idea is re-told – becomes an ‚object of consciousness' for people, has developed a factual existence/ truth – it becomes ‚real'

- Internalisation: future generations are born into a world where this idea has become part of the common understanding of the world
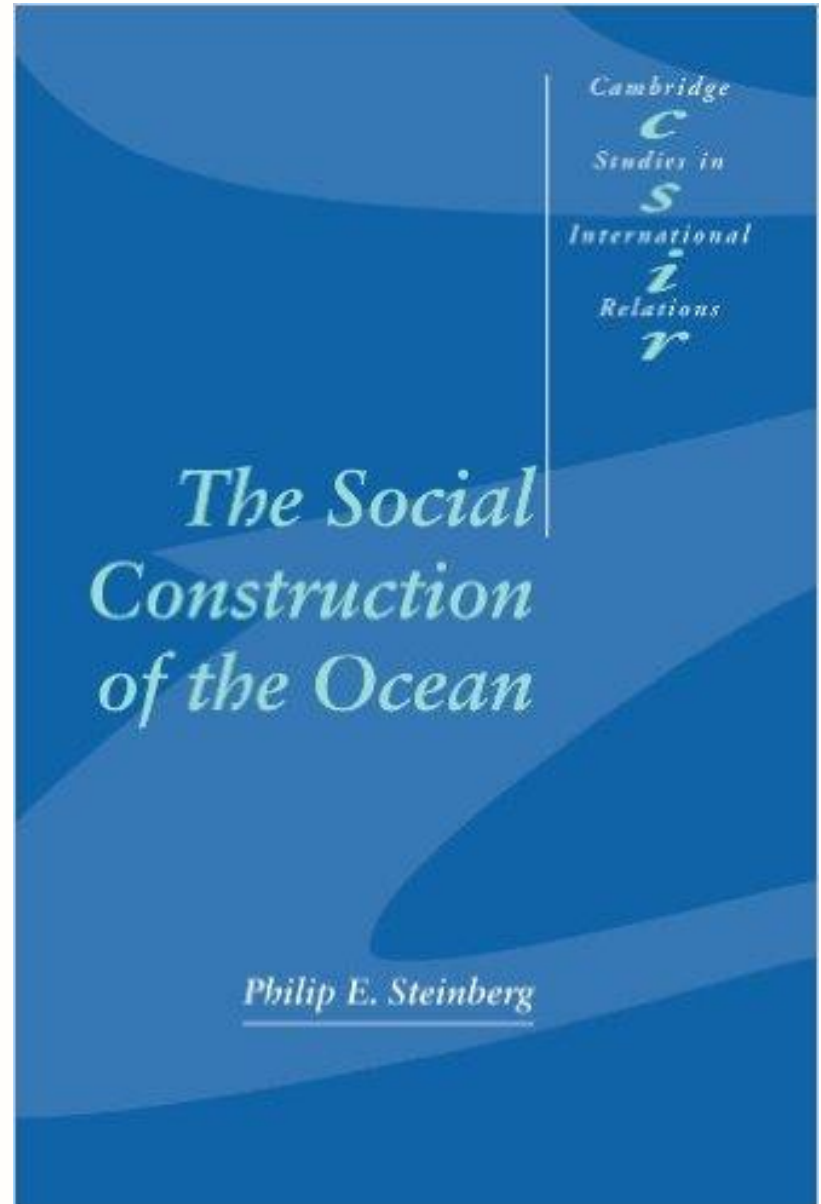
"In the depths of the ocean, there are fascinating creatures"

- Ocean as resource provider

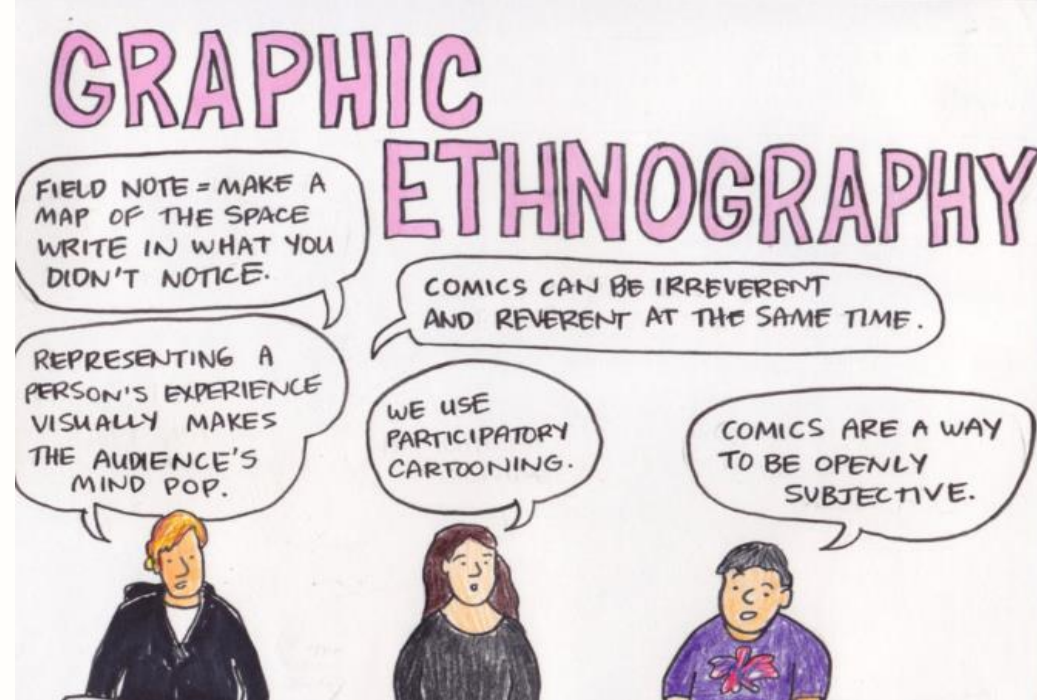- Ocean as transport surface

- Ocean as battleground

- Ocean as.....
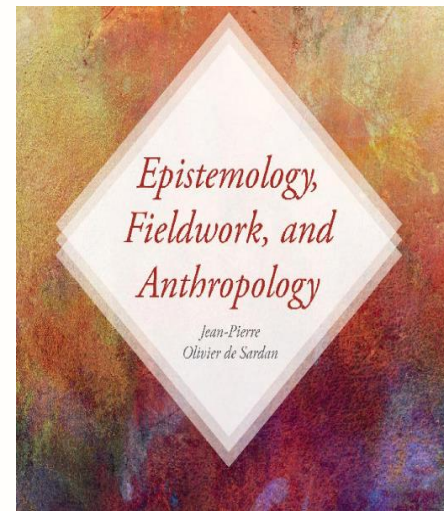
Can you think of others?

"Anything goes?" On rigour and methodological vigilance?

"Rigorous Approximation" - Applies to the interpretive social sciences (Olivier de Sardan, 2015) – plausibility, never the truth

1) **Rigour of argument** (convincing)
2) **Rigour of logic** (making sense of contradictions….)
3) **Rigour of theory** (statements that sit within a framework of scholarly debates)
4) **Empirical rigour** (to 'reference reality') – a double leap:
   - 'data' + arguments
   - 'data' + reference reality

https://comicnurse.com/pulp-culture/

Epistemology, Fieldwork, and Anthropology
Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan

24.11.2010

Emic – actors' point of view

"The term grounded theory has the advantage of connecting rather opposition fieldwork and theory. ..highlights the production of theory based on data [insights] from their field" Olivier de Sardar (2015: 11)

Traps:

Sweeping generalisations

vs.   Overinterpretation?

….. Can you think of others?

'Descriptive' – use of observation/bearing witness (intersubjective understandings, events, symbols, social practices/routines, linguistic and tacit meanings….)

http://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/2750/3/Murphy__

Emic Evaluation

1. *Acknowledge initial impressions*

2. *Capture speech behaviors, events artifacts*

3. *Construct Meaning*

4. *Self-Appraise sufficiency of capture construction of meaning*

Design if we want to put the system in the room — HOW

etic vs emic

OBSERVING FROM WITHOUT

WITHIN

Who? Who's missing? is there

A framework for assessing etic vs. emic perspectives in Systemic Design

Working with STAKEHOLDERS, ARTIFACTS

SYNTHESIS Persona

Case Study YOUTH LEADERSHIP

AM I BEING EMIC ENOUGH?

RYAN MURPHY FINDING THE EMIC IN SYSTEMIC DESIGN

Lunch break

Icebreaker

The 'Ethnographic Pact'

What is an ethnographic statement?

Not a representation of reference reality nor reflection but "production", "performance" and "hypothesis "

"Other people's reality exist independently" of the researcher (OdS, pp. 14)

Table 2.1 Field inquiry and inquiry through questionnaires

Field inquiry	Inquiry through questionnaires
broad, multidimensional, noncodable information	circumscribed, univocal, codable information
artisanal processing	statistical processing
natural situations or situations close to natural situations (conversation)	artificial situations (interrogation)
researcher in person	paid investigators
immersion in the milieu	sporadic interaction
information on contextualized processes and logics (without statistical representativeness)	information on decontextualized variables (statistical representativeness)
intensive, duration, returns	extensive, brevity, linearity
research trails, iteration, improvisation	verifiable, precise hypotheses
many intertwined variables	dependent/independent variables

Awkward improvisation/Immersion in the milieu

"Fieldwork above all is a matter of know-how; it uses intuition, improvisation and tinkering (bricolage)" (Oliver de Sardan, 2015: 24)

"Learning to be a field researcher poses the same problems as learning to live in society" (Hughes, 1996: 279)
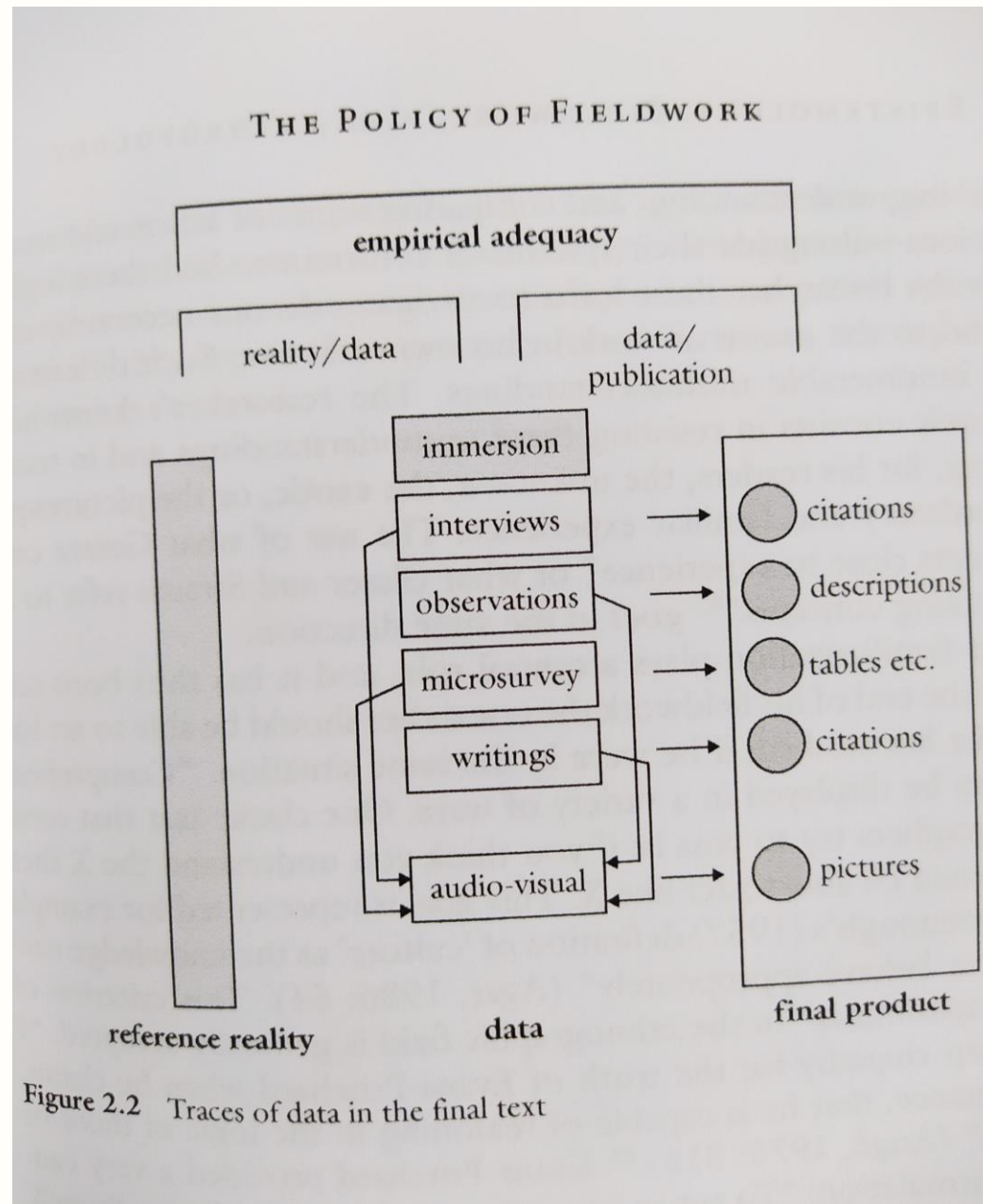

Figure 2.2   Traces of data in the final text

Weekend exercise – 'Warung watching'

- How do make something you intimately know 'unfamiliar'

- Once you have 'seen' something, are there way to look at a social space differently?

Spend 15-20 minutes in a warung or any other eatery close to your home. Simply observe (and interact if you wish). Try documenting everything you think is of 'significance'.

How is your warung space organised? What are the social roles you observe? What do you see as 'event-ful?', interesting, unfamiliar, maybe odd or unusual?

You could choose to take photographs and record sounds if you wish!

Thank you!