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**Participant Observation**

The participant observation aims to collect primary data. It is a method originally used in social sciences, as well as in the market research and other related sciences. The forms of participant observation vary from an active researcher to a passive form.

What you need:

Participant observation needs a structured procedure. First, you need a schedule where you manage your study. Dependent on the form of participation you need to familiarize yourself with the your scene and you need to meet the people beforehand. During the study it is important to take notes, such as memory protocols, reflexivity journals. Besides, you can document the interviews in audio recordings and in visual forms. The aftermath of observation is dominated by the analysis of the obtained primary data. Notebook, sketchbook, audio & video camera are useful documentation devices.

Forms of participation GOLD (1958):

* Non-participative observation with no contact to the subjects
* Passive observation, where the researcher can communicate very little with the subjects
* Moderate observation is the nexus between passive and active observation, the role of the researcher, weather he/she is active is changing during the research.
* Active observation includes the integration of the researcher into the subject (group, project etc.)
* Complete observation is used when a group member is dedicated to conduct the survey within the group.

Constraints:

The outcome of observation is closely linked to the risk of subjectivity, if the investigator is not able to differentiate objectivity and subjectivity during the process. The risk, however, declines when the degree of integration is little. If the degree of integration is little, in this case the degree of understanding can be questioned.

Important in the case of agro ecological knowledge:

Agro ecological knowledge is often sticky knowledge entrenched in daily social behavior. The participative observation is a powerful method to observe for example working processes. The researcher should focus on one particular question during his observation to ensure the deepness and diligence of his/her research. Participant observation can be combined with other methods. An *Interview* for example or *L’instruction au sosie* can be used after the observation to extract further information about the subject.

Biblio:

Gold, R. (1958) Content Analysis: Roles in Sociological Field Observations, Social Forces Vol. 36, No. 3 (Mar., 1958), pp. 217-223