



Step 3: Field research

TRAINING WORKSHEET FOR LECTURERS: GUIDING STUDENTS IN URBAN OBSERVATION FIELDWORK

Purpose:

This worksheet is designed to support lecturers in preparing and guiding students for ethically grounded, reflective, and analytically meaningful observation-based fieldwork in urban environments.

1. Designing the Observation Framework

A. What is the core learning objective of the observation task?

- ☐ Developing critical urban literacy
- ☐ Understanding social dynamics and inclusion/exclusion
- ☐ Supporting interview/survey data
- ☐ Training attentiveness and descriptive skills
- ☐ Other: _____

B. Observation area:

- Will it be preselected or chosen by students?
- What makes this area relevant for the course or topic?
- Are there any risks or sensitivities associated with this location?

C. Duration and frequency:

- How much time should students spend observing?
 - Should this be a one-time session or repeated (e.g., different times of day/week)?
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2. Ethical Preparation and Safety

A. What will be discussed with students beforehand?

- ☐ Informed presence: how to "be" in public without intruding
- ☐ Photography and privacy: no identifiable images without consent
- ☐ Interactions with locals: when and how is it appropriate to engage
- ☐ Responding to questions: how to explain who they are and what they are doing
- ☐ Working in pairs or groups for safety
- ☐ Knowing when to leave or disengage if uncomfortable

Optional pre-field reflection:

“What is your own relationship to this neighborhood or type of space? What assumptions might you carry?”

3. Student Guidelines for Observation

Students should be encouraged to:

- ☒ Stay attentive
- ☒ Document not just *what* they see, but *how* it feels
- ☒ Pay attention to:
 - Spatial layout and use
 - Sounds, smells, rhythms
 - Signs of care, neglect, or control
 - Accessibility (or its absence)
 - Social patterns (who interacts with whom, where, how long?)
 - ☒ Note surprising or ambiguous moments

Core guiding questions (choose or adapt):

- Who is present in this space, and who is not?
 - What kinds of interactions are visible?
 - How is the space organized socially?
 - What signals inclusion or exclusion?
 - What emotions or atmospheres seem present?
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4. Tools for Documentation

Students should be instructed to keep an **Observation Log or Diary** including:

- Date, time, weather
- Location and sketch map (if possible)
- Descriptive notes
- Emotional reactions or bodily sensations
- Emerging questions or hypotheses
- Photos (if appropriate) with clear ethical boundaries

Optional format suggestion:

Time	Place	What I saw/heard/felt	Interpretations/Questions
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5. Encouraging Reflexivity

Lecturer's role:

Create space to explore how students' identities, assumptions, and presence may shape what they observe.

In-class or post-observation prompts:

- What lens are you observing through?
 - Did anything make you uncomfortable? Why?
 - Did you feel like an outsider or insider in this space?
 - How might your presence have influenced the space or people?
 - What moments made you feel connected or disconnected?
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6. Debriefing and Turning Observations into Insight

Post-fieldwork reflection session may include:

- ☐ Sharing field notes in small groups
- ☐ Identifying emerging patterns
- ☐ Connecting observations to course theories (e.g., urban inequality, spatial justice, sense of place)
- ☐ Comparing interpretations of the same site
- ☐ Introduction to “**thick description**”: going beyond what is seen to ask *why it matters*



Optional Add-on:

Create a **shared folder** where students upload:

- Observation logs
- Photos (if taken)
- Audio reflections or voice notes
- Post-field reflective summaries