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Methods of sociology and demography

Observation

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OBSERVATION

- "Sensory perception of the surrounding world"
- Scientific observation as an information collection technique based on focused, systematic and organized monitoring of aspects and phenomena that are the subject of research.
- Scientific observation – one of the generally accepted scientific methods → important role in qualitative and quantitative research



OBSERVATION

Advantages

Disadvantages

OBSERVATION

Advantages

- the most natural and inexpensive diagnostic method,
- direct observation of real phenomena,
- obtaining data that cannot be obtained by other techniques,
- provides information about the context,
- suitable for exploring the topic.

Disadvantages

- considerable training requirements in the professional, organizational and possibly technical areas,
- time-consuming,
- influencing the course of observed phenomena through the participation of the observer,
- errors resulting from the personality of the observer,
- complex data interpretation.

OBSERVATION

Participant observation:

- The researcher participates (i.e. takes part) in the everyday lives of the people he/she studies
- Pioneered by the prominent Polish sociologist, anthropologist, and ethnographer Bronislaw Malinowski with his popular work *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*
- The observer enters the group of research subjects, becomes an active member of the group - usually part of a more complex study of the group, with the task of revealing the inner perspective of the participants and is often accompanied by other methods of scientific research

Non-participant observation:

- We choose in case of denial of access or for research of unjustified entry into the observed group
- In the natural sciences, the only alternative, due to the inanimate nature of the object of investigation

OBSERVATION

DIVISION BY OBSERVER POSITION

Obvious observation:

- The subjects are aware that the researcher is not one of them, so to speak (the researcher does not deny this fact)
- Disadvantage – the possibility of significant distortion resulting from a certain disturbance of the observed data and their subsequent stylization.

Covert observation:

- It does not disrupt the naturalness of the group and thus allows for a deeper understanding of the researched reality
- The observer is constantly at risk of being exposed – in a certain social environment, the risk of long-term discrediting of his research, and of research in general.
- The question of the ethics of such research

OBSERVATION

Direct observation

- sensory - most often it involves observation through primary visual and auditory perceptions

Indirect observation

- mediated - e.g. through a microscope, questionnaire or video recording

According to the nature of the research:

1. **Qualitative observation**
2. **Quantitative observations**

Structured observation

- classifies observed phenomena into predetermined categories

Unstructured observation

- Only the observation objective is specified, minimal formalization of data collection tools

STAGES OF OBSERVATION

1. Determine what, why, and how we will observe – precise definition of the goal, object, and method of observation.
2. Description and registration of observed phenomena
 - Technical means – video, audio recording – certain restrictions
 - Observation sheets or protocols
 - Keeping a diary
3. Analysis and processing of the obtained data
 - Qualitative or quantitative analysis of observed phenomena
4. Interpretation of observed phenomena
 - Placing phenomena in a broader context

OBSERVATION SHEET

- A diagram prepared by the researcher containing selected categories of observed phenomena
- Categories
 - the general form of an observed phenomenon from two or more classes that allow the observed phenomena to be classified
 - recorded during observation using the selected code (comma, number, other graphic character).
- The researcher records the presence or absence of a phenomenon or its intensity
- Rating scales allow you to assess the intensity or degree of the phenomena being assessed

OBSERVATION ERRORS

- Subjectivity
- Halo effect
 - the tendency to be influenced by a certain distinctive characteristic, a trait, when assessing the characteristics of others, i.e. a favorable impression leads to the perception and assessment of positive personality traits and vice versa
 - It is related to errors that arise from prejudice, stereotyping, and generalization.
 - Stereotyping – the assessor assumes certain characteristics in most members of a given group without regard to individual uniqueness.
 - Prejudices – a subconscious tendency to be biased, e.g. towards a certain nationality or gender.
- Fatigue
- Agitation

OBSERVATION – DAILY RHYTHM OF A PLACE

- different spatial use of the city during the day
- maps according to permanent residence of residents - static view - do they correspond to reality?

OBSERVATION – DAILY RHYTHM OF A PLACE

- different spatial use of the city during the day
- maps according to permanent residence of residents – static view – applies mainly at night → for understanding the functioning of the city, its planning and management it is no longer sufficient → search for alternatives
- the city is a dynamic system – the distribution of residents differs fundamentally between day and night
- rhythm of the place
 - Evaluation of short-term changes in the population of a given location, their number, structure, behavior and activities
 - Searching for regularly recurring activities (hourly, daily, weekly, yearly)

ASSIGNMENT OF OWN WORK

- Data collection will take place in a group (2-3 people), but everyone will process the results and comments on their own.
- Choose a place to observe the daily rhythm of the place – suitable for example a square, an area where people spend time, or for example the UJEP campus, an unsuitable place with markets and other irregular events
- Everyone will conduct 3x15 minute observations at 1 location at times at least one hour apart - observations should always start at approximately the same time (e.g. X:15)
- The goal in the group is to cover the course of one day (weekday or weekend), or the difference between weekday and weekend

ASSIGNMENT OF OWN WORK

- What needs to be clarified in the group?
 - location of inquiry
 - query times and day (weekday vs. weekend – both can be included but then reasonably cover comparable times)
 - observed activities – relevant to the chosen location
 - preparation of the record sheet (see xls file and example in the presentation)
 - Can one person perform multiple activities in a location at the same time?

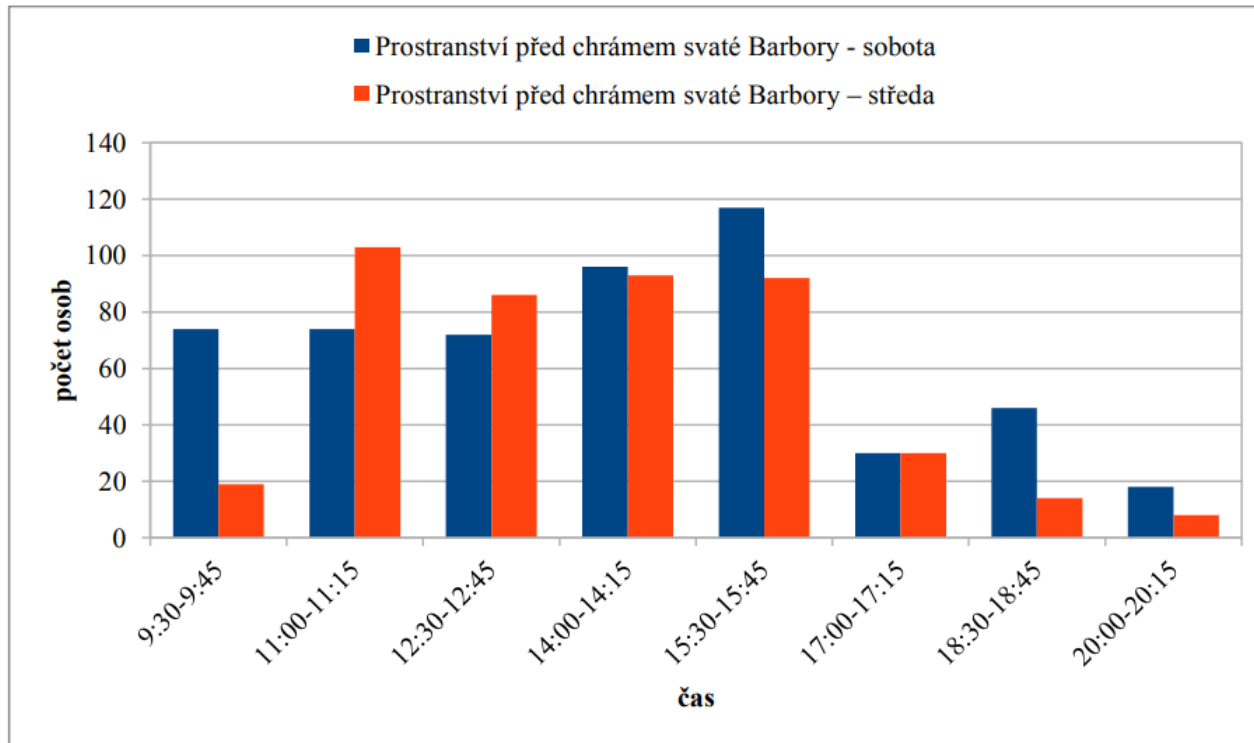
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PROTOCOL FOR THE DAILY RHYTHM OF THE SITE

- Submit a document in doc or pdf format with graphs and text and a completed record sheet (transcribed into xls or photographed paper sheet)
- in the document – description of the location (character of the location, type of development, predominant use) with a map indicating the observation location
- graphs with the structure of activities, possibly information about age and gender, numbers of people in the location at different times (see next slide)
- accompanying text describing the results, main findings, summary of own notes from the research
- the minimum text length is **1600 characters including spaces**
- submit via STAG by 23:59 6.11.2023

OBSERVATION – EXAMPLE OF RESULTS

Graf 16: Porovnání denních rytmtů prostoru před chrámem svaté Barbory o víkendovém a všedním dnu 20. 5. a 24. 5. 2017



Zdroj: vlastní výzkum

Kříž, Tomáš. The Impact of Tourism on the Historic Center of Kutná Hora. Prague, 2017. Master's thesis. Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Arts, KSGRZ.