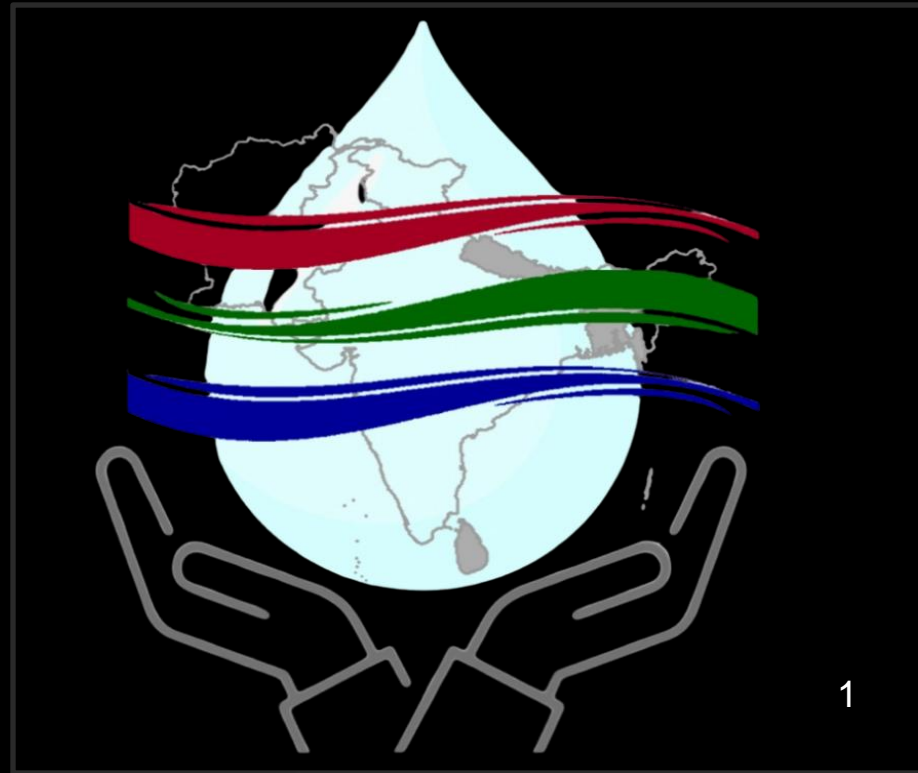


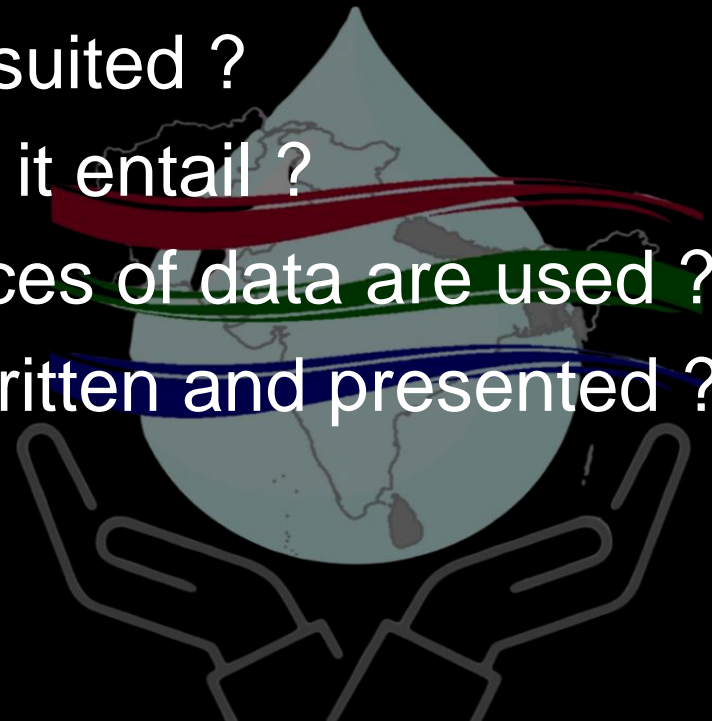
# Doing field work around water: an ethnographic approach

February 2024



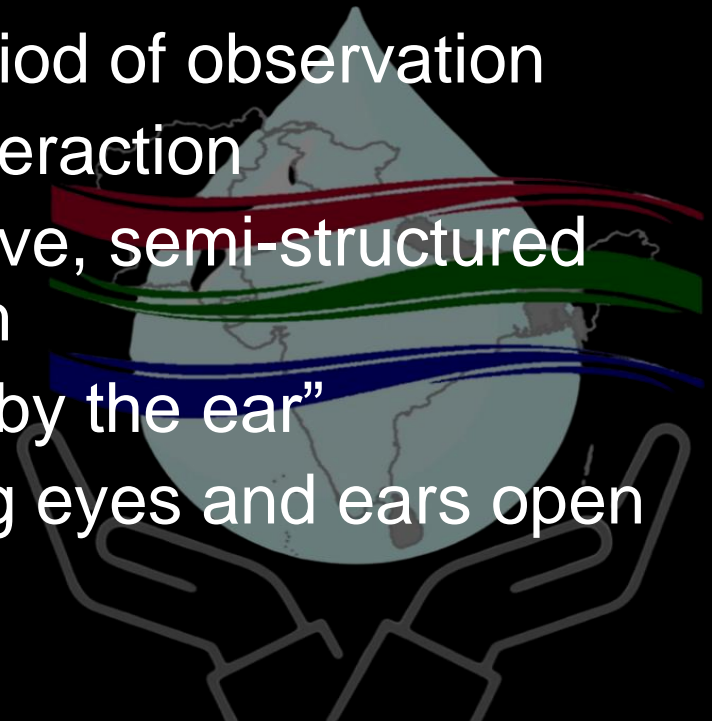
# Some reflections on the reading circulated

- What does it tell you about the ethnographic approach to water studies ?
- When is it suited ?
- What does it entail ?
- What sources of data are used ?
- How is it written and presented ?



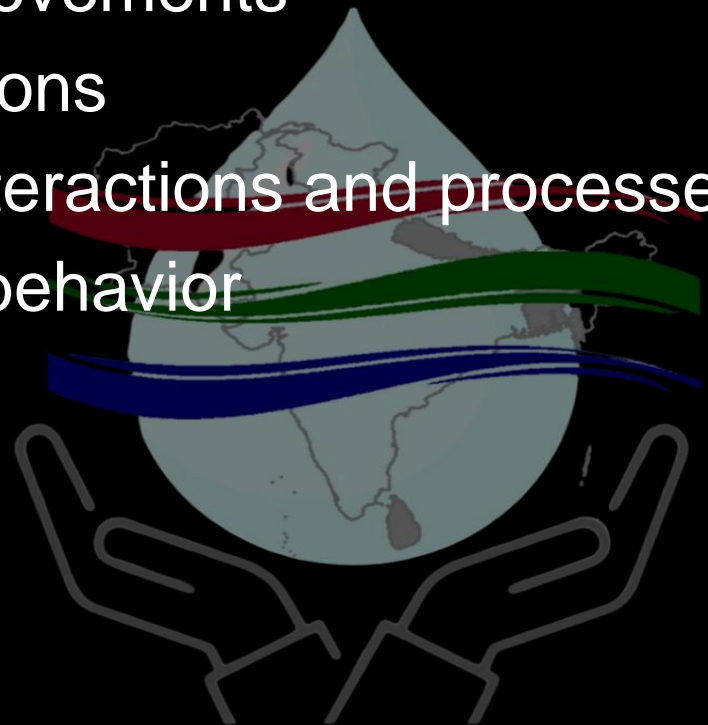
# What is ethnography ?

- Ethnos + Graphein
- Anthropologist's approach
- Entails fieldwork
  - ◆ Long period of observation
  - ◆ Direct interaction
  - ◆ An iterative, semi-structured approach
  - ◆ “Playing by the ear”
  - ◆ Keeping eyes and ears open



# When is it suited ?

- Answer “how” questions ?
- Study of
  - ◆ Social movements
  - ◆ Occupations
  - ◆ Social interactions and processes
  - ◆ Deviant behavior

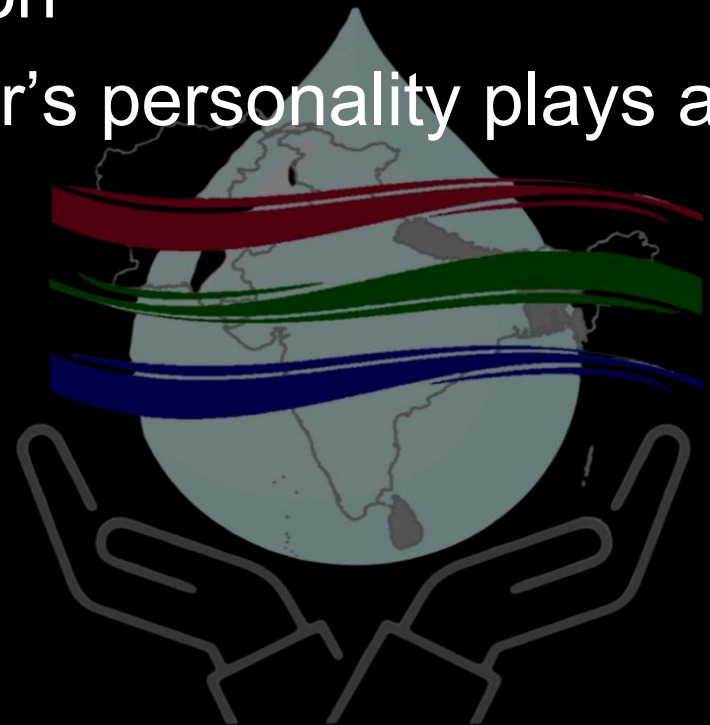


# In the context of water

- Study daily practices around water
- Processes of conflicts, co-operation
- Strategies employed by water users to improve their control over water
- Conflict resolution mechanisms
- Ethnographies of the state

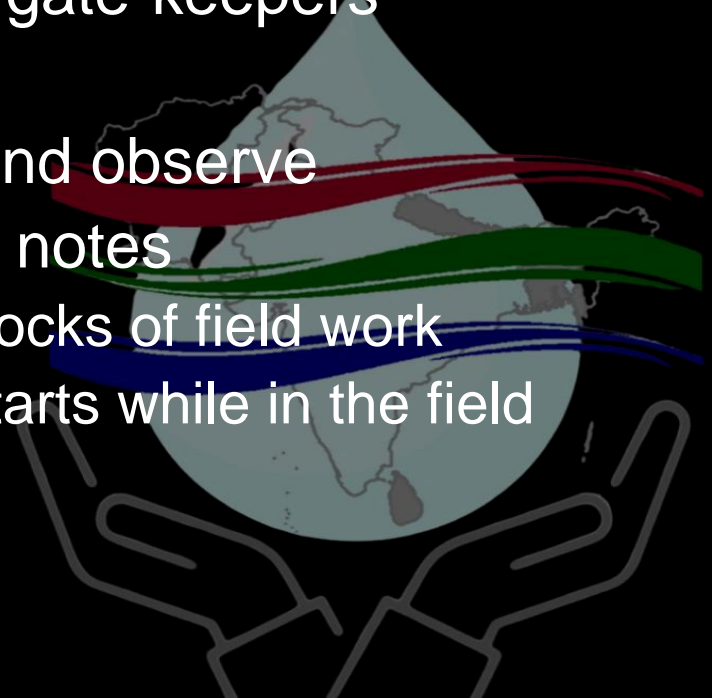
# Principles of field work

- Methodological pragmatism
- Naturalism
- Socialization
- Researcher's personality plays a role



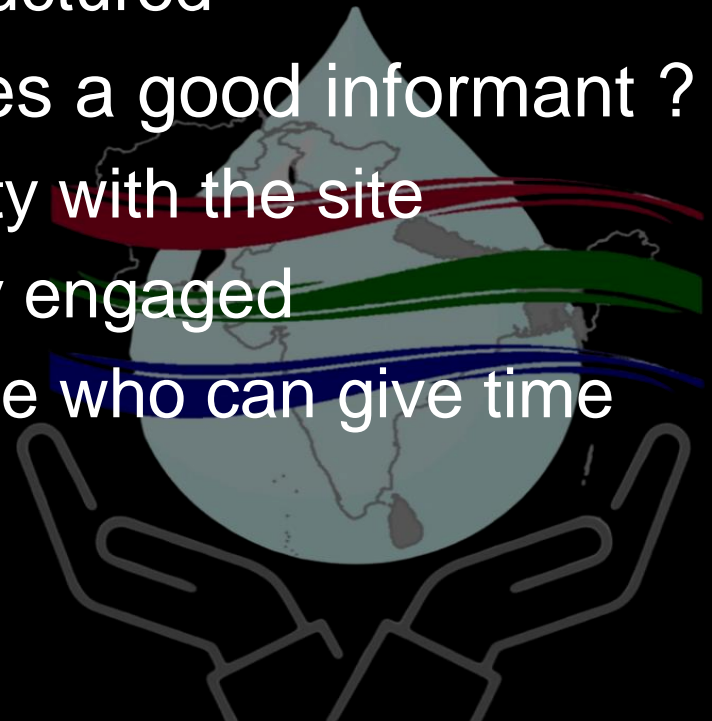
# Steps in field work

- Start with a research question
- Defocus
- Select a site
- Dealing with gate-keepers
- Disclosure
- Listen, see and observe
- Regular field notes
  - ◆ Building blocks of field work
  - ◆ Analysis starts while in the field



# The key informant technique

- Who is an informant ?
- The informant interview
  - ◆ Semi-structured
- What makes a good informant ?
  - ◆ Familiarity with the site
  - ◆ Currently engaged
  - ◆ Some one who can give time



# Who makes a good informant in the field ?

- The village barber
- School head-master
- Owner of the local tea shop
- An engineer in the Irrigation Department
- A paatkari (Maharashtra, India)



# The semi structured interview

- Approach the respondent with a check-list
- Overall, broad questions
- Let the conversation evolve
- Ask new questions thrown up by the conversation



# In the case of water..

- Take leads from field observations
- Start with broad, general questions
- Let the conversation evolve
- Pay attention to the respondent, even if what is being spoken about is not on your interview schedule
- Pay attention to words and expressions that keep coming up

# Sampling in field work

- Theoretical sampling
- Snowball sampling
- Sample
  - ◆ People
  - ◆ Locations
  - ◆ Timing
  - ◆ Sample for relevance, not representation



# Observation and photos

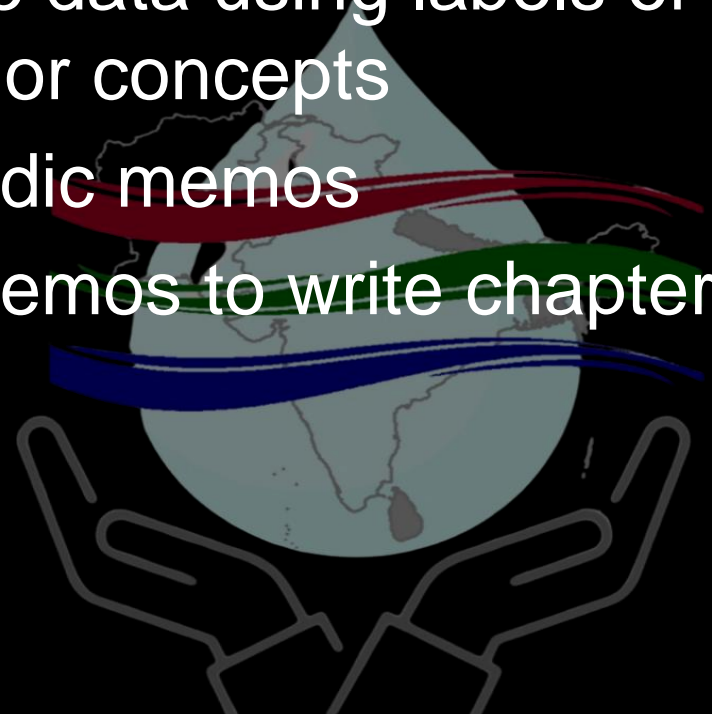
- Observe what is going on, and investigate
- Click photos especially of artefacts and structures
- Click photos of people only with their consent, do not embarrass them
- If you wish to record interviews, take prior consent always

# What it means for fieldwork around water

- Be at the site at critical times
  - ◆ (different cropping seasons, day/night, times of scarcity/plenty, village meeting grounds)
- Be at the site at different places
  - ◆ (agricultural fields, irrigated plots, canals/ water sources)
  - ◆ Sample events and places relevant for your work

# Analysing data from the field

- Make field jottings
- Fair them out as typed field notes
- Classify the data using labels or categories or concepts
- Write periodic memos
- Club the memos to write chapters or drafts



# Cracking the jig saw puzzle

- Analyse evidences from the field to tell a story about water
- Assemble the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle
- The anecdotes, evidences, photos are tied in to tell us what is going on
- Use this to develop an argument, contextualise with the literature

# Grounded theory

- An empirico-inductive approach
- Immerse in the data to theorize about the situation
- Say something about the context in theoretical and conceptual terms
- Consistent with the case study method
- Premise of analytic generalization

# To read more on this

- The case study method (Yin 1984)
- Grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin)



# Intricacies of field work

- Ethical issues
  - ◆ Extent of disclosure
  - ◆ Intrusion
  - ◆ Confidentiality
  - ◆ Dealing with deviants



# Intricacies of fieldwork

- Managing stress
  - ◆ Physical
  - ◆ Mental
- When does field work end? When can you exit ?
  - ◆ When theory building ceases
  - ◆ Just call it a day ?

