Revisiting a Bad Study: Map Tasks as Place-Making Mapping Narratives

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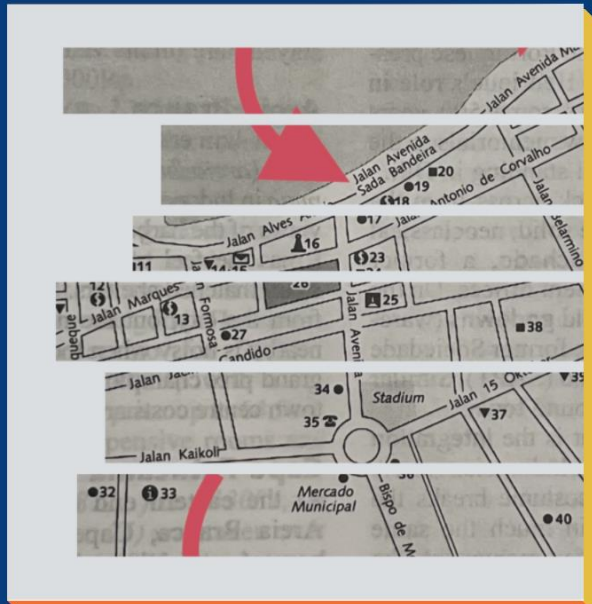
JALAN AVENIDA
A STREETNAME STORY
IN TIMOR-LESTE



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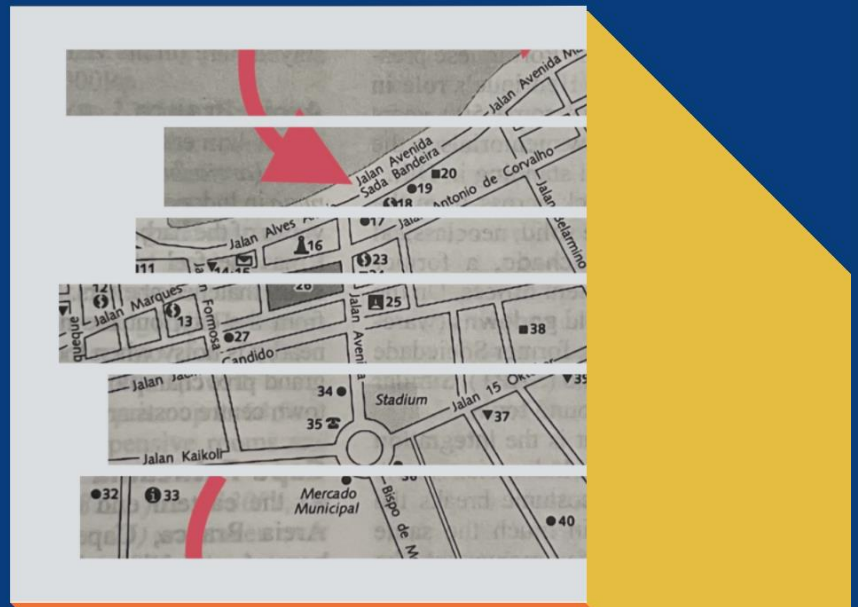

- **JALAN AVENIDA** *(FORTHCOMING, BLOOMSBURY PRESS)*
- TOPONYMY PROJECT IN TIMOR-LESTE
- 400 YEARS OF STREETNAME (CHANGES)
- → CRITICAL TOPONYMY
- → LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES
- → CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES

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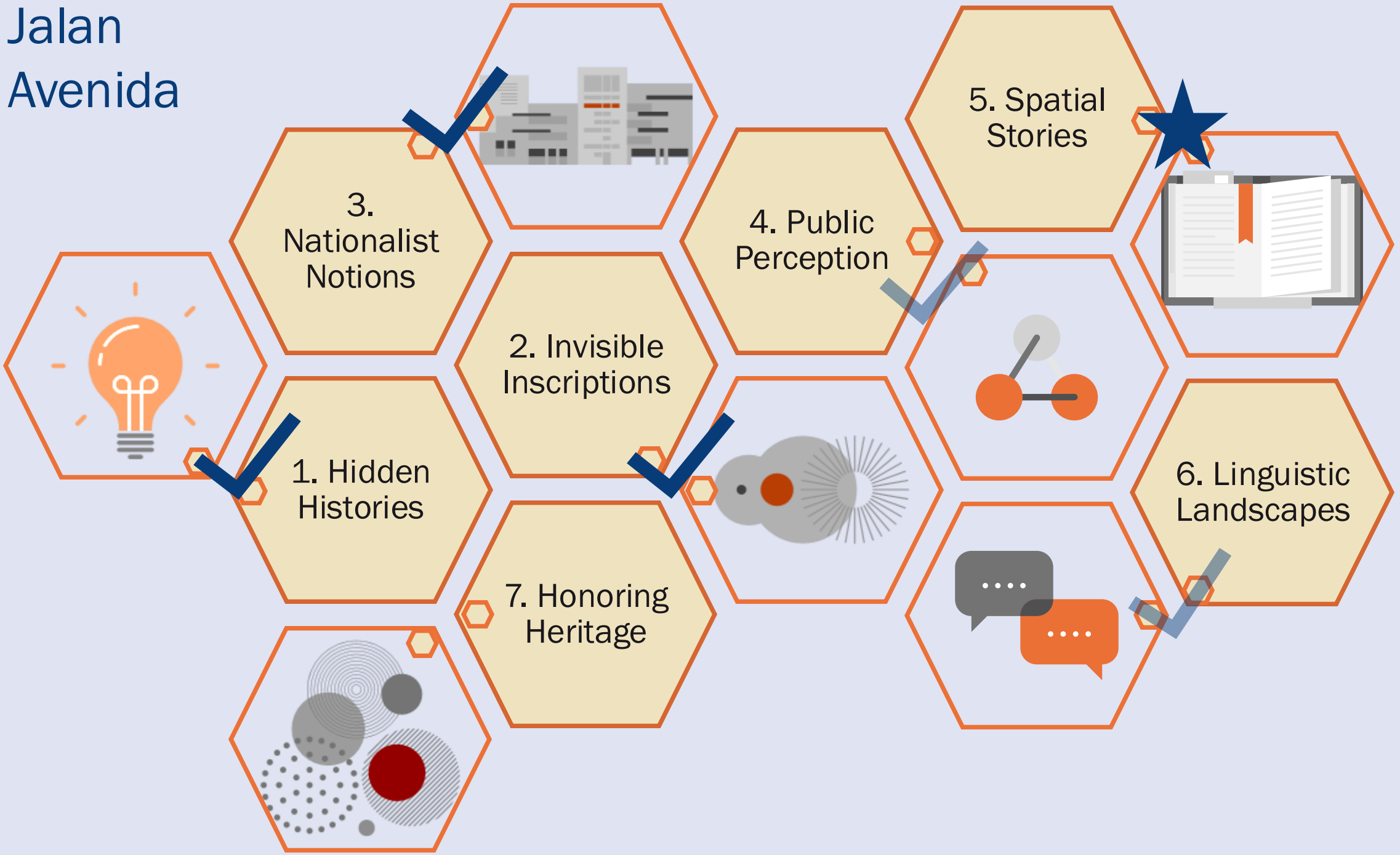

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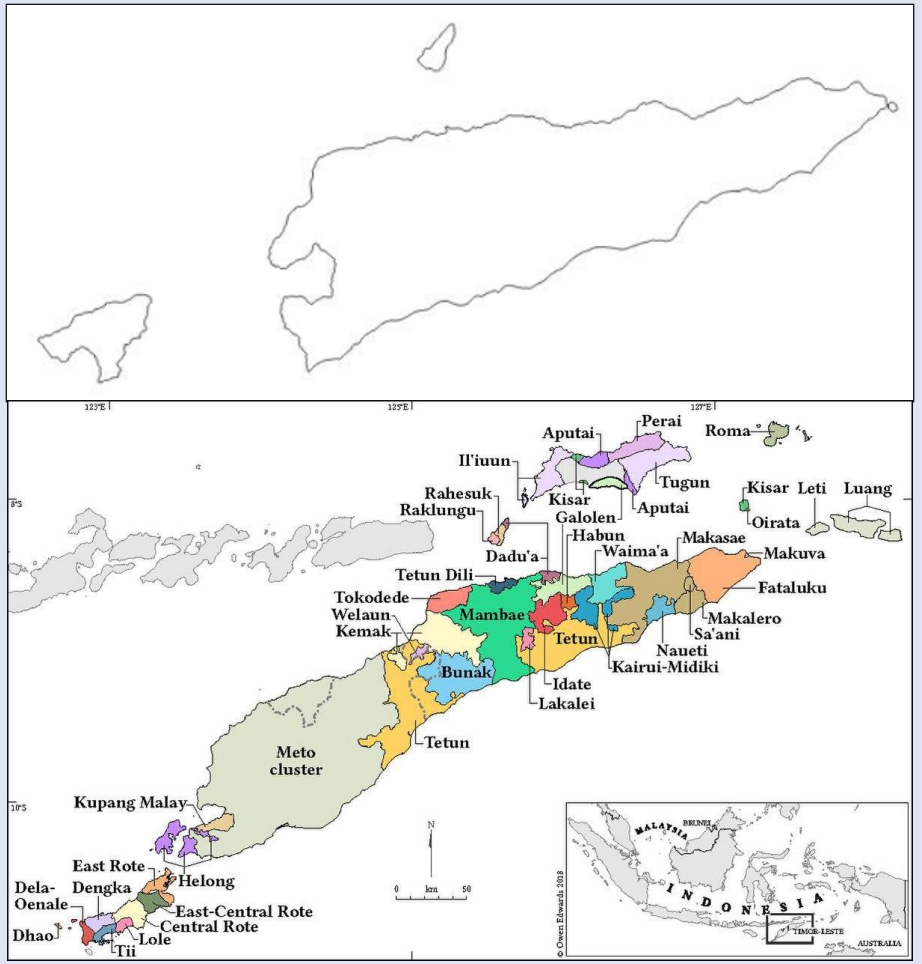
5. Spatial Stories

Starting Point: Revisiting Old Studies

- **2015** Perceptual dialectology map-task of Timor-Leste study
- **Basic results:** Participants labeled administrative divisions more than linguistic; task was deemed a failure
- **Problem 1:** The map was too ‘weird’
  - Left off Indonesian part of island; precluding cross-border languages



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Street Names, Group Maintenance, and Identity-Construction

- **How** does colloquial knowledge strengthen / threaten (1) group cohesion and(2) individual identities ?
- **What patterns** arise in spatial narratives of 'navigating' Timor-Leste?
  - Next phase of Jalan Avenida: collecting narratives from the UNAMET mission, 25 years later: *How did you get to your field office? What happened when you had to leave?*
  - Directional tasks in Dili (Timorese and malae): *Where can I go to buy tickets for the ferry?*
  - Travel stories, firsthand or otherwise: *How do you get to Jaco island?*

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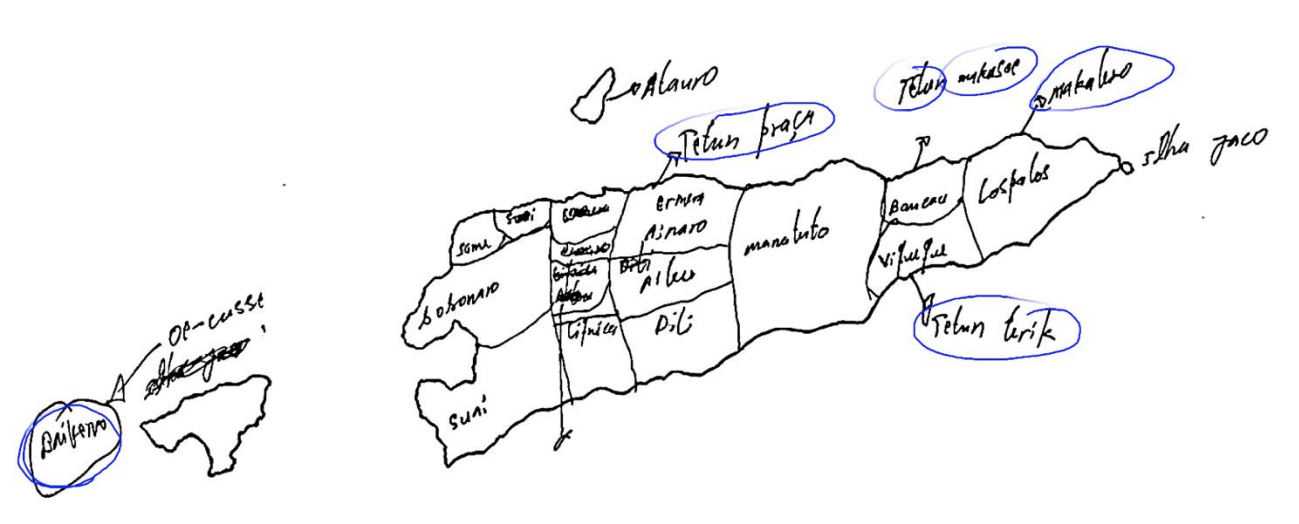
5. Spatial Stories

Starting Point: Revisiting Old Studies

- **Problem 2:** Map was burdensome
  - Participants needed more orientation
  - Somewhat ‘burned out’ after orienting themselves

R13, demonstrating orientation

- 15 administrative areas
- Only 6 languages (circled)



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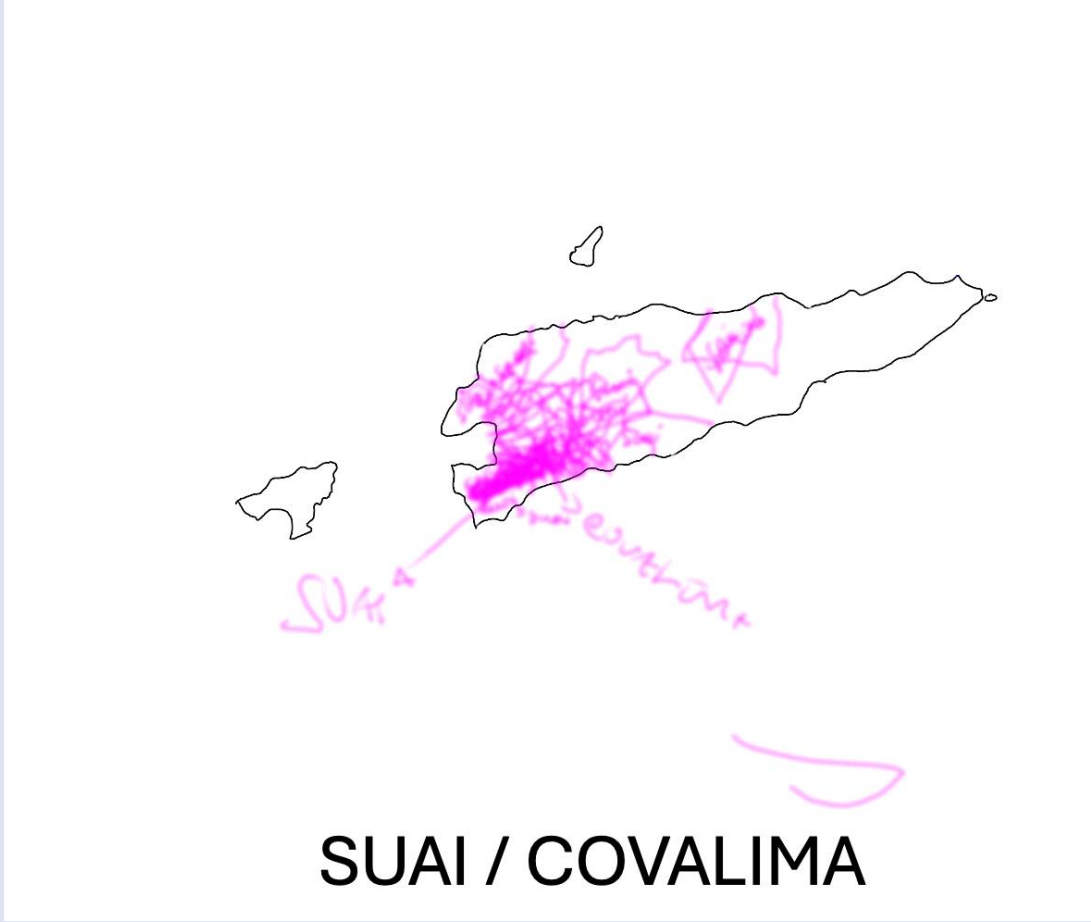
Starting Point: Revisiting Old Studies

- **Problem 3:** Lack of interpretive framework
  - –I did not understand the importance of the practice I was seeing (and its uniformity)
  - –Aggregate mapping shows that participants had strong need to first label districts
  - –Also showed knowledge trends



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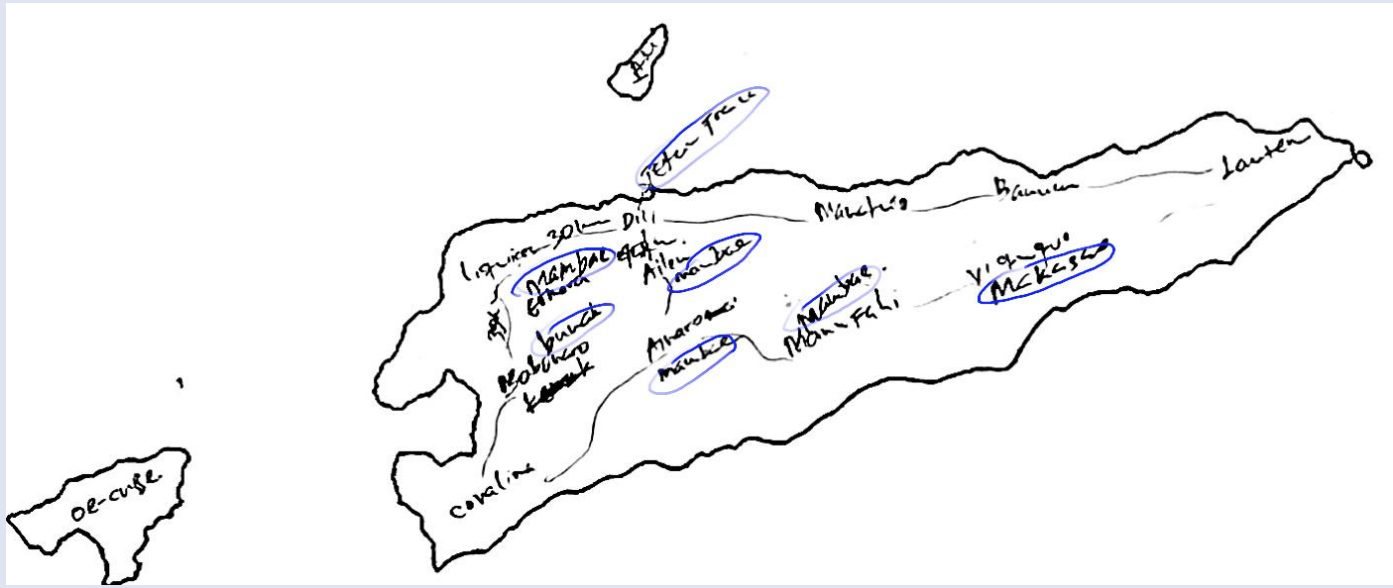
5. Spatial Stories

Revision: A Framework of Spatiality

J4, demonstrating three components of *spatiality* (Britain 2010a)

- Physical: locations
- Social: pathways (lines)
- Psychological: languages (circled)



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5. Spatial Stories

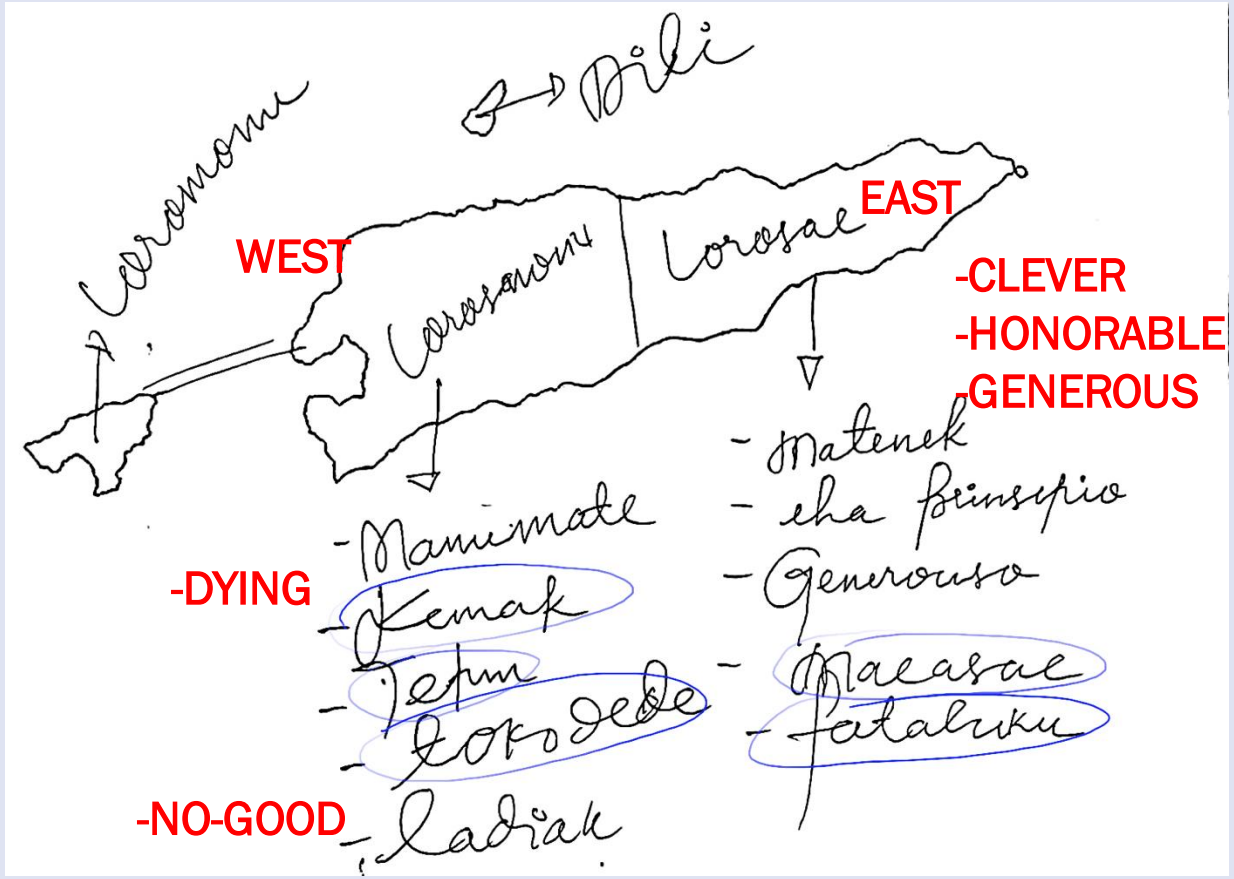
Revision: Space – to – Place

R9, demonstrating spatiality

- Physical: compass directions
- Social: languages (circled)
- Psychological: attributes

Muddling of all three:

- "Space as becoming"



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Revision: Interim (Re)-Conclusions

- **First re-conclusion:** Space-to-place takes different forms for different people
- **Second re-conclusion**: Group tendencies are an important part of understanding the space-to-place process in Timor-Leste
- **Third re-conclusion**: Group tendencies are only part of the story
- To get at more, look at each map as telling a story

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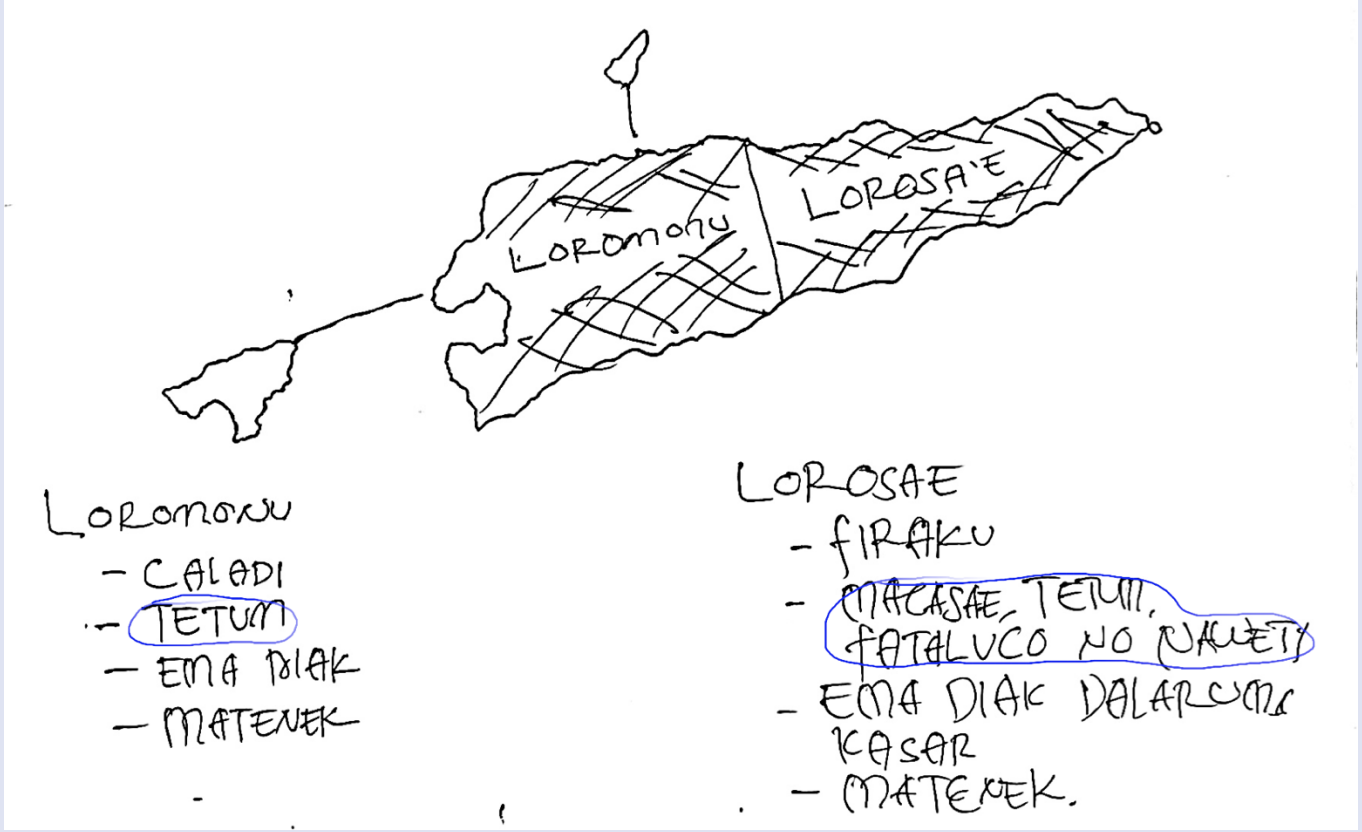
5. Spatial Stories

R4, 22yo male, student from Dili

- Parents subsistence farmers
- Speaks Tetun, Indonesian, and Portuguese
- Has never travelled abroad
- One of 4 participants who speaks *no other* language of Timor-Leste



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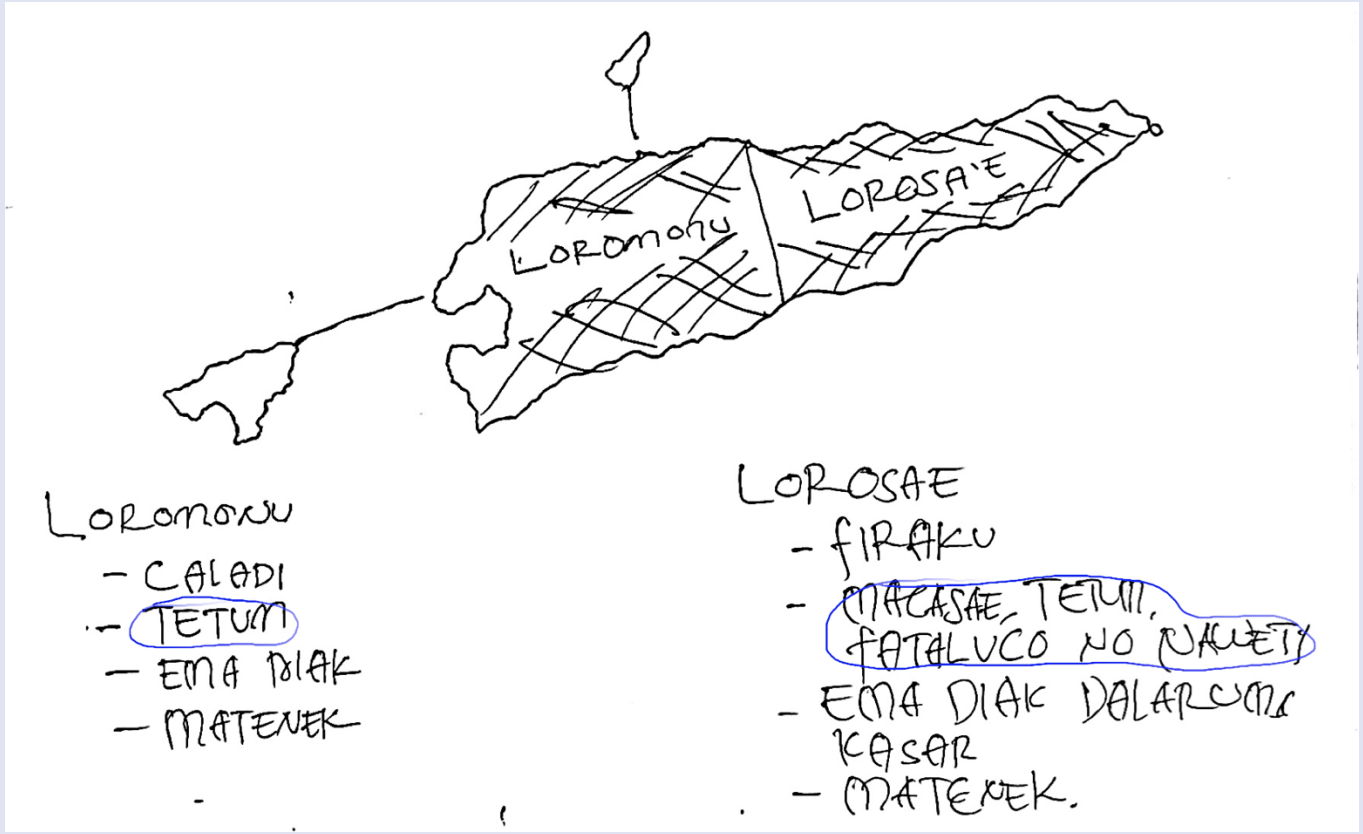
5. Spatial Stories

CALADI - FIRAKU

- R4 includes a handful of languages within the east-west schema
- Value judgments of people
  - *Good people*
  - *Good people sometimes rough*



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5. Spatial Stories

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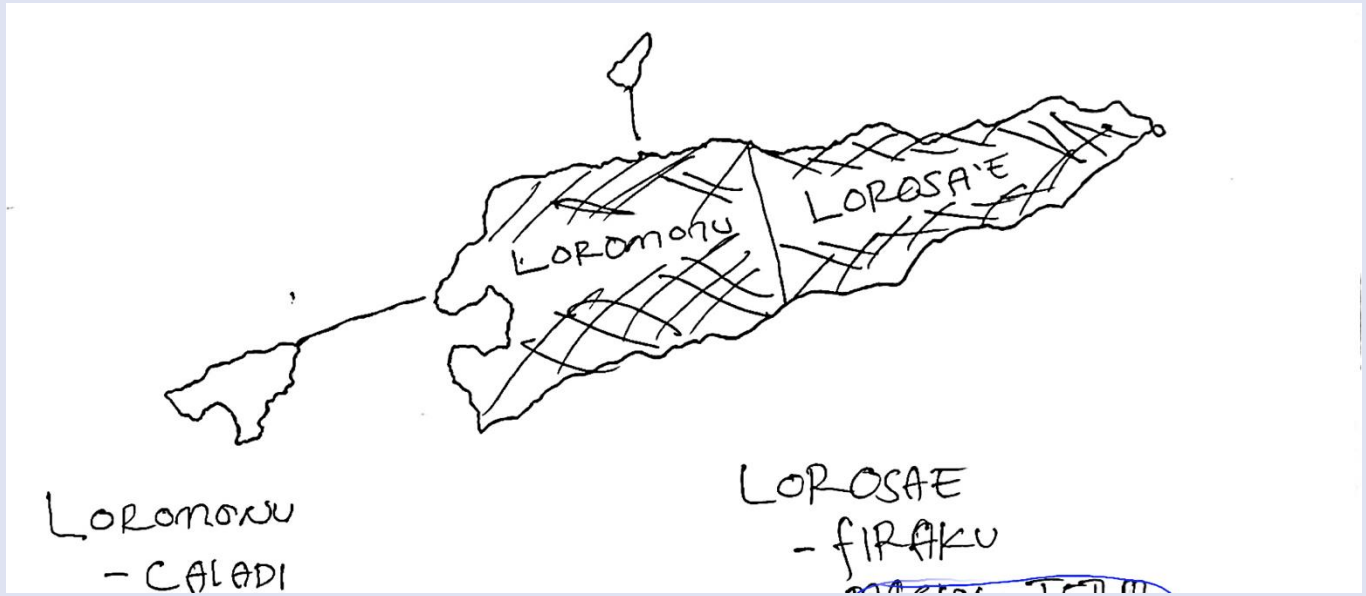

Very old terms

- Pre-colonial: to separate the ‘hill peoples’ (neg) of the east and west from the ‘civilized’ Tetun
- 1970s: broadly incorporated all eastern and western Timorese, as separate from the Portuguese
- 1990s: had become associated with personality traits
- 2000: came to (retroactively) represent ideologies toward occupation
- 2006: notable point of conflict
- 2014, appears on R4’s map, free from any apparent context!

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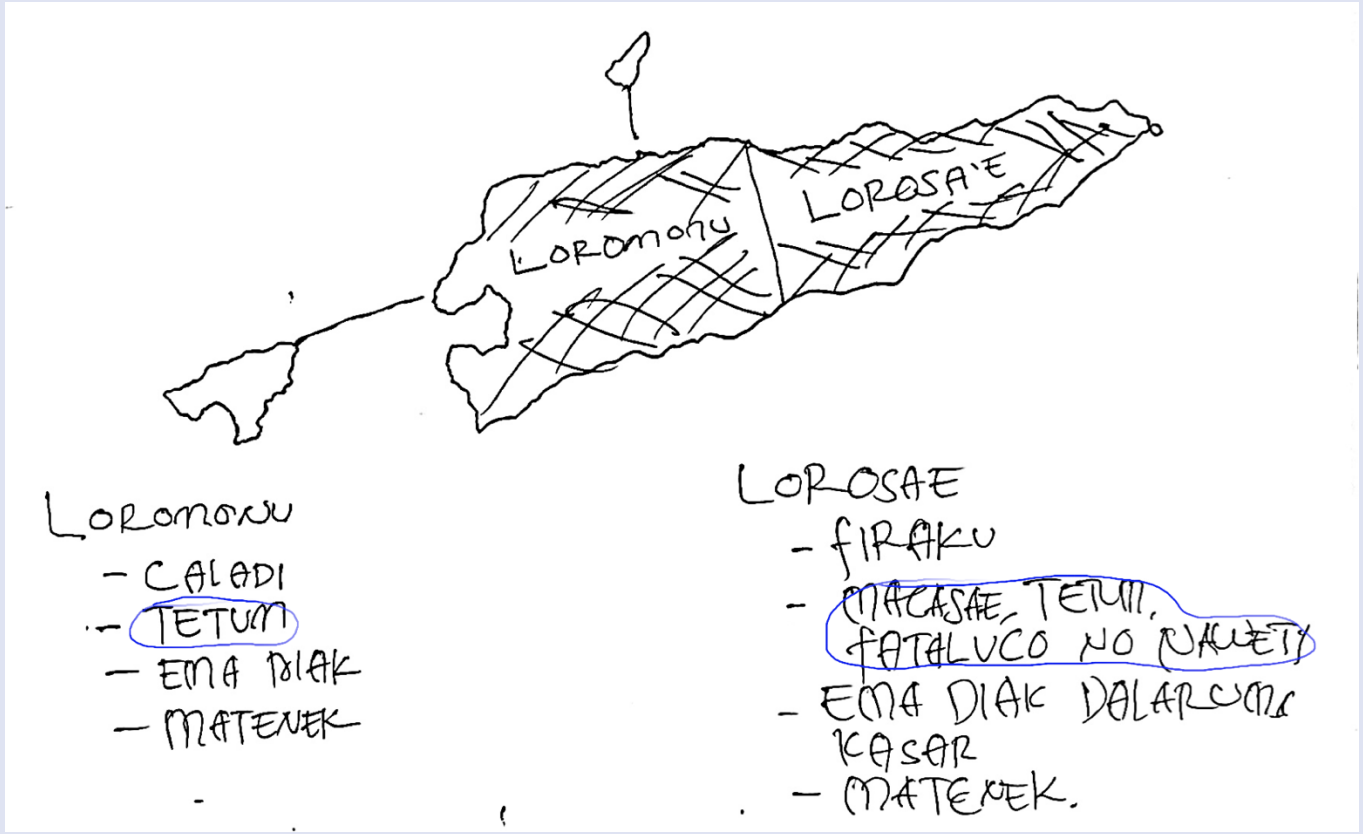
5. Spatial Stories

R4's personal narrative

West:

- Caladi (calm, quiet)
- Tetun
- Good people
- Clever



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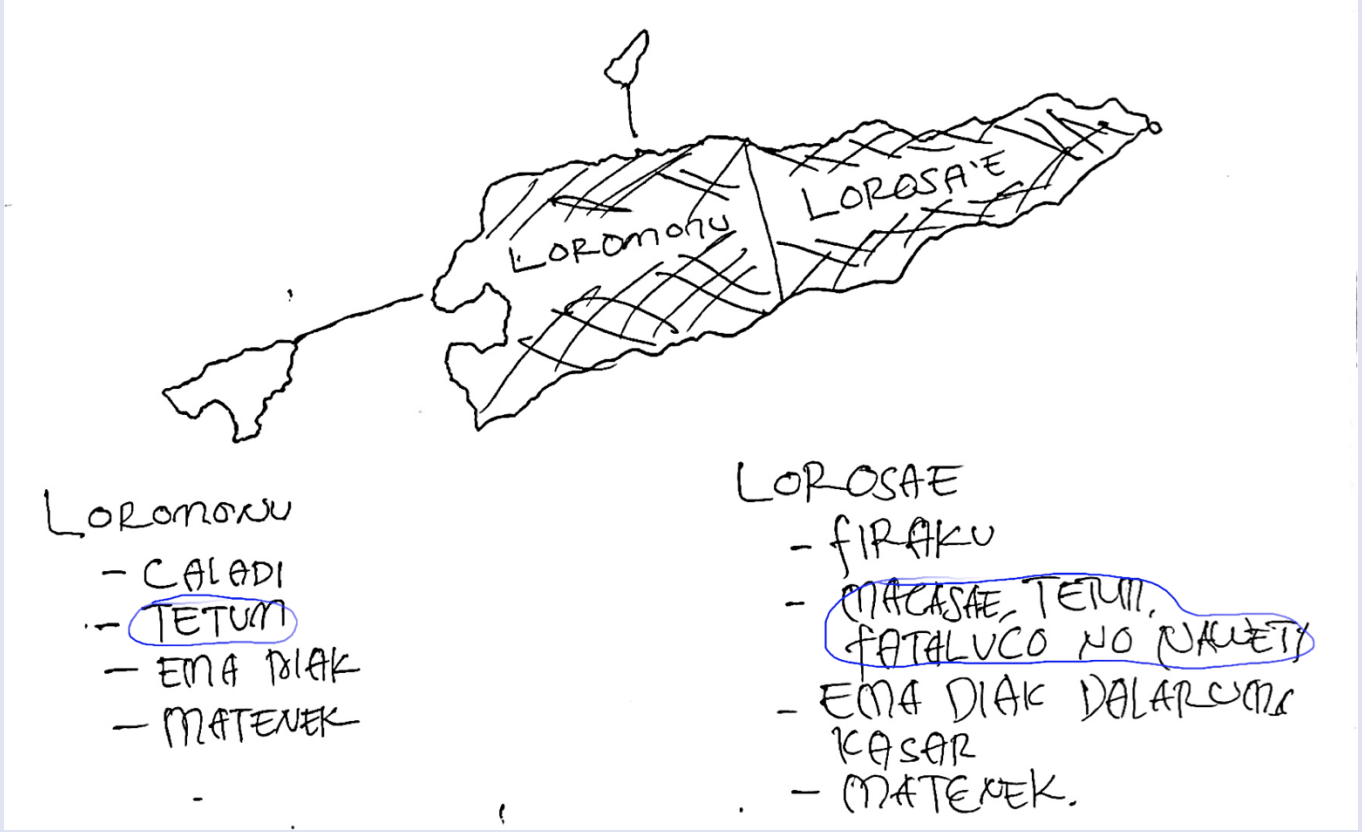
5. Spatial Stories

R4's personal narrative

East:

- Firaku (rough, talkative)
- Makasae, Tetun, Fataluku and Naueti
- Good people sometimes rough
- Clever



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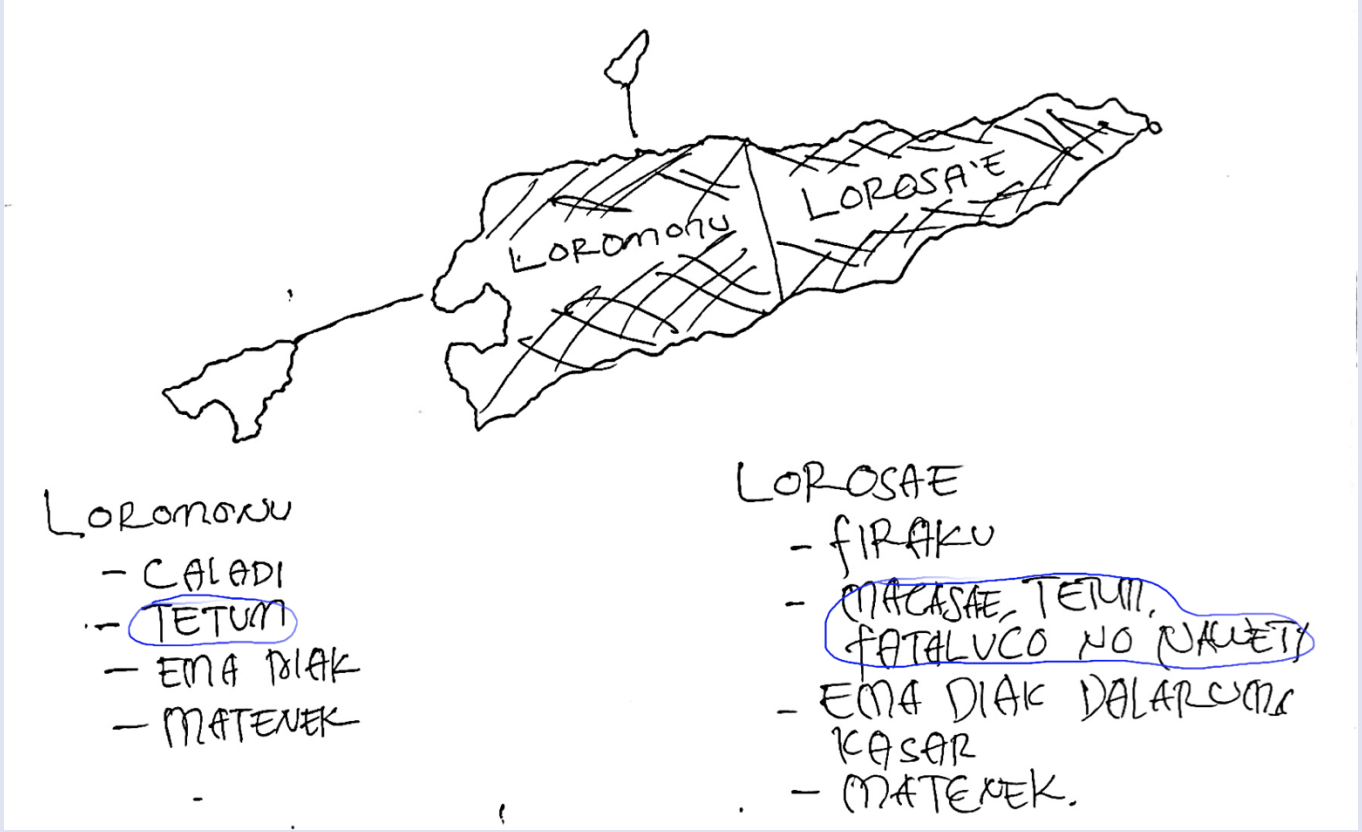
5. Spatial Stories

R4's personal narrative

Understands larger social divisions without necessarily articulating the nuance

Understands space-language pathway without necessarily needing specifics



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5. Spatial Stories

M5, 52yo, male, from Viqueque, lives in Dili

- Professional; only finished primary school; speaks Makasae, Tetun and Indonesian; has never traveled abroad; parents of humble origin
- Showing me his life story; he knows lots about his neighbors, current and previous

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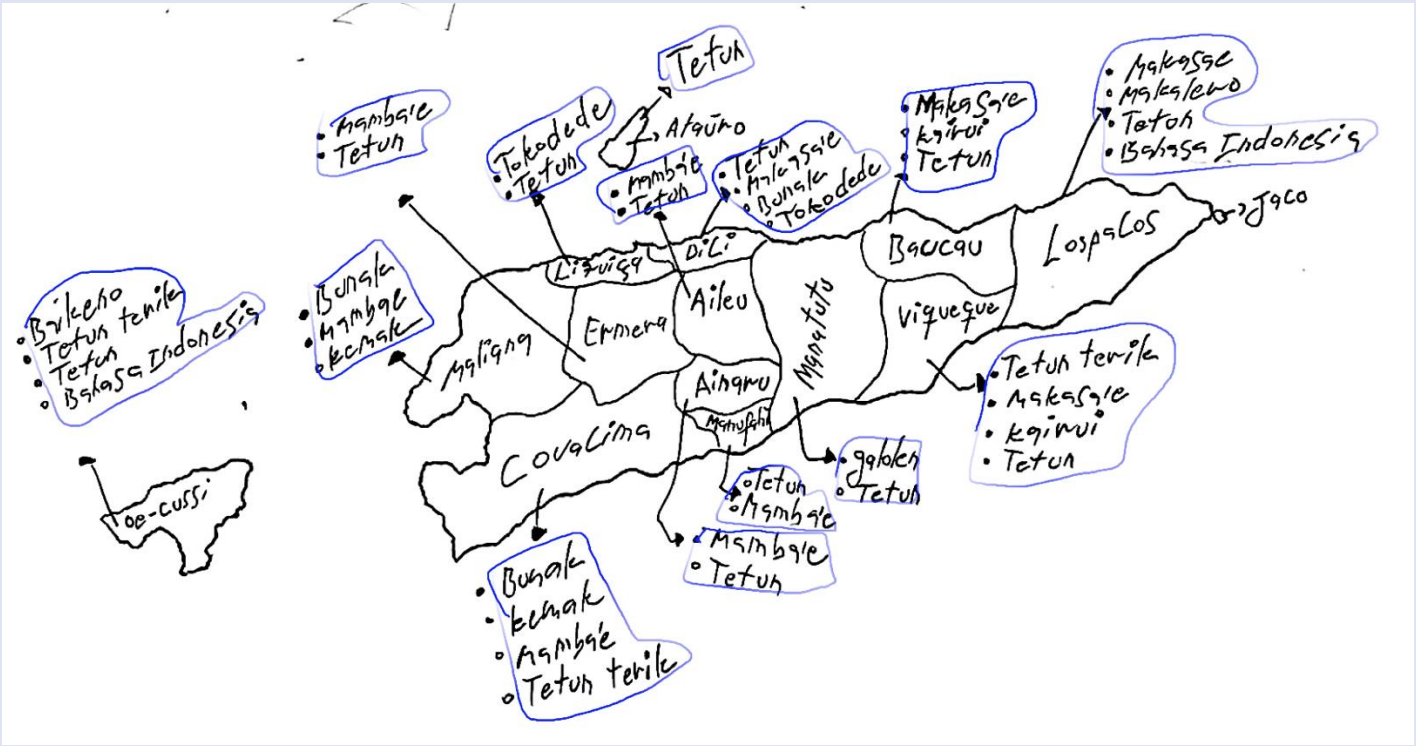
5. Spatial Stories

A7, 46yo male, professional from Dili

- Speaks Makasae, Tetun, Portuguese, English, Indonesian; has traveled to Australia, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia; parents of humble origin; only finished primary school
- Engagement with Timor-Leste takes on far more rigid, exo-gazey structure



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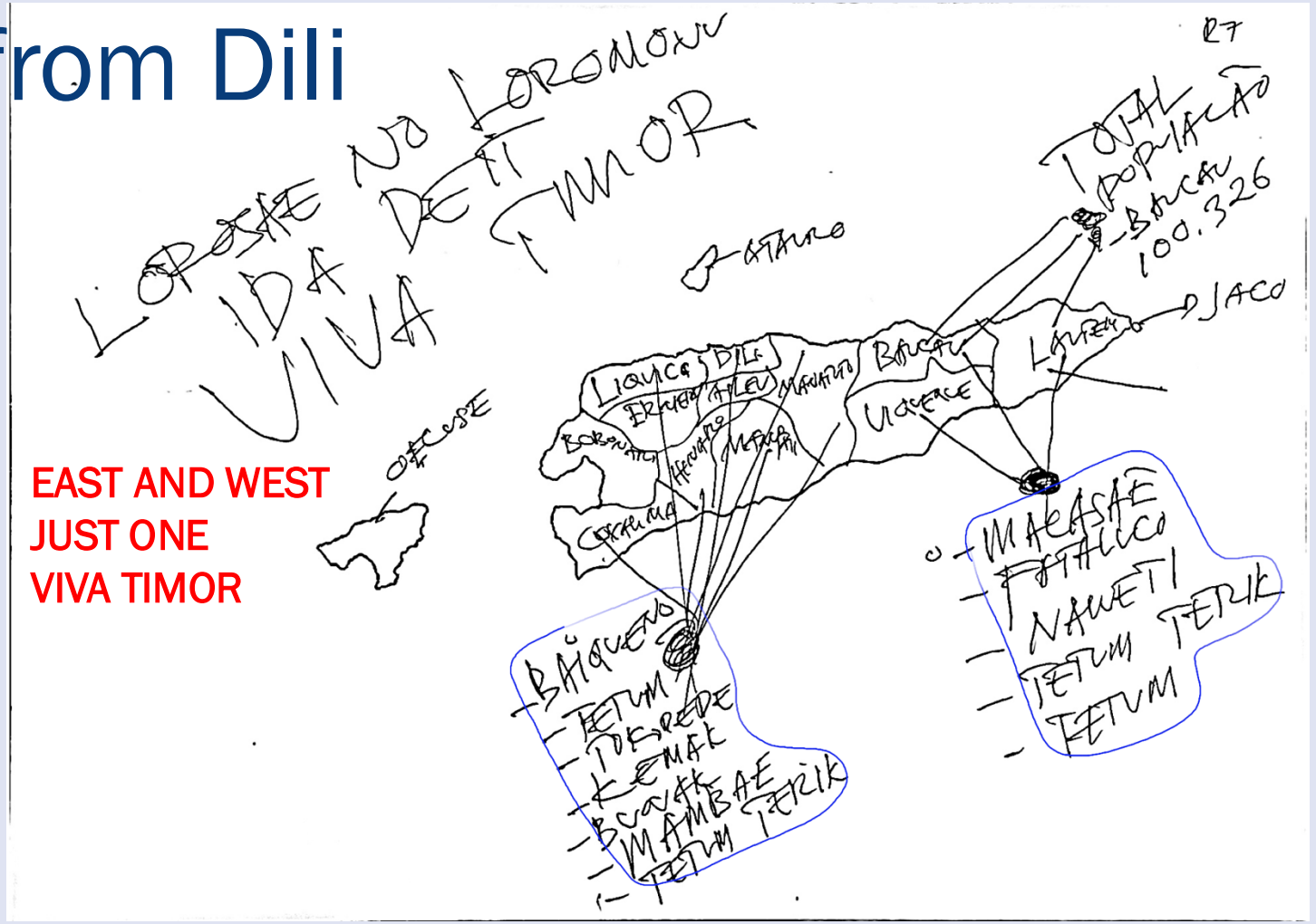
5. Spatial Stories

R7, 29yo, male, from Dili

- Mother is a teacher, father is a farmer; has been to the Indonesian side of Timor Island; speaks Tetun and Indonesian; currently a uni student
- Gives demographic info about Baucau?
- Glomps all languages into two groups; makes strong statement on national unity



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Conclusions 1/

- **Meta-Narratives**
  - –Researcher inattention to the structures of spatiality resulted in overfit interpretation:
  - –Participant discomfort engaging with fundamentally divisive task forced a choice of actions:
    - (1) rely on administration to divide-by-proxy (psychological representations obscured by social manipulations of physical space)
    - (2) emphasize national unity (physical space obscured by psychological representations of social space)

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Conclusions 2/

- **Individual Narratives**
  - –Researcher inattention to frameworks of narrative obscured narrative patterns:
    - Temporal ordering
    - Setting
    - Complicated action /disruptive event
    - Result
  - –The postmodernist conception of ‘self as emergent' overlaps with the concept of ‘space as becoming’

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Conclusions 3/

- **On Revisiting Old Data**
  - Positive experience of self-reflection
  - Opportunities to entertain doubts about one's own work
- **New Conclusions**
  - Participants didn't fail to understand the task so much as I failed to understand the results
  - Spatiality, like identity, are processes of becoming; that is what my maps show

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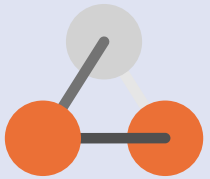
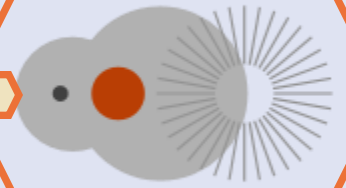
3. Nationalist Notions

2. Invisible Inscriptions

4. Public Perception

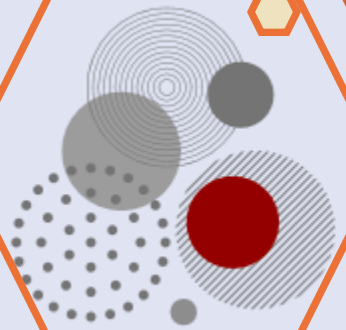
5. Spatial Stories





6. Linguistic Landscapes

1. Hidden Histories



7. Honoring Heritage

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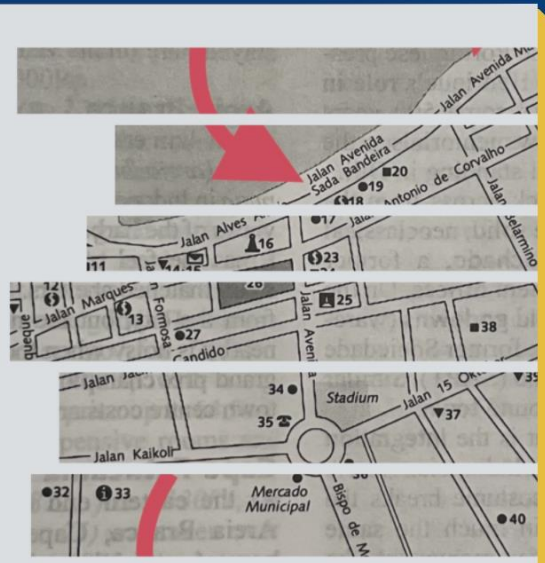

THANK YOU!