



Aalto University
School of Arts, Design
and Architecture

ARTS-L0130

Methods of gathering data

Eeva Berghund – 15 January 2018
Introduction to the course

Outline of the session

Methods of gathering data? What is that?

Who are we?

- In groups of three share your experiences of the pre-course assignment
- Say something about how it involved 'method' and 'data'

Some key concepts and issues

How the course is run

What are we doing on this course?

Learning ways to produce field notes or capture data

Reflecting on what it means to observe social behaviour and how doing it methodically can be useful

Linking methodological traditions with your independent research

What are we doing on this course?

Learning ways to produce field notes or capture data

Practical tasks

Reflecting on what it means to observe social behaviour and how doing it methodically can be useful

Readings

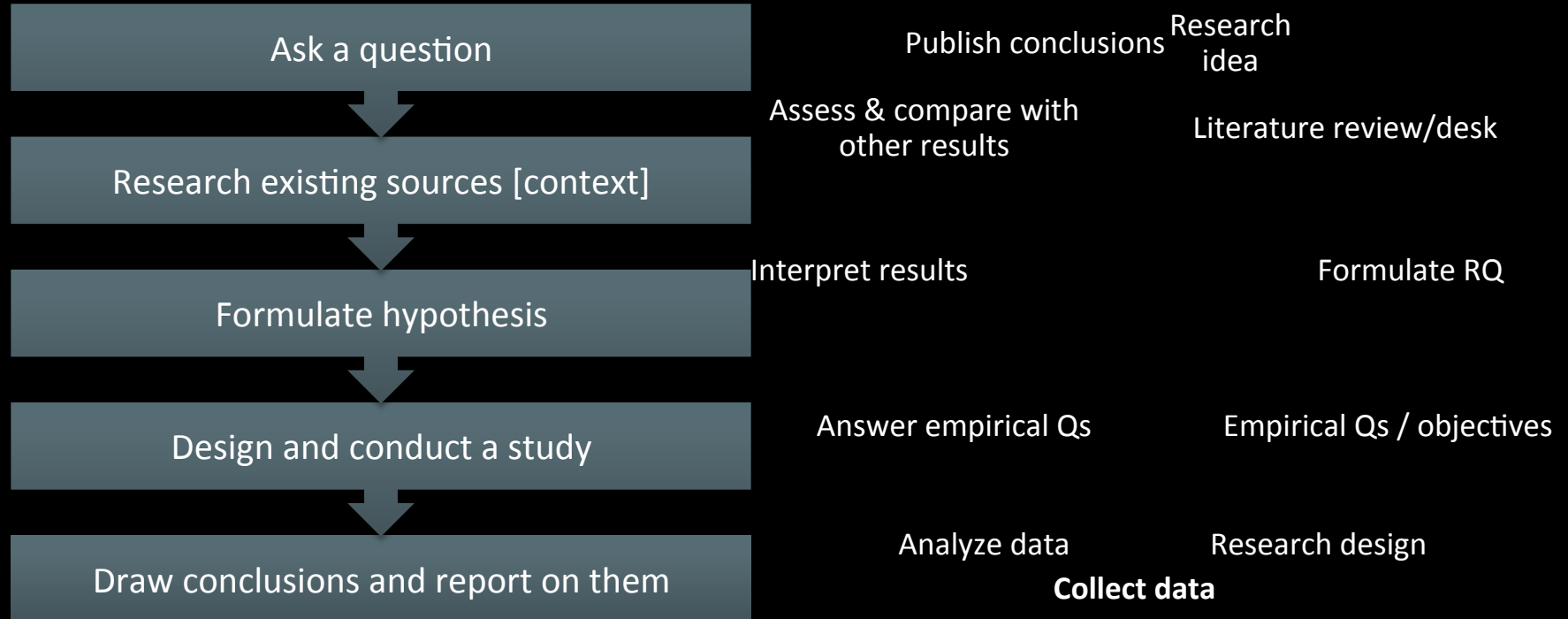
Linking methodological traditions with your independent research

Joint reflection

Hopefully satisfying and inspiring our curiosity



The scientific method and the ideal research process



Post-normal science, experimentation and surprises ... and new uses for art

Thomas Kuhn – 'normal' science

Funtowitz and Ravetz: where "facts [are] uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high and decisions urgent" scientific practice has to adapt to new social demands and criteria of success

All research / enquiry is curious, reflexive and open-ended but also situated, whether or not this is explicit or not.

Methods of gathering data

A method is “a route that leads to the goal” (Steiner Kvale in Warren 2011)

It can be a tool, but it can also be closer to a style of reasoning

What then is a methodology?

Methods of gathering data

Data is that which is given

'Data' is the new oil (it's mined)

See Annette N. Markham 2013 'Undermining data' <http://uncommonculture.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/4868/3749#author>

First Monday – Peer-reviewed journal on the Internet

Methods of gathering data

As a concept, gathering is a bit like discovery, it implies that there is something already out there to be plucked out.

- Most qualitative research takes a constructionist and interpretive-hermeneutic approach

Qualitative research as studying human behaviour

Obtrusive & unobtrusive

Participant & non-participant

Representing & intervening

Listening & soliciting

Creative & critical



Qualitative research as studying human behaviour

Obtrusive & unobtrusive

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Creative & critical

The human body as instrument of enquiry implies high levels of

- Subjectivity and meaning
- Situatedness
- Contextuality
- i.e. it's only going to be standardized up to a point

The field versus the (controlled) experiment

- Do not necessarily cancel each other out
- The field is likely to afford a more *emergent* style of data generation
 - It is likely to be dialogic
- Experiments can be *replicable* and *about testing* or *one-off* and *exploratory*
- Observation – documentation – conceptualization - & back again

Even within mainly constructionist fields, we can take a realist(ic) approach

- does the topic (site etc) really interest me?
- is this a problem amenable to scientific/systematic enquiry?
- are there adequate resources?
- will the research Q or process lead to unresolvable ethical problems?
- is the topic of theoretical or practical interest?

If you cheat on these you will probably regret it (H. Russel Bernard, *Social Research Methods*, e.g. 2013)

Data gathering as a specialist, expert, endeavour

Research implies an epistemology.

Research presumes and helps constitute an ontology – the census presumes but also enacts, subjects.

The words *data*, *gathering* and *methods* remain problematic but probably necessary!

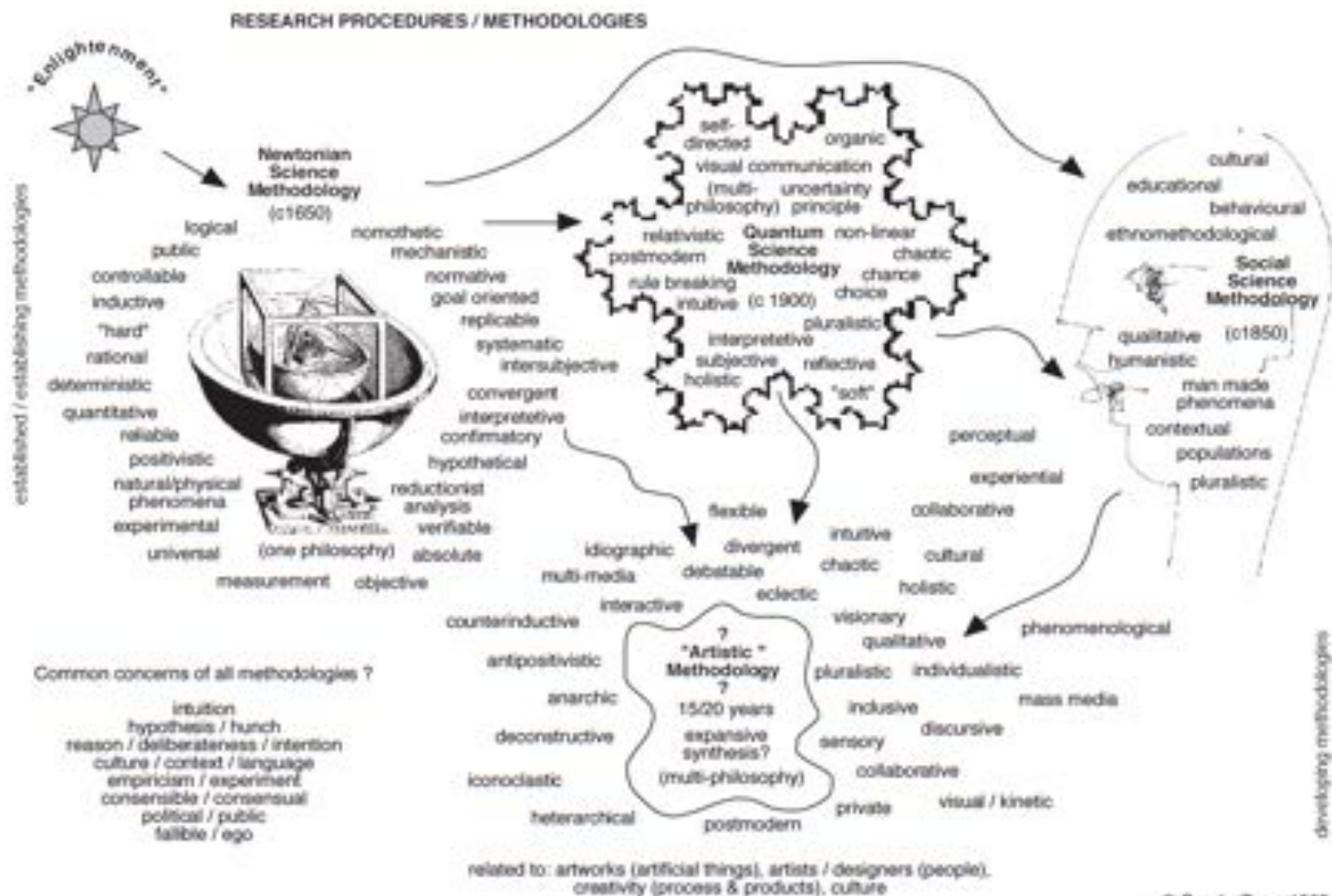
Who are we?

We all have an interest in recording observations of the world

In groups of three, introduce yourselves to each other and compare your pre-course assignment (10 minutes)

Each participant should report back on something they learned from another's experience (40 minutes)

Wrap-up (5 minutes)



Some concepts

- learning how to gather data and thinking critically about it



Standard methods in the social sciences

Surveys and questionnaires

Interviews

- *Special focus on object interviews*
- *Combining interviews with visual data*

Ethnographic research

- *In sociology and anthropology, marketing and product development*
- *Everywhere? An 'ethnographic principle' of seeing it from their p.o.v.*

Action research – seeks change

- *Everywhere? An 'ethnographic principle' of seeing it from their p.o.v.*

Experimental

- *In psychology, design. Everywhere?*

Research as intervention

Conventionally research on social behaviour has sought to *merely record what is out there*

Under conditions of rapid change and social tensions, research is an intervention and recognizes this. It is reflexive and cognizant of social power.



Traditions of qualitative research and disciplinary backgrounds

from Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis (2003) *Qualitative Research Practice*

- **Ethnography – anthropology, sociology – 'writing culture'**
- **Ethnomethodology – philosophy, sociology – 'everyday constructs'**
 - Conversation analysis, discourse analysis, protocol analysis (psychology)
- **Symbolic interactionism – social psychology**
 - Grounded theory
- **Constructivism - many disciplines, incl. history of science**
- **Critical theory - many sources, focus on material conditions**

The growing interest in fieldnotes

E.g. Roger Sanjek in anthropology

When everything is potentially interesting:

- Headnotes and fieldnotes
- Records – census returns and other official records; kinship diagrams and genealogies; taxonomies
- Journals and diaries, letters and emails
- Everything in your phone...

The trick is to keep track of this!

ON FIELDNOTES

- Are they for you or to share? What form do they take?
- What information do / should they include?
 - Physical setting, what people (others) do, patterns and frequencies of interaction, directions of action. Sometimes who is present & when.
 - Formal and informal actions. Verbal and nonverbal communication.
 - Things you expected to observe but did not.

ON FIELDNOTES

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- What information do / should they include?
 - Physical setting, what people (others) do, patterns and frequencies of interaction, directions of action. Sometimes who is present & when.
 - Formal and informal actions. Verbal and nonverbal communication.
 - Things you expected to observe but did not.
- Features of notes
 - Detailed and accurate, legible. Easy to follow – this can be fixed over time.
 - Descriptive to the degree you need and perhaps a little more.
 - You can add interpretive or reflective comments – usually kept separately.

One way of recording and organizing observations: fieldnotes as a table

REFLECTIVE COMMENTS (ON THE SITUATION / META-NOTES)	CONTENT / OBSERVATION	SPACE TO MAKE NOTES LATER
	180114, The Cafe, New Cross, London 11.14 (see 160401)	
<p>Front garden was v. tidy ... I'm surprised how easy it was to organize this interview.</p> <p>Given the recent tensions in the group, blah blah blah...</p>	<p>XX was already waiting for me. Recognized her from the photo. Shook hands and exchanged greetings. I expanded on the reason for the interview, and we agreed to recordi We sat at the table in the main room (see photos).</p>	<p>- To follow up by email or later interview:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where is YY? 2. Check blah blah – details don't make sense

Assignments and tasks



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<http://designmuseum.org/exhibitions/fear-and-love>,
Christian Meindertsma

What do we expect to generate on this course?

- Scratch notes, jottings, and mnemonics, on paper or on a device
- Photos, sketches, maps, logs
- Field reports
 - narrative
 - in tabular form (in columns)
- Transcripts, or textual representations of language and speech
- Workbook entries, a short essay – submit in MyCourses
- *Inscriptions* that help construct scientific facts (Latour & Woolgar)

A useful resource available via Aalto Information Services

Byrne, D. (2017). Data collection. *Project Planner*.
10.4135/9781526408563.

<http://methods.sagepub.com.libproxy.aalto.fi/project-planner/data-collection>

Successful completion of the course involves:

Attendance and active participation in classroom discussion and exercises (or prior arrangement with lecturer of substituting activities).

Preparatory readings.

Carrying out all practical tasks listed in the syllabus (1 - 10), including a final project to generate a small body of data and a reflection on the process.

Submitting entries in MyCourses for specific tasks. See Task Schedule.

MyCourses

- My Power Point Slides will be uploaded after each session.
- Submit specified tasks on MyCourses under *Assignments*.
- I will upload a Tasks Schedule for you to look at soon.
- There is a *General Discussion* forum on MyCourses if you want to share resources and ideas with others. Try to be clear and concise in your messages.
- Please try to avoid sending me email except when you are going to be absent. Remember, attendance is required unless otherwise agreed.

Task 2: Schedule an interview related to your own research

Schedule an interview linked to your own research project to be carried out before 30.1.2018.

This can be anyone, including a friend, but the focus is on your own research. No need to submit anything at this point. An interview report to be submitted 5.2.

Task 3: Observation or object interview on a wardrobe or public space by 20.1.

Continue in the area of your pre-course exercise. Define a broad theme or research topic to focus on. Go deeper into the material you observed in the pre-course exercise. See how revisiting the same (or related) site opens up new questions. What more you can find out about it in a 45 – 90 minute observation? What can you learn about your own skills of observation?

You can focus on something that caught your attention in Task 1 (a recurring event, a type of garment, a perceived problem, a material object or process).

You can observe it from a detached position or you can engage users/people in discussing it.

You can do a simple inventory or audit (classifications and lists). This will produce quantitative and qualitative information about a setting (e.g. wardrobe or public space). See readings for tips.

You can do an 'object interview' about it, invite an interviewee to reflect on what this material item means.

Or do something else, but make sure you produce notes to submit on MyCourses. In your written submission, include a note on what the theme or research topic was that you identified. And keep your data safe!

This might inspire you

<https://dscout.com/people-nerds/Paula-Zuccotti-objects-that-define-us>

<http://paulazuccotti.com/The-Book-The-Project>

Syllabus on MyCourses <https://mycourses.aalto.fi/>

WEEK 1

Mon 15.1.2018 9:15 - 12:00: Observing and documenting human behaviour

Additional readings: [Gans](#), H. J. (2011) 'Participant observation in the era of 'ethnography'', in Atkinson, Paul & Sara Delamont (eds) *SAGE Qualitative Research Methods*.

[Walford](#), Geoffrey (2009) 'The practice of writing ethnographic fieldnotes', *Ethnography and Education*, 4:2, 117-130.

[Lehtonen](#), Turg-Kimmo & [Pasi Mäenpää](#) (1997) 'Shopping in the East Centre Mall', in Falk, [Pasi](#) and Colin B. [Cambell](#) (eds), *The Shopping Experience*.

[Geertz](#), Clifford (1973) 'Thick description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in Geertz (ed.) *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books.

[Doloughan](#), Fiona J. (2002) 'The language of reflective practice in art and design', *Design Issues*, Vol.18(2): 57-64.

[Feyerabend](#), Paul (1988) *Against Method*.

Task 2: Schedule an interview linked to your own research project to be carried out before 30.1.2018. This can be anyone, including a friend, but the focus is on your own research. No need to submit anything at this point.

Task 3: Practical exercise. Either do an observation exercise or an object interview related to your chosen stream (max 90 minutes). Once you have finished, compile and submit a short MyCourses entry, e.g. as a [fieldnotes](#) table, in MyCourses by midnight 20.01.18 (Saturday). Make sure your own notes are in a format that you can retrieve and make sense of later. Instructions will follow.

Before launching into the task read the following:

In stream 1, wardrobe studies: [Woodward](#), S. (2016) ' "Humble" blue jeans: Material culture approaches to understanding the ordinary, global, and the personal', in Heike [Jenss](#) (ed.) *Fashion Studies*, <https://aalto.finna.fi/Record/alli.721891>

In stream 2, spatial studies: [Matan](#), Anne and Peter Newman (2012) 'Jan [Gehl](#) and new visions for walkable Australian cities', *World Transport Policy and Practice*, online: https://espace.curtin.edu.au/bitstream/handle/20.500.11937/9921/191158_71520_PN_WTPP.4.pdf?sequence=2

Tues 16.1.2018 10:00 - 12:00: Interviewing basics, including access and ethics

Be careful with these peculiar lecture times...

Mon 15.1.2018 9:15 -12:00: Observing and documenting

Tues 16.1.2018 **10:00** - 12:00: Interviewing 1

Weds 17.1.2018 9:15-12:00: Interviewing 2

22.1.2018 **10:00** - 12:00: Cultural probes

23.1.2018 9:15 - 12:00: Documents and other objects

24.1.2018 9:15 -12:00 Visual methods: Anna Kholina, PhD candidate, DoD

29.1.2018 9:15-12:00: Ethnographies and case studies

30.1.2018 9:15 - 12:00 Speculative and activist research

31.1.2018 **10:00** - 12:00 Focus group discussions

**I look forward to
learning with you!**