



Aalto University  
School of Arts, Design  
and Architecture

# ARTS-L0130

# Methods of gathering data

*Eeva Berglund – 7 January 2019*  
*Introduction to the course*

# Outline of the session

Methods of gathering data? What is that?

Who are we?

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**

**Practical tasks**

**Readings**

**Joint reflection**

**Hopefully satisfying and inspiring our curiosity**



# What we might do on this course

**Questionnaires**

**Audits**

**Interviews and focus groups**

**Participant and non-participant  
observation**

**Varieties of documentation**

**Action research**

**Activism**

**Artivism**

**Contextually**

**Comparatively**

**Historically**

**Biographically**

**Sequentially**

**Through practice**

**Through devices**

**With others**



# What we might do on this course

**Generate**

**Handle**

**Analyse**

**Collect**

**Explore**

**Find**

**Create**

**Produce**

**Share**

**Problematise**

**Information**

**Intelligence**

**Data**

**Wisdom**

**Skills**

**Problems**

**Ways forward**

**Journal articles**

**Doctoral dissertations**



# What we might do on this course

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Why should

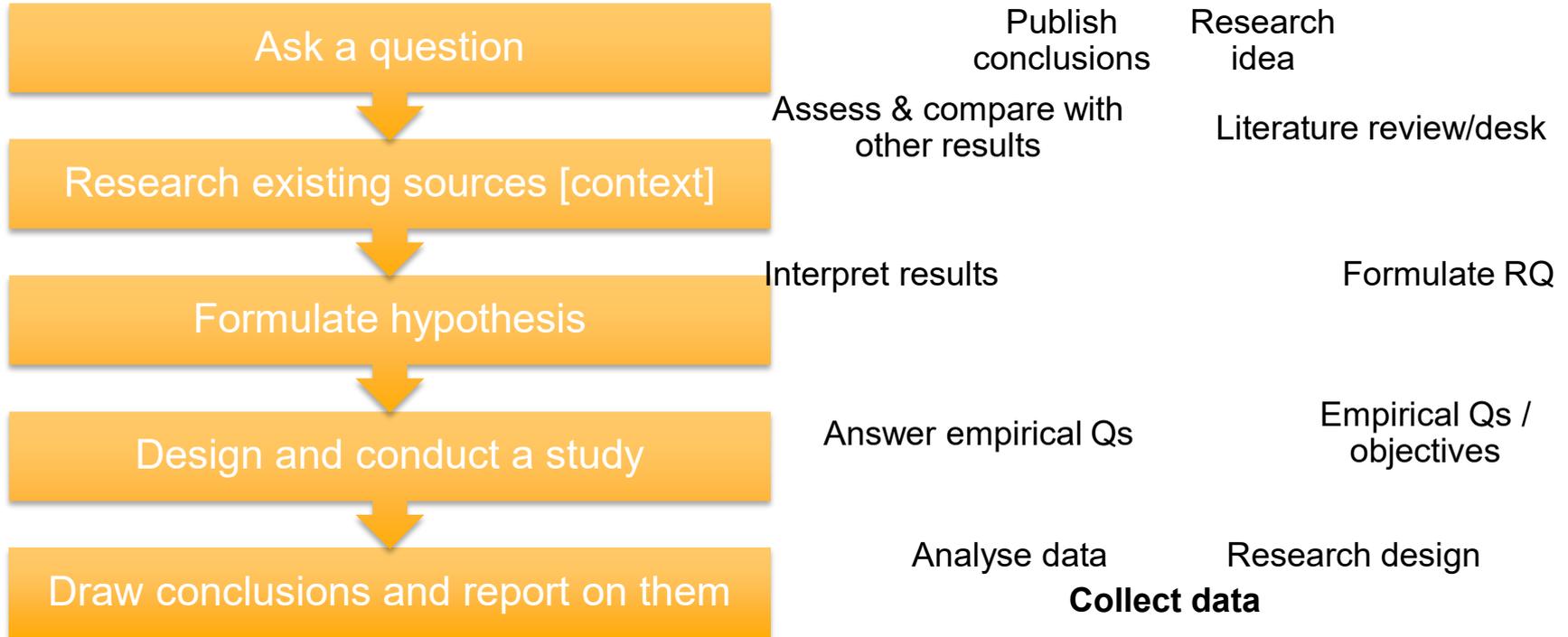
Journal articles

Doctoral dissertations

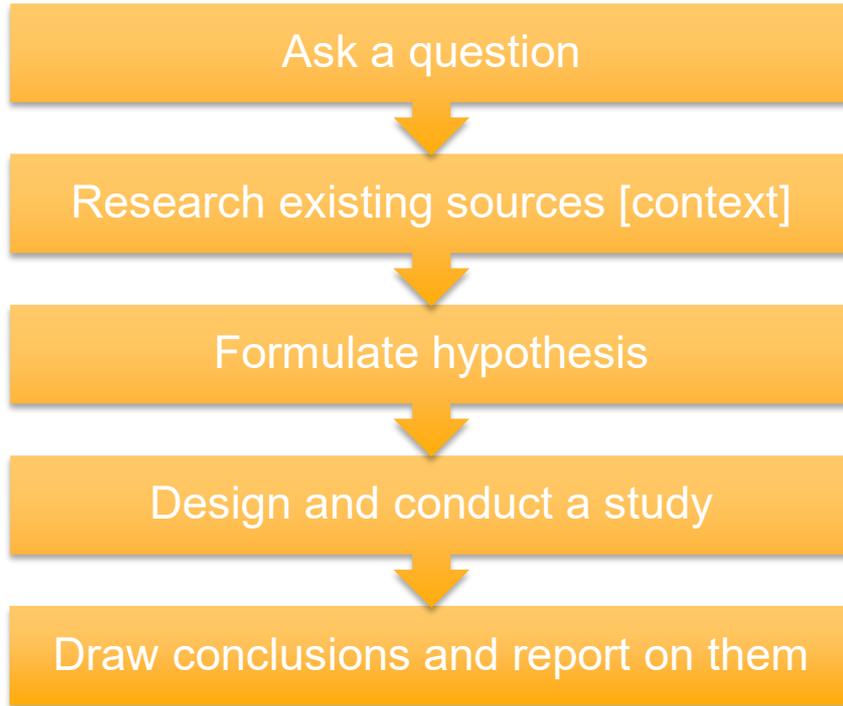
# FOREGROUNDING HUMAN INSTITUTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS



# The scientific method and the ideal research process



# The ideal scientific method and the probable research process



Analyse material  
Assess & compare with  
other results  
Publish  
Interpret results  
Answer empirical Qs  
Analyse data  
Research  
idea  
literature review/desk  
Empirical Qs /  
objectives  
Formulate RQ  
Research  
Collect data  
Question data  
Question questions  
material

# Collaborative Confusion Among DIY Makers: Ethnography and Expertise in Creating Knowledge for Environmental Sustainability

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## ABSTRACT

Eco-oriented makers and grassroots subcultures experimenting with new technologies and ways to design sustainable futures are increasingly the subject of research. As activists address problems of environmental sustainability beyond institutional contexts, their work may appear vague, even confused, yet their activities are underpinned by intense and principled commitment. Working through their confusion, many DIY maker communities build new understandings about what 'sustainability' could mean. We argue that herein lie important resources for new knowledge and, further, that ethnography is the ideal way to track these processes of learning and knowledge production. The

# Who are we?



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# 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 (30 minutes)**

**Wrap-up (5 minutes)**



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

# BREAK



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# 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

<https://www.lynda.com/learning-paths/IT/become-a-data-scientist> and LinkedIn



**Data Science Foundations: Data Mining** with Barton Poulson

Get started in data mining. This introduction covers data mining techniques such as data reduction, clustering, association analysis, and more, with data mining tools like R and Python.

4h 40m • COURSE



**Excel 2016: Managing and Analyzing Data** with Dennis Taylor

Learn easy-to-use commands, features, and functions for managing and analyzing large amounts of data in Excel 2016.

3h • COURSE



**Data Visualization: Storytelling** with Bill Shander

Learn the keys to telling a story with data from data visualization expert Bill Shander.

1h 37m • COURSE

# 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 or extracted.

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

See, Jussi Parikka 'Digging' in Lury, Celia, et al., eds. *Routledge Handbook of Interdisciplinary Research Methods*. Routledge, 2018.  
It "opens up what conditions experience".

# Qualitative research as studying human behaviour

**Obtrusive & unobtrusive**

**Participant & non-participant**

**Representing & intervening**

**Listening & soliciting**

**Creative & critical**

**The human body as instrument of enquiry implies high levels of**

- Subjectivity and meaning
- Situatedness
- Contextuality (even risk)
- i.e. findings and methods can only be standardized up to a point, but they **can** be shared

# 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?
  - And should the definition/understanding of 'scientific' be scrutinised?
- are there adequate resources to find out something of value?
- will the research Q or process lead to unresolvable ethical problems?
- is the topic of theoretical or practical interest?

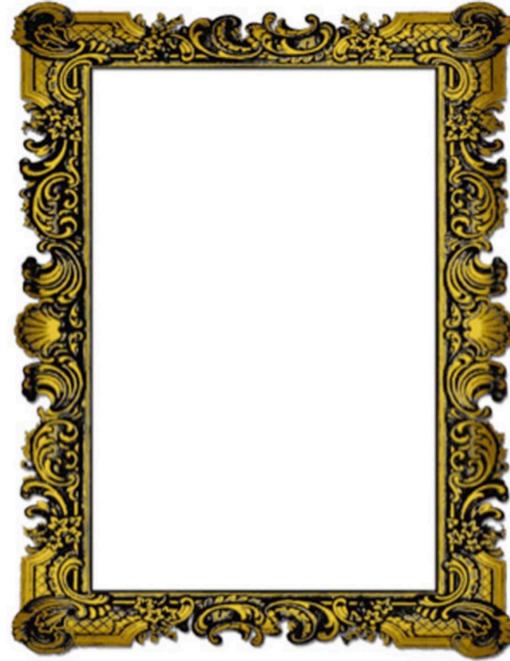
If you cheat on these you will probably regret it (H. Russel Bernard, *Social Research Methods*, e.g. 2013)

# 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!



# Thick or thin?



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# Thick description as sensitive understanding

Gilbert Ryle (1949) *The Concept of Mind*

Clifford Geertz (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*



Eero Järnefelt 1893 *Raatajat rahanalaiset or Kaski* (burn-beating or slash-and-burn agriculture)  
Reused in 2018 to make fun of President Trump

# Thick and thin description

- See C. Geertz 1973
- Thickness requires:
  - What is said
  - How it is said and how people act
  - What artefacts are involved and what impacts they have
- Thickness implies rich, sustained and carefully situated contextual elements

# Comments and questions on the readings



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# Assignments and tasks



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# 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 practical exercises in and beyond the classroom.

Submitting entries in MyCourses for specific tasks. See Full Syllabus under 'Materials'.

A portfolio of your data to work with on the course 'Analysing qualitative data'.

# MyCourses

- My Power Point Slides will be uploaded after each session.
- Submit specified tasks on MyCourses under *Assignments*.
- 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.
- Do we want to maintain a **GLOSSARY?**
- 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 and conduct an interview

*Schedule an interview to be carried out and written up.*

*Write out a loose interview protocol allowing for a semi-structured, conversational interview of an appropriate length. The theme should connect somehow with the topic of 'home' and pick up on something that you found out in your pre-class observation exercise.*

*You can also discuss the meanings of home, e.g. explore how your and your interviewee's experience of home might become an interesting or problematic issue in relation to the topic you are discussing.*

*Your interviewee can be anyone, including a friend. An interview report to be submitted 15.1. Suggestions on how to do this will be provided tomorrow (session 2).*

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

