



Aalto University
School of Arts, Design
and Architecture

ARTS-L0108

Methods of gathering data

*Eeva Berglund – 15.1.2019 - Documents, objects and other
research participants*

Who/what *participates* in research (methods)?

1. Short revision – what we have learned and what has challenged us
2. Participation and inter-disciplinarity – Marres
 - Experiments in sociology
3. Documents as data, probes and partners
 - not forgetting librarians and archivists
4. Probe kit exercise – time to work in class in your groups

Recap: Key qualitative methods

- Observation
- Interview
- Intervention
- Document analysis

⇒ All of the above needs to be generated – even written and digitised documents

⇒ All of the above can yield thick or thin description

Using experiments to generate materials

A classic example:

Harold Garfinkel's breaching experiments as part of ethnomethodology

e.g. sitting on the bus *the wrong way*

Recap: Research resources beyond 'data'

Scholarship is a joint exercise. Acknowledge the importance of:

- letters and emails and random conversations
- hastily scribbled notes about other people's work (seminars etc.)
- insights of interview respondents
- i.e. other people

⇒ traces of this stuff are also worth filing and labelling

'Naturally occurring data' – I believe it does exist!

We can make and communicate observations of 'data' that we generate 'out there'.

But we can also include previously organised materials = archives

Note: archives are created. They speak differently to researchers. Yet they resist "rampant relativism", like objects that one must attend to, they are obdurate and guide research.

Conceptually: a constructivist or neo-materialist stance, a Deleuzian or Foucauldian or Baradian stance (See Tamboukou on Dora Carrington's letters). Discourses are material things disclosed in engagements...

Insight beyond language

**Feeling – doing – documenting
– feeling – documenting –
doing**

Theory is always also practice



Pixelache 'unconference', Helsinki, 2014

Insight beyond language

Feeling – doing – documenting
– feeling – documenting –
doing

Theory is always also practice

'Knowledge' can be as weak a
term as 'data'

Article

Science & Technology Studies XX(X)

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 ethnographer participates in local confusion over values and the definitions of sustainability, but also about what constitutes useful knowledge. Supported by STS (and other) literature on environmental expertise, we argue that maker communities' own acknowledgement of this vagueness actually makes possible a position from which epistemological authority can be reasserted.

Discussing the texts

In two groups discuss the required texts for Monday and today

Marres, Noortje (2012) 'Experiment: the experiment in living', in Wakeford, Nina and Celia Lury (eds) *Inventive Methods*.

Klepp, Ingun Grimstad and Mari Bjerck (2014) 'A methodological approach to the materiality of clothing: Wardrobe studies', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, Vol 17(4): 373-386.

Hoskins, Janet (2006) 'Agency, biography and objects', in *Handbook of material culture*, 74-84.

Tamboukou, Maria (2014) 'Archival research: unravelling space/time/matter entanglements and fragments', *Qualitative Research*, Vol14(5): 617-633.

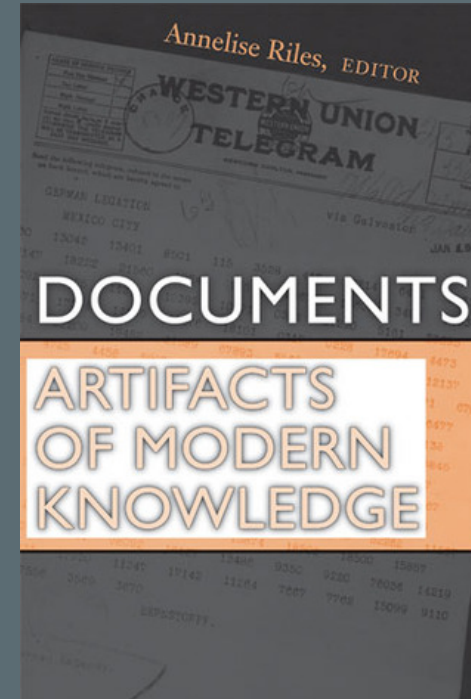
Freire, P. (2000) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*.

Openjuru, G. L. et al. (2015) 'Despite knowledge democracy and community-based participatory action research: Voices from the global south and excluded north still missing', *Action Research*, Vol. 13(3): 219-229.

Documents

Documents as information and as artefact

- Personal or historical archives
- Public records
 - Statistics, probate inventories, court transcripts, Mass Observation exercises, AV archives
- Policy documents
- News media
- Fiction
- Online sources?



Non-humans – a trendy but welcome addition in Anthropocene times

Non-humans in social science herald a paradigm shift

- Conventional sociology could it appear as if toxic waste was immaterial to the development of environmental protest
- Berglund, E 2001 'Self-defeating environmentalism? models and questions from an ethnography of toxic waste protest', *Critique of Anthropology* Vol. 21(3): 317-336.

We ask about the mutual co-constitution of elements in the world – entanglements of all kinds – and the way the world is composed.

The object

- Focus on materiality as a quality
- Still focus on how 'things' mean
- Leading to object interviews
 - The social life of non-living things
 - In-depth interviewing with one or more human participants
- 'Objects of attention' exhibition in Tallinn,
http://www.etdm.ee/en/news?news_id=459

The Thing

- Or Elizabeth Grosz, 'The Thing', in *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*.
 - Matter already configured. With semiotic and discursive dimensions.

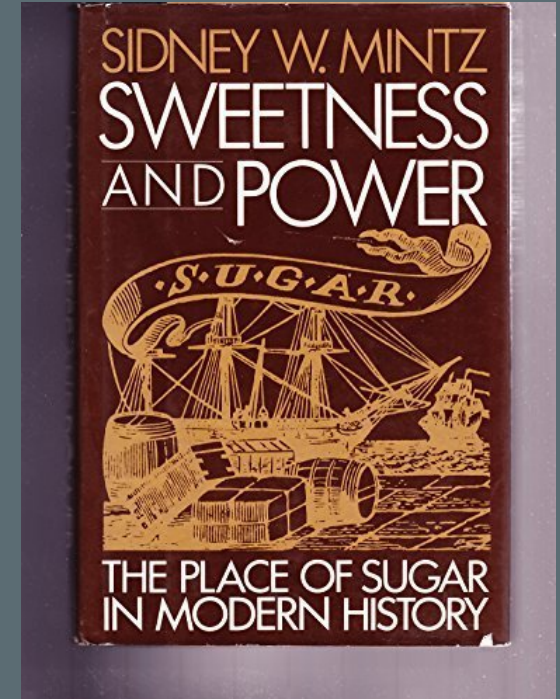
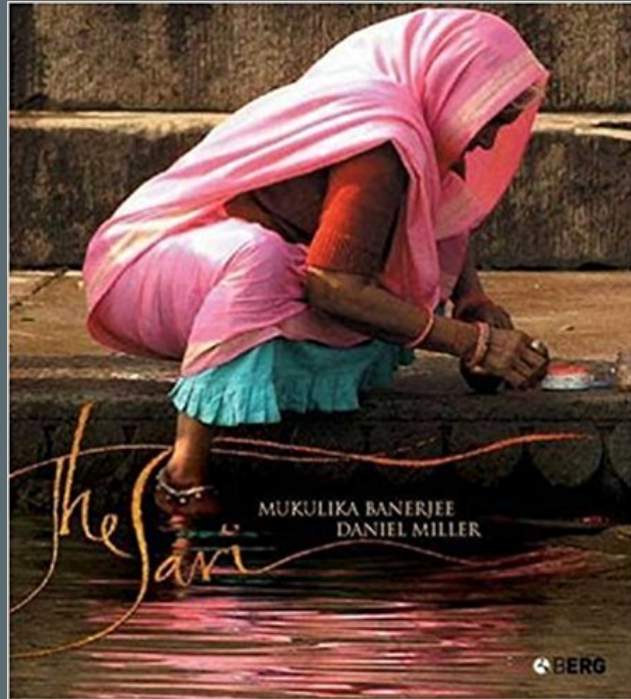
- Bruno Latour *Dingpolitik* as an improvement on dualistic epistemology and politics

"By the German neologism *Dingpolitik*, we wish to designate a risky and tentative set of experiments in probing just what it would mean for political thought to turn 'things' around and to become slightly more *realistic* than has been attempted up to now".

In Latour B. (2005) 'From realpolitik to Dingpolitik, in *MAKING THINGS PUBLIC*

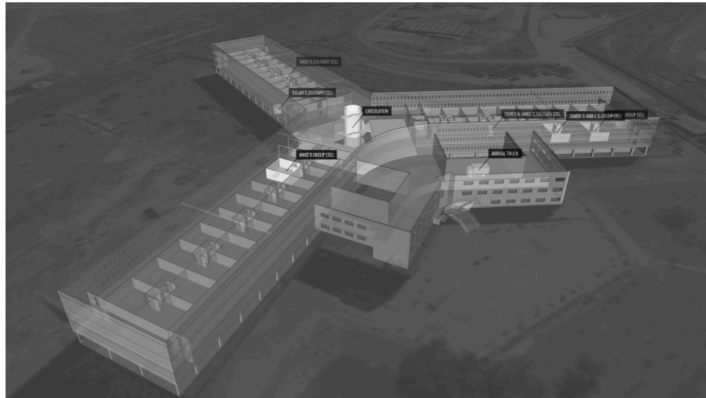
⇒ methodologically one follows the network

Studying (out from) THE THING



An example of working with data, probes, partners

In one of their recent high-profile projects, FA teamed with Amnesty International investigators to create [an architectural model of Saydnaya Prison](#), a Syrian military facility near Damascus notorious for torture and summary executions. Access to the prison, controlled by the Bashar al-Assad regime, was impossible, so FA used aerial satellite images and testimony from survivors about how the prison sounded to reconstruct the interior.



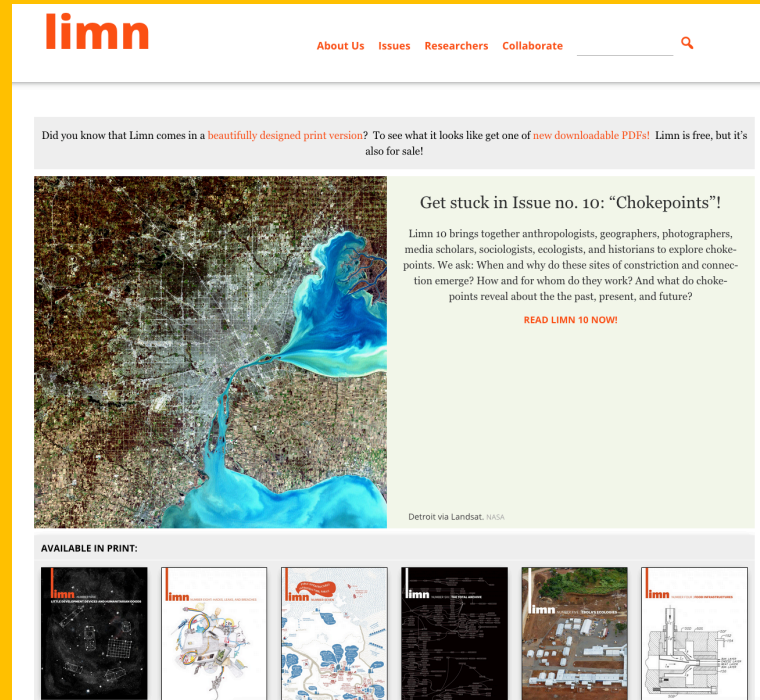
Forensic Architecture

FA's model of Saydnaya Prison

For Amnesty International, more accustomed to gathering evidence using pen and paper, the collaboration was a window into entirely new ways of

- *Architect* journal:
- **The Rise of Forensic Architecture**
- **How Eyal Weizman and his London-based team use design tools to investigate human rights abuses around the globe.**
- By [Andrew Curr](#)
- https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/culture/the-rise-of-forensic-architecture_o

More good examples from limn.it



The screenshot shows the website interface for limn.it. At the top left is the 'limn' logo in red. To its right are navigation links: 'About Us', 'Issues', 'Researchers', and 'Collaborate'. A search icon is located on the far right of the top navigation bar. Below the navigation bar is a light gray banner with the text: 'Did you know that Limn comes in a [beautifully designed print version](#)? To see what it looks like get one of [new downloadable PDFs](#)! Limn is free, but it's also for sale!'. The main content area features a large image on the left showing a satellite view of a river delta with a blue overlay representing water flow. To the right of the image is the article title 'Get stuck in Issue no. 10: “Chokepoints”!' followed by a paragraph of text: 'Limn 10 brings together anthropologists, geographers, photographers, media scholars, sociologists, ecologists, and historians to explore chokepoints. We ask: When and why do these sites of constriction and connection emerge? How and for whom do they work? And what do chokepoints reveal about the the past, present, and future?'. Below the text is a red button that says 'READ LIMN 10 NOW!'. At the bottom of the article section, it says 'Detroit via Landsat, NASA'. Below the article is a section titled 'AVAILABLE IN PRINT:' which displays six small thumbnail images of the journal's print covers, each with a different design and color scheme.

Also: Landscape as sedimented social history



Blenheim Palace grounds, landscaped in the 18th century

- *Landschaft* and *landsting*: concepts that always included territories, objects, people and norms
- Olwig, K. (1996) 'Recovering the substantive nature of landscape', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86(4): 630–653.

Task 7: working with things 'conventionally': Inventory, 'space audit' or object interview

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.

Produce your own notes and file them. Write a report that others could make sense of. Do this for your portfolio. Indicate (somehow) how it connects with other bits of work you've done on the course.

**Work on your probe
exercise – how do the
readings link to the
task?**



**Note on readings: read
Finch on focus groups
before Tuesday 22nd**

