

Gathering material

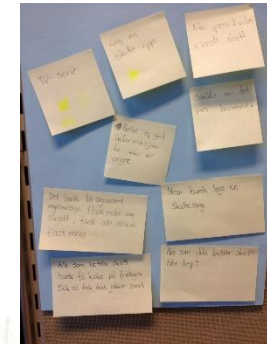
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January 31, 2018

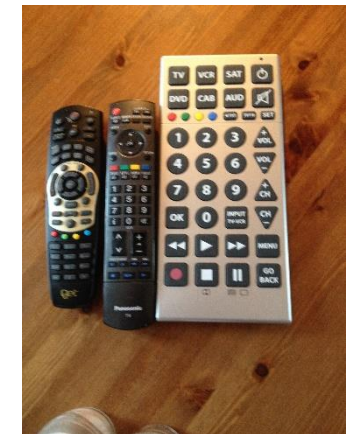
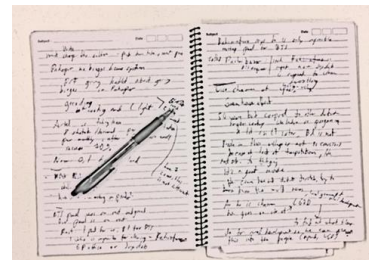
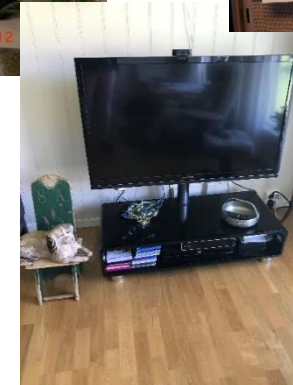
Guri Verne, Design group

Qualitative material comes from

Naturally occurring settings
Workshops
Experiments



Observation
Interview
Documents
Photos
Video



OBSERVATION

- Observation is a way of generating empirical material in *naturally occurring settings*.
- Naturally occurring data is coined by what you want to do with them
 - no data is 'untouched by human hands' (Silverman 2005)

Observation can be:

- Passive observation
- Participant observation

- Getting access
- Becoming an «apprentice» (Crang & Cook 2007)



WHY OBSERVATION?

- What people say they do and what we observe them do is not the same (ideal and manifest behavior) (Blomberg et al. 1993 + Crang and Cook 2007).
- Besides conversing with the one(s) studied, during participant observation, you can study/note the following when conducting observation – this also goes for interviewing:
 - Gestures
 - Cues that lend meaning to words
 - Body language
 - Setting of location
 - Other people present (The Sage Handbook 2005 + Crang & Cook 2007)
- No neutral positions and representations



OBSERVATION HOW-TO

Note taking is important when observing

- Where are we, weather, time of day, location, who is present

(for full list see Crang & Cook 2007:51-52)

+ photos, video, audio

- Targeted note-taking: Focus can be on objects, people, events, place (Blomberg et al. 1993) – could be on
 - human-artifact relation
 - concepts practiced (e.g. identity, cooperation, or e.g. users)
 - activities (planned, unplanned, where, how)
 - interactions (with whom/what, how, where, frequency, directions, forms of communication (formal, informal, silent, loud, noise, etc.))
 - patterns, deviations, routines, rhythms, etc.(Crang & Cook 2007)
- It depends on your research question/topic.
- Be aware of *loaded categories*
 - instead provide detailed descriptions

INTERVIEW

- Interviewing is part of participant observation
- Not naturally occurring. 'Constructed' by researchers, and, as such, do not provide direct access to the experiences of the ones studied
(Silverman 1998)

Interviews can be:

- Structured interviews (planned, strict procedure to be followed)
- Semi-structured interviews (few questions / a checklist)
- Unstructured interviews (open-ended, no planned topic)
(Sage Handbook 2005; Madden 2010)

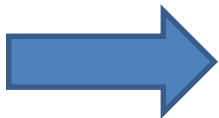
INTERVIEW HOW-TO

Aim: The long stories of events

How to ask questions?

- 'Grand-tour': what, who, where and how?
-> their words, their version
- Wherefore:
 - What do you mean when you say..
 - Can you tell more about how it can be that you do this, not that
 - How did you get involved, interested, enrolled (Crang & Cook 2007)
- 'Why' questions can be asked within qualitative research, but avoid using them (or wait as long as possible)
 - they lead to a path of means and ends /
 - presuppose that the person knows why
(The Sage Handbook 2005 + Silverman 2005).
- Be aware of loaded/ directive questions (Madden 2010, Crang&Cook 2007)
 - Based on speculations or false assumptions

Intersubjective understanding between you and your interviewee



INTERVIEW continued

- “It is better to appear slightly dim and too agreeable than to give any sign of a critical or sardonical attitude” (McCracken 1988, in Crang&Cook 2007, p 69).
- Practical:
- Take care that your recording equipment is
 - with you
 - functioning
 - with batteries
 - enough memory
 - familiar to you
- Take notes in addition to recording
 - Note the time often
- Transcribing takes time!
- Ethical considerations (informed consent – see course page for an example)



[Source: Warfieldian](#)
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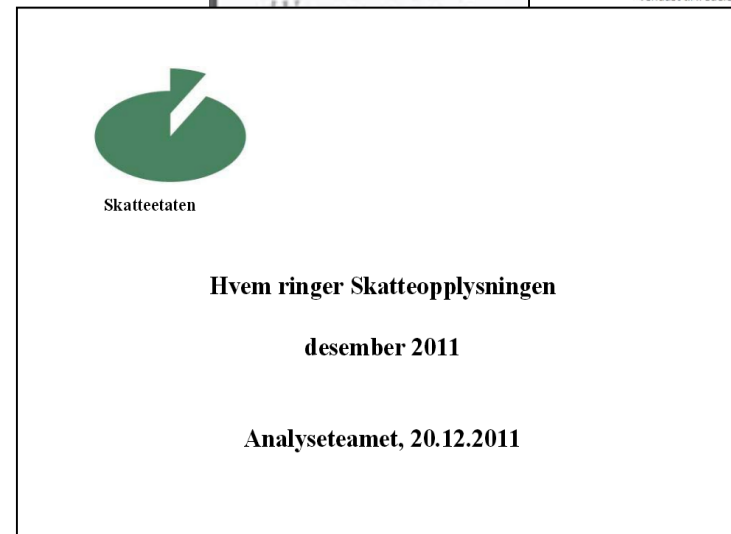
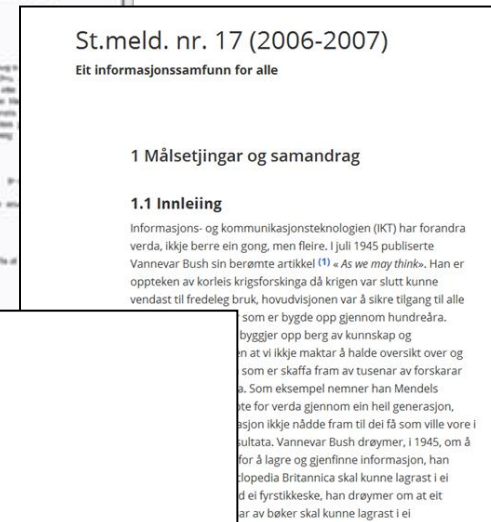
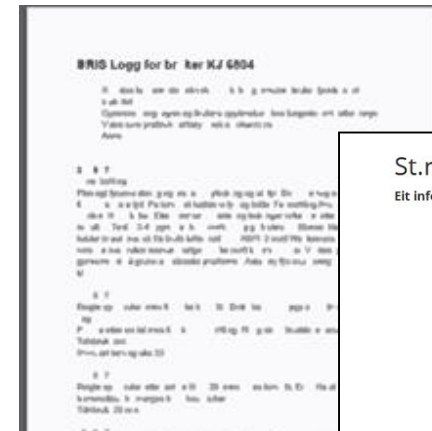


DOCUMENTS

Texts that serve as empirical material

- Newspapers
- Local / state archives
- TV, radio, internet
- Screen dumps
- Letters
- Agreements
- Annual reports
- Market surveys
- Brochures

(see eg. Crang & Cook 2007:67)

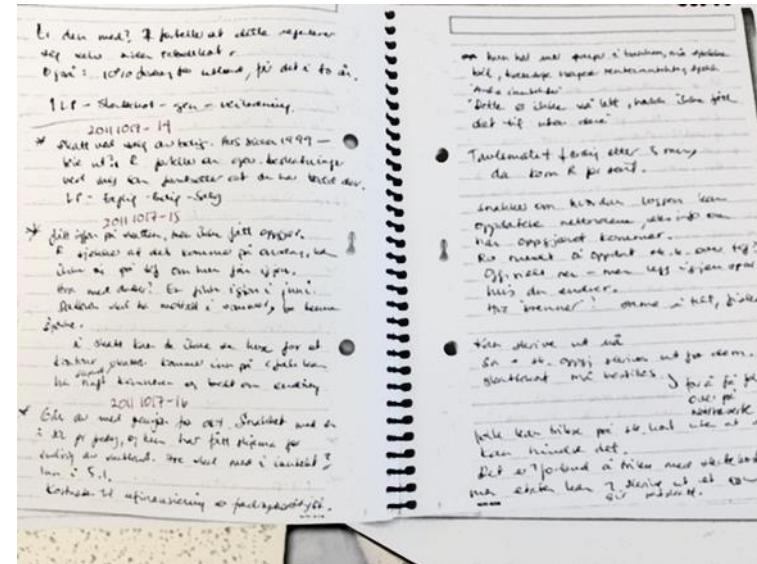


Oral presentation

Each group is responsible for presenting a paper to the class **and** questions to another group's presentation to be discussed in class

Today we distribute the papers

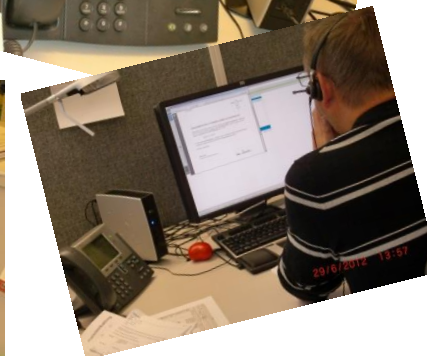
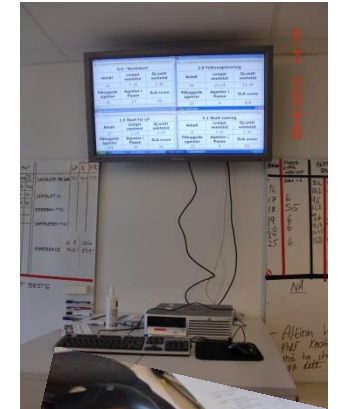
Listening in



PHOTOGRAPHS

- Strategy using photos: who takes the photos (researcher, researched?)
- Document and amplify text (authenticate, “being there”)
- Photos as a way of prompting reflections/ memories
- Photos can contextualize (visual documentation) and connect the viewer to the argument (vis-à-vis text)
- Photos can be helpful in studies on social change
- Photos as material objects (part of living)
- Analyzing still/moving pictures (notes/ transcripts, patterns, symbols, who, how, what)

Crang & Cook 2007 + The Sage Handbook 2005



USE OF PHOTOS

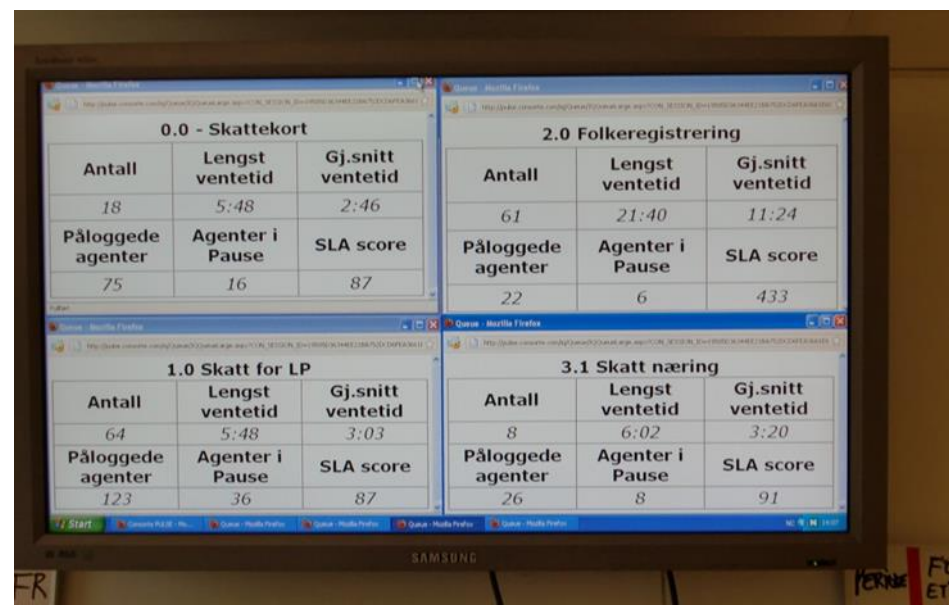
- The researcher takes photos
- Use already existing photos
- Asking people to take photos
- Constructing useful data from photos

Crang & Cook 2007 + The Sage Handbook 2005

PHOTOGRAPHS 1

- Researcher takes photos
 - Take down observation “scratch notes” (so you know what’s on/behind/outside the photos)
 - Photos as documentation (complementing fieldnotes, memory, what used to appear strange)
 - No unmediated reality

Crang & Cook 2007 + The Sage Handbook 2005



PHOTOGRAPHS 2

- Use already existing photos
 - Discuss photos -> multiple viewpoints

Crang & Cook 2007 + The Sage Handbook 2005



“Skrapa komager”, Anne Katrine Dolven, Photo: Theirey Bal, STORMEN, Bodøs nye bibliotek og konserthus, Source: nrk Nordland

What about this photo?



Male and female doorknockers in Iran, photo: Paul Keller, CC BY 2.0

PHOTOGRAPHS 3

- Asking people to take photos
 - Serve as projective stimuli
 - Getting pictures is more important than fine art
 - Their story, their meaning
 - Both description and action?

VIDEO

Much of what goes for photos goes for video, but pay notice to....

- Think about: framing, focus, distance, angle, point of view, shot duration, tracking, cutting, continuity between shots
- Video can be transcribed into text and analyzed as such (but it depends on what you want to do: to hand in a written thesis, an appendix with a movie, a movie) – see e.g. Suchman & Trigg (1991) for example of transcribed video
- If you choose to transcribe, remember descriptions of setting, persons present, interactions, etc. as when you do observation/interviews.
- Always take down observation “scratch notes” when you film
- What kind of equipment (software) do you have to edit video? – what about hardware? – do you have the expertise to use editing software or do you know somebody who can help you?
- What do you want to use the video for?
- Time consuming!!
- Seek informed consent and preserve subject anonymity

A transcription example

Analysing how design workshop participants used the Color Table:

Time code fixed cam	Time code mobile cam	Transcript	Description of events	Panorama	Changing viewpoint (pan)	Flow type	Flow token color (rectangular)	Token location	User	Content card	Token Color	Token location	User
11:14:28			CJ picks content card from the content board and places it on the table	P6						Content sheet 1, row4, col 2 - Bridge			CJ
11:15:36			AS changes position of purple token	P6						Content sheet 1, row4, col 2 - Bridge	Purple	Map	AS
11:24:12	11:23:53		HW place a flow card on the RFID reader	P1		Pedestrian	card assigned to orange		HW				
11:27:18			IW suggest the group set another flow the purple flow tokens	P1			Purple	in hand	IW				
11:38:00			SK minor adjustment to blue token	P1						Cafe	Blue	Map	SK

Workshops

Is it a naturally occurring setting?
Design, observation or both?

Elements of

- Observation
- Focus group
- Interview
- Document analysis
- Design
- Prototyping

Depending on your research aims

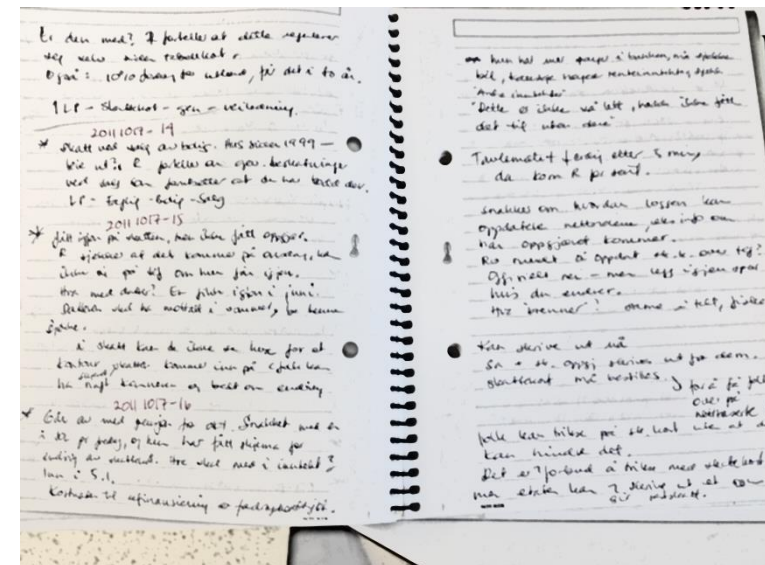
Design methods and research methods

Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action



NOTE TAKING

- Used both within interview and observation.
- Keep a journal, field diary or note book throughout the research process (Crang and Cook 2007).
- Jot down what you observe/ encounter/ hear/ smell/ engage in / non-verbal communication / tone of voice / etc.



FIELD NOTES are notes you

- Jot down of impressions in the field while (participant-) observing, listening in, talking, asking, doing
- Write down (each day) after your empirical study – reflections, questions to ask, your reaction, etc. (these notes are “**fieldnote records**” Sanjek 1990).
- Take when you engage in direct conversations about a topic (interview) and write answers down verbatim away from ongoing activities (**notes of “transcription”**, Clifford 1990)
- For example:
 - what artifact is this, answer
 - what do you call it, answer
 - what do you use it for, answer
 - when, answer
 - how is it different from x artifact you use, answer
 - when do you use it, answer
 - do others use it, answer
 - for the same purpose as you, answer,
 - etc



DESCRIPTIVE FIELD NOTES

- When you write up your impressions or ‘verbatim’:
- make “a more or less coherent representation of an observed cultural reality. While still piecemeal and rough, such field descriptions are designed to serve as a data base for later writing an interpretation aimed at the production of a finished account.

[...] it involves [...] a turning *away* from dialogue and observation toward a separate place of writing, a place for reflection, analysis, and interpretation.” (Clifford 1990:51--52, original italic).

Constructing useful data

- “Any kind of transcription, whether of audio or video data, is by definition a process of transformation, where complex, richly situated phenomena are reduced for the purpose of analysis” (Flewitt 2006)
- Systematic notes about contents
- Interpreting visual language of the pictures
- Visual language and filmic practice
- Multi-method to understand use and meaning

Issues to consider

- «To imagine that behavioral patterns become visible and self-explanatory in a videotape is analogous to believing that a photograph reveals the diagnosis of a patient's illness. [...] the expertise is in the mind and technique of the analyst, not in the recording itself". [Conducting field work is a matter of] "selectivity and interpretation that go into the process of gathering careful ethnographic [material], writing useful fieldnotes [...], and analyzing the [material] in an appropriate and systematic way." (Forsythe 1999:132-133).
- "Recent critical work has [...] highlighted three problematic issues regarding the 'reality' of photography, film, video and other visual media":
 - First, photography can never show unmediated reality.
 - Second, still and moving pictures are often bound into existing discourses.
 - Third, such photographs were also used to help 'reconstruct' visions of the other (Crang & Cook 2007:105-106).
- Ethical aspects – seek informed consent and subject anonymity.
- Research sensitivity: do not take photos if they violate norms or feelings.

Summing up generating material

- A method may not work
- Other methods may work
 - have a repository of methods and mix
- Re-think as you learn more
- There is no guarantee of a convergent account from using multiple methods
 - No “triangulation” for accuracy
 - Divergence can be interesting

Literature not listed on syllabus

- Clifford, J. (1990): Notes on (Field)notes. In Sanjek, R. (edt.): *Fieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology*. Cornell University Press. Pp. 47-70.
- Madden, R., (2010): *Being Ethnographic. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*, Sage
- Mautner, T. (2005): *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*. Penguin Books.
- Sanjek, R. (1990): A vocabulary for Fieldnotes. In Sanjek, R. (edt.): *Fieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology*. Cornell University Press. Pp. 92-121.
- Silverman, D. (2005): *Doing Qualitative Research*. Sage.
- The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research 2005

