



## Exploring fieldwork: A critical consideration of empirical methods and habits-of-mind in design research

7,5 hp

*-- a collaboration between the D! - Swedish Faculty for Design Research and Research Education, ResArc - Swedish Research School in Architecture and SLU, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences*

### Course responsible:

Maria Hellström Reimer, Swedish Design Faculty;

Thomas Binder/Joachim Halse, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design;

Andrea Kahn, Columbia University (?)

### Examiner:

Maria Hellström Reimer, Swedish Design Faculty

### Overall theme

The course addresses the 'field' or site of 'method' in design-led research. Broadly, we are interested in exploring the back-and-forth interaction of research intentions and practices as these shape research outcomes (knowledge production).

Through close readings and tentative 'in situ' field observations (throughout the course the Ørestad city district in Copenhagen) the course will tackle the interplay between ontology and method, or 'habits of mind' and design research practice. In the course, we will critically explore and consider forms of observation, documentation and operationalization; principles such as deduction and induction; hypothesis and facts; causality and emergence etc. Specific emphasis will be placed on empiricisms or forms of empirical research as compared to research including different forms of interference or experimentation in field situations.

The aim of the course is to investigate how ideas of empirical work and methodological standards associated with neighbouring fields might be applied to design research questions as well as to design research processes. By interrogating design research 'habits of mind' or the disciplining of thought through training and education, the goal

is to generate questions concerning trans- and interdisciplinary work, divisions between various fields of knowledge, and methods used for the production of empirical 'facts'. An inquiry into these issues will enable the doctoral students to position themselves ontologically and methodologically relative to their own research practices, and articulate a standpoint of their own.

The course welcomes doctoral students from different fields of design and architectural research, including research in the arts, currently engaged in research activities that involve field work or site explorations.

### *Recurrent questions will be*

- What defines 'method' in different (research) contexts?
- How does a research method reflect a disciplinary 'worldview' or 'habit of mind'?
- What is the connection between research methods and forms of knowledge?
- How does the relationship between method and knowledge become actualized through research practice?
- What types of knowledge outcomes does research engagement with the empirical world produce?
- How does the practical activity of conducting empirical research impact expectations about what research work entails and what it generates?
- What is the distinction between 'empirical'/'rational'/'situated'/'relational' knowledge and how are these distinctions discussed in contemporary discourse?
- What are the methodological implications when engaging in research that aims towards transformation?

### *Learning outcomes*

After the course the doctoral student should be able to

- give an account of central concepts and ideas concerning field work or site exploration;
- critically discuss the distinction between "pure" and "applied" research;
- exemplify and critically assess the relationship between research intentions, exploratory practices and knowledge producing outcomes;
- develop informed arguments concerning hypotheses, variables, experimentation and interpretation in relation to own project

### *Course content and learning approach*

The course will consist of one workshop during the spring semester of 2013, one workshop and one seminar during the autumn semester 2013. The first workshop will be dedicated to working *on the field* through close reading and in-depth group discussion of literature as a means to critically frame experimental field work; the second to working *in the field*, experimentation and additional reading; and the third to doctoral presentations. Each workshop will include a fieldwork exercise specifically structured to highlight the dynamic interface between research intentions, engaged research practices, and specific research outcomes. The final seminar provides students the opportunity to directly apply concepts and questions addressed in the workshops to their own doctoral research.

The learning approach will foreground the intimate combination of practice and theory by asking participants to critically reflect on their own research 'habits of mind'.

### *Examination*

For passing the course, active participation in workshops and seminar is required, including the submission of a final essay and an oral presentation of the same. Participation in workshops corresponds to 5 credits and the final seminar and essay to 2,5 credits.

### *Course registration and deadline*

Send your application to [maria.hellstrom.reimer@mah.se](mailto:maria.hellstrom.reimer@mah.se) before Feb 10. Applicants are asked to include a 1-2 pages position paper motivating the participation in relation to the doctoral project.

### Preliminary schedule and preliminary literature (to be confirmed)

Apr 8-11

Workshop 1 -- *Framing Engagements: Habits of Mind*  
Malmö University

The first workshop follows a two-pronged approach. It combines the close reading of texts and the close examination of practice. Participants are expected to vocally participate in discussion of literature selected to highlight methodological questions relevant to design-led research. They will also engage in a site-based fieldwork exercise, structured to elicit critical reflection of research practices.

The close-reading of literature will provoke discussion about the types of knowledge produced through engagement with texts, and the fieldwork exercise will promote discussion about knowledge produced through engagement with the empirical world. Overall, the workshop will ask

participants to explore and expose the dynamic interplay between research intentions, research expectations, and disciplinary habits of mind, as shapers of research outcomes.

NOTE: Participants should become familiar with (read) assigned and recommended texts in advance of their arrival, and will be expected to re-read materials again during the workshop session, in preparation for the workshop discussions). READINGS LISTED BELOW ARE PRELIMINARY, AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Day 1 am: introduction to aims: inquiry into knowledge production (faculty)  
introduction to desired outcomes (participants)

pm: Close reading session # 1 : **"Conversations/ Collaborations"**  
Focus: the 'thickness' of concepts demands interpretative work and position-taking by all researchers.

Andrea Kahn, "Field Note 1- On inhabiting "thickness"," *Architecture and Field/work* (2011) [p.56 -59]

(Recommended) David Tracy, Chapter 1, Interpretation  
Conversation, Argument *Plurality and Ambiguity* (1982) [p.1 -27]

Gilles Deleuze (1991) ***Empiricism and subjectivity: an essay on Hume's theory of human nature*** (extract)

Day 2 Site-based fieldwork day: Location(s) to be confirmed  
Student site visits and preparation of 5 minute knowledge sharing presentation: "Fieldwork Intentions, Practices and Outcomes"  
(no faculty contact/input this day)

Day 3 am: Close reading session # 2: **"Habits of Mind"**  
John Dewey, Search for the Great Community, *The public and its problems* (1927) (Swallow Press, Ohio, 1954) [p. 143-184]

(Recommended) Samuel Weber, The Limits of Professionalism,  
*Institution and Interpretation* (1987) [p 18 -32]

pm: Close reading session #3: **"Situating Knowledge"**

Pierre Bourdieu, A Book for Burning, *Homo Academicus* ( Stanford,

1984) [p. 1-35]

Nelson Goodman, Notes on the Well-Made World, *Erkenntnis* (Vol. 19, No. 1/3, Methodology, Epistemology, and Philosophy of Science (May, 1983), pp. 99-107

(Recommended) Nigel Thrift, Flies and Germs: A geography of knowledge, *Spatial Formations* (1996)

Day 4 am: Student knowledge-sharing presentations (5 minute max): "Fieldwork Intentions, Practices and Outcomes" and  
pm: Final discussion of presentations and consequences:  
"Findings from Findings" and "seminar outcomes/next steps"

Aug 27-30

Workshop 2 -- *Engaging methods: Devises and experimentation*  
Kunstakademiets Designskole, Copenhagen

The second workshop is pursued in collaboration with the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design, which has extensive experience in staging ethnographically inspired field work and field operations. The focus of the workshop is on the exchange between empirical material, theoretical analysis and the representation of findings; the "writing-up" of fieldwork.

Thomas Binder, associate professor in design research

Day 1 am: introduction to aims, (inquiry into knowledge production) and participants  
pm: Close reading session # 1 (students will be required to read the texts (2) prior to the session):  
**"the inventiveness of method"**  
Lury, Celia, and Nina Wakeford (2010) *Inventive Methods – the Happening of the Social*. Routledge.

Halse, J., Brandt, E., Clark, B. & Binder, T. (2010). *Rehearsing the Future*. Copenhagen: Danish Design School Press.

Day 2 Student site visits and preparation of findings presentation (no faculty contact/input this day)

Day 3 am: close reading session # 2: **"Field work and Laboratories"**

Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (1994), *Experimental Systems, Historiality,*

Narration and Deconstruction, *Science in Context* 7, 1 (1994), pp. 65-81

Binder, Thomas, Brandt, Eva, Halse, Joachim Foverskov, Maria, Olander, Sissel, Yndigegn, Signe (2011), Living the (codesign) Lab, *Proceedings of the Nordic Design Research Conference (NORDES)*, Helsinki

Law, John (2004) *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*, Taylor & Francis Group

pm: Close reading session #3: **"Frictions and actuals"**

Anna Tsing (2011) *Friction : An Ethnography of Global Connection*, Princeton University Press (selected chapters)

Richard Schechner (1985), *Between Theatre and Anthropology*, University of Pennsylvania Press

Day 4 am: students findings presentations and discussion: "findings from findings"

pm. Final discussion: seminar outcomes/next steps

Oct 15-16

Final Seminar -- *Exploring Fieldwork* -- Malmö University

A 2-3 days final seminar with students' presentations.

### *Short presentation of lecturers*

**Maria Hellström Reimer**, professor in design theory, Malmö University, School of Arts and Communication, contributor to among other books Jorgensen & Keenan (2012) *Urban Wildscapes* (Routledge); Thörn *et. al.* (2011) *Space for Urban Alternatives? Christiania 1971-2011* (gidlunds). and co-author of *Land Use Poetics* (SLU, 2011)

**Andrea Kahn**, associate professor, Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation; author of *Constellations: Constructing Urban Design Practices* (2007), *Site Matters: Design Concepts, Histories and Strategies* (with Carol Burns, 2005) and *Drawing/Building/Text: Essays in Architectural Theory* (1991).

**Thomas Binder**, associate Professor at the Royal Danish Academy of fine Arts, School of Design, co-author of *(Re-) searching the Digital Bauhaus* (Springer 2008), *Rehearsing the Future* (Danish Design School Press, 2010), *Design Research through Practice* (Morgan Kaufman, 2011) and *Design Things* (MIT press, 2011)

**Joachim Halse**, assistant professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design, co-author of *Rehearsing the Future* (Danish Design School Press, 2010),.

### Suggested reading (preliminary):

Nelson Goodman (1978) *Ways of World-Making*. Indianapolis: Hackett

Paul Feyerabend (1999) *Conquest of Abundance – A Tale of Abstraction Versus the Richness of Being*. The University of Chicago Press.

Gilles Deleuze (1991) ***Empiricism and subjectivity : an essay on Hume's theory of human nature***.

Mark Dorrian & Gillian Rose (2003) "Introduction". In *Deterritorializations – Revisioning Landscapes and Politics*. Black Dog Publishing.

**Suzanne Ewing**, Jeremie Michael McGowan, Chris Speed (2010) *Architecture and Field/Work*. E-book. ISBN: 0-203-83944-7

Halse, J., Brandt, E., Clark, B. & Binder, T. (2010). *Rehearsing the Future*. Copenhagen: Danish Design School Press.

Lury, Celia, and Nina Wakeford (2010) *Inventive Methods – the Happening of the Social*. Routledge.

David Hume (1740) *A treatise of human nature : being an attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects*. Book 1: "Of the Understanding" – *An investigation into human cognition. Important statements of Skepticism*

David Tracy, *Interpretation, Conversation, Argument, Plurality and Ambiguity* (1982)

Andrea Kahn, "Field Note 1- On inhabiting "thickness", " *Architecture and Field/work* (2011)

John Dewey, Search for the Great Community, *The public and its problems* (1927)

Samuel Weber, The Limits of Professionalism, *Institution and Interpretation* (1987)

Raphael Fischler, Strategy and History in professional practice: Planning as world making, *Spatial Practices: Critical explorations Social/Spatial Theory* (1995)

Nigel Thrift, "Flies and Germs: A geography of knowledge", *Spatial Formations*, (1996)

Anna Tsing (2011) *Friction : An Ethnography of Global Connection*, Princeton University Press

Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (1994), Experimental Systems, Historiality, Narration and Deconstruction, *Science in Context* 7, 1 (1994), pp. 65-81

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