Gathering qualitative material

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Qualitative material comes from

Naturally occurring settings

Observation
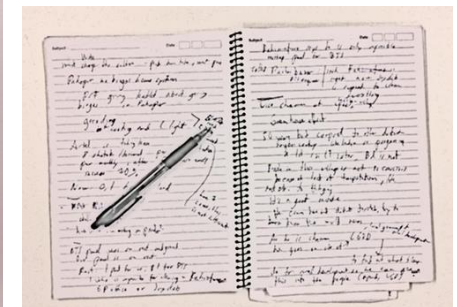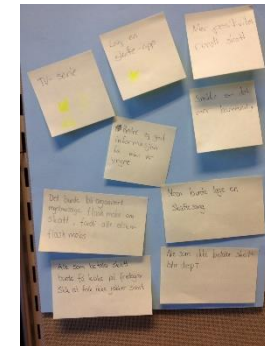Interviews
Documents
- Logs
Post-it
Photos
Video

+ Also:
  Workshops
  Design experiments

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)

Discuss in groups

What will you consider to be «naturally occurring settings» for your master work?

Perhaps you will prefer to arrange the settings?

WHY OBSERVATION?

- What people say they do and what we observe them do is not the same (ideal and manifest behaviour) (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

- Intersubjective understanding between researcher and researched

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) – and 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* (old, pretty….)
  - instead provide detailed descriptions

INTERVIEW

- Interviewing is part of participant observation

- Not naturally occurring. It is arranged 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
    - 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)
    - Avoid threatening questions!!
- '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 - practical

- "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) https://sikt.no/informasjon-til-deltakarane-i-forskingsprosjekt

DOCUMENTS

Texts that serve as empirical material

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

(see eg. Crang & Cook 2007:67)

Listening in

Also "chatting in"
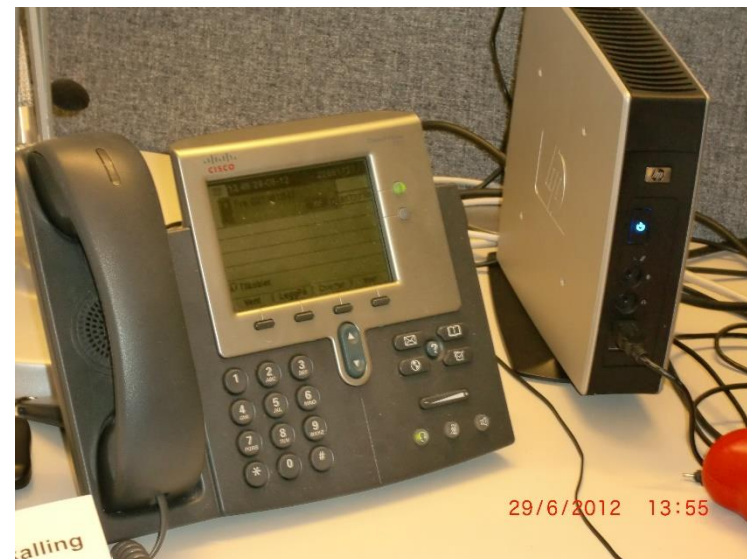
PHOTOGRAPHS

- Strategy using photos: who takes the photos? 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

Ethical aspects – seek informed consent and subject anonymity

Photos never show unmediated reality!
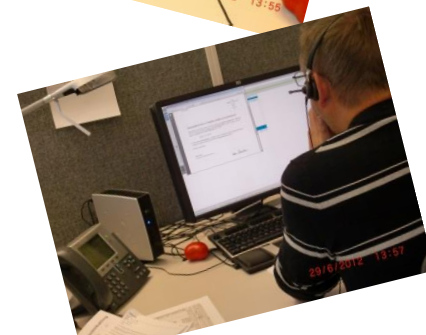
WHO TAKES THE PHOTOS?

- 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

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)
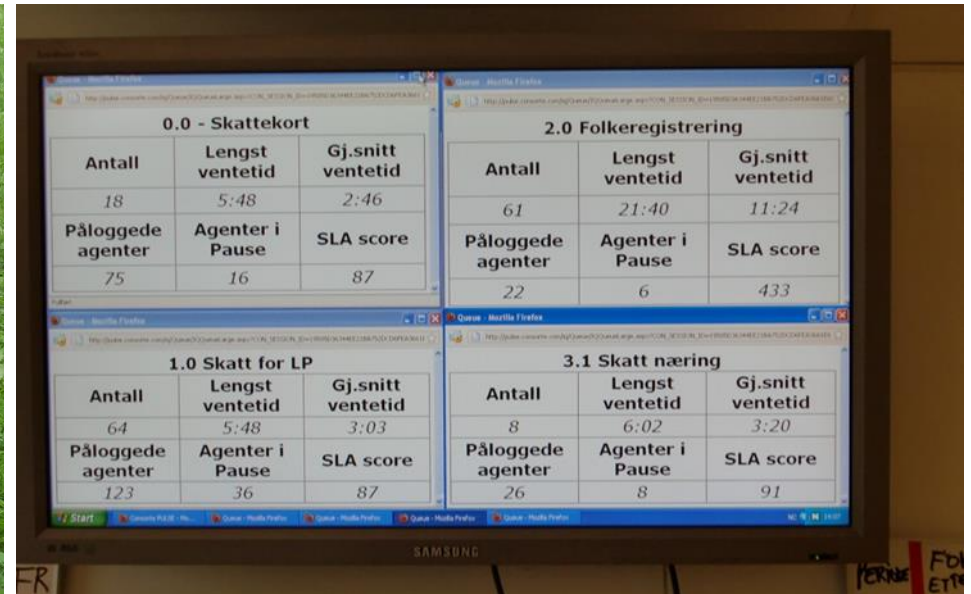
Use already existing photos

- Discuss photos -> multiple viewpoints

Crang & Cook 2007 + The Sage Handbook 2005

"Skrapa komager", Anne Katrine Dolven, Photo: Theirrey Bal,
STORMEN, Bodøs nye bibliotek og konserthus, Source: nrk Nordland

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?

Crang & Cook 2007 + The Sage Handbook 2005

Discuss in groups

Which methods for data collection will you want to use in your master work? Which will you like to try out?

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: hand in a written thesis, an appendix with a movie, a movie – see e.g. Suchman & Trigg (1991) for an 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

Source: Ole Kristian Rolstad, Master thesis 2014
«The life and death of design ideas»

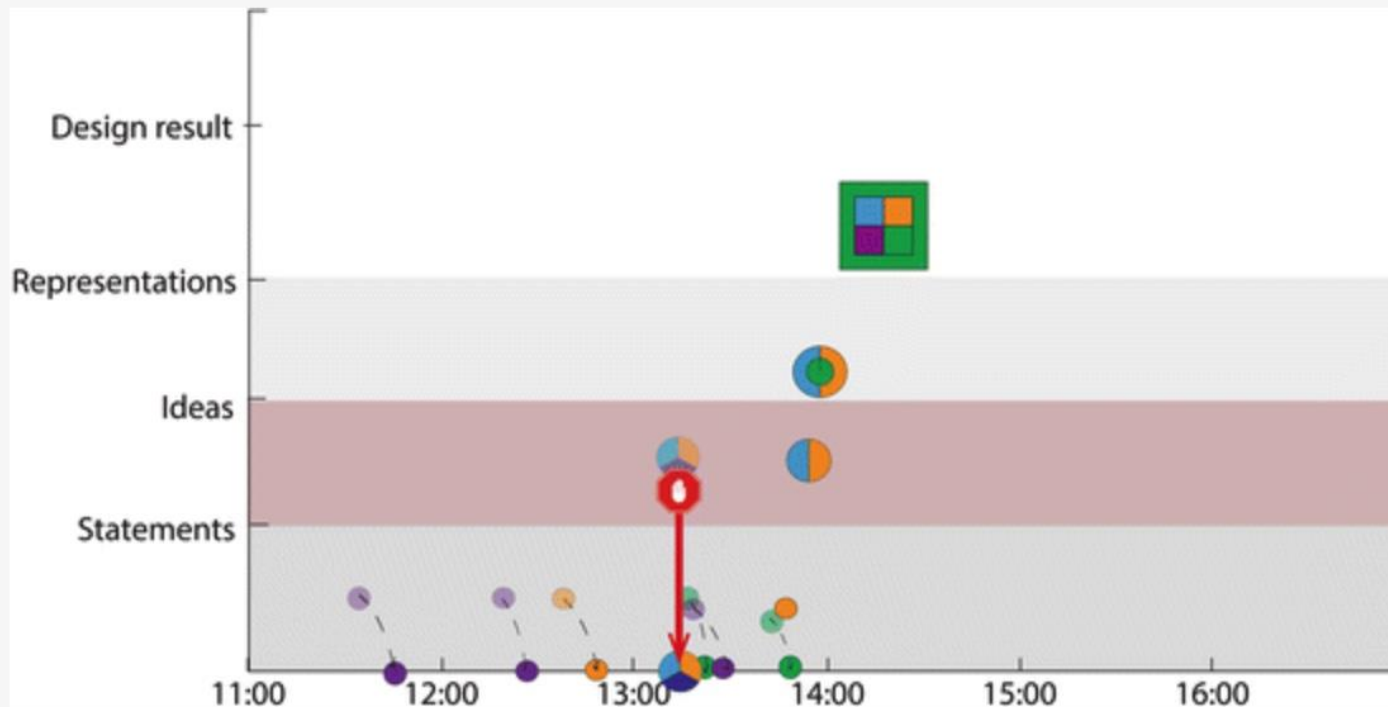# The life and death of design ideas

Fig. 16.6

A representation of the idea development leading to a design result

Bratteteig T., Rolstad O.K., Wagner I. (2016) The Life and Death of Design Ideas.
In: De Angeli A., Bannon L., Marti P., Bordin S. (eds) COOP 2016:
Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on the Design of Cooperative Systems,
23-27 May 2016, Trento, Italy. Springer, Cham.

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

Diary study

Ask your informant(s) to write a diary of some kind of events
Well suited to get in contact with rare or private events

(Not naturally occurring?)
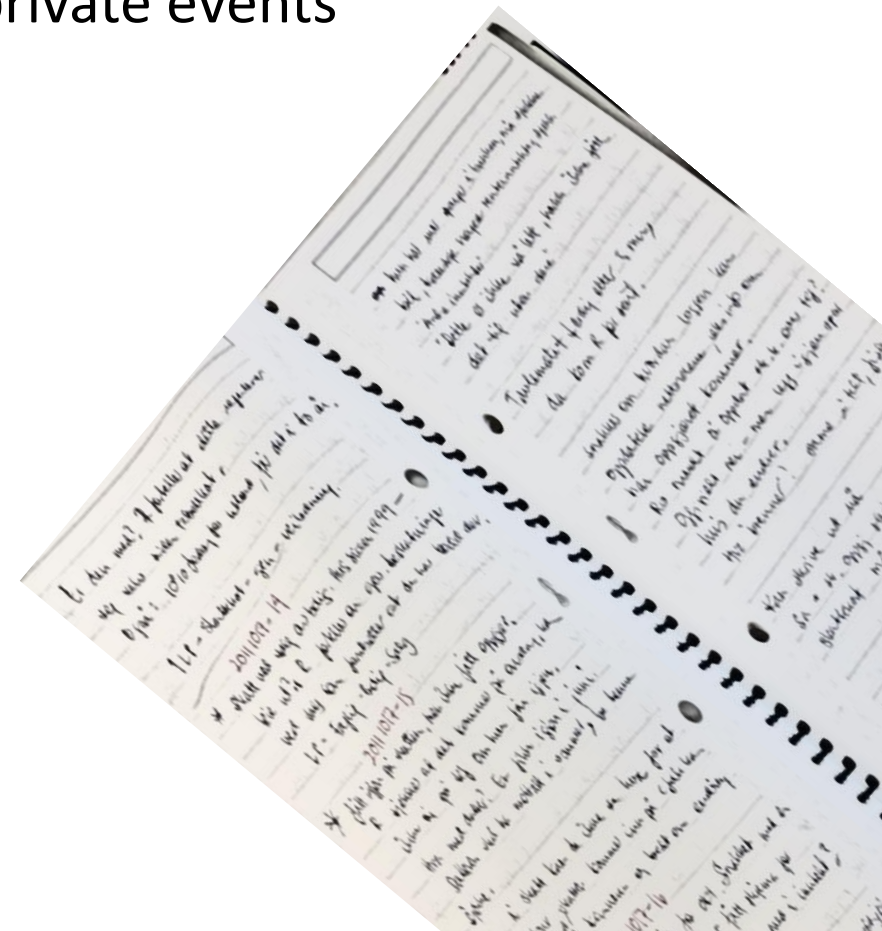
NOTE TAKING

- 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.

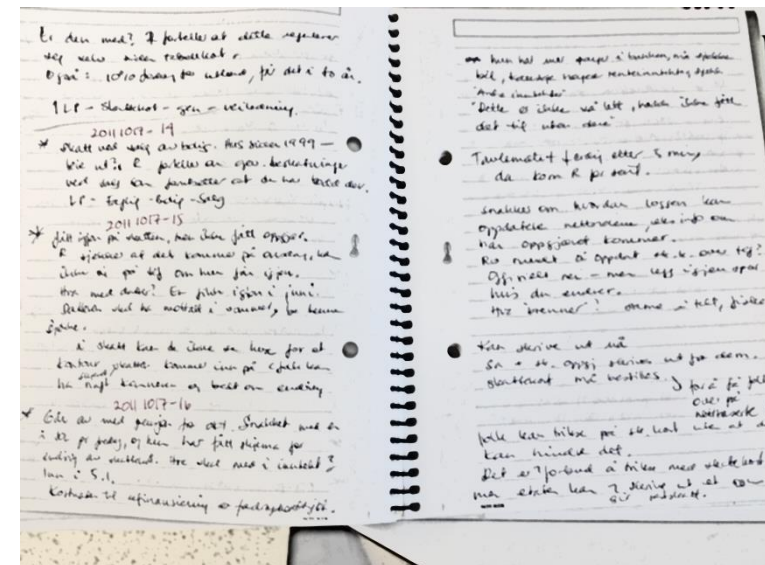# FIELD NOTES are notes you

- 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

When you write up your impressions or 'verbatims'

- 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).

Final words

- "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)

- «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).

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
    - "triangulation" for understanding
    - 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.

- Fujii LA. Five stories of accidental ethnography: turning unplanned moments in the field into data. Qualitative Research. 2015; 15(4):525-539.

- 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