**DIY Methods** – Plain Text Zines

A Mostly Screen-Free, Zine-Full, Remote-

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Juried by:

Anne Pasek

Sarah Rayner

With additional support from:

Kees Schuller

Lynn Vegh

Coordinated through:

Experimental Methods and Media Lab

The Low-Carbon Research Methods

Group

(<http://lowcarbonmethods.com/>)

Editor’s note: This is a compilation of the plain-text versions of zines from DIY Methods 2024. Participants were asked to submit plain-text versions of their own work, with image descriptions where needed. To respect the work of participants, only minor changes have been made to their plain-text zines, as we believe that participants best know how to translate their work for their readers. As such, you will find a variety of different transcription and image description style within these pages.

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# **algonquin home. land.**

Jenn Cole

Cover:

A brochure sized cover reads, instead of “Algonquin Park,” Algonquin home. Land. Replication of the authors grandfather’s diagram of balsam needles appears at the bottom right of the page and repeats throughout the Zine.

Page 1:

image: In sharpie, over scanned bear berry stems and leaves and a Silent Lake provincial park receipt are the words: sometimes when I gather mishkike/ plant medicines and worry about being stopped by a park Ranger, I feel close to my ancestors.

Scanned from a book: Bartlett met a group of Algonquins camped just outside of the northwest park boundary on the water route leading from Eau Claire to Lake Koshkokwi. Bartlett later met the head of the family who explained he had come into the park to gather roots and bark for medicines.

In author's handwriting, followed by two drawings of tiny hearts: INDAANIKOOBIJIGAN: my ancestors.

Page 2:

Scanned letter of the official establishment of Algonquin park from the archives, in the penmanship of the superintendent of the park:

…is hereby withdrawn from sale, settlement and occupancy under the provisions of “the public lands act, The do grants and homestead act, and the general mining act of Ontario” or any regulations made under the said act. II the sad tract of land is hereby reserved and set apart as a public forest and park.

This harmful archival letter is written over in the author's handwriting:

No Anishinaabemowin

No laying semaa

No following seasons

No gitigaan

No laughing with tea

No grandmothers

No shelter

No hide tanning

No queerness

No paddling in peace

No continuity

No sleeping under the stars

No hunting

No trapping

No birchbark wiigwaas

No blueberries minaan

No fish camps

No songs

No planting

No ceremony

No bark baths

No birthing medicines

No rabbit fur

No balsam beds

No keeping children’s fevers down

and more continuing off the page and out of view.

Page 3:

written over a burnt orange conte rubbing of the author's father's snowshoes:

my family was moved off our traditional harvesting grounds

Page 4:

A black and white photograph of the author's maternal grandfather’s family, four generations, with log cabin and trees in the background sits above a portion of a map of Algonquin park focusing on the eastern edge, established in 1914, including the author’s family’s traditional harvesting grounds.

Page 5:

balsam needles drawn by the author's grandfather, Stanley Mcisaac, begin text from a page taken from his forestry school book for the entry entitled “balsam fir.”

Twig - surface smooth no woody projections at base of leaf

bark - young stems smooth with blister like bulges finally become ridged and thick resinous liquid in blisters becomes crystallized

leaf - single

shape - linear

size - approximately 1 inch long

margin - entire

colour- surface upper green, lower whitish

base sessile

shape - oblong

scales- deciduous, when mature they fall, leaves central core on branch located in upright position on branch

mature- one season

range- Ontario accept extreme north

arranged- spiral umbo unarmed

Seedling- primary leaves some as secondary leaves radial arranged firm leaves.

Pasted over this forestry book entry is text from a book about Algonquin Park reading:

the idea was born in the brain of a clerk in an office of the Ontario department of crown lands, a man who had never set eyes on the park area, Alexander Kirkwood.

Authors margin note follows reading: grandpa said to be careful of these guys.

In prominent text: grandpa said be careful of these guys. They don't know where they are.

Page 6:

Listening to Kashtin with My Mom

Hard maple. Buds. Leaves. Scars. Range.

My grandpa went to forestry school.

It’s 1992 and I am at my mom’s apartment on Cassel’s Street in North Bay next to the video store down the road from the Friendship Centre where we go to dances. Once, we dressed my brother up like a pumpkin and his costume was stuffed with pillows so when it got late, he fell asleep by

Slumping

Into

Himself.

We are listening to Kashtin in the living room and my mom is chain-smoking.

She taught me to put down tobacco when I wanted to take something from Mother Earth. She taught me how to smudge.

She taught me how to swear and how to run away.

It’s 1995 and Atomic Energy has just written in the North Renfrew Times about the radioactive waste it is going to store that it is, quote, “less radioactive than a banana.” Dana Rodriguez and I listened to All-4-One’s “I Swear” on her plastic ghetto blaster and we watched the eclipse last winter.

I am going to marry Eric Giardini or Sinead O’Connor. Eric is going to be a cartoon voice actor or a Zamboni driver when he grows up.

I swim in the river. I swim in the Kiji Sibi and she is deep and cold and it is hard to hold onto her water. You have to t*read.  hard*.

On the way home, I nibble roadside bits. Wintergreen. Blueberries. Putting sweet fern and blown birch bark in my pockets. English words for older things.

Where are all the Indians?

Where are all the Indians?

No like for real I know you’re around so why in this town where we all speak Geiger, listen to nuclear test sirens on our lunch hours, do we think     we   don’t          exist?

I’ve got a sweet braid in my room at home. Deer and moose are teaching me kindness. I live among medicines. Maple Nation.

Gentle aspen.

Lichen and rabbit poop!

When Grandpa went to forestry school, he already knew the woods. Traplines. Taking my mom to the spring to drink on Easter mornings when she was little.

English words for older things.

Ninatigoog.       Miinan.         Dibik Giizis.        Nmishoomis.

Pages 7 and 8:

In prominent text: they were given guns to kill us.

A collage archival letter where Superintendent of the park, Bartlett, approves the provision of three rifles to Park Rangers totaling $45 and the text: several of our men are unarmed and the men in the new section should have rifles at once. they have to deal with Indians and bad ones.

Archival text is interspersed with text pasted from books: the Algonquins walked very lightly upon the land and had very minimal impact upon the land and environment.

And: much of the trapping hunting and fishing activity was hidden from authorities, as members rarely held registered trap lines and often considered that such activities were their natural heritage which they should be free to continue as their forefathers. Consequently, the male informants could describe being introduced to particular areas by their older male relatives. Female informants were aware of the ongoing hunting, trapping, and fishing activities within the community and participated in some aspects including small game hunting. They sold their furs on the black market accepting lower prices as they did not possess licenses. Consequently, there are no official records of their trapping grounds.

The bottom of page 8 contains a rounded copy of a sketch by the authors great grandfather, Gordon Dufoe of Mattawa, of bears, as well as the following citation from Dylan Robinson: “sovereignty isn't just official modes of governance, of written law, but something that we do every day in various ways. Thinking about that form of doing sovereignty, not just exclusively related to songs and dances and our traditions but also walking—what is the practice of sovereign walking through our territories and breathing the air?”

Page 9:

Two photographs of wiigwaas jiimaan/birchbark canoe. One, a close up of spruce root stitching in the Birch bark. The second features the author embracing jimaan, draped over her belly.

Page 10:

a series of cut and pasted selections of texts from varying books:

W Gibson, then deputy minister of the department of lands (blurs) Mr. GW Bartlett, the Superintendent of Algonquin park.

Lot 25 in the 12th concession of Wilkes, Algonquin park was patented to Ignace Dufond in 1888. As the patent was issued under the mining act, the land was subject to two cents an acre under the mining act. The taxes remained unpaid for a number of years, and in 1910 the land was forfeited to the crown. Authors margin note reads NDNs couldn't hold title.

The Dufond family, or some of them live, and which has been occupied by them for many years. They have a small farm there with the house and barn and some improvements. It would appear from correspondence which the department has received that the Dufond's would like to have the Land regranted to them, or that they would be willing to accept compensation from the department for their improvements and for the length of time they have occupied the lot.

Having been at this place it is my own view that it would be advisable for the department to retain the title as there is always the possibility of it passing into the possession of people whose presence in the park would be objectionable. The department would be willing to compensate the Dufonds to a reasonable extent and to perhaps allow the old people to remain in possession as long as they live, at a nominal rental. In response to this letter from Toronto the Superintendent must've replied to the effect that the whole situation was complicated by the fact that there were other Dufond relations who were interested in the farm besides this Ignace to whom it belonged.

23 years later the case of the Dufonds was finally “cleaned up” (author’s scare quotes added in blue ink) on the death of Ignaced Dufond. On October the 14th, 1916, a letter was sent by Mr. Thomas W Gibson, then deputy minister of the department of lands, forests and mines, to Mr. GW Bartlett the Superintendent of Algonquin park the letter read:

Emma Dufoe, another one of the Dufoe children, reported her life with the family on Manitou in an interview partly reported in the Calvin township history book. She recalled that Suzanne was a hard working and skilled woman who was a midwife, made maple syrup, dispensed herbal medicines, tanned hides, made mitts and moccasins, and was very generous to everyone she met.

In her later life, after she left the farm, Suzanne lived in Mattawa and in Calvin Township. Staff at the Eau Claire store near where she lived recalled her generous gifts of mitts and moccasins at Christmas. She smoked a curved pipe and wore a long dress and large hat. Joe Baptiste, mentioned above, recalled her affection for high wine. She was a remarkable character and was fittingly remembered when the road she lived on near Eau Claire was officially named Old Suzanne Rd.

There is no doubt that the Dufoes played an important role in the life of the area and through their numerous descendants continue to do so to this day. The river that bears their name is a fitting tribute to this longstanding family.

The sugar Bush of Amable Dufoe was shown in an 1847 plan as being located on the North East side of Lake Kaiasquaque (Kkioshkoqu or Kioshkokwi, also known as Wilkes Lake) on the Amable Dufond river system. Frances and Ignace Dufoe operated a farm on Manitou Lake directly West of kiosk we from the 1880s until Ignace's death in 1916. George W Bartlett, Superintendent of Algonquin Park (1898 to 1922) noted that Mrs. Dufoe had made 450 pounds of Maple syrup. Authors merging note reads Suzanne! See!

Page 11:

The following questions sits below a poem: if the Group of Seven's paintings are supposed to define Canada, what does it mean that so many stories of the land’s history are deliberately missing?

The poem reads:

Group of More

Grandpa is missing from all the paintings.

Group of more. Group fed, canoed, guided, sitting deep in the birchbarks our families built, knew, cared for, ceremonied. Group guided.

AY’s wilderness our home. Relations. I can’t tell you how deep it goes.

Back and back and back, wolf friendship, wawaashkesh giving her life again and again, so much that my Nan is afraid of losing her teeth from biting hide and thread. We were all fed. Ninatigoog sweet water, hard sugar.

Those first thunder rolls waking up creation. Leeks, trout lily, trilliums for fish nation nets and thanks, semaa, smoking to think it in by the fire, berries, bear berry, manoomin. Bear medicine rubbed in birchbark skin. We bring it all with us. We let you in.

Tom paints a tree, a good tree, a *good* tree, horizon. Foreground. A certain perspective.

Grandpa’s brushstrokes aren’t as thick, don’t move so deft.

But his paddles.

I know it when I tuck under my canoe to sleep at night and feel held in her belly. Dream the rapids. And I know his rabbits, I know how soft that downy antler ziigwaan feels under the palm. They watched him draw all day long, the kids in town.

Page 12:

Pasted over a snippet of the formal archival letter that establishes Algonquin park and a snippet of a would cut print of the last undammed tributary of the Kiji Sibi/Ottawa river, is a poem by the author's great grandfather, Gordon Dufoe:

My little Canoe

oh how I hate to leave you

In this thicket by the stream

For there's not a Creek or lake about

that you have never seen.

you never once have failed me

you always got me through

and many times were overworked

When you had to carry two.

The many times I portaged you

I never will regret,

and if you were not so badly worn

I'd like to use you yet.

Many many trips we've had

and some were very rough

and I might be at the bottom now

if you were not so tough.

There's not another bark canoe

that could ever do the same

however rough the rivers were

you always took them game.

Every night I'll think of you

in the thicket by the stream

and I'll come out and paddle you

if only in my dream.

A tiny snippet of undetermined waterways underscores the poem and moves of the page.

Page 13:

Over an image of the author harvesting spruce roots with dirty fingers, the following words from Monique Mojica appear: “as long as the land is there, as long as the rivers are there, as long as we remain connected and open enough to be receptors and transmitters, the stories are there... So, if we position ourselves properly, that knowledge hasn't gone anywhere, nothing's lost.”

Page 14:

An image of the painter Gordon Dufoe with two unknown others on a rock at a lakeshore, all crouching and looking at a painting the viewers cannot see, sits above these words from Dylan Robinson: “reciprocity, considering what it means to be responsible for knowledge, and having accountability to those you learn from, are of course foundational not just for indigenous methodologies, but to a more generalized ethics of research. Similarly, thinking through how histories of place and cultural specificity are connected to the work we do as artists and scholars... should be... and everyday fact.”

Page 15:

An artist drawing on birch bark featuring gestural wisps of white pine needles, red pine needles, a familiar landscape of mountains, river, and shore. Some abstract scribbles indicate sounds inscribed by the author on a walk down the road to her favorite place in her home territory. The birch bark sits upon a beautiful rock.

Page 16:

3 replications of sections of a map the eastern portion of Algonquin park with authors notes scrawled over top.

Image 1 locates us at Manitou lake and the Amable Dufond river and features text from the map makers, reading: Dufond farm cleared by Frances and Ignace Dufons in the 1800s. Briefly prosperous with logging camp market, it was abandoned when Ignace died in 1916.

The author has written: Suzanne, Igance’s wife tanned hides here and tended sugar bush. She smoked a pipe with dudes at the woodpile and made birch bark baskets.

The second image features Bissett Creek and a number of lakes called Christopher Robin Lake, Piglet lake, Owl Lake, Mary’s lake, etc. The author has marked many places on this map and indicated that “grandpa told dad he named these lakes for mom.” She also marks the McIsaac/Petrant/Wajou second settlement, the family spring, and the third settlement of the family on McIsaac drive.

The map traces Driftwood Bay, Driftwood provincial park, Stone Cliff and surrounding area. The author has written: “grandpa cared for this park as a forest Ranger” and “Grandpa’s dad’s trapping grounds before the road.”

Page 17:

The words from Madeleine Whetung: “It is not our movements that make the Indigenous landscape live, it lives of its own accord, but our movements can bring that geography to life for us,” rest above a photographic image of the sacred site Migizi Gishkaabikaan on the Kiji Sibi/Ottawa River. At this site, pictographs and graffiti reading, “Scott 1984,” “Rick 1984,” and “KRB RG 1990” appear together on the face of this grandparent. The authors own rough lino cut print of a pine cone holds this image in place.

Page 18:

A messy page full of words. An image of notes taken in the archives from surveyors’ field notes reads unclearly: RG01 CB- 1 lands department field notes rock, slump, Ridge of rock, Birch and pine, hemlock low level larch... Relatives. My heart goes to a place — my home territory. I think this is survey for extraction but that's not where these words... naming... People to come chopping.

Swamp and rock make their stand though.

Underneath in the author's handwriting: archives are traumatic. I choose ancestral articulations.

An image of the author repairing a canoe, leaning underneath and stitching spruce roots next to this note.

The author's child’s revision of the Canadian national anthem is cut and pasted throughout, obscuring some of the archival notes. It reads:

oh native lands

their home and native land

true genocide

in all these soldiers command

with twisted hearts we see the rise

the true north withered and enslaved

from far and wide our native land

we lie on ground from thee

settlers keep our land

smoggy and bitter

oh native land we li on ground from thee

Also interspersed in the style of the brochure’s cover are the words: ninaatig, precious sugar bush, all all my relations.

Page 19:

Copper coloured brush lines indicate trees and rise up off the page.

A good friend told me of how he used to hunt near the park... He said that overtime some of the trees the Rangers had marked to outline the parks boundaries had grown so tall that they hid the signs and that by pointing those out they would sometimes convince Rangers to let them keep their hunt. But when he said it, he said that the trees were hiding the signs. They were taking it back, eh?

Page 20:

Some of the conte rubbing of the author is father's snowshoe continues on to this page where the author has drawn five bsirch bark trees reaching to the sky carrying colonial signs far, far out of sight.

Page 21:

Works Cited

Dylan Robinson on sovereignty

Monique Mojica in an interview with Aging Activisms

Kirby Whiteduck’s research on Algonquin presence in these territories

Maddy Whetung’s brilliant MA thesis

Grandpa Stan McIsaac's forestry journal

Karen Recollet’s idea: ancestral articulations

Great Grandpa Gordon Dufoe's artwork and poem about jiimaan

Audrey Sanders’ notes about our family

My child's remixing of the national anthem

Ian Sorgo Grant Puppe’s thesis on Algonquin presence in the park

Joan M Holmes’ notes about trap lines

Past forward Heritage’s words about the Dufoe's on Manitou Lake

Unfortunate archives from Park Superintendent

Matteo Cimellaro’s question about the Group of Seven

In our home territory, the author's child ceremonially soaks jiimaan from a red bucket. His shadow appears on her beautiful birch bark skin.

Page 22:

On a background deep blue woodcut print of the turbulent, powerful Dumoine River, in prominent text:

We know where we are

We know where we're from

We keep going.

Back Cover:

The author has written her e-mail address [jenncole@trentu.ca](mailto:jenncole@trentu.ca)

As well as: please feel free to copy and distribute, especially at provincial park literature displays. Assembled by Jenn Cole in Michi Saagig Anishinaabe territory, 2024.

A final snippet of text appears: as we commenced cutting and clearing the chiefs of two tribes of Indians that live in the lake of two mountains came to us and about 10 days later their chiefs assembled together and procured an English interpreter... They requested him to demand of me by what authority I was cutting down their wood and taking possession of their land... They believed that if I had stayed home that it would have been to their interest as they had great dependence upon that situation it being the chief hunting ground, sugar ease and fisheries etc, which was the chief support of their families and they were afraid of further difficulties which would arise between us, such as taking their beaver, destroying their deer, breaking up their sugaries, and causing a great deal of trouble; That I must know that clearing of the forest was driving back their game which would totally dislodge them of their former expectations.

On the back cover we see a linocut print of the author standing in friendship with a bear in her home territory at the shore of Kiji Sibi, a beloved asin/rock at her left. The author also includes a rounded copy of another of her great grandfather’s drawings of bears and birch bark trees. The back cover is held up by a final replication of her grandfather’s drawing of balsam needles.

# **Bas kuchh baatcheet: Restitching participant-researcher relationships through conversation & reciprocity**

Aditi Shah, Antara Madavane, Ava Mumtaz Haidar and Manvi Parashar

Cover:

[Front cover image: A collage of white, red, and most prominently, green pieces of cloth

fills up the space afforded to the front cover. Along the top edge runs a beige cloth on

which a piece of red cloth is stitched, a yellow blanket stitch connecting the two. Below it

are the title of the zine and an accompanying subtitle, separated by a green chain stitch

emerging from the left, the words printed on a green cloth with blurry pink motifs. To

the right, part of a visual created for one of the written pieces is visible - a scrap of green

cloth on which a purple herringbone stitch, and half a green and red braid of thread

that appears to be framing a black and white photograph. To the bottom left is a

similarly layered amalgamation of red cloth, pink cross-stitch, and an incomplete black

and white photo that shows a researcher. To its right, the names of all four researchers

are printed on a piece of beige cloth. Underneath, a red cloth is overlaid by a torn black

and white photograph of what seem to be four women sitting together, with two of

their faces obfuscated by purple stars and flowers.]

Page 2:

[Inside front cover]

“Mujhe mazza aaya aaj. Aap vaapis kab aaoge?”

“I had fun today. When will you come back?”

Rabia\*, 17

\*Participants’ faces have been obscured and their names changed across this zine to

protect their privacy.

Page 3:

In February and March 2024, the four of us travelled to eight locations across India to

understand from women their experiences of interacting with digital platforms. These

women, ranging from teenagers to women in their sixties, belong primarily to

underserved and marginalised communities in both rural and urban areas. Their access

to digital devices is often mediated by several forces, including patriarchal attitudes

surrounding women’s usage of technology.

As researchers, we were interested in unpacking the affective idea of digital trust, and

its construction and enactment by our participants. To this end, we devised methods

borrowing from human-centred design: an approach that sought women’s articulations

of their own experiences and simultaneously attempted to narrow the gap between

participant and researcher. Based on learnings from secondary research, conversations

with experts, and previous fieldwork, we crafted four research activities (or “games”),

using tangible artefacts like cards to foster a sense of play and encourage uninhibited

conversation. We set participants at ease by letting them know it was nothing

intimidating or complicated—just a chat, bas kuchh baatcheet.

We soon discovered that these activities, and the manner in which we facilitated them,

enabled us to unravel far more than initially anticipated. Through aspirations and

regrets shared in confidence, our participants let us into their lives in unexpected and

moving ways. As women studying women, we found common ground with many of our

participants. At the same time, we were constantly grappling with our positionality as

women with socioeconomic and caste privilege conducting research with women from

marginalised communities.

This zine is a stitching together of individual and collective reflections from our field

experiences. It is also an invitation to reimagine the fabric of field research and the

threads that constitute it—beginning, perhaps, from the delicate and ever-changing

relationship between participant and researcher.

* Aditi, Antara, Ava & Manvi

Page 4:

This piece is authored by Aditi and Ava.

[image: A black and white photo of three women sitting on the ground rests atop a

scrap of red cloth, both stitched together with purple cross-stitches. The face of the

translator, who is sitting in the middle, is covered by an orange paper cloud with red

triangles, and cross-stitches in yellow and purple emanate from it, leading to each of the

women. Between them rest white cards with app logos on them, as the women play the

first activity in a series of activities. Both the participant and researcher’s hands are

outlined in black.]

Women in rural and urban India are busy. Their days are packed with household chores,

childcare duties, and endless emotional labour. As researchers, we strove not to add to

this burden, instead hoping to infuse moments of leisure by prioritising interactivity and

fun in the design of our research activities.

We found that sometimes, the most organic way to understand someone’s perspective

is to make sure they know that they hold all the cards. Asking people to recognise key

icons commonly found on devices—the camera icon, for example—works really well for

digitally-confident women. However, women who are underconfident may think of us as

the ones in control, that we are evaluating their knowledge and not just curious about

their personal patterns. The participant-researcher hierarchy rears its head despite

attempts to break away from it.

Women, then, need to know it’s all in their hands, and that we are merely trying to learn

from them. So when Rakhi began to feel nervous, we flipped the script. “Rakhi, forget

what I said about telling me what you know. Think of me like your student. If you had to

teach me how to use this, how would you [cont.]

Page 5:

do it?” The difference in her response was palpable. She went from being a participant

to being a teacher in that moment—her answers gained authority, and she, more

confidence.

Our “What Would Asha Do?” activity served as a playground in which women claimed

control, as they responded to various dilemmas of trust. While it began as an exercise

hinging on predetermined options we presented to participants in conjunction with the

dilemma, we tested something different with Ghazala. Ava explained to her the fictional

dilemma, and said “Help me finish this story. How do you think it should go?” This

change in tactic enabled a more creative power for Ghazala, who then saw herself as an

equal agent. Framing this activity as one of “co-writing” also encouraged her to own and

express her opinions and attitudes in ways that felt safe. The stories featured

protagonists that partially resembled her, giving her the leeway to share personal

experiences with us without feeling burdened to “perform” a correct answer.

As researchers entering participants’ homes and other spaces, it was also important for

us to make the interactions as familiar as possible. By using icons—of apps, phone

features, or one’s social environment—or calling them “buttons” (a reference to older,

more familiar keypad phones), we were able to account for varying literacy levels, and

more broadly, speak a language of the digital that the participants were fluent in. Our

flexibility made the activities more comprehensible, while extending familiar cues

between participant and researcher.

Participant power, then, was the axis around which to make activities flexible—we had

to adjust to the little hints of discomfort and underconfidence that tend to plague

research settings, particularly for women. We matched women’s tones, explained that

there are no wrong answers, and recalibrated our own behaviour and strategy based on

what we observed of their body language. We also leveraged the physicality of the cards

to encourage active play by the participants.

Page 6:

Lalita, an enthusiastic eleventh grader, loved holding the cards herself. She was in

charge of the game, and we were playing by her rules.

Our intention, from day one, was to prioritise iteration over perfection. We were not

afraid to change pace or tactics, and lean into the participants' excitement to maintain a

positive environment for their expression. We even eventually moved from conducting

interactions in pairs to one-on-one conversations with participants, allowing an ultimate

form of privacy to become the norm around interactions. In that spirit, we also made

blank cards available to participants to account for anything we may have missed, but

more importantly, as an active invitation of their inputs. Ultimately, we were not only

shaping the activities together, but also the very knowledge that would emerge from it.

Page 7:

This piece is authored by Aditi and Antara.

[Aditi] During my interview with Harsha, I realised she wasn’t very comfortable in Hindi.

So I switched to Marathi midway, and I think that really helped. Although she wasn’t

confident in my ability to converse in Marathi (and rightfully so), I insisted that I

understood her perfectly. Eventually, we settled into a flow that worked for the both of

us.

[Antara] I tried a similar approach with a few women who had migrated from Andhra

Pradesh. Despite my spoken Telugu being so poor, this improved the conversation in

more than one way. Being able to speak in a language that they felt more at ease in

encouraged them to let me into their worlds and share experiences and intimacies they

would not have otherwise. And while I definitely felt foolish scrambling for the right

words, they could see that I was making an effort to meet them halfway instead of

imposing another language upon them.

[Aditi] It’s crucial for us as researchers to meet our participants where they are, not

enter their spaces with little regard for the time and energy they expend to participate

in this work. Despite the conversational frictions our limited knowledge of a language

generates, it does ease the back-and-forth and decreases our reliance on a translator.

[Antara] And this becomes critical when participants don’t feel comfortable around the

translator, which was often the case when the translator was a man or a familiar face

from the community—sometimes it’s easier to reveal parts of yourself to a stranger

than it is to someone who might gossip about you.

[Aditi] During a focus group discussion conducted in Hindi—which only a fraction of the

women understood—the field partner intervened to translate, but also ended up

steering the conversation at times. In an attempt to shorten the gap between the

participants and us, I hesitantly volunteered a question in Marathi. A few women,

previously half-engaged, sat up straighter and demonstrated a newfound [cont.]

Page 8:

interest in the discussion. The field partner continued to be integral to the conversation,

and we were still speaking some Hindi, but widening that channel of communication did

wonders for everyone involved.

I experienced that again during our interaction with Sushila, this time as the third party.

I imagine the interaction would have been significantly more staggered and

“interview”-like had you not made the effort to speak with her in Telugu. I could see her

open up to you in ways that felt comfortable to her.

[Antara] I got the sense that since getting married and moving across the state border,

Sushila hasn’t had as many opportunities to speak in her mother tongue and to do as

she wishes; this seemed to be a rare moment for her to share her story with two

strangers who were willing to listen. I was touched by how she shared as much as she

did—feeling left behind by more educated siblings, her regrets about her marriage, her

pain in censoring herself to appease others.

[Aditi] Even for somebody who didn’t entirely follow the conversation, the gradual

formation of a cadence over the course of that hour was unmissable. The only times

you would break that momentum was to catch me up so I could take down notes. But,

eventually you stopped doing that too. Although that took me by surprise initially, I saw

the good it did the rest of the interaction. The rhythm of the conversation couldn’t be

compromised; it had a sacred quality to it. And I also trusted you to share her story at a

later time to the best of your ability.

[Antara] In particular with Sushila, when I chose not to catch you up, it was because I

wasn’t always able to separate her words and my analysis of them in the moment. It felt

inappropriate, perhaps even rude, to share the latter in her presence. And so when I

was able to relay her [cont.]

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answers without attaching my opinions to them, I would do so in Hindi. This allowed her

to follow and then correct me if I didn’t interpret her responses in the way she intended.

When speaking between ourselves, I’m glad we always did so in a language the

participants understood. Of course it helps maintain accuracy, but it’s also just common

decency to ensure participants are not othered.

[image: On an off-white piece of cloth is stitched a yellow-patterned pink-reddish cloth

whose yellow strands are fraying and escaping it. A black and white photograph of four

women is stitched on top of this piece of cloth. The two researchers’ backs face the

viewer, and the participant and translator’s faces are embroidered with a purple flower

and star, respectively. Between the four women is a weave of yellow, green, blue, and

red threads—each representative of a woman. Two of these flow out of the picture and

onto the other pieces of cloth.]

Page 10:

This piece is authored by Aditi.

[image: A misshapen black and white photo of two women, participant and researcher,

sitting on a cot, rests partially on a purple piece of cloth, itself layered atop another in

beige. The strands from the purple cloth emerge from behind the photo, all moving

towards the right of the visual. A yellow chain stitch runs from the participant’s face,

through that of the researcher’s, before joining one of the aforementioned strands.]

On our last day of fieldwork, I sat with Mariam on a charpai. Like clockwork, I told her

about myself, the objectives of our research, that it was okay to share as much as she

wanted, and pulled out the cards for our first activity. The card with the phone symbol

in hand, I asked her who she calls most often.

Gazing intently at the card, a pause heavy in her breath, she looked me in the eye and

asked, “Bata doon? Shall I tell you?” Momentarily taken aback, but with a sense of what

was to come next, I nodded. “Bata do, aap ki marzi. Go for it, only if you’d like to.”

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For the next hour, she let me into her private life, something it seemed those around

her were only permitted small glimpses of. She told me about the man who was her

“friend” and the various apps they did “chatting” on—they often blocked each other on

one app or the other and would then take to another to continue their conversation. I

was amazed by Mariam's ingenuity in asking her sister to initiate conference calls so she could speak to this friend without any trace of this relationship appearing on the call log of her husband’s phone. She went on to rave about the apps and filters she liked best, painting a picture of a deeply rich and connected digital experience that created an

escape through which she could express her desires and needs.

I am grateful to Mariam for opening up to me, and I know that it was, in part, my role as

stranger more than researcher that allowed her the security it did. The few times other

women were in earshot, she would go quiet and I would quickly switch topics, only

resuming that conversation when we were afforded more privacy.

Women were not always readily forthcoming, and understandably so. A young girl Ava

met had experienced online harassment by an older boy in her village. Although this

was difficult to talk about, and she was skittish in the presence of others, there was a

visible need to talk to somebody about it. There were also moments of renegotiation, as

with Sunidhi, who alluded to a village tragedy during the first activity, but was only

willing to offer details towards the end of the conversation, when she felt comfortable in

Antara’s company.

Although we went in with the intention to take notes and record conversations, we were

never married to the dream of a picture-perfect archive. Miloni shifted in her seat at the

mention of a recording and so I put my phone away. Salma requested we turn it off

while she shared a deeply personal anecdote, and reminded us to turn it back on so

that we would still have a record of the rest of the conversation to reference later.

Page 12:

At the end of the day, a voice recording or scribbled anecdote would always come

second to a participant’s ability to express themselves as safely as possible. It was

important to us to have these conversations the way we would any other social

interaction, treating participants as fellow humans before all else.

Page 13:

This piece is authored by Antara.

Through most of our conversation, fifteen-year-old Pallavi was practical and cheerful,

talking a mile a minute about Instagram, YouTube, and her favourite influencer. When I

asked if anyone disapproved of her using the phone, her face fell and her tone

shifted—she had to stop going to school because a male classmate had been sending

her inappropriate messages. I let her know that she didn’t have to finish the story, we

could stop at any point.

Pallavi chose to continue, speaking slowly but evenly, and used the end of her dupatta

to wipe away the first sign of tears. Given the circumstances, offering comfort felt

insincere, and moving onto another question insensitive. I told her that I hoped she

knew this wasn’t her fault. This was the first time I had ever consciously communicated

my opinion to a research participant. I knew it wasn’t the neutral thing to do. Pallavi thanked me; she agreed, but some community members weren’t of the same opinion.

Her reaction confirmed my instincts: sometimes my empathy is more important to my

research practice than an attempt to be unbiased.

Many traditions of research emphasise objectivity during fieldwork—by interrogating

the research subject, prioritising impersonality, and ‘controlling’ for variations in

interactions by adhering to a predetermined order of questioning. Such approaches

sometimes forget that the person sitting across from us is not just a data point in a

soon-to-be-published report. At an interpersonal level, participants might need more

from us to feel a sense of ease, dignity, and agency in such interactions.

Page 14:

Part of understanding our participants’ experiences is drawing connections to (or letting

them into) some of our own. This was sometimes as simple as recognising a shared

identity. Manvi was met with sunny smiles from participants in Odisha after mentioning

that she was an Odia bahu or daughter-in-law of an Odia family; Wafa felt more

comfortable opening up to Ava upon realising they were both Muslim women.

As general practice, we’d begin and end our interactions by checking with participants if

they would like to ask us anything. For some women, the idea seemed absurd; they

were used to being ‘interviewed’ and the questions typically flowed one way. We wanted

to dispel that notion.

Our participants were generous with their stories, their time, and their homes; creating

space for any questions from them was a small way for us to reciprocate. In

encouraging them to ask and tell us as much as they wished, we often heard anecdotes

and opinions that would not be strictly relevant to our analysis. We were happy to listen.

Sometimes these stories revealed a richer and more complete picture of the lives we

were attempting to understand. At other times, our willingness to listen cemented our

participants’ trust in us and led to fewer inhibitions later. Nearly always, and perhaps

most importantly, this created a safe space for women to speak more freely and at

leisure, briefly unencumbered by daily responsibilities.

Page 15:

[Facing image: A strip of red cloth is embroidered onto a beige scrap with a blanket

stitch in yellow. Above it is a selfie of five women—an adolescent girl holding the phone

and four researchers next to her, all smiling brightly. The faces of three of the

researchers have erroneously been half-cropped from the photo, so they’ve been

completed using blue ink and the artist’s imagination. A similar rendition of the

participant’s hand is drawn in red, and it holds a cutout of a phone made from

blue-coloured paper. There are two pieces of green cloth stuck to the photo—one along

the length of the photo on its right, and one—with a pink motif on it—that hides the

participant’s face.]

Page 16:

This piece is authored by Ava and Manvi.

[Facing image: On a square-ish scrap of green cloth, a black and white photograph of

two researchers and a field partner sharing a meal is framed by a green and red braid

of thread. The picture has glasses of water and plates of food crafted using thread and

bits of paper. A purple stitch emerges from behind the bottom left corner of the photo,

running up until the edge of the green cloth.]

Page 17:

A group of young women, unaccompanied by male chaperones, asking questions about

technology and phones? This benign curiosity was expressed by many of the women we

spoke to.

They asked about our work—why were we doing it, when would it be finished, how

would it help. Others asked for advice. A few young girls satisfied their curiosities about

life in a big city like Bengaluru. In some ways, we represented an exotic species: dressed

differently, living away from family, and nearly all of us unmarried.

Shanaya, for instance, wanted to know more about our jobs and the reasons for our

presence in her community. She asked Manvi how much she earns—expressing a desire

to be as independent as she perceived Manvi to be, as well as searching for

encouragement to pursue her own aspirations. When we spoke about her interests, she

mentioned using YouTube extensively for general knowledge and understanding

requirements for different jobs. Much like us, our participants’ ambitions for a

professional journey coincided with understanding how other women grew into their

success. Some women voiced their aspirations, away from societal expectations that

came with being boxed into roles of mother, wife, or daughter.

While we always welcomed questions, we had to maintain an appropriate distance as

researchers in answering them, whether to ensure this wouldn’t influence our

participants’ behaviour around us or to respect our own personal boundaries.

Page 18:

However, balance was key. It was equally important to lean into the participants' mode

of building familiarity—often this meant sharing food together or accepting (and never refusing) gestures of hospitality such as offerings of tea. We also attempted to

reciprocate these instances with gestures of our own, like sharing water.

Building trust with participants, however difficult, had to be about more than just being

transparent in our intentions with them. Our positionality as researchers in the life of a

participant was of a ‘temporariness’—we would be there to talk for a few hours, share

some food and tea as we spoke, perhaps see each other again the next day. But our

time together would inevitably come to an end.

[image: A scrap of orange cloth is embroidered on a vast, rectangular piece of beige

cloth. On it, a purple running stitch forms a circle, within which is a black and white

photograph of a group of women. They are also sitting in a circle. A line of herringbone

stitches, and two lines of running stitches run across the bottom of the photo.]

Page 19:

[Facing image: A collage of photographs and embroidery adorn a torn circular beige

piece of cloth. Two strands of embroidery thread, purple and blue, run through its

centre, the words “WHO ARE YOU?” stuck on them in orange paper. On the left of these strands is an embroidered purple eye, below which are three black and white photos, the last two embroidered atop a piece of purple cloth. The first photo shows two

researchers listening intently to a participant (not pictured). The second is of a third

researcher taking notes, and the third photo also of two researchers—one tasked with

note-taking as the other facilitates the conversation.

On the other side are three photos of participants. The first two are of individual

participants, both their faces covered by blue paper. Sandwiched between them is an

embroidered eye, this one in blue. The last photo, placed on a green piece of cloth with

pink strands peeking out from beneath the photo, is of four women standing together,

their faces hidden in a similar fashion as the others’. A few cross and running stitches

are placed at random on these photos, purple on the left and blue on the right.]

Page 20:

This piece is authored by Manvi.

The physical and mental toll of conducting the same kinds of interactions on repeat

across eight locations in four weeks was immense. Maintaining energy and enthusiasm

for each interaction, while keeping the activity fresh for every participant, was a

recurrent challenge. In moments of celebration, but equally in these instances of

overwhelm or fatigue, our support for one another proved invaluable in encouraging us

to keep going. We found rhythms that sustained us: chai breaks with participants and

field partners to recharge, decompressing in the car between visits, and daily debrief

sessions during which we processed emotions together just as much as we analysed

new learnings.

Our camaraderie and mutual learning was often interwoven with how we conducted

ourselves on the field. For example, spectators would often distract participants either

by instilling a fear of judgement, or by inviting themselves in the spaces of

confidentiality that we as researchers sought to build. We improved our facilitation skills

by observing and building upon one another’s tactics to manage onlookers. In some

cases, we would politely request them to leave by explaining how it was important to

prioritise the comfort of the participant. In one instance, Antara started another

“interview” with an inquisitive young child at a suitable distance so that our participant

could continue speaking to Ava in privacy. Such quick thinking and tactful

communication helped us maintain the rhythm of our conversations and reassure

participants of our intent.

Our end-of-day collective reflections also fostered peer learning in ways that pushed

our boundaries as researchers. We shared which activities we thought had worked

better with a participant, in what form, and in which order. Strategies of all kinds were

exchanged too; Aditi reported having made an activity easier to understand by using

cards from another. We would go around the room, each one of us analysing all that we

had learnt that day, as well as talking about our feelings and experiences, making room

for the good and the not-so-good.

Page 21:

Indisputably, one of the most touching aspects of our shared experience and teamwork

was the empathy we extended to one another. This meant sharing or giving space when

the situation called for it and being attuned to each other's mental, emotional, and

physical needs. We approached each other with the same compassion and understanding we sought to offer our participants.

Page 22:

A note on the design

The zine is peppered with mixed media visuals combining fieldwork photographs and

our attempts to stitch, embroider, weave, and braid with and on Indian textiles. The

variations in stitching evoke each of our voices: Manvi through the purple herringbone

and Ava via the maroon cross-stitch, while Antara and Aditi communicate using the

yellow blanket and green chain stitches, respectively.

Our intention with using fabric and needlework as a medium is manifold. For one, to

acknowledge the history of these crafts being carried out primarily by women, often to

chronicle their lived experiences. Another, to question persistent notions that

photographs are objective records of past events, while art is a subjective

interpretation. By bringing the two together, we hope to remind readers that research

always holds an element of subjectivity; who asks the questions and how they do so

invariably has bearing on the conclusions. And lastly, to visibly capture the additions

and (mis)stitches of many hands on a single piece, much like the collaborative and

iterative nature of our research.

Aditi Shah, Antara Madavane, Ava Mumtaz Haidar, and Manvi Parashar are researchers

at Aapti Institute, a research institution in Bengaluru, India that works at the

intersection of technology and society.

For more information, visit www.aapti.in or write to us at contact@aapti.in.

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[Inside back cover image: A pink cloth with vertical yellow patterns running along the

length of the page sits under random red cross-stitches and purple herringbone

stitches, as well as scraps of green and purple cloth on its right edge.]

Page 24:

[Back cover image: A purple cloth with white stripes moving horizontally serves as the

background, on whose top-left corner is layered a scrap of white cloth. On the right is a

green cloth and chain stitch, both in continuation with the front cover. There is a hint of

the red cloth at the very top, on the right. The bottom right corner is graced by the

collage of red cloth, black and white photo of three women, and the orange cloud

connecting all three of them with yellow and red cross stitches. Here, however, only the

participant and translator are visible, the former’s face hidden behind three lines of

green chain stitches.]

# **Centring Joy and Fun as a Feminist Research Method**

Dr. Alex D. Ketchum

Cover:

[The cover shows black and white images of 6 people dancing. They are figures representing people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds of different heights and body sizes. One person does not have an arm. Every person looks joyful.]

Summer 2024 (written in May and first printed for July)

Assistant Professor, McGill University’s IGSF

Page 2:

About this Project:

This zine will discuss the importance of embracing joy and fun while undertaking feminist research.

So often joy is treated as an unserious emotion in academia. Why? Should not we find moments of joy in conducting our research? Just because research is work, should it not be fun– at least sometimes? Even when we work on heavy topics (such as violence against marginalized communities), joyous moments can sustain our work. If the goal is to train, become, and remain scholars in a sustainable manner, our scholarship can only endure if we take care of ourselves and our communities.

Every project has its challenging moments– whether those challenges come from the subject material, technical issues, a lack of funding, writer’s block, or other structural issues. Finding the joy and fun in our methods, material, and/or research knowledge dissemination (aka how we share our findings) is a good feminist research practice.

This page has a QR Code that links to this google doc.

Page 3:

Choosing Our Research Questions with Desire, Joy, and Fun in Mind

In “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities (2009), Indigenous scholar Eve Tuck discusses how even though there are useful applications for collecting data about the violence and challenges that marginalized communities, particularly Indigenous communities, face, scholars can perpetuate harm if they are always portraying marginalized communities within a narrative of damage and oppression. While damage centred research can be a strategy for getting funding towards programming or trying to impact policy, Tuck encourages scholars to undertake desire-centered research.

When researchers only ask questions about harm, pain, or violence, they risk flattening narratives about a community or topic. Is not joy, laughter, love, and silliness part of the human experience?

A move to narratives of resilience is one strategy of framing research questions within joy and desire. But you can do even more!

When choosing your research topic, where are the moments of joy?

Page 4:

Joy and Fun in Our Research Subjects

Researchers are all individuals and we all have a different capacity for focusing on violence and pain in our work. When I started grad school, I wanted to look at inequity in domestic and commercial kitchen spaces and how feminists, and especially lesbians and queer women within feminist movements challenged unequal distribution of reproductive labour and capitalist structures. I knew if I only focused on the sexist, racist, classist, and homophobic inequities that this project (which spanned from my BA honours thesis, MA paper, PhD dissertation, and a later book (see *Ingredients for Revolution* (2022), available in open access) over 12 years) would make me sad and unhappy. Of course my work spoke to the harms, damage, and violence, but I instead focused the work on feminist restaurants. I wanted to center my attention on the ways that activists resisted economic, social, and cultural harms by taking risks and trying to create the kinds of spaces and communities that reflected their values. Their work was imperfect and so was mine. However, finding the places where joy, celebration, food, and music facilitated gathering, care, and support was necessary for my own.

J.J. Wright  is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at MacEwan University. Their doctoral project involved research with diverse youth in higher education who self-identified as trauma survivors and explored the impact of traumatized subjectivity for gender-based violence prevention education. Quite a heavy subject! However, their work, while continuing to look at sexual violence, centers moments of queer and trans joy; with projects about cultivating just,pleasurable, and affirming sexual cultures. I am constantly inspired by their Queer Joy project, their Queer Joy Research Hub, and their queer joy zines.

When students ask me about what research project they should pursue, I ask: which topic are you most excited about? What work do you want to spend your time doing? What seems the most interesting and intellectually stimulating? And… what seems the most fun to pursue?

If you are already working on a project, where are the moments of joy in your subject matter? How can you incorporate these moments of joy and fun into your analysis? A focus on joy or even resilience does not have to be the entire project, but are there spaces where you can find the fun?

Page 5:

Joy in Our Methods: Having Fun Doing The Work

There are many ways to conduct research; some research methods will be more useful for answering your research questions.\* Conducting oral histories can be great for a project about lesbian bar raids in the 1980s but won’t be as useful for 14th century agricultural histories. Quantitative and qualitative analysis all has its place within research. Sometimes, however, there are multiple methods that would be useful. While mixed methods can be a great strategy, sometimes you have to choose between 2 methods.

In addition to considering questions such as the amount of time, training, and resources required for each method option, I also encourage you to consider what method feels more exciting or fun to pursue.

To repeat: which method seems more fun?

You are likely going to spend A LOT of time doing this work and developing this skillset. Does one option seem more fun, appealing, or exciting?

It is okay to ask yourself this question.

Fun could mean: intellectually challenging, whimsical, thought provoking, or something else entirely. There is not a right answer here– I’m interested in what seems fun for you.

Looking for the moments of joy and fun can also be an important form of care for ourselves as researchers. Research methods can be filled with emotions of all kind. While archivists and oral historians have looked to the role of emotion in the archives and feelings during interviews (Ann Cvetkovich’s work is a good starting point), the emotional experiences of undertaking research deserve more attention.

\*I don’t have the time and space here to go through every feminist research method in this zine, but I teach multiple courses on feminist research methods and I’ve created public versions of my GSFS 300 and WMST 601 syllabi if that is useful to you (available at [alexketchum.ca](http://alexketchum.ca/) under the syllabi tab).

*This page has a QR code that links to that website.*

[*https://www.alexketchum.ca/p/syllabi.html*](https://www.alexketchum.ca/p/syllabi.html)

Page 6:

Joy in Our Research Communication

As scholars we engage in multiple forms of research communication. Journal articles, conference papers, and books are strategies for sharing our work. You might also be interested in sharing your work with wider audiences– such as the public.\* Perhaps you are considering making a podcast, writing an Op-ed, creating a comic book version of your work, or hosting an event, but you are also starting to feel overwhelmed. Your subject matter might lend itself to certain research communication strategies better than others (for example- if you work on something that is very visual-centered, you might consider curating an exhibit or using social media platforms such as Instagram to share your work). However, you will likely still have lots of options.

I recommend you  begin with the strategy that seems most interesting and fun. What skillset seems most fun to develop? What strategy would bring the most pleasure? What research knowledge mobilization methods could lead to more fun experiences? Or put you into conversations that might foster joy?

It’s also okay if you make mistakes or change your strategy. Part of embracing the fun, joy, and silliness is a reminder that we can change our minds, grow, and try new things. Experiment!

\*I wrote a whole book on public scholarship, filled with toolkits, that I encourage you to check out (*Engage in Public Scholarship!: A Guidebook on Feminist and Accessible Communication* (2022- available open access)).

*This page has a QR code that links to that book:* <https://press.library.concordia.ca/projects/engage-in-public-scholarship>

Page 7:

Concluding Thoughts

While academia often belittles ideas of “joy” and “fun,” finding and centring moments of joy in our work, especially when working on challenging topics, is a serious and important undertaking. Most researchers experience exhaustion and disinterest at some point during a long term project. Being able to turn to those moments of joy and fun is something that can keep us going.

So go out there and have some fun! Seriously...

Page 8:

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About the author: Dr. Alex D. Ketchum is an Assistant Professor of Gender, Sexuality, Feminist, and Social Justice Studies at McGill University. She teaches an undergraduate Feminist Research Methods course (GSFS 300) and a graduate Feminist Theories and Methods course (WMST 601). Learn more about her work on queer feminist tech and food history at [alexketchum.ca](http://alexketchum.ca/).

# **COMPOSING LOCAL LISTENING**

Trent Wintermeier

Cover: COMPOSING LOCAL LISTENING

Page 1: KEY

[Image: Illustration of a circuit diagram for an Open-Wave Receiver, a shortwave radio

designed by the Shortwave Collective]

[Image: A key for the circuit diagram which labels the following: coil, ground, diode, antenna, phones, and copper]

Page 2:

INTRODUCTION

COMPOSING LOCAL LISTENING is an instructional zine and a site for considering the many

implications, opportunities, and futures of integrating the practice of writing into the design

of do-it-yourself shortwave radio receivers.

The guide not only offers instructions but some of the materials necessary for beginning to

build the receiver outlined across the zine. In this way, the zine is designed to be

deconstructed; while reading, one should rip out pages, remove the binding, and begin

writing with the material.

Together, we will briefly review the Shortwave Collective’s radio design. Then we will discuss the introduction of a written component into this design, specifically the use of pencil lead, carbon paper, tin foil, and a found metal object, to access radio signals.

Lastly, we will consider how writing and listening can apply to the composition and rhetoric

classroom, and the possibilities this provides for learning about the local sonic conditions of communities in which we—students and educators—learn.

Page 3:

SHORTWAVE COLLECTIVE

THE SHORTWAVE COLLECTIVE is an international feminist artist collective that designed the “Open-Wave Receiver,” which is a shortwave radio receiver that uses found objects and waste to access signals across the shortwave. They say that their design doesn’t rely on “pre-fabricated parts (capacitors, resistors, a chip… [the radios] are entirely ‘open’ and out of the black box” (Shortwave Collective).

[Image: Illustration of a coil, copper wiring]

The foundational components include building a coil (inductor), diode, and ground—and

then connecting each of these with copper alligator clips and, as we’ll introduce, a written

component that re-thinks the diode.

(Please see the Shortwave Collective’s website for more information on the radio design and complete instructions.)

Page 4:

RADIO CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTING this radio receiver requires integrating found materials into the circuit. This includes:

1. Coil: using a toilet paper roll and 22-gauge copper, wrap the copper around the roll 120

times

2. Diode: find a metal baking sheet or a sheet of metal that has a large surface area

3. Ground: take a tent peg or sharp metal object to drive into the dirt or connect to a

radiator

[Image: Illustration of ground, a tent stake]

These components—alongside an antenna, speaker, and cat’s whisker—serve to develop

local connections to the places and spaces for listening. Oftentimes, these materials can be borrowed from friends, found around the house or work, or removed from the

garbage—giving new meaning(s) to these materials. Instructions are available in the back of the zine.

Page 5:

IMAGE

[Image: Photograph of the written radio component being used at a workshop in

Pennsylvania. First side of photo is a hand using a cat’s whisker with a pencil, which is

drawing on the diode (tin foil, carbon paper, metal)]

Page 6:

COMPOSING

WRITING IS INTRODUCED in the diode, which requires using the following materials:

1. Metal sheet

2. Golf pencil

3. Safety pin

4. Sheet of carbon paper

5. Sheet of tin foil

It is layered like this (see below), requiring writing on the top of the foil:

[Image: Illustration of the new diode design, layered tin foil (top), carbon paper (middle), and metal (bottom)]

The metal sheet will be connected by an alligator clip in the “Open-Wave Receiver” circuit,

replacing the diode. When using the cat’s whisker, the pencil lead makes a layered

connection between the conductors and carbon, allowing for writing to be introduced into the design.

Page 7:

CONT.

ONCE the safety pin is jammed into the back of the pencil lead and connected via an

alligator clip, we can write on to the foil, making a connection between the pencil lead, foil, carbon, and metal. Every time we make that connection through writing, we will be

accessing signals across the shortwave.

Expanding sites of composing with sound affirms that “listening and learning happen

everywhere” as Mark Peter Wright explains (4), and this unfolds through the material

relations of community spaces. When putting pencil to not paper but foil, a connection is

made between the ground, antenna, inductor, and copper alligator clips that make sound intelligible.

To listen, then, involves an ecology of relations that make possible the engagement with

sonic planes. Writing becomes a route for making meaning through the scribbling and

scratching of foil to find AM radio signals.

Page 8:

LISTENING

THIS WAY OF LISTENING to the shortwave uses found objects and writing to develop an

attunement to the local material conditions that create sound. Different material

circumstances and conditions emerge through writing as the connection to the shortwave is made through prose, drawing, and any other purpose for composing.

“Listening is thus a political practice that hears and generates alternatives”

— Salomé Voegelin

The use of waste and everyday materials as the means for composing develops relationships with and interventions into the local conditions of sonic production. Through writing, new meanings are discovered and, quite literally, inscribed through material circumstances, creating new opportunities to think about who and what makes sound in a variety of communicative contexts. Composing listening in this way is a pedagogical task designed for the writing and rhetoric classroom.

PAGE 9:

SHORTWAVE PEDAGOGY

INTRODUCING shortwave listening into the classroom has been discussed by Myles Mustoe in terms of its benefits to the geography curriculum, as it introduces some “reality into the curriculum” (84) because of radio’s focus on place. Further, Irvin King says that integration of shortwave radio into the classroom can “motivate students to learn about the outside world” (11).

“The radio can bring a sense of relevance to geographic information a student might

encounter and can stimulate the student to go further in his or her study.”

— Myles Mustoe

Shortwave listening, in general, provides a just and apt means for teaching students about the conditions of the communities in which they are a part of and in which they learn. It prompts active engagement with place and conditions beyond the classroom.

PAGE 10:

LOCALITY & WRITING

WRITING WITH SHORTWAVE RADIO is then a productive activity for the rhetoric and

composition classroom. Introducing the written component in the “Open-Wave Receiver”

design allows for instructors to tailor the use of radio and their writing assignments to

simultaneously practice a relationship to the community and material settings in which their classroom contexts are produced.

Thus, combining writing assignments and shortwave radio is a pedagogical method for

teaching students about their never-separate position within a constellation of material,

sonic, communal, and rhetorical considerations that emerge through writing.

PAGE 11:

CONT.

ACCORDING TO Nedra Reynolds, “writers or learners need strategies for entering unfamiliar areas” and they “need to see discourses as places to be inhabited” (4).

Introducing writing as a mode for accessing sonic and material conditions is a rhetorical

tactic which foregrounds how discursive belongings are wrapped up with the sonic and

material circumstances of educational space(s).

For this reason, the rhetoric and writing classroom is an apt place for such activity; as Steph Ceraso tells us, “rhetoric and composition scholars are already attuned to questions of sound” (312).

What this zine offers is yet another way to make evident this relationship between writing, rhetoric, and sound, while practicing a material and community sensibility that is always already in constellation with the work we do and the meaning we make.

PAGE 12:

CONCLUSION

THE GOAL, or at least one of the goals of this work, is to develop more responsible

relationships across the material conditions of communities that are based in and afford

different ways of listening to sound. By practicing this work inside and outside of rhetoric and writing classrooms, we can become more accountable writers, listeners, sound-makers, and material relatives.

[Image: Illustration of the new diode design, layering of multiple sheets with a pencil writing on top]

Altering the “Open-Wave Receiver” to include a written component made from found,

everyday materials and waste is a radio design suited for amplifying the pedagogical

commitments of instructors and building the capacities for students to realize their

discursive implication within a scene constituted by material, sonic, and community

responsibilities.

PAGE 13:

IMAGE

[Image: Photograph of the written radio component being used at a workshop in

Pennsylvania. Second half of image is the other hand securing the tin foil]

PAGE 14:

INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of this zine isn’t to provide instructions for building an “Open-Wave Receiver” but, instead, to offer an alteration to the design and consider the potential value of this alteration. To assist with the integration of this design, though, this zine can be deconstructed into radio components that serve to support introducing writing into a radio circuit. Begin this deconstruction with the following steps:

1. Coil: remove the copper spine and cut along the perforation on this page. This will form a

cylinder air-core component and the copper wound around it

2. Ground: the tent stake can be stuck directly into the dirt or any other ground source

3. Diode: use the black carbon paper and tin foil to form a layered connection on top of a metal sheet

After building these components, the remainder of the zine has a 2x7 circuit diagram on the back of pages 2-13. This circuit design is developed by the Shortwave Collective. Once correctly organized, each component can be adjusted according to the diagram or placed on top of the diagram.

PAGE 15:

RESOURCES

Ceraso, Steph. “Sonic Scenes of Writing.” College English. 2022.

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*Pedagogies*. Logan: Computers and Composition Digital P/Utah State UP. 2018.

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Knight, Aimée. *Community Is the Way: Engaged Writing and Designing for Transformative Change*. The WAC Clearinghouse; University Press of Colorado. 2022.

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Mitchell, Caroline. “Re-Sounding Feminist Radio: A Journey through Women & Community

Radio Archives.” Feminist Media Histories. 2015.

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1988.

Reynolds, Nedra. *Geographies of writing: Inhabiting places and encountering difference*. SIU Press. 2007.

Shortwave Collective. “Open-Wave Receiver.” 2023.

Voegelin, Salomé. *The political possibility of sound: Fragments of listening*. Bloomsbury

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Wright, Mark Peter. *Listening After Nature: Field Recording, Ecology, and Critical Practice*.

Bloomsbury Publishing Inc. 2022.

# **Critical Approaches To Place: Teaching Narrative Mapping in Southern New Mexico**

Eric Magrane and Kerry Banazek

Cover:

[image” the cover of the zine is a black and white grainy landscape photo, the title sits above it, the subtitle in smaller text just above the peaks of the landscape.]

In 2020, we received funding from the (U.S.) National Endowment for the Humanities to support a three-year project titled: Critical Approaches to Place, Teaching Narrative Mapping in Southern New Mexico.

Page 1:

[image: the preface is done in the style of blackout poetry, where instead of fully redacting unchosen words they are scribbled out with a pen or pencil, and chosen words are boxed in, the paragraph is rotated 90 degrees to the right relative of the standard layout of the zine]

Preface: Written for those who want to learn more about the life in which they live. To learn does not require a visceral student.

Page 2:

[image: a paragraph blocked with a white background is overlaid on a grainy photo of a thicket of thorns]

During the course of this project, we explored the complexity of represneting place and space by critiquing, designing, and building digital Story Maps together. We ran a facukty development workshop, a public speaker series, and an experimental graduate methods class. Our students explored environments near Las Cruces, learned from community partners, and developed projects in teams. This zine documents some of the ideas that drove that work.

Page 3:

[image: the words on this page are handwritten in pen, with a diagram from an academic paper after the title. The diagram is labelled “FIGURE 3. The discursive terrain of GIS is marked by stratifications and destratifications.” The diagram shows three conjoined arcs labelled “GIS & Society” which sprouts into “critical GIS” which in turn sprouts into “x GIS”. From “GIS & Society” comes an arrow labelled “GIScience”, and from “critical GIS” comes an arrow labelled “big data science”. This figure is cited at the bottom of the page after the next written portion, as: Wilson, Matthew. (2017) New Lines. Critical GIS and the trouble of the map. Minneapolis, University of Minnisota Press.]

What does “Critical” even mean? The quesiton of “what we do” is an already loaded one – assuming that a “doing” (versus an “undoing” or a “do nothing”) is the greatest social good. P.19

Page 4:

[image: this page is another black out poem, this time filling the whole page. At the top right is a semi-transparent stylized rendering of a hummingbird and flowers. The words on this page are typed and circled/boxed to show the significance. The unused words are scribbled out with a thick black marker.]

Critical approaches to place, presences and absences. To be a place conversations allow to open attention projects you might want.

Options (starting places): somewhere you lived for the map (or each what does it/do they leave out? What is the context of your own personal knowledge This can be a question.

Curiosity.

Page 5:

[image: two paragraphs, typed out, are above and below a map of the Chihuahuan Desert, which features the Spanish as well: Desierto De Chihuahua. This spans much of Mexico as well as Texas.]

Environmental and place-based themes are often framed vis-a-vis “problems” that require address by STEM disciplines, but the humanities offer essential insights into place, the environment, and entanglement of related issues with cultural dynamics and power imbalances. Global environmental challenges encapsulated by the designation of the “Anthropocene,” a proposed geologic epoch that marks human impact on the Earth, have facilitated a burgeoning of geohumanities and aligned environmental humanities research, but organized pedagogical programs in this vein remain relatively few.

While environmental challenges such as climate change are global in scope, they play out in particular ways in particular places. Our insights and approaches are necessarily inflected by the location of our institution—New Mexico State University. We are situated in the Chihuahuan Desert, where sustainability issues such as water use, agriculture, and the urban heat island effect are of critical importance—and are intertwined with social challenges along the U.S.-Mexico border (which is less than 100 miles away).

Page 6:

[image: typed text hangs above a grainy image of rocks or pieces of a sculpture arranged in a matrix of white dots, possibly painted. The rocks are situated within their own outlines, each outline is a different shape than the rock it inhabits.]

“dialogues’ whereby geographers interpret and analyse art works, and ‘doings’ in which geographers become exhibition curators, collaborate with artists and even become creative practitioners in their own right”

Harriet Hawkins, “Dialogues and Doings: Sketching the Relationships between Geography and Art”

Page 7:

[image: what looks to be a full page spread of a magazine cover showcasing a grainy and indeterminate pattern, in the background is the title in large white letters: “MAPPING ABUNDANCE FOR A PLANETARY FUTURE.” Overlaid in white boxes is the typed content of this page. At the very bottom a black bar with white text states: “Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawai’i Candace Fujikane,” it appears to be partially cut off in the photo]

Ecological communities

Definitions of abundance ripen

To map abundance is not a luxury but an urgent insistence on life. Envisioning and practicing abundance is a necessity in the face of the deadly consequences of occupation, settler colonial genocidal tactics, and corporate-induced climate change. Traditional Kanaka Maoli economies of

The struggle for a planetary future calls for a profound epistemological shift. Indigenous ancestral knowledges are now providing a foundation for our work against climate change, one based on what I refer to as Indigenous economies of abundance—as opposed to capitalist economies of scarcity. Rather than seeing climate change as apocalyptic, we can see that climate change is bringing about the demise of capital, making way for Indigenous lifeways that center familial relationships with the earth and elemental forms.

Page 8:

[image: black text on a white page, irregularly spaced and including a poetry fragment]

In the introduction to Ashiwi Awan Ulohnanne The Zuni World, a book and catalog of a Zuni map art project and exhibit, Jim Enote writes, “these maps are like relatives, like aunts and uncles that entrance us with narrations of places they have been to or heard about.”

You go to a map to find out:

Where you are

Where you have been

Where you are going

Where you might go

“Un mapa es un modo de hablar (A map is a manner of speaking)” writes Alberto Blanco.

You go to a map to change the way you think, the way you see.

Page 9:

[image: hand drawn map of unknown landscape, featuring what look to be lines symbolizing paths or walkways with what may be equations written in and around it. Below that is another map, much the same as the first but without equations, instead, written to the top right of the lower map are the words: “DESERT QUESTIONS”, also handwritten.]

Page 10:

[image: two white blocks overlaid on a pattern of static-ey lines, some appear to almost have a concentric ring pattern. The first block is at the top of the page, holding the title and authors, and the second block is on the right hand side of the page, rotated 90 degrees so the text is sideways]

A Nest for Art and Science. Jorge Perez-Gallego, Erin Espelie and Tara Knight

“Experience has shown us that while the sciences and the arts seem siloed from one another from as early as secondary school, graduate students with different skills and abilities are eager, if given the opportunity, to embrace the true nature of collaboration between the two—even when it may seem to take away from their own lines of

Page 11:

[image: another blackout poem, this time situated on what appears to be a selection of botanical drawings of what is presumably native flora to the Chihuahuan Desert. A large cactus is cut off on the left side of the page, with a prickly pear shown as well as another type of cactus that is flowering slightly lower down]

PRELIMINARY KEY

3. branching toward the margins; parts or multiples each growing Division

4. or some species surrounded with many seeds in each fruit;

PURPLE PRICKLY PEAR

Opuntia martiniana

CANDELABRA CHOLLA

Opuntina imbricata

Abaundant these often occuring may be a parasite; ranging

Page 12:

[image: a detailed botanical drawing of ALLIGATOR JUNIPER, juniperus deppeana, showing the papery texture of the bark and the formation of its needles and berries. What appears to be a close up of a sprout shows almost a pine-cone like structure in its younger years]

Page 13 and 14:

[image: a two page spread with one paragraph on the left page, a snippet of a webpage discussing StoryMaps just beneath it. In the centre of the two pages is a clipping of a map, with a couple photos on the right page reminiscent of a scrapbook. The first image shows a series of three grainy landscapes with what appear to be links relating to Las Cruses, including a community garden and birdcalls. The other image shows a grainy picture of Big Chile Inn Weekly, what seems to be a inn or motel with, as the name implies, a very large statue of a chile pepper out front]

We got interested in how helping others work with narrative maps, map art, and related theories of space and place might open up new avenues of inquiry and insight. Our faculty development workshops focused on introducing ideas but also lowering barriers to entry for humanists and artists interested in designing projects and assignments that levrage GIS Story Maps.

StoryMaps

Combine cartographic representations with text, images, and multimedia content. Working with them in the classroom offers scholar-teachers:

A way to model critical deployment of technical (digital production) skills

A way to ethically build on lived expertise of local students, including first-generation, multilingual, and bi-national students; supporting their retention and professionalization

A way to help students experience how traditional writing skills contribute to production work across media formats, reinforcing the relevance of writing to their 21st century lives

An opportunity to transform conversations about environmental grand challenges and break down divisions between humanities, arts, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Page 15:

[image: this page seems to showcase a snippit of ciriculem that utilizes sstorymaps, the text is rotated 90 degrees sideways]

Big Question 1

Every week as part of your participation grade, you will submit a big, unruly, discussion-generating question before class. Your first one is due week 3 (1/27 at 10am).

Your question should engage with the week’s texts and concepts in some way. What way is up to you. This week, you might choose to respond to something from the Kelly article, the Map Poems PDF, the Maps as Media PDF, or the panel dsicussion that took place on the 20th. Pick something very specific from all this material (rather than trying to cover a huge amount of ground). Let us know what you’re thinking as you formulate your question; it doesn’t have to be neat. It can be long or short. It should be a question that is, in some way, reflective of your individual thinking—not a question someone else has already asked.

You might ask us to trouble, contextualize, or reflect on a passage we read. Share a quote in your post, if you’re doing this.

You might bring in your lived experience (tell a story in your question) or share media “samples” that weren’t assigned—stuff you’re familiar with that might help your classmates think about an idea.

Think about what you like about class discussions (even if you only occasionally like them). What kinds of questions are helpful to you as a thinker? As a reader?

Aim to create an opening. Classmates should be able to respond to your question in multiple ways—and the prospect of that should be exciting to you (a question with a “right” answer you already know will be frustrating to talk through in this way!)

Don’t worry about trying to “sound smart.” You’ll have plenty of chances to ask more questions.

A weird question can be more generative than a brilliant question.

Something that seems obvious or simple to you might surprise others.

Something that you “feel dumb” for not getting might turn out to have confused almost everyone.

Page 16:

[image: a white box and a sentence is superimposed on a grainy image of what might be a frame of a movie, featuring two monsters/robots facing each other. The closer robot is focused on the right side of the image, with the white text box on the left. The text is oriented in the same manner as the previous page, 90 degrees sideways]

Representations—whether they take linguistic, imagistic, cartographic, or multimedia forms—are never neutral. Rather they reflect, reproduce, distort, and enable various power structures, cultural dynamics, and ways of knowing.

Page 17:

[image: this page is rotated 90 degrees once more, sideways, the largest portion on the left hand side is dedicated to a list that describes the foundations of data feminism. The right hand side of the page has a small image featuring what appear to be magazine clippings, words partially cut off by the page. The right side image includes the words: feminism, data feminism, and two names: Catherine D’Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein]

1.Examine power. Data feminism begins by analyzing how power operates in the world.

2.Challenge power. Data feminism commits to challenging unequal power structures and working toward justice.

3.Elevate emotion and embodiment. Data feminism teaches us to value multiple forms of knowledge, including the knowledge that comes from people as living, feeling bodies in the world.

4.Rethink binaries and hierarchies. Data feminism requires us to challenge the gender binary, along with other systems of counting and classification that perpetuate oppression.

5.Embrace pluralism. Data feminism insists that the most complete knowledge comes from synthesizing multiple perspectives, with priority given to local, Indigenous, and experiential ways of knowing.

6.Consider context. Data feminism asserts that data are not neutral or objective. They are the products of unequal social relations, and this context is essential for conducting accurate, ethical analysis.

7.Make labor visible. The work of data science, like all work in the world, is the work of many hands. Data feminism makes this labor visible so it can be recognized and valued.

Page 18:

[image: a figure from a cited article is shown under the title and citation. This figure shows a grid of 38 icons (7 by 5 + a smaller row of 3 at the bottom). These symbols are typical of those found on maps, including icons that display activities such as baseball (a little human swinging a bat), basketball (a little human throwing a ball), playground (a little human on a swing), as well as symbols to represent places including a blood bank (a drop with a plus sign on it), a college (a graduate’s cap), and a doctors office (a stethoscope).]

[Under the figure is the description, reading as follows: FIGURE 6 Maki Icons that depict bodies directly, utilize bodies in their symbolism, or could be used to indirectly or abstractly depict bodies are highlighted in black. These thirty-eight icons were used in my feminist semiotic analysis.]

Mapping Bodies, Designing Feminist Icons

Meghan Kelly

To cite this article: Meghan Kelly (2021) Mapping Bodies, Designing Feminist Icons. GeoHumanities, 7:2, 529-557. DOI: 10.1080/2373566X.2021.1883455

To link this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2373566X.2021.1883455>

Page 19:

[image: a collage of images along with snippets of quotes. The page is almost divided in half, with the first quote and two images, and then the second in the second half of the page also with two images]

Working in Pilsen we asked residents of the city to draw maps on our hands that detailed the routes to various points of interest in the city. For example, one hand-drawn map depicted the route from a coffee house to the cathedral in city center. Another illustrated the route from the technical university to a shopping mall. We then photographed and converted those informal and highly specific maps into folded paper maps that resembled a typical tourist map of the city. Finally, with new maps in hand, we returned to the city where we asked passers-by to help orient.

Yumi Roth

[https://spot.colorado.edu/~rothy/](https://spot.colorado.edu/-rothy/)

[image: the top left image is of a person navigating a city by an image of a hand that has been drawn on, to the right is an image of a different hand-map, where streets and blocks have been drawn out and labelled]

Cartographic Bodies explores the idea of the body both as a cartographic territory and tool. Two of the experiments included in this project attempt to map the body: a photographic series that captures some of the traces of our bodies in our environment and a sound piece that looks for traces of our bodies in our conversations. Three other exercises use the body as an instrument to map the world around us: a sample of body-centric expressions that people use in their everyday lives to relate to other people, themselves, and their environment; a map that presents New York City as a human body; and a small book that speculates about what our body parts would remember if they could.

Nelesi Rodriguez

<http://bitsofself.com/cartographic-bodies/>

[image: a hand-bound booklet is shown in the top left of this section, and the rightmost image is a large hand drawn map of what looks to be a town or city with thick and thin lines that could represent roads or paths]

Page 20:

[image: at the top of the page are two images, one of an open book on rocky soil, and the one to the right of a grainy landscape and part of what might be a brick wall. The first paragraph is placed below it on white background]

“...between chrononormativity—those temporal qualifications that regulate everyday lives through which one waits for the expected—and the reimagined temporalties through which we understand the messiness that can occur when past and future come together. Importantly for the living archival body, these tensions also open up generative spaces where the possibility for hope, resistance and change might reside.”

Jamie A. Lee, Be/longing in the archival body: eros and the “Endearing” value of material lives

[image: beside the second quote is a small image, letters that are similar to magazine cutouts are arranged to say: ZINES IN THIRD SPACE]

“I also mean these third spaces to be understood as in-between spaces that are created at virtual and material intersections”

Adela C. Licona

Page 21:

[image: two images are side by side at the top of the page, the leftmost shows two people smelling bottles in front of a wall filled with stickie notes. The rightmost shows the wall itself, some stickie notes were placed in orderly fashions and in grids, but others are crowding around the lines or threads that connect the clusters of stickie notes. Below the text is a third and final image on the bottom of the page, showing a closeup of the wall. There is an old perfume bottle on a tiny shelf, and stickie notes dispersed around. It looks as though the notes and the bottle are situated on a map of some kind, with thick lines painted on the wall reminiscent of streets]

The audience were invited to:

SMELL a scent from any of the bottles

RECALL what it reminds you of

WRITE the place and/or feeling you associate with the smell

STICK your notes on the board near to the bottle of scent

Observations: coffee makes people tell a story, perfume encourages people to mention other people, wine is most likely to make people recall an event. Locations can be very specific or general. All smells have emotions attached.

Kate McLean, Smell Maps (Paris Postcards 2014)

<https://sensorymaps.com/>

Page 22:

[image: a screenshot of a website, rotated sideways, the title in large letters front and centre. Under a small divider is the introduction, which we cannot see. On the left-hand side is a sidebar that contains names of contributors and their respective affiliations. At the bottom of the website is what appears to be an audio component player]

Broder Soundscapes Project

Introduction

In Pursuit of a Border Sound Identity

Contributors

Jose Manuel Flores

Dr. Lucia Dura

Affiliations

The University of Texas at El Paso

Emails:

[Jflores62@miners.utep.edu](mailto:Jflores62@miners.utep.edu)

[Ldura@utep.edu](mailto:Ldura@utep.edu)

Page 23:

[image: two somewhat similar maps are rotated sideways on this page. Each shows a beautifully curving pattern, some lines drawn thick and dark, with echos of them rippling out further beyond the ‘original’. Not an inch of space seems to be free from these echos, resulting in a beautiful sight overlaid upon a coordinate grid]

Meander maps from geological investigation of the alluvial valley of the lower Mississippi River

W.O.Dement for Harold Fisk

1944

Page 24:

[image: once more shifted sideways, there are two maps of city streets and paths. One, on the upper right corner, above the text, is black with white lines, it seems to be on an angle. The other, on the lefthand side of the page, is white with black lines from a straight-down point of view. Both maps give the appearance of a city, with the roads and highways shown in a crowded and busy manner that is akin to a spiders web]

Jeremy Wood “plots the journeys, bicycles, boats, planes and his two feet provide him... land, water, air and the engineered environment of places determine the routes, are the medium within which his body moves and are the settings where he performs his traces. Time, location and established measurement standards, along with geodetic models, radio signals, software, the language of culture and place, encode the narrative voice. GPS is his cartographic rendering tool: it is what points, traces, locates and recounts.” My Ghost 2012 (L) and 2016 (above).

<https://www.jeremywood.net/artworks/my-ghost2016.html>

<https://www.gpsdrawing.com/press/caj71-JeremyWood.pdf>

Page 25:

[image: three images of maps border a paragraph, two on the top of the page, one on the bottom. The larger of the two on the top is labelled ‘Utopia’, and shows a continent surrounded by the ocean. The smaller, to the right, is a map of Pearl Harbor seemingly combined with Hiroshima, showing a small and detailed map of a harbor city. Below the text is a more detailed look at the larger image of ‘Utopia’, zooming in to look at a harbor section complete with piers and larger buildings]

Satomi Matoba. “Pearl Harbor – Hiroshima” (R) and “Utopia” (above, with detail)

“A nomansland exists in between cultures. This idea stemmed from my experience of living between two cultures. Marginal people who live in the nomansland need constantly to renegotiate one’s space between conflicting systems. That is a difficult situation. However I feel a threshold to a utopia is hidden here. Because the rules that seemed unshakable in the center of culture lose power in this frontier, and that maks the impossibles within a cultural framework possible, at a risk to lose oneself in an unbearable sense of dislocation... I dissolve familiar space in order to reconstruct the world, contemplating an ambiguous open ended potential in the act of shifting boundaries.”

<https://satomimatoba.com/>

Back Cover:

[image: two photos of people, presumably the authors of this zine, are layered above an image of what is presumably flora native to the Chihuahuan Desert, some sort of flowering body. The short bios of each contributor is right under the lower of the two photos]

“Critical Approaches to Place” project directors

Eric Magrane is an associate professor in Geography and Environmental Studies at NMSU (magrane@nmsu)

Kerry Banazek, also at NMSU, is director of the Creative Research Center and an associate professor of Rhetoric and Professional Communication ([kbanazek@nmsu.edu](mailto:kbanazek@nmsu.edu))

# **DIY on the Fly: A Feminist Field Guide for Drosophila Research**

Dr. Lisa Weasel and Suzanne Fisher

Cover:

[A reproduction of a mottled reddish-brown cardstock laboratory notebook cover with a

label filled in as follows:

Department: DIY ON THE FLY

Subject: A Feminist Field Guide for Drosophila Research

Name: Dr. Lisa Weasel and Suzanne Fisher

Address: Portland State University, Oregon]

Inside front cover:

[Background is reproduction of laboratory notebook reddish brown mottled cardstock

with text in white letters superimposed.]

Table of Contents:

001 Welcome to DIY on the Fly

002 Feminist science as DIY Method

004 Why the Fruit Fly?

006 Feelings About Flies

008 Flexible Flies: Pigmentation and Plasticity

009 From Eugenics to Afrofuturist Techno Dreams: The Many Lives of Melanin

010 Sex, Flies and Feminism

012 Feeling around with Flies: Getting set up

014 Capture!

016 Choosing what to observe and record

017 Observation

019 Sample Lab Notebook Observation Page

020 Living on fly time: Indigenous temporality and climate resilience

022 What does it all mean? Reflecting on method and affect

023 Ending the experiment: ethical methods when working with living beings

024 Concluding thoughts on methods

Page 001:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook page

with a large watercolor Drosophila image]

Welcome to DIY on the Fly: A Feminist Guide for Drosophila Research. We created

this experimental guide/workbook to provide methods and tools for readers to explore a

feminist investigation that honors the valuable aspects of conventional science but asks

how we might at the same time cultivate a more ethical, equitable, and exciting

approach to laboratory experimentation.

Our methods are intentionally DIY, relying on recycled and easily available materials.

Our experimental organism, the fruit fly Drosophila melanogaster, is found on every

continent aside from Antarctica, and can easily be captured in kitchens and gardens

during warmer months of the year. Sprinkled through this workbook you’ll find not only

directions for capturing your flies and setting up your experiment, but reflections and

insights on how to fully immerse yourself in a feminist investigation of both your flies and

the research experience itself.

We hope that the DIY feminist method provided here will offer you the opportunity to

expand your relationship to both science and to the “more than human” beings that

coexist with us and in fact have much to teach us.

Page 002:

[background watermark is is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook

page with text in pink background blocks. A photographic image of a single Drosophila

melanogaster fly is centered on the page between the text.]

Feminist science as DIY method

What makes a laboratory method feminist? Feminists have been critical of science,

addressing the ways in which intersectional gender biases have impacted everything

from the questions that we ask to the outcome of our studies. It can be easy to risk

drowning the proverbial baby as we throw out the bathwater, but we can also work to

reclaim and retool conventional science methods from a feminist perspective.

As Deboleena Roy writes, “Sometimes a pipette is just a pipette...in a science

influenced by feminism, pipettes will still be pipettes, one plus one will still equal two,

and as Ruth Hubbard has said of gravity, apples will indeed continue to fall unless

someone throws them up in the air...” While our approach to feminist methods follows

some of the same protocols used in conventional laboratory science, we imbue these

methods with feminist insights and framings to expand the kinds of knowledge science

can produce. The following are some of the feminist principles that guide this project.

Feminist DIY methods need to be accessible, cheap, and directly embedded in

marginalized or overlooked spaces.

Citizen science; maker spaces; hacktivism: democratic approaches to reclaiming

science through a DIY approach have become popularized in recent years. Clare Jen

points out how many of these spaces and approaches have been strongly gendered,

dominated by men and a masculinized “promissory narrative” that takes place in

“mythical garages.”

As a feminist alternative, Jen proposes “kitchen science 2.0” informed by feminist

principles and biopunk activism: “Curiosity knows no ethnic, gender, age, or

socioeconomic boundaries, but the opportunity to satisfy that curiosity all too often turns

on economic opportunity, and we aim to break down that barrier. A thirteen-year-old kid

in South Central Los Angeles has just as much of a right to investigate the world as

does a university professor” (Meredith Patterson, A Biopunk Manifesto).

Jen, C. (2015). Do-it-yourself biology, garage biology, and kitchen science: A feminist

analysis of bio-making narratives. In Knowing New Biotechnologies (pp. 125-141).

Routledge.

Page 003:

[background watermark is is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook

page with text in pink background blocks. A photographic image of a single Drosophila

melanogaster fly is centered on the page between the text.]

Feminist methods require that the researcher themselves be situated within the

experiment.

A longstanding tenet of feminist science are the concepts of standpoint and situated

knowledge. Feminist standpoint theory, according to feminist philosopher of science

Sandra Harding, acknowledges that as knowers/researchers, we are all influenced by

intersectional lived experiences embedded in a matrix of power relations. These

“standpoints” influence the knowledge that researchers produce and have access to,

and direct us to focus on marginalized standpoints and perspectives to fill in the gaps

left by these power imbalances. Meanwhile, Donna Haraway’s emphasis on “situated

knowledge” forces us to recognize that we as researchers are part of our experiment,

and that subject and object cannot completely be disentangled.

Feminist methods need to leave space for “getting lost”.

Deboleena Roy draws on the work of Patti Lather to emphasize the importance

of“getting lost” as a framework for feminist science methods. Roy’s “Getting Lost”

focuses on marginalized spaces and perspectives, frees us from the forced linearity that

often excludes affective and contextual aspects of our research, and is undergirded with

an ethic of care for both human and more-than-human participants in the research

project. As a metaphor, Roy invokes the stolons of spreading grasses, which extend

above ground to reach out and make new connections, “feeling around” as they sense

their surroundings. A feminist method needs space for getting lost through stolonic

spread, as a means to generate new knowledge.

Roy, D. (2008). Asking different questions: Feminist practices for the natural sciences.

Hypatia, 23(4), 134-157

Page 004:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook page

with text in yellow background blocks. A photograph circa 1920 of the Fly Room at

Columbia University, showing lab benches, vials of fruit flies, a microscope and various

bottles on shelves with a cluster of bananas hanging from a shelf.]

Why the Fruit Fly?

Fruit flies are famous! In the 1920s, Drosophila was made famous as the star of

geneticist Thomas Hunt Morgan’s “Fly Room” set up at Columbia University. Fruit flies

taught Morgan about “sex linkage”, the ways in which chromosomes link different genes

and traits together due to their linear biochemical structure. Drosophila turned out to be

such a useful and lab-friendly informant in the field of genetics that these tiny

two-winged subjects have won nine Nobel Prizes (along with their scientist

collaborators) and were some of the earliest experimental passengers on the space

shuttle.

Page 005:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook page

with text in yellow background blocks. Imbedded in the upper textblocks, a photograph

circa 1920 of the Fly Room at Columbia University, showing a person wearing

high-waisted jeans and hairstyle in a bun turned away from the camera at work, with

bottles of cultured fruit flies on a table in foreground. Imbedded in the lower text block,

an image of the continents in shaded bright colors.]

Fruit flies are feminist! There were women in the fly room too! While Morgan receives

a lot of credit for initiating Drosophila as a model organism for the study of genetics (and

now many other fields, including neurobiology, cancer biology, and even cultural

transmission) the conventional history of the “Boss and the Boys” (Dietrich & Tambasco,

2007) in Drosophila biology belies the important role that women have played in

Drosophila laboratories since the earliest days.

Fruit flies are everywhere!

The fruit fly Drosophila melanogaster is classified as a “cosmopolitan” strain, and you

probably have encountered them hovering above a fruit bowl in the kitchen during the

warm season. D. melanogaster share a curiously coincidental overlap in habits and

tastes with humans. They are the only Drosophila species that likes to live indoors with

us, and similar to humans, their earliest ancestors originated on the African continent

and then spread diasporically. They also have good taste in foods, preferring ripe fruits

and gravitating towards fermented products including beer. Their widespread

companionship with humans makes them an excellent, accessible DIY co-conspirator in

feeling around for a feminist method.

Dietrich, M. R., & Tambasco, B. H. (2007). Beyond the boss and the boys: women and

the division of labor in Drosophila genetics in the United States, 1934–1970. MAKE QR

CODEplace citation in 10pt font on page 6

Page 006:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook page

with text in two blue background blocks. There is space between the two text blocks for

readers to write their thoughts.]

Feelings about flies

Before we begin: How do you feel about flies? What sentiments and emotions

does the thought of working closely with flies bring up for you? Does it make you

feel curious? Fearful? Disgusted? Take a moment to record your initial reaction to the

thought of being intimate with fruit flies: need space

Tara Mehrabi writes about her feelings of disgust in working with Drosophila in the

essay “Being Intimate with Flies: On affective methodologies and lab work”.

Acknowledging such feelings transgresses and unveils the projection of science as

objective, neutral and disembodied. By bringing such affective responses to the

surface, rather than suppressing or ignoring them, laboratory research can

become a new form of intimacy; not the romantic, humanly exceptional concept

of intimacy (that often serves as a euphemism for sex) but one in which the

mutual co-constitution of researcher and subject is revealed.

Page 007:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook page

with text in two blue background blocks. There is space between the two text blocks for

readers to write their thoughts.]

Such an approach the foregrounds affect and intimacy undergirded by feminist ethics and epistemology, is one that in Mehrabi’s words, “not only captures the intra-active and

material-discursive modes of doing science, but which also enables me to ask different

research questions, such as whose lives matters within the contemporary science

economy.”

How can you become "intimate" with your research subject, the fruit flies, during the

course of this experiment? How is this approach different from science as you’ve

experienced it before?

Feminist approaches allow us to question and redraw boundaries that are often set up

as binaries- reason/emotion; science/society; gender/sex; male/female. What

boundaries will/can your experience with capturing and working with fruit flies at home

allow or require you to redraw? (these could be material or physical boundaries,

concepts or ideas, or your own experiences).

Mehrabi, T. (2018). Being intimate with flies: on affective methodologies and laboratory

work. Kvinder, Køn & Forskning, (1), 73-80. QR code link.

Page 008:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook page

with text in one orange background block. There is a diagram of the Drosophila life

cycle in the middle of the text block, with the title “Drosophila melanogaster Life Cycle”

in the middle of the image, depicting the following stages and descriptions, with arrows

leading between them. Clockwise from top of the image: at 12 o’clock position, a male

(left) and female (right) fruit fly, text says “male and female flies mate readily and

quickly”; at 1 o’clock position: a single female fly, text says “females lay up to 100 eggs

into suitable food sources”; at 3 o’clock position, three gray first instar larvae with text

says:”After 12 hours or so larvae emerge.” At 4 o’clock position, an image of a gray

second instar larvae, text says :the larvae feed and grow within their food source.” At 6

o’clock position, a gray third instar larva, text says, “Larvae grow very quickly depending

on how warm it is.” At 7 o’clock position, a pale gray pupa, text says “After about 7-10

days the larvae leave the substrate to pupate.” At 9 o’clock position, a darker yellow

pupa, text says “Fruitfly pupa stick to the sides of surfaces.” At 10 o’clock position, a

single adult female fly, text says “After about 4-7 days, adult flies emerge.”]

Flexible Flies: Pigmentation and plasticity

How do Drosophila adapt to changing environments?

As a small, ectothermic (eg, “cold blooded) insect encased within an exoskeleton that

cannot regulate its internal temperature very well on its own, fruit flies have adapted

physiological systems to help them warm up when it is cool and deflect heat when it is

hot Drosophila is a holometabolous species, going through four stages (egg, larva, pupa, adult) each with their own distinct physiological shape and structure. This life cycle is relatively short (roughly 10 days from egg to adult at 25c/76F) which allows us to observe changes in response to different environments.

Because of their short life cycles and remarkable plasticity (ability to change

phenotype, or physical traits) in response to different environments, Drosophila are

often used in research related to adaptation and climate change.

One of the ways in which Drosophila are able to physiologically regulate their body

temperature is through increasing or decreasing the production of melanin pigments in

their exoskeleton during development, especially along their striped, segmented

abdomen where most of their internal organs (including egg and sperm producing

gonads) are located.

Page 009:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook page with text in one orange background block. There is an image in the middle of the textblock, showing a 3D projection image of a 5 ringed melanin molecule in ball-and-stick format, with black depicting carbon atoms and bonds; yellow depicting hydrogens; red depicting oxygen; and green depicting nitrogen.]

From eugenics to Afrofuturist techno dreams: the many lives of melanin

The melanins that give flies their stripes are the same molecules, synthesized from

dopamine, that give humans the range of visible skin tones that have been socially

commandeered to segregate, privilege and oppress through chattel slavery and

subsequent anti-Black racism. The racializing of melanin itself has historically

hindered scientific investigation into the many properties of this amazing

molecule.

In addition to providing protection from damage due to UV rays in both humans and fruit

flies, melanin also can conduct electricity, as well as serving as an insulator. As feminist

theoretical physicist Chanda Prescod-Weinstein, the first Black woman to earn tenure in

particle or cosmology theory, writes, “Melanin may hold the key to delivering our

green-energy future efficiently, if we make an ethical commitment to using the

technology for the greater good (and sadly such commitments aren’t yet part of

scientific tradition.)...What all this means is that melanin, the material that

eugenicists argued caused people of African descent to be inherently inferior, is

also the stuff of Afrofuturist techno-dreams.”

The entanglement of the social and the scientific in the story of melanin, both in its most

oppressive forms of racism and its most promising forms of equitable green energy

futures, demonstrates why we need a feminist method that can account for both the

materiality and physicality of molecules and the inseparability of our human sociality

from them.

Keep this need in mind as you take notes in your lab book at the end of this zine.

Prescod-Weinstein, C. (2021). The disordered cosmos: A journey into dark matter,

spacetime, and dreams deferred. New York: Hachette.

Page 0010:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook

page with text in one green background block. In the lower half of the page, a diagram

showing a female (left) and male (right) Drosophila, both with red eyes, labelled with

female and male symbols respectively. Below the flies are two double parallel bars on

each side, labelled “sex chromosomes” with the lines on the right of unequal length, left

bar is yellow labelled X chromosome, right bar is half the height and gray, labelled Y

chromosome. Lines on the left are equal length.]

Sex, Flies and Feminism

Pigmentation in Drosophila is sexually dimorphic- males (sperm producing form)

exhibit darker pigmentation at the ends of their abdomens than do females (egg

producing form). Females are also larger than males, and have larger, paler abdomens.

Often, when sexual dimorphism occurs, it is attributed to sexual selection, a “special

case” of Darwin’s natural selection, in which members of each sex select mating

partners based on particular desirable traits, causing the physical form of different sexes

to look different.

In the case of Drosophila pigmentation, scientists initially thought that the color

difference was due to male fruit flies preferring to mate with paler, less pigmented

females, and that the color difference served “to maintain sexual dichromatism by

preventing males from wasting time by courting other (darkly pigmented) males.”

(Llopart 2002)

Page 011:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook page

with text in one green background block. In the lower half of the page, a diagram

showing a male Drosophila (left) and a female Drosophila (right) adult fly.]

Later, when scientists attempted to repeat these experiments, they found no such

preference, and suggested that the original study results were biased due to the use of

inbred stocks. Furthermore, when Drosophila are observed in natural field settings

outside the laboratory, many many bouts of male-male courtship are found to

occur. (Dukas 2020). When collecting data involving sex or gender, it is important to

acknowledge the ways our social ideas and experiences may bias or affirm aberrant

data, especially when our conclusions reinforce dominant ideas about “appropriate” and

“natural” [hetero]sexuality.

We still don’t really know why male and female Drosophila melanogaster have different

pigmentation patterns, but acknowledging and attending to how our own lived

experience of sex and gender might influence how we view data on sexual selection is

an important part of a feminist method.

Llopart, A., Elwyn, S. & Coyne, J. Pigmentation and mate choice in Drosophila. Nature

419, 360 (2002).

Dukas, R. Natural history of social and sexual behavior in fruit flies. Sci Rep 10, 21932

(2020).

Page 0012:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook

page. At bottom of page are two hand-painted watercolor images. Left image is of a

rubbish bin with lid ajar and pieces of refuse overflowing, and small fly shaped images

surrounding it; to the lower left of the rubbish bin is a banana peel, and to the lower right

is a partially-eaten apple core. Right image is of a green and gray microscope on the left

and on the right a person with short reddish brown hair wearing a lab coat and a striped shirt holding a tube in their left hand. There are small flies in the background of the

image.]

Feeling around with Flies: Getting set up

Now that you know a little bit about the history and nature of Drosophila, by following

the instructions below you can attempt to capture and cultivate a local strain to directly

experience and observe the fly life cycle.

Drosophila melanogaster can be found on every continent other than Antarctica, and

are generally active between temperatures of 18-30 degrees celsius (65-86 degrees F),

although they can tolerate a wider range of temperatures for short periods.

Warmer months are best for capturing fruit flies; during these seasons they can usually

be found near ripe or rotting fruit in kitchens, pantries, gardens, compost or refuse bins.

Page 0013:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook

page with text in one purple background block. Text is on the left side, on the right side

are six hand-painted watercolor images and one photograph. Clockwise from upper

right: a photograph of a plastic lidded drink cup with tape on the top and a piece of

banana in the bottom; a paperclip labeled “paperclip”; a green magnifying glass labeled

“magnifying glass”; a banana (no label); a yellow lighter with red flame labeled “lighter”;

a purple roll of tape labeled “tape”; a yellow spoon labeled “spoon”.]

Materials:

-recycled clear plastic drink cup with lid, washed (transparent plastic works best to

directly

visualize the flies)

-masking or duct tape

-a large, metal wire paper clip (or 045 gauge steel wire)

-lighter, candle, or other source of flame

-ripe banana

-optional: a tiny amount of baker’s yeast (granules or paste)

-jeweler’s loupe or other hand-held magnifier such as used to examine stamp

collections,

photos, or gemstones. You can also find magnifying devices that attach to smartphone

cameras online that are relatively inexpensive.

Page 014:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook

page.]

Capture!

1. To prepare the trap, first seal up any openings in the cup and lid, such as slits

for straws, holes for sipping, etc. Use a strong, water resistant tape such as

masking tape, duct tape, or mailing tape. This will keep out any larger insects.

2. To make holes that Drosophila can fit through but that will exclude other types

of insects, a heated large-gauge wire paper clip can be used.

3. Ensure that the paper clip is not coated with plastic or paint. If a large size paper

clip is not available, 045 gauge wire can be used instead.

4. Heat the paper clip (or wire) using the flame source. Use care in this process

to ensure safety, and do not overheat the wire.

5. The heated wire can be used to poke (melt) holes around the top of the cup

(keep the lid on during this process to stabilize the sides of the cup). A minimum

of 5 holes should be punched evenly in the cup side around the top.

Wiggling the hot paperclip slightly will help to open up the small hole. The

paperclip may need to be re-heated after making one or more of the holes.

6. Ensure that the hole is punched all the way through; re-heat and re-punch if

it is not.

7. Once the holes have been punched around the cup near the top, place a piece

of ripe banana into the bottom of the cup (the riper the better- can be

overripe) approximately 1.5-2 inches in length (other soft fruits can also be used,

if necessary, but banana is consistently popular with the flies).

8. If you have baker’s yeast (not nutritional, or brewer’s yeast) available, place a

few grains (no more than 10 grains, or a small dab if paste yeast is used) on top

of the banana in the bottom of the cup.

9. Replace the lid, making sure it is snapped on tightly.

Page 015:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook

page.]

10.Place your baited cup near a fruit bowl, next to a garbage or compost pail

where fruit and vegetable scraps are disposed of, or if warm (between 15-30

degrees c/ 60-85 degrees F) outdoors in a garden, near a rubbish bin, or on a

windowsill.

11. Places with proximity to fruit, vegetable, or food waste scraps will attract

Drosophila. (If you need to place your trap in public, you can make a note on it

explaining it is part of an experiment).

12.Flies develop best if exposed to day/night light cycles, so avoid keeping your flies

intentionally in the dark such as in a closet

or cupboard, for long periods.

13.Begin monitoring and recording the temperature and humidity as soon as

you set out your baited trap.

14.Check your trap each day to see if small flies have entered. If you know there

are flies in the area but they are not entering after a couple of days, check to

make sure the holes are big enough. They may need re-opening with the hot wire

(or you can use a ball point pen or pencil to poke through them.

15.The banana will begin to decompose and get slimy. The more it begins to break

down, the more attractive it will be to the flies. If your banana was not very

ripe, you can add a few drops of vinegar, apple juice, wine or beer to the bottom

of the cup. Do not add so much that it covers the base of the cup, to avoid

drowning the flies.

16.Give the cup some time to attract flies. Do not get discouraged too early. If after 5

days there are no flies, move the trap. Do not worry if the banana is decaying. (If

excessive mold growth is clearly present, it should be discarded and re-baited, as

mold can be harmful to human health.) Once you see flies in your cup, note

the date and time (you should already be recording temperature and humidity).

Page 016:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook

page. Superimposed on grid is a white panel with ten and a half small watercolor

images of yellow bananas placed in haphazard directions behind the text.]

Choosing what to observe and record

Feminist approaches go beyond just following methods in “cookbook” fashion. Feminist

physicist Karen Barad has developed the concept of “agential realism” to theorize the

importance of relationship and context in our knowledge-making projects:

"Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don't

obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world.

We are part of the world in its differential becoming. The separation of epistemology

from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference

between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and

discourse." (Barad, 2007, p. 185)

“Ethics is about being response-able to the way we make the world, and to consider the effects our knowledge-making processes have on the world.” (Barad, 2007, p. 381).

A feminist method needs to provide space and tools to account for the entire knowledge

making process. Take a moment to jot down some of the things that are important to

observe and record as you feel around and experience your entanglement with the life

cycle of your flies. Some suggestions are provided on the sample lab observation page

that follows, but feel free to modify this to fit your own choices and needs.

Barad, K. (2007). Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the

entanglement of matter and meaning. Duke University Press.

Page 017:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook

page.]

Observation

An important part of a feminist method is accounting for researchers themselves in the

observation and collection of data. As feminist researchers, we don’t stand outside our

experiments and look in, but root ourselves firmly within them.

At the same time, taking careful notes and retaining the commitment to reproducibility

and accurate logging of process as well as outcome remains important. Watch your flies

and follow them through their life cycle, taking careful notes about not just them and

your techniques, but about your own feelings and assumptions, as well as the larger

context of your experiment.

Some variables to observe and record that are important to both you and the flies:

Temperature and humidity, sex and relative size of the flies, pigmentation patterns,

developmental stage: (larvae in food; crawling larvae on wall; pupae, adult; the eggs are

too small to see even with a handheld magnifier).

Also be sure to note:

Personal affective experience of the experiments; challenges and questions; biases and

influences on your procedure and observations; notes to make things run more

smoothly or avoid problems, etc.

Troubleshooting: if there is an excess of liquid in the tube, the larvae can drown. You

can devise strategies to remove or absorb excess liquid, such as inserting a strip of

cardboard or a cotton ball in the cup to soak some up. Don’t give up on your flies too

quickly, it can take time for them to hatch, and it is important to be patient and respect

their time scale.

Page 018:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook

page.]

Sample Lab Notebook Observation Page

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Temp.:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Humidity:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

OBSERVATIONS:

PROCEDURES:

Page 019:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook page.

Lower half of page shows a photograph of the Columbia University fly room circa 1920,

with floor-to-ceiling shelves in background and a table with a microscope and laboratory

equipment in the foreground.]

REFLECTIONS:

Page 020:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook page

with text in one pale orange background block.]

Living on fly time: Indigenous temporality and climate resilience add time element

to this page.

Another way that Drosophila exhibits plasticity, or adaptation to environmental

conditions, is in shortening or extending its developmental life cycle in response to

temperature.

At moderate temperatures (25c/76F), flies will complete the cycle from egg to adult in

approximately 10 days, but at 18c/64F, it will take on average 21 days from egg to

hatching. At 29c/84F, a stressful temperature for Drosophila melanogaster, development

is sped up to only an 8 day cycle, and adult flies are noticeably smaller upon hatching

as a result.

By living with flies and observing and experiencing their life cycles in accord with

varying temperatures, they can be understood as a sort of climatic clock,

stretching out or slowing down the pace of their lives to better adapt to

temperature instability.

Samantha Chisolm Hatfield, in “Indian time: time, seasonality, and culture in Traditional

Ecological Knowledge of climate change”, compares the epistemologies of time

between scientific and Indigenous knowledge traditions. Concepts, expressions, and

experiences of time are highly culturally specific. Conventional scientific

approaches to time are linear and constant in flow. In contrast, Hatfield

observes,“Ultimately, we see Indigenous concepts of time in this study as 3D,

integrating observations and knowledge about the environment, knowledge of cultural

tradition, environmental awareness, application of longstanding Traditional Knowledges,

reliance on and understanding of environmental cues, and finally, finding the right

moment or “time” to act based on environmental indicators” (2018, page 9)

Chisholm Hatfield, S., Marino, E., Whyte, K. P., Dello, K. D., & Mote, P. W. (2018). Indian time: time, seasonality, and culture in Traditional Ecological Knowledge of climate

change. Ecological Processes, 7(1), 1-11.

Page 021:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook page

with text in one pale orange background block in top quarter of page. There is open grid

background below, and an image in lower right quadrant depicting a geological time

spiral with images of volcanoes, mountains, continents, labeled with quaternary periods

in blue, tan and white on a black background.]

How can your observations/experiences with the life cycle of your flies help you to

reflect on the cultural specificity of your concept of time? When did you explicitly feel or

observe a sense of time in your work with the flies? How did it feel? What

questions/concerns did it raise? Does it contrast or compare with any aspects of the

Indigenous/TEK perspectives that Chisolm discusses? Can we learn anything about the

forces that capitalism and colonization exert on the dominant cultural experience of

time?

Page 022:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook page

with text in two blue background blocks. There is space between the two text blocks for

readers to write their thoughts.]

What does it all mean? Reflecting on method and affect

Let’s go back to feelings about flies. As you’ve captured your flies and watched them

grow and develop, have your feelings toward them changed? What did you observe and

learn about your flies and yourself during your capture experiment? How might

expanding method in this way change the way we encounter science and the

knowledge we produce?

“Staying with such affective moments of knowledge production is essential because it

enables writing about ethics of human and nonhuman/nature/animal encounters within

sciences differently. Such forms of writing are particularly important when concerning

nonhumans that trigger fear such as ticks, flies, viruses, etc. This is because it

highlights the reciprocal modes of doing science in which animals are not passive recipients but active agents in the process of knowledge production. It emphasizes the embodied realities of doing science, moving away from the myth of absolute objectivity and disembodied science. Scientists must become hospitable, habituated to, care for,

embody, and even become something else with the abject to be able to do science as

the subject and object.” -Mehrabi, 2020

Mehrabi, T. (2020). "Almanac: Affective method." Matter: Journal of New Materialist

Research 1, no. 2: 154-157.

Page 023:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook

page.]

Ending the experiment: ethical methods when working with living beings

If you were successful in your fly capture experiment, within one generation you may

find yourself with hundreds of new fly lives in your cup, newly hatched and eagerly

laying the eggs of yet another generation in the meager remains of the original banana

bait. This presents an ethical dilemma; at what point, and in what way, should you

intervene and decide to conclude your experiment? And what should become of the

flies?

“I suggest that it is a misstep to separate the world’s beings into those who may be

killed and those who may not and a misstep to pretend to live outside killing...It is not

killing that gets us into exterminism, but making beings killable.” (Haraway 2007, 79).

In standard US animal care ethical guidelines, as invertebrates, Drosophila are exempt

from strict regulations surrounding their disposition at the end of an experiment. And

you may feel the same; after all, these are household pests whose progenitors

voluntarily entered into the cup trap and whose population expansion constitutes at best

an irritant if not a threat.

Yet, an important part of a feminist method is to engage with our responsibility to the

fate of our experimental subjects, whose lives are indelibly woven into and out of the

knowledge that is produced through science. Considering how living subjects, not in the

least but most especially those subjects already deemed pests or unwanted others, are

“made killable” is a critical component of the ethics of feminist research.

Specifically with regard to your fruit flies, some of the options include:

-releasing the flies back into the environment. Drosophila melanogaster are endemic

during warm months in most regions of the world. The population you have bred in the

cup is unlikely to have an ecological impact (unless you have by small chance captured

and bred Drosophlia suzukii, the spotted wing Drosophila, ID’d by spots on its wings;

these species do economic and environment damage, and may warrant different

consideration).

-Tapping the flies through a funnel into a jar of rubbing alcohol or vinegar. These are

both substances that fruit flies are attracted to, and will lead to a relatively quick death

through numbing/drowning. This is the conventional approach used in most Drosophila

research labs.

Keep in mind that these two options will likely leave viable eggs, larvae, and pupae

behind to hatch later, so there may be more adults emerging in the future from the cup.

-Putting the cup of flies into a freezer (0c/32F or below) overnight. While flies can

survive following a chill coma of moderate length, an overnight freeze is nearly

guaranteed to induce widespread death. This treatment will also cause lethal damage to

eggs, larvae, and pupae in the cup, preventing future hatching. This mimics more

closely the conditions that flies encounter at the end of the season when cold

temperatures arrive.

Haraway, Donna. (2003). The companion species manifesto : dogs, people, and

significant otherness. Chicago, Ill. : Bristol :Prickly Paradigm Press.

Page 024:

[background watermark is reproduction of grid-line laboratory notebook

page.]

Concluding thoughts on methods

Methods are modes of intervening in and with the world, with the goal of generating new

knowledges.

As you come to the end of this encounter with a feminist method for laboratory science,

how has this experience changed you and your worldview?

Do you think differently about what science is and could be?

Do you feel differently about yourself as a scientific knower and doer?

Has your relationship to fruit flies changed in any way?

What from this experiment will you take back out into the world?

How can we continue to reinvent, repair, and hack methods to further feminist aims of

justice, equity, and expansion?

Inside back cover:

[background is reproduction of laboratory notebook reddish

brown mottled cardstock. There are QR codes placed on the page that link to the

following URLs]:

QR code for CLEAR Lab book:

CLEAR Lab Book, from Max Liboiron’s feminist anti-colonial laboratory at Memorial

University in Canada

<https://civiclaboratory.nl/clear-lab-book/>

QR code for Leslie Koyama Fly Guts:

Leslie Koyoma’s Fly Guts Art + Science

<https://www.lesliekoyama.com/science>

QR code for Rachel Gross Not an Oxymoron:

Rachel Gross on why Feminist Science is Not an Oxymoron

<https://undark.org/2022/09/15/opinion-feminist-science-is-not-an-oxymoron/>

QR code for podcast Fruit Flies Where do they Come from?

Podcast: Fruit Flies, Seriously Where do they come from?

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/3LOh73DS6oBdJ37KU1Od1O>

QR code for Markstein Drosophila Workers Unite:

Michele Markstein’s Drosophila Workers Unite! A laboratory manual for working with

Drosophila

<https://marksteinlab.org/dwu/>

Further Reading and Inspiration

CLEAR Lab Book, from Max Liboiron’s feminist anti-colonial laboratory at Memorial

University in Canada

Leslie Koyoma’s Fly Guts Art + Science

Rachel Gross on why Feminist Science is Not an Oxymoron

Michele Markstein’s Drosophila Workers Unite! A laboratory manual for working with

Drosophila

Podcast: Fruit Flies, Seriously Where do they come from?

Back cover:

[background is reproduction of laboratory notebook reddish brown

mottled cardstock. The lower half has a blue textbox with a QR code that links to the

following website: <https://www.lisaweasel.com/flies-project> ]

This guide is adapted from the protocol used in the feminist laboratory course WS/SCI

347U Science, Gender and Social Context at Portland State University in Oregon during

the Fall of 2023. The authors are the instructor (a feminist biologist) who developed the

feminist Drosophila laboratory experience and a student (an accounting/art major)

taking the lead on illustrations and design.

# **felt felt felt: towards a felt paradigm: a zine**

Kai Schmidt

Page 1:

first, a metanarrative

In felt felt felt, I propose and unpack a triple signifying paradigm for DIY research

methods. As a first signification, I take ‘felt’ in the sense of mimesis. As a second

signification, I take ‘felt’ to mean corporeal feeling or touch. Paradigmatically, this

approach continues in the ‘embodied turn’ of the humanities (Nevile 121), drawing

attention to sensory knowledge, the physical interaction of body and environment, and

enacting resistance to Western hegemonies of Enlightenment idealism (Barker 84). In

its final signification, ‘felt’ refers to affective feeling and emotion, which has the potential

to empirically and materially ground research, approach meaning and meaning-making

from different angles, and broaden the impact of research (Timm Knudsen and Stage

5-7). As a bonus component of the overarching wordplay, I link the material form of the

zine’s felt cover with a philosophical approach, drawing from Deleuze and Guattari’s

explorations of the smooth and the striated via the metaphor of felt: by its absence of

woven threads, the authors hold felt as a ‘nomad’ fabric that interacts with the world in

mimetic, haptic ways (Deleuze and Guattari 475).

While I have triply divided felt felt felt, I don’t mean to imply that the three meanings are

distinct. Instead, I think of them as three axes along which ideas can extend

simultaneously. To make it ‘material,’ a textile metaphor: each ‘felt’ is a strand of

Page 2:

meaning, a thread composing a larger, non-linear, malleable surface of significance and

implication.

With a ‘felt’ paradigm, I posit an approach to research that centres materiality, affect,

and multiplicity. None of the frameworks that I propose are new; my intended

contribution is to synthesize and ground them by use of a material metaphor. In the

interaction between content, form, and metaphor, I hope to provoke critical thought

around methods and presentation.

[image: A DV (digital video) still displaying a close-up of a pigeon grooming itself. The

image is primarily textural rather than representational. The display includes the text

“STEREO” and a timestamp, battery percentage visual, video tape symbol, and “12

BIT.”]

Page 3:

on visuals

The images that appear in this zine are stills from my experimental video art

research-creation project, Touch II (2024). In and through this piece, I experimented

with and explored some of the ideas that crystallized into this zine.

DIY methods

Even as I position this paradigm within a DIY methodological tradition, I draw upon

Francis Stewart and Laura Way’s work on the intersection of ableism and punk

scholarship to address the shortcomings of the movement. DIY, ‘do-it-yourself,’ is

claimed as a central tenet of what has been claimed as a punk movement in scholarship

(Stewart and Way, 2023; Guerra, 2018; Martin-Iverson, 2017). DIY is based in the

principle of reclaiming agency and autonomy from authoritarian and hegemonic (often

capitalist) institutions and of seizing the means of production. And yet this move relies

inherently upon the assumption that one can simply ‘do it themself,’ a condition of

possibility that is determined largely by the very institutions attempts—or purports—to

evade. Such institutions permit and allocate privilege along axes of class, race, gender,

ability, and other characteristics, extending more potential to ‘do’ to those [cont.]

Page 4:

who are already endowed with more privilege. Thus, despite the communitarian

principles claimed by DIY punk movements and their scholarly outgrowths, the very

communities that can access the privilege to ‘do’ are shaped by these same external

institutions. In recognizing these inherent limitations of DIY—when applied to

methods—I intend to build reflexivity into my methodological constructions. Further, I

want to preserve the complications and resulting richness and accountabilities of

histories of failure as I move forward into discussion of a felt paradigm. I conclude with a

quote from DIY scholars Stefani Relles and Randall Clemens: “DIY scholarship is an

invitation – perhaps a challenge – to counteract professional complacency with a ‘quiet

activism of everyday making’” (323).

at Grocery Coffee, 19 June 2024

In this zine I intend to discuss methodology, which consists of methods and everything

around them. This makes methodology both material and theoretical. As such, I hope

for the resulting zine to echo such a balance. A praxis, thinking and doing. (When I refer

to writing in cursive, I point to its iterative nature in i’s and t’s being dotted and crossed,

always neglecting to mention the rare but equally participant x in need of its own

crossing). Is it too easy to claim this as process-based if I take

Page 5:

my text (x crossed) from these writings? I think no, I think I will iterate. I begin by

thinking on the first signification [of felt]. It is Juneteenth today and in the spirit of

recentering Black narratives I want to pay direct homage to my introduction to

multiple-signifying theoretical frameworks. Though she is certainly not the first to deploy

this postmodern, wordplay-heavy style of theorizing, Christina Sharpe is my central

inspiration for this principle exploration. In the Wake: On Blackness and Being utilizes

the image of a wake—as in awakening, as in the ritual of sending off the dead, and as in

the trail left by ships carrying enslaved people across the Middle Passage—as a way to

theorize contemporary Blackness.

[image: A DV still displaying large-scale pixelation and distortion; the image shows a

close-up of a chain link fence and is textural.]

Page 6:

a note on language

It’s strange to write an academic zine. The fit between academics and zines, while

possible and sometimes beautifully productive, is not always easy or comfortable. To

address this, just as I do with the complexities in claiming DIY, I’m choosing to make it

visible and keep it that way. The problem of contradiction is often not easily solved; in

attempting solutions, complexity is often sacrificed for internal continuity and cohesion.

I’m choosing to forego such manufactured simplicity in favour of dissent, negotiation,

and both/and approaches. In this spirit, a note on language: I want this piece to be

accessible, even as I write (in this iteration) primarily for an academic audience. Zines

are rooted in access, taking production out of officially-sanctioned and -censored circles

of publication, opening space for different voices and narratives to take up (to a

somewhat whitewashed extent—see Hemphill and Leskowitz 2013). I want to honour

this history; I want to eschew obfuscation (a quote lifted off the wall of my high school

English classroom). In short, I want to balance this zine along the fine line between the

demands of academic content and the needs of diverse audiences and the roots of the

medium’s form and methods. Expect code-switching (paradigmatically).

Page 7:

[image: A DV still of the author’s mouth with a lip piercing. Their teeth are showing.

Minimal pixelation appears around the edges of the frame.]

1. felt, as in mimesis

I entered into my earliest thoughts on the first signification of ‘felt’ as mimesis via the

apparently distant (to methodological research) field of film theory. By cinema scholar

Laura U. Marks, mimesis, a form of representation carried out by acting like the thing

one is trying to represent, is “based on a particular, material contact at a particular

moment” and a “tactile epistemology” that “shift[s] the emphasis from the world of

abstraction to the concrete here-and-now” (The Skin of the Film 138-9). In Marks’ work

on mimesis and cinema, she advocates for a form of analysis that she terms ‘haptic

criticism’ that attends to materiality through a mimetic approach that draws close to,

touches, and mimics shape and form in order to [cont.]

Page 8:

understand and engage media (Touch xiii). Drawing inspiration from this move, I aim to

port and extend such an approach into a mimetic praxis for research methods—that

which enacts and invites (political and ethical) action.

In this construction, therefore, ‘felt’ refers to mimesis as both a means and theory of

research. A mimetic praxis calls for the complication of western hegemonies of visuality

and legacies of Enlightenment idealism that insist upon a margin of distance and a

policy of non-involvement for so-called objectivity (Marks, The Skin of the Film 140-1).

Mimesis holds potential for decoloniality as it “illuminates indigenous agency in the

exchanges between modernity and tradition, and between the colonial and the

post-colonial,” becoming an “expression of a dialectical politics of identity and alterity”

(Roque 204). Yet, at the same time, colonialism scholar Ricardo Roque cautions that

mimesis has also played a role “as theory and practice of empire building and

colonization,” complicating (though not entirely defusing) its decolonial potential (Roque,

2015, p. 201).

Mimesis also resists the capitalist drive for symbolic meaning-making, a process which

renders representation as easily generalizable, consumable, and therefore marketable;

as such, mimesis offers a critique of domination- and extraction-based practices (Marks,

Touch 116). In research, this calls for involvement, closeness, and mimesis as both

material realities of research as theoretically desirable. Such an approach [cont.]

Page 9:

resists the hegemony of scopic regimes and attempts at mastery, instead favouring a

position of political and material non-neutrality.

What might this look like in a DIY method? A mimetic praxis means a paradigmatic

implication of the researcher in the research that encompasses and goes beyond

acknowledgment of positionality to instead position the researcher on a plane equal to

and directly involved with participants, for example. This paradigm advocates for a

central grounding hapticity in research; at the same time, I maintain consideration of

Lury and Wakeford’s cautions of the “different affordances for generalization” present in what they term “inventive methods,” which I contend includes the DIY methods under

discussion (18). By the authors, “inventive methods have a multiple capacity for

generalization that is precisely not monotheistic universalism” (Lury and Wakeford 15).

As such, a haptic praxis may look different in various settings: it could manifest as

on-ground work, community involvement, essential consideration of participant need, or

building-in of methodological principles that make data, method, and researcher

accessible to participants and concerned or implicated parties.

Page 10:

[image: A DV still showing the author’s left eye, double exposed with a chain link fence.]

2. felt, as in materiality & corporeality

Enacting the overlaps between ‘felts’ that I alluded to earlier, I return to my favourite

(film) theorist from the mimesis section to introduce my second signification of ‘felt’:

“Mimesis shifts the hierarchical relationship between subject and object, indeed

dissolves the dichotomy between the two, such that erstwhile subjects take on the

physical, material qualities of objects, while objects take on the perceptive and

knowledgeable qualities of subjects” (Marks, The Skin of the Film 141). In discussing

this iteration of ‘felt,’ I address touch. Titularly, I elected to forego the more

commonly-used term ‘embodiment’ in favour of ‘corporeality’ initially for its sonic

cohesion with ‘materiality.’ This not only makes for a good title but also evokes a deeper [cont.]

Page 11:

cohesion between human, non-human or more-than-human bodies, and objects (after

Rosi Braidotti, 2013), offering posthumanist and anti-anthropocentric significance.

Psychiatrists and aging studies researchers Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs likely would

object to my use of the term: “Corporeality ... refers to the role of the body as a set of

structures whose identity and meaning is mediated by culture and society. Embodiment,

in contrast, refers to the processes by which social actors realise distinction, identity and

lifestyle through the medium of the body” (5). I agree that this distinction is useful

(particularly to their area of study), but I am stubbornly keeping my section title both for

its slant rhyme and to insist upon the meatiness of bodies. With this choice, I gesture

towards Graham Harman’s object-oriented ontology, which scholar Timothy Morton

characterizes as “a view in which there are only objects, one of which is ourselves”

(165).

In reflecting upon research that attends to touch and physicality, I find myself limited by

my own disciplinary specificities. Though I consider myself an interdisciplinary scholar,

my work largely skews towards sociological, arts, and organizational studies and away from more direct studies of physical objects like health sciences, environmental

sciences, or technical material research.

Embodiment in research methods is by no means a new idea; arguments have been

made for the development of ‘sensory [cont.]

Page 12:

scholarship’ and ‘sensory ethnography,’ encouraging use of all bodily senses in

research (Stoller, 1997; Pink, 2015). Critical disability studies, to name one field among

many, holds a long tradition of addressing material conditions of the physical

environment with regard to access. To address the application of materiality and

corporeality to methods, I draw upon Torkild Thanem and David Knights, who suggest

that these themescan guide researchers in raising “ontological questions about what the

body is; epistemological questions about what we can know about it; and

methodological questions about what kinds of methods, tools and techniques we might

utilize in order to investigate it” (9).

Empirically, a felt paradigm with respect to materiality and corporeality can offer

attention to issues in the physical world, a prime example being the decarbonization

espoused by projects such as this conference. Further, I offer that attention to the

physical can aid in the work of decolonization. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang remind

us, decolonization “is not a metaphor” but rather something that “brings about the

repatriation of Indigenous land and life,” thus enacting material change (1).

Page 13:

[image: A DV still showing two pigeons ‘kissing’ as part of a courtship ritual. The image

is overexposed such that the birds appear to become part of the background.]

3. felt, as in affect

For the final simultaneous signifier, I take ‘felt’ in the sense of feeling, or affect. Feminist

theorist Clare Hemmings importantly reminds us that affect “broadly refers to states of

being, rather than to their manifestation or interpretation as emotions”; I again take my

titling just as broadly to indicate the affective impact of feeling. By artist and theorist

Simon O’Sullivan, “you cannot read affects, you can only experience them” (126).

Baruch Spinoza similarly conceptualizes affect, with a simplicity that borders on

redundancy, as “a power (or potential) to affect or be affected” (Massumi 15). More

concretely, theories of affect appear at various locations along the following spectrum: [cont.]

Page 14:

“First, affects and emotions are located within an individual subject or body. Or,

second, affects are collective or atmospheric forces that operate external to the

body. Third, and finally, affects are the effects of the interactions between and

encounters of individual bodies. These three formulations are not necessarily

mutually exclusive” (Seyfert 28).

In a felt paradigm, I advocate for consideration of each of these theories of affect. I

follow Noora Pyyry in “not proposing a style of research that relies on ‘personal feeling’

... in today’s post-truth political climate” but rather in situating bodily and affective

experience—conceptualized by Brian Massumi as “thinking-feeling...as an argument

against the artificial division of thought and affect”—as “part of the [broader and

external] landscape that runs through us with all its affective force” (Pyyry 65-66).

As seen earlier, the three iterations of ‘felt’ again blend and arise from one another; as

such, affect emerges from and moves through embodiment. By Bruno Latour, “to have a

body is to learn to be affected, meaning ‘effectuated’, moved, put into motion by other

entities, humans or nonhumans” (2). As explored in the second signification of felt as

materiality and corporeality, anti-anthropocentrism again emerges as a central feature to

destabilize human-centred ways of knowing. Affect is inherently immaterial (in itself). I

argue for its belonging within a (materialist, embodied) felt paradigm by following a [cont.]

Page 15:

“Deleuzian interpretation of affect ... where a precarious consensus on the meaning of

‘affect’ is constructed around the idea that it is processual, relational, and situated,” thus

aiming to “switch the question from ‘what affect is’ to ‘what affect does’ to us” (Gherardi

743-44).

In conclusion

Throughout this, I’ve tried to think of myself as a curator or a collector or maybe just an

organizer of others’ ideas. I have tried to keep the theorists to the front, largely in their

own voices. I enjoyed this work—I always enjoy the opportunity to read, to follow the

webs of interlocking theorists and articles, and the impetus to do so for a creative format

like this zine. Thanks for reading felt felt felt and for taking part in reflexive, generative

conversations like the DIY Methods conference. I’d love to keep these webs of

connection and knowledge growing and weaving and iterating, so if you have thoughts,

experiences, or literature to share, please reach out!

Page 16:

[image: A double-exposed DV still displaying heavy pixelated distortion; it is

non-representational and abstract.]

Page 17:

Kai Schmidt (they/them) is an artist and scholar based at Toronto Metropolitan

University on the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the

Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, the Anishinaabeg, and many other First Nations, Métis,

and Inuit peoples. To reach me, please email kai.schmidt@torontomu.ca

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# **Folds, Flows, Fields: Toward a Compositional Kite-method**

Dr. M Gette, Claire Fitch, and Maria Fernandez-Pello

[note: zine unfolds into poster-sized paper allowing for reader to transform it into a kite.]

to make this zine into a kite, you’ll need:

some string

some tape

a spool of string

a thing capable of making holes in paper

instructions:

1. When the zine is folded into booklet, fold along the diagonal line on the cover.

2. unfold the entire zine.

3. cut or fold along your new diagonal folds to turn the paper into a diamond shape.

4. with a hole punch, pen, or sharp stick, make 4 small holes an inch in from each point of the diamond.

5. cut your two dowels, stirrers, etc. to exactly the length and width of the kite.

6. tape your frame in place.

7. fasten the loose end of your spool of string to the center of the frame, reinforcing the T and creating a line of connection between you and the kite.

8. find some air. hold on to the spool and toss the kite into it.

9. experiment with materials, shapes, and weather conditions for variations in flight.

to read this zine as a folded movement:

Like all planes, this zine can take multiple folded forms. Each shape provokes new relations with the page, with your hands, with paper and its dimensions, with air. the dotted lines are an invitation to fold and unfold new ways of reading, new aerodynamics.

instructions:

1. flip over

2. fold along dotted lines into a fan shape.

3. toss lightly into the air

4. read vertically

Compositional Kite Methodologies

Celia Lury defines a compositional methodology as one in which methods do not solve a problem but rather “equip” a situation to become one (2020). A problem is enunciated not to become fixed but to become operable. A kite for us is a method in this sense: it does not seek to solve a problem but to interrogate the nature of problems and their relationship to methods – in our ethnographies and our practices, or in those from which we get inspiration.

We build compositional kite-methods: we do not settle on a shape or material but rather we stick with a loose concept or image, and let it evolve. A compositional kite-method acknowledges that solutions (or methodologies) are always contingent, always already part of a context, not the correct answer but rather the surfacing or congealment of one of the many potential answers.

How far does a kite need to fly? How close to hear its sounds? What makes a kite a kite? We work with images of kites in our minds but, when building them proves difficult, we discuss what to prioritize. Our problem evolves with our methods in a “reciprocal capture” (Stengers 2010), forcing us to rethink the relationship between the two, as well as our position in relation to both.

Research prompt

Build your kite or invent a new form for one. Consider the weather, sounds that interfere or attenuate, and what effect this has on its flight, if any.

What line of flight does your kite take? How does its form affect its trajectory? How does the weather affect what is heard, or how it moves? What or who does it connect? How can you listen with pockets of air or acoustic shadows that might affect what you hear? What lines of flight does this produce?

A kite is a vector of dreams, held taut by a line. An invention of weather data collection and recording, or a weapon of psychological warfare, surveillance, a technology of war. (Tying bells to the string to wake up the enemy, or convince them there are ghosts.) In prototypes for a flying machine, Alexander Graham Bell drew tetrahedral models of kites, a perfect geometry to make the kite lift. Its form, multiplied, can be massive as a house. Bell wanted them to show up in photos, and so draped them in red silk, calling them things like Cygnet III and Oionos.

This zine might be a diary of flight where we chart dreams as vectors between bodies and their elemental shadows. In multiple minor experiments, we questioned the dimensions of flight. One included making a curved line with foldable wire, placed against the fold of the wall, to explore form in the absence of wind. Another charted light moving across the fold of the wall through a crumpled piece of mylar. Another tried different materials – tissue paper, mylar, cotton fabric, shopping bags, cellophane – to interact with wind, pulled taut by threads. Another recorded the rub of mylar and piezoelectric transducers as they swirled in the air. Another attuned to the shadows and reflections made by materials and sunlight, streetlight, and puddles.

Each experiment drew different components from the research object as imperative to its composition: form, material, tension, dimensions, weight or aerodynamic conditions. “I don’t have the patience for this,” or “this is more complicated than I thought,” or “numbers, measurements and geometry seem important,” or “do you think this will fly?” or “what even is a kite, anyway?” questioned models where a perfect geometry replicates itself to become a transmission tower, an air traffic control tower, or a prototype for an airplane – though even Bell’s diaries chart dreams as process: “airfoil,” “as though glued in the sky,” “can’t draw it,” “so solid & so perfectly braced that it may be treated as a solid body,” a “swan song.”

Soon the kite is the only thing in the sky you are paying attention to. The forms determine what is human, how it fits inside, how it can be lifted in the air. The wind beyond the kite, the thunder, the little dog whining because of the thunder, or a gunshot at the edge of the city vanish into thin air. They are not what is interesting as the kite takes form, draws a line between the body and the sky. A kite in the shadows or reflections of its mirrors give this vector or dream a transmissive quality, a logic held in the hand of the flyer that flattens its multiplicities. What could be, what might be, if the weather – and the flutter it makes – a crumple, or crinkle – becomes the attitude of its composition? Its boredom, or its frustration? What is the flight line of a crumple? Of mylar fabric that does not encase a birthday balloon, but is plain, a barrier to oxygen – good for both potato chip bags and space blankets.

Flying is mostly about holding a line, becoming grooved from its wrap around your palms, getting choked up around the fingernail by a thinness. Going looped. Pulling tight around the idea of a lift. The space between the hand and the kite is a stitch threading bodies into an aerodynamic. With kitestring in hand, a collaborative method is enacted, one of a taut intensity and expressive of a spatiotemporal actualization on the vertical.

A circumstance: free time, desire, the crook of an arm in Texas at 4pm, the flick-out of a gesture, a weather, a surface area, a gust. It’s a method pulled together by tension – as much beating down from the air as yanking up from your stance. It scaffolds an extension of both body and kite, setting your conjunction apart from the rest of the turbulence that surrounds. It’s a zone of flighty control, set by the nerve of the wind and the way it stretches the reach of your arm, the power of its grip on a technique.

Ground to air through body and shape and string, this compositional practice pulls linearity out beside itself, lumps both ends with excess and form, the needs of aerodynamics, a strain. For flight, no loose ends: always caught between the two points, body and aether, string gets thrown into a pull, into gravity, to the edge of a snap.

Kitestring is a lively tension, a resistance to both the wind and your work. Despite its seeming simplicity, it’s a madman posing a defiant physics, one who attempts weightless aerial drapery and the broad spread of surface above its thin self. it’s a balancing edge, a precarity held up by working knuckles. The attentive hand of a flyer wraps and unwraps spool and slack as a direct response to things the wind is doing. Length is imposed by a method built of retort and counterpoise, impulses towards movement and relation.

Flying is a yearning on up. Kitestring allows it, eggs you on, seams your want up through the air. Throws your weird hunger to float into the whims of convection cells and global currents. Kitestring in hand, you’re making sense of the wind and learning how to ride it. You practice and you figure it out. Cull a trajectory out of a whirlwind. You learn a good posture and grip. Kitestring is a method that’s not at all stringlike when the whole contraption’s working well. It becomes indistinguishable from straightness. Decent and inflexible, rigid and pointing. Promotional, very present. It insists: A firm way to connect in a moment of indeterminacy, like one made of wind with big mph. Stays clear and brash in the tumult of what’s going on in the air. We hold on tight to our tools.

# **How to create figurations and inhabit research: a DIY manual**

Clarissa Reche

Cover:

[background image: Handmade collage of clippings from old science encyclopedias. Psychedelic and visceral scene made from illustrations of parts of the human body.]

How to create figurations and inhabit research: a DIY manual

Page 1:

[background image: Clippings from old science encyclopedias. Microscopic images of scientific experiments with organic and inorganic materials, creating colorful textures placed side-by-side.]

Hello, I'm Clarissa, and this zine is a small DIY manual for working with figurations to inhabit research. What you will find is the result of my doctoral research, and is mainly based on Donna Haraway's proposals. Here you will find a summary of figurations: where they come from, what they are, what they are not, what they do, some examples and reading recommendations. I hope this manual helps you create your own figurations and try other ways of relating and being together with your research!

Figurations: where they comes from

Figuration is a methodological procedure that consists of creating figures, or tropes. Tropes are figures of speech, such as allegory, hyperbole, metonymy, metaphor.  Like Donna Haraway, many feminist theorists who developed critiques of science and technology in the late 20th century pointed out that the creation of tropes, especially metaphors, make up an important part of scientific practice itself, and are a privileged point of observation to understand ethical consequences of the theoretical and experimental speculations of science.  For example, when using metaphors that refer to domination and violence to describe the objectives of research (explore, unveil, discover), the image that is constructed of nature is as something capable of being treated in such a way.

The methodological proposal of figuration, as described by Haraway, places us once again at the center of a basic procedure of technoscience, making us stay with the trouble. Furthermore, Haraway points to the origins of her interest in figuration in the influence of Catholic heritage on her thought  (Haraway, 2006, p. 137). In the “semiotics of Western Christian realism,” the figure of Christ embodies both past prophecies and future apocalyptic hopes  (Haraway, 2018, p. 9). Haraway's proposal is to use figuration with the aim of engaging in a creative process to subvert this temporal logic. With figurations, we exercise a speculative dimension in our research, hoping to produce different thoughts, practices and worlds.

Page 2:

[background image: Clippings from old science encyclopedias. Microscopic images of scientific experiments with organic and inorganic materials, creating colorful textures placed side-by-side.]

Figurations: what are they

What “figures” is what “embodies”(Haraway, 2018, p. 9), what brings body, materiality and situationality. Figurations are “entities” (ibid., p. 8)  that connect different dimensions of knowledge, for example, the dimensions of imagination and material. Figurations are “performative images that can be inhabited” (ibid., p. 11).  Thus, the figurations are also:

* an obligatory worldification: “inhabiting it you can’t not get it ” (Haraway, 2006, p. 239);
* a map of worlds that we can contest: “we inhabit and are inhabited by such figures that map universes of knowledge, practice and power” (Haraway, 2018, p. 11);
* places you travel to: “you get somewhere you weren’t before”  (Haraway, 2026, p. 152);
* a specific time-space: “my cyborg figures inhabit a mutated time-space regime that I call technobiopower” (Haraway, 2018, p. 12).

Figurations: what they are not

Metaphors, tropes, figuration and narration practices are “much more than literary decoration” (Haraway, 2018, p. 299). Therefore, when making figurations, we also need to be aware of what they are not:

* literal and self-identical: “figures do not need to be representational and mimetic, but they must be tropic” (Haraway, 2018, p. 11);
* innocent, always positive or negative: “It is  not just about picking an entity in the world, some kind of interesting academic object. There is  a cathexis that needs to be  understood” (Haraway, 2004, p. 338).

Figurations: what they do

As methodological tools for research, figurations produce roots and connections between people and the stories being told, allowing us to inhabit stories that we could otherwise easily just condemn and celebrate (Haraway, 2004, p. 1). The work to create figurations is a work of opening possibilities for stories without a determined ending. In this way, the figurations do:

Page 3:

[background image: Clippings from old science encyclopedias. Microscopic images of scientific experiments with organic and inorganic materials, creating colorful textures placed side-by-side.]

* stammer, stumble, break down: “they are creative. That is why you get somewhere you weren’t before, because something didn’t work”  (Haraway, 2021, p. 152);
* displacements towards uncertainties: “figures must involve at least some kind of displacement that can trouble identifications and certainties” (Haraway, 2018, p. 11);
* departures from apocalypse/salvation stories: “to read such maps with mixed and differential literacies and without the totality, appropriations, apocalyptic disasters, comedic resolutions, and salvation histories of secularized Christian realism” (Haraway, 2018, p. 11);
* materialized assemblages, configurations and reconfigurations: “for example, this  family or kinship of entities, chip,  gene,  foetus,  bomb,  etc.  (it  is  an indefinite list),  is  about location and historical specificity,  and it is  about a kind of assemblage, a kind of connectedness of the figure and the subject.” (Haraway, 2004, p. 338).

Knowing some figurations…

Cyborg

Cyborg is the figuration that populates the classic Cyborg Manifesto - science, technology and socialist feminism at the end of the 20th century (1985), by Donna Haraway. Born from postmodern and non-naturalist socialist-feminist theory, Cyborg also has in its genealogy the utopian tradition of imagining the world without gender, without genesis and without end (Haraway, 1991, p. 150). Being a hybrid par excellence, Cyborg inhabits the dissolution of boundaries between human being and machine, human and animal, nature and culture. Staying away from pure technophobia/pessimism and pure technophilia/optimism, Haraway allies with Cyborg to outline possibilities for escaping the essentialism of fixed and fixed identities. Cyborg's existence as fiction and lived experience changes what counts as “women's experience” by asserting that identities are contradictory, partial, and strategic.

Page 4:

[background image: Clippings from old science encyclopedias. Microscopic images of scientific experiments with organic and inorganic materials, creating colorful textures placed side-by-side.]

Polegarzinha

Polegarzinha (something near Thumbelina in portuguese) has her head between her fingers. It is with her that we join hands to walk through Gabriela Paletta's research (2019) and face the viscous world of menstruapps, cell phone applications for monitoring and controlling the menstrual cycle. In her dissertation, Paletta created the Polegarzinha figuration as a research methodology to approach and analyze some free and popular menstruapps, in order to investigate how technology “incorporates” itself, “makes a body”, experimenting – with the help of Polegarzinha – how “menstrual cycle” and “menstruation” are being produced and performed on these platforms. Polegarzinha doesn't have the thumbs numb: this figuration of a young student has agile and precise thumbs. New counterparts from the world reach her. The worldification that Polegarzinha invites us to do is based on the possibility of a kind of contemporary resistance to the dampening that digital has increasingly presented to us as a life practice.

Spotting

I ask for permission to tell you a little about my experience with figurations during the research I carried out in my PhD. I carried out ethnography together with anthropologists, researching their experiences of menstruation during fieldwork, especially when they were in indigenous territory (COSTA, 2024). As you can imagine, these experiences were systematically suppressed from the academic knowledge that these anthropologists produced, even when they were good field inputs. This is because menstruation is often associated with a less productive body, and this is no different in academic work. To be able to move along with this sensitive topic, I created the “spotting” figuration. In interviews with anthropologists, the memory of the menstrual blood spotting always appeared. Anyone who inhabits the spotting knows what I'm talking about. And this sensitive and powerful communication was important for me to be able to safely navigate the complexities of menstruation.

Page 5:

[background image: Clippings from old science encyclopedias. Microscopic images of scientific experiments with organic and inorganic materials, creating colorful textures placed side-by-side.]

Creating a kinship sticker album: some questions to get started

When used as methodological strategies to provoke critical thoughts and practices, figurations generate an opening of horizons experienced “in the flesh”. For Braidotti, the figurations make up a creative project with the aim of stimulating a qualitative change in consciousness by being vehicles for the glimpse of other modes of belonging (Thiele, 2021, p. 232). The figurations and their assemblages/reconfigurations work from within the stories that are being told, not from the outside, in a disembodied critique, and, in this way, invite us to move, get closer, to look from other angles. The stumbling step is precisely in this movement: we are used to reflexive criticism that, looking in the mirror, reflects the same image that it observes.

Figurations are not mirrors. They are material-semiotic entities/creatures that help us complexify the way in which we feel and learn let's end different dimensions of the world. They affect our senses, allowing us to be aware of concrete problems (Thiele, 2021, p. 231). Therefore, the figurations are not innocent either. They collect hopes and fears, and show possibilities and dangers (Haraway, 2004, p. 1). The assemblages (or kinship groups) that the figurations form go through lineages that are occurring with the aim of defamiliarize them and propose a new reconfiguration, which is also not innocent, ever. There is a strong connection between whoever analyzes and writes, the object of writing and the figurations produced. The implications of these links must be excavated, as these links are just a way of being in the world, and it is important to understand why these assemblages are being made, and not others (Haraway, 2004, p. 338).

To close this zine, I share some questions that can help you create your family sticker album. The questions below can be asked for each figuration you are creating, to help them take shape and become incarnated. Have fun!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Do you inhabit this figuration? How? | Where did they make you travel? |
| How does the world that this figuration maps look like? | What is the time-space of this figuration? |

Page 6:

[background image: Clippings from old science encyclopedias. Microscopic images of scientific experiments with organic and inorganic materials, creating colorful textures placed side-by-side.]

Readings

COSTA, Clarissa R. N. da. Manchando: (o que) fazer (com) a menstruação. Estratégias e experimentos para vazar questões feministas através das tecnociências. Thesis (Doctorate in Social Sciences) - Institute of Philosophy and Human Sciences, State University of Camṕinas, Campinas, 2024.

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HARAWAY, Donna J. Modest \_ Witness @ Second \_ Millennium. FemaleMan©\_Meets\_OncoMouseTM. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2018.

HARAWAY, Donna J. The Haraway Reader. New York: Routledge, 2004.

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PALETTA, Gabriela Cabral.  Menstruapps na era farmacopornográfica: aplicativos de monitoramento de ciclo menstrual e interseções entre corpos, máquinas e tecnopolíticas de gênero. Dissertation (Master's in Sociology) - Institute of Philosophy and Human Sciences, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2019.

Page 7:

[background image: Clippings from old science encyclopedias. Microscopic images of scientific experiments with organic and inorganic materials, creating colorful textures placed side-by-side.

[image on the left: Handmade collage of clippings from old science encyclopedias. Psychedelic and visceral scene made from illustrations of parts of the human body]

Thank you for reading this zine. The collages that illustrate this zine were made by me, using images cut from old science encyclopedias. If you want to chat, just send me an email, I'd love it! Abraços,

Clarissa Reche

Right bank of the Tietê River, at the foot of Pico do Jaguará, August 2024

To contact me: [clari.reche@gmail.com](mailto:clari.reche@gmail.com)

To learn more about my work: clarissareche.com

Discover my thesis “Staining: (what) to do (with) menstruation. Strategies and experiments to convey feminist issues through technosciences”: <https://tese.clarissareche.com>

Back cover:

[background image: Handmade collage of clippings from old science encyclopedias. Psychedelic and visceral scene made from illustrations of parts of the human body.]

# **Small Feminist Manual for Survival at University**

Daniela Manica and Clarissa Reche

[note: zine can be unfolded to have small poster on the front, and text on the back.]

Front:

[background image: Handmade collage of clippings from old science encyclopedias. Psychedelic and visceral scene made from illustrations of parts of the human body and the bust of a girl.]

ABRIR EM CASO DE INSISTÊNCIA

OPEN IN CASE OF INSISTENCE

Back:

[background image: In the center of the collage is an eye, with blood dripping in the middle of it.]

SMALL FEMINIST MANUAL FOR SURVIVAL AT UNIVERSITY

1. Organize the rage
2. Insist on respecting your limits
3. Build alliances
4. Break bonds and addictions from harmful relationships
5. Defend the principles we value
6. You can quit, if you want to
7. Don't let it pass. Anything.
8. Let it go. If it hurts. If you want. If you need.
9. Take care of yourself and others.
10. Demand to be cared for as well.
11. Be able to listen and be heard.
12. Demand the right to dream of other futures.
13. Demand the right to have our humanity respected.
14. May our demands be respected and met.

Text by Daniela Manica, collage and layout by Clarissa Reche

# **Let’s Play! An Antidote to Solitary, Serious, Unsurprising Fieldwork**

Kassandra Spooner-Lockyer, Noha Fikry, Nick Smith, and Jean Chia

[image: blue graphic of two dice in the background.]

Page 1:

In the winter and spring of 2023, four lone(ly) ethnographers played a game of broken telephone around the world, sending each other sets of fieldwork instructions to carry out and send on, if a little broken and remade.

In parentheses: Broken Telephone is a game of whispers and miscommunications, but so too is it about listening and sharing, a network of messages between the players. You whisper something to the person next to you and they whisper what they’ve heard to the next player. The message is slowly broken, from listener to listener, sometimes intentionally played with, and at others times misheard or reinterpreted, until the final message is revealed to all.

[image: graphic of a red telephone in the background.]

Page 2:

We straddled the space between Manitoba, Singapore, Cape Breton, and Cairo, circulating fieldwork prompts, notes, reflections, objects from the field, and in the end, relations of care, across the world. Fieldwork, through this style of collaborative circulation, became a process of tinkering. We rethought and refashioned our instructions every time they passed from player to player.

[image: graphic of researcher’s names connected by dotted lines indicating travel. Nick’s name is in the upper left-hand corner, with a dotted line with a graphic of a bus on it connecting it to Jean’s name in the upper right-hand corner. Jean’s name is connected to Kassandra’s with a dotted line in the lower left-hand corner. Finally, Kassandra’s name is connected to Noha’s name in the lower right hand corner connected by a dotted line with a graphic of an airplane at the end.]

Page 3:

An Initial Prompt for Nick in Manitoba; “Turn south and tell us what you see; turn north and take a photo; …. Are you inspired by the directions which orient you in your playful space? tell us more.” Became; “Look up and look down. What textures of sky, earth, ceiling, or floor, ball, or uniform characterize your place of play, can you present these to us with a photograph, a rubbing, or a description? Is there a sense (hearing, touch etc.), or feeling (cold, speed, danger etc.) that matters most to your site of play?” By the time it reached Jean in Singapore.

[image: graphic of an open compass in the background.]

Page 4:

We read, played, took photographs, doodled, painted, video-taped, wrote, chatted, met, ate, waited, reflected, wrote and rewrote notes, and digested fieldwork together.

Fieldwork exchanges:

[image: 5 comment bubble graphics scattered across the page. The comment bubble in the upper right-hand corner says: “On play as ‘breaking unsaid rules’ and the fear of being reprimanded. Is fear an essential component of play, one which perhaps makes it always more fun?”. The comment bubble in the upper left-hand corner says: “Does play lose meaning or gain meaning in being repeated? Would you consider this to be improvisational play or play with structure based in repetition?”. The comment bubble in the middle says: “How did you choose these two particular stories in relation to play? What decisions/choices do we make as ethnographers when we decide to play?”. The comment bubble in the lower right-hand corner says: “Play as something we have forgotten!”. The comment bubble in the lower left-hand corner says: “The intrinsic/extrinsic value of play is something we need to discuss more, especially in its relation to space and boundaries.”]

Page 5:

Play became both our object and method of study. As a modality of action that responds to contingency through “a readiness to improvise in the face of an ever-changing world that admits of no transcendentally ordered account” it lends itself well to collaborative practice (Malaby 2009: 206). While bound by rules and sets of instructions, thinking in and through modes of play opened up our fieldwork to tinkering and cheating, to collaboration and interdependence, to vulnerability and failure. It made space for the kind of “blind fumbling” (2017:17) that Julietta Singh calls for in her work *Unthinking Mastery*. It is a way into research which better suits the vibrant matter of a world that is fundamentally “not stable and cannot be mastered (2017:18)”. In play, we were able to think beyond the role of the disciplined and solitary ethnographer and think instead through the networks, intimacies, failures, and fractures that make our work, as draft after draft piles up, each comment and cut, critique and suggestion, modification and redo contributing to the whole.

[image: graphic of a hand of cards in the background.]

Page 6:

Our collaborative game became a deeply iterative process. In trying to communicate our field sites to each other as raw data and discuss it together, we had to critically attend to those moments where what we experienced was translated into fieldnotes and takes its first steps towards something shareable. This became a process of sharing and resharing, writing and rewriting, a practice where the field gets opened up again and again in the intersubjectivity of collaboration. We wrote notes on each other’s fieldnotes asking questions and adding ideas. We added addendums to our own after our monthly discussions revealed something essential we had forgotten to write up. Some of us wrote shadow notes, the things we couldn't face to share, but kept in the privacy of our notebooks, only to be revealed later when we decided we could trust each other. Some of us wrote supplementary notes, when play popped up in our daily life and made us think of our collaborative work.

[image: graphic of a boardgame board in the background.]

Page 7:

Ultimately, it was a game of translation, like any good game of broken telephone; an iterative process of trying to find ways to communicate all the intricacies and intimacies that underpin fieldwork that we take as habit and often neglect to unpack; the loneliness, resentments, vulnerabilities, connections, and sensualities that fall to the background when trying to weave a larger narrative. Only through collaborative digestion was it possible to gain perspective on the movement between our individual habits and the forms of documentation which they came to assume as data. This is a method where the experiential and the intimate becomes more than just the infrastructure against which we set a story, it becomes everything.

[image: graphic of three puzzle pieces in the background, two interlocking, one separate.]

Page 8:

It was the adrenaline and rush of speed and angle for Nick; the desire for motion and variation atop one of the only hills in a flat place like Manitoba. This place was known as Garbage Hill in Winnipeg, made of trash built up over the decades and covered in snow in the winter. The only other mountain in the city is a mountain made of snow, the stuff plowed off the streets and into a central location, taller than anything around, even Garbage Hill. But the snow mountain is not safe to play on. Neither is Garbage Hill for that matter, with its warning signs and restrictions. But Nick’s bursts of laughter come through on the videos he took, as he broke the rules that everyone breaks on Garbage Hill, sledding joyously down amid a number of ominous signs signaling catastrophe in reds and oranges. The speed and excitement of hills and valleys in a flat city provoked play, a novelty demanding engagement.

Page 9:

[image: collage photograph of a snowy hilltop with trees and a satellite pole in the background. In the foreground of the photograph are warning signs against sliding. The first one, in the left-hand corner of the photo, is a tall black square pole that says “no sliding this area”. This pole is duplicated in the background of the image as well. At the right hand of the photograph is a metal fence with the sign “slide at your own risk” attached to it. Superimposed onto this image is a poem that is written in blocks of red, and which descends down the page like a slide. It says “hill, hill, hill, hill, Children using snow, no sliding, no, helmet and goggles, no, brakes, no, safe areas, only, speed and snow, hill, tress, speed and snow”.]

Page 10:

It was the thoughtful quiet and isolation of rain during monsoon season in Singapore for Jean. The deluge that drives people away also brings to the fore those moments of relation in an isolating place. Her last day to do fieldwork, she found herself in the park amid a heavy rain that sent almost everyone home. But Jean had made a commitment, and she was going to answer Nick’s instructions, even if she got soaked. She wandered the park, a highly surveilled space by the state, where the city tracks every tree, and found herself picking up leaves and foliage to send to Cape Breton for Kassandra. When she came to rest in the McDonalds in the middle of the park, a kindly woman who had been observing her odd behavior offered her a plastic bag. “Take this. For your things” she told her, gesturing towards the foliage she had picked. In this city - so busy yet so put together - there was a need to connect and get into another person’s space. So Jean responded in kind to this woman’s kindness, and sent Kassandra not just the leaves and seeds she picked up from the ground, but also some of her favorite foods from Singapore, another gesture of connection.

Page 11:

[image: photograph of a rainy park, the asphalt path in the middle flooded with water and debris from the trees overhead. The path is lined with trees on each side and leads to one large tree that appears to be composed of vines. A sign is superimposed on top of the photograph that reads “please do not climb tree” with a yellow border around it.]

[image: a photocopy of a text. It reads: “Items in package – 1. flower: this flower disintegrated into a powdery substance as it dried over my radiator, but really it was a very pretty pink flower with delicate leaves! Tabebuia rosea: Common name: Pink Poui. <https://www.nsparksgov.sg/treessg?treeid=10456957>. 2. Palm branch: Cocos nucifera. Common name: coconut palm. <https://www.nsparksgov.sg/treessg?treeid=10457086> 3. Leaf: Millettia pinnata. Common name: pongam. <https://www.nsparksgov.sg/treessg?treeid=11017866> 4. Pong Pong Fruit – I know this is a pong pong, but I could not find the tree on the tree database. It is a very common tree in Singapore, but might have required a more thorough search of the mapping database on my part. <https://www.nsparksgov.sg/florafaunaweb/flora/2/8/2800>. It, um, might be toxic. I read that it is known rather cavalierly as the ‘suicide’ tree, as the seeds are known to be toxic. Keep it away from pets or children, but I think if you stick it into some soil, it might grow! 5. There was room in the package, so I stuck a couple of delicious items from Singapore.]

Page 12:

It was the feel of grit and dirt beneath her fingernails for Kassandra, the discomfort and bodily repulsion of digging in a soil with toxic legacies in Cape Breton. She sat on the ground at the water's edge of the park, once one of Canada’s most toxic waste sites, the Sydney Tar Ponds, remediated into a park, and she was loathe to stick her hands in the dirt. But she came here with a purpose, to make a collage composition out of the collection of objects she’d received from Singapore and cut-outs she had painted herself. So she crouched awkwardly on the rocks, her face in the dirt, trying to get a shot of her cut-out tar monster. The figure was inspired by an interlocutor’s story about protests in the community in the 1980s and 1990s. Citizens had stuffed garbage bags full of leaves and debris to make tar monsters to sit on their lawns with signs of protest, markers of dissent against the toxic waste site that had been left too long and the monstrous dangers the unremediated site presented. But with tales like these at the back of her mind, her body protested against being so intimate with the park's earth and soil, knowing that toxic sludge was still buried below, albeit deep under concrete. She was breaking the unsaid rule of the park, don’t get too comfortable, don’t forget where you are, this is a toxic place, and her skin crawled with the act of digging in.

Page 13:

[image: a collage photograph. The collage shows a black tar monster with one yellow eye in the middle of its head and a black garbage bag tied, sitting atop rocks. A creek and the sky is visible in the background. In the foreground of the photo below the rocks is a cut out photo of the tar ponds, a black pool of water. Superimposed over the entire image is a metal fence, with signs that say “no trespassing” backwards and “human health hazard” atop it.]

[image: a photocopy of a text. It reads; The set I’ve sent on to you is acrylic, which is what I use, a much more flexible paint than oil, not requiring hours to dry, or giving off carcinogenic fumes. It can be mixed with water to achieve a more translucent effect you can layer onto, or spread more easily across the canvas. My painting teacher told me bold strokes are the way to go to create energy and life in your painting. All strokes can be edited, undone with a wet cloth if you get there in time, or painted over, but so too are strokes sometimes fate, and it’s best to listen to what your painting wants to do rather than assert mastery over it.  Cobalt Black: not a color you’re supposed to use as a beginner painter (like me) because it quickly overpowers all other colors, lacks depth, and is unforgiving. However, as I was painting black garbage bags and a tar monster, no other color would substitute. Cadmium Yellow Medium: I’ve made the mistake before of getting the wrong yellow, you need medium, or else you can’t properly blend to get orange or green. Titanium White: Never underestimate the usefulness of stark white paint to create subtle colors, highlights, and glass. However, you go through white twice the rate as every other color, because it is so easy to dilute.  Cobalt Blue: without the right shade, mixing blue to form a dark purple is very difficult. Purples and blues are great substitutes for black, to create shadows that still fascinate the eye rather than stop the light. Cadmium Red medium: Again a color you need in medium, or else your color mixing is off. Red is a tricky color, energetic, but often overwhelming. Mixed well it adds a richness to any color, but use sparingly on its own, it can oversaturate the canvas. Viridian green: Normally a complete set is white, black, yellow, blue, and red, the primary colors that can be mixed into others, but green remains a difficult color to mix, stubborn in its depth and sometimes there is no substitute for true green.]

Page 14:

It was the slippery bodies and splish of muddy waters for Noha, and the desire to grasp at non-human life, to share in their habitats and commons, at a sabeel in Egypt. In Arabic, sabeel is a water source devoted to charity, where passersby can drink without paying anything to anyone. One of Noha’s interlocutors had dug a hole in her land and filled it with water for stray animals to drink from, attending to different kinds of passerby, to the dogs and cats and birds that came through. Playing in the waters with some of her younger friends, they worked at catching the sluggish and slimy little creatures that had begun to live in the sabeel, rejoicing in the game of guessing what creature was what. Their little bodies were alluring, with a golden sunlight leaving them glittery and attractive. They played and splashed until they got in trouble for mucking around in dirty waters, but the game was worth it. They discovered the unintended visitors that made a home in the sabeel, the tadpoles and minnows and the algae and muck that thrived there, even if it was not meant for them. It reminded Noha of a definition for ethnography she had heard long ago “that which you learn when you’re not in a hurry”.

Page 15:

[image: a collage photograph. The photograph shows a small water hole at the foreground with green grass around it. Walking away from the watering hole is a dog. Past the green grass, the ground is bare, except for a hill with brown grass in the background and a grey sky. In the sky are 5 tadpoles superimposed over the image, highly transparent. Overlaying this photo are two other photos, one of a hand pointing to a tiny tadpole atop a plank of wood and the other a closer shot of the water hole, where you can see mud and algae mixed in with the water. In the middle of the screen, written in pink cursive lettering is “S is for Sabeel”.]

Page 16:

By staying in the space between experience and data - in the exciting woosh of speed and quiet isolation of rain, in teeth grinding against the grit of dirt and the satisfying feel of slimy creatures caught (if only temporarily) - we uncovered something essential to us about our field sites and the ways we occupied them. We came to understand how our desires, fears, and sensibilities were in fact at the forefront of all our ethnographic engagements, and more importantly an integral part of our fieldsite, elicited by the material, cultural, and social makeup of our sites.

Page 17:

But it was only through the iterative process of sharing that we arrived at this space to begin with, in our desire to collaborate above all else. By sharing here, we don’t mean the act of parcelling up the whole to divide it amongst the many, but instead as a method of expressing the whole, so that it becomes something experienced with others. We shared our field sites in ways that made us dig deeper into our reflections. We shared our sensations and reactions in the field in ways that made us pay closer attention to what was eliciting them. We shared our worries and anxieties in ways that made us more aware of the way they informed our work. And we shared letters and books, gifts and secrets, companionship and confessions, in ways that sustained and nurtured new relations of care and camaraderie.

[image: two photographs of typed letters are situated in the background. They are mostly illegible except for the greetings on each. The one in the left hand corner says “Hello Noha! Here’s hoping this got to you!” followed by text. The letter in the middle of the page simply reads “Hey Kassandra,” with the rest of the text cut off].

Page 18:

While play was our method into ethnography, protocols were our output, a genre of synthesis that is infinitely shareable, adaptable, and interpersonal, intended to be used and tinkered with.

[In parentheses: Andrea Ballestero and Brit Winthereik’s engaging work *Experimenting with Ethnography: A Companion to Analysis* discusses protocol as a means of deepening ethnographic analysis; one which creates room for “unanticipated insight” and opens up new ways of noticing different images, beings, subjects, and themes in gathered data [(2021:3)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?D4UY9a).]

We assembled a protocol as such, our ‘rules of the game’, which detail the sometimes mundane but always pertinent steps for how we arrived at our collaborative method of play. We regard this protocol as an “experiment to wonder”, one that suspends expectations for linearity or certainty in fieldwork and which invites the ethnographer to slow down, play, take notes differently, and share half-baked thoughts [(Ballestero, Winthereik 2021:7)](https://www.zotero.org/google-docs/?ZQtE5o).

[image: graphic of a checklist and instructions, and a large checkmark overlayed on top].

Page 19:Written together and experimented collectively, we share this protocol to invite other researchers to think about and experience fieldwork differently. This collaborative ethnographic experiment has provided us with an inviting and generative space to process challenges, think through different themes, remain flexible and open in our respective sites, and develop our separate projects in new errant and unexpected directions. We’ve included all our own fieldwork prompts, interview questions, and guiding principles of play as a helpful resource, but so too is our protocol open to tinkering and adaptation. We hope whoever uses it will modify and remake it their own. <https://www.protocols.io/view/let-s-play-an-antidote-to-solitary-serious-unsurpr-n2bvjn685gk5/v1>. We’ve also assembled a number of side games that are geared for both analytical and pedagogical work, which are detailed in the University of Toronto’s video on the Emerge Matrix website; <https://www.emergematrix.org/projects>. Please feel free to email us at emergelabsuoft@gmail.com with questions, comment, and ideas! Let’s Play!

Page 20:

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Back cover:

[image: image of the researcher’s notes, though none of the images or text are legible. Nick’s notes are a cluster of images and texts in the middle of a white circle. Nick’s notes sit in in the right-hand middle of the page, with an arrow pointing from Nick’s notes to Jean’s at the bottom of the page. Jean’s notes show a cluster of images and texts in the middle of a white bubble, with five smaller white bubbles of text surrounding it. Jean’s notes are connected to Kassandra’s at the left-hand side of the page by an arrow. Kasandra’s notes are a cluster of images and texts in the middle of a pale purple bubble with a larger page of notes below it. Kassandra’s notes are connected to Noha’s, at the tope of the page, with an arrow. Noha’s notes are a collection of photos, texts, and arrow graphics in the middle of a white circle. In the middle of the page is a large amounts of text, too small to be legible.]

This playful project was made in collaboration with the Emerge Matrix, a project between 5 ethnography labs around North America, and the University of Toronto’s Ethnography lab.

[image: logo for the Emerge Matrix and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.]

# **Mapping Bodies**

Rine Vieth

Page 1:

[questions in large blue text:]

How do you map a body, your space?

Can we make our own atlas?

Page 2:

We carry maps with us. We make maps with our bodies, and carry maps in our bodies with us. We remake our bodies—not just me, not just you, but we, together, remake our

bodies. Our bodies are not just cyborg, not just different. Our bodies are mapped: our bodies tell stories of distance and space. Our bodies are also messy, and co-constitute space with us: we encounter not only barriers, but also the ease and connection of what Mia Mingus (2011) has called “access intimacy”— care and connection that offers some ease for those of us who are disabled, sick, mad, crip. Access intimacy is love and connection, and offers a counter-mapping.

[questions in large blue text:]

Do we map our bodies to space?

Do we map space to our bodies?

In asking questions, I welcome you to reflect with me, on these pages: draw your maps alongside my maps, your scars alongside my scars, your care alongside my care. If you prefer to print this out yourself or if you want to share copies—and while online hosting can be ephemeral—you can go to the DIY Methods ([diymethods.net](http://diymethods.net/)), or my personal website ([www.rinevieth.com](http://www.rinevieth.com/)).

Page 3:

Mapping distance is shaped by transportation.

Buses were brought in Tio'tià:ke/Mooniyaang/ Montréal in 1919, and have been moving us through the city's arteries ever since. The bus that takes me to the hospitals I most often frequent is the 51. It turns around a park where my heart was broken, curves around Mount Royal, and I get off where a dear friend—now in the Maritimes—used to live. (I can't visit her so easily, but her printer was used to make drafts of this zine; her imprint is here, with us.)

Maps are carried taken with us, carried through

getting somewhere by bike, by car, by bus, by metro.

I cannot list the names of the bus stops, but I know the

church, the park, the building whose façade I love, the

outdoor market I pass on foot when I get off the bus. I

map better on the bus; the metro is too smooth,

underground.

Distance is measured in time: time walking, time en

route, time waiting.

When I let someone know I am ten minutes away, or

when I try to calculate the space between me and my

destination, I am not measuring space so much as I am

measuring how my body passes through space—a

calculus that changes daily.

[questions in larger, bold font]

Do you count your footsteps?

Do you go by bus changes?

Do you instead measure how often you refill

your gas tank? How often you carry your

bike down the stairs, out to the street?

How do you measure time?

Page 4:

[image: a simple blue, illustrated road, with white dotted line through the center.]

When I travel to my usual clinics, I take the same bus.

I could navigate by the familiar stops, but instead I navigate by familiar space.

Page 5:

Time is also shaped by how I—and you—feel, live with, experience pain.

Pain doesn't punctuate days in as much as it reshapes time: it extends and folds, it bends and stretches.

Pain can also be invisible. Pain can be internal. Pain can occur without a diagnosis, without a pathology.

Medicalization is mapping—explaining the workings of a body by tracing a symptom to its cause. We can re-map, instead: mapping ourselves, our bodies to

space around us.

Pain makes fissures the social model of disability, though it is not the only thing to do so: on days when I have bad pain, there is no ramp, captioned meeting, or

added structure to my workday that removes pain.

At the same time, medicalization forces a mapping we may not want.

If we have diagnoses—if our body is mapped—we might get accommodations. If our body is not, we must keep trying to make do.

Encountering others who experience pain like we do can lead to access intimacy: we do not have to justify slower movements, rest time, shrinking in the geography of 'local.'

[questions in larger, bold font]

Is pain linear?

How do you experience pain?

How do you experience pain in space?

Do some spaces bring you ease?

Page 6:

[image: illustrated pain scale on the left of page. Scale starts at “0”, with an illustrated yellow happy face, and ends with “10”, a crying red face.]

Pain scales are difficult for me and others (perhaps you!) to navigate.

How would you make a pain scale?

Is it organized by how much pain interferes with your life?

How it makes you feel?

Or: Would you reject pain scales altogether, choosing instead other ways of describing your pain?

Page 7:

To crip time is also to wait.

Time spent waiting is uncertain periods, gaps without a known end.

If space is relational, our time spent waiting is part of that space-making. Our time spent waiting is to reconfigure waiting rooms into spaces that are familiar.

Ephemera is created during this waiting. We send text messages to friends and family—

making jokes, complaining, troubleshooting, sharing the experiences of waiting. We make sketches, doodling in the margins.

As Alex Haagard (2021) writes, there is a "temporal debt" that comes with disability. Hours in a day are fixed, but how we experience those hours varies significantly. Fatigue, recovery time, burnouts all re/claim time from us.

Time is restructured by capacity, by capitalism, by pain, by appointments, by waiting to be called, by waiting for tests, by waiting for results, by waiting for care.

[questions in larger, bold font]

Where do you wait?

What does it mean, to map our bodies waiting in the meantime?

[image: illustrated blue chair in right bottom corner of the page, with text underneath reading: Chair I quickly sketched while waiting in an urgent care clinic. This chair became a companion over hours and re-visits. (It was also right next to an outlet—peak

waiting room seating, if you know you know.)]

Page 8:

[questions in larger, bold font, with four black pulse lines between them]

Is waiting heartbeats? (Can you draw your pulse?)

Is waiting a line? (Does it break?)

Page 9:

J. Logan Smilges (2023) uses the term crip negativity to describe "bad crip feelings, felt criply."

Crip negativity is, in part, how I have become tied to place: it is a lightning bolt of pain, it is exhaustion from staying in the meantime, it is my dissatisfaction with layers of medicalization, it is the endpoints in my transit journey.

As a concept, crip negativity is also how I find comfort. Rocked home, sleepily, on a late night-bus, I can more easily hold space for my frustration and anger. I can feel upset about another day lost to waiting in the ER for tests, checks, more lines in my medical file, things that became necessary—never life- threatening, the baseline as there is no measurement offered for quality of life— but that could have been avoided with a fully-funded, fully-functional public healthcare system.

I have a name for grieving and anger about how my body experiences time.

[questions in larger, bold font]

How does your body shape how you feel time?

How does your body shape how you experience place?

How do you locate your feelings in space?

Page 10:

Years ago, I tattooed coastlines onto my body. It was an attempt to stay in places that no longer exist, or that I cannot return to.

This coastline does not exist—it is an imagined geography, mapped onto my body.

How does your past geography map onto you?

[image: an illustrated blue figure with a yellow, squiggled line on it]

Page 11:

Scars can be choices, scars can be possibilities. Scars can be a map, a mapping—tracing trips, care, place, space.

I have scars from scrapes as a toddler, scars from chicken pox, scars from an unfortunate drumming incident, scars from medical procedures—some that went well, some whose upsetting, affecting echoes I carry with me.

There is an understanding of time and transition, wherein some trans people see ourselves as having two ages: age since our date birth, and age since transition (another kind of birth).

The scars on my chest mark changes to my physiological topography, and were the result of 30- minute taxi rides back and forth to the clinic where my top surgery was done.

Daniel Lavery (2020) describes feelings about his chest leading up to top surgery that echoes my own experiences: fear of uncertainty for what would come after alongside circular, late-night ruminating on scars as part of having a new kind of chest.

Fear of uncertainty can mean fear of what comes next. The horizontal line that now bisects my chest—a curved line that I carry with me—that the new topography of my chest resulted in a new kind of chest, an after that allowed me to remake my body. It is a geographical, embodied queerness.

[questions in larger, bold font]

How do scars on your body shape how you are rooted in space?

How would you map your body?

Page 12:

I used to feel ambivalent-to- upset about scars—they were too permanent, marked too much.

Now I see them as part of my body, my own topography. Some scars I even chose, through decisions to remake my body.

How would you chart your body? What would you trace? (Doesn’t need to be scars!)

[background image: two blue figures of bodies—one with yellow line across chest, the other without markings.]

Page 13:

Care is complicated, confounding cartesian space. Care networks span globes, and also are our next-door neighbours. Care is in our phones, in letters, phone calls, networks that make sure we have transportation to hard-to-access appointments we dread.

Recently, I have seen 'mutual aid' framed as the circulation of money, becoming a short-form term for fundraising. This is not to say that fundraising is wrong—or, that it is not sadly a necessity for living under neoliberal capitalism—but that fundraising is not the

only thing we can offer each other, and I worry what we miss when we situate ourself in 'monetary space.'

As Dean Spade (2020) reminds us, mutual aid is far, far broader and much more imaginative than this: "Mutual aid is collective coordination to meet each other’s needs, usually from an awareness that the systems we have in place are not going to meet them."

Collective coordination happens in particular space(s) and time(s). It happens when we get access to free masks and COVID-19 tests through volunteer-run mask blocs, run out of a neighbour's basement. It happens when we are in need of food, and activists organizing for food justice drop-off of groceries to our front doors—offered without requiring lengthy, humiliating forms. It happens when we offer our skills to coordinate support in Signal group chats, providing editing work in online documents, and managing spreadsheets that organize resource distribution.

Defining mutual aid as only financial exchange forgets the possibility of collective care—and also misses how we're implicated in networks that traverse cities, states, borders.

[questions in larger, bold font]

Can you map care?

Is your map through letters, group chats, phone calls, DMs, emails, photos that made you smile?

Page 14:

[image: blue figures of continents, with yellow lines overlapping in various directions (mimicking flight patterns).]

Page 15:

Thank-Yous and Contact

Thank you to all involved in coordinating the 2024 DIY Methods Conference, particularly Anne Pasek and Sarah Rayner (whose kindness when crip time became an increasing factor is part of what made this zine possible).

Thank you as well to the participants, particularly those who showed up for a zine circle or two.

Thank you to everyone cited in here, to everyone I forgot to cite, to everyone who helped shape and re-shape how I think about my body and space.

Thank you to Karen McAllister, whose friendship as well as gift of a printer shaped much of this zine, in ways neither of us could have predicted.

Thank you to Willow, whose soft purrs and gentle paws on my leg accompanied the making of this.

To talk further about bodies, space, disability, and time, feel free to reach out to me via email at [rine.vieth@gmail.com](http://rine.vieth@gmail.com).

Page 16:

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# **Narrative Mapping and Visual Analysis**

Sheryl-Ann Simpson

Cover:

[Narrative Mapping and Visual Analysis in a decretive text printed in relief in yellow ink on a purple background]

Page 1:

Narrative Mapping and Visual Analysis

What’s the first thing that comes to mind when you think of a map?

Pages 2-3:

For a lot of us it’s likely a navigation map that you use on a phone or computer. That map has a lot in common with paper maps and atlases with north as up, and where the scales, projections and symbols stay consistent.

[image: small map of a city centre with the roads as black lines of different weights organized as a grid on a white background, with about three small grey squares representing parks and place markers along main roads. The place markers are white with black outlines, circles with the bottoms elongated to a point]

But these are just one kind of map developed in southern Europe and the Low Countries for sailors to navigate at sea.

As Zuni mapmaker Jim Enote puts it “*We limit ourselves if we think of maps as only two dimensional. The map may be something we heard from our grandmother about a place. There are maps in songs, and in prayers. There are maps that are etched in stone, and woven into textiles, and painted on ceramics*”.

We can use this variety in maps and mapping to support a wide range of methods including sharing stories about the places where we live, work, worship, learn and play.

Narrative maps, for example, are the perfect mix between narrative interviews and the family of qualitative maps that use visualization in their analysis.

Pages 4-5:

Narrative Interviews

Interviews are an empirical qualitative research method, meaning that interviews are a tool for gathering data about what someone has experienced, seen and heard, and how they understand it. Who you interview depends on your research questions. So you might want to interview a wide range of people with different experiences, or people with a specific shared experience. When trying to figure out how many people you should interview, instead of thinking about representation, you can pay attention to saturation, the point in your interviews where you start to hear information or stories from new interviewees that you have heard before.

Narrative interviews are a style of interview that asks people to share longer stories rather than giving short responses to a list of preset questions. The prompts in narrative interviews ask about particular experiences that could be transitions or routines, or about specific relationships or people. Narratives are a way that people organize their thinking and do their own analysis, connect their experience to broader contexts, things that have happened in the past and elsewhere, and lessons about how things should be. So as a researcher you’ll want to pay attention to how interviewees tell the story alongside what they say. When you start your analysis ask yourself how to does an interviewee start the story, what goes in the middle, how does it end, are their acts, arcs or cycles. Who else is in the story, do they stick just to themselves, or shift the narrative to friends, family, community, adversaries? What words, phrases and expressions do they use to describe a phenomenon, place, event or relationship?

Pages 6-7:

Qualitative Maps and Mapping

Rather than just giving us information about where things are, qualitative maps are another storytelling tool. Maps that fall under this category can help researchers better understand how different people see and experience a place and what it means to them.

There are different types of qualitative maps:

*Mental maps* give a sense of people’s perceptions of a place. They can help you understand what landmarks people have defined for themselves, how does everyone understand the boundary of a district or area, and what paths do they use to move through space. The ‘what’ people map is usually pretty standardized so that you can compare between them.

*Qualitative GIS (Geographic Information Systems)* add qualitative elements to digital maps. For example adding photographs, videos, snippets of sound or text, anything that adds to an understanding of the quality of the place. In this way qualitative QIS connects place and narratives in a dynamic way.

Pages 8-9:

*Imaginary and cognitive maps* might not map physical space, and instead can be tools to organize and visualize the relationships between ideas, experiences or understandings.

*Mesoamerican mapping* like its European counterpart is a pre-contact mapping convention used for navigation. The conventions though are so different that it took European and other colonial scholars a while to even understand they were looking at maps. For example place markers are glyphs that give a sense of the places name and history. They can often be oriented in any direction, and the scale is variable with close places being larger and further away places marked in a smaller glyph. So they provide political and cultural as well as spatial relationship information.

[Xilotltepetl in black hand written text. A glyph in burgundy ink with two ears of corn in v, and a bell shaped mound with some embellishment on the side. Two black lines from the glyph to explain the image. For the top part of the glyph xilotl - silky ear of corn, teptl - bell-shaped hill]

[Tututepec in black hand written text. A glyph in burgundy ink a striped mound with some embellishment on the sides with a tall building on top of it with stairs a large entrance and flat roof. Two lines from the glyph to explain the image. For the top part of the glyph an elaborate temple, for the bottom part of the glyph a hill]

adapted from Mundy, Barbara. 1998. Mesoamerican cartography in David Woodward and G. Malcom Lewis (eds) Cartography in the Traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian and Pacific Societies. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pages 10-11:

Narrative Mapping is the process of inviting people to share their narratives – those biographical particulars, and unique experiences that make them them–and to organize those narratives in spatial and visual ways.

By mapping these narratives there is an opportunity for folks to intertwine their particular story with their context, with place and space, the political and cultural. Because these maps are narratives we can also pay attention to how people map to the beginning, middle and ending of their map.

This means that narrative maps are maps in four dimensions with an element of time added in.

Time might be in terms of the process of how someone maps, but it might also be in the maps themselves, where people use their maps to visualize how they understand things as changing over time or how they want something to be different in the future.

They might also mix time and context in different ways. In a narrative mapping project about immigration and housing as an example, people mixed time and place by drawing the types of homes they knew from back home in their new location. Sometimes this was part of a narrative of longing, but in other cases it was an example of happily mixing two cultures and places in their own homes.

Pages 12-13:

Narrative Mapping is great for:

Learning about how different people use a particular place

Learning about people’s history with a place and about change

Learning about relationships in place

Starting to analyze the experience of place with participants

They can also be useful when you are working in a community where you don’t have a shared language with the participants. Mapping let’s people tell their story and provides a concrete tool to help people organize their thoughts and support more dialogue.

Some difficulties:

Getting most adults to draw something can be a challenge especially when people have those to-perfect-scale European maps in mind, that only include official or ‘important’ elements.

The prompt can help, and there are other things you can do, encouragement, showing delight as folks get started, letting their child draw for them, or drawing at their instruction in a pinch.

Since the maps are personal narratives, anonymizing the map can be difficult, and the volume of information can be a (fun) challenge to deal with and make sense of. These are questions of analysis discussed below as well.

Pages 14-15:

The Prompt

One of the most important things for narrative mapping is the prompt, or the invitation to share a narrative.

A prompt needs to be inviting, and help participants understand your expectations.

For example letting people know that you are interested in their story, their experience, their perspective, rather than that perfect scale or official landmarks.

The material you bring with you can also be part of the prompt. Colourful markers, large paper, craft supplies that are familiar and fun.

For example you might have a two part prompt where you ask ‘*Could you draw a map of the place where you live*’ and then add ‘*just the places that are important to you, or where you go*.’ This way they understand that you’re really interested in them and their experiences, and not just where everything is.

Pages 16-17:

Another example would be to ask someone to draw a map of the same place at more than one point in time. ‘*Could you draw a map of your neighbourhood today, and a second map the way you imagine it in five years*.’ Again this lets people know your interested in them, and their narratives, and their imagination rather than just finding out where things are.

If you are interested in a particular experience or type of experience, another type of prompt might ask where. So for example, ‘*Would you map where it [the experience] happened*’.

The prompt also carries into the mapping, so show delight while people are drawing to encourage them, and affirm that they’re doing what you’d hoped. Keep the conversation going if people would like to, let them narrate as they go to keep the pressure low, you don’t want it to feel like a test.

And if need be encourage alternatives, maybe someone just wants to list all the things that would go on their map, maybe they’ll want to just tell you their narrative map, and have you illustrate it as you go along, maybe they’ll ask if their children can draw in their place.

Pages 18-19:

Visual Analysis

What to do with all these narratives?

You’ll likely have a set of maps that are interesting and beautiful in and of themselves, so you might want to display them if you have permission from the people who shared their narratives with you.

You’ll also likely want to do some analysis of the maps.

Your analysis might turn them into European maps or qualitative GIS maps where you try to add all the elements people illustrated to a scale map on paper or digitally, or add snippets of their stories of images from their map.

You might use the type of analysis you would use for narrative interviews focused on understanding how people are organizing their own biographies, and what that means in terms of how they understand it. So you might analyze the specific words that people use to describe an experience, the characters they include, the major themes that you find that are shared between stories, the explanations that people have in common.

But again if narrative mapping is a hybrid method, why not a *hybrid analysis*?

Pages 20-21:

Using visual tools in your narrative analysis for example, can help you hold on to some of the richness of the data, the symbols and visual phrases people used to tell their stories, the spatial and temporal elements, and the different ways in which people expressed themselves.

For example you could analyze the maps to find the common themes as you would a narrative interview, but instead of just writing about the themes you would find a visual way to express them.

You could create a collage of all the symbols people used to illustrate a theme on their map. For example what were all the ways that people depicted home on their maps.

Pages 22-23:

You could create new maps that fall somewhere in between mental maps and cognitive maps, by re-symbolizing the different themes, and then putting them in relationship to each other. For example, if homes are often far away from work on the map you could draw your new symbol for those themes far away from each on the map. If people draw barriers that get in the way of achieving certain goals, you could would create a symbol for the goal and the barriers, and draw barrier symbol surrounding the goal.

Also keep in mind the visual language used in the narratives that people shared.

Here’s one example from my research,

[image: a legend with five elements a circle with home written in capital letters labelled home space, a diagonal striped circle labelled social services, an empty circle labelled friends + family, a blob with a thick undulating boundary labelled off limits and a soft purple blob labelled dream space.

these elements are arranged on the map to the right of the legend. Home is one large element surrounded by social service and friends and family elements. There are small off limit elements and larger off limit elements further away from home. At the other end of the map from home a large dream space symbol.]

and you can see the full results at: wheretohere.com/atlas

Pages 24-25:

Visual analysis can also be a way to make sense of narrative interviews that started as just stories you’ve been told. There might be themes in the interviews that are expressly spatial, so putting those stories on a map might help you to understand and share those understandings.

Using spatial metaphors might also help you to build your understanding of the narratives people are sharing. For example in work around home and housing in rural Manitoba a theme that emerged was the ways in which the place was produced through the places people are coming from, visiting, moving to and from. Also (as a secret just between us) the region has an amazing beach culture, and is defined by so many different bodies of water. So I started to put together a map of rural Manitoba building on Mesoamerican mapping with bodies of water from all of the places named throughout interviews and the place glyphs.

[a small sample of the map with bodies of water in black outlines filled in with green tint labelled with thick black text. The bodies of water from the region are the largest for example Silver Beach at the centre, further away bodies of water are at a smaller combative scale for example Vancouver Harbour or Lake Ontario. Many of the bodies of water are labelled in multiple languages, for example Red River, Miscousipi, Asiniibwaaniziibiing, Rivière Assiniboine; Look ng Maynila, Manila Bay; Lago Gal Carrera, General Carrera Lake; and Gaa-gwekwkijiwang, Ebb and Flow.]

Page 26:

So the visualization can go in multiple directions, from the invitation to a participant to share their visual narratives, drawing with someone, or using visualization as a method for you to build your own understanding through visual analysis.

Page 28:

Thanks!

Sheryl-Ann Simpson

<sheryl-ann.simpson@carleton.ca>

[wheretohere.com](http://wheretohere.com/)

# **Out With the New, in With the Old**

Hels Bowie

[note: this is a series of mini, 8-page zines, with different titles.]

## *Zine 1*

Zine History and Theory Zine

Zines have roots across three distinctive cultural moments, initially emerging within sci-fi fan subcultures in the 1930s. A re-emergence in the 1970s brought about a wave of punk fan zines where music, events information and political agendas would feature alongside one another within zines distributed among punk communities. The DIY blend of musical and political information led to a third emergence of zines through 1990s Riot Grrl subcultures (Gray et al, 2021).

Zines have continued to grow and evolve as a means of feminist subcultural production and communication, and these spaces are of particular importance to feminists working in spaces such as body positivity, anti-racism and queer communities. (Nijesten, 2017). Moreover, the tactility of zines, and the DIY nature of zine production creates an intimacy and adds an additional layer of connection between creator and reader (Triggs, 2010).

Research into DIY culture demonstrates the value of amateur production in enabling creativity, authenticity and social connection, transforming end-consumers of culture in cultural creators. (Kanai, 2018). As physical objects, zines create opportunities to create embodied communities, which offer tangible connections between creators and readers and enhance the communal nature of cultural production (Peipmeier, 2008).

As ephemeral objects, distributed in print and among networks of zine-makers through zine fairs the zine form occupies a different space to other contemporary community-based DIY media, which is often mediated through online channels. In contrast to discussions in externally hosted and structured online spaces, zines offer a potential ‘queer form’ to creators, building Ramzi Fawad’s exploration of ‘queer cultural forms as vehicles for the expansion of a political imagination’ (Fawaz. 2024).

Moreover, the creation and sharing of zines, particularly for queer fanzines which overlap with perzines (or, personal zines) offers potential for new forms of queer intimacy which ‘builds worlds; it creates spaces and usurps places meant for other kinds of relation.’ (Berlant, 1998, 282)

Visual arts-informed participatory research has been used extensively in research into the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ communities (Flicker, 2008; Holtby, Klein, Cook, & Travers, 2015; Wernick, Woodford, & Kulick, 2014; Wilson et al., 2014). Such methods offer not just accessible opportunities for participants to engage, but greater accessibility for dissemination of research findings to wider communities (Sakamoto, 2014).

Collaborative zine-making tips: 1. invite each participant to fold an 8 page, single sheet zine (instructions for this can be found on inside of this zine).

## *Zine 2*

Zine Workshop Reflections

Held at the Glasgow Zine Library on a Sunday afternoon, the workshop was intentionally informal, with discussion prompts focussing on participants’ own engagement with fandom and fan spaces, their experience in creating fan-media and responding to heteronormative media, and their zine experience. Using a zine space offered access to the resources for making a zine, such as pens, paper, glue, scissors and collage material. And it was a cute vibe.

Through the design of the workshops as a safe and informal discussion   
space, I engaged with these conversations primarily in opening asking follow-up questions, but with some researcher-participant engagement in contributing to discussions to ensure that all participants had an opportunity to engage and to help draw out threads of discussion further.

I also used a handwritten cut-and-fold zine to take field notes during the process, rather than recording or typing up notes, to suit the informal tone and remain engaged with the zine making process.

Attendees had different backgrounds with zine-making – all of them had engaged with zines in some form, but spoke about zines as activist tools, consciousness raising opportunities and as publication method for more ‘conventional’ literary works such as poetry, or in specific reference to writing and experimental works, rather than fanzines specifically.

Discussions spanned online vs offline fan media, reclaiming queerphobic tropes, queer communities as distribution networks for ephemera, and the potential for interactivity through blank space and invitations within zines.

As participants began the process of making zines, the discussion became more sporadic, and a great deal of care and focus was given to the process, with one participant commenting on how ‘mindful and wholesome’ it was to arrange things on a page.

Across the group, different forms were used, including an a6 mini zine, an a5 minizine, a stapled booklet, and a larger-format a4 booklet, as bound with glue along the edge and then this glued section decorated with rhinestones to create a distinctive ‘spine’ . The initial workshop design was based around the creation of a6 minizines, but the discussion of form led participants in other directions – which I love!

## *Zine 3*

Zine Workshops for Participative Research

Zines can offer a relaxed, informal and collaborative method for participative research. The process can be used for individual zines or group zines, depending on your research aims and participants.

Before your workshop, it may be useful for seek out zines related to your research themes, or to distill your own research into zine form. This give background to the participants and helps to test the methods and processes yourself.

Possible approaches to using a workshop for research:

* An open discussion about the research themes and questions, followed by set time to make response zines
* A more structured approach, with set questions, asking participants to use a page of the zine per question for creative responses
* A group zine, or series of zines. Multiple pre-folded zines, each focussed on a different question, are circulated among the group to add to in turn.

THESE ARE ALL JUST SUGGESTIONS! GET CREATIVE!

It can also be helpful to use the zine format to take notes during the workshop. This will give you a set of coherent, stylistically matched outputs of your own, and can break down barriers with participants as you are also making zines.

Afterwards, the zines can be photocopied so participants can have their own copy, and – depending on permissions – shared at engagement events, through libraries or research archives, and offered as examples at future workshops.

They also offer contemperanous first-person notes of the research process to use in more formal write-ups and presentations of your research workshops.

## *Zine 4*

It’s Very Embarrassing Having Feelings – A Rosa Diaz Fanzine  
  
I headcanoned Brooklyn 99’s Rosa Diaz as bi some time in season one. Maybe it was over-relating, maybe it was wishful thinking… Why not both? In season one she describes Tonya Harding as ‘thicc’ and Stephanie Beatriz herself said that line opened up the possibility of her playing Rosa as queer.

But playing it and saying it are two very different things. So after 5 seasons of looking queer-longing and imagining that any character who is so private about her life could potentially be anything to anybody, the moment where she came out BLEW MY MIND.

Because I couldn’t even think of a comparable scene, because women so rarely get to be bi in the media. Maybe they ‘don’t like labels’, maybe they ‘experimented in college’, or maybe they’re just a whole lesbian with no backstory or internal life from the moment they first kiss a girl (looking at you, Willow).

But Rosa… Rosa is bi. Matter of factly bi. She tells Charles she’s bi. She tells the squad she’s bisexual. She tells everyone it doesn’t change anything and it doesn’t but also, it really does.

# **Palestinian Resistance Poems**

Danielle Layton, Rashed Hussein, Sameeh al-Qassem, Mahmoud Darweesh, and Refaat Alareer

[note: a series of mini, 8-page zines, with different titles and authors.]

## *Zine 1*

Cover: [image: oil pastel illustration of half of earth, black background]

p. 1 [image: oil pastel illustration of white/grey tents]

Tent #50

(Song of a refugee)

By Rashed Hussein

p. 2 [image: oil pastel illustration of white/grey tents]

Tent #50, on my left, is my new world,

Shared with me by my memories:

Memories as verdant as the eyes of spring,

Memories like the eyes of a women weeping,

And memories the color of milk and love!

p. 3 [image: oil pastel illustration of white/grey tents]

Two doors has my tent, two doors like two wounds

One leads to the other tents, wrinkle-browed

Like clouds no longer able to weep;

And the second – a rent in the ceiling, leading

To the skies,

Revealing the stars

Like refugees scattered,

And like them, naked.

p. 4 [image: oil pastel illustration of white/grey tents]

Also the moon is trudging there

Downcast and weary as the UNRWA,

Yellow as though it were the UNRWA

Under a load of yellow cheese for the refugees.

Tent #50, on the left, that is my present,

But it is too cramped to contain a future!

And – “Forget!” they say, but how can I?

p. 5 [image: oil pastel illustration of apricot orchard]

Teach the night to forget to bring

Dreams showing me my village

And teach the wind to forget to carry me

The aroma of apricots in my fields!

And teach the sky, too, to forget to rain.

p. 6 [image: oil pastel illustration of apricot orchard]

Only then, I may forget my country.

Back cover [image: oil pastel illustration of half of earth, black background]

## *Zine 2*

Cover: [image: oil pastel illustration of memorial garden of flowers being cultivated in used tear gas canisters in Bil’in, West Bank, blue sky, trees and barbed wire fence in distance]

p. 1 [image: oil pastel illustration of seedling growing in used tear gas canister, green background]

I Defy

By Sameeh al-Qassem

p. 2 [image: green background]

Talk about exile—I defy

silence my argument with chains

and a foolish prison cell

I defy

Turn plague and sadness against me

I remained defying

cut my wrist

with my bloody chest I defy

cut my leg

I mount the wound and walk

and with my violence I defy

with my forehead I defy

with my teeth of songs—I defy

p. 3 [image: oil pastel illustration of fields of yellow flowers, city in background]

and kill me—I defy

I kill death

and come to you a defying God

All what I own of my father’s and grandfather’s

inheritance is to defy!

p. 4 [image: oil pastel illustration of fields of yellow flowers, city in background]

All what I understand from the wind

and the secrets of erased villages

and the songs of springs

on dying grass

a concealed sob

the roots of the tree

memorize it for me

a sob: To defy

p. 5 [image: oil pastel illustration of fields of yellow flowers, blue sky]

All the eyes of children living within me

in bloody exile

All what I live of my absent country

in name and deed

a scream bruising me—to defy!

My anger drips oil and honey

my pain bears almonds, flouts and roses

so jail my piece of bread

I defy

p. 6 [image: oil pastel illustration of fields of yellow flowers, blue sky]

Back cover [image: oil pastel illustration of Sabiha Abu Rahmah, mother of Bassem Abu Rahmah who was killed in 2009 by an Israeli soldier firing a tear gas canister into his chest, tends to memorial garden made with spent tear gas canisters near Bil’in, blue sky, tree and barbed wire on horizon]

## *Zine 3*

Cover: [image: oil pastel illustration of olive grove and sunrise]

p. 1 [image: sprig of olives, coral background]

Lover from Palestine

By Mahmoud Darweesh

p. 2 [image: olive on coral background]

Your eyes

A thorn in my heart

Painful yet adorable

I shield it from the wind

And stab it deep through the night,

Through pain

Its wound illuminates the darkness

Transforms my present into future

p. 3 [image: olives on coral background]

Dearer than my soul

And I shall forget as our eyes meet

That once we were together behind the gate.

Your words were my song

I tried singing

But winter replaced the spring

p. 4 [image: olives on coral background]

Your words, like the sparrow, flew away

Like the sparrow who left our doors

After you

Our mirrors broke—sorrows engulfed us

We picked the splinters of sound

And only learned to lament the fatherland.

p. 5 [image: olives on coral background]

We shall plant it together over the breast of a guitar

Play it over the roofs of our tragedy

To disfigured moons and rocks

p. 6 [image: olives on coral background]

But I have forgotten

I have forgotten your voice

Was it my silence

Was it my silence or

Your departure

That rusted my guitar?

Back cover [image: oil pastel illustration of olive grove]

## *Zine 4*

Cover: [image: oil pastel illustration of Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem]

p. 1 [image: oil pastel illustration of mature olive tree, yellow-orange background]

The Children of Rafah

By Sameeh al-Qassem

p. 2 [image: oil pastel illustration of mature olive tree, yellow-orange background]

To him who digs his path

in the wounds of millions

whose tanks crush the garden’s roses

To him who breaks at night the houses’ windows

who burns a field and a museum

and sings to the fire

who rips the hair of sad women

and bombs grape fields

who executes the nightingale of feasts in the square

whose planes bombard children’s dreams

who break rainbows

p. 3 [image: oil pastel illustration of rubble]

The children of deep rooted ancestors tonight declare

the children of Rafah tonight declare:

We did not knit blankets from hair braids

we did not spit on the face of murdered women

after plucking the golden teeth

p. 4 [image: oil pastel illustration of child holding cat amid rubble]

p. 5 [image: oil pastel illustration of Bisan Owda sitting on pier in Gaza]

Why do you take the candy

and give us bombs?

why make Arab children orphans?

And thanks?

Sadness turned us into men

We must fight

p. 6 [image: oil pastel illustration of Bisan Owda sitting on pier in Gaza]

Back cover: [image: oil pastel illustration of Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem]

## *Zine 5*

Cover: [image: oil pastel portrait of Patrice Lumumba]

p. 1 [image: black]

Patrice Lumumba

By Sameeh al-Qassem

p. 2 [image: black]

Beat the wind and soar

Oh rebellious lover of freedom

O you eagle repelled by existence

In a humiliated, shackled valley.

As you twisted in the cesspool of mud and thorns

Fired by a yearning for light

p. 3 [image: black]

And your dreams gleamed with the visions

Of Jesus, Moses, and the aspirations of Muhammed.

Illuminating a craving for lofty summit

Soaring among the stars in the far beyond.

You pranced for glory, your faraway haven

That perches on deep-seated dignity.

p. 4 [image: black]

O you cheers whose tremors

Rocked the sad, tormented Congo

Hoodwinked by a gang that slave-drove

The people and delivered them to a foreign master

O great eagle of Africa, the calling of the sun

Looms and thunders in the universe.

p. 5 [image: black]

And it was you who heeded its appeal, cried:

Mother, I heed, And tomorrow we rendezvous

On the horizon of heroic gallantries.

You braced your wings, your beak throbbing with flames

Your tears restrained.

p. 6 [image: black]

And you glittered, a star breaking

The long drawn screen of darkness.

So—carry the magnificent torch and

Dispel the reign of night that the invaders

Wanted to be eternal, perpetual.

Back cover: [image: black]

## *Zine 6*

Cover [image: oil pastel illustration of photo of 14-year-old Faris Odeh throwing a stone at an Israeli tank in Gaza shortly before he was shot and killed in 2000]

p. 1 [image: oil pastel illustration of lamp, black background]

On Poetry

By Mahmoud Darweesh

p. 2 [image: black background]

Yesterday,

We sang to a star above a cloud

To a full moon near the star

And cried.

Yesterday

We reproved the vines,

The moon, the night, the fate

And flirted with women.

p. 3 [image: black]

The clock has struck, and Khayyam drinks

While we remain wretched,

Listening to his opiating songs.

My poet friends

We live in a new age,

The past is dead

And he who writes poetry

In the age of the storms, of the atom

Is a prophet.

p. 4 [image: oil pastel illustration of key, black background]

Our poems are

Colorless, aimless, voiceless

If they do not carry the lamp

From house to house.

And if simple do not comprehend

Throw your poems to the wind

And let us immortalize silence.

p. 5 [image: oil pastel illustration of door, black background]

If only these poems were

A chisel in the hands of a worker

A grenade in the hands of a fighter

If only

If only these poems were

A plow in the hands of a peasant

A shirt, a door, a key,

If only

p. 6 [image: black]

once

A poet said:

If my poems gratify my friends

And anger my enemies

Then I am a poet.

And I shall say—

Back cover: [image: oil pastel illustration of Israeli tank]

## *Zine 7*

Cover [image: oil pastel illustration of watermelon rind on black background]

p. 1 [image: oil pastel illustration of oranges growing on tree, yellow-orange background]

If I Must Die

By Refaat Alareer

p. 2 [image: oil pastel illustration of oranges growing on tree, yellow-orange background]

If I must die,

you must live

to tell my story

to sell my things

to buy a piece of cloth

and some strings,

(make it white with a long tail)

p. 3 [image: oil pastel illustration of grapes growing on vine, yellow-orange background]

so that a child, somewhere in Gaza

while looking heaven in the eye

awaiting his dad who left in a blaze—

and bid no one farewell

not even to his flesh

not even to himself—

p. 4 [image: oil pastel illustration of grapes growing on vine, yellow-orange background]

sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above

and thinks for a moment an angel is there

bringing back love

p. 5 [image: oil pastel illustration of mature olive tree, yellow-orange background]

If I must die

let it bring hope

let it be a tale

p. 6 [image: oil pastel illustration of mature olive tree, yellow-orange background]

Back cover: [image: oil pastel illustration of watermelon rind on black background]

# **Publish or Perish: A Methodological Guide on How to Be An Academic Productivity Machine**

Lori Beckstead, Ian M. Cook, & Hannah McGregor and Máté!

Cover: [image: The cover is styled like a classic *Choose Your Own Adventure* Novel, with the series brand across the top. “Podcast or Perish” is written in hand, with “podcast” crossed out and replaced by “Publish.” The centre image, contained in an arched frame, is a collage of hand-drawn images, including a shark wearing a mortar board, a bag of ruffled potatoes chips with the word “Salty” written across it, a roller skate containing a copy of the book *Podcast or Perish: Peer Review and Knowledge Creation for the 21st Century*, all clustered around a face with an agonized expression.]

Page 1:

Super Zeros: Zine Authors Card Game.

[Image: the page is styled as a series of superhero cards including cartoon-style images of each author as well as statistics.]

Lori Beckstead. Special Power: 10. H-Index: n+1. Height: 5.4. Resides: Toronto. “Wielder of dad JOKES and accusations of neoliberalism. Get off her LAWN!” [Image: a white woman in her 40s with shoulder-length wavy hair, wearing glasses and a blazer.]

Ian M. Cook. Special Powers: 6. H-Index: 2^√2. Height: 6.4. Resides: Budapest. “Finally managed to reach the STATION, only to find that the bus replacement service had BROKEN DOWN!” [Image: a white man in his 40s with curly hair, wearing a white t-shirt.]

Hannah McGregor. Special Powers: yes. H-Index: 6,546,812.75463. Height: 5.6. Resides: Vancouver. “Out of OFFICE auto reply is always on cuz she’s too BUSY for your SHIT!” [A fat white woman in her 40s with very short hair and tattoos on her chest and arms, wearing glasses and a tank top.]

Page 2:

What is this you are holding?

[image: the page is styled as a retro web page, with the text contained in a series of smaller pop-up windows.]

Welcome to PUBLISH OR PERISH, a choose-your-own-adventure zine about the nightmare that is contemporary academic journal-publishing.

This zine will present you with a series of scenarios, ask you to choose a possible path, and then tell you what page to turn to next…

PUBLISH OR PERISH is inspired by our recently published book, Podcast or Perish: Peer Review and Knowledge Creation for the 21st Century (available wherever semi-obscure academic tomes are sold).

While that book is full of ideas about how to do things better, this zine is all about problems. Can you find your way to the elusive work-life balance? (Spoiler alert: no, you can’t.)

[For a discussion on method please read this book.]

Turn the page to begin your adventure…

Page 3:

BEGIN

[The word BEGIN is written by hand in block letters. The font for rest of the text is taken from the computer game series Zelda. There are low quality drawings of a person with a sword, a packet of crisps - Salty and Vin -, some crisps, and a shocked face]

It’s a rainy evening in Tarrey Town, Akkala. You are in a dark room amongst amidst a group of troubled souls.

"Don't do it," says Nancy. She’s been the most reluctant of the group the whole day.

You pluck up the kind of steely determination usually reserved for an action hero about to take their final stand. "We have no choice," you say.

"It's time," says Gurdeep, nodding earnestly.

Everyone in the room knows there’s no going back now: you're going to found an academic journal!

Lightning strikes across the sky. Shadows dance across the car park. An empty packet of salt and vinegar crisps is blown up against the window pane. You see its silvery inners and think of mercury leaking from a cracked thermometer, enticing and dangerous.

Page 4:

Peer Review Policy

[the page has hearts in the top left, underneath you see a magnet, a sword and a shield, the top right page indicates how many rupees you have (6,669) - in short it looks a lot like the main screen from Zelda. There is a hand drawn Navi, a help from Zelda, shouting ‘hey listen’]

You are now faced with multiple options regarding your peer review policy.

Do you:

adopt the standard double anonymous peer review that will encourage people to submit papers, help your journal eventually get a good ranking, and give an air of legitimacy to the whole thing.

[go to page 5]

have a mix of peer reviewed and non peer reviewed contributions, placating those who’ve asked for the inclusion of non-text based submissions.

[go to page 11]

develop your own form of peer review that will employ different mediums and forms. But this may mean the journal will not be taken seriously by many of your colleagues.

[go to page 14]

Page 5:

Proper Journal

[the page is styled in a ChatGPT theme. We have written ‘prompt’ before what appears as a prompt in the zine]

Prompt: Congratulations, you’ve founded a proper journal for proper scholars! You’ve convinced an important scholar in your field to guest edit the first issue. And you’ve received a decent line-up of submissions. Now it’s time to find some peer reviewers!

You set up a system in which authors and reviewers need to create profiles using passwords they will forget. Automated emails are sent to people to ask for their free labour. No one has checked whether these people have permanent positions in academia or not.

Prompt: No one replies.

Reminders are sent. Some people agree.

Months pass. No one sends in their reviews. You send reminders from your personal email address and people are happy to hear from a human. They promise to get the reviews in soon.

Meanwhile all academic positions in your field are replaced by AI because it writes more papers than anyone else. No one outside your field notices. Students think they just went to the wrong classroom and end up switching courses to something they think will help them get a job.

Prompt: Years later.

You sit in a retirement home crying into your warm milk and trying not to associate the smell of stale urine with the death of your discipline.

After chair yoga, you strike up a conversation with a lady who asked you about what you’re most proud of in your career.

[Under the “Message ChatGPt” bar it reads “ChatGPT can make mistakes. Check important information.”]

GO TO NEXT PAGE

Page 6:

What do you do?

[the page is still styled like ChatGPT. There is a large hand drawn arrow going from top left to bottom right. There are two simple hand-drawn sheep at the bottom of the page.]

Prompt: What do you do?

Tell her about your H-Index (then explain what an H-Index is).

Prompt: Go to page 8

Tell her about a journal you tried to found.

Prompt: Go to page 9

Tell her about a time you shot down your rival at a conference.

Prompt: Go to page 16.

[Under the “Message ChatGPt” bar it reads “Seriously dude, you can’t just believe whatever AI tells you.”]

Page 7: Deconstructing the Ivory Tower: A Defense of Alternative Peer Review Policies. By Dr. Smart McSmartface

[The page looks like a photograph of a scholarly essay on a desk. In the background a computer keyboard is visible. The corner of an academic book is obscuring part of the text. A pencil is resting on the page. There are pencil annotations in the margins that include question marks, “look this up,” “WTF?” and “HELP!”]

In the intricate latticework of academic production, the hegemonic paradigm of traditional peer review operates as a disciplinary apparatus, perpetuating the reproduction of epistemic hierarchies. This mechanism, ensconced within the superstructural apparatus of the neoliberal academy, enacts a form of symbolic violence through the ostensibly impartial evaluation of scholarly labour. Consequently, it becomes imperative to interrogate and deconstruct this hegemonic process, advocating for the sublation of traditional peer review through the implementation of alternative policies. Alternative peer review, conceptualized through a post-structuralist lens, engenders a polyphonic multiplicity wherein the monologic discourse of conventional evaluation is supplanted by a heteroglossic interplay of diverse epistemic voices. This approach disrupts the hierarchical stratifications entrenched within the academy, facilitating a democratization of knowledge production that aligns with the Marxian critique of alienated labor. By fostering an inclusive dialogical process, alternative peer review undermines the fetishization of academic capital, reconceptualizing scholarly evaluation as a collaborative praxis rather than a commodified transaction. The Derridean notion of différance elucidates the deferred nature of meaning within the peer review process, highlighting the contingency and interpretative plurality inherent in scholarly assessments. Alternative policies, by embracing this différance, cultivate a reflexive criticality that resists the teleological closure imposed by traditional review mechanisms. In doing so, they instantiate a rhizomatic network of intellectual exchange, wherein the decentered subjectivities of reviewers and authors coalesce in a dynamic, non-hierarchical assemblage. Moreover, the Foucauldian dispositif of power-knowledge relations underscores the insidious ways in which conventional peer review perpetuates dominant epistemic regimes, marginalizing subaltern knowledges and reinforcing existing power structures. Alternative peer review policies, by contrast, seek to dismantle these power asymmetries, enabling the emergence of counter-hegemonic discourses that challenge the orthodoxy of the status quo. This emancipatory potential resonates with Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual, fostering a scholarly milieu that is attuned to the transformative praxis of critique. In this regard, the praxis of open peer review, wherein the identities of reviewers and authors are disclosed, epitomizes a radical transparency that subverts the opacity of traditional evaluation processes. This mode of peer review aligns with the ethical imperative of accountability, engendering a reciprocal dialogue that enhances the rigor and credibility of scholarly work. Furthermore, the incorporation of diverse evaluative criteria, including qualitative and community-based assessments, broadens the epistemic horizons of peer review, accommodating a plurality of methodological approaches and disciplinary perspectives. Ultimately, the defense of alternative peer review policies necessitates a dialectical engagement with the ideological underpinnings of academic evaluation. By deconstructing the reified norms of traditional peer review, alternative policies advocate for a more equitable and inclusive academic landscape, one that is attuned to the emancipatory ethos of critical theory. In this way, they preserve the radical potential of scholarly critique, fostering a collaborative intellectual community committed to the pursuit of knowledge as a collective, transformative endeavor… (article continued page 94)

GO TO PAGE 18

Page 8:

What is a H-Index?

[The page is styled like a question for the television show “Who Wants to be a Millionaire.” The four options each appear in pointed rectangles.]

$1 MILLION

A: The number of H’s that appear in your name (Hannah’s H-index is either 2 or 0 depending on how you pronounce it!)

B: Your Height (Ian’s H-Index is 196!)

C: A measure of Happiness calculated by taking the number of faculty at your institution and dividing by the number of papers published at your rival institution (Lori’s H-index is π!)

D: The number of people in academic who Hate you: the more people who hate you, the more successful you are (Lori, Ian & Hannah’s combined H-index is 42069!)

Go back to page 6!

Pages 9 and 10:

Please enter the maze based on the page you came from!

[Pages 9 and 10 are a single full spread featuring a complex circular maze. In the centre of the maze is the agonized face from the zine’s cover with the word “PERISH” above it. The maze is surrounded by arrows advising you where to enter the maze depending on what page you came from. It is important to note that the maze is not winnable. The maze is also surrounded by images drawn from elsewhere in the zine, including (clockwise from the top): Navi from Zelda, a hand-drawn sheep, a stylized penguin profile in a circle, a bag of ruffle potato chips that reads “Salty”, a nude person climbing out a window, a single rollerskate and a shark in a mortarboard. The text below is also clockwise from the top.]

[Arrow in] Enter here if you came from page 18 or 15.

[Arrow in] Enter here if you came from page 12.

[Ladder]: You quit your job, sell your house and go backpacking around southeast Asia, hanging out in hostels and attempting to impress 19-year-old geeky Europeans with the fact that you were once a professor.

[Arrow in] Enter here if you came from page 17.

[Arrow out] Way out!! Go to last page

[Arrow in] Enter here if you came from page 6 or 16

[Ladder] Your “retirement community” is a prestigious one, with many illustrious intellectuals spending their twilight years there. You decide to write an article about the home and its great minds. It gets sent to review. You wait. You get older. You wait some more…

[Arrow in] Enter here if you came from page 8.

[Arrow in] Enter here if you came from page 13.

[Ladder] There is a revolt amongst your journal’s editorial board. The board has slowly been taken over by people who use the glamour of your edgy journal to enhance their otherwise standard prestige-chasing career. You find yourself removed from anything to do with the journal you helped found all those years ago.

Page 11:

Prestigious U

[The page is styled like an email, with the sender and time at the top and reply options at the bottom. There are several hand-drawn doodles and additions around the margins.]

From: Prestigious U

To me.

7:32 AM (2 hours ago)

It's been a few years since founding your journal. It is now highly ranked. Congratulations! [a hand-drawn celebration emoji wearing a party hat and blowing a noise-maker]

One day you receive an email from the head of a selection committee at a really, really, really prestigious university. [Hand-written: (Illustrious U of High Wank Rank)]

It seems that someone they just hired had claimed to have one more peer reviewed publication than they actually did. It turns out they had listed a photo essay they published in your journal under the ‘peer reviewed publications’ section of their CV.

The decision to hire this scholar had been a close call. 420 people had applied for the position. But the chosen candidate’s impressive record of 69 publications every year for a decade gave them a strong advantage.

The selection committee head is all in a tizzy, threatening to “expose” your journal as not only having dubious standards but also facilitating scholarly misconduct.

GO TO NEXT PAGE

[Response options in bubbles: Reply, Reply All, Forward, Smile Emoji]

Page 12:

What do you tell them?

[The page is styled like the automatic response prompts on an email interface. The three rounded rectangles containing the three response options are surrounded by hand-drawn doodles of flowers, flames, and trees.]

That piece is clearly marked as non-reviewed. Maybe you should have double-

checked the candidate’s references before making them an offer. (Go to page 9)

I’m so sorry for the confusion but I can direct you to our journal’s disclaimer page on which we explain that, legally, none of this is our problem. (Go to page 10)

Let me tell you a few things about the history of peer review… (Go to page 17)

Page 13:

An apology from the Dog End of a Poorly Attended Academic Event Reception

[The page is a transcript of a phone call with the image of a phone handset and a coiled handset cord in the background.]

“RING! RING!” Hey, hi, it's… erm, well, it's me. Yup.  I know it's been a while since we talked, sorry for calling out of the blue, but there’s something I’ve been needing to say for a long time. And... well, I just got back from work… yes, yes, I am, but just a little, there was free wine so… no no, of course not… yes, they’re fine, asleep I think… no please, just listen a moment…

[Sighs deeply] Wow. This is more nerve wracking than speaking at conferences. I’ve been thinking a lot lately. About you, about me, about everything that happened between us. And I realized... I never really apologized. I mean, I said the words, but I don’t think I ever laid it out. So here I am, trying to do that. I know I hurt you. I know that my constant prioritization of my work over our relationship drove a wedge between us that eventually became insurmountable. I was so consumed with my career, with climbing the academic ladder, I was all ‘up, up, up the ziggurat, lickety-split’, and I forgot to nurture the most important part of my life – you… no no, I’m not, yes, I’m clothed, of course I’ll tell them, please, just let me get it out… I wrote some notes of what I wanted to say.

Remember those nights you’d stay up waiting for me to come home from work so we could binge watch Red Dwarf, but I just told myself ‘one more email’ and sent 50? Or those weekends when I’d promise we’d go rollerskating, but I’d cancel last minute because I just got the reviews for an article in? I see now, with the benefit of cheap wine-induced melancholy-tinged hindsight, how those broken promises and missed moments might have added up. Each broken promise was another brick in the wall between us, stacking up like the citation count of a phantom article that I wish I’d written.

[Sighs deeper than the Mariana Trench] I remember the day you left. I came home late again, and you were packing your bags. You didn’t yell, didn’t accuse. You just looked at me with those sad eyes, and said, "I can’t do this anymore." It was like a punch to the gut, but even then, I was too wrapped up in my own world to fully grasp what was happening. I told myself you’d come back, that you just needed time. But deep down, I knew. I knew I had pushed you away for good. In the years since, I’ve had a lot of time to reflect. I’ve seen colleagues lose their families, their relationships, impregnate PhD students. And I see myself in them. I see the same mistakes, the same misplaced priorities. And every time, I think of you. Of us. Of what we could have been if I had just taken a step back and realized what truly mattered. I’m not saying all of this to excuse my behavior. There’s no excuse for neglecting the person you love. I’m saying it because I need you to know that I’m truly sorry.

[Sighs deeper than the singer of 2 Unlimited promised to go when she said ‘no valley too deep’ in the 90’s euro banger No Limits] I don’t expect anything from this call. I don’t expect forgiveness or reconciliation. I just needed to tell you that I see now. I see the pain I caused, and I carry that with me every day. You deserved better, and I failed to give you that. If there’s one thing I’ve learned through all of this, it’s that success is meaningless if you have no one to share it with. I’ve achieved many things in my career, but they all feel hollow without you. I missed out on so much – not just the milestones, but the everyday moments that make life worth living. The morning coffees, the shared laughter, the quiet evenings playing Mice and Mystics. I took all of that for granted, and I’m so sorry.

[sound of 4th wall crumbling] … Sorry?! What’s that you say? I should go to page 9? Bit of a strange request… but, er, okay…

Page 14:

Dr. Promising “Young” Scholar

[The page is styled like a CV. In the upper right hand corner is an image of the promising young scholar, shown as the stylized profile view of a penguin.]

EDUCATION

2015-2019 A-Way Levels Sweet Valley High

2019-2099 PhD Phrenologyilosophy Bitter Valley U.

Your journal marks a radical departure from the journals that came before. It places traditional articles, podcast episodes, videos, photo essays, graphic and illustrated contributions and other formats side-by-side. It quickly becomes a go-to venue for early career scholars eager to experiment with the mediums in which they publish their scholarship. Working with your editorial team, you develop an open peer review process that adapts to the medium of the submission. It takes more time and effort to track down appropriate reviewers. But the fact that the review is both creative and open, and therefore the reviewers get credit, means your rejection rate is pretty low.

Three years later, you get an email from one of your earliest published authors. They were a PhD student working in graphic ethnography. You worked closely with this young scholar to get their work ready for review and then mentored them through the revision process. You remember that around that time your marriage had been on thin ice. The extra hours you stayed late at the office talking this inexperienced author through their revisions may have been the tipping point into your divorce.

Well, you think to yourself, at least I made a difference in a promising young scholar’s career, and you click open their email…

They’re writing to tell you that they’ve just been rejected for a major grant in their field because they didn’t have a strong enough record of peer reviewed publications. The jury had specifically noted that their publication in your journal didn’t count, because the review hadn’t been “double blind” and thus did not meet the gold standard of scholarship. The email is admonishing: it was your responsibility, as the editor, to make it clear to all contributors what was at stake in participating in an open peer review process. Because of you, their career is ruined!

Turn to the next page.

Page 15:

Do you:

[The page is hand-written by someone’s kid and then scanned. There is a dark streak across the page, a remnant of the scanning process.]

A) Call your ex-spouse and leave a 17 minute voicemail. (Go to page 13)

B) Write an article about it. (Go to page 7)

C) Nothing. Since when do you read, let alone answer, your emails? (Go to page 9)

Page 16: An account of the time you SHOT DOWN your RIVAL at a CONFERENCE!

[The page is hand-drawn 9 panel comic with a header featuring the title and an image of a plane taking off.]

[Panel 1 depicts a flight tracker from an in-flight entertainment system. The tracker shows the plane flying over Europe; Berlin and Madrid are both marked. It reads: Distance to Destination 24,358 km.]

[Panel 2 depicts a tray table with a small glass of water and an open notebook. The notebook is open to a page that reads “Paper Ideas” with four bullet points, all empty.]

[Panel 3 depicts a large hotel with a sign reading “Marinott.” In the foreground are the cut off images of strike pickets that read “Local 69 ON STRIKE”.]

[Panel 4 depicts a top-down view of a left hand holding a pencil writing on the previously blank notebook page. Under the first bullet point it now says “critique of”. A cup of coffee is visible in the corner. A speech bubble coming from some outside the panel reads “How’s the coffee?”]

[Panel 5 depicts a paper cup of coffee viewed from the top. Beneath it, a speech bubble reads “It tastes like mud.”]

[Panel 6 depicts a slideshow presentation with a hand gesturing to the text on the slide. The slide reads “H-index = ∞.” A speech bubble coming from the person presenting reads “As you can see, I have perfected academic and can say with authority that it means nothing.”]

[Panel 7 depicts a nude person with short hair climbing out a window. The text reads “And with that, your rival stripped naked and climbed out the window…”]

[Panel 8 depicts a close up of a person with long hair taking a sip from a paper cup of coffee. A thought bubble above them reads “This is my chance.” A speech bubble coming from them reads “I didn’t know the H stood for “hot take.” The words HA HA HA are spelled out in the background to indicate audience laughter.]

[Panel 9 depicts the same notebook page. “Paper ideas” and “critique of” have been crossed out. Beneath is written “TO DO: start scheduling crying breaks at work”. The laughter is still visible in the background.]

GO TO PAGE 9

Page 17:

[The page is styled like a piece of paper emerging from a hand-drawn typewriter. The text is in Courier. There are hand-drawn ruffled potato chips falling down the left side of the page, and a photograph of an open back of chips superimposed over the typewriter at the bottom of the page.]

You launch into an explanation of the complex history of peer review, reminding the head of the selection committee that recent scholarship [insert citations] demonstrates that peer review is, in fact, extremely bad at finding errors. And it has a tendency to reinforce the peer reviewers’ existing biases based on either their knowledge of the anonymized author or their belief that they can identify the anonymized author. You’re halfway through describing your journal’s editorial policy when you start to cry into the muffin-crumb-laden typewriter (yes, you use a typewriter, so what?!). It’s been years of having the same argument with people who were unwilling to apply even a morsel of critical thinking when examining their own practices. ‘What was this all for?!’ you scream into the void as you begin stress eating a packet of salt and vinegar crisps from the supply in your desk drawer.

Turn to page 9.

Page 18:

What happened to the article you wrote??

[The page is styled like the submission portal for an online journal. There is some hand-drawn annotation. The title is in bold letters with a hand-drawn spiky speech bubble around it.]

This journal operates on double anonymous peer review. You will need to provide two copies of your manuscript. One copy should be the full manuscript with author details. The other copy should be an anonymized version of your manuscript that will be sent to reviewers during peer review. More information about peer review and anonymization can be found here.

[Within a large rectangle] Drag your sorry ass research paper here or [Button] Choose Files to Upload

You spend the next 8 months writing the article, and an additional 18 months waiting for the peer review.\* The reviewer asks for a lot of additional citations, suggests you’re dumb, and makes you cry. It gets published in a paper-based journal, whose distribution model is mailing copies out to its 39 subscribers. Only one person ever cites it, but it’s clear they cited it without reading it. You realize you’ve never really done anything meaningful with your life outside of roller skating.

Turn to page 9.

[hand-written annotation] \* Also you have to sign up for a new “web submission portal.” [frowny face]

Back Cover:

Wish You Were Here

[The page is styled like a postcard. There is an image of a tropical beach with a large palm tree. In the upper right hand corner is a vintage 1 cent Canadian stamp depicting a young Princess Elizabeth with sunglasses superimposed on her face. The text “Wish You Were Here” is written in large bubbly white letters superimposed over the water. There is a message written in a hand-writing-style font.”

Congratulations!

You’ve created a journal that is both radical and well-respected. Your peer review process is open and transparent while still being widely recognized as rigorous. While continuing to support this field-defining intervention, you maintain a healthy work-life balance and spend plenty of time with your loved ones!

# **Publishing as Praxis: A Manifesto**

Dr. Roopa Vasudevan

Cover:

[Front cover background image: an image of clouds in the sky, rendered in low-resolution bitmap patterns and printed in pink ink.]

Publishing as Praxis:

A Manifesto

Dr. Roopa Vasudevan

Assistant Professor

Department of Art

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Produced for

DIY Methods

a zine conference hosted by the

Low-Carbon Research Methods Group

Fall 2024

Pages 2-3:

[background image: a texture of photocopied paper, rendered in low-resolution bitmap patterns and printed in teal ink.]

Introduction

“Publishing as Practice” is a course exploring self-publishing as both an art form and a political statement. I developed the class based on my own creative work in artistic self-publishing, and taught it for the first time in Spring 2023 in the Art Department at the University of Massachusetts Amherst to a mixed group of graduate (MFA) and undergraduate students. The class looks at the affordances of published work—zines, books, websites—as means for creating unique artistic experiences, both within and outside of more traditional contexts such as galleries and museums. We engage with publishing as both a formal innovation for experiencing art, as well as a way of seizing the means of production to uplift and share perspectives that may otherwise struggle to find reach and audience. The class approaches publishing as a means of building community and providing space for important (and often marginalized) discussions, expression, and communication.

“Publishing as Praxis: A Manifesto” offers four lessons I have learned from teaching this course in a studio art setting, and offers ways to translate them to qualitative academic research methods. Drawing on my interdisciplinary and hybrid background—as a contemporary artist who is also a social science researcher with a PhD in Communication—I trace parallels between DIY publishing (which, in the context of the class, includes zines, limited run artist’s books, and hand-coded websites) and the development of methodological design and strategy.

[image: a photo of an artist's book produced by my class. A spiral bound book laid flat, with collaged hand drawings and text on both pages.]

[image: a photo of zines produced by my class. Eight zines, each of which was created by folding a single sheet of paper, lie on a table.]

[Caption for images: Student work from “Publishing as Practice”, S24.]

The lessons I have learned from teaching this course, and from my own work in artistic self-publishing and creative methods more broadly, offers a new perspective on how researchers might approach their methods. Taking inspiration from the DIY, grassroots efforts of independent publishers, this zine advocates for a more independent approach to research, working around, against, or between the often rigid standards of academia to produce work that offers alternate perspectives to the questions we ask and a deeper commitment to community-engaged scholarly practice. Working in self-publishing has also been a reminder that we, as researchers, cannot default to what has always been standard. Our methods need to be flexible, adapting with every new project, and willing to accept deviations from traditional protocols. Independent artistic publishing offers a new way to think about what research could look like if we begin to refuse academic gatekeeping, and start to set the rules for ourselves.

Colophon

Risograph printed at Looky Here, a community arts space in Greenfield, Massachusetts, USA, and hand-bound by the artist. Printed on recycled paper sourced from French Paper (Niles, Michigan, USA). All background images via Pexels. First edition of 30.

Typeset in Times Dot and Times New Roman.

Pages 4-5:

[background image for p. 4-5: a close-up of ripped up magazines and newspapers collaged together, rendered in low-resolution bitmap patterns and printed in pink ink.]

Lesson #1:

Don’t Be Precious.

Among the students in the class, as well as internally in my own work and practice, the number one obstacle to completing work is a crushing adherence to perfectionism. Particularly during the zine unit—in which students had a little under two weeks to conceptualize and produce a zine from start to finish—I heard repeated comments about how the rapid pace and urgent production timeline was at total odds with the way they usually worked. They felt deep discomfort with submitting something that they considered to be “imperfect”, and wanted more time to go back, revise, and change the tiniest of details.

Their conversations reminded me of the struggles I faced as a PhD candidate, plodding through the dissertation process and, at times, letting my own worries about producing the “perfect” research get in the way of submitting my methods protocol to the Institutional Review Board or sending a draft chapter to my advisor. I often spent more time agonizing over how not to produce “bad” work than simply sitting down and getting it done.

The thing about both art and qualitative research, though, is that there is always room for adjustment. As many have outlined, working with people in social science research necessitates adaptability, patience, and frequent reflexive reconsideration of what in our approach is working—along with what isn’t. There is no such thing as the “perfect” methodological strategy, just as there is no such thing as the “perfect” creative output. Someone who is engaged with and cares deeply about the thing they are studying or making will likely always find places, no matter how small, where they could have done a better job, thought of things differently, or executed in an alternate way.

And so, when my students would worry about their work being imperfect, or would get too precious about their ideas, I would tell them to embrace the urgency and rapid-fire approach that zinemakers have taken since the development of the form. What drove these artists was the feeling of needing to get their words into the world as quickly as possible—to get out of their own heads, find community, and start the conversation now. Similarly, waiting for things to be perfect in a research context—the perfect protocol, the perfect number of interviews, the perfect draft—can hamstring the process by preventing what is truly important about what we do: spurring dialogue, debate, and the production of new ideas. None of that can happen if we sit on our work, worrying that it’s not good enough and obsessing over the smallest of details.

References & Resources

Tharp, Twyla (2006). The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It For Life. Simon & Schuster.

Triggs, Teal (2006). Scissors and Glue: Punk Fanzines and the Creation of a DIY Aesthetic. Journal of Design History, 19(1), pp. 69-83.

Joseph, Branden W. & Sawyer, Drew (2024). Copy Machine Manifestos: Artists Who Make Zines [exhibition catalog]. Phaidon Press.

Pages 6-7:

[background image for p. 6-7: a photo of raised hands against a brightly lit concert stage, rendered in low-resolution bitmap patterns and printed in teal ink.]

Lesson #2:

Know Your Audience.

The thematic throughline of the “Publishing as Practice” course was the ability of artistic self-publishing to center and reach people who have traditionally been ignored or discounted by larger institutions. In the first class, after reading a selection from Patricia Hill Collins’ seminal Black Feminist Thought (1990), we discussed how the traditional publishing process works—the gauntlet of editors, endless cycles of review, and the avalanche of rejections from presses—and, rather than accepting it as a means of quality control, viewed it instead as a form of gatekeeping. Unconventional or challenging works have a steeper climb in this environment, which often rewards predictability, familiarity, and the perpetuation of established norms and structures. But, building on Collins’ arguments, traditional publishing is not the only place in which knowledge and culture is produced; sometimes it’s simply a matter of looking to people and groups that, in the absence of wider intellectual acceptance, are theorizing, discovering, and building within, about, and for their own communities.

A question that I often ask of my students, particularly in art and design contexts, is: “Who is your ideal audience?” I sometimes get pushback on this, with students arguing that they want their work to reach a general population. But while we all harbor dreams of our work receiving universal acclaim, trying to appeal to everyone will, more often than not, dilute the power and impact of what you make. You simply cannot speak to everybody; the most effective and thought provoking projects manage to reach a broader audience through building resonance with specific experiences, by extension augmenting the viewer’s worldview beyond what they already know.

This, I have found, goes for research too. It is tempting to think of broad generalizability as the end goal, particularly in social science fields—the positivist legacy of the disciplines haunts us no matter how removed we are from it. But using specific circumstances to make larger arguments often ends up reducing the experiences of people and communities, erasing the nuance, detail, and idiosyncrasies that make them so interesting and unique in the first place. As I have learned more about what it means to do qualitative research, I increasingly resist calls to use my work to make generalized arguments. My work is meant to uplift those who participate in it with me; any wider application of my findings is just icing on the cake.

We can learn from the zinesters and independent musicians of the late twentieth century, whose work was resolutely for and by their communities—and who, in many cases, resisted pressure to broaden their reach by commercializing or toning down their messaging, even as they reached more and more people outside of that immediate group. While their resistance to scale and “selling out” often spelled trouble for the work’s longevity in the moment, these artists have often found lasting impact as others find and feel their messages in deep ways. Speak to the people who your work is really for; more often than not, you’ll find resonance in larger circles than you anticipated.

References & Resources

Collins, Patricia Hill (1990). Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment. Routledge.

Azerrad, Michael (2001). Our Band Could Be Your Life: Scenes From the American Indie Underground. Back Bay Books.

Liberty, Megan N. (2020). Printed Matter. The Brooklyn Rail.

Pages 8-9:

[background image for p. 8-9: a photo of silhouettes of birds flying, rendered in low-resolution bitmap patterns and printed in pink ink.]

Lesson #3:

Nothing is a Solo Practice.

In academia, the importance of the “solo-authored” or “first-authored” paper cannot be overstated. Our practices are constructed on the myth of individual genius, in which specific people are given credit for developing and popularizing theories and approaches to research—research which, in reality, stands on the shoulders of the many academics who came before or worked alongside these scholars. This also extends into creative fields, which, as Kondo (2018) has eloquently argued, have been positioned as “the aesthetic sublime, floating above mundane social and economic structures” (p. 57). Although there are often nods to collective action and solidarity, particularly in this moment of political strife and fractured belief systems, the current art economy still traditionally holds up select individuals as responsible for the most groundbreaking and paradigm shifting ideas of our time.

In reality, however, nothing is entirely completed on one’s own. Becker (1982) offered a theorization of interlinking “art worlds”, which are constructed of the relationships, conventions, and infrastructures that enable artists and artworks to function in society—a notion that Bowker and Star (2000) used to build their influential work on classification and categorization, and which has been echoed by scholars using a methodological and theoretical focus on infrastructure and relationality. And qualitative researchers in a broad range of disciplines have continually emphasized the importance of building trust with participant communities and maintaining a deep understanding of how one’s positionality as a researcher influences and impacts the interlocutors, the research site, and the findings derived from the work.

It turns out that collaboration, cooperation, and relationship building are key to making both research and art practice work effectively. In the “Publishing as Practice” course, the major project of the semester was specifically designed as a class-wide collaborative effort—we all worked together, as one consensus-driven unit, to create an artist’s book from start to finish, including deciding on a theme, selecting paper and binding, picking typefaces and colors, and beyond. The process was frustrating and, at times, seemed to drag on when people had conflicting ideas or were reluctant to step up and take the lead on something. But ultimately we produced a work that felt true to each and every person that was in that room, and which allowed for everyone’s voice to come together in service of something greater than we could each do on our own.

Perhaps reimagining what “authorship” entails—especially in research—offers new roads to creating knowledge that upends the hierarchies of power in which it is mired now. No one ever works in a silo; rather than pretending that individual researchers are responsible for all of the breakthroughs we see happen in our fields, embracing multiplicity might lead us towards true equity and solidarity in academia.

References & Resources

Press Press & the Institute for Expanded Research (2020). Toolkit for Cooperative, Collective, & Collaborative Cultural Work. Press Press (independently published).

Soulellis, Paul (June 2020). Urgentcraft. Self-published online.

Becker, Howard (1982). Art Worlds. University of California Press.

Kondo, Dorinne (2018). Worldmaking: Race, Performance, and the Work of Creativity. Duke University Press.

Vasudevan, Roopa (2022). Solidarity, Reciprocity, Distribution. Just Tech (Social Science Research Council).

Pages 10-11:

[background image for p. 10-11: a close-up photo of stacks of newspapers, rendered in low-resolution bitmap patterns and printed in teal ink.]

Lesson #4:

Use the Resources You Have.

It is often easy to get discouraged in self-publishing because of how expensive everything seems to be. Even a low-volume run of zines or books can cost hundreds or thousands of dollars if you’re using high-end, specialty printing processes; and, as my students heard from our range of guest speakers over the semester, financial sustainability is a major obstacle to keeping an independent imprint or publishing practice running over multiple years.

Research can also get expensive. In the United States, academics are overwhelmingly reliant on funding from universities, government institutions, and private philanthropy in order to complete their work. Those embedding or working with people or communities need to consider myriad costs and logistical needs in order to conduct their work appropriately and ethically. And funding isn’t the only thing that keeps research from happening; as we have seen over and over again, uncontrollable circumstances—geopolitical conflict, extreme weather events spurred by climate change, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020—have ways of felling the best-laid plans and crushing the most carefully designed methodologies.

A lack of money or resources can certainly impede project development, particularly if you are rigidly tied to a specific vision or trajectory; if you’re looking to produce a run of 1000 books using archival paper and holographic covers, high expenses are probably unavoidable. But with a little flexibility, you can still put out a publication retaining the core of what you wanted to make even if you can’t access what you originally wanted; as Oakley (2023) writes, “it often doesn’t take much money to make incredible work… Shoot for the stars with your ideas, visions and future plans but not with your production budgets” (p. 21). If you don’t have access to a risograph printer, use the photocopier at the library. Stapling zines yourself can be a cheaper alternative to paying for fancy binding. If you aren’t yet plugged into a network of bookstores, the Internet can be a way to quickly distribute your work independently; this spring I nearly sold out a run of zines solely via posting on social media, without partnering with any stores or distributors at all.

The most prolific DIY publishers harness the resources they can access to get their work out into the world. When one route proves to be cost prohibitive, they pivot and use what they have rather than letting the project grind to a total halt. Perhaps researchers can benefit from this approach as well. In fact, my doctoral dissertation, originally planned for in-person interviews and participant observation, shifted to a mostly online approach after Covid—and this quick maneuver enabled me to stay on the course to finish the degree according to my original timeline. Rather than letting a lack of funding or changing circumstances stymie the project as a whole, we can learn to re-strategize on the fly, think about what we have in our immediate surroundings, and use these things to help facilitate the most important parts of what we are trying to accomplish.

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Back cover:

[Back cover background image: an image of clouds in the sky, rendered in low-resolution bitmap patterns and printed in pink ink.]

Artist Bio

Roopa Vasudevan is a South Asian-American new media artist, computer programmer, and scholar based in Western Massachusetts, who investigates default technical practices and protocols, and how they intersect with larger social and economic power structures. Her work has been exhibited and featured by press outlets internationally, and she has demonstrated a particular and steadfast commitment to artist-led organizations throughout her career. She is a 2024 Processing Foundation Fellow; a 2020 Eyebeam Rapid Response for a Better Digital Future Fellow; a community member at NEW INC, the art and technology incubator at the New Museum (New York), where she was a member of the Art & Code track (in partnership with Rhizome) between 2021 and 2023; and a co-investigator on the Data Fluencies Project, an international research team funded by the Mellon Foundation. Her writing can be seen in venues as varied as New Media & Society, Media-N: The Journal of the New Media Caucus, the Brooklyn Rail, and the Social Science Research Council’s “Just Tech” platform, alongside many independent, small-press, and bespoke publications. Roopa received her PhD in Communication from the University of Pennsylvania in 2023, and an MPS from the Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP) at NYU in 2013. She is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. https://roopavasudevan.com

# **Research TL;DR: Where we make science short and sweet <3**

Pierre Depaz

Cover:

Research TL;DR

Where we make science short and sweet <3

Page 2:

Welcome to a collection of TL;DRs (Too Long; Didn't Read) for scientific research. Why should I care? Read on page 3!

Too busy to read full papers? Too funky to settle for the abstracts? Too human to ask a GPT to summarize it for you? Check out some real-life TL;DRs on page 11!

Tired of the impersonal tone, the repetitive style and the performance of seriousness? Check out our how-to guide on page 17!

Page 3:

Abstracts vs. TL;DR

Style in science, science in style

How do we summarize lengthy pieces of writing? Who are we summarizing for, and what should we summarize? How does technical medium and syntactic style play a role in such summarizing?

Page 4:

The Abstract

Scientific research is hardly separable from scientific communication. From the circulation of Galileo’s encrypted manuscripts to the Berlin Declaration on Open Access, the question of how to disseminate scientific writing across time, space and publics has remained a central concern of people working in and around academia.

In the middle of questions of propagation, attribution, intellectual property, sharing and access, the abstract is one device to address this concern. As a concise representation of a longer piece of writing, it is one of the main entrypoints into a work and, more often than not, the only part of the research which is actually read, as opposed to the skimming of a full text. It facilitates circulation through compression

Historically, the abstract appears around the same time as scientific production starts to increase (i.e. the turn of the 19th century) and as scientific societies start to review, organize and publish their peers’ productions. First used as convenient records of academic meetings during which scientists presented their works, then used as a means to gain access to, and discuss, research written in a foreign language, these abstracts were quickly made available to the broader public under the name of proceedings.

There are a few things we can excavate from the historical roots of abstracts: they operate as means of compression (faced with quantity, it’s better to have smaller, denser chunks), they were primarily used to translate publications in a foreign language (faced with estrangeness, it’s easier translate a shorter text), and they aim at broadening the potential audience (experts are not the only ones interested in the production and reception of new knowledge).

In the 20th century, the abstract continued to perform as a shortcut to knowledge, following the ever-increasing industrial production of scientific material. Yet, its audience shifted slightly. Their writers focused on an academic readership, and so publications steered away from the (relatively) general (educated) public, and were subjected to a certain homogeneization, embracing the same academic style of writing of the papers they abstracted.

Page 5:

Today, abstracts are an integral part of the work they represent, written by the same authors, for the same audience, and even subject to the same constraints imposed by publishers on circulation—leading, for instance, to the founding of an initiative for open abstracts. Originally supposed to act as an interface, a stand-in for a longer text, and aimed at broadening an audience, the abstract became an integral aspect of the paper they were supposed to provide a bridge to: circulating in the same circles, abstracts stuck to their purpose as a mediator from scientists to scientists.

So these two things, the increase in the scale of scientific publishing and the consolidation of publishing monopolies, seem to have encouraged formal standardization (i.e. blankly andboring). Nowadays, abstracts’ structure can be broadly divided into two categories: informative (i.e. exhaustive) and descriptive (i.e. superficial), while their syntactic style did not depart from the academic linguo which characterizes the larger field. There is as little diversity in how abstracts are written as in their intended audiences.

At the same time, the desire to further foster knowledge transfer is stronger than ever. Not in small part since the material conditions of scientific communication changed drastically with the popularization of the World Wide Web (whose creator, Tim Berners-Lee, designed it to be able to access and share scientific papers himself!). The overload of information that followed the adoption of personal digital communication networks is both an opportunity and a challenge in spread scientific thought. And yet, scientific papers would not be the only genre of written content in need of compression.

Page 6:

The TL;DR

The context is the attention economy: the accelerated circulation of information — scientific, journalistic, vernacular, etc. — which creates a competition for the (limited) focus of the receiver. Faced with this, people beyond academia have also come up with techniques to best represent a long chunk of written content in the most condensed manner. After the headline, the blurb, or the elevator pitch, the tl;dr (too long; didn’t read) was first spotted online around 2002.

Written in response to a lengthy review of a video game (btw, a review is already an interface to a lengthy piece, and the scientific equivalent might be a book review), one of the people reading this only made clear the relation between the format of the piece (too long) and the resulting behaviour of the audience (didn’t read). Such complaint, becoming particularly widespread across the budding social media sphere, became a widespread practice.

Originally, the tl;dr would be an answer to a post, but it eventually moved to being a part of the piece itself, moving from one paticipant in the discursive exchange to the other. Integrated to the original piece itself, it seems that the authors anticipated the readers’ reactions. Located either at the beginning or at the end of the text, a tl;dr acts as a nutshell, a bottom line, a one-liner, if not a punch line! It aims at compensating the perceived dreariness of long-form, the meandering sentences, the mass of text scrolling across a screen, drowning the point of the message. It is the clearest and most honest kind of shortcuts. In this sense, it maintains a slightly different relationship with the main text than an abstract.

On one side, the abstract is about persuading the reader to get to the main text. It has this transitive role, through which the abstract is given value: either it leads to engaging with the content which it abstracts, or its contents are deemed uninteresting. Few readers would delve into a research paper just because the form of its abstract is engaging. On the other side, the tl;dr can stand by itself, and replace the underlying text altogether. Its value can be assessed despite the value of the underlying content. The tl;dr focuses on the fact that, if it is the only thing that will be read, it might as well be good! And so it rushes to get the point across in the little amount of time and interest that is given to it by the reader. There is a [cont.]

Page 7:

spontaneity and urgency in the tl;dr which is hard to find in the abstract; it’s about respect for other people’s time, rather than respect for convention.

This spontaneity is hard to spot in the professional convcentions imposed on the abstract, which answers to a more explicit style exercise. There are also differences in audiences. For the abstract, this audience is made up of academic peers: people who are similar to the reader for professional reasons. For the tl;dr, the audience is still made up of peers, but of a different kind: they are people who are similar to the reader in the sense that there is too much to read and too little time. These two kinds of audiences played a different role in the development of each of those textual interface mechanisms: the abstract's first appearance was unrelated to the author, while the tl;dr appeared as a direct complaint to the author. Perhaps due to such straight remark, it is interesting to notice that the tl;dr does not really care about adhering to the style of the original text (if there ever was one).

Page 8:

The styles of communication

How we say things matters for capturing the attention of readers (see: clickbait).

For instance, you can change the content without changing the form, reducing the amount of information in an abstract without changing the form (keeping with the academic voice). Another way would be to change the form in order to communicate a consistent content (switching from the academic voice to, e.g., a pedagogical voice). Yet another way is to reduce both the content and choose a different form, condensing and rephrasing in a different voice.

This seems like an obvious thing to say, but it isn’t exactly clear the extent to which a change in form affect what is being understood. However, it does affect the circulation of the content(as illustrated by countless waves of A/B testing)! The way things sound, or the kind of topic they gravitate around, makes them more memorable and more shareable. In our case, the example of lolmythesis, a one-line summary of theses across the world, makes the case for the memetic value of shortening and rephrasing research.

In any case, we can start from the fact that abstracting is not the only approach to interfacing a dense, if not always complex, scientific work. The abstract compresses knowledge from the rest of the paper, but barely changes its form. In doing so, it sidesteps the fact that it might actually be this kind of form which is a barrier to entry in the first place! It also removes it from contextualized existence, assuming that the academic context in which it circulates is the only context, and so forgets that any address involves an addressee, whom might or might not share the same interpretative codes (a.k.a. not everyone you're talking to knows what you're talking about). Sticking to a writing style resulting from collective agreement results in a de-personalizing process. The resulting text could have been written by anyone, at any point in time, and about anything, presenting scientific findings as “a view from nowhere”.

Even if style has not been a thoroughly-explored aspect of doing science, it is nonetheless an unavoidable part of human experience: style is how you do something. Just as with politics, having no style is already having a style.

Page 9:

One of the questions of style, is whether it is a individual marker or a collective endeavour, whether it is about personal, idiosyncratic expression or collective, standardized communication. But this does not need to be so binary. We can also take the perspective of style as reconciling the individual with the collective. By clearly acknowledging a style effect, this “irreductible superfluous” which accompanies any human creation and which we can never get rid of, we also recognize the subjectivities involved in the creation of scientific outputs (researchers are human too!). In so doing, it’s also acknowledging the existence of a desynchronized yet, very real reader, another human who's a part of the broader social circle in which a discourse circulates. A style can thus be about a personality addressing a public, rather than a personality isolated from, or submerged into, a group.

Style is “the relation of the lived experience to the structures which objectivize it”. It's the spice within the expected behaviour, the little something which makes it relatable. By doing that, it also carries meaning in itself. Through context and grounding, it shows allegiance to certain things: belonging to a genre, belonging to a value system, and even belonging to a lineage of socio-political histories.

Why isn’t talking about serious things in a banal way considered the proper thing to do (especially in university?)? Or the respectful thing to do? Perhaps because it does imply a shift in values, a loss of reverence for the authority of proper academic writing; yet, it might be overlooked that it also implies a shift in audiences. Lose some, win some, as they say.

Ultimately, then, representing text not as an abstract but as a tl;dr is about leaving behind a strict structure impersonally aimed at a restricted group of peers, about heading into a shameless loose rephrasing because both writers and readers are humans after all.

So where do we go from here? The rest of this publication includes a short guide and a few examples on how to tl;dr a piece of science, preparing it to roam freely across discursive circles.

Page 10:

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Page 11:

TL;DRs

Real-world specimens

Page 12:

computers can make up worlds and sometimes we believe they're real

Basically, the idea was to show that there are some similarities between political science and game design. In both cases, you're setting up rules for people to do stuff. But the plot twist is that, with computer games, the computer also creates a full dynamic simulation of a world (like suburbia in The Sims). And simulations is a special kind of representation: it evolves by itself! And that gives it a special persuasive power.

Pierre Depaz, computer simulations as political manifestos

<https://hal.science/hal-04276949>

Page 13:

the same tech applied to different things is not the same tech

I was curious about the question of whether technology is independent of the social environment in which it exists (like, does it have a life of itself, or is the context stronger?). So I wanted to test the comparison: there's two projects, that use the same kind of tech (a sort of blockchain), but they come from relatively different communities (start-up boys vs. tech hippies). And turns out there is a difference! In this case, the social context affects what kind of entity the technology is applied to (start-up boys apply the blockchain to objects, hippies apply the blockchain to humans). And this, in turn, limits what you can do with the tech.

Pierre Depaz, Critiques protocolaires d'Internet: comparaison des projets IPFS et SecureScuttleButt

<https://hal.science/hal-04421591>

Page 14:

we can argue about something but technology does the thing (and makes the argument pointless)

I was interested in style, particularly in whether its personal (like in arts) or collective (like in sociology). Taking the case of programming, it's a nice in-between: you work alone on collaborative projects. So I was curious how do programmers negotiate which style to use! There's a bunch of different arguments, but the one that I found the most interesting is that there is automated software to make your code in a certain style, and that argument (because it actually does what it says!) is more effective than the others. Made me think of what other kinds of argument software can make.

Pierre Depaz, Discursive Strategies in Style Guides Negotiation on GitHu

<https://hal.science/hal-04366323>

Page15:

programmers are like architects except they have nothing to refer to

This is just a side paper I was writing when I was doing my PhD. Basically it's about the parallels that can be drawn between building software and building buildings (i.e. programmers vs. architects), in terms of knowledge transfer, and in terms of appreciating the nice things they made. The problem with knowledge transfer is that a building is always visible and so you can learn by example. Not so much with code. It was also an attempt to look into the concept of craft a bit more, and how craft is not so much about a thing, but about a way of doing things.

Pierre Depaz, The craft of code

<https://hal.science/hal-04365925>

Page 16:

online political videos really work when you bring them offline

I co-wrote this one with Pauline Donizeau, and we were wondering how activists use social media during the arab spring in Egypt. The cool things we found is that, while social media is good for coordination and bypassing official media (often corrupted lol), the campaigns are most effective when you take these alternative videos countering the official narrative and you project them in the streets! I wonder how it would work now, since a lot more people have smartphones and would just look at the video by themselves, or share it in restricted whatsapp groups. That does say something about the importance of public viewings as political devices, imo.

Pierre Depaz, Pauline Donizeau, L'agit-prop à l'ère 2.0: les campagnes du collectif

Kazeboon dans l’Égypte en Révolution

<https://hal.science/hal-04276991>

Page 17:

Do It Yourself!

How-to write a TL;DR and shine on the internet

Page 18:

Think of the tl;dr as a punchline.

Not subtle, but effective, and memorable. At first, the impact matters more than the subtlety but, if you pay a bit of attention to it, the punchline can become an elegant aphorism, compression a lot of insight into a couple of words.

Here are some tips to keep in mind:

Don't overthink it.

Don’t be afraid to be funny or quirky. People remember it better than long demonstrations.

Remember that you are someone, and that you are talking to someone. It's ok to use personal pronouns (me/you/etc.)

Remember that this someone might be tired. Make things easy for them.

People pay attention when they get why they should pay attention. Be direct and involve what's at stake.

Avoid technical terms.

You can scribble your TL;DRs on the following blank pages, and/or upload them at tldr.science.

Pages 19-20:

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This page intentionally left blank for people to scribble on.

Page 21:

Colophon

Put together by Pierre Depaz for the DIY Research Methods 2024 <https://diymethods.net>, also existing online at <tldr.science>.

This zine has been automatically generated for print from the website thanks to PagedJS <https://pagedjs.org>.

All content CC BY-SA. You can reach me at [pierre@enframed.net](mailto:pierre@enframed.net)

# **Slow-scan Event Archives**

Dawn Walker and Emily Maemura

Inner C=cover:

Slow-scan Event Archives

Slow-scan event archives (c) 2024 Dawn Walker, Emily Maemura.

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Dawn Walker

dc@dcwalker.ca

Emily Maemura

emaemura@illinois.edu

Colophon

Thank yous: Anna Tildlund, Douglas Jarvis, and Karen Knights for offering their time and knowledge on the history of slow-scan. Garry Ing especially and all the previous Our Networks organizers and A/V teams who made each edition of the event possible: Sarah Friend, Benedict Lau, E.L Guerrero, Mauve, Patrick Connolly, Elon Li, Henry Wilkinson, and Yurko.

Typefaces: bianzhidai, VT323, Space Mono, Terminal Grotesque, BC Sans 2.0

Images: 2024 (c) Dawn Walker CC BY-SA 4.0 unless otherwise noted

Image treatments: Dithering usind didder by makew0rld

The archive visits and Our Networks event described in this zine all took place on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səl̓ílwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations and Lək̓ ʷəŋən (Lekwungen) People, now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

Page 1:

In this zine

[image: Black and grey photo of the overcast sky]

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\*\*\*\*\*\*Western Front\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*→ 6

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To keep or not..............→ 10

To distribute...............→ 11

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[image: Black and grey photo of the ocean with an indistinct coastline in the background]

Pages 2-3:

A-ZINE-OF-OUR-NETS

This zine tries to weave together amateur digital archiving, a concern for the environmental impact of those practices, and a reflection on the role of archives in exploring how to try new things that draw from the past.

We made it because of two events:

DIY Methods (<https://diymethods.net/>), a remote-participation conference on experimental research methods and exchange, and

Our Networks (<https://ournetworks.ca/>), a conference about the past, present, and future of building our own network infrastructures.

The sixth Our Networks, “Does not [cloud] compute,” was held July 2024 in Vancouver, BC. It focused on transitional computing and drew inspiration from local-first, solar-powered servers, folk software, and permacomputing.

In all the ways this moment feels like one where our institutions and ways of operating are breaking down in a time of pressing need [the climate crisis, rising fascism, and the rapid increase in the cost of living], the same feels true our digital technologies.

[image: Black and grey photo of a street corner of a building with trees along the outside edge of the sidewalk]

A recognition of that breakdown and its possibilities informed Our Networks 2024:

Last year provided an opening up a decade after platforms foreclosed on a sense of possibility of an earlier web. Turmoil on social media was the backdrop for creative experimentation with protocols and in networked spaces. Yet despite these new avenues (<https://www.robinsloan.com/lab/new-avenues>), the myriad problems of being online haven’t been adequately addressed. The internet is dead, long live the internet.

The event sought other models of collaboration, looking to already existing practices and the not-too-distant past in order to make something new. The event ethos has always been to find novel connections and to read familiar concepts in new ways. As with previous years, the event looked to historic networks and protocols which existed before an “always-on” and powered present.

In the past, co-organizers of Our Networks experimented with amateur digital archiving techniques and strategies to steward the resulting things. We continued that in 2024, but also staged a local area network [LAN] with materials from archives and published on the web.

Vancouver has been a place for explorations in telecommunications art going back to the artist-run centres that were founded in the 1970s, including

Western Front, VIVO Media Arts Centre and Open Space [in nearby Victoria]. While planning the event this year we conducted a micro archival research project to look at artistic performances that took place here that used one

particular transmission method: Slow-scan television.

Pages 4-5:

Slow-scan transmissions

Slow-scan television [SSTV] is a low bandwidth way of transmitting images using radio frequencies. SSTV takes a few seconds to a few minutes to send a series of static black & white or colour pictures but can also be

used to transmit and receive audible sounds.

The facing image shows the spectrogram [a visual representation of a signal as it changes over time] of an SSTV transmission. What you see is an initial calibration header before waves which are the “lines” of the transmission scanned from left-to-right with colours sent after each other.

SSTV was developed in the 1950s, and one key early use was to transmit images from the far side of the Moon by both the Soviet and US space programs [see wilkins’s excellent “How Slow Scan TV Shaped The Moon” (<https://www.scopeofwork.net/how-slow-scan-tv-shaped-the-moon>)]. By 1970, commercial systems appeared and the technology became available to a broader set of people. Today people use software to transmit and receive slow-scan images from their computers.

[image: Black and grey photo of the top half of a binder with dot matrix print paper sticking out the side, on the cover are the words Robot, Robot Research, Inc.]

[image: Black and grey spectrogram image showing densely packed lines as a wave]

Credit: Mysid, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SSTV_signal.jpg>

In late 1970s, artists in Vancouver and Victoria began experimenting with SSTV and telecommunications alongside others. Bill Bartlett at Open Space organized a SAT-TEL-COMP [SATELLITE-TELEPHONE-COMPUTER] event [1978] that used the Robot 530, and more performances followed.

One thing that is hard to communicate about SSTV on the page is the experience of it. A recurring thread in our conversations is the allure of the “8.5 second swipe,” the time between when an image starts to appear line-by-line from the top, reaches the end, and is overwritten by the next image. That swipe is common across SSTV, but the amount of time depends on the resolution and system.

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slow-scan_television>

- <http://archive.vivomediaarts.com/open-space-slow-scan>

Pages 6:

Western Front

Visit Date: Friday May 17, 2024  
Where: 303 East 8th Avenue, Mount Pleasant neighbourhood, Vancouver, BC Who: Anna Tidlund, Archivist

Western Front Society is a non-profit artist-run centre founded in 1973 by artists Kate Craig, Glenn Lewis, Eric Metcalfe, Michael Morris, and Vincent Trasov, composer Martin Bartlett, architect Mo van Nostrand, and writer Henry Greenhow.

- <https://westernfront.ca/>

- <https://arcpost.ca/articles/arclines-western-front>

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Front_Society>

Western Front has a collection of slow-scan performances from the 1970s-1990s. Their archive is at University of British Columbia and onsite, since 2012 records are born digital, and they have digitized earlier material.

Artist Hank Bull, who moved to Vancouver after Western Front was founded, was a key figure of the artists experimenting with telecommunications art and putting on slow-scan performances. The idea of Weincouver, an imaginary city between Vancouver and Vienna, was explored in a series of events with slow-scan performance [1979-1983]. In addition to digitized video and photo documentation, the archive has system diagrams, old machines and equipment, manuals, and other paper records from the era.

[image: Black and grey photo of a dark coloured building with wood siding on the corner of a street with power lines and street signs in the foreground and a blue sky in the background]

[image: Black and white logo of Western Front]

Page 7:

Open Space

Visit Date: Friday May 24, 2024  
Where: 510 Fort Street, 2nd floor, Victoria, BC (temporarily at 750 Fairfield Road)

Who: Doug Jarvis, Executive Director

Open Space Arts Society is a non-profit artist-run centre founded in 1972, it has been a space for contemporary visual arts, music, writing, and media arts. It supports experimental artistic practices in all contemporary arts disciplines, acting as a laboratory for engaging art, artists, and audiences.

- <https://openspacearts.ca/archives>

- <https://arcpost.ca/articles/open-to-new-ideas-the-development-of-open-space>

- [https://web.archive.org/web/20050412134134/http://www.openspace.ca/outer-space/](https://web.archive.org/web/20050412134134/http:/www.openspace.ca/outer-space/)

Open Space has a collection of slow-scan and video art performances from the 1970s onward but no comprehensive overview. Their archive is being catalogued at University of Victoria.

[Image: Black and white logo of Open Space]

Bill Bartlett moved from Vancouver and animated the centre with slow-scan projects among many other activities. Peggy Cady was also important figure in early video art broadcasts.

The archive has many digitized performances, secondary material, and has facilitated remediation and recent retrospectives of the early period of slow-scan, including their Telecom History Project OUTERSPACE.

[image: Black and grey photo of art deco building with stairs in the centre and shrubs on either side]

Page 8:

VIVO Media Arts Centre

Visit Date: Friday May 31, 2024  
Where: 2625 Kaslo Street, Vancouver, BC (from August 2014)   
Who: Karen Knights, Archive Manager, Crista Dahl Media Library & Archive

VIVO Media Arts Centre is an artist-run centre and video distribution library founded in 1973 with the mission of “nurtur[ing] past, present and future media arts discourses and communities through equitable and public access to resources for preservation, production and dissemination.” Crista Dahl Media Library & Archive houses more than 8000 video titles and media by artists, activists, and independent producers from over 50 years of production.

- <https://www.vivomediaarts.com/>

- <https://arcpost.ca/articles/opening-the-video-inn>

- <https://archive.vivomediaarts.com/about-us>

VIVO never had a slow-scan machine, and so involvement in projects was through Western Front. At that time, artists at VIVO focused on the democratization of media through video and systems like Portapak, a self-

contained video recorder.

Paul Wong was an important early figure who experimented with new technologies.

[Image: Black and grey photo of a book titled Art + Telecommunication showing a rotary phone on the cover sitting on a wooden counter top]

The archive has photo documentation of slow-scan performances, an archive web page, documentation of related events and workshops, which include remediations of early slow-scan works.

[image: Black and grey logo for VIVO Media Arts Centre]

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From visiting to making archives

Visiting these archives to learn more about slow-scan and identify records that might illuminate the technical and social networks followed a pattern. It started with an email request, that led to speaking in-person [with some review of the records], which led to new connections to email, to potentially talk in-person. Most of the time was spent in conversation asking questions to contextualize the records and practices.

After, we compared that to our own efforts preserving material and documenting an event, and reflected how those practices accommodate the steps followed when engaging with the above archives:

- talking to people and building relationships

- learning the narrative that presents or contextualizes materials

- negotiating rights and access, in particular for artistic materials and novel formats of publication

With Our Networks event documentation we’ve handled things quite differently: open licenses describe the ways material can be re-used up front for no cost, minimal context is provided for most materials, and because they are open and public and openly-licensed, that means that no one typically talks to us as co-organizers [though we are happy to!]

By this comparison we don’t want to overstate what we see as valuable about our materials: as a record of an event, we think the videos and a preserved event web site are enough. The interest we have seen is in the ephemera around the event, the poster, the zine, the USB, or in details on how one could plan and host similar events themselves. We turn to the what and how of amateur digital archiving next.

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To keep or not

Our Networks has intentionally archived materials:

- Videos of recorded talks uploaded to Internet Archive [easy]

- Videos of recorded talks and stream syndicated on Youtube [easy]

- Web site copy created and self-hosted on the event [medium]

- Artwork and organizing materials posted to GitHub [difficult]

Things have been preserved unintentionally at times, or out side of a typical scope in an effort to work openly and share ways to host and plan.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Digital things | Keep (Public) | Keep (Private) | Do not keep |
| Event website | **x** |  |  |
| Session submissions | **x** |  |  |
| Recorded talks [720p and 1080p] | x  [with consent] |  | x  [without consent] |
| Digital event spaces |  |  | x |
| Social media posts | x  [unintentionally] |  |  |
| Announcement emails |  | x  [unintentionally] |  |
| Artwork and organizing materials | x [majority] | x [minority] |  |
| Financial information | x  [aggregated] | x [disaggregated] |  |
| Personal and contact information |  | x |  |

Public spaces

- <https://ournetworks.ca/>

- <https://github.com/ournetworks>

- <https://www.youtube.com/c/OurNetworks>

- <https://archive.org/details/@our_networks>

- Interplanetary File System [IPFS]

Private spaces

- <https://share.mayfirst.org/>

- <https://drive.google.com/>

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To distribute

Over time, there have been experiments with different approaches to event documentation and distribution:

- [2018-2020] Stored recorded videos on a distributed protocol, IPFS, where files have a unique content address that only remain available if people using the protocol replicate them

- [2022 2047] Mailed outcomes of the event after the digital space was taken offline: a static version of the collaborative wiki website on USB and a companion zine

- [2024] Streamed low-bandwidth talks and hosted a website and file sharing service on a LAN with digital surrogates from existing archives who granted permission

Recently we have departed from a hybrid approach of distributing lots of digital copies of high-quality records across platforms we manage to various degrees. For 2022 2047, event documentation lives locally. For 2024, our recordings are low resolution, low frame rate, and 8-colour greyscale. There is lots of room to try out both hybrid forms and minimal options for small-scale digital archiving.

[image: Black and grey photo of a forest showing ferns and a fallen tree in the foreground, with narrow trunks behind]

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Protocols for small-scale digital archives

In the spirit of trying new things out we want to offer some protocols to try for small-scale event documentation and digital archiving:

1. Create a shared mailing list as text repository with mailman

mailman (GNU mailman) is free software used for hosting mailing lists. You can make use of its built-in archive feature to publish a chronological archive available on the web that you curate alone or in a group. Because it is email-based it works well with text, but you can also send images and HTML content as a formatted email.

It can be complicated to host your own version so we don’t. Our Networks started using mailman hosted by MayFirst (<https://mayfirst.coop/>), a democratic membership-driven cooperative, because we wanted an alternative to service providers like Mailchimp.

Once you find a host, you choose a list name, that forms the mailing list email where you send messages to: <listname>@<domainname> [like ournetworks@lists.mayfirst.org] and manage settings from a web interface.

From there, we set the configuration categories:

- Added our emails under moderator email addresses

- Archiving Options [to allow archives, set as public/private, and get archive period]

- Auto-responder [to set a message if someone accidentally posts without permission]

→ Privacy options ... Sender filters [to set new list member postings a moderated, set ceiling of acceptable posts to 0]

What we have is an announcement-style list, where only the event co-organizers can post.

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2. Create local copies of whole sites using wget

wget is a software tool you use from your command-line to fetch content from servers on the web. You can install it on all major operating systems, see Iffy Book’s zine: Download a website with Wget (<https://iffybooks.net/wp-content/uploads/zines/Iffy_Books_Wget_Zine_print.pdf>).

To create a copy of a whole website, say https://example. com/, in your terminal type the following:

wget -mpEk https://example.com/

What do all those letters mean?

-m = --mirror = “turns on recursion and time-stamping”

-p = --page-requisites = “download all the files that are necessary to properly display a given HTML page”

-E = --adjust-extension = which causes .html to be appended to the local filename, useful for mirroring a site with generated pages (.asp or .cgi)

-k = --convert-links = convert the links to make them suitable for local viewing

Sometimes sites includ HMTL attributes on links like “rel=nofollow” to tell programs not to use the link, or sites may have a robots.txt file. Both limit what wget would download. You can override that:

wget -e robots=off -mpEk https://example.com/

-e robots=off = captures all parts of a website, even pages and directories marked as ‘not allowed’ for access by web crawlers and indexers

[Note: this isn’t exactly a polite thing to do! Read about robots.txt etiquette <http://www.robotstxt.org/>]

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3. Have a public collection of audio, video, or text materials with archive.org

archive.org or Internet Archive provides many tools to save web sites and media.

You can use their Save Page Now feature (<https://web.archive.org/save>) to save a snapshot of a web page that you can visit in the Wayback Machine. For other types of media, you can create a free account on archive.org (<https://archive.org/>).

Our Networks uses Internet Archive to host our recorded talks with collections for each year.

Once you are logged-in, you can upload files and provide metadata and a description. You have the ability to specify subject terms (keywords), language, usage (select from a range of licenses), date of publication, IDs for your collection, or to add those files to other collections you have already created.

Different download options are automatically created (torrent, metadata file, and media-specific formats). Your files and collections show up in searches on the platform and on an account landing page.

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4. Distribute an archive using git (and a remote server)

git is a version-control tool for software development. It allows everyone working on the same thing to keep a local copy of the files and a log of all changes. That means people can be out of sync from the most current version, but by using the log as a reference, can programatically resolve conflicts if both people change the same file and creates a version history.

Most people don’t use git alone, they use it with a service that provides a remote server or upstream which also acts like a remote backup and typically an authoritative copy. The most popular option is [GitHub](https://github.com/) [owned by Microsoft] that provides free hosting and extra coordination tools. GitHub also has an Archival Program to create long-term backups of data. You don’t have to use GitHub however, there are others including GitLab, gittea, and sourcehut which also act as a remote.

Our Networks uses git and GitHub to host the code that runs our website, our artwork files, and public organizing notes and task-tracking for each year of the event.

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Minimal archives

The combination of reduced travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns for carbon emissions has led many researchers to rely upon, and advocate for, digital archives in order to access historical materials and records. Additionally, as climate change disasters are destroying communities, they are also destroying paper records. A common response from emergency and disaster preparedness is to maintain digital copies of vital records [see Tansey’s “A Green New Deal for Archives” (<https://www.clir.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2023/07/A-Green-New-Deal-for-Archives2.pdf>)].

Yet, at the same time as many archives respond with a push for mass digitization, there is a growing recognition of the carbon footprint of maintaining and providing access to digital collections. Recent scholarship in digital preservation has questioned the premises of the field’s current “best practices” that ensure authenticity through storing multiple copies [the basis of “Lots of copies keep stuff safe” mantra and open source repository software] and running frequent integrity checks with processing-intensive hash calculations [see Pendergrass et al. 2019 (<https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/40741399>) and Addis 2023 (<https://www.dpconline.org/blog/blog-matthew-addis-ipres23>)].

While the environmental impacts of our current networked communications are being calculated [see Burrington’s “The Environmental Toll of a Netflix Binge (<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/12/there-are-no-clean-clouds/420744>)”] a similar accounting is rarely done for the infrastructures of archival material, which is either ignored in the contemporary discussions of energy emissions, or positioned as evidently worthy of any environmental costs.

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The digital archiving explorations of Our Networks above led us to a few reflections and lingering questions on how to ‘do’ digital archives with low carbon methods. So we leave you with some final thoughts:

[1] Digital archival work can think materially and act locally.

Digital materials may be online and available at your fingertips from archival holdings across the world, but starting work close to home can still be a valuable constraint. Site visits and connections to individual archivists remain important with digital formats, and negotiating rights and access often benefits from these direct conversations.

[2] Embracing lossy copies where possible.

While vital records, government, and corporate archives may demand practices based around authenticity, not every collection or archives user expects or needs this form of engagement with historic materials. Both slow-scan and Our Networks are experiences of the moment, and the digital traces of their existence will never provide a high fidelity copy or transmission of these events. The hope is that consciously curating and maintaining the conference archives can support the goals of low-carbon methods, and make them more understandable and usable.

[3] Asserting the value of minimal archiving [in an age of digital abundance].

While common wisdom claims that “the internet doesn’t forget,” generative AI has already revealed how platforms and companies profit from controlling vast stores of online memory, which are increasingly scraped and transformed to train machine learning models. Rather than aiming to archive everything [an inherently impossible and unsustainable goal), taking a more minimal approach can also help ensure archives resist ‘datafication’ and remain spaces where records must be viewed and understood in context [see Carbajal and Caswell’s Critical Digital Archives

(<https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhab359>), and Christen and Anderson’s Toward Slow Archives (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-019-09307-x>)

# **nD::dox: The nD::StudioLab Field Guide to Speculative Meteorology**

Mark-David Hosale, Aftab Mirzaei, Nava Messas Waxman, and the nD::StudioLab

Inside cover: nD::StudioLab

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Editors: Mark-David Hosale, Aftab Mirzaei

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If you have used any of the tools and methods in this field guide, we would love to hear about your outcomes, challenges, suggestions, and any other thoughts, please share them with us at [nddox@ndstudiolab.com](http://nddox@ndstudiolab.com)

Digital version on issuu.com

[QR Code for online version]

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The n-D::StudioLab Field Guide to Speculative Meteorology

An Exercise in Speculative Method Making

Aftab Mirzaei

For millennia, understanding the weather has been a fundamental part of human culture and a mix of observation and speculation. The history of forecasting reveals a range of embodied and performative practices and speculative gestures used to understand the character and mechanics of the atmosphere. A finger to the wind, sailor’s rhymes, the sound of crickets, and the thickness of caterpillars have informed how we engage with and come to know our weatherworld.

Speculation imbues even the beginnings of numerical weather prediction. In 1910, Lewis Fry Richardson made the first attempt to mathematically forecast the weather, only to fail after a protracted calculation period of three months. In response to the failure and in order to remedy the long calculation period, Richardson envisioned the “forecast factory”: a spherical “hall” with its walls painted with the map of a world, housing 64,000 (human) computers who work on equations for one part of the world (See page 4).

The n-D::StudioLab Field Guide to Speculative Meteorology follows these traditions of speculative attunement and storytelling to explore atmospheres and microclimates around York University’s Keele campus. Our efforts were also inspired by Donna Haraway’s notion of SF(speculative fiction, situated feminisms, string figures, etc.) to compose a hybrid and layered account of the climate. We use Speculative Fabulation/fictional sciences to articulate alternative configurations of knowledge-making that are situated, imaginative, and multidimensional.

The field guide serves as a worldmaking tool composed of materially distinct practices that bring forth different representations of environments, atmospheres, and climates. The toolbox is the result of several iterative collaborations between graduate research members at the n-D::StudioLab at York University, and their exploratory excursions to Stong Pond on campus. Grounded in ArtScience, Computational Arts, Interactive Architecture, Dance, and Science and Technology Studies, our proposed attunement practices seek to register climates past, present, and future around the pond and its ecosystem.

Our hope is that the case studies and vignettes collected here highlight experiential and speculative techniques for fostering intimacy, attunement and bodily resonances with the environment.

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[facing image: illustration of a cross-section of a large globe with white and red checkered walls. There is a crowd of people working on the floor. A tower stands in the middle of the globe, projecting calculations on the walls inside]

Page 5:

Speculative Method Making

…To make other worlds visible.

Embrace and practice our ability

to create worlds that bring

multiple/more/other

bodies……voices….. and histories

into view.

A meteorological institute

NOT for PREDICTION but

PRESENT ATTUNEMENT

to futures already at play

– Transforming imagination.

We offer multimodal openings

into different ways of

thinking/feeling/making/doing.

Moving lenses. Senses. Sensors.

Out in the open. Grounded. In person. In place.

Page 6:

Staging Conversations Between Computers, Satellites and Antennae

Open Weather is a transnational satellite imaging project lead by ... probing the relationship between bodies, satellites, and weather systems. The artistic experiment follows traditions of feminist citizen sensing and principles of open data and DIY technologies to facilitate embodied and grounded sensing of weather in its entirety. In short, an antenna is used to capture EM signals from NOAA weather satellites’ passages. The signal is processed by a dongle and translated into an audio signal, which is then decoded through free software into an image. Open Weather’s methods and procedures subvert the disembodied planetary visualization by bringing bodies back into their nowcasting practice and democratizing these methods beyond communities of expert technical knowledge. The inexpensive toolbox allows practitioners to engage with US-operated climate infrastructure, and participate in the imaging and imagination of images of the Earth from space. Noise, interference, static and disturbances only enhance the images with situated information. This ethos is also embodied in Engelman and Dyers' careful compiling of numerous guides that help those with no experience in DIY radio and satellite imaging. While I leave you with their detailed resources on methods and procedures, I have collected some reflections from my experiences with the process.

[the page is bordered by two black and white satellite images depicting southwest Ontario from space]

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[The page is split vertically into two images. On the left is a black and white satellite image depicting southwest Ontario and the Great Lakes from space, with swirls of clouds on the top and bottom of the image. The right image is a screenshot from a satellite tracking app showing the location of the NOAA19 satellite on a world map. The map is dotted with bright green dots representing other satellites in the sky at the time. A textbox stretches across the background images]

No one prepares you for the joy of pairing with a satellite in the sky.

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[The page is split horizontally with two images. On the top is a black and white satellite image partially displaying the Great Lakes. The bottom image is a photograph of a partially cloudy sky surrounded by trees. A textbox stretches between the two images]

The static is overwhelming. Not a sound I often allow myself to sit in for long. I was underprepared and couldn't tell signal from noise. The static's intense nothing had become synonymous with my disorientation.

If only I could tune in right.

[[I referred back to the guides - found samples revealing what I should be listening for.]

training::: ~ sound~ vision~expectation

It sounds simple: Repeating beeps...like a dial tone from a device that is no longer in use, paired with ticking.

After some time, the tone and the ticking will sync... rolling off into a rhythm that you could almost dance to. On the radio app the waves dance along., with a discernible pulse.

My sensorium hadnt been rewarded like this in a while. Who knew ...celestial space was where my calm lies .... .

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The Ambient Factory Kawme Kyei-Boateng

The Ambient Factory is a 3D visualization inspired by Stephen Conlin's "Weather Forecasting Factory," a depiction of Lewis Fry Richardson's Forecast Factory, a fantasized method of weather prediction involving a large, spherical building filled with tens of thousands of human computers busily forecasting the weather.

This conception is created using Unreal Engine (UE), a real-time 3D visualization tool, and Niagara, a specialized VFX tool within UE, used to create visual effects involving particle systems. Ambient light values were collected around Stong Pond using the Arduino Science Journal app, which allows Android and iOS devices to collect environmental data through their sensors, to create the clouds. The light and shadow data is saved as a CSV file that feeds into the Niagara System to shape digital droplets and vapor into clouds.

[ image at the bottom of the of the page displaying a line graph of ambient light]

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[The top visualization shows the interior of a globe with white and red checkered walls. A scattered crowd stands on the base platform, while a bright, powdery cloud hovers above a central column. The middle image offers a higher-angle cross-section of the globe, where a chimney-like column releases four bright clouds. The third image looks down into the globe from above, capturing a cloud rising from the chimney]

Page 11:

Intero/outero -ception, Methods for the layered capture of environment and affect during the circumnavigation of a pond. Mark-David Hosale

Thursday, June 20th, 11:45  Five hours and five minutes before Summer Solstice 2024.

The pond is located in the South-West corner of the York University Keele Campus, just South of one of the newest buildings on campus, The Bergeron Centre. It is a location where people often come to get away from the bustle of campus life, lovers go to be alone, and people go to get high. Geese are abundant, there are reeds, a broken dock, a stream with a dam, and trees around the edge. There is no trail to navigate the shore, tall brush is present which is lush in summer and dry in winter. Because of the brush, the coast of the pond is inaccessible at most points. Therefore we walk around the pond as close to the shore as we can.

We begin the journey at a mysterious structure, a high modern bus stop, that is not directly connected to any road with broken benches on its interior, littered with cigarette butts, cannabis containers, junk food wrappers, leaves and dust. Forking trails from structure lead to the pond’s edge in one direction, a canopy of trees in another, and back to campus in another direction. The water is home to odd pieces of junk, garbage and algae. A broken desk sits half submerged in the water next to a tire, beer cans are littered here and there. All of which is juxtaposed by a choir rehearsing on the banks, disturbed by our presence, they came to enjoy the beautiful weather and scenery alone.

The goal of this preliminary experiment is to track the experience of circumnavigating an urban pond while tracking several layers of data streams simultaneously. This includes photo and video documentation, satellite tracking, poetry, and location sensing. My focus was on weaving sensor data that exposes activity from within my body (Electrocardiogram [ECG]) with a time accurate field recording of the environment outside my body, annotated with comments, conversations, and reflections. I analyse the body signals to assess my affective state (valence and arousal, as in (Russell 1980), I am using my long and short-term memory recall (triggered by the sounds of the field recording) to identify the locations I encountered on this journey for self-assessment1.

Tools used

The process involved two stages. Stage one involved the recording of a journey around the Strong Pond using a field recorder that was simultaneously capturing a stereo field recording of the environment and the continuous electrocardiogram of a subject (see Fig.1). Stage two involved the integration and analysis of the data using custom software tools (see Fig.4).

[Figure 1. Mark-David Hosale equipped with a Tascam DR-40, on a boom arm, and The Source by bioMECI, worn around the waist, collecting a simultaneous stereo field recording and his own biophysiology. Wen Luo and Mark-David Hosale are shown (from left to right). Image courtesy of Marcus Gordon (a.k.a. magfoto) ©2024 Marcus Gordon]

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Tascam DR-40, 4-Channel Field Recorder

The Tascam DR-40 (https://tascam.com/us/product/dr-40) is a field recorder that captures up to four tracks, using two built-in, high-quality condenser microphones to record on channels 1 + 2, and two line inputs to record on channels 3 + 4. It is possible to record on all four channels simultaneously, with the internal microphones on channels 1 + 2, and the signal from The Source (described below) on channel 3.

The internal microphones are adjustable from XY to AB position, allowing for precise tailoring of the recording for different acoustic situations. For this recording they were placed in the XY position to allow for the inclusion of a windsock (which looks like a fuzzy grey hat on the device, see Figure 1).

The Source by bioMECI

The Source (http://www.biomeci.com) is a wearable device that captures and interprets data from people, plants, and fungi, integrating seamlessly with creative software like Max/MSP, SuperCollider, Ableton Live, TouchDesigner, Processing, and Pure Data. It translates biological signals into dynamic digital art in real-time.

[Figure 2. Pictured above are the basic components of the The Source kit. From left to right, top to bottom there are the electrode leads, audio cable, two straps (large and small), the battery pack (with USB-C charging cable, shown below it), The Source (with USB mini connection cable, shown below it), and electrodes. Image: ©2024 bioMECI]

The Source was used to collect an Electrocardiogram (ECG) from Mark-David Hosale during the journey around the pond. This is accomplished by applying Electrodes (sticky, disposable pads with a metal piece) to the skin in a strategic place where an electrode lead can clip to and collect signals from the human body.

[Figure 3. Diagram of the position of a lead 1 electrode placement for ECG. Image: ©2024 bioMECI]

In Figure 3 the dots represent the placement of the electrodes. The black dot represents the black lead (reference) and the grey dots represent the grey leads (two poles of a differential signal that is amplified and filtered by the source). The heart can be recorded from multiple directions, depending on what kinds of details you want to capture from the heart. For the purposes for generic heart signal capture a lead 1 works well and is easiest to put on with clothes on.

[Figure 4. Patch in Cycling74’s Max8 that includes a custom made object from bioMECI for analysis of the ECG signal. The ECG signal and stereo field recording are combined on the lower left.]

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The Source outputs an audio signal that the Tascam DR-40 is capable of recording, despite the signal from The Source being sub-audio.The DR-40 outputs two stereo files corresponding to channels 1 + 2, and 3 + 4 respectively.

Integration And Analysis Of The Data Using Max8

The separate, synchronized, audio recordings collected by the Tascam DR-40 were re-integrated using Max8, an application-level tool for artists that facilitates the arbitrary integration of audio and visual media with interactive interfaces in real-time using a visual coding logic and integrations with several programming tools and platforms (see Figure 4). In Max8 it is simple to create a tool that triggers the playback and allows for sample level seek on two sound files simultaneously (left side of Figure 4). Once this integration was accomplished the field recording (channels 1 + 2) was outputted directly to the computer’s audio outputs, and the biophysical signal recoded on channel 3 was sent to thebiomeci.ecg~object for analysis.

biomeci.ecg~is a Max8 object developed by bioMECIfor analyzing ECG signals from The Source. The object takes a raw/unfiltered ECG from The Source and provides several signals that correspond to raw ECG (bi-polar signal of the heart), cooked signal (uni-polar signal that emphasizes the R-wave of the ECG), heart rate in beats-per-minute, R-to-R delta time in milliseconds, an ECG derived respiration signal, and respiration rate. From this complement of signals further analysis can be executed that will provide an estimation of valence (positive and negative affect) and arousal (level of excitement) as described in Russell 1980.

Results

The primary objective of this preliminary experiment was to integrate sensor data reflecting both internal bodily states and external environmental interactions, providing a comprehensive analysis of the subject's affective state during the journey. During the recording stage, the Tascam DR-40 simultaneously captured environmental sounds and ECG data from the subject (Mark-David Hosale). In the integration stage, the synchronized recordings were processed using Max8 software, allowing for real-time interaction and analysis of the audio and biophysiological data. Custom tools developed by bioMECI facilitated the detailed analysis of the ECG signals, providing insights into the subject’s affective states based on the Russell model of valence and arousal.

The integration of these tools facilitates a nuanced understanding of the interplay [cont.]

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…between internal physiological responses and external environmental stimuli during the circumnavigation of the pond. External events and self-reporting (narrations during the field recording) can be accurately synchronized with the biophysiology of a subject. This can be further enhanced by contributing to the array of simultaneous recordings, such as weather, photojournalism, satellite, etc. that are described in this journal to provide a subjective and objective multi-dimensional lens that extends from the beating of an individual’s heart to the near orbit view of the Earth provided by a satellite image.

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DIY Analog Sensors

Guide to creating low-cost environmental sensors

Grace Grothaus

In electronics you aren’t limited to the components you can purchase from manufacturers. The possibilities open wide when you realize you can also make your own. In this simple guide we will fabricate sensors that can detect environmental data using materials that cost only a few dollars and many of which you may already have at home.

In this step-by-step guide, we will fabricate sensors that can detect animal footsteps, raindrops, soil moisture, and wind and then learn to read their values using Arduino.

The data from these sensors can be used as input for actuators in physical computing projects or they can be triggers for screen-based animation or music - the options are wide and varied. Using the principles learned from this tutorial you can also go on to invent your own sensors or even turn sculptural artwork into a sensor as part of a larger work or installation. In a world in which human-induced changes in our environment are ever more pressing, these methods provide ample opportunity to make art that is not only about the environmental but is a real-time expression of it.

PART 1: SENSOR FABRICATION

MATERIALS

The materials needed for the four sensors described in this guide are:

card stock or thin cardboard

printer paper (or other type of thin paper)

copper adhesive sheet (or substitute aluminum foil and adhesive)

pencil

scissors

a ruler

tape

a kitchen sponge

As well as some soldering basics and an electronics component:

soldering iron

solder

wire stripper

multimeter

a few jumper wires

and a basic photocell such as this:Mini Photocell - SEN-09088 - SparkFun Electronic

[The page contains an image opposite the list of sensor fabrication materials. It contains scissors, a mechanical pencil, metal ruler, and one sheet each of cardboard and copper foil.]

Page 16:

Raindrop Sensor

1. Cut card stock into a small rectangle. The dimensions I used are 1 1/2” x 2”. Cut two pieces of adhesive backed copper (or aluminum foil) into two “U” shapes as shown here. This shape can take many forms. The main idea here is that there are two pieces of foil interlaced with a narrow gap of card stock separating them. The width I used is 1/4”.

2. Adhere the foil on the card stock, as shown. Next, we will need a couple of wires to lead out from these sensor pads. Cut two jumper wires in half and strip a short length of the protective plastic off of each of the cut ends, as shown here..

3. Solder two different coloured jumper wires to each of the two metal pads, as shown.

4. Let’s measure the resistance of our newly created sensor. Plug the two wires into separate rows on a bread board and plug the leads of a multimeter into the same rows, or measure directly from the jumper wires.

When the multimeter is on and placed on the setting to measure resistance (as indicated by the Ohm symbol), we will see infinite resistance. However, when water is sprinkled onto the sensor surface, in simulation of rain current is able to pass through and will show up on the multimeter. When placed on the ground outside this sensor will be able to detect raindrops.

[Four images are shown depicting each of the four written instructions, each numbered. Image 1 shows a ruler and cut pieces of cardboard and copper foil. Image 2 shows two jumper cables, their casings trimmed at the ends to reveal braided wire. In addition, two pieces of copper foil cut into a “U” shape, which are adhered to a square of cardboard so that the arms of the two “U” shapes are interlocked but leave a narrow strip of cardboard between them. Image 3 shows two jumper cables soldered to the outer edges of the two “U” shapes of copper foil on the cardboard/foil rectangle from image 2. Lastly, image 4 shows a multimeter. The two prongs of the multimeter are affixed to the two jumper cables on the foil and cardboard rectangle. The multimeter reads infinite ohms.]

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Footstep Sensor

1. Cut a section of cardstock into a long, narrow rectangle. The dimensions I used are 2” tall by 8” wide. Fold it in half, lengthwise. Cut two pieces of adhesive backed copper (or aluminum foil) into squares roughly half the width of one of the folded halves of paper. The dimensions shown here are 2” x 2”. Adhere the copper or aluminium foil in the middle of each of the folded paper halves, facing each other.

2. Cut two jumper wires in half and strip a short length of the protective plastic off each of the cut ends. These will lead out from these sensor pads.

3. Solder two different coloured jumper wires to each of the two metal pads.

4. Fold the paper stock in half and secure the two sides together with a piece of tape.

5. Let’s measure the resistance of our newly created sensor. Plug the two wires into separate rows on a bread board and plug the leads of a multimeter into the same rows, or measure directly from the jumper wires. When the multimeter is on and placed on the setting to measure resistance (as indicated by the Ohm symbol), we will see infinite resistance. However, when the two sides are pressed together (above image on right), current is able to pass through and will show up on the multimeter. When placed on the ground outside this sensor will be able to detect the footsteps of animals passing by.

[Five images are shown depicting each of the five written instructions, each numbered. Image 1 is split. The top half shows a folded rectangle of cardboard, two squares of copper foil and a ruler, the bottom half shows the folded cardboard with the two pieces of foil attached. Image 2 shows a wire stripper in the process of removing casing from a jumper wire to reveal the braided wire inside. In the background the folded cardboard and copper sensor can be seen. Image 3 shows two pieces of jumper cable soldered onto the cardboard and copper sensor. Image 4 shows the sensor folded shut with a piece of tape holding it shut. Lastly image 5 is split. The top half shows a multimeter with prongs reading from the two jumper wires in the sensor. The multimeter reads infinite ohms. The bottom half shows the same multimeter, now reading 0.6 ohms and there is a hand squeezing the top and bottom half of the sensor together so that the copper foil squares inside are touching.]

Soil Moisture Sensor

For this next simple sensor, we will need a sponge and two jumper wires.

1. Cut a small section of the sponge into a square. The dimensions used here are 1” x 1”. Cut into the sponge approximately 1/4” on two sides of the square that are facing each other.

2. Insert the two jumper wires into the cuts in the sponge.

3. Let’s simulated how this sensor will work in the soil. Plug the two wires into separate rows on a bread board and plug the leads of a multimeter into the same rows, or measure directly from the jumper wires.

When the multimeter is on and placed on the setting to measure resistance (as indicated by the Ohm symbol), we will see infinite resistance.

However, when we touch both of the jumper wires at the same time, we will see a resistance value on the multimeter. This simulates the conductance that wet soil will provide.

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[three images are shown depicting each of the three written instructions, each numbered. Image 1 shows a square of sponge being cut by scissors next to a ruler. Image 2 shows two jumper wires inserted into two cuts in the sponge. Image 3 is split. The left side shows a multimeter connected to the two jumper cables. It reads infinite ohms. The right side shows the same setup but now fingers are holding both jumper cable ends and the multimeter shows 17.38 ohms.]

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Wind Sensor

1. For the wind sensor we will start with a photocell, a simple light sensor that costs around $0.25-$1, and some paper.

2. Cut two pieces of paper, one into a rectangle and the other a long narrow rectangle with a height equal to the photocell’s width. The dimensions used here are a 1” x 1” square and a 1/8” x 2” rectangle.

3. Lay both the paper rectangle and the photocell on the same end of the square as above. Tape the two pieces of paper together.

4. Roll the paper square tightly around the photocell and tape it in place, as shown here.

5. Now blow on the rectangle of paper along the top end and you will see how wind will vary the amount of light coming into the photocell. This will result in varied values of resistance as shown below on this Arduino graph. In the following section, we will step through the process of reading the values of these four sensors in Arduino and explore some of the ways this data can be logged and/or used in real-time.

[Six images are shown. The first five depict each of the four written instructions, each numbered. Image 1 shows a photocell in a hand. Image 2 shows a thin rectangle and a square of paper. Image 3 shows the photocell placed at the top right of the paper square and the right end of the thin rectangle on the top left of the square. Image 4 shows the square of paper rolled into a tube with both the thin rectangular paper and the photocell inside. Image 5 shows a hand holding the tube. The final image stretches along the bottom of the page and shows a Arduino sketch and graph.]

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PART 2: Reading Sensor Data

If you are new to Arduino and need assistance getting their IDE setup, please visit Arduino Docs | Arduino Documentationand follow their “Get Started” guide.

Open Arduino and create a new sketch using the following simple program which enables the analog data from your newly created sensors to be read, and later used in data visualizations/sonifications.

int analogPin = 0; // The analog pin your sensor is connected to

int val = 0; // variable to store the value read

void setup() {

Serial.begin(9600); // setup serial communication

pinMode(analogPin, INPUT\_PULLUP);

}

void loop() {

val = analogRead(analogPin); // read the input pin

Serial.println(val); // Write value to serial console

}

At the top of our sketch we create two variables, one named ‘analogPin’ which should be equal to the pin number on the Arduino that you connect to (Ex. A0 or A1), and another variable names ‘val’ that we can store the incoming data on:

int analogPin = 0; // The analog pin your sensor is connected to

int val = 0; // variable to store the value read

In setup we will let the software know which baud rate we will communicate on. When viewing the incoming data in serial plotter or serial monitor, make sure this baud rate matches. 9600 is the most common to use but you can also read at 11520 bits per second or another rate if desired. Also, using ‘pinMode’ we will declare which pin we are connecting a sensor to and that it is an input rather than an output. Using ‘INPUT\_PULLUP’ rather than simply ‘INPUT’ will also initialize an internal resistor in the Arduino board which will protect it from receiving too much current at once.

void setup() {

Serial.begin(9600); // setup serial communication

pinMode(analogPin, INPUT\_PULLUP);

}

Lastly, in loop we will set our variable ‘val’ equal to the values coming in from the sensor by using ‘analogRead’ and ask that value to be printed to serial at the speed of the baud rate we chose in setup.

Because the ‘void loop’ function loops continuously, the changing values from our analog sensor(s) will continuously change as well, which we can use in software such as TouchDesigner, Max MSP, PureData, Processing, and many others to create real-time changing sounds and visuals for our very own environmental data visualizations and sonification. Visualizing and/or sonifying data is not only interesting and useful in art but has also been used by scientists to help with data analysis.

Now try out one of the sensors you just made outdoors and have a look at its incoming data using either Serial Plotter or Serial Monitor!

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PART 3: Setting up the Sensors

For this guide, I cited all four of the sensors at Stong Pond, on the campus of York University.

Now we are ready to set these up outside to receive streaming data for use in artwork. That could be an environmentally responsive sculpture in a remote gallery, a real-time animation or sound work, a game that incorporates the environmental data, or anything else you envision. In a world in which human-induced changes in our environment are ever more pressing, these methods provide ample opportunity to make art that is not only about the environmental but is a real-time expression of it.

Here a diagram that shows how all four of these DIY sensors we have made should be connected to the Arduino microcontroller via analog pin A0. Any of the analog pins will work, but be sure to make changes in the code if doing so. It’s a simple set-up and includes only a 10k Ohm resistor to protect the arduino. We have also initiated the internal “pull-up” resistor in our code above, but this offers helpful additional protection..

MOISTURE SENSOR

Below is the moisture sensor. The more moisture the sponge absorbs, the lower the resistance and the higher the millivolt readings that can be observed in Arduino and used as variables in artworks.

[Three images are shown on the right half of the page. The first and second image show different angles of the moisture sensor, a square of sponge and two jumper cables, placed in the mud of a shoreline. The third image shows a drawing of a circuit. The circuit contains a photocell and resistor placed into a breadboard. Wires connect both to a Arduino Uno board, powered by USB.]

Pape 22:

Footstep Sensor

For the footstep sensor, I cited it under a leaf along a narrow path through the grass. When animals (or people) step onto it, the sensor will log it. Please note, that waterproof housing is necessary for leaving electronics outside for a long time, which is not shown below. For long term remote sensing, I recommend water & dustproof electrical junction boxes (IP66 rating) and airtight cable glands, such as this one below:

[Five images are shown. The image on the top right of the page shows a waterproof electrical junction box. Three images below it show a footstep sensor, breadboard, and power source cited along a narrow path in a field. Lastly an image at the bottom of the page shows a breadboard and wind sensor placed in a tree.]

Wind Sensor

As the wind blows the wind sensor, as shown in the video below, the amount of light reaching the photoresistor changes and the variable millivolt reading can be read through an analog pin of the Arduino.

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Raindrop Sensor

The raindrop sensor is shown below with just a breadboard and power bank, but again, if logging for any length of time, use an IP rated container for everything but the raindrop sensor itself.

[Three images show different views of a raindrop sensor placed on a boulder in a field.]

Suggested next steps:

1. Log your environmental data for later use or condensing into a time elapse. My recommendation is Arduino’s cloud agent because of it’s ease of use, extensive tutorials and supportive community, but there are many options online or later you can learn to create your own.https://app.arduino.cc/
2. Stream the data from Arduino to TouchDesigner for environmentally generative real-time graphics, video manipulation and more. A good place to start is the following tutorial, and there are others online as well. [https://derivative.ca/community-post/tutorial/how-use-touchdesigner-arduino](https://derivative.ca/community-post/tutorial/how-use-touchdesigner-arduino%20%20-together/65273)

[-together/65273](https://derivative.ca/community-post/tutorial/how-use-touchdesigner-arduino%20%20-together/65273)

1. Stream the data from Arduino into Max MSP, a great software choice for not only audio and data sonification but animations and video playback as well. https://maker.pro/arduino/tutorial/how-to-send-and-receive-data-between-an-arduino-and-maxmsp

There are many other options as well including Processing, PureData, Unreal Engine and Godot Engine - the choice is yours!

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Machinic Observation System for Weather and Atmosphere,In Conversation with Chat GPT, Marcus Gordon

[The image shows a grainy and desaturated photograph of York University’s Stong Pond, lined by trees, which are reflected in the water]

Can you describe the weather in this photo and describe the atmosphere?

Certainly! The photo depicts a scene of calm and somewhat overcast weather. The sky is covered with a layer of gray clouds, suggesting the possibility of rain or that it has recently rained. The overall lighting is muted, giving the scene a subdued and tranquil atmosphere. The air likely feels cool and damp due to the cloud cover and potential recent precipitation. The atmosphere in the photo is peaceful and somewhat reflective. The gray tones and absence of strong sunlight create a serene and contemplative mood. There is a sense of stillness in the scene, as if the world is quietly waiting for something, or perhaps simply resting. This kind of weather often evokes a cozy, introspective feeling, inviting people to stay indoors with a warm drink or take a quiet walk to enjoy the calm surroundings.

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How would you translate this into poetry?

Gray clouds blanket the sky,

Whispers of rain lingering nearby,

A muted light, soft and shy,

Holds the world in a tranquil sigh.

The air is cool, the ground is damp,

Nature's quiet, a peaceful camp,

Stillness settles like a gentle lamp,

In this calm, thoughts revamp.

The day rests in a subdued hue,

Inviting moments old and new,

In quiet reflection, skies askew,

A contemplative mood ensues.

Here, in the gray and soft repose,

The world in gentle pause does close,

Wrapped in serenity, it shows,

The beauty in stillness that grows.

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Minutecasting Atmospheres and Microclimates

An Exercise of Remote Sensing and Aesthetic Perception, Aftab Mirzaei

[A radial graph (concentric circles) frames the left side of the page. The spokes display different qualities of air, including Climatic, Temperature, Humidity, Density, Velocity.]

Nowcasting refers to localized forecasts focused on thunderstorms, rainfall, and other short-term weather events in meteorology. These forecasts are derived from radar and satellite observations of local atmospheric conditions, which are processed by meteorologists using computer models. These models leverage accumulated expert knowledge, enabling meteorologists to produce quick and consistent forecasts across large areas.

Historically, however, knowing the mechanics of the sky and the characteristics of the weather was about intimate observations of the environment and sensitivity to patterns across different scales. Knowing the weather and environment was grounded, experiential, embodied, and often more than human.

Our Minutecasting training module was created with the guidance of Tomie Hahn, an artist, ethnomusicologist, and expert in embodied cultural knowledge, senses, and transmission. This exercise aims to attune practitioners to the thickness of microclimates and the affective atmospheres that surround them. The training is rooted in aesthetic perception and practice as a capacity to perceive and be concerned–a capacity to make oneself sensitive to atmospheres that contain and shape everyday life, politics, and possibilities. In the following pages, we share a few examples from our Winter 2023-2024 training, followed by a guide to conduct your own program.

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Minutecasting

Minutecasting

[The background of the page is overlaid with abstract watercolour painting in grey, blue, and eggshell colours]

For Trainers

1. Schedule a number of alerts to send to participants. The pings prompt participants to attune to their atmosphere through a specific sense/modality. Share the following instructions with the participants:

2. Upon receiving the prompt, close your eyes and take 30-60 seconds to focus on the surrounding atmosphere.

3. You can choose to do this through one or more modalities (i.e. vision, sound, smell; you can follow the light, listen to the wind, sense the air, temperature, humidity, movement)

4. Take a few minutes to express your experience in a few words, whether handwritten or typed. You can also draw, photograph, or use any other medium and send it to me. At minimum, a few words are required.

5. Tag your entry with relevant geographic information so that your Minutecast can be paired with meteorological data.

Practical considerations

Ideally, 4-5 recordings should be made.

Submissions can be made through email, WhatsApp, or whatever else works for ease and comfort.

Participants may not be able to respond or send their response exactly when you receive the Ping. We ask that you record something as soon as you can and send it when possible.

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[The background of the page is overlaid with an abstract watercolors in grey, blue, eggshell colours]

November 29, 2023, 6:20 PM IST, in Santiniketan, India (specifically in the Ballavpur area)

AC

I am in my childhood home, upstairs, there is a fluorescent light buzzing. Spotify is playing "Noor" by the Gobi Desert Collective. The air is still, but cool and dry. My feet are on blankets and my back is on pillows. There is a faint smell of flowers - I am not sure if that's real or from the detergent. Textures are all around very soft, but my body feels tense and lost. I am tired and want to be alone and rest for a long time. It's dark outside and the fluorescent light in my room and the darkness outside tells me that it's later in the year on the eve of winter, when it will only get drier and cooler.

[The paragraph is preceded by a three small sketches of a desk lamp]

23/11/23 10:57pm - bedroom, Maldon

19C and cooling after a high of 29C. no wind.

AW

In this room there are three small lamps lighting the rough mud brick walls different shades of muted yellow. One is low wattage Ikea, one is a traditional oily ex-kitchen lamp (Johns’) and three is a shapely BenQ computer E-screen lamp with colour temp adjustment, tilt adjust, set to be nearly as warm as the others. I am wondering if “playing yellow” is stressing it out. I imagine it now must idle at a speed that makes it emit an inaudible but stressful ultrasonic frequency that only bats can hear. And I know It is doing this for my benefit. Soon I will turn it off by tapping the touch sensitive ring at the top of it, and it will pass on a mild electrocution to which I have become accustomed.

sound: public broadcaster approved classical music plays quietly from the adjoining bedroom off an iPhone (bothersome). literal crickets outside. corrugate roof metal cooling with occasional creaking.

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Performative Gesture of Mediation

Engaging with Haunting Representations of Environmental Phenomena

Nava Messas Waxman & Hiromune Kubayashi

We live in a post-epoch time where human activity now dominates the climate and environment, its influence present in every ecological interaction and every aspect of our surroundings. This era is marked by profound changes and challenges, altering the very fabric of the natural world in ways that are both visible and hidden.

Even this picturesque and pastoral pond feels like a deceptive envelope that has buried beneath it stories and names, events and natural processes that occurred here before everything was coated in feigned pastoralism. This body of water, though seemingly serene, holds within it the remnants of a time before human intervention reshaped it entirely. I’ve been wondering and wandering; what is present and how to measure scientific data that can tell about the environmental and atmospheric condition?

[Top image - A photograph taken during our performative intervention at the Stong Pond. The photograph shows a large rock surrounded by trees. The rock was covered with blue cloth. On top of the cloth, there is an incense bowl.

Bottom image - Still from video documentation taken at the Stong Pond. The camera is set to record the water, showing the conditions underneath, and some objects that were thrown into the pond, such as concrete stones and wood.]

Strong Pond is a human-made body of water, specifically designed for retention of stormwater and flood protection in the York University campus area.

This pond elicits for me a mixed feeling, shivers of memory clashing with greenery, visual quietness, and gray noises. Despite being a location that students appear to value, its state of disrepair implies neglect. Issues such as contaminated water, trash, and dirt are apparent, detracting from its aesthetic and ecological value.

The Pond also serves as a vital water source for local wildlife, providing a habitat for various species. However, it's disheartening to observe geese and ducks swimming in murky water, a stark reminder of the environmental impact we have on even the most tranquil places.

In reflecting upon the pond, one can't help but consider the broader implications of human influence on nature. The pond, with its dual role as a functional infrastructure and a wildlife habitat, symbolizes the complex relationship between human needs and environmental stewardship. It stands as a testament to both our capability to engineer solutions and our responsibility to maintain and protect the natural world we alter.

In her work "Ghostly Matters," sociologist Avery Gordon uses haunting as a research method to examine a present marked by a past insisting on a seething presence. For Gordon, haunting challenges traditional scientific methods by recognizing the disquieting presence of what appears to be absent. This concept, known as hauntology, offers a method for artistic research to explore the fleeting but powerful specters that linger amidst environmental crises. Through repeated visits and collaborative encounters at the pond, I've sensed an unsettling, uncanny presence haunting its surroundings. Returning to the Stong pond environment at York University campus invoked awareness of our embodiment interwoven with environmental and invisible entities.

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[A watercolor drawing with text:

My body is learning to sense the place

The pond on the other side of the world

Arriving after crossing thorough the Atlas

Mountains in Morocco a few moths ago

I stand facing a field of stones at the

Foot of the mountains, and everything seems pastorial

I deep tremor in the heart

And a silent. An attractive

Stance to realize that I did not arrive here

By chance. The field of stones in walking

On is an ancient Jewish cemetery where my ancestors are buried, including my

Great-grandmother, and

An aunt who died at the age of three, who’s burial

Site is unknown. As I was, I observe and

Identify a marked engraving on a tombstone, and here is another stone that

Has rolled down the field slop, inscribed in Hebrew. Not far from here, a stream that cross between

The Atlas Mountains and the ancient cemetery passes

Seventy years, the stream has

Shifted its course towards the burial field

And with the force of

The water and flooding, the stream

Has washed away the tombstones, blurring this

Sacred place. The tombstone made of rocks,

Are no longer in their place; they have detached

From the burial site and mixed into the field. What

Remaining to remember? Beyond marking the land?

I do not need to find a specific grave to feel the people

And the place. Nature has its own laws, but it’s

A less painful erasure than human

Intervention becoming more violent. Thus

I think sometimes it is

Better to let the stream

Flow.

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Performative Gesture of Mediation

Engaging with Haunting Representations

What does it mean to approach the performative gesture of mediation as artistic research? How can modes of mediation be utilized to engage with the representation of environmental phenomena, and what aesthetic forms might it generate?

Inspired by Avery Gordon's use of haunting as an artistic research method, we explore "Ghostly Matters": an environmental present marked by a past insisting on a seething presence. For Gordon, haunting challenges traditional scientific methods by recognizing the disquieting presence of what appears to be absent. This concept, known as hauntology, offers a method for artistic research to explore specters lingering amidst environmental crises.

Through repeated visits and collaborative encounters at Stong Pond, we've sensed an unsettling, uncanny presence haunting its surroundings. Returning to the Pond invoked awareness of our embodied presence interwoven with environmental and invisible entities. These engagements with the immediate surroundings embrace chance encounters in real-time, embodied listening, sensing, and speculative reflection. Each embodied act of mediation thus becomes a gesture that generates representations of environmental phenomena.

Engaging with haunting representations of environmental data through performative actions, props, site-specific interventions, embodied listening, and experimental recording. The documentation materials are then reconstructed to create a transmedia installation comprising performance videos, projected images, objects, and an augmented reality interactive soundscape.

We document our on-site process using experimental audio-visual recordings. This data transcends traditional scientific methods of mapping and measuring environmental conditions. Instead, it employs performative modes that engage with speculative and poetic representations of environmental and atmospheric phenomena.

We reconstruct these recordings through experimental choreographies of mediation, utilizing video editing, Adobe Augmented Reality Environment, MaxMSP, and TouchDesigner. The resulting transmedia installation features performative videos, moving image projections, encaustic objects, and a dynamic sound composition that users can interact with both within the installation space and in their own environments.

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Fieldnotes

Each of us engaged freely in various activities around The Pond to gather hauntological data using audio equipment, photography, video, and intuitive spiritual senses. The data collected was experiential. Here are fieldnotes and data obtained by Hiro from our spontaneous actions around the pond, in his words.

1. White Balloon (Light) and Shadow

First, I hung a white balloon from a tree like a wind chime, tying a piece of rubber he found on the ground to the balloon and suspending it from a branch. Nava covered a monument with a blue cloth beneath the balloon. At the time, I wasn't sure what he was trying to demonstrate. The sunlight filtering through the leaves seemed to connect with the white balloon's glow. The combination of the white balloon, blue cloth, sunlight, and greenery created a subtle piece of art. Looking at the ground, he noticed the balloon's shadow. The contrast between the white balloon and its dark shadow seemed to invite ghosts.

2.Accidental Natural Music

I played a frying pan using an air pump. The rhythm echoed through the forest, reminiscent of the wooden fish sound at Japanese temples, though it was the metallic sound of striking the pan. Despite being in Canada, I felt like I was in Totoro's Forest in his hometown of Tokorozawa, Japan. The natural setting combined with familiar temple sounds transported me back home. Birds sang in the background, creating a new form of music with the frying pan's sound.

3.Messages from the Trees

I made various marks on a white wax-coated board prepared by Nava. He rubbed the board against a tree surface, then collected about ten different branches from the forest to make vertical, horizontal, and diagonal marks on the board. Sometimes, I pressed the branches against the board like a stamp. I rubbed a pine cone on the board. The trees, having endured rain, wind, and snow, conveyed their messages through the board.

[A photograph taken during our performative intervention at the Stong Pond. The photograph shows a large rock surrounded by trees. The rock was covered with blue cloth. A hanging white balloon indicates the direction of the wind.]

The commonality in these three activities is the absence of specific motives. His actions were based on intuitive spiritual sensations He felt while exploring the natural surroundings of the Pond. Just as people's moods change with the weather, his actions were guided by his feelings at that moment. Different weather conditions would have likely led to different data.

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Through experimental mark-making, we mediated the environmental sound through inscriptions onto an encaustic panel using rock and wooden sticks as tools. We inscribed environmental sounds onto the surfaces, translating and mediating the wind, birdsongs, water ripples, and white noise.

Wondering and wandering through walking as a method of collecting data through audiovisual recording, becoming intermediary bodies carrying movement and sound as data, inscribed on our marking surface and digital recording devices. There are things that stayed with us, collected data that could not be translated into any scientific, visual, or linguistic forms, and became an anarchived, inwards inscription of data.

Choreographies of Mediation

The second part of the process involves various choreographic strategies of reconstructing the audio-visual documentation recording, using various digital new-media applications, such as video editing, Adobe Augmented Reality Environment, and MaxMSP.

I utilized granular synthesis in Max MSP to create intricate textures and compositions from the sound recordings. The reconstructed sound materials were then mediated to the AR environment. In addition to this, I transformed the physical encaustic objects into virtual assets. These virtual assets were then integrated into the augmented reality (AR) environment. Alongside these virtual representations of the encaustic objects, I also included other 3D objects that conceptually represent the pond environment.

Other artistic forms include the encaustic objects and performative videos that could potentially be used in multimedia installation that include the physical encaustic objects, moving image projection, and the AR interactive soundscape that intertwines with the physical space of the installation. Through these choreographies of mediation, we propose performative approaches to create transmedial artwork that engages with haunting representations of the environment.

[image Description: Blue encaustic on wood — the inscriptions on the encaustic surface are mark-making as a form of collecting sound data from the pond.]

[image Description: White encaustic on wood — the inscriptions on the encaustic surface are mark-making as a form of collecting sound data from the pond.]

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Step-by-Step Guide

Step 1: Site Selection and Initial Engagement

Choose a site with personal or ecological significance, like an urban park or neglected water body. Visit at different times and weather conditions. Observe human interaction with nature, noting neglect or coexistence. Record your observations.

Step 2: Performative Engagement and Data Collection

Engage with the site through performative actions such as walking, marking, or other gestural interactions that resonate with the environment. Use these actions to explore the sensory and emotional impacts of the space. Choose Mark-making tools, such as pencil, ink and chalk. Sharp noises can be shown with hard lines, while softer sounds with curvy marks. Experimenting with materials alters sound interpretation. As you listen or recall the sounds, start drawing on your chosen surface. Let the rhythm, pitch, and volume guide your movements. Documenting the Experience: Use audio-visual devices to record these engagements. Focus on capturing the nuances of interaction between your actions and the environment. This could include sounds of the interactions, the visual record of changes you make or observe, and your movements within the space.

Step 3: Reflective Journaling and Conceptual Development:

After each visit, record your reflections on the experience, focusing on what felt significant, surprising, or revealing. This reflective practice is crucial for developing deeper insights into the environmental and personal interactions occurring at the site. Begin to map out how these reflections and recorded data might inform a larger artistic inquiry. Consider how themes of haunting, memory, and environmental interaction can be represented through your chosen media.

Step 4: Experimental Recording and Mediation:

Utilize the recordings and other collected materials to create experimental compositions. This might involve editing audio to highlight certain sounds, creating video montages, or developing photographic series that emphasize specific aspects of the site.

Step 5: Installation and Interactive Elements.

This part can be experimental and based on chosen space\place to present that work\*\*.\*\* Plan an installation that integrates the mediated recordings with physical elements from or inspired by the site. This could include objects found at the site, or other materials that symbolize the environmental and cultural narratives you have explored.

Interactive Components

Consider using Augmented Reality environments to design and reconstruct the audiovisual materials into an interactive experience. The spatial audio engine built into Adobe Aero will allow you to effectively design multi-sensory experiences, where sounds are triggered based on actions taken by the user. Audio in Aero works via a simple import feature that allows you to bring .WAV and .MP3 files into the app. This makes it easy to design an accurate soundscape for any AR experience, tied to the layout of the digital objects in a room. The level and frequency of these sounds can also be altered based on a viewer’s actions and directional changes.

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[Two almost identical photos above the title show some trees illuminated by a bright spotlight against a pitch-dark sky. On one image, a yellow text in a nonuniform yellow font reads, “ In the beginning, the first thing inherited holes.”]

Like A Labyrinth; Getting Lost, Tracing The Edge

Darian Razdar

Holes and Edges

Holes are everywhere. Perhaps ever since Einstein’s theory of general relativity, holes have circulated between scientific and artistic discourses. From Hawking’s black holes to Pope.L’s Hole Theory, from Karen Barad’s quantum field theory of the void to glory holes proliferating pandemic safer sex practices, or even from the holes perforating the epidermal layer to the “i’m just a hole, sir” meme circulating bottom Twitter. . . at this point, we’re well aware of the ubiquity and omnipotence of the hole. The void is no longer where ideas go to die, for they have shown us that they are where ideas go to mingle, move, dissolve, and transform.

But what about edges?

Every hole has its edge, and every edge its hole.

Little theorized, the edge is what defines a hole. Without the event horizon, black holes would not exist. Without the flesh of the lips, labia or anus, there would be no landmarks for entrances or exits in our body.

My interest in edges began with Anne Carson’s reading of ancient Greek poetry in Eros the Bittersweet. For Carson, Eros creates holes and makes those already holey even more apparent. “A hole is being gnawed in my vitals” qu0tes Carson of Sappho as she senses the void between herself and her beloved. “Who is the real subject of most love poems?” Carson asks, “Not the beloved. It is that hole.”

Labyrinths

It’s only fitting that the idea of the edge, which first appeared to me via Carson’s translation of ancient Greek literature, re-appeared in the form of the Minoan myth of the Labyrinth. The book Four Times Through the Labyrinth caught my eye at the Spector Books table at the 2024 New York Art Book Fair. Following four scholars from the original myth of Theseus and the Minotaur and proceeding in different, though often intersecting directions, the book covers the labyrinth-form from urban design to game theory and migration to militarism.9

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Immediately after NYABF I traveled to Wakefield, Québec for a week-long residency hosted by UKAI Projects at Ferme Lanthorn. Entitled “Intelligent Terrain,” a small group of artists and creative technologists gathered on this regenerative farm to experiment with ideas of ecological and artificial intelligence through material and land-based practices. Arriving with the idea of exploring edges, and with Four Times Through the Labyrinth in hand, I was reminded by my peers that labyrinths are all edge. That is, the edge functions as the labyrinth’s defining feature, without which — much like desire — it would not exist.

Tasked with creating a piece to present to the lower Gatineau River community on the residency’s final day, I determined to explore edges through the idiom of the labyrinth. I wanted to create a film-poem. I came prepared to use my method of choice, poetry, to move through this space, while eager to challenge myself to work with moving image and sound — two methods of my lesser acquaintance.

Could I integrate poetry and audiovisual to my liking? How would I be able to trace the edges of the labyrinth with these technologies? Where would I find the edges at Ferme Lanthorn? How would I respond to the question of intelligence to which we were gathered to respond?

Disorientation

I got lost.

In Four Times Through the Labyrinth, writer and publisher Anne König asks, “Does one’s sense of direction improve, the more one knows? Or is it even harder to find the way when one knows how easy it is to get lost?”10 In Queer Phenomenology, Sara Ahmed offers a sort of response: “‘getting lost’ still takes us somewhere.”11 Ahmed continues: “risking departure from the straight and narrow makes new futures possible” and that such departures “might involve going astray, getting lost, or even becoming queer.”12

Ferme Lanthorn is situated on the edge between rural countryside on the east and mountainous old growth forests to the west. Through it snakes a tributary of the Gatineau River, which flows into the Ottawa and then mixes with the St. Lawrence before reaching the Atlantic Ocean. On a morning walk surveying the land on which I might record in my film-poem, I fell into this tributary while attempting to cross over it on a mossy felled tree. I earned a few bloody scratches and a broken camera in those still-thawing waters on… [cont.]

[Two images line the bottom of the page. The image on the left shows a magnified view of the terrain through a lens. The image appears in a circle in the middle against a dark background, with the text “ I used to enter as a hole” in a yellow font. The image on the right shows the partial view of the author’s face through a 360 camera lens turned towards themselves with their arms stretched out towards the edges of the frame. The text on the image reads “and angel’s simulations: we’re all consequence”.

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[Two images line the top of the page above the text. The photograph shows the author with their hands on a gooseneck phone holder attached to the bike helmet on their head. The photograph to the right shows the author wearing their camera-helmet contraption against a green field and cloudy sky. Text on the image reads “in case I am integrated by chance]

…their way to sea. It was the fall that made me realize that I needed to fall even further, to get even more lost in this landscape in order to make the thing I came here to make.

Equipped with a GoPro, 360 camera, and Sony Handycam lended to me by fellow residents, and my iPhone 11 paired with detachable 45x microscope lens, I set out for a rural and wild dérive. I followed trails, traced fence-edges and tree-edges into forests, finding myself at times genuinely lost under the canopy of budding maple and birch while wading through underbrush of vernal saplings, trillium, and fiddlehead fern.

First filming on GoPro, I made use of the camera’s nimble nature and easy-to-grasp tripod. The camera became a removable appendage — holding it as I walked and placing it down for stable shots of the forest, fields, and streams. This got me thinking about the tools I use and their entanglement with my body. Were they as lost as I?

Remembering Edouardo Williams’s use of 360 video in Human Surge 3, I clipped a “gooseneck” desktop phone holder with a “flexible lazy arm” to the top of a bike helmet and switched out the phone clamp for the 360 camera.13 Walking around with this contraption on my head was cumbersome — the clip didn’t fit well on the helmet and would sink over the course of my walk — and it hurt. In the film you see me manually adjusting the lazy arm so as to be a little less lazy.

I lost myself in scale just as I did in the field. Using a handy detachable 45x iphone camera lens, I gained access to a microscopic world — new topographies full of holes and edges. Training my microscope toward moss, lichen, tree bark, fungi, paper, silk, and felted wool opened a new layer of disorientation from which I could look back out at the world.“In order to become oriented, you might suppose that we experience disorientation.”14

[Two images appear side by side at the bottom of the page. The left image taken by the 360 camera shows the author against the forest background with a small stream in the background. The text on the photo reads “we’ll create it and pretend to be like it. Not unified, but with some consistency. The image on the right shows the author’s hand holding a phone to the forest floor. The text on the photo reads: “edging the myth of the body as a body, coming”]

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Body

The only way I could make sense of my disorientation was through the body. We often talk about certain practices as embodied — as routing themselves through the body as if every other human practice isn’t already. When I talk about the body, I mean the thing that is always already there, that is never not invisible. And yet, as we discussed during this residency, we often forget that our fleshy bodies are what make us us.

When we buy into anxiety about Artificial Intelligence replacing humans, we forget that the hallmark of biological intelligence — the ability to learn and make meaning out of information — is that information is transfigured by a body's electrochemical signals. Unease in my microbiome, cool breeze against my sweaty brow, feeling of joy when I read the right page at the right time — such bodily sensations condition my intelligence. In this light, human intelligence can be extrapolated to animal intelligence, plant intelligence, soil intelligence, and even water or mineral intelligence, but not quite artificial intelligence.

This approach to embodied intelligence speaks alongside Ada Smailbegovic’s Poetics of Liveliness when she asks: “How can language index or somehow register in its syntactic and rhythmic unfolding the temporal flux of materiality that makes and unmakes the rich variability of animal, plant, and mineral worlds?”15 In other words, how might acts of human creativity address the many worlds in which they are inscribed?

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[The text “ Like a Labyrinth” in an black rectangle nonuniform yellow font against a black background]

1 William Pope.L, “Hole Theory—Parts: Four and Five” in William Pope L.: The Friendliest Black Artist in America, ed. Mark H.C. Bessire (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 76-110.

2 Karen Michelle Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway : Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

3 “Lacan talks about the significance of edges — how sex is not so much the urge to get inside, or to have something within one(self), so much as the desire to oscillate across the threshold established between inside and outside. Thus, the parts that are the landmarks to our entrances are desirable — lips, anus, labia, slit at the tip of the penis, eyelid, and ear — but not the liver, not the lungs.” Anthony Howell, The Analysis of Performance Art : A Guide to Its Theory and Practice (London ; Routledge, 2000), 1.

4 Anne Carson, Eros the Bittersweet : An Essay (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023), 34

5 Carson, 32.

6 Carson, 30

7 Carson, 109.

8 Of course there are other ways to interpret the edge — through the form of borders, boundaries, shores, and skin — that might lead to different onclusions about the nature of edges. For instance, the porous edge of the epidermis mediates contact between the internal body and the atmosphere, and every wall that separates necessitates a door for certain peoples’ movement. Such edges are never not already breached.

9 Four Times Through the Labyrinth, ed. Olaf Nicolai and Jan Wenzel, trans. Sadie Plant (Leipzig & Zürich: Spector Books and Rollo Press, 2012).

10 Annette König, “Orientation / Disorientation: Tati Halle-Neustadt, Debord, etc.” in Four Times Through the Labyrinth, ed. Olaf Nicolai and Jan Wenzel, trans. Sadie Plant (Leipzig & Zürich: Spector Books & Rollo Press, 2012), 165.

11 Sara Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology Orientations, Objects, Others (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 7.

12 Ahmed, 21.

13 Quoted are technical terms for the kind of bendable, flexible standing phone holder common on desktops in 2024.

14 Ahmed, 5.

15 Ada Smailbegovic, Poetics of Liveliness : Molecules, Fibers, Tissues, Clouds (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 15.

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The n-D::StudioLab is an adaptable space for research-creation based theoretical

discourse, methodological development, and the production of works in the areas of

ArtScience, Computational Art, and Interactive Architecture. In addition, there is an

emphasis on methodological development in the integration of software development,

digital fabrication, electronics hardware development, and sound and vision research with the goal of creating eversive works that blur the divide between the virtual and the real.

Since its inception in October 2011 the n-D::StudioLab has been involved in the research and development of several works that have been shown internationally in such places as Toronto’s Nuit Blanche, the Deutches Museum, the Dutch Electronic Arts Festival (DEAF), the Re-New Fesitval in Copenhagen, the Sydney Biennale, Currents New Media, ISEA International, and the Venice Biennale.

The “n” in n-D refers to vast potential and the infinite, whereas the “D” inn-D refers to:

• n-Disciplinary – trans-disciplinary, blurring boundaries, cross breeding and evolving

fields

• n-Dimensional – expanding, complex and continuous

• n-Domain – trans-sensory, trans-experiential, transmodal

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nD::StudioLab members—

Filiz Eryilmaz, Digital Media, (HBA 2018, MA 2023)

Hrysovalanti Maheras, Digital Media MA (2020), Ph.D. (since 2020) [www.hfmaheras.com](http://www.hfmaheras.com)

Francesc Morales, (Since 2017)

Marcus Gordon, Ph.D., Digital Media, (2024), [www.magfoto.xyz](http://www.magfoto.xyz)

Jacob Cram, MA, Digital Media (2020) <jacobcram.xyz>

Aftab Mirzaei, Ph.D., Science and Technology Studies (since 2020)

Ilze Briede [Kavi], Ph.D., Digital Media (since 2020), [www.ka-vi.com](http://www.ka-vi.com)

Kwame Kyei-Boateng, MA Digital Media (2023)

Grace Grothaus, Ph.D., Digital Media (since 2021), [www.gracegrothaus.com](http://www.gracegrothaus.com)

Eyal Assaf, Ph.D., Digital Media (since 2022)

Nava Messas-Waxman, Ph.D., Visual Arts (since 2022), [www.navawaxman.com](http://www.navawaxman.com)

Boluwaji [Boma] Adeyanju, MA Digital Media (since 2023)

Hiromune Kubayashi, HBA, Digital Media (since 2023)

Wen Luo, MA Digital Media (since 2023)

Xuan Han MA Digital Media (since 2023)

# **TransRural Lives**

Dr. M. Eliatamby-O’Brien and Dr. Griff Tester

[Front cover image: A rural landscape.“TransRural Lives: a digital storytelling project” is write across the image.]

Page 2:

TransRural Lives

*TransRural Lives* is the first digital storytelling project that, through interviews, archival materials, and scholarly interpretation, explores the lives of transgender older adults (ages 50+) from non-metropolitan areas in the Pacific Northwest (PNW). This digital project seeks to document and make accessible these understudied narratives and the histories they reveal through an interactive website. Through scholarly guides that will be published on the project’s website, *TransRural Lives* also offers analytical examinations of thematics related to transgender older adults and rural living left out of prevailing socio-political discussions of transgender lives today. We’re also working with two community partners to specifically collect stories from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color transgender older adults: the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Broad’s [Paths (Re)Membered Project](https://www.pathsremembered.org/), which centres health equity for Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ Indigenous communities, and The Pride Foundation’s [CARE: Community Advocacy, Research, and Education Department](https://pridefoundation.org/community-impact/initiatives/about-care/).

The Goal:

50-60 unstructured interviews undertaken by the project team that, once analyzed and edited into ~600 audio vignettes reflecting diverse experiences, will be uploaded to the *TransRural Lives* website alongside relevant archival materials.

Digital Storytelling: the production of life narrative through workshops and interviews that produces digital stories: audio-visual vignettes ~2-5 mins in length which present a first-person voiceover in conjunction with visual material, edited on consumer-grade computers and software

Propagates ideas about the power of. a story to “foster and promote community bonds through the exchange of narratives of life experience” and invites a high degree of personal interactivity from and between participants (Smith and Watson, 2001)

Page 3:

Research Gaps

* Limited research on older adults in queer studies often yokes together lesbians, gay, and transgender older adults
  + Transgender people experience drastically different health- and community-building challenges (Darwin 2020; Fabbre and Garveres 2020; Fredriksen-Goldsen et al. 2014)
* Medicine, public health, and gerontology have expanded research on queer aging in the last 15 years but has not yet focused on trans lives
* Much interdisciplinary scholarship has neglected the urban-rural distinction, creating a cultural hierarchy positioning LGBTQ+ people as primarily urban subjects (Ching and Creed 2013; Halberstam 2003; Smith and Mancoske 1997)
* Rural studies largely ignores fluid and subjective sociocultural rurality, limiting visibility of the complexity of rural identities and practices, including those that are subversive and (re)claim rural places and identities (Halfacree 2006; Stapel 2014)

Research Questions:

* How do transgender older adults map their experiences given historical and ongoing barriers to gender-affirming care?
* How does rurality in the Pacific Northwest and the lack of community therein shape their experiences?
* How have their networks shifted throughout their lives, particularly as their gender identities have shifted over their life course?
* Is a linear developmental narrative even possible for trans older adults with lengthy and complex relationships to past and present live(s)?
* What alternative forms of narrativization might be necessary?
* And how are rural transgender older adults queering or trans-forming social constructions of gender and aging?

[Two images of the TransRural Lives logo.]

*TransRural Lives* attends to these significant gaps in knowledge about transgender experiences lost in chronological developmental narratives and begins to uncover the lesser-known socio-cultural, geographic, and historical factors that have complicated transgender identity formation across time.

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Interviews: Project Cornerstone

We draw on LGBTQ+ archives and qualitative data collection through 50-60 interviews in combination with interpretive digital storytelling practices: narrative analysis, editing, tagging, and uploading of transcribed audio clips alongside archival material and scholarly interpretations. This approach allows us to engage with currently-available archival narratives of transgender older adults in the PNW, and expand this history by directly documenting and interpreting their stories. Stories are collected using an unstructured interview format which lasts 1-2 hours, either online or in-person based on participants’ needs and location.

Interviews with Indigenous Elders are completed by paid Two Spirit or Indigiqueer interviewers connected to the Paths (Re)Membered Project and will largely be grouped-based, consistent with Indigenous storytelling practices. Paths (Re)Membered will also be part of the narrative analysis and tagging processes of Indigenous Elders’ stories.

How do we reach participants?

* Word of mouth
* Trans support groups (virtual and f2f)
* Social media
* Relationships with other LGBTQ+ projects in the PNW

An example of our call for participants specifically for 2S & Trans Indigenous Elders:

[Image of a flyer calling for participants, noting participation requirements, eligibility, and contact information.]

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Unstructured Interviews

Medical rhetoric about transgender experiences has overemphasized ideals of chronological transition from one gender to another as a way of determining who precisely meets standards for care. This focus has necessarily inflected activist spaces, legal discussions, and cultural discourse broadly about current conceptions of who is “trans enough” (Ashley 2021; Stryker 2017).

For older transgender adults, their non-sequential gender journeys may “loop” between identities, but they are often compelled to relate their experiences to consecutive milestones—such as shifts in gender expression, name changes, and medical transition (Bettcher 2009; Salamon 2010; Stryker 2017)

But trans storytellers may need to:

* Reconcile many different versions of personal history
* Discuss versions of themselves at odds with those held by friends and family
* Discuss being “out” at home and still their “old self” at places like work or church
* Grapple with identity changes that are often more socially maligned than universal transitions (eg. from teen to adult)

Enabling participants to move through their own narratives in whatever format they choose encourages them to provide nuanced personal insight into gender identity construction, which can help expand and resist popular and scholarly conceptions of being trans.

[Image of an arrow in the blue, pink, and white of the trans flag.]

[Image of a quote from an interview: “I can’t believe how free I feel. I was able to drop all those walls, all that protection. And now, it’s, you know what people, this is who I am. I am not going to try to hide it anymore. It’s going to be your problem, your responsibility, if you can’t accept me. Dayne]

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Unstructured Interview Process

Interviews begin by collecting basic demographic data, before asking participants general questions about:

* Current and past locations in the PNW
* Family
* What their community looks like

From the initial questions, participants initiate discussions about their gender and sexuality, realizations about their gender, access to health and community care in rural areas, and childhood experiences; subsequent questions are unstructured and build from these initial narratives.

Participants may:

* Revise comments and statements
* Use personal anecdotes to describe their experiences or relate their experience to another individual
* Decide to not directly answer the question, or ask and answer a different question
* Connect a question or comment about transition to movies, books, popular culture
* Email after-the-fact with revisions or additions
* Provide before and after snapshots of their lives and oscillate between both
* Use metaphor and illustrations when describing their experiences
* Reflect on past experiences with current awareness about their identities (eg. identify that a particular childhood event now signals to them their burgeoning trans self)

Example: Elior

[Elior](https://www.transrurallives.org/stories/elior) knew at age 11 that he was a boy, but did not transition until he was in his late 40s, despite knowing many trans and queer people. He shared that he “pushed down the, ‘I want to actually transition,’” due to lacking “serious angst…like I don't want it bad enough to be like a real trans person,” which resulted in him ignoring “all kinds of dysphoria” before “undoing it” in middle age.

[Image of Elior.]

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Archives

A key research touchstone for this project is the use of LGBTQ+ archives to help guide interviews, and ensure the project remains grounded in the specific history and events of the region that would have affected the lives of rural transgender older adults. Archives such as the [Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest](http://www.glapn.org/) and the [Northwest Lesbian and Gay History Project](http://www.lgbthistorynw.org/) have helped facilitate public and researcher access to transgender history in the PNW. Material within these archives capture events relevant to participants when they were younger, which we will explore with them during interviews.

[Image from the TransRural Lives website’s “Related Archives” page.]

[Image of a newspaper headline reading “Seattle Man-Woman Bares ‘His’ Soul”.]

[Image of a website about the film The Crying Game.]

[Image of an archival record for the zine Gender Trash #1.]

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Editing

* All interviews are transcribed; following this, narrative analysis includes established digital-humanities practices—such as data cleaning and computer-based language analysis to identify places, identity markers, and historical events—alongside methods in queer narrative analysis.
* Audio files are then edited into vignettes from 30 seconds to 3 minutes.
* Audio vignettes are uploaded to the website along with associated transcripts, descriptions of the narrative's content, digital tags that hyperlink to all similarly-tagged vignettes, links to relevant scholarly guides, and relevant archival material

[Image of transcripts from an interview.]

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Tagging

Our analysis, coding, and tagging doesn’t focus on demographic data or developmental milestones generated through text mining alone; relevant tags are generated through approaches from narrative analysis in queer studies that enable less-apparent thematics to emerge as productive to interpret and tag. Such categorization, while productive for identifying broad commonalities between trans people, cannot alone attend to the diversity of trans experiences.

* Most transgender-focused archives and storytelling projects necessarily use standardized subject and topic tags, almost exclusively in relation to
  + transition (Passing, Gender Realignment)
  + identity categories (Female to Male, Crossdressers)
  + historical markers (AIDS crisis, Stonewall)
* Cisnormative trajectory of “coming out/transition, visibility, recognition, protection, and self-actualization” (Haritaworn and Snorton, 2002).
* Older queer adults, when sharing their experiences, may use “incoherent, non-linear, and dreamlike or omnipotent storytelling to queer narratives, allowing them to ‘cruise’ across time and versions of themselves, imagining futures that were new and unscripted” (Jen and Jones, 2022).

[Image of a map of Washington State counties. Quotes from interviews are written across.]

Page 10:

Tagging Examples

[Elior](https://www.transrurallives.org/stories/elior), discusses how writing a fictional story became "a sigil to change my life. And sure enough... things that I put in the story start[ed] actually happening in my life;" while this offhanded anecdote in a story about finding community in a rural area might not initially read as being about gender, after sharing this moment, Elior returned to it as an example of engaging with his gender transition prior to formal medical transition, revealing that though he initially identified medically transitioning as the crux of his gender journey, his transition journey emerged and occurred at other moments.

[Ginger](https://www.transrurallives.org/stories/ginger) describes watching *The Partridge Family* as “always my dream, to be Laurie, you know. The teenage girl playing the keys with …the long wavy hair. Just the whole family always smiling. There was a lot of joy, ” before identifying the lack of joy within her birth family. We analyze and tag this vignette as exploring not only standard categories like “family,” but “joy” and “gender creativity,” as Ginger engaged with a fictional character to grapple with her own ideals of gender and belonging while lacking familial acceptance and gender referents in a rural area.

* Trans joy
* Trans thriving
* Gender creativity
* Repression
* TV shows
* Popular culture figures
* Gender ideals
* Unlearning gender
* Urban-rural movement
* Rural life
* Vehicles
* Clothing
* Workplace
* Community building
* Small town

“It was always my dream, to be Laurie, you know [from The Partridge Family]. The teenage girl playing the keys with ... the long wavy hair. Just the whole family was always smiling. There was a lot of joy”

TAGS: family, joy, gender creativity, TV shows, popular culture figures

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Tagging Process

We initially tagged all vignettes manually using a codebook of relevant tags and descriptions

Method we’re implementing:

* The **first stage** uses Python programming via Google Colaboratory to perform AI text mining and discourse analysis that programmatically identifies and tags each interview with prominent themes.
* Common themes we anticipate to appear include aging, health care, transitioning, coming out experiences, and participants' location.
* **Second stage** of data analysis blends text mining with queer narrative analysis to identify less apparent themes occurring across multiple stories but are unlikely to surface through first-stage analysis of common terms
* Following narrative analysis of a representative sample of interviews by our lead scholars, and isolating themes not represented in the taxonomy provided by the first stage, we use Colaboratory to locate additional thematics across all transcripts
* Preliminary Phase I research conveys individuals often identify shifting relationships to appearance, aging, support, work, spirituality, unlearning gender, gender ideals, and intimacy depending on social context, gender expression, and safety
  + a single vignette might therefore be tagged with both "trans joy" and "gender repression at work" to identify these complexities and engage less common thematics.

[Image of a list of audio vignettes from an interview.]

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Tagging Example

Example: [Tylene](https://www.transrurallives.org/transcript-tylene), In an anecdote about winning an award from her small-town community, she expressed that she “didn't have to look over [her] shoulder.”

This narrative is analyzed and tagged in relation to the thematic of “trans thriving” in addition to reflecting “community” and “rural life,” following from the arc of several participants’ stories communicating moving from feeling conditionally tolerated within their rural communities to *thriving*, where they were less concerned about how others perceived them and felt confident to fully affirm and express their gender. Digital tags that link to other thematically-related narratives and archival components will appear in different colors to connote the different types of tags: demographically-significant identifiers, and tags generated through deeper narrative analysis. A user might click on a tag related to a specific location, and within the populated vignettes and documents, see tags related to “creative community building” or “gender expression ideals'' that motivate further exploration. Similarly, we will have tags reflecting racial identity and social class, and a tag allowing users to navigate to all BIPOC narratives.

[Image of interviewees from the project.]

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Navigation

* A user might click on a tag related to a specific location, and within the populated vignettes and documents, see tags related to “creative community building” or “gender expression ideals'' that motivate further exploration
* We have tags reflecting racial identity and social class, and a tag allowing users to navigate to all BIPOC narratives.
* Future Plans: digital tags that link to other thematically-related narratives and archival components will appear in different colors to connote the different types of tags, such as demographically-significant identifiers, and tags generated through deeper narrative analysis.
* This material will be supplemented by analytical scholarly guides to assist researchers; research guides for instructors; data visualization analyses like word maps and geospatial charts; and explanatory guides to assist site navigation.

[Image of the TransRural Lives Storymap with Emily, and interviewee, imposed on top.]

Page 14:

Events and Community Building

Exploring Rural Trans and Gender Expansive Identities

[Images of speakers and hosts of the event.]

Page 15:

Events and Community Building

[Image of a flyer for the event Community Exchange: Exploring Rural Trans and Gender Expansive Identities.]

[Image of a flyer for the TransRural Elders Conference happening in October, 2024.]

Page 16:

Public Responses and Feedback

Feedback

* “This website is an excellent educational resource that goes beyond a seminar or infographic or academic paper. It provides excellent opportunity for university departments to engage with new types of research”
* “Incentivizes students to engage with real-world experiences”
* “I love being able to hear the trans adult voices. It makes them more than pictures on a screen”
* “As a cisgender person, confronting transphobia with my in-laws is hard. But after seeing older trans folx on this website I can now confidently argue when they say that being trans is only seen in young people or that they can tell when people are trans”
* “Good resource for seeing people as people versus proving their value with numbers”

[Image of feedback from tumblr.]

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