

Week 10 Presentations and review



Today - overview

- **Presentations**
- **Review of the term (and essay question)**
- **Module feedback**



Presentations



Review



Essay question (3000 words)

Our collective research topic this term has been 'fake news.' In your group projects you have investigated various ways of making sense of this recent controversy. Drawing on your experience of working on this topic, the various exploratory activities undertaken in your groups, and the in-class interviews with guest, as well as media and cultural studies readings, critically reflect on the following statement:

'In its research practice, media and cultural studies is a way of making sense of a world that works primarily through, or in reliance, on media.'

In writing your essay, you are not expected to carry out new research, but you should draw on readings, concepts and analytical approaches discussed during the course.



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- **Essay will need to**
 - Discuss what 'research practice' entails for media and cultural studies
 - Discuss what the term 'making sense' might mean
 - Interpret and evaluate the claim about 'a world that works through/relies on media'
- **Not necessarily in that order!**



How to study media cultures today?

- Media:

... a form of unevenly shared consciousness of persistently external events. [Media] is what appears to happen, in these powerfully transmitted and mediated ways, in a world within which we have no other perceptible connections but we feel is at once central and marginal to our lives. (Raymond Williams, 1973: 295-6)

- Culture

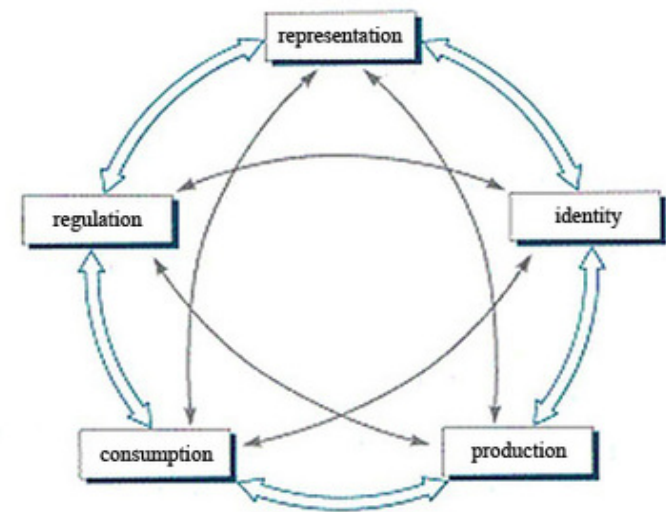


Fig. 1 du Gay et al's Circuit of Culture

Week 2

common issues of pedagogy: what exactly is it that we hope to teach, or study, in cultural studies? All these questions can be brought together in a single underlying methodological question: what is the space from which cultural studies speaks?

My answer, in essence, is that cultural studies is an expanding space for sustained, rigorous and self-reflexive empirical research into the massive, power-laden complexity of contemporary culture.

p. 1



Methods for cultural studies according to Couldry, 2001

- The single methodological question: 'what is **the space** from which cultural (and media) studies speaks?'
- The answer: 'an **expanding space** for sustained, rigorous and **self-reflexive empirical** research into the massive, **power-laden complexity** of contemporary culture' (Couldry, 2001, 1)



Couldry: what is the space from which cultural/media studies speaks?

- His answer is '**inside culture**'
 - High vs popular culture?
 - Culture as process in which **each person** participates
 - Culture does not necessarily equate to popular culture
 - The problem with popular culture
 - Culture + **power**: who does what when?
 - What else should cultural and media studies be studying if not popular culture?
 - e.g. middlebrow culture, elite experience, work, business, science, etc.



What tools/methods do we need to get inside culture?

tity can be easily read off from certain... Cultural studies, therefore, should take seriously the full complexity of being 'inside' culture.

This – to anticipate a little – is where method comes in. We should always reject short cuts in cultural description, not because we want complexity for its own sake, but because this is the only way to think culture in a non-dominative way, to recognize it as a space of multiple voices and forces. We need a theory of cultural complexity, but without lapsing into excessively complex language (a fault of some recent cultural studies). We need the tools to think about, and research, cultural complexity in a manageable way.

Page 4

- **Being 'inside culture' is complex -**
 - Find ways of questioning 'forms of address' directed at us
 - Couldry's **3** principles: **openness, complexity and reflexivity** (p.4).



Couldry: how can cultural/media studies be 'inside culture'?

- **Sociologically influenced and fully materialist methods:**
 - Look at media and cultural production (song, text, film, website, etc.) done by **specific people in particular times and places**
 - **Reflect on the conditions** under which you produce knowledge of media and culture (p.12)
- **Distinctive concern with connections between power and culture (cf. Cultural sociology)**



Couldry: media-cultural studies methods and their relation to theory

- Many different theoretical perspectives in MCS (structuralist, post-structuralist, philosophical, psychoanalysis, Marxism, etc.)
- Couldry suggests that MCS does not need to address fundamental philosophical debates
- Use theory from sociology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, philosophy if 'it can open perspectives for possible empirical work into culture' (14)



Couldry: experience and studying culture

- **Thinking about your own situation as key starting point to understanding complexity of contemporary media and cultures**
- **Individual experience connects to web of relationships**
- **Examples of 'forms of address'?**
 - Exercise: list some of the things you find yourself wanting to do when you feel distracted while writing an essay



Couldry: method and the complexity of contemporary culture

- **Materialist**: culture is the result of what particular people have done at a particular time and place, under certain constraints
- **Reflexivity** about method: think about how particular methods produce particular results or ways of seeing culture
- **Relations to theory**: pragmatic – how does it open up different empirical questions



Week 3



What is a text?

- **Text = 'complex of interrelated meanings which its readers tend to interpret as a discrete, unified whole' (Couldry, 70-71)**
- **Most famous comment in recent text theory?**
 - *il n'y a pas de hors-texte* (Derrida)
- **Are these slides a text?**



Semiotic analysis and the production of meaning

- Often used to analyse **ideology** and how structures unequal power relations
- Approach text as **systems of signs** that produce meanings
- Meanings arise from relations between signs in the text
- Analyse text by mapping those relations



Signs and meaning-making

- **Sign - key concept of basic unit of all texts**
- **Sign composed of signifier and signified, but can be attached to each other in different ways**
- **Semiotics identifies key signs in a text and analyses their relations**



Expanded definitions of 'the text'?

- **Text** = 'complex of interrelated meanings which its readers tend to interpret as a discrete, unified whole' (Couldry, 70-71)
- **Textuality** – 'the different ways in which something can function as a text for its readers' (Couldry, 71)
 - Investigate **specific forms** of textuality;
 - e.g. to compare the textuality of a magazine with a museum exhibition, you would need to compare the physicality, visual forms, arrangement of forms and materials
- **Intertextuality** = relation between texts (e.g. film + merchandise)



Textual environment: text and reader are co-produced

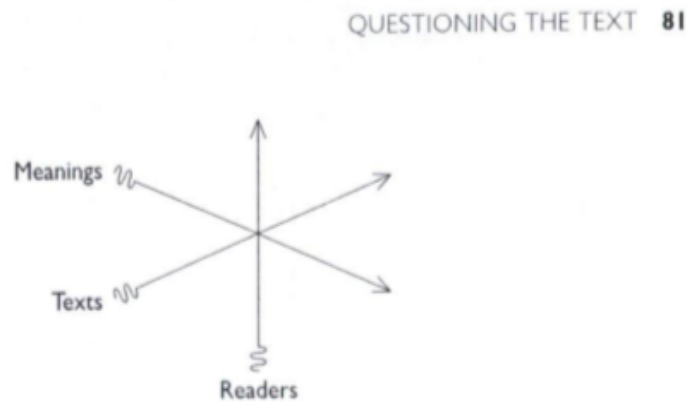


FIGURE 4.1 *The textual environment*

Couldry, 81

- Examine not just meanings, but flows of texts and readers
- Look at material structures of textual production and distribution
- Processes that order how we read, connect or screen out texts
- Helps us map what it means to be 'inside culture'
- Suggests need to 'read' texts in multiple ways



Week 4



What visual methods are there, and who uses them?

- *Semiotics* (see last week) - **cultural studies**
- *Compositional analysis* (today) - **art history**
- *Content analysis* - **sociology and communication**
- *Psychoanalytic* and other theoretical readings - film **studies**
- *Discourse analysis* - **cultural studies, sociology and communication (next week)**
- *Ethnography* of social viewing practices - **sociology and communication (2 weeks time)**
- *Making images* - photos, videos, etc: - **sociology and communication, art and design**
- *Visuality* - **visual media and cultural studies (today)**



Basic method: compositional analysis

- **Form of close viewing (developed by art historians) that describes:**
 - Content – what is actually shown
 - Colour and light – effect on realism, on atmosphere, etc.
 - Space: scale, complexity, geometry, perspective
 - Viewer's position – perspective, standpoint
- **Does not say much about meaning, or connotation or context**
- **Focuses on rich description of the visual entity (painting, photograph, filmic scene, billboard, et.c)**



Ways of approaching images

- Mcs approaches image using methods of textual analysis, **visuality** and discourse analysis (next week)
- the images themselves, sites of production, sites of audiencing/viewing
- Remember: text, *textuality*, the textual environment
 - Couldry: 'the textual environment' – flow of meanings, flow of readers, flow of texts

**New term -
visuality**



Rose on 'the question of method in ... visual culture studies'

- What is 'visual culture studies'?
- Not much discussion of methods in visual culture studies because:
- 'implicit methodology' of **critical connoisseurship** is used
- Focuses on meaning, tends to ignore audiencing or the place of the researcher/critic



Gillian Rose's advice for doing visual cultural studies:

- **Ok to focus on meaning, and contested meanings, with the critic 'finding' the meanings and doing the critique**
- **But also need to take into account**
 - **Visuality** = 'what happens when people look and what emerges from that act'
 - **Practices**: 'fairly consistent ways of doing something, deploying certain objects, knowledges, bodily gestures and emotions' (Rose, 549)
 - Visuality as practice: 'routinization and place-specificity [that makes] certain sorts of things visible in particular ways' 549



Week 5



Mitchell's idea of 'visual culture'

“I propose what I hope is a more nuanced and balanced approach located in the equivocation between the visual images as instrument and agency, the image as a tool for manipulation, on the one hand, and as an apparently autonomous source of its own purposes and meanings on the other. This approach would treat visual culture and visual images as go-betweens in social transactions, as a repertoire of screen images or templates that structure our encounters with other human beings” p. 176.



Part II: Discourse analysis

- Discourse analysis as a key method for textual/media environments (texts, meanings and readers)
- Discourse analysis: map groups of statements that structure of how things are thought and actions based on that thinking
- Discourse analysis involves reading/looking at things *and* at actions

'Visualities themselves are practices' (Rose, 550)



Discourse analysis as a method

- Centred on Foucault's notion of a **discourse**: groups of **statements** that **structure** the way a thing is thought, and the way we **act** on the basis of that thinking
- Discourse includes both language and things, what is said and what is seen, what is written and what is done
- Discourse analysis less concerned with **meaning** and more with **how power actually works in practice**
- As always with Foucault: **power is productive** (not just repressive!)
- Different emphases in discourse analysis – some on **language** ('critical discourse analysis' (Fairclough)) or **images**, and some on **practice/institutions**



Doing discourse analysis

- **Usually starts from authoritative account + lots of other sources** that relate to it
- No set number of sources, but sufficient quantity to generate complexity or tensions
- Try to forget preconceptions in reading/viewing the sources
- Look for **common features** across sources – similar conventions, styles, features – and perhaps code/tag images/texts
- Look for **different relations** or reactions to the same thing: complexities, **tensions, contradictions**
- Read with an eye for **details** that may indicate something taken-for-granted but nevertheless important



Observing 'what happens when people look'

- **Practice:** what is routinely done, and involves **body, things, thinking, place** and **knowledge**
- Practices are fundamental to *performativity* (and hence experience and identity)
- **Exercise:** list examples of practice and say why they are practices



Discourse analysis of actions: visual practices and their importance

- **Focused on how institutions and subject-positions are made visible together:**
 - School:students/teacher;
 - Factory:worker;
 - Hospital/clinic: doctor/patient, etc
 - Media: spectator?
- **Each is a regime of visibility**
 - Each may use images but in different ways



Methodology for studying regimes of visibility

- **Look at institutional apparatuses (architecture, laws, regulations, policies, theories, rules)**
- **Look at technologies - disparate sets of tools and methods assembled**
 - Compare photography as used in fashion magazine and photography as used in passports or forms of ID
- **Look at production, circulation and audiencing of images**
 - e.g. how are photographs used, stored, classified, valued, etc differently in different institutions



Rose's advice for doing visual cultural studies 3: critique

- **Researching visuality still focuses on critique (pointing to problems).**
- **But critique is entangled with practices and performances of looking**
 - Not just finding the real meaning but intervening by
 - Highlighting the unnoticed or invisible by attention to details
 - 'witness the world into being' differently 553



Week 6



Ethnography – general

ethno: nation, people,
culture
(**things, network**)

graph: draw, write,
(**narrate, record,
chronicle**)

ethnography: writing,
drawing, (**telling**)
about the people,
phenomenon, network

***Ethnography: the
scientific description of
races and peoples, with
their customs, habits and
mutual differences***

**(Shorter OED 5th ed,
2002)**



Ethnography uses a range of tools and techniques to write, record, draw the 'people, culture, network'

Why?

- Because what people/**networks** *say/project*, and what they *do* are different
- Because a sensitive, reflexive account can only be made by 'being there'
- Give voice to the other?

How?

By becoming part of the everyday life of the people, group, **network**



But **scrupulous, methodological reflexivity is essential**.....the careful, detailed account of the researcher's positioning allows the ethnography to claim a (modest) *objectivity*, rather than the presumed subjectivism of qualitative work

Haraway (1988) Situated Knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of the partial perspective



Ethnography as writing practice

The making of ethnography is artisanal, tied to the worldly work of writing (Clifford 1986: 6).

Cultures are not scientific 'objects' (assuming such things exist, even in the natural sciences). Culture, and our views of 'it,' are produced historically, and are actively contested (Clifford 1986: 18).



Ethnography – general

- Main method in cultural/social anthropology; very important in urban sociology, media sociology and cultural studies
- Focuses on one case or place – the 'field site' where an ethnographer does 'fieldwork'
- Sustained personal contact between researcher and people they research
- Looks at the whole situation over time



How people make sense of media

Ethnographic studies of audiences, fans, and users

- **Observe how audiences make sense ('decoding' - Hall) of particular media, and how their sense-making relates to social and cultural identity**
- **Explore how fans closely observe, interpret and transform across media (tv, music, blogs, etc)**
- **Examine how users move across media in 'convergence cultures' as does content (see Fish, reading for today!)**



How to study audiences

- **Earlier studies (1980s on) tend to use interviews that explore how people make sense of media**
- **One-on-one; family; group;**
- **Selection of people to interview will be shaped by what you think is important (class, gender, etc.)**
- **Analysis of interviews - reading and reading; identify different clusters of meaning; link clusters to social or discursive positions**



How to study audiences ethnographically

- **Observe, listen and talk to people as they go about everyday lives**
- **Involves extended periods of time spent in 'the field'**
- **'data' is gathered primarily by taking notes (sometimes photos and audio recording), and then writing notes up**



Ethnography and media objects

- **Much ethnography focuses on what people do and make (images, objects, etc)**
- **Study what people do with things (devices, technologies, products) in order to understand social relations and identities.**
- **More focused on people as 'users' than as 'audience'**



How to ethnographically study things like media?

- **Pay attention to where and how media objects engage people: visual form, material form, presentational form**
- **Examine how things and people are co-constituted: look at what is actually done where, and by whom**
- **Track mobility of things and how they are re-contextualised: look at the same thing in different places (public, private)**



Week 7



“Live methods” in media and cultural studies

- **Manifesto - a document that sets out a programme of change in response to standardisation and commercial uptake of methods such as ethnography**
- **“Manifesto for Live Methods” (Back & Puwar, 2012)**
 - Written by media and cultural studies scholars for a broad audience of sociologists and media/cultural studies
 - Seeks to discuss contemporary challenges in doing research
 - Elements of the manifesto:
 - 1.New tools for live/realtime**
 - Avoid the trap of the now – **expand the duration of the study**
 - See the whole without totalizing
 - 4.Make methods more artful and crafty**
 - Develop empirical devices that reinvent relations to social
 - Curate knowledge on public platforms
 - Utilize senses equally
 - Lively words
 - Recover history of inventive craft
 - Take time
 - Engage political and ethical issues without arrogance



Live methods as response

Reponse to:

- **market/industry research and its resources for survey, interview and ethnographic research**
- **'new coordinated forms of social reality' (Back & Puwar, 2012, 7)**

• **How to do this:**

- Participation:
 - 'Thus, by participation I refer to amateurs acting together individually, collectively, or with organizations in fields otherwise dominated by gatekeepers or professionals' (Fish, 2013)
- Re-invention of methods



'Live methods' emphasise:

- Looking outside 'academic methods'
- Re-purposing art/activist approaches
- Re-assessing how digital tools shape our understanding of social life
- Re-ordering the relations between data-gathering, analysis and circulation



Ethnography includes possibility of participation

by making audiovisual media:

- Use of **writing**, including blogs and other social media
 - Use of **photography** and **film**:
 - e.g Adam Fish's videos
- Anthropological film-makers**



Digital methods as expanded mode of ethnography

- Digital media as both object of research *and* research tool
- Smartphones permit use of video and audio as documentation
- Digital devices offer new ways of being present in the field
- New ethical challenges -- how to anonymize?



Further ways to make media as part of research:

- Make images or recordings as **empirical data** to be analysed
 - e.g. photos/videos of city streets
- Make images/videos/recordings as part of an **visual essay**
- **Ask participants** to take photos or make videos, and then look at them together
 - Interview participants about what they made and what it means to them



'Develop new tools for “real-time” and “live” investigation'

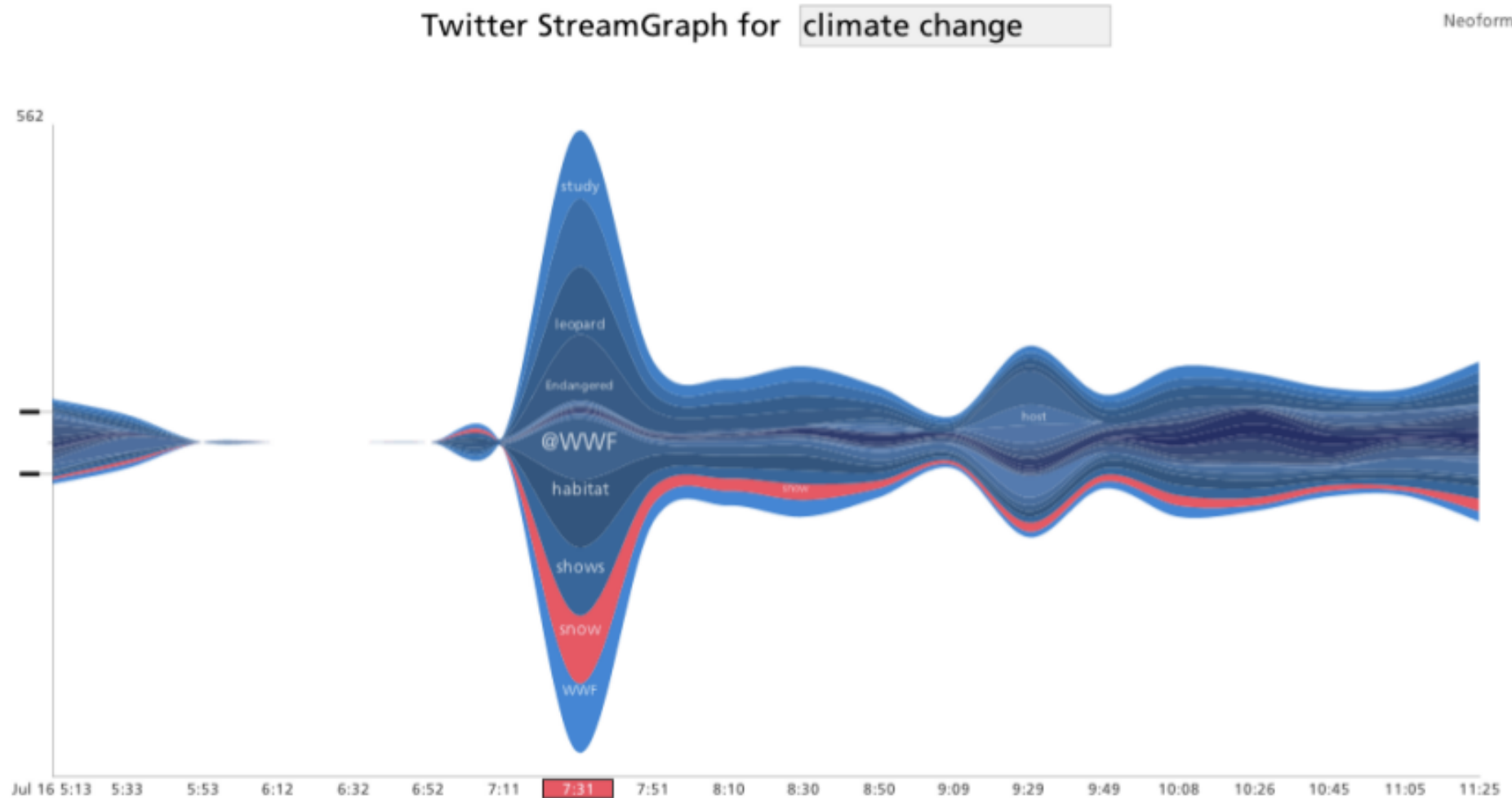


Figure 1: Twitter Streamgraph for keyword 'Climate Change'

'Develop new tools for “real-time” and “live” investigation'

- 'The tools and devices for research craft are being extended by digital culture in a hyper-connected world, affording new possibilities to re-imagine observation and the generation of alternative forms of research data' (Back & Puwar, 7)

- **Marres & Gerlitz (2015)** re-purpose data analytics tools for media and cultural studies

- Marres, Noortje, Carolin Gerlitz, and others. 2015. “Interface Methods: Renegotiating Relations between Digital Social Research, STS and Sociology.” Sociological Review.

<http://research.gold.ac.uk/11343/>.

- **See Digital Methods Initiative (Amsterdam)** for range of work on
 - web, hyperlinks, etc.at

<https://wiki.digitalmethods.net/>

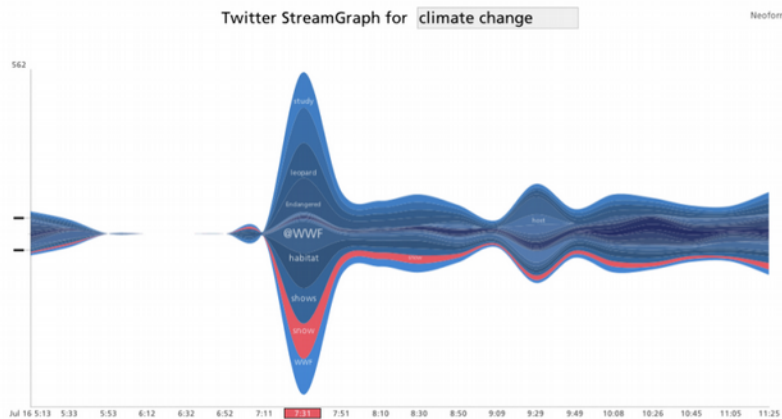


Figure 1: Twitter Streamgraph for keyword 'Climate Change'

Week 8



Modes of analysis (Crang)

- Analysis as **disciplining** the materials
- Analysis as **assemblage/montage**
- Analysis as **making narratives/stories**



Methods overview

| | images | texts | places/things | people | organisations |
|--|--------|-------|---------------|--------|---------------|
| semiotics | X | X | X | | |
| compositional analysis | X | | ? | | |
| discourse analysis of documents | X | X | | | X |
| discourse analysis of institutions/practices | | | X | | X |
| ethnography of audiences | | | X | X | X |
| ethnography of media objects | X | X | X | | |
| Live methods | X | | X | X | X |

Methods we did not cover much in the course

- **Psychoanalytic-influenced reading of texts (e.g. Lauren Berlant)**
 - Very important in film studies and some cultural studies
 - Key notion: texts are structured by unconscious processes of desire and reveal symptoms of desiring processes
- **Media archaeology (e.g. Friedrich Kittler, Wolfgang Ernst)**
 - Development of Foucault's archaeological approach to discourse, expanded to include media infrastructures



Things we haven't covered but still need to cover

- **How to 'get into' your research**
 - Remember the cultural studies approach to research includes the position of the researcher as key element
- **'Research design' - how do you bring different methods around a key question or questions?**
 - The other vital components of research – theoretical framings, and existing research



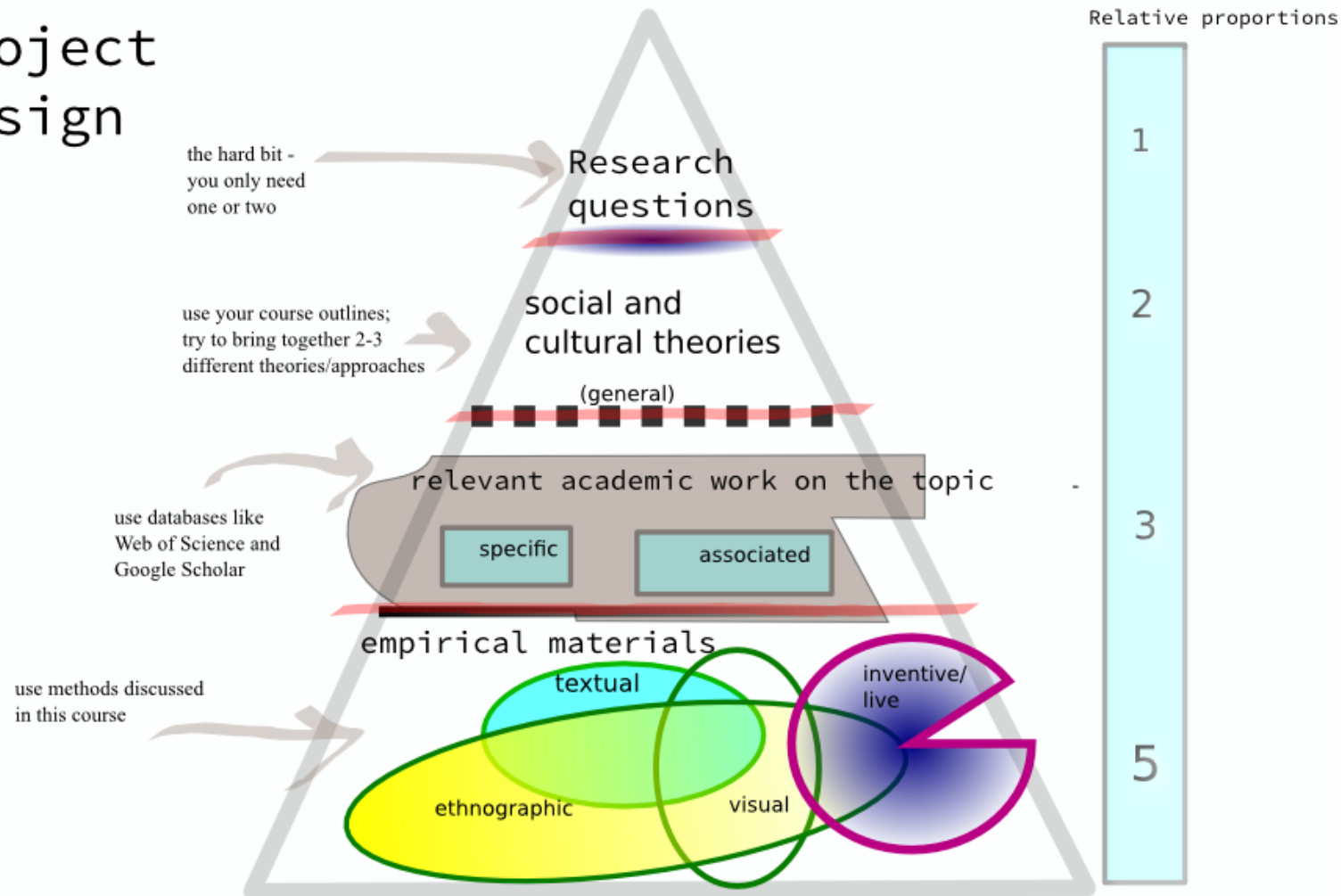
How to 'get into' your research project: The method of 'writing the implosion'

- **A series of exercises to help explore the fabric of an object, and thereby ourselves!**
 - See Dumit, J., 2014. Writing the Implosion: Teaching the World One Thing at a Time. *Cultural Anthropology* 29, 344–362. doi:10.14506/ca29.2.09 (on the moodle)
- **'pick an artifact or a thing' - as a specific as possible**
 - **Step 1: Brainstorm: write notes about the thing in response to the questions on pages 351-354**
 - Labour, epistemology, materials, technologies, contexts, politics, economics, texts, bodies, histories, parts, education, myth, symbolism
 - **Step 2: From knowledge-map to ignorance-map**
 - Look for patterns of ignorance in what you know about the object: why do you know some things and not others
 - Where/how could you get answers to what you don't know ?
 - **Step 3: Try to find answers**
 - Who controls the answers (experts, institutions, platforms, etc.)?
 - This is the work of **discourse analysis**: 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault)



Research design: how to bring things together?

Research project design



Week 9



Revisiting the research questions

Exercise: **research questions checklist**

- 1. Does the question address current problems or approaches in media and cultural studies?**
- 2. Does the question have any built-in assumptions about culture, media, power, experience, values, etc.?**
- 3. Are the terms used in the question reasonably well-defined?**
- 4. Is the question empirically researchable given your time and resources?**
- 5. Does the question have the potential to contribute something new?**

If there any problems with your research questions, discuss in the group how to fix them.



Re-visiting discourse analysis

- Read short extract from Kendall & Wickham, *Using Foucault's Methods*, pages 139-141.
- What is the contrast between two different ways of analysing 'discourse' (in Foucault's sense of that term)?
- What would this contrast mean practically?
- Did any of the guest researchers this term do discourse analysis?



Revisiting discourse analysis for group research projects

- Identify some of the materials, documents, things or places in your group project that you might address using discourse analysis?
- How does this approach shift emphasis away from **meaning**? What does it emphasise instead of meaning?



Making a research timetable?



- Why do you need a plan or timetable at all? Why not just do the research?
- Timetable as **one place** where research questions are translated into **actually do-able** research activities
- Plans and timetables will always change and be revised as you do the research



End of course!

