

Summer School

Going public: Social Sciences and Humanities in the 21st century in Europe

Stream 4. Material Culture and Identity

Presentation: Fieldwork (around Monuments) (40 min.) by Professor Sarah Holst Kjaer;
Break-out room Discussion (20 min.); Final presentation by students and common discussion (20 min.).

1st Meeting

25.5.2022, 10:30-12:00 (Berlin time) via Zoom



Stream 4, today's learning objectives, in selection

- Explore and understand the ways and strategies through which local, regional, national and transnational identities are forged in **the public sphere** by means of joint academic and grassroots, i.e. community- and stakeholder-derived, exchanges in contemporary Europe
- Receive training in **ethnographic methods**
- Acquire an understanding of the **interdisciplinary theoretical background of the methodologies** used when addressing issues associated with the 'Public'
- Exchange knowledge across disciplines and universities

Please view all learning objectives here:

<https://civis.eu/en/civis-courses/going-public-social-sciences-and-humanities-in-the-21st-century-europe>



Stream 4. Material Culture and Identity

Led by: Gabriele Alex (Tübingen) & Sarah Holst Kjaer (Stockholm)

- Links between material culture and identity.
- How do people relate to the world around them: materiality, monuments and lived-in environments.
- Constructions of identity, belonging, marginalization or exclusion.
- Method: Ethnographic Fieldwork (around Monuments).



Today's session:

- Presenting stream-meeting **2** (Professor Gabrielle Alex) and stream-meeting **3**.
- Lecture on Doing Ethnographic Fieldwork (around Monuments) (30 min).
- Give literature for student discussions in Stream meeting 3.
- Introduce break-out room question: **the unfamiliarity of a place**
- Discussion in break-out rooms (20 min)
- Group discussion and questions (20 min)



Next stream-meetings for Material Culture and Identity

- **2nd Meeting (June 2nd, 15:00-17:00), leader Professor Gabi Alex**

Material Culture (in everyday life) and the creation of identities and communities

Break-out questions: Insights Into Own Life Worlds

Give homework/assignment to prepare for the summer-school (Gabi)

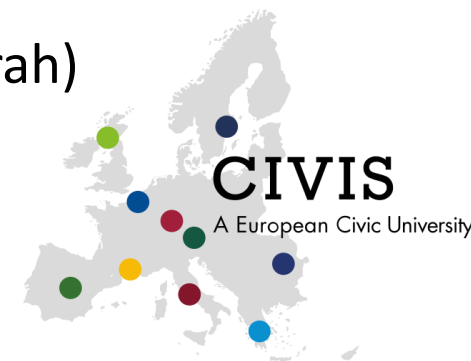
Introduce literature for student discussion on 3rd stream meeting (June 9th)

- **3rd Meeting (June 9th, 11:00-13:00):**

Preperation: Reading literature (given in stream-meeting 1 and 2) for discussion

Presentations of individual home-assignments to prepare for summer school (Sarah)

Ask questions to the assignments (Gabi and Sarah)



What is a monument?

Definition of monuments/significant places:

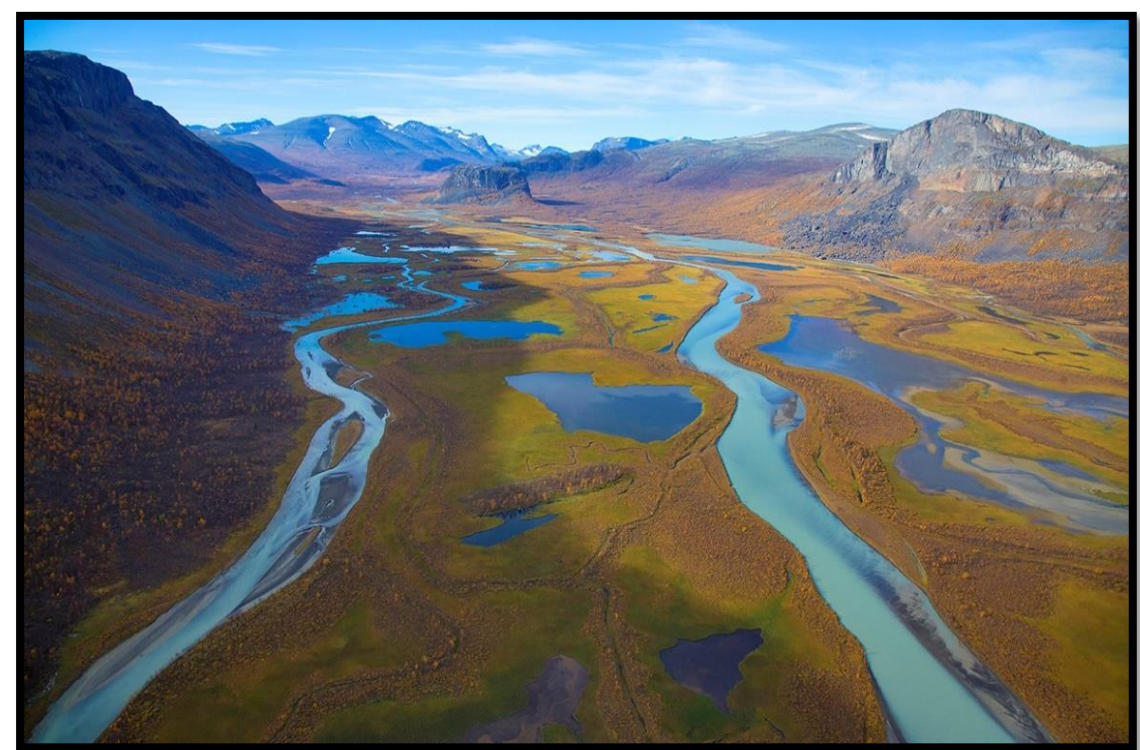
- Architectural, monumental, artistic or local significans
- Defined by: cultural heritage, universal, historical, social or cultural/natural values

”Universal value”:

- Historical, aesthetic, natural, ethnological, anthropolocial value (often focusing on the spectacular, something **worth** to preserve for the future)



Monumentalism: Places that 'need' maintenance, are 'demanding' but 'necessary' to preserve for the future



Official and spontaneous monuments

- Places to remember (grieve, sorrow, love, victory)
- Places to manifest power, (nation) and ideology
- Places of inofficial, spontaneous actions against forgetting and indifference
- Places meant to be remembered and then forgotten



"The 2011 Norway Attacks"

A mass-shooting on the Norwegian island of **Uttøya**.

Far-right extremist, Anders Behring Breivik, single-handedly killed **69** young Labor Party members and injured **110**, at their summer camp.

Motive: Preserving a Christian Europe/Nation.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Norway_attacks



Symbols for claiming a nation:
Nation versus (sub-)nationalism



Memories of accidents and longing



Building castles in the sand and then forgetting...



How do monuments/significant places 'speak'?

- A production of **collective memory**?
- Institutionalised as a **domain** (part of a larger network of interlinked practices, ideas, artifacts, institutions, etc.)?

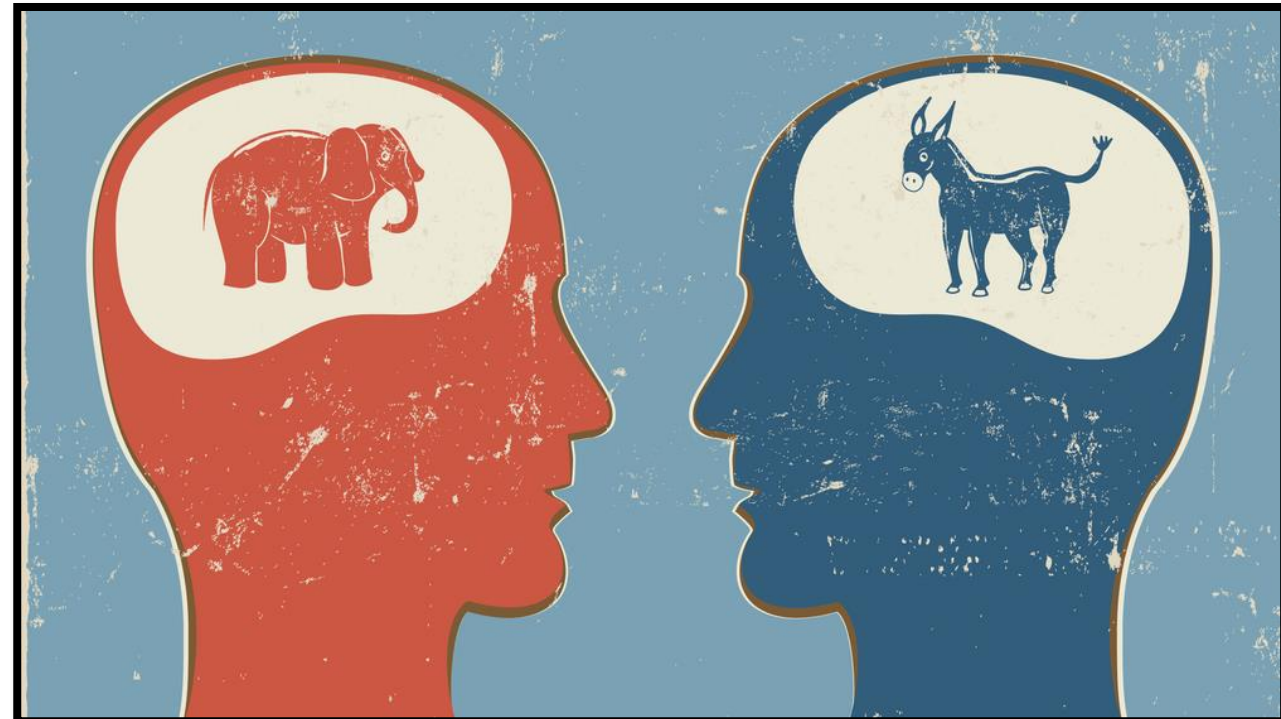
Important questions:

- Who 'speaks'?
- What is chosen, shown, promoted?
- Who is put on display? Us or them?
- For whom is the monument produced?
- What time-period is chosen and why?
- What does the choice of 'a past' tell us about the present?



A place of cultural importance?

- The role of location: How can you identify a place' importance:
- Important to whom?
- Atmosphere (tension, calmness, etc.) – 'importance' often **intensified** in one way or the other...
- Part of public debate?
- Part of a sub-culture's world?
- People and authorities busy to define and regulate behaviour?



Ethnographic observations ('hang-out' at a place)

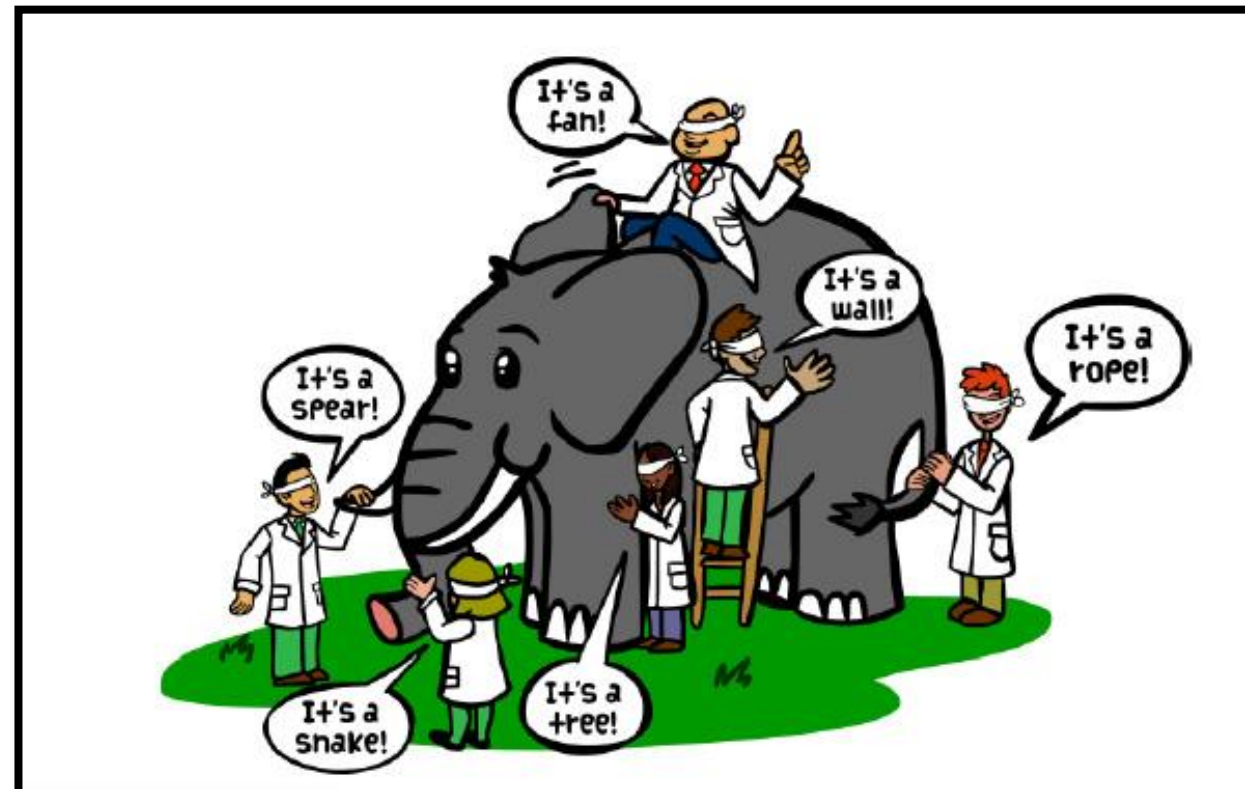
- An ethnographic observation is meant to 'frame the place and the people's activities' at a certain place, in a particular time.
- The observation leads to a description that documents the cultural activity and people's 'handling' of materiality.

What does it mean to observe?

- The role of perception: trained or random?
- Depends on eyes that sees?
- How imbedded **the observer** is?
- Is observation trustworthy – to whom?

Questions and interviews

- Interview questions in order to **adjust/correct** observations: focus/be guided by people's meaning-making.
- Research question: What do I want to know about?
- Viewing people as 'informants'.
- Adjust questions in relations to observations...
- Cultural significans: A place **varies** depending on informants' focus and your research question



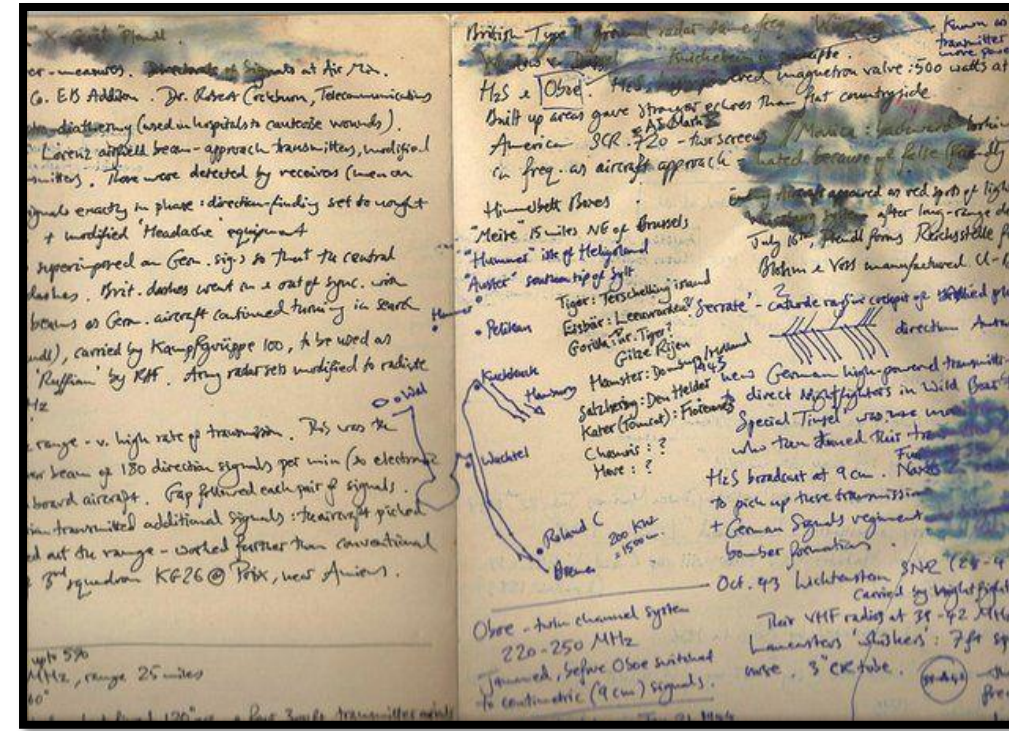
Thick Description

Field work diary

- Write down as many **signifiers** (phrases from people; your descriptions of their behavior); context (location, time of day, etc.); your sensory experiences (sounds, smells, feelings of materiality, etc.), your bodily experiences (being in the observation, feelings of business, quietness, tenseness, etc.).

Use your ethnography as scientific source

- Make sense of the description
- use quotes to answer your research question
- quote your observation in order to draw your reader into understanding the place' cultural significant...



Literature on various types of ethnographic method

Readings for 3rd stream-meeting

- Ehn, Billy, Löfgren, Orvar & Wilk, Richard 2016: Chapter 9. Taking Cultural Analysis Out into the World. Exploring Everyday Life. Strategies for Ethnography and Cultural Analysis. New York & London: Rowman & Littlefield, p. 131-144
- Busch, Mirja & Farías, Ignacio 2019: Don't Fix the Puddle: A Puddle Archive as Ethnographic Account of Sidewalk. In: *Repair, Brokenness, Breakthrough. Ethnographic Responses* (eds: Francisco Martínez, Patrick Laviolette), Berghahn Books, 115-120
- Hansen, Kjell 2003: The Sensory Experience of Doing Fieldwork in an 'Other' Place. In (eds. Jonas Frykman & Nils Gilje), *Being There. New Perspectives on Phenomenology and the Analysis of Culture*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 149-167
- Khalvashi, Tamta 2019: A Ride on the Elevator: Infrastructures of Brokenness and Repair in Georgia In: *Repair, Brokenness, Breakthrough. Ethnographic Responses* (eds: Francisco Martínez, Patrick Laviolette), Berghahn Books, 115-120
- Tschoepe, Aylin Yildirim 2019: Dirtscapes: Contest over Value, Garbage and Belonging in Istanbul, *Repair, Brokenness, Breakthrough. Ethnographic Responses* (eds: Francisco Martínez, Patrick Laviolette), Berghahn Books, 149-168

Student's Break out Group Discussion

Today's break-out room discussion (20 minutes):

Make sure everybody voice their knowledge...

The Unfamiliarity of Place

- Think about an experience where you felt 'new in' or 'dumped into' a context unknown to you.
- Name the the place of experience. Discuss how **people's behaviour: what did they do?** How did it puzzle you? What was odd or unexpected?

