In Search of Common Ground:
On designing and sharing research methods

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Context

- Two-year post doctoral project on (artistic) research methodology, 2019-2020, now in its second semester.

- Core of the project: a model for designing research projects

- Explicit connection between the practice and education of research, from final year BA to PhD level

Why a model for research design?

- We do share our methods with each other, but rarely in ways that they become usable for other (as well) beyond the individuality of our own projects - What about the dissemination of methods?

- Explore possible ways between methodological strictness and the notion of "anything goes".

- Enable researchers to *articulate* their methods and strategy: Offer a terminology that enables making methodological choices accessible and transparent to others, across borders of projects, genres or disciplines.

- An approach that provides clarity and practical access to the process of designing research projects, yet is flexible enough to work for many different kinds of researchers, from students to experienced researchers.
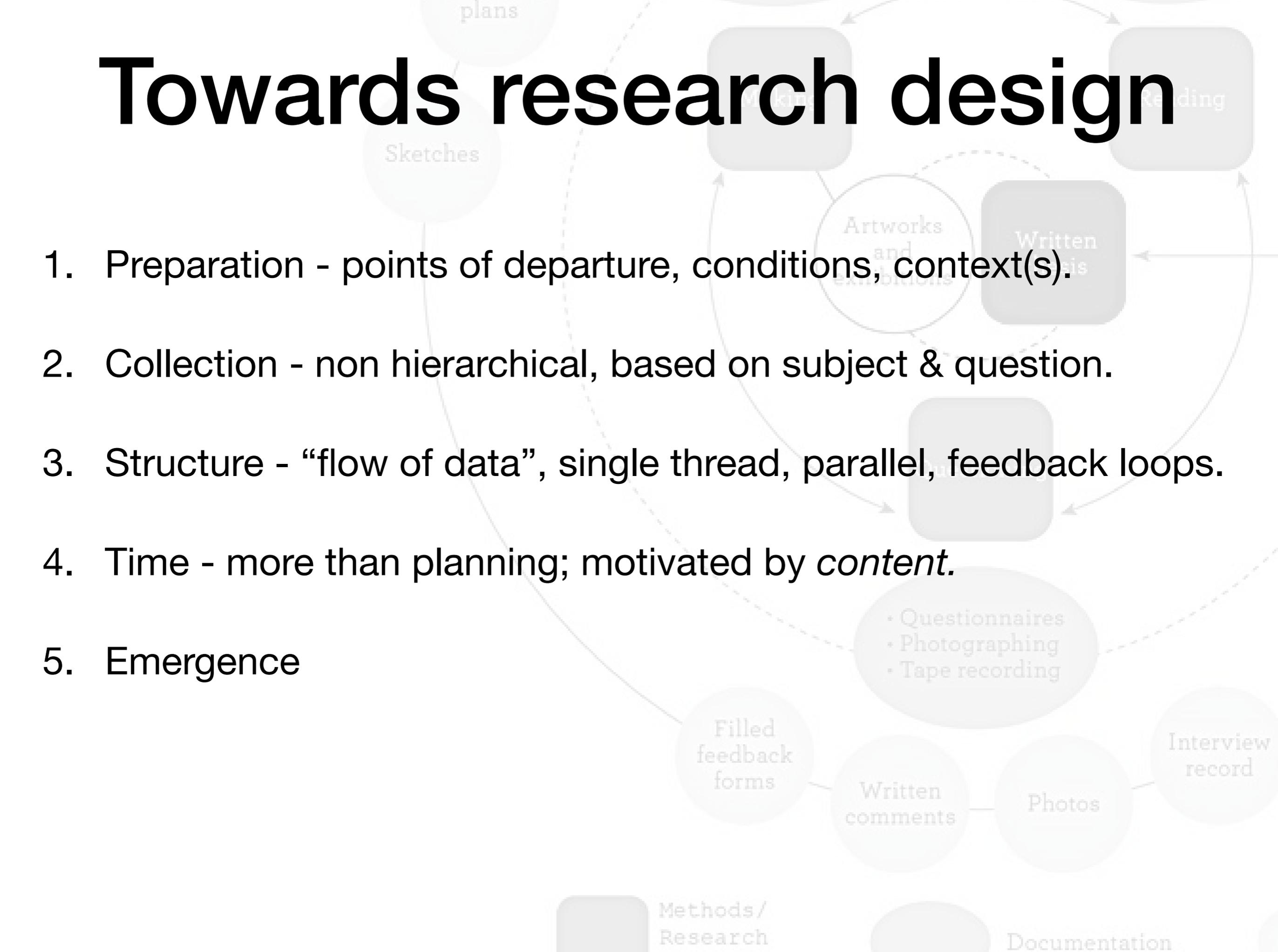
Points of departure

- Methodological pluralism (Borgdorff)

- Non-hierarchy of methods or kinds of knowledge

- Always departing from research subject, objective and questions, rather than positioning within research traditions.

- Creating a research design is regarded as a creative process (that continues during carrying out the research!) rather than a mere exact strategy to answer a question.

- Devise a model that houses a paradox: creating a methodological design with *some strictness*, yet make emergence an essential part of this methodology.

Possible purposes/applications for a design model

- Not meant as a unifying "how to" model!

- An approach to support the process of designing research (*for the researcher*), or to help making more implicit components of research more explicit.

- A model for (self-) feedback, or evaluation of a research design or finished research (*for colleagues, critical friends, a team/research group*).

- A framework for supervision (*for teachers*).

Towards research design

1. Preparation - points of departure, conditions, context(s).

2. Collection - non hierarchical, based on subject & question.

3. Structure - "flow of data", single thread, parallel, feedback loops.

4. Time - more than planning; motivated by *content.*

5. Emergence

Towards research design

1. Preparation

2. **Collection**
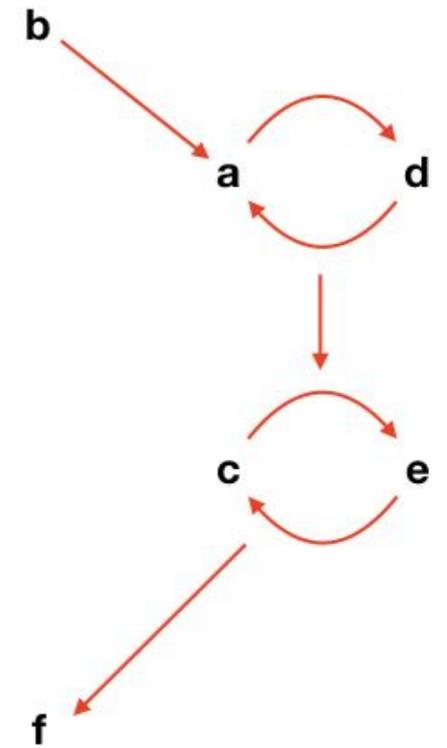
3. Structure

4. Time

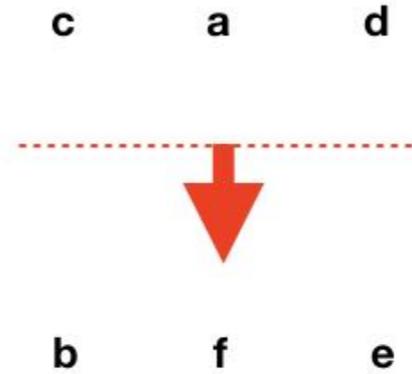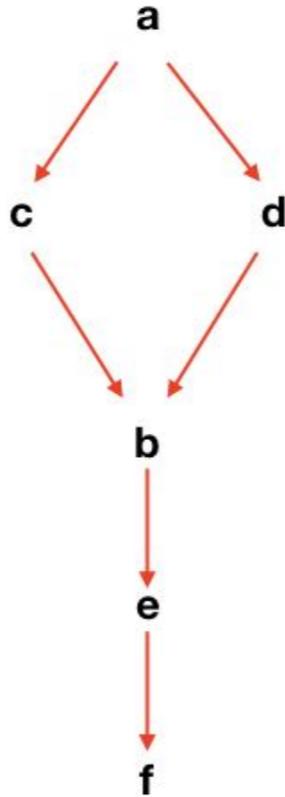5. Emergence

a

f

c

b

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e

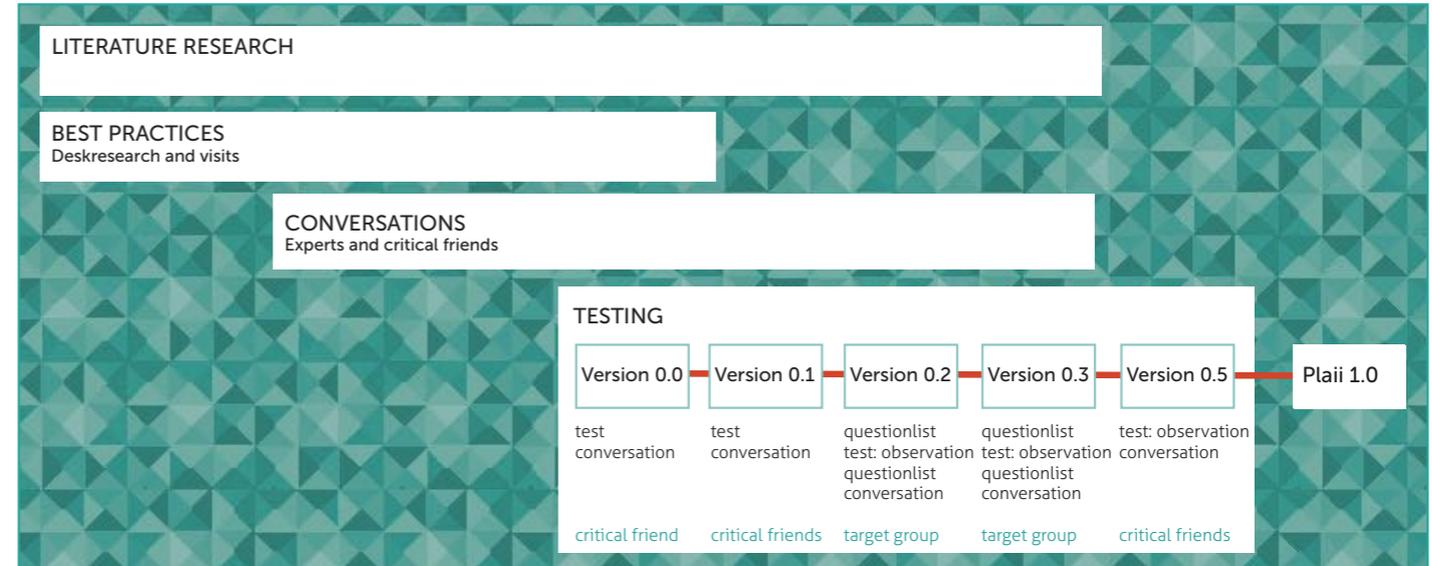# Towards research design

1. Preparation

2. Collection

3. **Structure**

4. Time

5. Emergence

Towards research design

1. Preparation

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LAYOUT RESEARCH

LITERATURE RESEARCH

BEST PRACTICES
Deskresearch and visits

CONVERSATIONS
Experts and critical friends

TESTING

Version 0.0	Version 0.1	Version 0.2	Version 0.3	Version 0.5	Plaii 1.0
test conversation	test conversation	questionlist test: observation questionlist conversation	questionlist test: observation questionlist conversation	test: observation conversation	
critical friend	critical friends	target group	target group	critical friends	

Task Name	Who	Duration	May			June				July					August			Sep
			15/05	22/05	29/05	05/06	12/06	19/06	26/06	03/07	10/07	17/07	24/07	31/07	07/08	14/08	21/08	28/08	04/09
Research																		
Definition & Research	KZ	42 days																
Audience Research	KZ	10 days																
Project Planning	KZ	21 days																
Background Reading	KZ	110 days																
Conceptual Design																		
Brainstorming	KZ	21 days																
Gathering Information	KZ	21 days																
Concept Selection	KZ	10 days																
Detail Desgin																		
Storyboard+Diagram	KZ	14 days																
Structure Design	KZ	14 days																
Visual Diary	KZ	42 days																
Prototype																		
Interface Design	KZ	21 days																
Programming	KZ	28 days																
Assemble & Testing	KZ	21 days																
Final Prototype	KZ	7 days																
Testing																		
User Testing	KZ	10 days																
Modify & Beta Test	KZ	14 days																
Quality Assurance	KZ	14 days																
Contextual Report	KZ	35 days																
Production Deadline	KZ	1 day																

Towards research design

1. Preparation

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- about *spending time* with something/someone
- How much time do I want to *give* this or that?
- Relating to notions of "slowness": "importance of delay and iteration"; "against the alignment of 'speed' with notions like efficiency, success, quality, and importance." (Cilliers 2006)
- Parkins 2004: not actually about fast vs. slow, but rather about "care as the central value" - an "ethics of time"

Towards research design

1. Preparation

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- About what comes up ; the unexpected.

- Against a (too) strict framework of what outcomes will be in advance.

- Strongly based on experience of how complex processes (including research) tend to take shape – and the desire to give this a voice in research design.
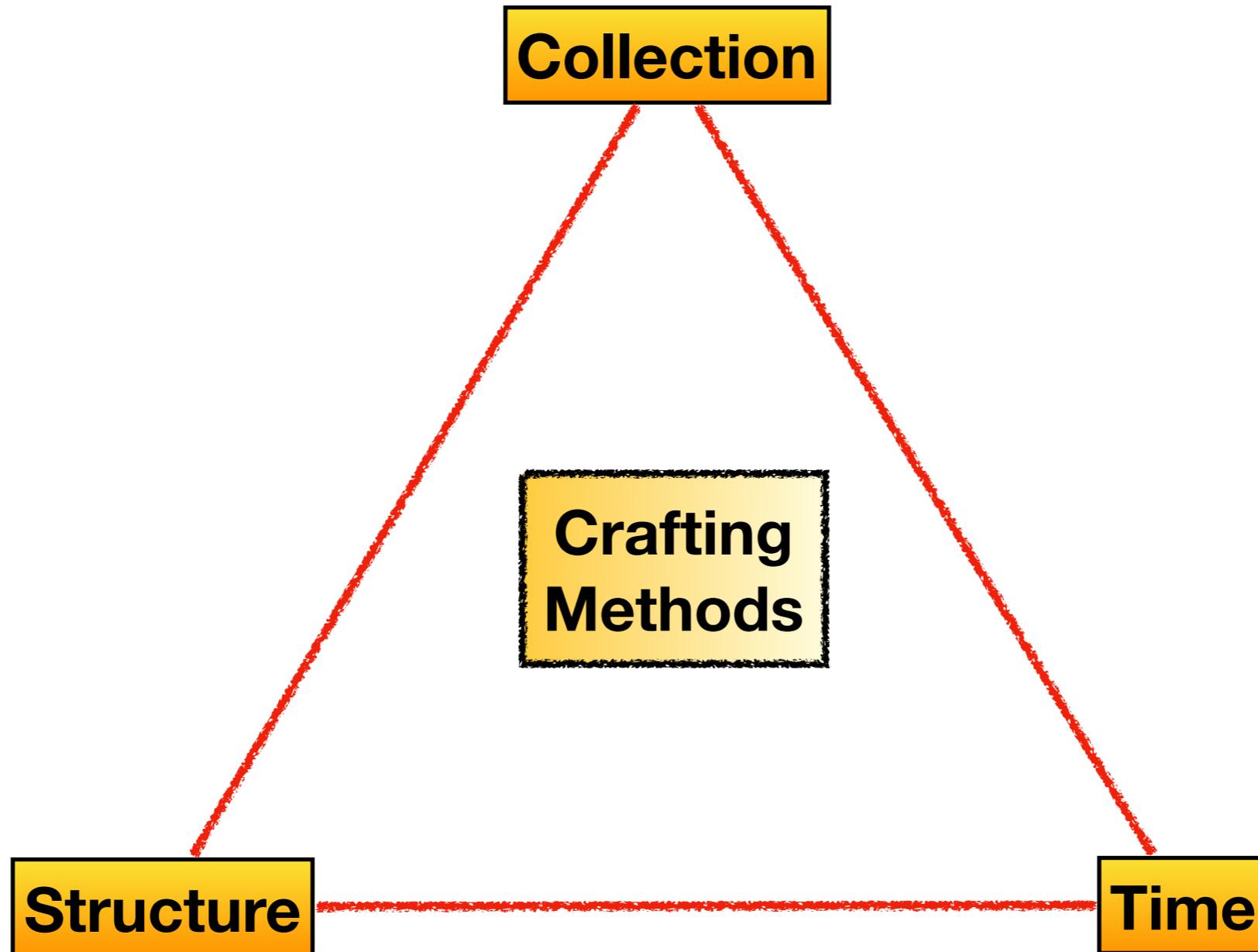
Towards research design

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# Research Design Model

Crafting Methods

Against framing "method" as something predefined (concerning its actors, actions and output) and taken shape by tradition, but rather devised "from scratch", from the very experience and reality of playing and making. (after Manning 2015)

Reframing of "Method"?
As a flexible network of (human & non-human) entities, activities, documentation, reflection and learning/experiencing/knowing.

Activities

Entities

(Forms of) Reflection

Documentation

Learning/Experiencing/ Knowing

Data/Information/"Output"
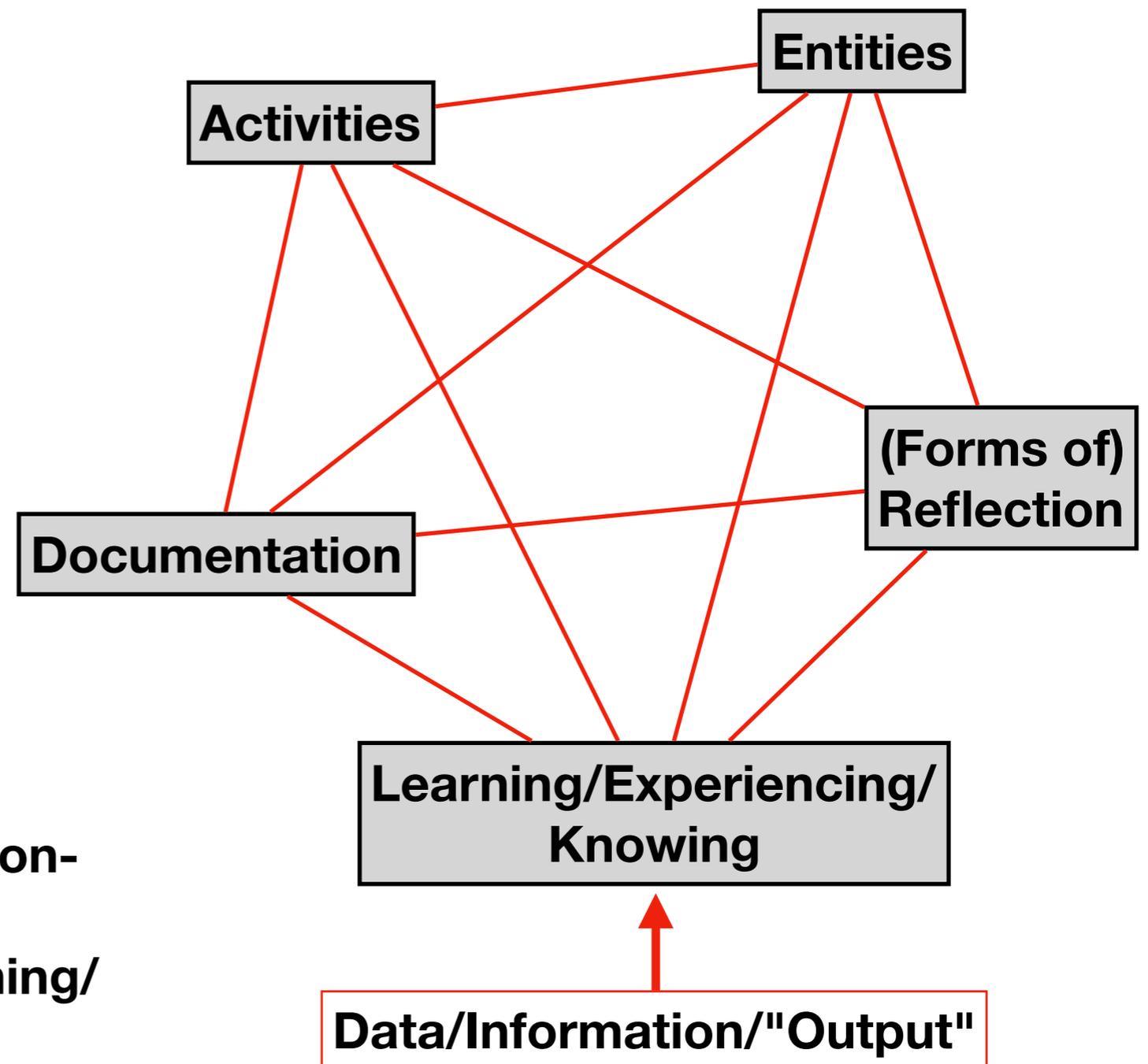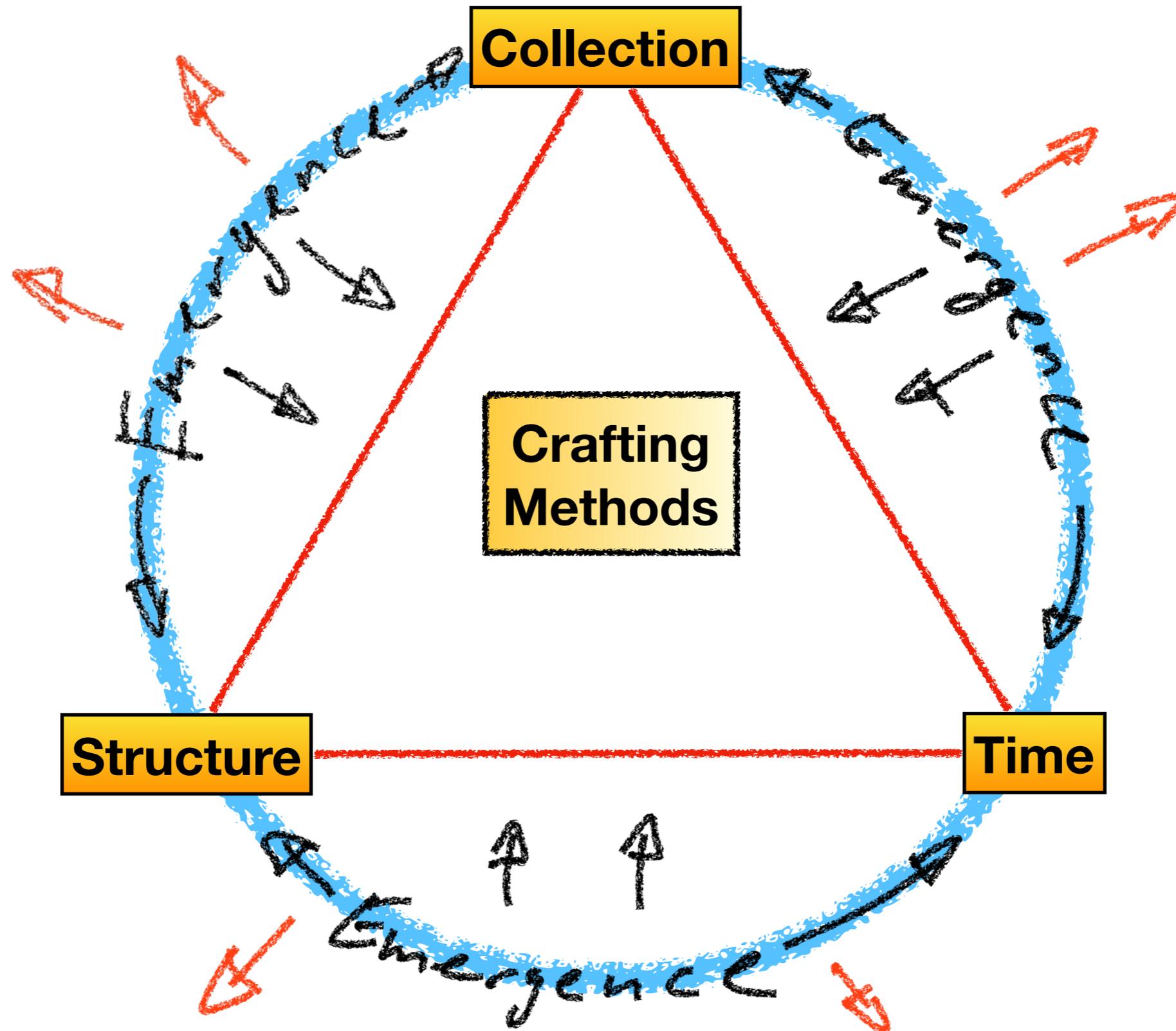
Perspectives on emergence

Stephen Johnson (2001):

- Higher level knowledge and behavior, emerging from low/local level interaction in complex systems; based on "swarm logic, with no central office in command."
- central: "tools of feedback, neighbor interaction, and pattern recognition"
- "But it is both the promise and the peril of swarm logic that the higher-level behavior is almost impossible to predict in advance. You never really know what lies on the other end of a phase transition until you press play and find out." (233)

Peter Cariani (2008):

- "The full gamut of emergence encompasses new forms, new material structures, new organizations, new functions, new perspectives, and new aspects of boing."
- including new techniques or paradigms

Oscillation between divergence and convergence - and providing space for it

1	Collection
2	Structure
3	Time

Emergence
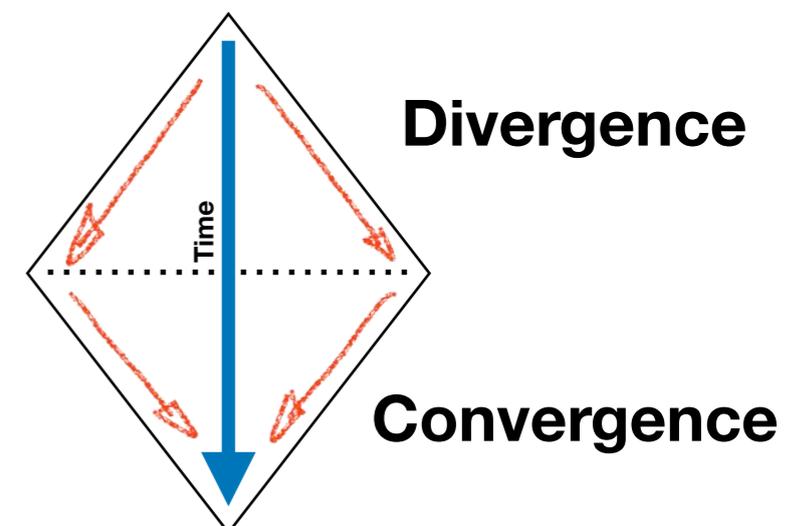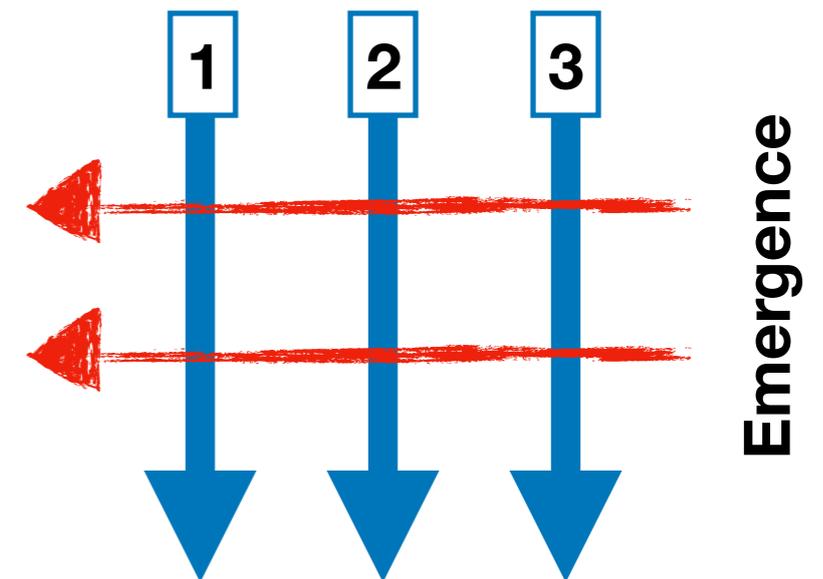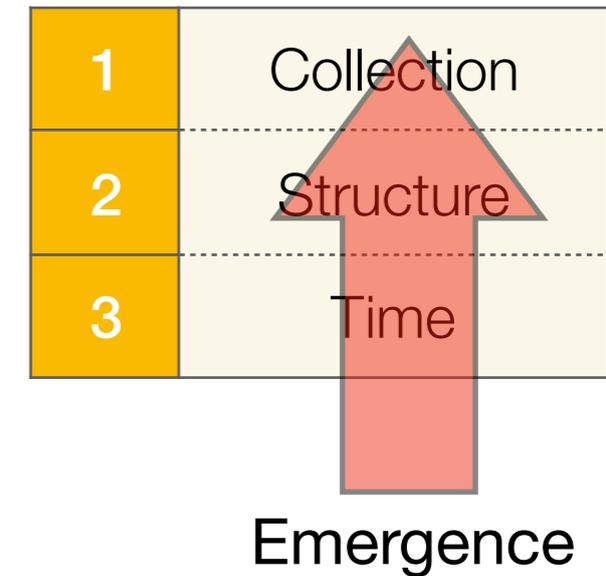
Design Assignment:
Quick Draft Design

- Who and what are the entities in a method, and what are their functions?

- What are the activities involved? How do these activities connect the involved entities?

- How do you document this method/process/activities?

- What are modes of reflection you like to employ?

- What will be the outcome of this method, and how might this lead to another method, potentially?

Entities

Activities

(Forms of) Reflection

Documentation

Learning/Experiencing/ Knowing
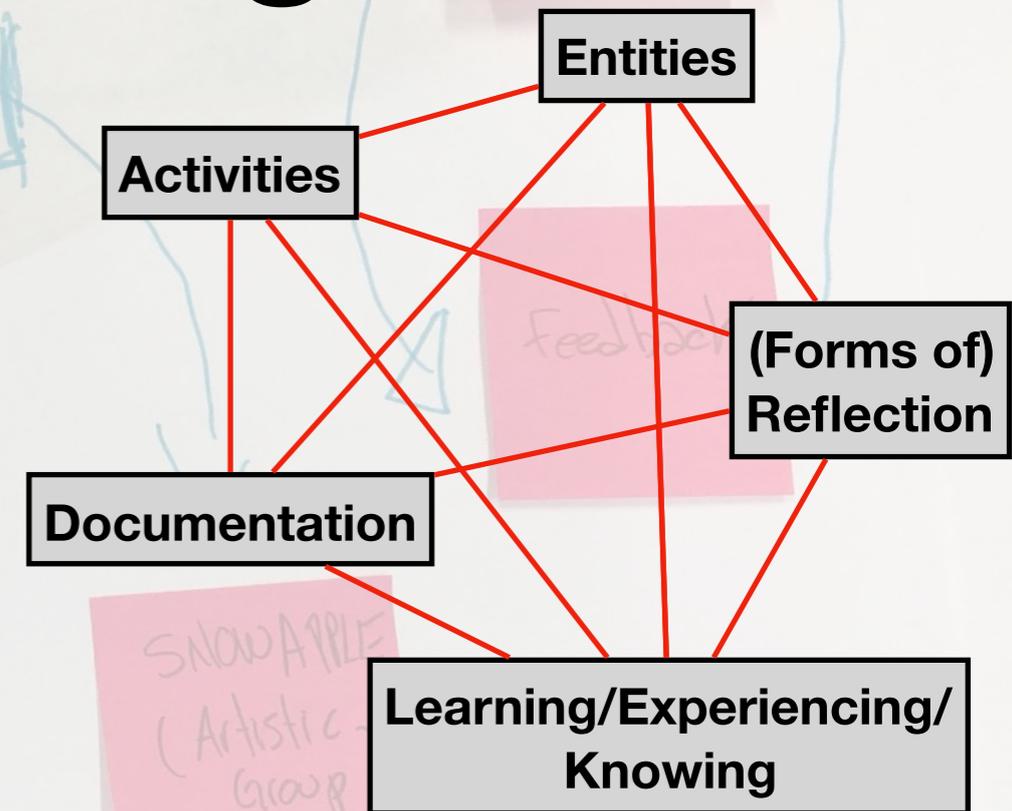
Dissemination - of methods?

- Methods in more traditional sciences often clearly framed, explained in a critical how-to fashion ⇒ e.g. focus groups, or surveys in the social sciences, experimental arrangements in chemistry

- Makes sense, as processes and results become transparent and comparable (to some extent)

- In AR methods, specifically when implying artistic practice, often more individual/particular (?) = less easy to use by others?

- Important to share, but how? Just by telling?

- "Crafting Methods" tries to offer a framework, terminology & common ground to share methods effectively

Case Study:
In Touch performance experiment,
January 2020, Bloombury Theatre London

- Collaboration with interactive performance maker Marloeke van der Vlugt & sociologist Carey Jewitt

- Research focussed on "touch" - haptic and tactile exploration as means for interaction with the world around us - "activating the tactile, proprioceptive and kinaesthetic senses" (vd Vlugt)

- Part 1: participatory performance, exploring touch through hand washing, touching self, others & objects;

- Part 2: exploratory research workshop to reflect on the performance experience, generate accounts and stories of touch and explore imaginations of future touch interactions.

Conductive curtain made by Marloeke van der Vlugt 2019

Tactile objects made by Marloeke van der Vlugt 2020

Tactile objects made by Marloeke van der Vlugt 2020

Tactile Mood-Boards

Tactile objects made by Marloeke van der Vlugt 2020

Exercise 1: Performative Processing

We invite you to *reflect on* and *document* some of your touch experiences during the performance. (e.g. your sensations, tactile surprises, memories evoked, thoughts, challenges, discomforts, pleasures and repulsions.)

You can do this on your own, in a pair or a small group, using:
- Your skills and forms of expression (your practice): e.g. use your body to re-enact or perform, move, dance (the floor is a sprung-dance one), or sketch, write, list, create a tactile landscape...
- And any of the documenting resources in the studio

These reflections will become part of a collective feedback display from the performance experiment

And then… A few thoughts concerning method

- "Performance-workshop" - a form suited for artistic research? ⇒ reflection on the event using the Crafting Methods framework

- Form for disseminating artistic research? Interesting as the event was mentioned on the In-Touch website as a "culmination of the collaboration", suggesting final dissemination

- But: Also a moment for data collection and creation of new narratives and questions - a method?

participatory performance with various "touchy" experiences
manipulating sound through touch
conversation with participants
exhibition of various objects and videos related to the
performance and its creation process
reflective assignments

artists, researchers
theatre "black box" space
exhibition setting
circle of chairs
objects for performance, older objects
videos of process
videos of other touch rituals
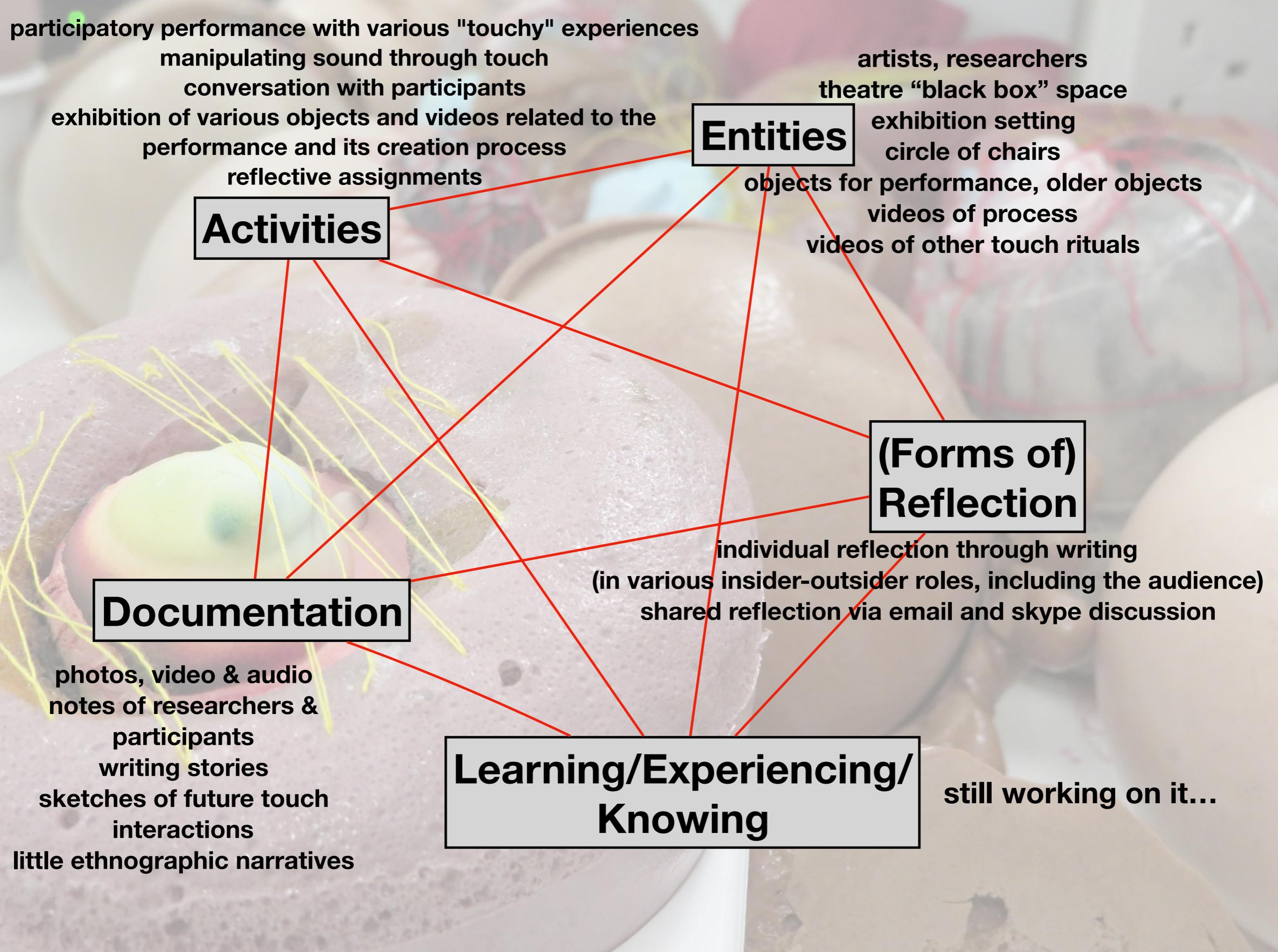
Activities

Entities

(Forms of) Reflection

individual reflection through writing
(in various insider-outsider roles, including the audience)
shared reflection via email and skype discussion

Documentation

photos, video & audio
notes of researchers &
participants
writing stories
sketches of future touch
interactions
little ethnographic narratives

Learning/Experiencing/ Knowing

still working on it...

Thank you!

Contact:
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