The
Public

AN INTRODUCTION TO:

RESEARCH

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The Public is an activist design studio specializing in changing the world.

This zine, a part of our *Creative Resistance How-to Series*, is designed to make our skill sets accessible to the communities with whom we work. We encourage you to copy, share, and adapt it to fit your needs as you change the world for the better, and to share your work with us along the way.

Special thanks to Jessica Bromley Bartram from OCADU's Design Program in Toronto, for developing this zine on behalf of The Public.

For more information, please visit thepublicstudio.ca.

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You are already a designer!

We live in a designed world filled with human-built objects and human-created ideas. For most of these objects and ideas, the process of creating them began with research that helped designers figure out what questions the object needed to answer. Questions are the core of research, the starting point that leads to exploration and change. In this zine you will find tools to empower your work, tips for thinking creatively, collaborative and individual research skills, and community-based research practices. The act of researching for design can exist in any environment—in communities, schools, and studios, where it can act as a powerful force for asking important questions and initiating change.

A BRIEF HISTORY

In the 1950s and '60s, new design methods emerged. After World War II, people in the Western world were beginning to depend more and more on designed industrial goods. They were also living in an increasingly industrialized world in which human-created problems such as overwhelming traffic and city sprawl affected their everyday life. These new design methods were an attempt to turn the practice of design into a structured form resembling the processes of scientific thought*, and became known as the Design Methods Movement (DMM). DMM was further developed through a series of conferences lead by working designers with titles such as Design: Science: Method, emphasizing the place of the designer as an individual or team scientifically analyzing the problem at hand. By the '70s, however, some designers were already rejecting DMM as too restrictive and overly simplistic in the face of real-world problems, leading to an emphasis on user involvement in the design process. Today, there are many design research methods being pursued by a diverse community of designers.

RESEARCH TODAY

Research is often seen as a formalized practice that exists within the realm of academia and professional practice, and researchers coming from those areas often fail to acknowledge their position of power in relation to the communities or people they're studying.

* A NOTE ON SCIENCE: though it is often framed as unassailable truth, science is a subjective Western methodology. Things not considered scientific, eg. Intuition, can also be true.
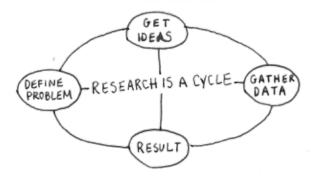
Research that is conducted from an unchallenged position of power, whether it is being conducted in the context of the academic industrial complex or simply by a researcher coming from outside a community can lead to skewed results that rest on hidden biases and generalizations and lack accountability to the community on which the research was based. The recent attempts by the Harper government to implement bill C-36, a new legislation surrounding sex work (in the winter of 2014) is an example of this style of research in action, as the legislation frames sex work as inherently "dangerous" and sex workers as "victims" who need this new bill for their safety, but it appears as though no sex workers were consulted during the development of the bill. Research can take advantage of a community by failing to consult members of that community during the research process, but can also negatively impact the community if the researcher makes use of the lived experiences and information given by those interviewed without making that research accessible to those who gave their time and expertise during the process. Community Based Research (see p. 7) responds to issues surrounding power dynamics in research by directly involving members of community in both the research process and eventual uses of the information gathered, making the process collaborative and ensuring that the project remains relevant to the community.

Repressing Research

Another way to alter the value of research is to suppress resources and means of obtaining data, making it difficult to gather information. Once again, the Harper government is involved in questionable practices, conducting what is essentially a war on research. This war has taken the form of, among other things, the implementation of a short form census that fails to provide adequate data to researchers studying various trends in Canada, for example language use across the country. Scientific research has also suffered with the closure and reduced funding of both libraries containing archives of scientific data and research stations around the country.

Getting Started

Research is not a straight line with a question at the beginning and a finished project at the end. Instead, it can be viewed as a web, a process that sometimes loops back on itself and uses tools that were first picked up early on in the process. For example, brainstorming (see p. 9) is a good way to explore your topic when you're starting out, but can be brought back in if you find yourself feeling stuck later on in the project. The various techniques described in this zine can be combined and blended together—whatever works for your project.

WORKING WITHIN A COMMUNITY

If you are doing work within a community, it is important to be mindful of the power dynamics that exist between researcher and subject. When you position yourself as a researcher, those within the community you're working with should feel safe and comfortable with your presence and the research you're doing. Many institutions that deal with design (eg. schools, design associations) have official codes of ethics, but many of the principles they cover can apply to research done within the community*.

STARTING A PROJECT

Some things to keep in mind when embarking on a research project:

Consent
How will you get consent from your subjects to use the information you gather? How will you respect their rights (eg. they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time) and make them feel safe during your interactions?

* A NOTE ON ETHICS: institutionalized codes of ethics often fail to acknowledge power dynamics between researcher and subject. Being conscious of these dynamics is crucial to community-based research.

Giving back

What will be the result of the research and how will the outcome give back to the community?

Transparency

How will you describe the project to your subjects? What do you need to tell them so that they know exactly what you will be doing with the information you're gathering?

COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH (CBR)

Also known as Participatory Action Research (PAR), both of these styles of research are collaborative, requiring the researchers and community to build a relationship to facilitate community action and social change. CBR and PAR aim to question the existing norms and power structures within and surrounding the community in question, and allow the members of the community to be involved in designing solutions for change.

Key principles of CBR

(from depts.washington.edu/ccph/cbpr/u1/u11.php)

1 Builds on strengths and resources within the community

2 Recognizes community as a unit of identity

3 Facilitates collaborative partnerships in all phases of the research

4 Integrates knowledge and action for mutual benefit of all partners

5 Promotes a co-learning and empowering process that attends to social inequalities

6 Involves a cyclical and iterative process

7 Addresses health from both positive and ecological perspectives

8 Disseminates findings and knowledge gained to all partners

WHAT'S NEXT?

Before going out and talking to people, you need questions. The next section will provide you with ways of generating ideas and fleshing them out into effective questions for further exploration.

Keep exploring research ethics

These sites contain resources and references for practicing good research ethics within a community:

Community Research Ethics Office:
communityresearchethics.com

Community-Based Research Canada:
communityresearchcanada.ca/resources

Centre for Community-Based Research:
communitybasedresearch.ca

For more in-depth training on research ethics, the **Canadian Panel on Research Ethics** has an online tutorial class (may require an academic login—if you don't have one, ask a friend!): tcps2core.ca/welcome

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Building a consent form

The process of building a consent form begins with the following points:

1 **Explanation of the research and what you will do**

   Discuss what, if anything, the participants have to do, not do in the study. Describe the steps of their participation chronologically.

2 **The participant's rights to participate, say no, or withdraw:**

   Eg. "Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time."

3 **Costs and compensation for being in the study (if applicable)**

   Tell your participants what they will recieve for taking part in the study.

4 **Contact information for questions and concerns**

   Provide your complete contact information in case participants have concerns or questions about your research, or questions/concerns about their role and rights as a participant,

   Include your name and complete contact information: mailing address, email address, phone number.

5. **Documentation of informed consent.**

   Eg. Their signature on a printed form or a checkmark on an online survey.

Generating Ideas

There are many ways to get ideas flowing, some regimented and others playful. As the research continues, you may find that coming back to these tools will help you keep the process moving along and help you if you feel stuck. All of these activities can be used in any combination—whatever feels most comfortable and productive for you. Including the community with which you're working in the brainstorming process will help keep the project relevant to and focused on the people involved.

BRAINSTORMING

The term was coined by Alex F. Osborn in 1953, who said, "the right idea is often the opposite of the obvious." This is the core of brainstorming—allowing for freedom of thought and dropping any fear of writing down the 'wrong' idea. During a brainstorming session, any idea that pops to mind is fair game, and should be written down no matter how far-fetched it may seem. Leave your opinions and assumptions behind and let your brain run along any path it finds. Speed is also an important element of an effective brainstorming session, as the aim is to generate as many thoughts on the topic as possible, but not to get stuck on one particular direction.

Thinking up a storm
Some tips for brainstorming effectively (alone or in a team):

1   State topic as clearly as possible

2   Set a time limit

3   Write down absolutely everything that you think or that is said by the group

4   Once the time is up, go through your ideas and organize them—rank them in order of best to worst (or most to least realistic, or whatever ranking makes sense for your project).

Possible brainstorming materials
Post-it notes, big pad of paper, markers, audio recording device, sketchbook, computer-based mind mapping software—Coggle (coggle.it) is a good one to try.

MIND MAPPING AND RELATED TECHNIQUES

Mind mapping

1 Write key point of focus in the centre of the page/whiteboard

2 Write words/terms related to the key point, linking them to show your thought process

3 If you run out of concepts, keep writing—slightly related ideas, opposites, even unrelated thoughts can be useful

4 Expand upon the relationships between the ideas on the page, circling and grouping items if necessary

5 Look for interesting relationships or unexpected results that might emerge

bonding

swimming

kids

fun

sports

togetherness

exercise

community centre

funding

programs

not enough

arts + crafts

creativity

Word listing

1 On a sheet of paper, write a column of words with as many concepts/terms as possible related to your key point of focus

2. To start the second column, pick an idea that interests you from the first column and make another list of concepts/terms related to this second idea

3. For the third column, write down words that are the opposite of the material in column 1

4. Circle relationships that span columns 1-3. Distill into ideas.

togetherness	neighbourhood	segregation
friendship	communication	alone
teamwork	apartments	hate
(community)	houses	ignored
	walking	uncertain
bonding	biking	discrimination
forgivness	transit	unforgiving

Exaggeration

Focus on one attribute of your current key point or idea and totally exaggerate it, eg. you're trying to improve a community centre for the residents that use it, so ask, "what would this community centre look like if budget were no obstacle?" Work through the logic of this outlandish scenario as if it could become reality, recording new and interesting ideas as you work.

Fantasy

Completely removing the constraints of reality from a project can inspire a plethora of new ideas. This method truly allows you to think outside the box, eg. what if this community centre was a living entity that responded to environmental conditions?

Collaborative Brainstorming

If you're working in a group, there are different ways of organizing the brainstorming process—parallel,popcorn-style, and in the round. Which method you choose will vary based on the group and how they work, and methods can be mixed together or used on different parts of the design process.

Parallel brainstorming

You and your partner/group members brainstorm simultaneously, but separately, then compare ideas and insights when the process is fininshed.

Popcorn-style brainstorming

All members of the group work together on the same things at the same time with little structure— an idea free-for-all!

Brainstorming in the round

This method draws on improvisation techniques and is inherently responsive. One person in the group throws and idea or thought out and the rest of the group builds on or responds to it. In the round is about evolving ideas without judgement.

VISUAL RESEARCH METHODS

There are many ways to visually explore your chosen topic and gather inspiring images or explore the topic via sketching or image organization.

Mood boards & visual databases

The first phase of gathering visuals for a project is open-ended. Collect any and all relevant images that relate to the topic

Once you have your images, they can be combined into mood boards that deal with the themes present in your project or organized into a database (on computer or in a drawer) from which you can draw further inspiration as the project progresses.

Finding Images

Tumblr*
tumblr.com

Pinterest*
pinterest.com

Google Images
google.ca

If you prefer a tactile experience, the **Toronto Reference Library** (789 Yonge Street, Toronto, ON) has filing cabinets full of photos in its Picture Collection on the 5th floor

*Both Tumblr & Pinterest are also good for storing the images you collect.

Sketch dump

Much like written brainstorming, freely sketching can lead you in unexpected directions. Set yourself a time limit and keep moving, sketching roughly and moving as quickly as possible from one idea to another.

GETTING INSPIRED

Don't be afraid to be inspired. Whether it's someone else's design project, nature, books, movies, science, etc., you can use the world around you to spark a new project and enrich one that's in progress.

Some tips for getting inspired:

1 Be a sponge

2 Keep a sketchbook/notebook to record the things you see and the thoughts they inspire,

3 Observe and, if possible, speak to other designers/ artists/community leaders/ activists, etc.

Once you start collecting things that inspire you, you can begin to apply them to your topic (or find new directions for your research).
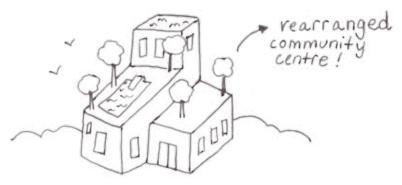
PLAYING WITH WORDS

Making connections

1 Choose a connection—with your topic in mind, decide what connection you want to make and pick two ideas to work from (eg. Community centre and environment)

2 Make two lists based on your connection (eg. **Community centre:** programs, togetherness, fun. **Environment:** conservation, planting things, pollution).

3 Identify opposing or overlapping ideas, see what new thoughts come out of comparing the words on the list, use images and written ideas to expand on these thoughts

4 Flesh out any of the new thoughts that appeal to you or enrich your topic

fun + planting things = GREENING OUR COMMUNITY CENTRE

Action Verbs

Take your initial idea, distill in into a noun (or series of nouns) and apply different verbs to it, (eg. Community centre – expand, multiply, rearrange, combine, decorate...), then make sketches that reflect these actions as applied to the noun(s) allowing you to reimagine the concept and see it from new angles/contexts

rearranged community centre!

Doing your research

When beginning the research process, consider challenging the existing competitive framework, in which researchers compete to be the 'first' to gather research and complete the study. Instead of forging ahead as though your chosen topic has never been considered before, take the time to find out who has already done work in the same area.

Being open to research as a collaborative process and working to form connections with individuals and organizations that are working in your field can both allow you access to resources you might not otherwise be able to connect with, and benefit the people with whom you work, as they might not have the time or resources to complete the same research. This is another facet of research as a cycle—by connecting with these other organizations and people and allowing them access to the information you gather, your research has the opportunity to grow beyond you and help build existing resources and solutions. When working within a collaborative framework, keep in mind the principles of Community Based Research (p. 7)—always be transparent about what the research is to be used for and who will be making use of it within and without the community, and be respectful of your collaborators and the labour, information, and collaboration they provide.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

To decide what resources are important for your research, think about your topic and your questions. Do you need to interview people right away, or is your topic better served by starting out with a round of reading in the library? Could a neighbourhood tour give you the best idea of where to start, or is a more formal site visit necessary to establish the direction of your research? Once you've created a work plan and decided on your research process, it is important to be willing to change it, as the plan you've made may not work for the community with whom you're working. Much like brainstorming, conducting research is a creative process that requires the researcher to be flexible and willing to change course if an adjustment is necessary.

CONDUCTING A LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review can help you establish existing information existing about your topic and suggest a direction for your research based on what people have already studied.

During a literature review...

1   Keep your research questions in mind

2   What sort of information are you trying to gather – theoretical? Practical? Policy? Qualitative (eg. Data)? Quantitative (eg. Studies)?

3   What is the scope of the review? Do you only want to focus on books and journals, or are articles (online or print) and other sources, eg. Social media or government documents also necessary?

Accessing sources

If you have friends who can access university libraries or archives, ask them if they can help you, either by logging you in so you can read the many journal articles available online (eg. at jstor.org, a massive journal article database) or access the libraries/archives themselves.

Reference library, 789 Yonge St, Toronto, ON   Many of the books here can't be taken out of the library, but there are lots of places to sit and peruse the materials, plus this and other Toronto libraries have free computer acess

Toronto library system torontopubliclibrary.ca
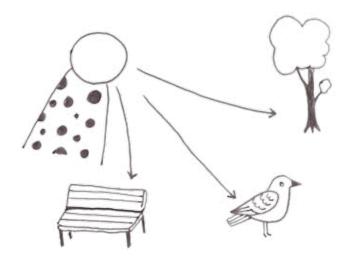
Directory of Open Access Journals: doaj.org

Wikipedia list of open access journals: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_open-access_journals

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4 While reading the sources you find, ask yourself questions, eg. how is the topic approached? Are the researcher's questions clearly defined? How was their research conducted? Is the source based in data or opinion (or a mix of the two)? Are there any biases apparent? How do they affect the author's analysis? What are the strengths and limitations of the source? How will this source be relevant to your research?

OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH

Research includes conducting interviews (whether one-on-one or via a questionnaire dispersed online or by hand) and collecting data, but can also take into account body language, personal style, and personal surroundings. These particular observations are opinion-based and interpreted through your own perspective as a researcher, but can improve the story behind your project.

Practicing Observation

With a notebook or sketchbook, choose a spot to sit for 30 minutes. During this time, write down everything you see, including as much detail as possible. Honing your observational skills will help you during research, as you will be used to taking down both obvious and subtle pieces of information simultaneously. During this exercise, keep in mind that your observations should be situated in a way that acknowledges your own biases and personal history.

Ethnography is used to create a, "portrait of the people*,' during which the researcher conducts up-close and personal research with their subjects to collect data for the project, build a narrative on which to base further research (or a final result), or find solutions to community issues by interacting with the people experiencing the issues at hand. Ethnography allows researchers to tap into local, "funds of knowledge*," drawing from an individual or community's lived experience to develop solutions that informed by the people that will be using/experiencing them. As with all research processes, it is important to put aside any assumptions or opinions you may have while conducting observational and ethnographic research. Be mindful of your position in relation to those you interview or observe and always avoid othering your subjects via the information or responses you record.

The troubled Origins of ethnography

Definition of ethnography (Oxford dictionary): The scientific description of peoples and cultures with their customs, habits, and mutual differences.

Etymology of prefix ethno- : word-forming element meaning "race, culture," from Greek ethnos "people, nation, class, caste, tribe; a number of people accustomed to live together" (see ethnic). Used to form modern compounds in the social sciences.

Etymology of ethnic: late 15c. (earlier ethnical, early 15c.) "pagan, heathen," from Late Latin ethnicus, from Greek ethnikos "adopted to the genius or customs of a people, peculiar to a people," from ethnos "band of people living together, nation, people," properly "people of one's own kind," from PIE *swedh-no-, suffixed form of root *s(w)e-. Earlier in English as a noun, "a heathen, pagan, one who is not a Christian or Jew" (c.1400).

Historically, anthropological ethnographic research is tied to colonialism and viewed through a lens of whiteness, in which the prefix enthno- indicates research that is about Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour instead of being by them. Words like ethnography and ethnic assume whiteness as the norm and are based in a history of othering   (definitions from etymonline.com)

FINDING PEOPLE TO TALK TO

Before you can conduct interviews, it is important to be mindful of your relationship with your interviewees. Building trust involves more than running through considerations of consent and comfort—even if you adhere perfectly to research ethics, the community's priorities still take precedence over your priorities as a researcher. Patience is an important quality for research, as building a trusting relationship can take time. Ensuring that you as a researcher are not taking advantage of the labour (the time and expertise) provided by your subjects and are providing them with incentives for their time are both good first steps towards developing a relationship with the community in which you're working.

Online surveys

If you're not able to do interviews in person (or want a more anonymous way of gathering responses), there are a number of free online questionnaire builders that can help.

SurveyMonkey (surveymonkey. com) has a simple interface and provides easy-to-read analysis of the data you gather.

Making it safe

Both researchers and participants bring their own experiences to the table. It's important to check in regularly with each other throughout the research to make sure the process feels safe and empowering.

TIPS FOR A GOOD INTERVIEW

1 **Identify participant(s)**
   By knowing your specific subject, you'll be able to know which questions to ask

2 **Be prepared**
   Compile your questions in advance, bring a pen, paper, recording device (if needed)

3 **Document non-verbal responses** (eg. body language) along with verbal answers

4 **Be open**
   Avoid coming to the interview with preconceived notions or strong opinions
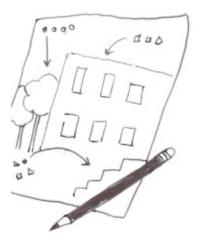
5 **Silence is OK!**
   Don't jump in if the interviewee pauses or interrupt them. Give them time to respond

6 **It's OK if the conversation goes beyond your questions**.
   Let the interviewee speak freely as long as they're comfortable doing so!

SITE VISITS

Site visits are essential to projects related to any built environment. Knowing the existing features of a space will help you consider how your ideas will fit within its confines and allow you to realistically consider concepts of accessibility and keep in mind any limitations it might impose. When conducting a site visit or neighbourhood tour, consider your own safety and comfort, and, when possible, get the permission of those who live in the area before starting your research. If you are taking pictures around the site, make sure to consider the privacy of the people who might end up in the photos.

Site visit tips:

1 **Visit the site**
Go at multiple times of the day, sketch a rough plan based on your observations, make notes of spots of interest (positive and negative)

2 **Observe and photograph or sketch**
If possible, build a database of visuals to analyze when you're not at the site, taking photos from many angles, take detail shots. You may see new things!

3 **Create a more detailed site plan**
Use a map resource such as Google Earth to build the plan, observe and mark overlooked and overused areas, consider the specifics of your project and how your proposed changes would fit into and impact the existing space

4 **Trace your photos of the site**
Simple outlines will help you analyze the existing forms of the site

5 **Sketch concepts**
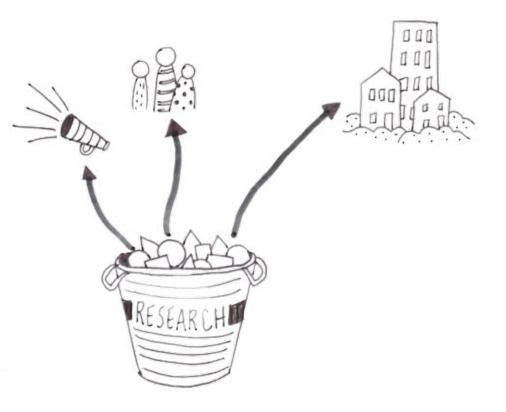Use any combination of the visuals you've created

WORKING BETWEEN LANGUAGES

When doing community-based research, you will most likely encounter community members who use language differently than you. They may speak another language or make use of community-specific terms (eg. specific pronouns) that are unfamiliar to you. Being aware of this and receptive to learning from the people with whom you interact is an important part of working within a community. Building a relationship with the community you're studying will help you find the best way to communicate, whether through learning their language/terms, working with a translator or via sketching and other visual forms of communication.

Asking open-ended questions
Open-ended questions are a good tool for gaining insight into a community's use of language. In its simplest definition, and open-ended question is one that deliberately seeks a long answer, prompting the interviewee to think and reflect and respond with their opinions or feelings. Open-ended questions also hand control of the conversation to the respondent, giving them the power to shape the interview and become involved in the research process. Good starting points for writing an open-ended question are words like what, why, how, and describe. For example, "is your community centre important to you," is a closed question because it asks for a yes or no answer. On the other hand, asking, "why is your community centre important to you," is an open-ended question, likely to lead to a more in-depth response.

Where to go From Here

A good first step for deciding what to do with your research once it has been gathered is to go back to the community with which you worked and ask its members what they would like to see happen with the information. Continuing the collaborative process as you begin to work with the research you have will help ensure that the results that come out of the process will give back to their community.

Once your research is complete, consider sharing it with the community and others working in the same field, as this will open a dialogue surrounding the information you've gathered as well as enabling others to create things that will exist alongside your own final result. Making your work open access will help create connections between research and community and provide an opportunity for open, continuing dialogue surrounding your topic.
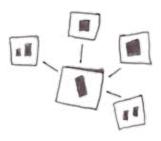
DESIGN SYNTHESIS

Similar to the making connections activity on p. 14, design synthesis will help you look at your collected information with fresh eyes and allow you to make new connections without relying on your pre-existing ideas of what the information is telling you. Synthesis will help you make meaning out of data and discover the story or stories your research is trying to tell, but it is important to consciously let go of any bias or expectations to allow the information to go in unexpected directions.
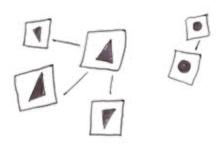
Synthesizing Ideas

A good way to begin the process of design synthesis is to write out your information and related ideas on index cards or sticky notes, using a system, eg. Colour coding, to divide the information into categories. Once everything is written out, start to move the cards around a table or tack them to a wall and find new ways to organize them. You may start to notice new patterns developing or see relationships between pieces of data that were previously invisible. The techniques outlined in the Generating Ideas section can also be repurposed for use once your research is collected. Each project could require a different combination of synthesis activites, so don't be afraid to use as many as seem necessary for the project at hand.

"Design synthesis attempts to organize, manipulate, prune, and filter gathered data into a cohesive structure for information building.*"

* FROM: slideshare.net/frogdesign/design-synthesis

NARRATIVES & DESIGN BRIEFS

There is more than one way to turn your research into a statement that defines what you discovered during the process. Both will distill your research into a form that is accessible to others and each one will help those reading it decide what to do with the information you have collected.
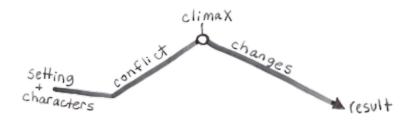
Narratives

The Oxford Dictionary defines a narrative as, "a spoken or written account of connected events; a story." Storytelling is an integral part of humanity, and interpreting your data as a story will make it accessible to others who are interested in reading about your research.
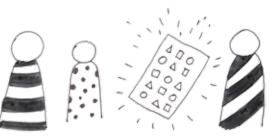
Find your story

To start finding your research narrative, think about the information you've gathered as a story—who are the characters and what are their journeys? What is the central conflict? How is the conflict dealt with and what is the result—what has changed? Your narrative will make use of the lived experience you have gathered from the community with which you are working and will create a compelling story that describes both the reason for the research and the changes the research can help create for those within the study.

Writing a brief

Where a narrative presents a story to its reader, a design brief presents the qualities and potential of the project in a straightforward manner that focuses on the upcoming process of turning the research into a finished thing. A brief acts as a statement of goals for the project and allows for an individual or group to define the key messages and create checkpoints for future development.

Tips for writing a brief

1 Ask questions about the project—go back to the community in which you conducted your research and ask them what they would like to see as the outcome of your research. The answers to these questions will help you refine your final brief.

2 Using your research and the answers to your questions, write a single sentence that describes your project

3 With the sentence as your starting point, make a list of the messages you want to convey with your project

Sample questions:

What are you hoping to achieve?

What are you hoping to learn?

Which connections and networks do you want to establish?

Who, apart from you, will benefit from the project?

4 Define your expected outcomes and objectives – sample questions:

Outcomes
What is the result/effect of your project?

What are you aiming to make (eg. Product, service, piece of communication, network, strategy, etc.)?

Objectives

What are the measures for success for the project?

What are the principles by which you're judging the project?

What must the project generate?

What should it generate?

5 You can also, once the above questions have been answered create a schedule for the project. This will help keep the project moving forward, and should include allocation of tasks over time, roles and responsibilities (if the project is collaborative), and deadlines for the various stages of the process (eg. For a poster—first rough sketches, refined sketches, final art, printing).

ORGANIZING, MANAGING & SHARING YOUR RESEARCH

Once you start gathering information and collecting sources, it's helpful to have tools to keep it all organized. Physical file management systems can be as simple as colour-coded tabs and file folders, or themed binders/notebooks. If you have access to a computer, the following free resources (some online-only, others downloadable programs) will help keep your work organized. The cloud storage applications and Wiki/ database providers will also allow you to make your work accessible to others, whether on a password-protected account or on an open-access website.

Online Resource Management & Sharing Tools

Mendeley
Free reference manager & citation generator
mendeley.com

Creative Commons
Find CC licensed works, license your own work as CC
creativecommons.org

Google Drive
File storage & sharing, requires a Google ID
drive.google.com

Dropbox
File storage & sharing, can be accessed from desktop and files can be used (but not updated/ shared) while you're offline.
dropbox.com

Zoho
Online database and information storage
zoho.com/reports

Grubba
Free online database site
grubba.net

A simple how-to for making a Wiki (using Google sites)
howtogeek.com/howto/34248/ how-to-create-a-wiki-without- any-technical-know-how-using- google-sites

Starting an article on Wikipedia
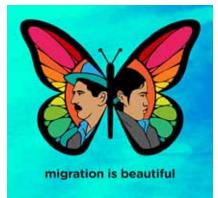en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Wikipedia:Starting_an_article

CREATIVE WAYS OF REPRESENTING YOUR RESEARCH

Don't be afraid to be creative when rendering your research into a final result. Your project can take the form of a workshop, a rally or demonstration, or an installation in a public space. Work with your community to come up with an effective and exciting way of using the information you've gathered!

Migration is Beautiful

migrationisbeautiful.com
Inspired by the fluid and peaceful migration of butterflies, which has inspired immigration activists for generations, artist Favianna Rodriguez created the "Migration is Beautiful" butterfly image in collboration with The Culture Group, Air Traffic Control, and Culture Strike. It is now available on the website for download as a colouring activity and wing template, as well as an Action Kit. The call for involvement continues via calls for speaking out to American politicians and an artists' statement on immigration reform.

Beehive Design Collective

beehivecollective.org

The Beehive Collective, a wildly motivated, all-volunteer, activist arts collective dedicated to 'cross-pollinating the grassroots' by creating collaborative, anti-copyright images for use as educational and organizing tools," creates immense graphics campaigns based on extensive listening projects during which they live amongst the community on which the campaign is based. Previous campaigns have focused on Latin American refugee camps and the coal fields of the central Appalachian mountains.

Ontario Women's Health Network—Putting solutions in place: Bridging the gap between women and breast cancer screening
owhn.on.ca/research_projects.htm

This community-based research project, which resulted in a report and infographic available on the OWHN website, consulted women who are eligible for Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) but have never had a mammogram (or haven't had one in two years) about their knowledge of and experiences with the OBSP program, including the barriers they face and their views on the accessibility of the program. By partnering with agencies already working closely within the communities included in the study, the study was able to reflect the voices of the women in each community.

More Resources

BOOKS

On Design Thinking & Research

Graphic Design Thinking: Beyond Brainstorming, edited by Ellen Lupton, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2011

Design Research: Methods and Perspectives, edited by Brenda Laurel, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2003

On Being A Designer

Designing for Social Change, Andrew Shea, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2012

How to be a Graphic Designer Without Losing Your Soul, Adrian Shaughnessy, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2005

ONLINE

CBR Resources
communityresearchethics.com/news-events-resources

Writing Literature Reviews
writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/literature-reviews

A slideshow on Design Synthesis
slideshare.net/frogdesign/design-synthesis

Consent form worksheets
humanresearch.msu.edu/applications/Consent_Template_EXEMPT_10-02-09.pdf

ecuad.ca/research/reb/informed_consent

More brainstorming tools

Mind mapping tools
lifehacker.com/five-best-mind-mapping-tools-476534555

Visual dictionary
visuwords.com