LAUNCH EVENT
22 March 2019

SOMATICS TOOLKIT

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Research with a Twist

SOMATICSTOOLKIT for Ethnographers

NCRM Commissioned Research Projects
Innovation in Ethnographic Approaches

18 months (1/9/17- 28/2/19)
Programme

MORNING

10.00-10.15 Welcome & Practicalities

10:15-11.00 Introductions to the project

11.00-11.30 Break

11.30-1.00 Keynote 1 Sandra Reeve: The Moving Body as Involved Witness

AFTERNOON

2.00-3.30 Keynote 2 Vero Benei: Ethnography as Alchemy

3.30-4.30 Circular Reflection time

4.30-5.00 Individually relocate to RAI

5.00-7.00 Reception RAI plus buffet
Aims

1. explore the role of physicality, embodiment and the contribution of somatic techniques to ethnography

2. build a toolkit that utilises the body as a research tool for anthropology students, employing ethnographic methods

3. contribute to somatic training within UK anthropology teaching and research, enhancing quality and depth of training

4. supporting physical and emotional wellbeing of researchers
Research Questions

1. What activities and (contextual) conditions will support researchers in bringing body-based and somatic techniques into their specific research context?

2. How can improvised, conscious movement and somatic practice in a studio setting support thinking, knowing, analysing and connecting research activities?

3. What, if any, are the effects or influences on ethnographic work of engaging more deeply with somatic attention and enhanced ‘physical literacy’?

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Development of Somatics
(from Greek, sōma: ‘body’)

1. End 19th century: breaking free from Victorian limitations, often in response to illness, disabilities, and possible through exposure to ‘exotic’ practices (Eddy 2009)

2. Phenomenological/existential theorists (Dewey, Merleau-Ponty, and Whitehead)

3. Expressionist dance (Mary Wigman, Rudolf von Laban, Kurt Jooss, Ruth St. Denis, Martha Graham)

4. Mid 1980s commonalities between various approaches started to be recognised
Somatic Practice

- Awareness of breath and the senses
- Conscious relaxation
- Connection between inner/outer; self/world
- Agency, choice and time-space dimensions
- Role of memory, images and imagination
- Exploring different points of view and transitions between those
- Recognising and investigating habitual movement responses, and exploring new movement possibilities
Theoretical Framework

- **Sensory anthropology** considers the role and meaning of sensory experiences as culturally constituted, and part of knowledge creation.

- **Autoethnography** also recognises the literacy of the body and has the capacity to embrace paradoxes such as body/mind, personal/scholarly, individual/social, evocative/analytical, without making the research less rigorous or theoretical.

- **Hermeneutic cycle** to move between subject-object, pre-understanding and understanding, to address the intricacy of data and interpretation as an ongoing process, and reflect on meaning in multiple layers.
Toolkit addresses

1. Physical engagement with all aspects of the research process
   (literature review, data collection, analysis, writing, dissemination)

2. Avenues for emotional support during the often stressful aspects of the research cycle
   (drowning in data, personal responses to ethically challenging material, high pressures and demands of the academic endeavour, or writers block)
Body in Entire Research Cycle

- idea
- planning
- data collection
- analysis
- writing
- knowledge exchange

body as a source of information and understanding

KoZin Photography 4/3/16, Digital Echoes Symposium, C-DaRE
1. Core Practice
2. Extended Practice
3. Podcast series
4. Blog
Core Practice

1. Body Basics: Arriving

PRE-FIELDWORK
2. Literature: A Spatial Approach
3. Identity: Noticing Your Lenses
4. Confidence: Taking on the Researcher’s Mantel

FIELDWORK
5. Observation: Seeing and Being Seen
6. Interviews: Intimacy and Reciprocity in the Field
7. Places: Being in the Unknown

POST-FIELDWORK
8. Analysis: Moving with Polarities
9. Writing: Embodying your Thoughts
10. Presenting: A full-bodied Performance

Designed through:
- Interviews with anthropology PhD students
- 1:1 and group practice sessions with somatic practitioners
- Case-studies with senior academics from other disciplines
- Writing and recording Scripts
- Testing and Refining

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Core Practice 2 — Literature: A spatial approach

During literature reviews we easily get inundated with questions about what to read, where to start, and how to find our unique and original contribution amongst the forest of existing texts. This exploration engage with these questions through the body and through physically arranging some literature around you. We assume that objects, such as books, as well as the space contain information beyond that which is immediately obvious. The body is a kind of ‘Cognitive Plus’ tool to access that information, and allows you to engage with your literature review in an embodied, spatial manner. This can give you fresh insights into familiar texts, clarify relationships between different pieces of literature, show gaps, and help you find your own flow in the landscape of readings. Allow your curiosity to take you on a journey, as you review and explore your literature in this novel way.

Further Reading
Extended Practice — Finding relief from overwhelm
By Elizabeth Hayward

This practice is intended to help reconnect you when you’re feeling overwhelmed by work. When we are in a state of overwhelm, it is hard to tell what we can do in order to shift our relationship with work and figure out what comes next. We are often instinctively to focus on work harder. But often is in order to reconnect to our project, it’s necessary to take some time to rest and reexperience in a way that will soften the anxiety so that we can return to our project. To start, you are invited to connect with the full sense of your present moment so that you can begin to notice when your body tells you to slow down. From there, you will explore what this “stress” sense is might be trying to communicate about how you can respond.

Further Reading

Extended Practice — Spatial awareness and gaze: a solo exploration
By Deborah Nkuc

This solo is designed to prepare you for physical work tasks and help you find a way to get through tasks, using your gaze to take in more information, and bring a sense of curiosity and play into your research.

Further Reading
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<th>Topic</th>
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<td>A Non-Binary Guide to Embodying One's Embryonic Gonads</td>
<td>Nicole Bindler</td>
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<td>Blood work (3 Recordings!)</td>
<td>Mette Terp Højbye and Marie Hallager Andersen</td>
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<td>Butoh Walk</td>
<td>Paola Esposito</td>
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<td>Comfort, Discomfort and the transformation of perception</td>
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<td>Embodying epistemology and evolving research ethics</td>
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<td>Finding Relief from overwhelm</td>
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<td>Spatial awareness and gaze: working with others as participant and observer exploration</td>
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<td>The Body as Homeland</td>
<td>Dom Chatterjee</td>
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<td>The deep nerves of rest and restoration</td>
<td>Roxlyn Moret</td>
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<td>Urban and Environmental somatics</td>
<td>Andrew Suseno</td>
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<td>Working from challenges/from inspiration</td>
<td>Elizabeth Maynard</td>
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<td>Working with empathic fatigue</td>
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<td>Yielding as an ecologically sensitive and somatic practice</td>
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In the first series of our podcast, Eline Kieft talks to academics who pioneer the body as a research tool in anthropology.

S01 Episode 03: Jonathan Skinner on Concerns regarding the body in fieldwork, analysis and writing

Dr Jonathan Skinner from Roehampton University talks to Eline Kieft about how dance has become integral to his research and

S01 Episode 02: Jerome Lewis on Learning about a culture through physical participation

Doctor Jerome Lewis from University College London talks with Eline Kieft about using his body as part of his research.

S01 Episode 01: Véronique Bénéï on Body education in India and slavery history in Colombia

Professor Véronique Bénéï from the French National Institute for Scientific Research talks with Eline Kieft about using her body as
Podcasts 2

In the second series, Doerte Weig talks about how our bodies can be related in a broader way to the fields of anatomy, economics, environment, architecture, mobility and systems thinking.

S02 Episode 03: Brian Massumi and Erin Manning on the economic challenge to collectively reorganize how we value money

In Episode 3 of Series 2 we continue our discussion with Erin Manning and Brian Massumi from the SenseLab in

S02 Episode 2: Erin Manning and Brian Massumi on critical somatic individualisation and why we need more movement in university education and architecture

In Episode 2 of Series 2 Erin Manning and Brian Massumi talk to Doerte Weig about schizo-somatic workshops at the SenseLab.

S02 Episode 1: Gil Hedley on integral human anatomy, fascia and the link between body fat and consumer culture

In Episode 1 of Series 2 Gil Hedley talks to Doerte Weig about how discovering our inner bodies allows us
Reflects on applying the body within academic research.

Includes a variety of voices and experiences: from students to movement practitioners to senior researchers.

Represents different disciplines and backgrounds including anthropology, dance practice and scholarship, and theatre studies.

Blog

Integrating different ways of knowing: deepening interviews through shared movement

By Mila Bammens I'm a fourth year BA cultural anthropology student at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. During my studies, I...
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<td>Embodied awareness as pedagogy and practice for academic resilience</td>
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<td>The Perils of Un-Physical Education: a personal narrative</td>
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<td>Palestinian Dance and the Obfuscation of Somatic Source Material</td>
<td>Nicole Bindler</td>
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<td>Knowing the Body in the Virtual Field Site</td>
<td>Harsha Balasubramanian</td>
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<td>somatics : an undichotomizing poetic : a provocative invitation</td>
<td>Bronwyn Preece</td>
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<td>Autonomous Bodies</td>
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<td>Working with head and Blood</td>
<td>Hallager Andersen + Terp Høybye</td>
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Navigating the Site
1. Anthropology students, ethnographers + designers (enhancing perception of research topic when working with own sensory experiences)

2. Informants + collaborators (through fair representations and culturally sensitive narratives)

3. Researchers within and outside of Arts and Humanities, employing ethnographic methods

4. Other disciplines such as health care professionals, business, education, sports
“body as source for creative, sensorial language with which I can bring my field data to life”

“using the body to imagine solutions for challenges in the field, such as establishing my identity as researcher and navigating the various roles I am assigned”

“don’t need to leave this part of me behind when I do research”

“support for speaking to ‘structuralist’ supervisors”

“importance and effectiveness of integrating body in mind-oriented activities”

“reflecting on where I work: screen not always the most optimal”
Issues that we encountered

1. Audio-files designed for *imagined* (and at the production stage: disembodied) listener
2. Functional diversity of listeners
3. Cultural positioning of us as designers
4. What do we even mean when we speak about the body?
5. Age-related discrepancy on relevance of toolkit
Where to go from here? (1)

What’s already happening

1. Expand the Extended Practice tracks and blog
2. Expand the podcast (Series 2...)
3. Prepare research publication on somatics & anthropology
Where to go from here? (2) SOMATICS TOOLKIT

What we would like your feedback on

1. Availability to and use by Undergraduate and Postgraduate students in anthropology across the UK

2. Survey of Somatics Training in Anthropological Teaching in UK Higher Education (indicating the absence of somatics in anthropological pedagogy)

3. Two key ideas
   • Student peer groups, within a department and/or online, to share their experiences with the Toolkit and ensure a continued motivation through being part of a group
   • Defining someone within an (anthropology) department, as contact person for the Toolkit

4. Translation into other languages and formats

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Thank you

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References 1


• Stoller, P. (1997). *Senuous Scholarship (Contemporary Ethnography).*

