

# On Method: Tacit Knowledge in the Expanded Field of Architecture



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**Teaching Module 2**

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 860413.

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Architecture and its Ways of Knowing

# Module aims

The module takes the individual research project as a starting point for exploring *the effect of methods*. Through site visits and text analyzes, the participants will:

- frame potential “objects of research” and discuss the impact of different methods
- investigate how notions of tacit knowledge could be addressed and explored in relation to an expanded field of architecture
- Investigating the notion of “the archive”

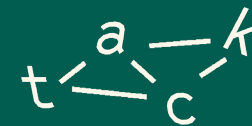
This module was created as an online course but works as well as an in-person on-site module



Photos by Julian Rosefeldt and  
Future Architecture,  
[futurearchitectureplatform.org](http://futurearchitectureplatform.org)



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# Module aims

During the module, the participants start creating an archive of literature, objects, drawings, documents, traces, silences, memories etc.

Topics to address:

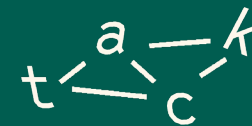
- How to create a collective archive of tacit knowledge?
- How can the material be structured and categorized?
- What material is of use to share with others?
- What form could an archive take?
- Who should have access to the archive?



Photography Julian Rosefeldt



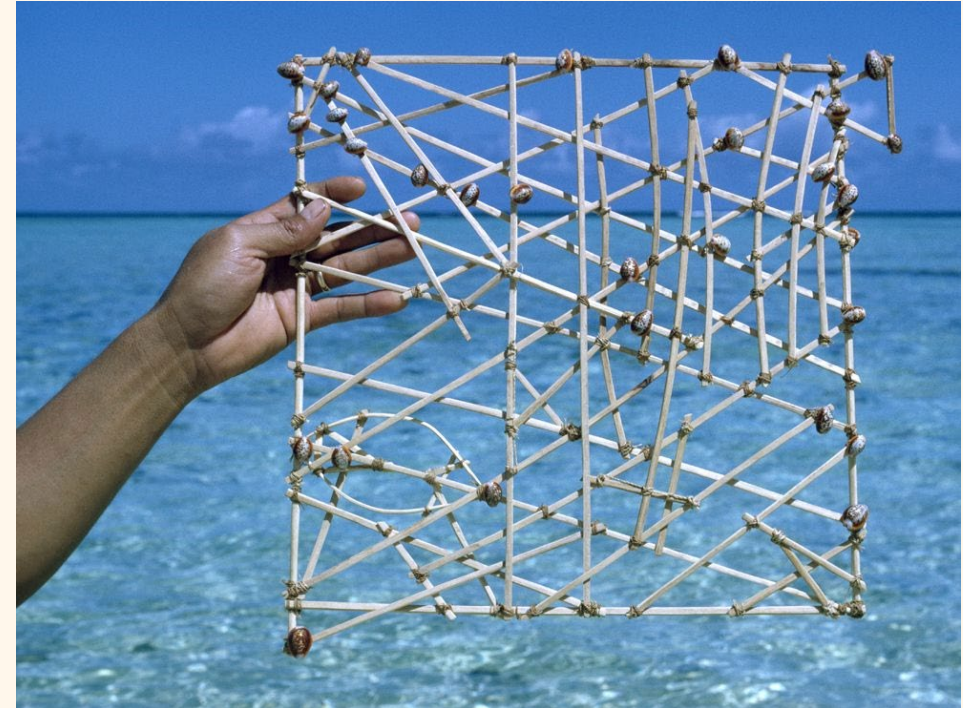
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# Methodology: architecture and (tacit) knowledge worldmaking and ontological politics

Research produces new knowledge and presents new perspectives on the world. Methodologies are not only deciding how the world is represented, they also produce worlds; they are worldmaking practices. ‘Ontological politics’ means that if methods create worlds, then it becomes a question of which worlds to create. (Law & Urry 2004).

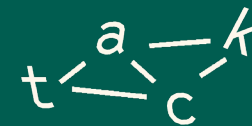


*Photograph by Walter Meayers Edwards.*

Source: [http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/media/micronesian-stick-chart/?ar\\_a=1](http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/media/micronesian-stick-chart/?ar_a=1)



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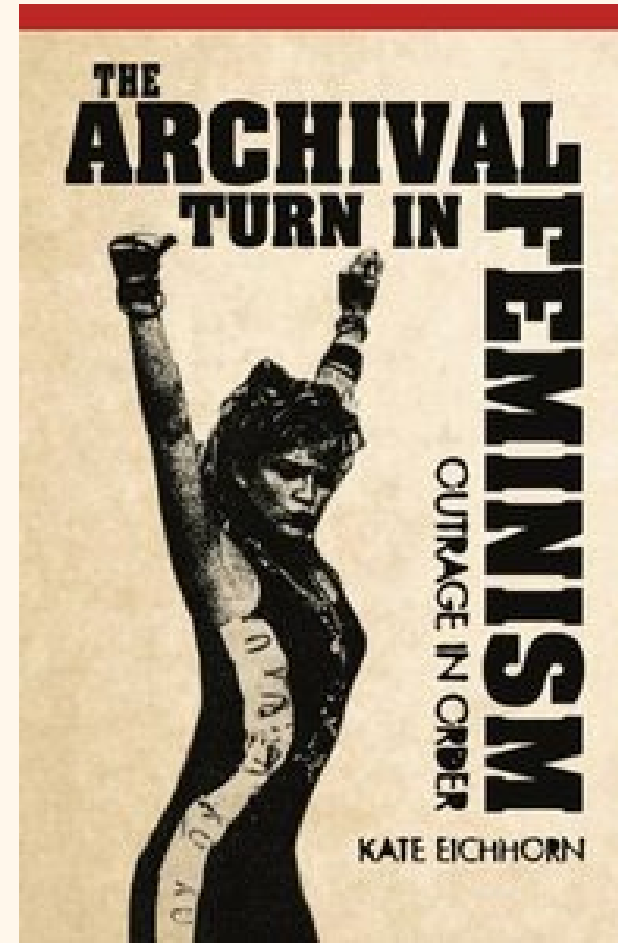
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# The archive: given or created?

Rather than approach the archive as a site of preservation (a place to house traces of the *past*), feminist scholars, cultural workers, librarians, and archivists born during and after the rise of the second-wave feminist movement are seizing the archive as an apparatus to legitimize new forms of knowledge and cultural production in an economically and politically precarious *present*.

Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, 2013

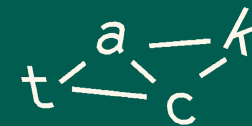
- What is a historical fact?
- How to work with silences and gaps in the archives?
- How to produce the archive?



Kate Eichhorn,  
*The Archival Turn in Feminism*, 2013



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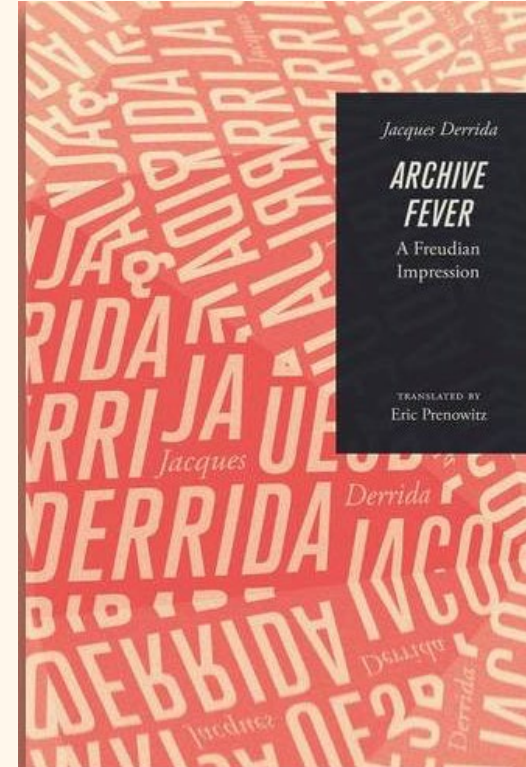


# The archive: political, or...?

There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.

Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*, 1995

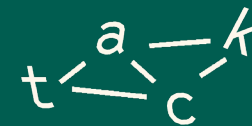
- How are methodologies imbedded in the political sphere?
- What is the role of control and transparency in the construction of the archive?
- What is the role of ‘the spatial’ when formulating a method and using/producing an archive?



Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*, 1995



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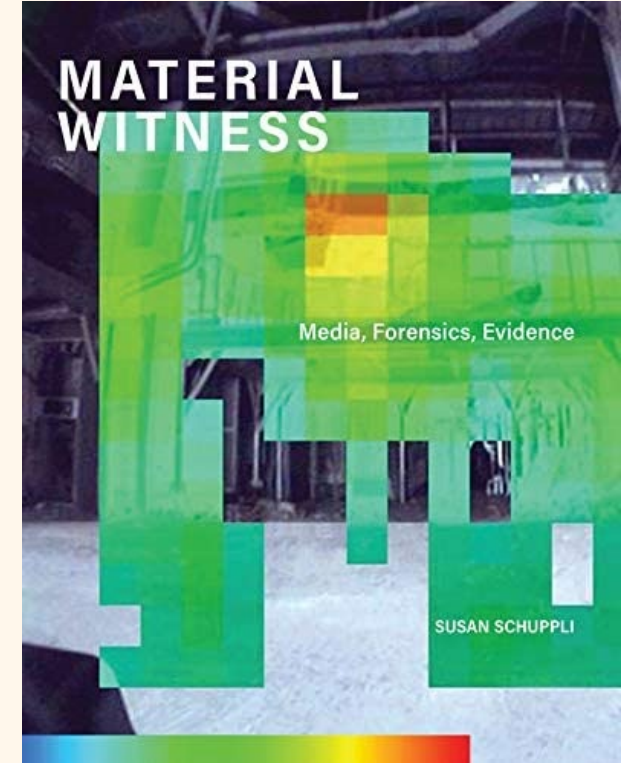
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# Methodology: architecture and (tacit) knowledge material witness

Matter becomes a material witness only when the complex histories entangled within objects are unfolded, transformed into legible formats, and offered up for public consideration and debate.

Susan Schuppli, *Material Witness*, 2020

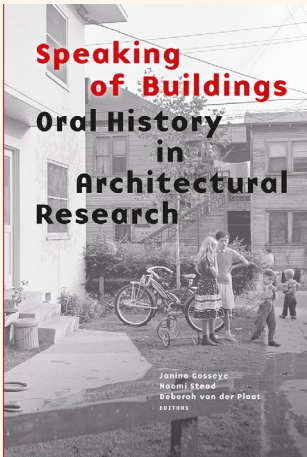
- What types of information does architecture and materials store and trace?
- Through what methods can these be ‘unfolded’ and made legible?
- In which ‘forums’ can these be offered up for consideration and debate? And with what outcomes?



# Methodology: architecture and (tacit) knowledge oral witness

In spite of a long lineage, the place of oral history within the historiography of modern architecture is not yet fully accepted, understood, or theorized. The question of who can speak for and about buildings, what they can say and how, and what it all means – both for buildings and for people- thus offers a rich field of discussion.

Janina Gosseye et. al., *Speaking of Buildings*, 2019



Janina Gosseye et. al., *Speaking of Buildings*

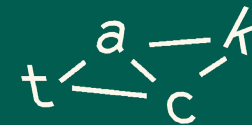
- How can methods be developed through participatory history writing?
- How to work with human witnesses and oral history?
- How to open up research questions through the witness seminar?



Witness seminar ArkDes 2019,  
Photo: Mariette Parling



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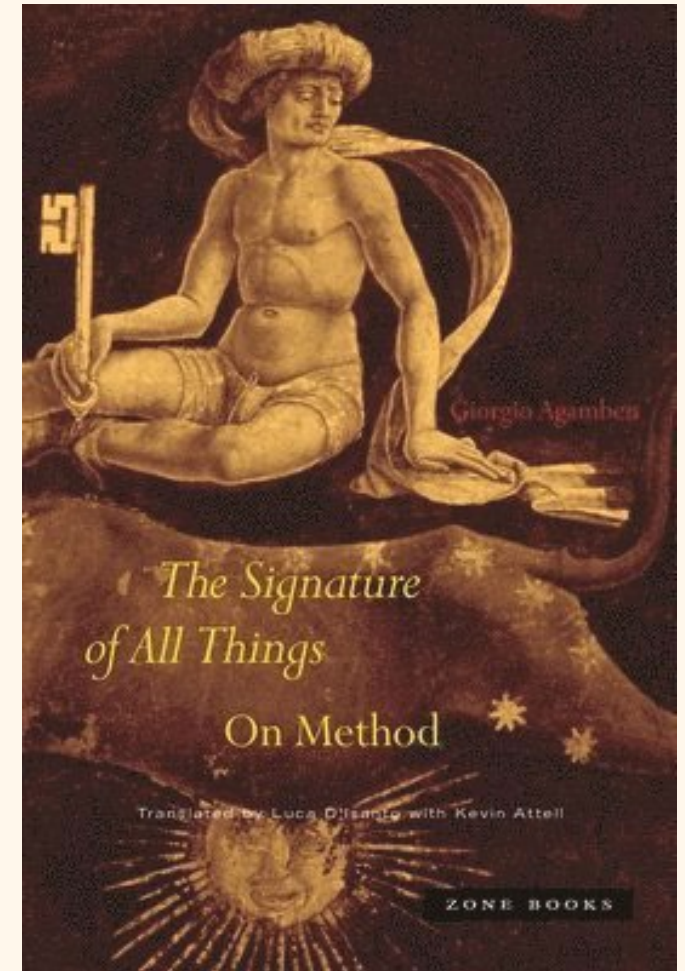


# ‘Archeological vigilance’

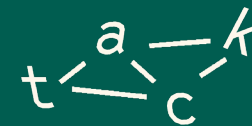
Every inquiry in the human science must retrace its own trajectory back to the point where something remains obscure and unthematized. Only a thought that does not conceal its own unsaid, but constantly takes it up and elaborates it, may eventually claim to originality.

Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method*

- How to answer research questions?
- How to work with materials, interpretations, and methods that lead toward silences in the material without giving all of them a figure but instead identify some openings for further inquiries?
- How to follow the tacit knowledge of the research object?



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# Assignment

## Task 1: Object(s) of research: What? Why? How? preparation and presentation (individual)

Develop a *short essay/textual description* of your individual PhD-project, 1000-2000 words. Try to be clear and include your aims, research questions, methods: What? Why? How?

The text should include references to literature. Address the notion of tacit knowledge and articulate potential *object(s) of research*, use visual material.

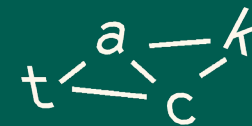
The *object(s) of research* can be your “case study” or the physical content of your investigation; a building, an environment, a process, a relationship, etcetera. Even if you have not yet defined your PhD-project, you can try something out, and of course you can change it later.

10-minutes individual presentations of your PhD-project.  
Include:

- A title of the presentation
- 3-5 Visual slides (ppt, pdf) addressing the “object(s) of research”



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# Assignment

## Task 2: Site visit

### Preparation (individual or group work)

Document a *site visit* relating to your research project. The techniques of documentation and presentation are optional, could be texts, video (essay), drawing, images/photos, collages, text, data, etcetera. Reflect on how specific method(s) can be used to unpack the stories/structures/power flows on-site and help you answer your research questions. Elaborate on the particular architectural and spatial aspects of your site visit. Who are the actors, and how are they interacting? What infrastructures are created through their interactions? How is material activated, and what social relations does the material enable? How is social life framed through space? Discuss conflicts and tensions on the site.



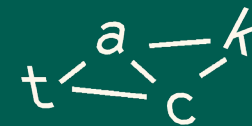
TACK site visit to Ungers' archive in Köln. Photos: Anna Livia Vørsel

Discuss the notion of tacit knowledge in this specific situation and how it plays out in the broader domain of architecture.

A site visit can be physical, digital, imaginary, visual; it can be a physical place or object (a building a street, a hospital etc); it can be a document, a drawing, a law, a protocol and much more. “To visit” is here referring to positioning yourself in the midst of something, engaging with it, confronting it, staying with it.



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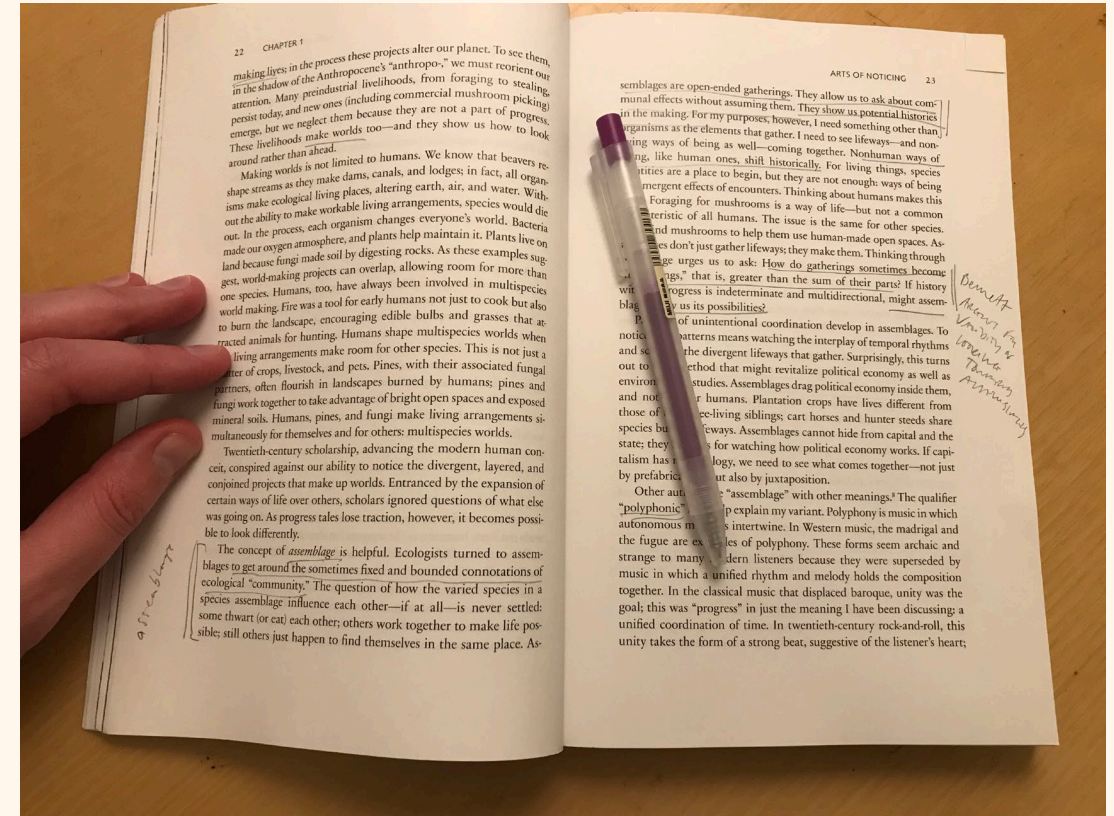
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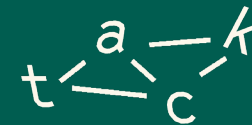
# Assignment

## Task 3: Annotation preparation (individual)

Annotate three texts that relate to your project, at least two on method, and include them in the TACK *archive*. Discuss your choices with your supervisors. Each comment should be 200-500 words containing a summary and a personal reflection stating your position to the text. Choose one of these texts on method and relate to your *site visit*.



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# Assignment

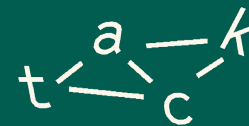
## Task 2+3: Site visit and annotation presentation

The candidates will be divided into groups of 3 or 4 people, and it will be a session on each candidate's site visit and annotated text. A session will contain the following:

- Prepared comments and discussion on the annotated text (further instructions to come)
- A short presentation of the site visit
- A final discussion



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