

**WEB WITHOUT A WEAVER-
ON THE BECOMING OF KNOWLEDGE**

A STUDY OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION IN THE DANISH POLICE

Camilla Hald

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*Web Without a Weaver- On the Becoming of Knowledge:
A Study of Criminal Investigation in the Danish Police*

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ABSTRACT

The present dissertation is an anthropological study of the formation and production of knowledge through the prism of criminal investigation and case making in the Danish Police. The fundamental puzzle informing this research is the question of how knowledge ‘comes about’. How do we as social actors make sense of and form knowledge to produce a sense of certainty on which to act in our social worlds? How do we, in other words, make the move from no knowledge to knowledge; from a state of ‘radical doubt’ or *non-sense* to *set* meanings and a state of ‘certainty’? And, just as importantly, how can this movement be understood and described anthropologically? Rather than being an ethnography of investigators, this work is a contribution to the development of a theoretical understanding and a methodological framework for researching and describing social acts of signification and the web of meaning they produce. The premise of this study is that criminal investigation and the legal field is a paradigmatic case for the study of *epistemic cultures*. In the same sense as the natural sciences produce ‘facts’ which come to act as powerful performances of the world we live in; the ‘facts’ produced by investigative activities and the deliberations of courts of law, powerfully affects our understandings of moral truths, justice and social order. Also, they are powerfully applied forms of knowledge, in that they are used in the governing of people in modern society.

The dissertation combines the methodology and basic tenets of Actor-Network-Theory with pragmatism and critical post-structuralist theory to develop an ethnography of investigative knowledge-formation as ‘assemblage’. In order to describe investigative knowledge-formation as ‘assemblage’ the dissertation attends to the micro-processes of interaction between actors in assemblage. Assemblage is described as process through the development of the concept of ‘investigative semiosis’ and as an inter-place for the production of knowledge, through the development of the concept of ‘investigative space’. Together these concepts are used to explore how actors within an assemblage interact to form meanings and produce knowledge of a crime. By describing the micro-practices and micro-processes of investigative knowledge-making the dissertation explores different ways investigators relate to and interact with their environment, with objects, with skilled communities of practice, with fields of knowledge, with technologies, with textual spaces, with procedures etc and how in this interaction meaning and ultimately knowledge emerge as a consequence or effect. The dissertation in this way makes a point of describing different levels and scales of the becoming of knowledge as well as the complexity and multiplicity of actors (or actants) involved in its formation. A central line of argumentation in the dissertation is one emphasising and

exploring how materiality significantly contributes to the formation of knowledge, both on the level of embodied knowing and at the level of epistemic manufacture of knowledge. To explore the becoming of knowledge within investigative practices, a distinction is made between knowing and knowledge-making, ultimately arguing however for an understanding of these as belonging to different scales in a continuum of the formation of epistemic knowledge. With this emphasis on different scales and social forms involved in the becoming of knowledge, the dissertation contributes to the anthropology of knowledge, by developing and exploring a social theoretical and methodological framework which can encompass both the embodied and tacit forms of knowledge exhibited in the performance of investigative acts of discovery of clues, and the forms of knowledge derivative of far more abstract and systemic working flows.

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PREFACE

"In fact, the sociologist and his 'object' form a couple where each one is to be interpreted through the other, and where the relationship must itself be deciphered as a historical moment"

— Sartre: Critique de la raison dialectique

This dissertation is an anthropological study of the formation and production of knowledge through the prism of *criminal investigation* and *case making*. It is not the ethnography of investigators or investigative work in the sense of being a holistic description of a particular people, their way of life and their culture; nor is it an attempt at an exploration of a particular worldview, or of the cultural commonalities of a particular community of practice. Like a 'web without a weaver', the field does not consist of a single rationality which ethnography seeks to disclose. Rather, this ethnography is about disentangling a meshwork of lines and threads of social *acts of signification* and the web of meaning they produce. It is this *web-of-signification* or rather, the *weaving* of this *web*, which embodies *the field* and the *object of study* of the present work. The fundamental puzzle informing this research is the question of how knowledge 'comes about'. How do we as social actors make sense of and form knowledge to produce a sense of certainty on which to act in our social worlds? How do we, in other words, make the move from no knowledge to knowledge; from a state of 'radical doubt' or *non-sense* to *set* meanings and a state of 'certainty'? And, just as importantly, how can this movement be understood and described anthropologically? The main thrust is thus

theoretical rather than descriptive: description serving rather as the handmaiden of theoretical reflection and the development of theoretical perspectives. I wish with this work to contribute to the development of theory and methodology within the anthropology of knowledge, by developing theory *vis-à-vis* empirical data and some detailed investigated examples from the field of criminal investigation.

The legal process is the ‘evidence-culture’ *par excellence*. It is the field which most clearly deals in transitions from doubt to certainty, through the production of knowledge and the manufacture of evidence; why the investigation of crime and the manufacture of legally convincing evidence constitutes a ‘paradigmatic case’ of the eradication of doubt and the production of certainty (Flyvbjerg, 2001, pp. 80-81). Nowhere is this movement from no knowledge or doubt to certainty, in the form of material evidence, more central and explicit than within the legal process. To eradicate ‘doubt’ – to provide the kind of evidential knowledge that “proves beyond reasonable doubt” that a given crime was committed by a given perpetrator lies at the core of the legal process. In this process criminal investigation is decisive. Criminal investigation produces the knowledge and evidence on which cases are evaluated. The field of investigative production of knowledge and evidence is also ‘paradigmatic’ in the sense that a range of scholars – from philosophers to sociologists – within the last decades increasingly have pointed to the ‘legal field’ as a metaphor for the *evidential paradigms* reigning in intellectual communities and society at large, and, also as a metaphor for a specific way of thinking – a ‘modern’ form of thinking (cf. Bauman, 1987). The investigative production of evidential knowledge thus presents a paradigmatic case on a par with that of Bentham’s Panopticon in the work of Foucault or of the Balinese Cockfight analysed by Geertz (Flyvbjerg, 2001, pp. 80-81), for exploring what Karin Knorr-Cetina has termed *epistemic cultures*: “cultures that create and warrant knowledge”, ... “those amalgams of arrangements and mechanisms – bonded through affinity, necessity, and historical coincidence – which in a given field, make up *how we know what we know*” (1999, p. 1). Such epistemic cultures exert a significant influence on the form and practices of complex societies, which is why understanding and describing these is an important project for contemporary anthropology and especially so for the anthropology of knowledge (see also Latour, 2004a, 2009). Following the insights of Governmentality Studies¹ (Burchell, Gordon, Miller, & Foucault, 1991; Dean, 1999; Ericson, Doyle, & Barry, 2003; Rose & Miller, 1992) in the wake of Foucault, that modern forms of

¹ The notion of governmentality stems from a neologism coined by Foucault in his lectures on the ‘governmental rationality’ of liberalism, held at College de France in the late 1970s, published in English in 1979 (in the journal *Ideology & Consciousness*). After being republished in 1991 (Foucault, 1991b) a vast literature inspired by this work emerged. This school of thought has developed primarily among Anglo-American scholars and is in particular connected to the journal *Economy and Society*. A basic premise of governmentality studies is that in modern liberal societies, power is exercised through knowledge. The aim of governmentality studies is to highlight the ways in which scientific discourse plays a part in translating society into an object of government (Vestergaard, 2009).

government is intrinsically bound up with knowledge practices and informed by the development of the human and social sciences; i.e. that modern government is a governing *through* knowledge, I will address the field of law, policing and criminal investigation on a par with the sciences as what Knorr-Cetina terms 'epistemic cultures'. The 'forms of knowledge that arise from and inform the activity of governing' I will thus with Mitchell Dean refer to as *epistemic* (the episteme of government) (Dean, 1999, p. 31). In the same sense as the natural sciences produce 'facts' which come to act as powerful performances of the world we live in; the 'facts' produced by investigative activities and the deliberations of courts of law, powerfully affects our understandings of moral truths, justice and social order. Also, they are powerfully applied forms of knowledge, in that they are used in the 'conduct of conduct' (Dean, 1999, p. 10), that is in the governing of people in modern society.

FROM EXPERIENCE TO THEORY

Based in ethnography but driven by an ambition to contribute to an understanding of human interaction in all its diversity and detail this dissertation manoeuvres within the particular space between experience and theory, which is at the core of the anthropological project (Hastrup, 1995). The present work is inspired by a mode of anthropology that rests on theoretical development through empirical visitation and a close presence to the actors and impressions of the field in the development of the theoretical framework of the ethnography and of social theory as such. A prominent example of this mode of analysis is Kirsten Hastrup's work on theatre, most notably represented in: *Action: Anthropology in the Company of Shakespeare* (Hastrup, 2004a). This is anthropology born not just from the practice of fieldwork alone but of a companionship with the actors of the field. In this mode of anthropology the company is kept. It is extended all the way to the final text, which unfolds still in the company of the actors and spaces of the field. In Hastrup's case this entails using the theatre, its players, directors, writers, its stages and dramatic plots, as conversational partners and certain aspects of the lingua and common sense of the field as metaphors for anthropological theoretical reflection. The goal being to enter into a form of dialogue with the field rather than placing the anthropologist in a position exterior to it and to the actors sought described and understood. Keeping the company in this way provides anthropology with new resources for the development of the discipline, and with new routes for accumulating knowledge of the social.

Inspired by Hastrup's work this dissertation is an exploration of anthropological theory applied to a quite different set of actors: those carrying out criminal investigation within the Danish justice system. It is a 'dialogic' ethnography of knowledge-making (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 139). Social theoretical questions are raised and accessed through particular empirical explorations and through engaging with the actors and particular spaces of the field of criminal investigation, while the empirical world of criminal

investigation is sought described and understood through the theoretical frames of anthropology. Hence, this dissertation is a study of the production of certainty and the manufacture of evidence of crime in terms of two analytical levels, intertwined and inspected at different times and in different relations throughout the dissertation. The concern of empirical analysis is the study of criminal investigation and the manufacture of evidence, i.e. the processes, modes of action and the multiplicity of actors that goes into producing knowledge (performing a reconstructive history of a crime) and evidence of a crime. These descriptions feed into the theoretical aim of this dissertation, which is to provide a detailed discussion of the *becoming of knowledge*, the phenomenon of knowledge-making and the production of certainty in the form of specific 'evidence-forms' which becomes powerful and directive of socio-political action.

Hastrup delineates the ethnographic movement from experience to theory, as a three-phased process: *experience*, *ordering*, and *closure* (Hastrup, 2003, p. 420). These phases denominate respectively: (a) the collecting of knowledge through experience of the field in terms of participant-observation (fieldwork); (b) the systematisation of these experiences into something which pose a proper explanation to these experiences in terms of analytical reflections and systematisation (theory-building), and finally (c) the exposition in ethnographic writing of the experiences, reflections and theories (the ethnography). I will use this analytical distinction between aspects of the movement from experience to theory to describe briefly how I have made the movement from *experience* to *closure* and thus how the dissertation as a piece of ethnography qualifies its findings. In the following I will therefore give a short outline of the *methodology*, the terms of *analysis* and the form of *ethnographic writing* informing the present work, delineating how this dissertation has *come about* and how it makes a claim as a piece of 'anthropological evidence' (Hastrup, 2004b).

ON EXPERIENCE: FIELDWORK 'INSIDE-OUT'

The present work springs from experience in a very particular sense; one based on different forms and modes of fieldwork ranging from pure observation to a complete immersion in the field through participation and, ultimately, employment within the very institution that was the object of my observations. The field of study has thus, over the years, become also my field of occupation. Writing this dissertation I am occupying a position in a borderland; an uncharted territory between anthropology and the increasing awareness about methodology and theory of policing within the police organisation itself, as the acting Head of Research in the newly established Danish Police Knowledge and Research Centre. I am a student in both traditions and a researcher of both, which is why the ambition here is to develop an understanding which brings new knowledge and theoretical value to both through an in-depth analysis of the processes through which knowledge comes about, drawing on the theoretical

habitus of one tradition and the experiences and embodied knowledge achieved through empirical involvement in the other.

The fieldwork on which this dissertation is based was conducted in three phases or rounds. The first round of fieldwork was a shorter and more fragmented period of fieldwork within a project organisation, composed of a large group of mostly highly ranked investigators and managers, as well as specialists from different districts and departments within the Danish National Police, also including representatives from the administrative sector, as well as from the public prosecution service. The project organisation had the task of describing and evaluating the status of criminal investigation in the Danish Police, in order to propose development initiatives and future scenarios. This evaluation work was carried out by five working groups in workshops spanning a couple of days each time, over a period of six months. The work of the groups resulted in the production of five reports and a final plenary meeting of the whole of the project organisation. During this period I attended the workshops of four of the working groups, as well as the final plenary session. This fieldwork was beneficial primarily in relation to securing my credibility and *ethos* within the organisation at large, providing me with a large personal network across districts, departments and expertises within the field, and with unique personal references for the carrying out of the proper fieldwork in a specific Criminal Investigative Department (CID). Among other the Detective Superintendent who was the head of the CID chosen for my prolonged fieldwork was participating in one of the working groups. He was a former manager of the National Flying Squad and a highly respected and renowned investigator throughout the organisation, and his recommendations thus served to lend credibility and legitimacy to my work.

The second phase of field studies consisted of a seven month period of fieldwork with the Criminal Investigation Department (*Kriminalpolitiet*) of *Frederiksberg Politi*. Here I spent time in the narcotics section during the conduction of a large scale drug-smuggling case involving the investigation of a network of twelve suspects. I also spent time in the sections of the department and with investigators working with cases spanning from art theft, arson and harassment etc. to homicide, robbery, rape, and violence and more common and trivial forms of crime such as petty fraud, theft and the like. During this fieldwork I studied both closed and ongoing case-files, paying attention to how cases were collected and produced, their form and the processual flow and development of the cases. I followed the routes of different case file numbers and ordered documents chronologically to map the ‘social life’ of particular case files. I traced the path of these case files through the organisation as well as the chronology of their formation in terms of the clues, leads and routes used to move the case along, and the investigative steps taken to get there. I participated as a student/observer in the four week course designed for introducing new investigators to the craft (*videregående efterforskning* or VE). I took part in discussions of cases around the coffee-table; asking for and discussing the reasoning behind a given investigative practice – listening

attentively to the way investigators talked about cases, suspects, witnesses, and the problems they faced in order to obtain a sense of the qualities and logics of investigative practice and of how investigators experience and explain their work. I sought to follow in their tracks whenever possible and participated when possible in investigative tasks e.g. going to a crime scene for a second visit in a homicide case, searching for witnesses for brief interviews, sitting in a car which was trailing a suspect in an investigation of narcotics smuggling, or guiding the investigators by phone from faxed print-outs detailing the positioning of mobile antenna on which the suspects' phone registered. These latter activities however were rare opportunities to be exploited. Participation was just as much about sitting in the office listening to calls being made, watching reports being written, or dealing with arrestees, their mail and supervised visits etc.

The sheer complexity of the investigation of criminal cases made it difficult to follow the actors involved *at the time* of their involvement. Investigators often work on many cases at once and at any one point in time many different actors are involved simultaneously in the investigation and production of any one case. This not least due to divisions of labour both within the investigative team working a larger case like a homicide, and between what is referred to as the technical and tactical investigation respectively. Furthermore, a great deal of legal assessments and administration is needed during investigation, which is why cases may be pending on the tables of jurists or secretaries at any given point in time. Moreover, work carried out by external suppliers of data, intelligence or analysis may also be involved which adds a geographical distribution to the process of investigation. All these aspects of case making makes it difficult to follow the making of cases first hand.

Besides being a very complex field with a multitude of actors and a multi-sitedness related to very highly distributed processes involved in the formation of knowledge and the manufacturing of evidence, the field of criminal investigation is also a 'silent' or rather a wordless field of 'actions' and 'doings'. For one thing the field for the study of meaning and knowledge is a difficult field to access empirically considering that the object of analysis relates just as much to questions of epistemology as to forms of praxis. Questions such as: how judgements are formed and made sustainable as 'true' and 'correct'; how investigators makes discoveries (i.e. find and explore the relevant clues etc.) and become convinced of 'being right' and thus how they as actors within this particular field of knowledge move from an exploration of truth-possibilities to evidence are questions which are normally associated with the epistemological debates of a given discipline (Chandler, Davidson, & Harootunian, 1994; Engelke, 2008). This is another area in which the field is 'silent'. Criminal investigation is a craft-based form of knowledge. It is a form of knowledge, which is not explicated, neither in doctrinal forms (e.g. prolonged schooling, books or explicitly argued methodologies), nor does there exist a forum or media for overt epistemological debate. It is rather a tradition of knowledge which is practiced with reference to *experience*. It is a knowledge-tradition in which the acquisition of skills is achieved through learning in practice and in

apprenticeship relations with more experienced investigators. Last but not least, the field of criminal investigation is a field shrouded in an ethos of secrecy which makes it difficult to access and to obtain a proper degree of rapport on issues related to the object of study. To borrow the words of Latour in the preface to the English edition of his monograph of the Conseil d'Etat, it “[takes] a long time to sneak in” (Latour, 2009, p. vii).

To accommodate this predicament I also adopted another and in some sense more radical approach to doing fieldwork, inspired by the Malinowskian dictum, that: “(...) the ethnographer has not only to spread his nets in the right place, and wait for what will fall into them. He must be an active huntsman, and drive his quarry into them and follow it up to its most inaccessible lairs. And that leads us to the more active methods of pursuing ethnographic evidence” (Malinowski, 1972, p. 8). My way of addressing this ‘silent’ nature of the field and the problem of empirically accessing all aspects of the becoming of knowledge, from the initial practices of the investigators forming judgements in the moments of discovery to the final exposition of evidence in the case-file prepared for the prosecution, was to make them complicit in teaching me their craft. This I sought to accomplish through a third round of fieldwork, taking a leave of absence from the PhD-studies to offer myself up for the production of a written overview of the investigative process and methods on a consultancy basis. I thus acquired a position as an ‘internal consultant’ with the National Commissioner of Police, with the task of describing criminal investigation in the form of a report which could be used to introduce new investigators to the job and craft, and provide a sense of the overall processes and methods involved in investigating crime. Taking the role of ‘the consultant’ with the explicit task of seeking to describe the craft of investigation to its initiates served the purpose of allowing me access to parts of the organisation and aspects of the investigative collective’s knowledge which would otherwise have remained inaccessible to me.

This ten month consultancy took me to all the different departments of the Danish National Police (*Rigspolitiet*) involved in one way or the other in the investigative process and gave me both a legitimate access and a purpose for interviewing specialists across a range of different roles in the investigative process. This took me across a range of different locations whose specialists all contribute to the investigation of cases: from technical investigators to crime analysts and personnel working with intelligence and information processing or communications in relation to the international cooperation of police forces. I spend prolonged periods of time in both the National Centre of Investigation (*Nationalt Efterforskningsstøtte Center – NEC*) and at the Forensic Technical Centre (*Kriminalteknisk Center – KTC*). In both settings I had long dialogues about the text produced and could consult personnel about the questions that arose as I tried to describe and present the knowledge I had collected. Thus I became the one explicating their knowledge, an explication which in the course of the project was made accessible to the investigators themselves through text and question and answer sessions, as well as

discussions of the findings and my perceptions of their work. This in turn provided me with new knowledge and evaluations of my findings which otherwise could not have been obtained. By consciously exposing myself and my research to reactions from the surroundings – both positive and negative – I was able to learn a great deal about the craft and its tacit and practiced aspects (see also Flyvbjerg, 2001, pp. 71-81, 129-140). Also, by fulfilling the role of someone sent by and accepted at the highest levels of the Danish Police with a purpose in the field, I became someone to whom one could and ought to speak about what is otherwise considered best kept undisclosed to the uninitiated. This process more than anything revealed to me the experience-based and practice-oriented ethos of learning and practicing criminal investigation.

A methodology of “perspectivism”

The empirical basis for this ethnography rests on a composite approach to the field of criminal investigation. One approach is derived from the anthropologists actively studying the production of ‘facts’ and thus evidence-making within the sciences. Such an approach use the strategy of ‘following the actors’(Latour, 1987), not deciding beforehand *who* or *what* is relevant to the study; treating all aspects of the process of knowledge-making on an equal basis as participants (i.e. as *actors* or *actants*) in the becoming of knowledge (Knorr-Cetina, 1995; Latour, 1987). This approach takes the position of the naïve stranger to its most productive limit (see Latour & Woolgar, 1986), extending the field of study beyond the human actors alone to include also the material aspects of knowledge processes as part of ‘the social’ to be studied. However, this methodology of attending to the objects, structures and processes involved in the manufacture of evidence, I found, left a significant dimension of the becoming of knowledge unexcavated – the one related to human acts of knowing and to questions of how ideas are formed, discoveries made and how as perceiving and sentient human beings investigators are involved in the production of facts. To properly explore these questions, I found inspiration in a more phenomenological methodology; taking a reflexive approach to the emergence of meaning, and to how the world arises in intersubjective interactions, experience and perception (Ingold, 2000, 2006; M. Jackson, 1989, 1996, 1998; Merleau-Ponty, 2004).

This composite style of approach to fieldwork embodies an attempt at achieving a position from which to understand the field from ‘within’ and from ‘without’ simultaneously, what Bourdieu calls: “the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 9). Paying attention to both ‘actor’ and ‘frame’ – a ‘frame’ which while practicing is not present to the actor except as the *environment* in which they navigate, the *language* they use to represent their findings, the *organisation* in which they operate and perform their job, the *knowledge* and special *skills* they acquire based on moving within the institution and becoming a professional, etc. Thus, I have attempted to analyse actors and their practices in relation to structures, and to analyse structures in terms of agency (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 137). I have sought to

explore the ‘frame’ through attention to ‘the observable’: the forms of organisation, the processes of case making, the analysis of documents (case-documents, historical documents, legal codes and theory, technical descriptions, educational literature etc), the sites and locales used in relation to different investigative activities (the databases, the archives, the laboratory, the information and case managing system etc.). Conversely I have sought to explore the perspective, skills and experiences of the investigators through a participatory “fusion of horizons” (Flyvbjerg, 2001; M. Jackson, 1998); and through attempts at learning the ways of the field, exposing myself to the field by participating in training courses, engaging in close cooperation by forming apprenticeship relations and by letting the field impose its forms and structure on my body and mind through prolonged and sustained participation in the field, all the while constantly seeking a dialogue with its actors about the experiences had.

I have striven, however, to perform my analysis of the field without ending up with an account which merely reflects the field to itself in terms and language of its own inception. This has been one of the crucial roles of theory in my research: to provide a set of ‘distancing devices’ making it possible to ‘keep the company’ and yet to avoid producing what Bourdieu might term a ‘spontaneous’ anthropology of criminal investigation. Such an account stemming from the tenacious nature of everyday notions, would merely reproduce the self-representations of key-actors in the field and would result from the lack of effort to perform what Bourdieu terms: ‘the break’ (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, Passeron, & Kraus, 1991, p. 13). I have also taken the advice offered by Latour in relation to the study of science that: “knowing that empirical studies would never do more than scratch the surface of beliefs” that one must also “spend a few hours a year practicing Philosophy” (Latour, 1988, p. 153). Theoretical reflection on the field’s own understandings serve as a vehicle to get beyond what is immediately given, to a level of understanding that produces *new* knowledge.

In other words, with this dissertation I seek to strike a balance between being ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, between ‘understanding’ and ‘explaining’ and to strategically walk the borderlands of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’, in order to come up with new insights into the constitution of knowledge in social life, trying to open up one knowledge practice, by reflecting it subtly in the other; mirroring and mirroring back; making possible enlarged perspectives that generates new insights into and for both. This does not mean that the mirroring will be heavily explicated throughout the dissertation, rather, it is integrated in the form and argumentation of the dissertation and should be viewed as the outer frame in terms of which the argumentation is identified and unfolded. The dissertation is not an attempt at *representing* the views and worlds of particular actors and their particular empirical reality – rather it is the result of my own process of getting to know the discipline of criminal investigation and the views and ways of this evidence culture in all its complexity as a field of knowledge with its own terms of reference, its own ideas and forms of evidence and validation, and its own terms of legitimacy, in order to describe it anthropologically, and to gain a perspective from which it can be

understood from outside its own referentiality. It is thus a form of ethnography which makes an attempt at both *verstehen* (understanding) and *erklären* (explaining) (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 136).

This methodology has resulted here in a form of ethnography which seeks to understand and describe the field by reflecting it in concepts and theoretical perspectives which *do not* belong to the field itself, but which springs from the observations of its practices and dialogues with its actors. The methodology reflects the fundamental objective of the study: to understand how knowledge comes about in human interactions with their social world and how, within this particular field of study, doubt is resolved and certainty formed. This oscillation between experience and theoretical reflection which began with the work in the field and in the interactions with its actors is in the present thesis brought all the way to the final text. It is a methodology which at the same time poses an argument about ethnographic inquiry, and ethnographic forms of evidence. Tipping my cap to Nietzsche and his truism that “[t]here is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective knowing; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our ‘concept’ of this thing, our ‘objectivity’ be” (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 119), it is an attempt to turn the eye ‘in no particular direction’. An attempt at getting as many ‘perspectives’, ‘affects’ or ‘ways of seeing’ in play as possible in order to understand the phenomenon to hand.

ON ORDERING: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF ASSEMBLAGE

The analysis performed in this dissertation is founded on a conceptualisation of criminal investigation and evidence making as processes of assembling, inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s concept of *agencement* or *assemblage* in English (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 71, 88-91, 323-337, 503-325). *assemblage* as it is used in Deleuze and Guattari’s work is a concept which deals with the play of contingency and structure, organisation and change, while implying the falseness of the terms thus paired as oppositions (Wise, 2005, p. 77). In French, the term implies the act of ‘putting together’, ‘arrangement’ or ‘fitting’. It is not a static term as its English translation often come to imply (*ibid.*). It is in other words not *the* arrangement or organisation, but *the process of* arranging, organizing and fitting together – of *assembling*. *Assemblage*, in other words, is a verb as much as a noun, a process of *becoming* as much as a state of being (Palmås, 2007, p. 1). It conveys the idea of a combination of heterogeneous elements that have been carefully adjusted to one another. *Agencement* has the same root as agency the point being that assemblages are arrangements endowed with the *capacity of acting* in different ways depending on their configuration (Callon, 2007, p. 320). In the case of understanding criminal investigation and the becoming of knowledge the concept of *assemblage* serves to underline how it is not the practices of the individual investigator and their cognitive capacities or even their cooperative efforts which explain anything –

it is the entire 'formation' *emerging in the process* as assemblage which must be studied to form an explanation (ibid.).

Manuel DeLanda (2006) develops a new philosophy of society and social complexity from Deleuze and Guattari's writings on assemblage and presents a methodology of assemblage, which he terms 'assemblage theory'. My purpose with adopting the concept of assemblage and assemblage theory as a framework for analysis is that it offers a way to think of social life and entities not as essences but as relations and *processes of relating* and of *assembly*. The concept of assemblage is used as a means of steering clear of construing social structures as fixed, monolithic forms and instead convey them as dynamic entities under constant reconfiguration (Barry, 2001).

Studying investigative knowledge production as assemblage or assembling involves addressing it as social phenomena made from relations of exteriority between social forces or entities. Following DeLanda's reading of Deleuze, assemblages exist in an unlimited variety of forms and scales, with different 'properties', being made and remade by different 'parts' – whose interrelations and individual 'capacities' provide them with equally diverse 'structures of possibility' and capacities for acting (DeLanda, 2006, pp. 22-46). The investigator as a human being is one form of assemblage, the police as a governmental hierarchical organisation another assemblage, and the Danish Justice System or the nation state yet other forms of assemblage. These forms of assemblage exist in different scales and exhibit different kinds of historical identities – as well as vary in internal coherence and structural form (2006, p. 3), while being also able to act as parts in other wholes. The capacities of the whole provided by its parts are mutual and reciprocal between wholes and parts and between the different scales of an assemblage. The investigative assemblage and its capacities reflect back and influence the capacities of its parts. Just as the investigator as part of the heterogeneous structure of the investigative assemblage is a significant contributor to the knowing capacities of the larger scale investigative assemblage; he receives new attributes through the interrelations transforming his capacities to know and the ways of knowing. Or his knowing actions become something more, something other; extended to a different scale and different from what he as an individual human being (a different assemblage) is able to accomplish or know.

All assemblage-forms are acting or can be described as *actors* in the sense that they engender *effects* in other forms and produces changes in their contexts or environment by way of their capacities (DeLanda, 2006, pp. 20-22). Thus, "a large organisation may be said to be the relevant actor in the explanation of an interorganizational process if a substitution of the people occupying specific roles in its authority structure leaves the organizational policies and its daily routines intact" (2006, p. 27). An assemblage, following Deleuze and Guattari consist of "two segments, one of content, the other of expression" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 97). Assemblages are *machinic* in the sense that they consist of bodies, actions, passions etc – they are "an intermingling of bodies

reacting to one another” (1987, p. 98). On the other hand, they are a collective assemblage of *enunciation*, i.e. of “acts, statements, and incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies” (ibid.). Assemblages are in other words entities that consist of bodies and objects referred to as ‘content’ as well as non-material entities such as statements referred to as ‘expression’. This means that there is nothing left outside assemblages, since the construction of its meaning is part of the assemblage. It includes the statements pointing to it or expressing it; e.g. the operating instructions are part of the device and participate in making it work (Callon, 2007, p. 320). The concept of assemblage is in other words a descriptor of heterogeneous structures composed of both human and non-human elements; heterogeneous structures which may have a more or less stable form and identity, but which are to be seen as products of a process of constantly being ‘put together’.

Approaching criminal investigation as assemblage is thus both attending to its material or ‘machinic’ dimensions (i.e. to investigation as carried out by human bodies, in concrete locales and in terms of specific forms of organisation, following particular models of action, which in turn has been taught in concrete buildings at the Police College, written up in material form by way of information management systems and exhibited in piles of paper such as case files and legal documents, note books etc.) as well as its ‘expressive’ dimension (i.e. as expressed in language and symbolic forms, its rituals for interaction and cooperation, verbal communication, bodily gestures, authority structures etc.).

Furthermore, assemblages can also be characterised by the processes constantly stabilising or destabilising the ‘identity’ of the assemblage, by increasing or decreasing the degree of internal homogeneity or the degree of sharpness of its boundaries (DeLanda, 2006, p. 12). An assemblage has both sides which stabilise it (*territorialise* or *re-territorialise* it) and sides which destabilise and potentially dissolves it (*detrterritorialising* it). Assemblages are always coming together or moving apart. Assemblages *create* territories, which are not fixed for all time, but which are always being made and remade. Assemblages selects elements from the milieu (the surroundings, the context, the mediums in which it works) and bring them together in a particular way; *territorialising* them. The idea of recurrence of processes of *territorialisation* and *re-territorialisation* is central to Deleuze’s conceptualisation of assemblage. The main territorialising process providing the assemblage with a stable identity is, DeLanda argues, habituated repetition (2006, p. 50). Studying investigation as assemblage I suggest that the central aspect of the investigative assemblage – the habituated repetition which is used to provide the criminal justice system and the police in their role as investigators with a stable identity – is significantly played out in the production of cases. I thus propose to study the becoming of knowledge and the manufacture of evidence as *a process* through *moments of case making*.

I will mobilise the Deleuzian concept of the ‘event’ to describe the moment where processes of re-territorialisation of the investigative assemblage is initiated, and where the legal field recasts itself and its identity through a re-territorialisation of its parts. I will use the inspiration from Deleuze to frame the study of situations of case making and the production of individual cases as *moments of emergence*; moments where ‘social morphology’ unfolds and re-folds itself in the course of the open-ended repetition of the processes that produce it. We can in other words conceptualise case making as a form of *knowledge events*, where the established meanings (e.g. society, law etc.) making up the ‘social fabric’ are redistributed, reworked, and, re-folded into new variations of the same. Case making is an event which reveals on a small scale and in a condensed form, processes of knowledge formation and stabilisation of systems of thought. As such the case as event – as case making – provides a moment for anthropological investigation of the processes and texture of social life. Cases conceived of as ‘events’ represent in this way both moments of *creative production* of a re-constructive history of social incidents and thus on a larger scale of the order and symbolic meanings of the legal field (as assemblage), and moments where a whole tradition or ‘style’ of knowledge (Hacking, 1992) through repetition of its habitual forms recast the world in particular *forms, meanings* and *materialities* which make up its identity and social reality.

Case making thus framed is to be seen as a process and a certain way of *coding* the world, “a certain fold, establishing a stratum of sediments, a *stratification*” (Sørensen, 2004, p. 17). The case file, as the product of this process, is the materialisation of such a *classification* (ordering) and *coding* (expression) of the world. My argument here is that the ‘case’ (in the form of the completed case-file) is a *materialisation* of casework (processes of knowledge-making) and thus the moment of *actualization* of the expressive *possibilities* of the legal field within which it occupies a significant position in the sanctioning of crime. Moreover, one can think of case documents (and other artefacts) as *places* which open and close particular *spaces*. Cases viewed as ‘events’ expresses a moment of creative invention, of forming knowledge while at the same time represents a moment of closing; i.e. of the ‘folding’ matter into new formations (Kozin, 2007), providing reality with new meanings, closing a moment of pure possibilities in the emergence of a signifying object; an object with power, which being a ‘textual assemblage’ performs its world in particular ways: stratifying, folding, ordering a territory of its own; assembled in it, by it or by the movement and actions resulting in its production.

The argument here is that paying attention to ‘things’ in this manner – in their becoming; in their formation – means that “anything caught at a particular moment, enfolds within its own constitution the history of relations that brought it there” (Ingold, 2005, p. 209). The point here is that we can only understand the nature of things by attending to their relations (*ibid.*); and that these relations are enfolded as traces left of these relations in their material forms. Put another way, the underlying reasoning behind this methodology is that in the moment of response and initial investigation, the full register of investigative practices and the multiplicity of actors involved in the

investigative process are revealed in fractional, yet empirical form. Or, put in different and perhaps more esoteric terms: within the single moments of investigative response are present the worlds of thousands of actors. One can beneficially explore the whole of the investigative assemblage through the establishment of the relations between actors playing a part in its constitution – i.e., a particular moment of *actualisation* of its parts through the processes of territorialisation. Within a given case file are in other words traces of the theories, histories, people, spaces, times, technologies, narratives, procedures, events, etc. that performed it into being. All connected; all inscribed in a different form – *materialised* and *objectified* in the stack of files produced by the investigation encapsulates the signs and traces of them – in document form. Following Deleuze, the ‘case’ is more than just a composited text – a case file. It is an assemblage in and of itself. As such it represents to the ethnographer a social formation of heterogeneous structures (an assemblage) to uncover and unfold.

Taking inspiration from Deleuze it becomes possible to carry out an investigation of matter-in-formation. Deleuze provides a means of understanding the world at the point of intersection between Pragmatistic and phenomenological understandings. The concept of assemblage bridges phenomenological or pragmatist conceptions of the ‘world-in-formation’ via the (symbolic) interaction between the actor and his experientially constituted environment and the methodology of the post-structurally minded social or material semiotics of Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) for studying science-in-action; i.e. knowledge in formation. This joining of inspirational forces provides Actor-Network-Theory with a phenomenological depth I find it lacks and enhances pragmatism and phenomenology with a contemporary elaboration that makes it more powerful in terms of providing new discursive tools for describing the world of significant symbolic communication. This framework is one that sets process above structure or form, insisting that “knowing does not lie in the establishment of a correspondence between the world and its representation” (Ingold, 2005), but rather is immanent in the life and actions of the knower as it unfolds within the field of practice set up through the interrelationships of actors as different forms of beings in the world. As ‘eventing’, case making does not provide a ‘window’ to social structures, as proposed by classical case methodologists such as the structural-functionalists (Evans & Handelman, 2006), rather they constitute themselves the very *processes* that bring a ‘structure’, a ‘web-of- signification’ into being, in the course of the production of a specific form of matter: the case-file.

The ‘means of study’: Key analytical concepts

To describe the ‘morphology’ of investigative assemblage I will develop and make use of two central analytical concepts: *investigative semiosis* and *investigative space*. The first concept is one attending to *process*. The second relates to sites, places and physical or material relationships as ‘territories’ viewed, however, in their practiced dimension as ‘space’ (Certeau, 1984). The concept of investigative semiosis is used to analyse and

refer to the *expressive capacities and potentialities* of the assemblage and of the ‘expressive’ or ‘semiotic’ (the sign and meaning producing) effects of the interrelations between parts in assemblage. I will in this dissertation argue that investigative knowledge formation can be viewed as a process of *material semiosis*. Drawing on the pragmatist philosophies of Charles Sanders Peirce (1994; 1940; 1960; 1992; 1997) and George Herbert Mead (1932; 1934; 1936, 1938) respectively I will in the analysis treat the process of meaning-making and thus the expressive dimensions of the assemblaging of the case, as a *process of semiosis*. Using semiotics to study investigative work and knowledge formation allows an insight into the processual aspects of knowledge formation in all its complexity, as well as the contingencies of cultural productions of knowledge.

I will however inspired by the *material* semiotics of Actor-Network-Theory (Law & Hetherington, 1999, p. 4) add the concept of *material* to Peirce’s concept of semiosis, in describing investigative assemblage through processes of semiosis. Adding the concept *material* to Peirce’s concept of semiosis (which does in some sense already incorporate material aspects of the world in his philosophy) serves to highlight the point made by Deleuze, that it is just as much the assemblage of bodies and things which is relevant to the understanding of meaning making, as it is purely a linguistic or abstract process, engendered in cognitive processes of the individual. It is also in this light that the concept of ‘investigative space’ is developed. The focus on ‘space’ serves to denote and highlight the ‘poetic’ – i.e. productive, creative, connecting – dimension of *material orders*; of the content and bodies interrelating in forming the investigative assemblage.

Drawing on the works of Bruno Latour (1987, 1988, 1993, 1999b, 2005; 1986), and Actor-Network-Theory, in particular John Law and Kevin Hetherington (Hetherington, 1997, 1998, 2007; Law & Hetherington, 1999), I wish to show how knowledge arises as a *relational effect* (Law & Hetherington, 1999, p. 4). In the words of Law and Hetherington: “knowledge, power, and subjectivities are all produced in circumstances that are materially heterogeneous” (1999, p. 4). This means, that “the distinctions between human and non-human, between ideas and objects, between knowledge and infrastructure – that all of these are seriously overdrawn” (ibid.). The central point of placing such material emphasis within the study of processes of semiosis (i.e. of meaning-making) is that “what is produced, together with whatever goes to produce it, secures its significance, meaning, or status not because it is essentially this way or that, but rather because of how everything interacts together” (Law & Hetherington, 1999, p. 4). The emphasis on the investigative becoming of knowledge as *material semiosis*, begs a particular definition of ‘actors’, inherent also in the use of the concept of assemblage. Thus ‘actors’ are treated in the sense of ‘assemblages’, or ‘actor-networks’ in the vocabulary of Latour. Actor-network theory is characterised by a radical use of a network concept, otherwise found in Saussurean linguistics (Law 1999). It takes its point of departure in the relational understanding of networks, with which Saussure described language, but uses it broadly to describe social life in general. As proposed by John Law “actor-network theory [...] takes the semiotic insight, that of the relationality