

Suitcase, Bata slipper and lighting the “Ceremonial Oil Lamp”: Innovative material for research in Social Sciences and Humanities

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This is not a presentation of facts but a “Lab” where the audience is expected to actively participate⁷, in sensory exercises, brainstorming and mind mapping. The session is open to all researchers in the quest for new material and methodologies.

Some of the discussion questions are : What objects used by ordinary people can narrate untold stories and offer insights into the experiences of ordinary people whose lives will otherwise not be documented? Can objects narrate their cultural history? How brands like “Bata” and “Sunlight” mask the name of the product, that have become part of our everyday life? How were they introduced in colonial times? What are the semiotics of wearing Bata slippers today in the university sub culture? Why have rituals like “Lighting the Ceremonial Oil Lamp” become the inevitable cultural features in contemporary Sri Lanka? Are we constantly inventing new rituals and traditions and compelling others to follow these inventions? Which disciplines or areas of study will be used to contextualize the data and contribute to finding the meaning of things?

Possible material and methodologies to research on Material Culture will be discussed in groups and shared in the final plenary session.

The objective of the Lab is to come to grips with issues relevant to research such as symbolism, methodology, hidden meanings, implications, and subjectivity.

Keywords : Lab, Audience Participation, Mind Mapping, Semiotics, Methodology

⁷ Participation is limited to only 15, inviting all researchers and mentors willing to give up the sleepy chair at conferences and research symposia to join in and interact with others.