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Making Political Science: Material-Aesthetic Approaches to Knowledge Production

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Making represents an important practice in political science research, but the relative unfamiliarity of "making" within the discipline often pushes discussion of it to the margins. This article helps theorize the value of making in political science and questions the idea that moves away from writerly research modes undermine or otherwise erode standards of scholarship. It argues that making processes generate unique opportunities for intellectual discovery; for data collection; for analytic practices of reflexivity, associative thinking, and the adaptation of multiple positionalities; and finally, for argumentation. As such, it suggests that boundary-pushing research that incorporates hands-on praxis to make aesthetic products may in fact augment systematicity and rigor according to established disciplinary norms.

El concepto hacer representa una práctica importante en la investigación de las ciencias políticas, pero la relativa falta de familiaridad con el "hacer" dentro de la disciplina deja de lado, a menudo, las discusiones acerca de este concepto. Este artículo ayuda a teorizar el valor del "hacer" dentro de las ciencias políticas y cuestiona la idea de que alejarse de los modos de investigación que no son bibliográficos socavan o erosionan los estándares del conocimiento. Argumentamos que los procesos de creación generan oportunidades únicas para el descubrimiento intelectual, para la recopilación de datos, para llevar a cabo prácticas analíticas de reflexión, de pensamiento asociativo y de adaptación de posiciones múltiples y, finalmente, para la argumentación. Como tal, el artículo sugiere que la investigación que va más allá de los límites y que incorpora la praxis práctica con el fin de hacer productos estéticos puede, de hecho, aumentar la sistematicidad y el rigor de acuerdo con las normas disciplinarias establecidas.

La fabrication représente une part importante de la recherche en sciences politiques; toutefois, la méconnaissance relative de cette dimension au sein de la discipline renvoie souvent son étude dans les marges. Cet article contribue à souligner la valeur théorique du "faire" en sciences politiques et questionne l'idée selon laquelle la dimension écrite de la recherche ébranle, voire érode les normes en matière de savoir. Il avance également que les processus du "faire" génèrent des opportunités uniques pour l'exploration intellectuelle, la collecte de données, l'analyse de la réflexivité, des associations d'idées et de l'adaptation à des situations et points de vue multiples, ainsi que pour l'argumentation. Par conséquent, cet article suggère que la recherche exploratoire intégrant une praxis concrète et produisant ainsi des résultats esthétiques est en réalité susceptible de gagner en systématicité et en rigueur au regard des normes établies dans la discipline.

> The labor of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property.
> —John Locke, *Two Treatise of Government, 27* (The Founders' Constitution 2023)

> ". . .when the head and the hand are separate, it is the head that suffers."
> —Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 44 (2008)

Introduction

This special issue asks what might be gained by expanding the scholarly praxis of political science into distinct forms of material-aesthetic laboring, challenging researchers to move beyond exclusively textual forms of production, and suggesting that such a move might better reveal the complexity and agentive diversity we see reflected in today's empirical political reality. This article addresses these provocations by reconceptualizing existing practices in political science research as forms of making, drawing mostly on "making" in ethnographically oriented studies. In so doing, it does not wish to minimize the daring and important call to push beyond our comfort zone. Engaging research practices as diverse as filmmaking, doodling, and the design of graphic novels, it argues alongside others that "making" generates unique opportunities for intellectual discovery; for data collection; for analytic practices of reflexivity, associative thinking, and the adaptation of multiple positionalities; and finally, for argumentation. As such, making represents an important avenue of research, pushing scholars beyond inherited understandings of who and what count as political actors, institutions, and practices, and exposing alternate taxonomic possibilities for making sense of "the political."

Yet mainstream methodological and epistemological approaches in political science rarely countenance material-aesthetic practice explicitly, and the discipline's evaluative frameworks struggle to find ways to enfold difference despite repeated calls for pluralism. Thus, in addition to theorizing the value of "making" for political science, this article locates making–thinking as something already embedded in some political science research and demonstrates how the mechanics and logics involved in "making" exist analogously in what might be viewed as more familiar research practices. As such, it posits that "making," far from stretching the boundaries of the discipline beyond recognition or diluting standards of scholarship, can augment systematicity and rigor in research and stimulate public debate, even as it

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contributes in other unique and important ways to advance political knowledge both empirically and methodologically. Thus, the article calls for the discipline to embrace making and to galvanize creative engagement with the materiality of knowledge production in ways that may be readily assimilated into disciplinary norms of rigor, systematicity, peer-review, and political commitments to truth claims.[1]

Many scholars understand ethnography as a method of inquiry in which the researcher immerses herself in a situation and takes an active part in a core activity that relates to her research topic, in so doing, attempting to understand that topic from various grounded perspectives. In this conception, the exercise of participant observation is a form of making in which knowledge accrues in the body of the researcher; the researcher herself is as much a product as the careful fieldnotes she types up.[2] Sociologist Loic Waquant's ethnographic inquiry into black poverty on Chicago's South Side, wherein Waquant transformed himself into a boxer to physically understand the practical logic that guides human action, stands out as a now classic example (Wacquant 2006). In political science, Timothy Pachirat's turn to veganism similarly grew from his ethnographic fieldwork in an industrial slaughterhouse; the choice and the subjectivity it entailed represented a proactive and embodied way of countering the social violence he observed in his research (Pachirat 2011). Tani Sebro, in pursuit of an understanding of what exile and nationalism mean to refugees in Thailand, became an accomplished dancer and performer of *Jaad Tai*, or Tai Opera (Sebro 2019). Less dramatic examples of ethnographic immersion are likewise transformative—even the act of learning another language demands a certain metamorphosis as the tongue learns new positions and sentence structures and grammar rewires thought itself.

Thus, a significant aspect of such ethnographic practice involves making and remaking the Self—a notion that has received some attention in discussions of positionality and autoethnography but could be pushed to further interrogate how authorial legitimacy derives from embodied experience—as well as how and when this paradigm fails. The slow transformation entailed in remaking the self, and the learning that occurs thereby, speaks to a conception of making as a *process*—an action by which something new is brought into existence, often (though not exclusively) by the mixing or recombining of extant physical materials. It also speaks to the role of embodied action and the tacit knowledge that undergird many scholarly production practices. The time-honored academic pursuit of writing could certainly be conceived as an embodied act of "making," but a heuristic emphasis on processes that extend beyond writing, and beyond even self-making of the kind that comes with immersive participant observation, is perhaps best suited to reveal the unique intellectual payoffs for political science.

In what follows, I move beyond writing and embodied transformations of the self to focus on research that "makes" and the attendant objects that emerge from this making, drawing particular attention to audial and visual products appearing in some recent scholarship. Research of all sorts produces a host of artifacts. In the field, these might be personal in nature, such as doodles, Instagram stories, or journals crammed with ticket stubs and ephemera. Other artifacts, of course, are tied directly to the research process and question: fieldnotes, interview transcriptions, digital copies of archival material (and emergent taxonomies that organize this material on a hard drive), maps, sound recordings, photographs, and videos. The making of research artifacts shoots through the ethnographic encounter from data collection to publication. Yet, more often than not, this host of non-textual or semi-textual objects ends up on the cutting floor of the academic production line as we transform our experiences into findings that conform to disciplinary expectations. Also lost in such a paring is the record of the implicit and explicit ways making enters into our research design and methods.

I suggest that this repository, and the scholarly practices that generate it, may gainfully be theorized and resuscitated along each step of the research process. In identifying material-aesthetic making processes in research, I highlight benefits that derive from moving beyond an exclusive focus on reading and writing, while at the same time demonstrating how these seemingly radical departures from disciplinary norms may be understood within the shared ontological framework of political science. The following sections proceed by considering common steps in research, from framing a research question and collecting data to analysis and argumentation, drawing on scholarship that has, in one way or other, dealt with or produced audial and/or visual objects in research.

In the first section, photographs, maps, videos, 3D models, and sound recordings are produced and then entered as evidence as research projects are framed and case studies are envisioned. While hermeneutical attention to non-textual material will be familiar or intuitive to many and may be common practice in literatures dealing with politics and aesthetics,[3] the fabrication or production of research objects as new evidence is less commonly discussed. Leading from this, the second section, then, addresses how making generates unique opportunities for analysis via its foregrounding of reflexive and associational thinking processes. I examine how filmmaking has been used as a method in the service of two research projects with starkly different epistemological orientations, speaking to the chances for reflexivity that "making" enables, but also the limitations of this framing. To draw contrast with the highly technical and costly demands of filmmaking, I also briefly discuss the comparatively low-tech making practice of doodling. The third section considers making and effective argumentation in final outputs, or research products, noting ways we already routinely extend beyond purely textual research, underlining areas where the discipline might fruitfully expand—and what such an expansion might require. At each point, I highlight ways "making" follows logics inherent to existing standards of good research and where it might be used to augment best practices. Finally, in conclusion, I raise some implications of "making" for the broader discipline.

Intellectual Discovery

Qualitative scholars often collect existing audio–visual material (cartoons, state propaganda, archival photographs, diverse sound and music recordings, oral histories, newsreels, etc.), organize them according to criteria befitting their study, and then analyze them as a means of reading politics. In this light, non-verbal material is not unique and may be grouped under hermeneutical understandings of "texts" that include work beyond the written word. Scholars of vi-

[1] Truth claims in the discipline may be judged either according to a presumed external reality, as in positivist paradigms, or judged within an epistemic community with its own standards and evaluative criteria, as in interpretivist paradigms. Disciplinary research from both epistemological positions attempts to persuade readers of their authority to answer to the question at hand.

[2] Anthropologist Jean Jackson captures this idea in her assertion, "I am a fieldnote" (see Jackson 1990).

[3] For an introduction to this kind of approach, see Bleiker (2009).

sual politics have demonstrated for decades now that these techniques can lead to better understanding some of the world's most pressing political concerns. Yet sometimes the collection of extant material, or in some cases, the absence of the empirical material needed to answer a research question leads researchers to take it upon themselves to make audio/visual products that, through their production and subsequent existence in the world, reveal something we could not otherwise know.

One way of conceptualizing the shift between textual exegesis of the sort described above and processes that privilege "making" more concertedly may be found in photography and the act of taking pictures. Objects as pedestrian as fieldwork photographs, for example, have the capacity to overturn research expectations. When approached as an open-ended and questioning process, rather than an intent to illustrate, exemplify, or simply record, the act of visualizing through a camera and of capturing scenes presents fruitful opportunities for engaging a fieldsite in ways that go beyond what one might have anticipated in the preparatory study that led up to the fieldwork. A researcher in Israel and Palestine, for example, might arrive intending to interrogate the spatiality of checkpoints and the politics of mobility. In the early days of fieldwork, she might take pictures of the metal turnstiles, long lines, concrete barriers, and holding areas that regulate the flow of bodies. Thus focused, the pictures can serve a variety of purposes. Reviewing the images with fresh eyes, however, may reveal details that exceed the initial photographic intention: the same photos may additionally include distant Israeli guard towers installed on each hilltop or highpoint of the landscape, or surveillance drones caught in the corner of the image—elements that could serve to recast the central puzzle in terms of verticality, aerial dominance, and lines of sight. Engaging the space in embodied ways to produce images, and then revisiting and studying the photographs that emerge from this encounter, are not common steps in research design, but even this simple example demonstrates that by encouraging researchers to think and produce differently and iteratively, "making" jolts us out of inherited formulas and established lines of study, opening new spaces for understanding.

The potential for discovery is not limited to the early phases of research but shoots through the entire process. The following examples from legal forensics help illuminate this practice and reveal its connection to the political world. On June 23, 2020, Israeli soldiers shot Palestinian Ahmed Erekat after his car crashed into a guard booth at a fixed checkpoint in the occupied West Bank. Israeli authorities claimed the 26-year-old Erekat rammed the border guards in a deliberate attack and justified their lethal response as self-defense. They released video footage from cameras covering the checkpoint to bolster their claim. Bystanders and journalists likewise filmed and took photos of the event on smartphones, capturing the incident from different perspectives and on various devices. The Erekat family denied the possibility that their son attacked the guards and demanded an official investigation—a demand the Israeli state ignored.

In the absence of a state inquiry, social scientists working for Forensic Architecture launched a study in which they amassed images and video taken at the scene, synchronizing and geolocating the footage to create a multi-perspectival timeline of events.[4] The interdisciplinary team of scholars added to this architectural data from a land survey of the checkpoint, combining these "raw" evidentiary sources to construct a detailed 3D model that reproduced the event from various angles. In so doing, the researchers made a new visual product that they then analyzed to better understand the circumstances of the car crash; the use of lethal force; the availability of medical aid in the wake of the shooting; and the treatment of Erekat's body.

Forensic Architecture's 3D model rendered the event legible from a multiplicity of perspectives and positions, leading researchers to conclude that the incident was most likely an accident stemming either from driver error or a vehicle malfunction. Whereas the video footage released by the Israeli state depicts a car veering suddenly into a guard booth, it could not reveal contextualizing factors such as the degree of declination of the road or the car's speed. The findings from this investigation made international news, changing global narratives surrounding the event from ones centered on a Palestinian terrorist attack to accounts of extrajudicial Israeli executions. In making a digital 3D model, scholars were able to offer a different explanation of what took place.

Audial products similarly divulge empirical realities that might otherwise be missed. In a comparable investigation, this time into the killings of two Palestinian teenage boys in 2014, scholars conducted audio analyses of gunshot sounds compiled from audio–video recordings taken from Israeli sources, bystanders, and journalists present during the incidents (Forensic Architecture 2014). Once more synchronizing available videos to create a multisensory and multidimensional audial and visual perspective, the team analyzed the sonic frequencies of gunshots in a spectrogram comparing the distinct sound signatures both aurally and visually to determine whether the shots consisted of rubber-coated ammunition, as Israeli officials claimed, or live fire.

Here again, the making of an audio–visual product enabled scholars to critically engage a dominant narrative and change common understandings of events. The findings were made public, and as they gained exposure, Israeli officials changed their position and arrested Ben Deri, an Israeli border policeman, for the killing of Nadeen Nawara, one of the two Palestinian teens. While belonging to the field of applied forensics, these examples demonstrate how political scientists might gainfully "make" as well as find, experience, or collect evidence. They likewise shed light on the detail, rigor, and skills necessary for the making of such products: In these cases, the processes by which the audio/visual objects were generated underwent close scrutiny so the findings could stand up in a court of law—arguably a standard beyond even peer-review. Thus, while many academics might, at first blush, bristle at the idea that evidence can be "made," these cases reveal how the core mechanics of data collection, analysis, and the communication of findings track closely across a wide range of practices such that they readily extend into the production of tangible objects.

An example that cleaves more closely to disciplinary norms may help drive this home: In fieldwork conducted for her book *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, Elisabeth Jean Wood convened mapmaking workshops in which she asked campesinos[5] touched by the long-running civil war to draw maps of their localities, indicating the property boundaries and land uses before and after the war. These large-scale, analog, paper-and-marker maps were drawn collaboratively by members of a community, and the activity was punctuated with discussions, jokes, and gossip,

[4]The 3D model and details of the investigation, as well as a video outlining the event, may be found online: Forensic Architecture (2021).

[5]In Wood's usage, "campesinos" refer to people engaging in agricultural activities, such as a landless day laborer, a permanent wage employee, or a farmer working a small holding Wood (2003).

such that Wood characterized the workshops as exercises in the construction of social memory (Wood 2003, 49). For Wood, the resulting maps document how campesino collective action redrew the boundaries of class relationships through their depiction of changes in de facto property rights and patterns of land use over the course of the war (Wood 2003, 45).

These newly made objects entered into the body of evidence Wood used to generate her findings, revealing historical patterns of land use and occupation, but also giving insight into the social perceptions and values of the mapmakers. Calling the maps "artifacts of my research" (Wood 2003, 47), Wood corroborated the information the maps produced through personal observations as well as through examinations of land claims archives maintained by the Front for National Liberation, the state of El Salvador, and the United Nations. Thus, the maps, interviews, in-person observations, and archival research served as distinct categories of data that could be weighed against each other to validate or question the accuracy of each individual source, contributing to the systematicity and rigor of the research design.

The point of highlighting these examples is not to valorize 3D models, audio analysis, or maps as made objects that deserve more sustained attention; similar deductions could be made from observing how scholars make use of many genres of made objects. Nor is it to provide an overview of approaches to "making" in political science—a rather impossible task. Instead, I want to suggest that the varied body of aesthetic artifacts we make and collect during research represent a reservoir of data that may be fruitfully assembled, organized, and analyzed as source material alongside textual and linguistic data. These made objects, and the processes that bring them into being, bear the potential to spawn new important projects and offer counterhegemonic insights into how we understand the political world.

Audio/visual artifacts and methodological discussions that reveal the making processes that produce them render legible mechanics of thought that scholars of all stripes must engage. In combining raw data in unusual ways and adding an additional layer of information (in the first example, architectural data from land surveys, and in the second example, the sonic record of the events), scholars at Forensic Architecture laid bare their process such that it might be evaluated for precision, accuracy, and credibility. Depending on one's epistemological proclivities, these final products can be mobilized to fact check, verify, or replicate, or they might shed light on meanings and social relations that a researcher missed while she was in the thick of the action—or help recall details she forgot. Either way, finding ways to "make" while researching, and recognizing the scholarly merit of the incidental "making" already underway, promise to enrich empirical understandings of politics and represents a potential path by which critically to engage biases or hypotheses that a researcher brings to an issue, contributing to the fastidiousness of any research design.

Understanding the multitude of decisions that go into any act of making an aesthetic-material object reveals that "made" evidence of this variety shares a close affinity with the decision-making entailed in generating a dataset that later will be subjected to statistical analysis or in designing a survey that considers questions of sampling and nonresponse. Both acts mandate careful decisions about the collection, selection, and codification of empirical material. This is not to say that the practices are identical; indeed, as I posit in the next section, material-aesthetic making in the sense of "getting your hands dirty" offers political scientists certain distinct advantages (alongside its inevitable limitations). Rather, it is to demonstrate how the underlying logics inherent to both practices allow them to be recognizable to one another, even if 3D modeling, sound production, or other forms of making feature less frequently in political science research.

Making as Analytical Method

Thinking through the constructed characteristics of evidence reveals a framework that understands distinct kinds of research projects as pursuing shared goals, rendering it possible to speak of meta-level standards of evaluative criteria across differences in research design. This issue of commensurability has cropped up repeatedly in disciplinary debates, often revolving around the purported "quant-qual" divide in methods. This section builds on this thought, seeking to highlight ways that making practices may be understood more explicitly as a mode of analysis and suggesting that acts of making are not inherently beholden to one methodological paradigm or another. This is not to say that making practices are neutral. As any method, making practices embed specific epistemological proclivities. To examine this further, I introduce three instances of making as an analytical method for political science research.[6]

In 2017, IR scholar Sophie Harman co-produced the full-length feature film *Pili*, which deals with contemporary Tanzanian women's experiences living with HIV/AIDS.[7] The fictional drama, directed by BAFTA-nominated Leanne Welham, seeks to understand how rhetoric of security impacts individuals and communities targeted by HIV/AIDS health policies in Africa. Harman, a scholar of gender and global health with fieldwork expertise in sub-Saharan Africa, had no filmmaking experience prior to producing *Pili*. In scholarly publications following the production of the movie, Harmon theorized filmmaking as a method for IR explicitly, situating it in collaborative, visual, and feminist traditions (Harman 2018, 2019).

Harman and Welham's process included holding a series of workshops to involve the local community. Throughout pre-production and production, the team adopted a ground-up, iterative process in which local women shaped the film's narrative and dialogue so as to imbue the project with their understanding of the significance of their situation to international structures.[8] In the workshops, the team heard and recorded stories of the women whose lives provided the basis for the film; identified women interested in participating in the film; explained the purpose and intent of the film; and later, cast women as actors (Harman 2018, 800–3). Filming itself took place over 5 weeks, at a site selected for its centrality and convenience for the members of

[6] While my focus in this section is limited to international relations and political science, it will be clear to most that the making of film as a scholarly endeavor is not without precedent. Visual ethnography developed in connection with the use of film and photography as tools of colonial rule in the early part of the twentieth century—a topic that has received sustained treatment in the discipline of anthropology. Film is likewise an established method of research in sociology and geography. For more on this topic, see Rose (2016) and Pink (2007).

[7] To my knowledge, Harman is the first to produce a narrative feature film as an object of IR research. Documentary films by IR scholars include Malte Phillip Kaeding and Dr. Hippo's "Black Bauhinia" (2020), William Callahan's "Toilet Adventures" (2015b), Cynthia Weber's 2007 "I am an American: Video Portraits of Unsafe U.S. Citizens," and James Der Derian's films, including "After 9/11" (Udris Film, 2003) and "Human Terrain: War Becomes Academic" (Bullfrog Films, 2010), among others.

[8] In her discussion, Harman also considers the limits of this egalitarian blurring, discussing the power dynamics that continued to exist despite the collaborative structure of the filmmaking process.

the cast, and according to a time schedule that accommodated the women's diverse needs.

Thus, the process of film-*making*—the multifold steps involved in the production of an aesthetic object—presented at each turn an opportunity for collaboration and for the framing of knowledge by those closest to it. The slow, iterative nature of making, in this case, captures the actual unfolding of knowledge production, rendering it possible to document how meanings take shape. Beyond this, making-as-method also presented repeated occasions for ethical evaluation—indeed, making demanded it, particularly when misunderstandings arose that might otherwise scuttle the operation.[9] Collaborating to produce a material product in this manner facilitates what Jessica Soedirgho and Aarie Glas have called a posture of "active reflexivity" that evolves and adapts to diverse circumstances, recognizing positionality as dynamic and context-dependent (Soedirgho and Glas 2020). Whereas in fieldwork situations where scholars are less obligated to produce a tangible object as part of their commitment to the project or community, a researcher might walk away from difficult introspection if a relationship with an interlocutor sours or becomes too vexed, opting to interview another, similarly placed subject. The process of making a movie with a fixed set of characters and a predefined, formal output (a feature film) committed Harman to her subjects such that reflexive engagement and continual negotiation were built in. Making something, and bending to that object's needs, timings, and logics, forces scholars, as well as the subjects they engage, again and again out of any a priori stance as they are required to adjust to the agency that the emergent object exerts.

While I suggest filmmaking and other making processes proffer unique opportunities for reflexivity, this does not mean all filmmaking is necessarily reflexive and participatory, nor can a reflexive approach guarantee how the film will be viewed by an eventual audience. The production of 360-degree videos and photos, for example, is integral to experimental work in psychology and decision-making that relies on Virtual Reality (VR) technology in research. This genre of filmmaking bears little resemblance to Harman's participatory approach, as the following study illustrates.

Political psychologists and conflict researchers working in the context of Israel and Palestine filmed a 1-min, 360-degree, scripted scene depicting a confrontational incident at an Israeli checkpoint—modeled on real-world situations where soldiers and civilians come into frequent and dangerous contact. In the scene, a Palestinian couple approach armed and uniformed Israeli soldiers on foot at a military roadblock along a dirt road. The soldiers order the couple to halt and begin inspecting them, which the man protests. The scene ends when the Palestinian man reaches into his jacket, at which point the soldiers direct their rifles at the couple in response (Hasson et al. 2019, 4). For the study, the sequence was filmed from two vantages, one that showed the experience from the Palestinians' visual perspective and the other from the Israeli soldiers' perspective.

Participants in the study were divided into groups, read a brief, and assigned roles imagining themselves either as Palestinian or Israeli. Participants watched the film wearing a VR headset that tracked head motions to provide an interactive panoramic experience with corresponding directed sound. The researchers posited that for an Israeli audience, immersive exposure to the Palestinian's point of view would lead to more positive attitudes toward the Palestinian outgroup, and that this attitude shift would last beyond the limited time frame of the experiment. The film played a key role in the study by helping participants visualize a concrete outgroup experience.

The making of a VR video designed to enable hypotheses testing in accordance with the researchers' positivist epistemological orientation differs sharply from the interpretive, reflexive, and participatory approach seen in Harmon's filmmaking. This suggests that while making processes creates opportunities for thinking political science differently, making does not automatically align with critical or feminist epistemologies but can be utilized in very different ways. The Hasson study found that subjects adopted a more favorable attitude toward the outgroup after experiencing the VR scene; one might say the subjects made up their mind differently after watching the video. This change recalls the initial discussion of self-making and the transformation of political subjects through embodied undertakings. It highlights how making and makers of all sorts, from researchers to subjects, are entangled in the empirical political world, lending support to Joanna Tidy's notion that material production represents an embodied process through which diverse power relations take shape.[10]

The experiential aspects of making and making-as-analysis merit closer attention. To examine this embodied process further, I digress from filmmaking to consider a visual practice that may be as far from the technological demands of film production as can be imagined, namely, the humble doodle or notebook sketch. Doodling as a method reminds us that not all parts of the research process necessarily involve active data collection. Other supplementary social skills are required, even if they often remain unexamined in questions of project feasibility or research design. One significant aspect of a field researcher's skillset (or "toolkit"[11] as this is sometimes called) revolves around the ability to gain access to the people he hopes to speak with and the places he wants to visit. Richard Nielsen, conducting fieldwork in Cairo, Egypt, in 2011, describes a scene from his first day in the country, in which he visited the al Husayn Mosque in the Cairene old city. Nielsen writes:

> I sit at the back, cross-legged on lush green and gold carpet dappled with stylized leaves and punctuated by row upon row of marble columns soaring up to meet the roof arches. I watch pilgrims filing in to visit the shrine believed to be the final resting place of Imam Hussein's head. I start sketching. Then I sneak a few photographs. Are cameras allowed here? I accept a piece of bread from someone offering food to worshippers. I haven't spoken to anyone, but I don't really want to. All I want to [do] is observe without being singled out.[12]

In the moments that follow, Nielsen is spotted by a mosque-goer who challenges Nielsen's presence and intentions, demanding to know what Nielsen is doing, why he is in the mosque, and whether he is an American spy. In "Recite! Interpretive Fieldwork for Positivists," Nielsen attributes his eventual success in winning over first the challenger, and then the crowd of people that gathered around them, to his ability to recite the opening lines of the Qur'an. In Nielsen's retelling, the act of recitation displayed his beneficence and sincerity, charming the crowd and easing him into the community. Yet I would like to suggest a second act

[9] For Harman's nuanced discussion of an instance in which a misunderstanding impacted the progress of the film, see Harman (2018).

[10] Tidy (2019).

[11] Reyes (2020).

[12] Niels on (2020).

played an equally important role in persuading the men that Nielsen might be accepted. "Figure 3.2," the image that accompanies the article, shows a reproduction of the doodle—a detailed line drawing of the mosque itself—that Nielsen sketched into his notebook in his time spent sitting on the mosque carpet. The figure is captioned: "The sketch conveyed to them that I respected something they loved," indicating that it too was carefully considered by the group and weighed as to what it might reveal about this strange foreigner. This non-verbal medium of expression and the subsequent interaction that surrounded it succinctly captured and communicated an attitude and stance. The doodle, I suggest, helped Nielsen gain access to this site and these people, even as it served as an analytical exercise representative of early fieldwork.

Anthropologist Michael Taussig, writing on doodling in the field, offers insight into why Nielsen's drawing might have carried weight in that context. Taussig, leaning on John Berger, writes that "drawing is like a conversation with the thing drawn, likely to involve prolonged and total immersion" (Taussig 2011, 22). What is more, Taussig highlights the distinction between *taking* photographs and *making* drawings or sketches, stressing the ongoing, dialogic, and kinesthetic demands of this kind of making (Taussig 2011, 21). The act of drawing something bespeaks a commitment to looking carefully, to questioning (possibly erasing or scratching out and trying again), to admitting to a particular point of view, but most of all, to spending time—all behaviors that lend themselves readily to grounded research, as well as to gaining bona fides and access among a group of potential interlocutors. Drawing, in this view, becomes a method not so different from the kind of self-making we observe in participant observation. In thinking slowly through one's hands in a non-verbal register, tacit knowledge is made conscious and considered, weighed, and judged in accordance with the questions and theories that frame the project. Making, then, presents unique opportunities for engaging in a range of activities that facilitate analysis, even as it contributes to the rigor of such work.

Practices of making in political science are not limited to a given philosophical approach, but may be creatively grasped and formed to fit a task. In this manner, making practices—from films to doodles—become a method for thinking, uncovering tacit knowledge, building on thought, and reflecting on that process. Made field objects, in turn, take on value that goes beyond mementos, mnemonics, and "mere" evidence. And like other analytical processes, made objects and making practices, in their tangible, multisensory presence, materialize bias in such ways that may serve to stimulate debate and engagement. Audio–visual footage and artifacts represent research objects that, in their thingness, introduce possibilities for dissemination, replication, and manipulation that might at each step be scrutinized, reviewed, and built upon by peers in the interest of furthering research. Objects may be remade, and in their reproduction, we may learn anew. The expectation or indeed hope of remaking should not be that the outcome will be identical; rather, it is to assess what differences in the process or in the outcome can teach us.

Making and Argumentation

If filmmaking and doodling bring attention to the slow, immersive aspects of making that "freeze frame" the analytic process for more ready introspection and interrogation during fieldwork, making also presents unique advantages in the final stages of research, when attention turns to communicating with a broader audience. A final facet of "making" I wish to rethink and valorize relates to the everyday academic practice of developing an argument and building a compelling case to illustrate findings. Disciplinary expectation in this regard has long been to produce text-based works—typically books and journal articles such as this one. Products that convey ideas and arguments via exposition are familiar, easily transmissible, and can be assessed according to established standards of quality and practices of peer-review: The style and norms of academic writing constitute a common language, the mastery of which identifies its authors as belonging to a particular tribe. In graduate school, we are taught to parse texts for their arguments, their logical flaws, their biases, and omissions—as well as to appreciate and learn from their genius. As we master the practice, we are initiated into the tribe.

Moves away from this longstanding bond with text and language are often met with skepticism because extratextual products generally show rather than explain, and it is, perhaps, in the explanation where scholars find the greatest intellectual leverage.[13] Even within a purely textual realm, denigrations of some qualitative work as "mere description" echo this disciplinary bias against showing, ignoring the possibility that, as Pachirat put it, "detailed accounts . . . are not merely incidental to or illustrative of a more important theoretical argument. . .. They *are* the argument" (Pachirat 2011, 19). The myriad benefits of making and showing rather than (or alongside) explaining, whether through words or otherwise, should be clear from the sections above and have been debated in many contexts. The questions for this section, then, become whether the kind of knowledge political science engages can be effectively and broadly communicated outside of reading and writing; whether non-textual or extralinguistic products may be assessed according to the discipline's established scholarly standards; and why we might bother to move beyond text.

The first and second questions, pertaining to whether academic knowledge lends itself to creative, alternative forms, and how, as an epistemic community, we might evaluate products we are less familiar with, need not particularly challenge existing paradigms. As with making that produces evidence, and practices of making that constitute methods, we are again likely more familiar with moves to go beyond journals and books than it might seem: Extratextual and even (some) extralinguistic practices permeate everyday components of most mainstream political science research, as has already been demonstrated. They also already comprise important aspects of what we produce.

Take, for example, the prosaic PowerPoint, present at critical junctures in politics (one might recall the 2003 PowerPoint presented to the United Nations, in which Colin Powell made a case for going to war in Iraq; or the PowerPoint circulated to former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, which recommended then-President Donald Trump declare a national emergency to delay the certification of the 2020 US election results) as well as in academia, where it is ubiquitous in job talks, conference presentations, invited talks, and teaching. This simple interface, with its preset aesthetic options and functions, might seem a poor example of a made object, but many scholars take great care in crafting their PowerPoints—from following the cardinal rule of lim-

[13]Although this begs the question: "leverage for *what*?" given that a primary goal of political science must be to discover and share new empirical knowledge—and not only to theorize. Indeed, as most would grant, the production of empirical knowledge already embeds theorization. To wit, arguments—central features under scrutiny in any external review—are, as semantic norms remind us, "made" or "built" and not explained.

iting the amount of text on the screen, to making sure the fonts match and that colors and graphics line up pleasantly and coherently. Scholars are increasingly adding moving images and sound to their presentations, for reasons ranging from wanting to engage the audience and keep their attention, to signaling their fieldwork or archival experience with on-the-ground photos and video clips, to visualizing statistical data and diversifying the evidence they harness in support of their talking point.

Parsing the mechanics and logics that underly a PowerPoint production can reveal surprising similarities with other, less-familiar making practices—including filmmaking or exhibitions. PowerPoint, like other audio–visual productions, derives power via its ability to operate on multiple sensory registers, thereby impacting an audience differently than text and engaging an affective dimension. To the degree that such audio–visual products have the potential to hold attention more than the printed word, they do so via their operation on numerous simultaneous sensory "channels" or tracks. Herein lies a great benefit of "making" for argumentation. Film, for example, relies on moving and/or still images; on spoken dialogue; on ambient noise; on music; as well as on a written script and any accompanying textual accessories. Its potency stems from the associative and affective connections made across each of these.[14] Making opens avenues to communicate affectively as well as ideationally, relying on form as well as content to develop an argument.

As such, scholars who make audio–visual products have at least five channels through which to build their argument. The ramifications of this are significant beyond holding an audience's attention: It expands the scholar's repertoire of communication, allowing her to reach people across different modalities of cognition and increasing her potential to devise a nuanced explanation that effectively and succinctly captures some of the messiness and complexity of a given research problem. Communicating on multiple channels simultaneously also presents an opportunity to explore and reveal the multiple positionalities from which a topic might be approached, making it possible to use dialogue to indicate one position, and background sound to highlight another—for example.[15] This potential applies from "simple" formats like PowerPoint through to technologically complicated media. Scholars who make in this manner must decide whether they want an image in a slide show to correspond with the spoken text of the talk or whether analytical purchase may be gained by creating audio–visual dissonance or associative bridges across media.

Making and delivering PowerPoint presentations, then, involves hundreds of multisensory micro-decisions, all of which—ideally—speak directly to the research findings and build on each other to reveal the complexity of the broader intellectual project.[16] Paying close attention to the construction of these presentations can reveal much about the researcher's thought processes beyond "mere" academic explanations—it encourages a parallel conversation with how information is configured. And far from being inscrutable to other scholars, peer-review of this making process is common (although unpaid and generally underrecognized) labor that academics conduct routinely when they help each other prepare by attending and giving feedback at practice talks or workshops.

Much like PowerPoint, poster and iPoster presentations have long been hallmark events at major political science conferences such as the American Political Science Association and the International Studies Association. The newer iPoster system allows a range of multimedia and interactive features to be embedded in the virtual posters. Scholars can interweave texts, images, and sound video and may also audio-narrate the viewer's experience. Both professional associations provide tips and detailed how-to tutorials instructing scholars on techniques for crafting the poster. The point is mainstream political science is already comfortable with a variety of "making" practices and made research products, and we judge these as a matter of course according to the same standards and evaluative criteria familiar to each of the epistemic families in the discipline. As such, the skeptic's fear that standards of disciplinary knowledge production would decline should we move beyond tried-and-true forms is revealed as an unlikely one: conventional standards may be upheld without undue intellectual acrobatics. Differences in form and method are real, but the issue of evaluating work across differences is manageable. The bigger challenge revolves around overcoming disciplinary inertia surrounding norms and expectations and enacting structural changes in departments, editorial boards, and grant-writing committees across the globe to recognize alternative forms of work.

There is a burgeoning body of "literature" that has moved beyond PowerPoint and iPosters to deal creatively with the presentation of research findings. Just in the last 5 years, work in political science that has incorporated an exhibition as part of its scholarly output includes Marc Howard's "Solitary Confinement" (2017–2018); Berit Bliesemann De Guevara et al.'s "(Des)tejiendo miradas" (2019); "Puntadas" (2019); "Reminiscencias—Puntadas" (2019); and "Un-)Stitching Gazes|(Des)Tejiendo Miradas" (2021)—all commissioned and curated under the umbrella project "(Un)Stitching the Subjects of Columbia's Reconciliation Process."[17] Additional examples include "Threads, War, and Conflict," commissioned and co-curated by Lydia Cole, Faye Donnelly, Laura Mills, and Natasha Saunders (2019); "Floorplans (journeys from there to here)," a participatory collaborative installation organized by Siobhan Campbell, Natasha Davis, and Sara de Jong as part of the 2018 "Who Are We?: Art, Migration, and the Production of Democracy" event at the Tate Museum (Cambell et al. 2018); and the multi-sited exhibit "Security on the Move" (2017–2019), researched and organized by Jutta Bakonyi, Pete Chonka, Abdirahman Edle, and Kirsti Stuvoy, which showcased personal stories and photographs taken by displaced people from Mogadishu to London (Bakonyi et al. 2019). Kristof

[14]William Callahan develops this argument with regard to film in his recent book (see Callahan 2015a and Callahan 2020). The point that making engages the affective register need not be limited to film. For a comparable argument related to more tactile endeavors such as needlepoint, embroidery, and quilting, see Andrã et al . (2020).

[15]To say nothing of the additional, crucially significant "channel" presentations engage, namely the speaker/author's embodied presence and non-verbal self-presentation. Posture, attire, diction, tone, self-confidence, race, gender, health, age. . .these performative aspects are unquestionably "read" by an audience alongside the aural text of presentation itself and feature critically in the reception of the scholarly material.

[16]The emphasis on PowerPoint is not to suggest that the medium is commonly used to its fullest potential, as anyone who has ever sat through a boring presentation may attest. As one anonymous reviewer noted, the vast majority of academic presentations function primarily to deliver key points and embed graphs and visualizations. Rather, I treat PowerPoint here precisely because it is such a ubiquitous presentation tool and because approaching PowerPoint presentations through a lens of "making" might present opportunities for improving its utility.

[17]These projects, in addition to creating and exhibiting textiles in the service of conflict research, spawned over ten scholarly articles published in academic journals. In English, see, for example, Andrã (2022), Arias López, Andrã, and De Guevara (2021), De Guevara and Kurowska (2020), and De Guevara and Krystalli (2022).

Titeca's book *Rebel Lives: Photographs from Inside the Lord's Resistance Army* (2019) had its origins as an exhibition at the Photo Museum of Antwerp. Nor are all exhibits visually oriented: at Glasgow University, Fergus McNeill and Phil Crockett Thomas' Economic and Social Research Council funded research on the reintegration of individuals with criminal records into broader society took the form of three evening music performances, including songs co-written in Scottish prisons (Thomas and McNeil 2021).[18]

Research presented as an exhibit, installation, or live event can introduce evidence in ways that allow the viewer to experience it firsthand. Communicating findings in this way is akin to recreating ethnographic participatory observation practices or inducing reactions in subjects in a natural experiment, but with a controlled and constructed overlay filtered through the researcher's argumentation and framing. For example, Marc Howard's work on mass incarceration in the United States involved physically replicating a real-life solitary confinement cell and installing it on campus at Georgetown University. Visitors to the exhibit could spend up to 30 minutes in the cell and could participate in a 9-minute VR experience "to learn more about what it feels like to be placed in extended isolation" (Howard 2018). Thus, rather than describing or explaining solitary confinement or surveying inmates, Howard made it possible for attendees to embody it and imagine it for themselves.

Presenting research findings in the form of an exhibit, then, may be theorized in part, following Christine Sylvester, as "collage." Sylvester writes, "the high-low art-making technique of collage . . . juxtaposes unexpected, odd, often ordinary, and seemingly unrelated items and images without providing an indication of the work's meaning. Interpretation is left to the viewer" (Sylvester 2005, 320). Making practices, as well as communication practices that invite viewers to experience findings in a multi-modal way, encourages analytical cross-fertilization that deepens the meanings of the findings themselves. And yet, viewers never formulate ideas in a vacuum. Each day of the Georgetown exhibit, for example, was hosted by a different formerly incarcerated individual who shared personal experience, thereby inviting viewers to move beyond their own frames, to consider Others, and to contextualize their personal discoveries within a scholarly rubric that provided information about issues of policing and justice. Thus, participants were guided in various ways as they made sense of the exhibit. Attendees produced one of the pieces in the exhibit themselves, writing their impressions of the encounter in solitary—one might say their "reader-response"—on a large canvas for others to learn from and appraise.

Exhibits are not the only spaces that push against the hegemony of reading and writing as scholarly outputs. One could also consider the growing crop of political science podcasts, such as the Hayseed Scholar Podcast (Hayseed Scholar 2023), Scope Conditions (Scope Conditions 2022), The POMEPS Conversations Podcast (POMEPS Conversations 2022), Middle East Law and Governance Podcast (Middle East Law & Governance 2022), New Books in Political Science (New Books Network 2023), Academic Aunties (2023), (Bungacast 2023). . . to name just a few. These podcasts make scholarly findings accessible aurally, diversifying pedagogical possibilities and tuning in to modes of learning that may lend themselves more readily to contemporary engagement with knowledge. To be sure, many of these academic podcasts feature discussions about books—still the touchstone for academic production—but the textual reference point of the discussion does not undermine the impact of this aural mode of scholarship. Nor is the explosion of "alternative" research products limited to podcasts—YouTube archives high-profile academic lectures as well as short-form scholarly presentations and policy recommendations, such as climate specialist Leah Stokes' "The Narwhal Curve" video (Stokes 2020). Professors are turning to the production of TikTok as well. Gender and conflict scholar Courtney Burns' Tiktok cover topics ranging from the power of language in shaping debates, to world systems theory, to explanations for war's duration in three-minute video clips (Burns 2020). Political violence scholar Christian Davenport's serial graphic novel "RW-94," produced in collaboration with artist Darick Ritter, in turn, presents a graphic interpretation of Davenport's research on the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 and its ongoing political and sociological effects (Davenport and Ritter 2022). This incomplete overview of innovative research outputs can only hint toward the multitude of directions in which the discipline is beginning to move, but it reveals that creative-making practices are in full swing.

Conclusion

In demonstrating the centrality of making–thinking to existing knowledge production in political science, this article sought to normalize and valorize a range of scholarly practices that reach beyond reading and writing to engage multisensory as well as extralinguistic elements. It evaluated "making" along various phases of the research process, first demonstrating that making processes generated unique opportunities for intellectual discovery by creating room for researchers to think differently and by combining embodied practices with more conventional research exercises to put tacit, empirical knowledge in conversation with scholarly theorizing. Second, the article suggested that making's processual nature embeds opportunities for ongoing reflexivity, the exploration of multiple positionalities, and associative thinking across sensory registers. Contrary to critiques that aesthetic practices push scholarship outside the bounds of "scientific" knowledge production, these opportunities can be exploited to augment systematicity and rigor in research. The recursive, aesthetic decisions embedded in "making" deepen engagement with the subject matter, stimulating analysis in part because they have the capacity to disrupt smooth narration, as the materiality of the object being made speaks back to the maker. Finally, the article suggests that an embrace of making invites greater attention to issues of form in ways that service argumentation and communication.

Adopting "new" norms is, of course, not without its challenges and risks. Creating space for making–thinking institutionally and uniformly across the discipline so that this work is valued equally with conventional research would be no small feat—but a necessary one for programs that want to equip scholars with skills necessary to generate cutting-edge research. In what remains, I raise three areas that would need to undergo practical and considered change for political science to embrace making more fully. First, making requires diverse skills, many of which are not taught as a matter of course in political science departments. Given financial and human resource constraints, it is unlikely that most departments would be able to introduce methods courses covering the broad gamut of skills fruitfully applied to making in political science. That said, many universities offer training that could be relevant across their various schools and departments. Key for faculty and directors of gradu-

[18] In connection with this research project, see also Thomas et al. (2021).

ate studies in political science, then, would be to renegotiate what counts toward method requirements, to explore opportunities for cross-listing courses, and to develop relationships with reputable external institutes that provide summer short course training in practices like filmmaking, photo editing, or audio production. Departmental discussion about how these "new" techniques may be made to bolster projects that will reach and exceed the department's criteria for excellence would be equally important. "Making" processes should enter the roster of qualitative methods training alongside other "learning by doing" activities such as visiting archives, practicing interviewing, and conducting local ethnographic studies. Cassandra Emmons and Andrew Moravcsik's recent assessment of the poor state of qualitative training across top political science departments, and their attendant call to redesign a qualitative methods curriculum, suggests time is ripe for these discussions.[19]

Second, given the challenge of acquiring additional skills alongside the already overcrowded curricular demands of becoming and being a political scientist, it is likely that many scholars interested in this path may enlist collaborators from outside the discipline.[20] This comes with ethical and other implications. Alena Pfoser and Sara de Jong note at least three sites where artist–academic interactions may produce pressures that require negotiating, including asymmetric funding and remuneration structures, differences in audit cultures, and different expectations regarding pace of work (Pfoser and de Jong 2019, 317–33). These pressures are significant and demand careful consideration—but, again, guidance exists within the discipline surrounding this kind of ethical navigation. Ethnographers and scholars doing fieldwork negotiate Self–Other power relations as a matter of course, writing their ethical choices and collaborations into project proposals, and documenting how they handle complex situations at each step of their research. Thus, interdisciplinary and extra-academic collaborations, and the thorny problems they raise, present opportunities to deepen scholarly engagement with the ethics of research.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, practices of making in political science would need more formalized professional recognition and support. If careers continue to be built solely (or primarily) on the basis of publications in top-tier journals and academic presses, then the likelihood of embracing "making" as a way to advance diverse research programs will remain slim, despite the gains that may be had from adopting making strategies. Without clear career incentives, untenured scholars will be hard-pressed to risk a less-traveled road. Current rankings and rating structures so thoroughly permeate academic behavior that our success in the discipline relates directly to how assiduously we follow expectations and norms—with the result that research hurtles along an ever-narrowing path.

Making represents an important practice in political science research, but the relative unfamiliarity of "making" within the discipline often pushes discussion of it to the margins. Thus, rather than conceiving of making as existing entirely outside of disciplinary evaluation structures, this article sought to enfold making praxes and highlight compatibilities by demonstrating that many aspects of making are already part and parcel of what political science estimates to be good research. Scholars need not re-envision evaluative schema or distort the boundaries of the discipline to embrace making. Rather, gainful incorporation would require developing clear pathways for recognizing creative practices of making as the serious scholarship it is and rewarding scholars who "make" the same way we reward scholars who cleave to mainstream methods and epistemologies. This will mean considering making in conversations related to publication, awards, funding opportunities, tenure, curriculum design, citation practices, intellectual networks in associations, methods courses—and more broadly, status and collegial support.

[19] Emmons and Moravcsik (2020).

[20] This pragmatic stance is not meant to squelch impulses toward innovation and exploration in the embrace of making. Cynthia Weber, Mike Shapiro, and others are correct to insist that we need to develop aesthetic literacy for our own purposes—a point I am grateful to Anna Leander for raising in personal correspondence.

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