From Sheep to Shop: The Wool Assemblage
Onyeahialam, Anthonia Ijeoma

Publication date:
2016

Citation for published version (APA):
**From Sheep to Shop: The Wool Assemblage**

Anthonia Ijeoma Onyeahalam*, Laura Jones, Michael Woods, Jesse Heley  
*ani@aber.ac.uk

---

**Introduction**

It is often possible to trace the origin and destination of wool from the sheep in a farm through its supply chain involving many rural locations into the global commodity chain and back to the shop shelf. However this can prove tricky in the midst of connections and processes wool passes.

We use the Assemblage Framework as constituted by DeLanda to breakdown these chains and unravel connections in the wool assemblage.

We present efforts using GIS to explore, unravel, visualise and communicate complexities and connections in the wool assemblage as a global commodity interacting through, yet not bounded in rural spaces.

---

**Data and Methods**

**Data**

- Interviews  
- Field visits  
- Trade Data  
- Agriculture Industry data  
- Online data

**Methods**

- Flow Mapping  
- Network Analysis  
- Web Story mapping Platform

**Assemblage Framework**

Assemblage is a way of looking at relationships, associations, breaking down complexity and unravelling connections. Six key attributes of this framework has been identified.

---

**Introduction to Global Wool Production and Trade**

In 2013 alone, 2.2 MTs of greasy wool was produced and 30% of this became mobile and exchanged hands. Here wool changes status, becomes lost or maintains traceability across international boundaries, eventually finding itself or part of itself in a final product. For example, China is responsible for approximately 30% of wool production but also constitutes the major destination for wool from top exporters like AUS, NZ, SA inclusive of UK. Rural wool making spaces like Newtown, UK, Jiangsu Province, China and NSW, Australia become part of these connections.

---

**UK as a Top Wool Producer and Exporter**

---

**UK Wool Assemblage**

Assemblage emphasizes the interconnectedness in the expressive and material, between parts and a whole. Here we identify parts of the assemblage as it applies to wool in the UK, presenting this visually and translating this knowledge into maps. Maps are often unable to handle fluidity as a core character in the framework, and so attempt to represent this and invisible relations using hatched lines and the human aspects using bold symbols.

---

**Map of UK Wool Assemblage**

Here, we translate territoriality by mapping the geographic position of the material (being sheep, farms, buildings – depots, auction houses, wool) in while representing deterritoriality as extension of territories as shearsers have to travel to farms to derive wool fleece from sheep. Wool exchanges hands when it moves through depots of different functionalities to be reconfigured and reconstituted in order to put value to it and exchange ownership to eventually find itself in a household. In all these, relations are built, disconnected and remade between places, humans, commodities, money and infrastructure locked to multiple administrative units. The assemblage and connections though happening at multiple scales and across boundaries does not make one scale less or more important as is reflected in the Wales map and case study.

---

**Wales as a Rural Case Study: Steve the Farmer**

Steve, residing 12 miles from Newtown, Wales, purchased Texel sheep from Netherlands to cope with Welsh topographic limitations. Steve, residing 12 miles from Newtown, Wales, purchased Texel sheep from Netherlands to cope with Welsh topographic limitations. Steve delivers his fleeces to a Newtown depot.

Here it is marketed and blended with wool of similar types and quality sourced from over 66 breeds. A sample of this blend is sent for testing North Wales. The result is a medium wool blend, for example, are useful for making carpets. However, we cannot trace Steve’s medium wool back, and so we loose this provenance.

---

**References**


