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PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES TO VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY FROM THE DIGITAL TO THE HANDMADE. AN INTRODUCTION

KEYWORDS

Participatory Action Research (PAR), visual and digital methods, video, photography, drawings.

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Participatory visual methods are changing the way anthropologists forge new knowledge and interact with informants in the field, creating possibilities for intimate and public-engaged inquiry. This approach brings the visual and digital production process into a participatory action research (PAR) framework. Participatory visual methodologies include PhotoVoice, participatory video, digital storytelling, and visual archival research, among others. These techniques produce rich visual and narrative data, but also open other paths to a ‘shared anthropology’, guided by participant interests and priorities, putting the methods literally in the hands of the participants themselves. These methodologies and forms of communication appeal to wide and diverse audiences, deploying knowledge beyond the academy. It also allows the collective production of knowledge in more sensory and sensitive domains, exploring new levels of expression beyond verbalization. The greater intimacy that these methods allow and the possibilities for communicating to a wider range of interlocutors raises new ethical and methodological questions. How can visual ethnographers open up their research process at different stages to foster a kind of “shared anthropology,” as proposed by Jean Rouch? How does the introduction of these methods produce a shift in the research process and the role of the ethnographer, taking it in new and unexpected directions?

In the contemporary world, visual and digital information is produced and disseminated faster and broader than ever (even if in many contexts, inequality of access to information and communication technologies remains an important element to take into account. In recent debate on “digital visual engagements,” Grasseni and Walter (2014) question “whether digital media are *per se* participatory, and further, whether participatory digital media are *per se* politically engaging.” Some of our initial queries in this direction were: how should anthropologists glean knowledge from the visual materials participants are producing? How can we make use of visual insights—from handmade drawings to digital video clips, captured with sophisticated camera—in order to foster multisensory research and enable research participants to tell stories alongside the ethnographer?

This collection first took shape when the three co-editors organized a panel on Participatory digital and visual methods (Panel 036, “Participatory visual and digital research in anthropology: engagement and innovation”) at the 2014 EASA meetings in Tallinn. We were drawn together by our common interest in using images throughout the research process: as a visual elicitation tool, as a form of data and creative expression, and as a way of communicating anthropological knowledge to new audiences. Harper was excited by Bayre’s participatory approach to research with images from colonial archives (Bayre and Valenciano-Mañé 2014). Bayre, in turn, invited Harper to speak about her book (Gubrium and Harper 2013) in a visual anthropology seminar at University of Barcelona.

Harper and Afonso had worked together on a Photovoice research project with urban gardeners in Lisbon, Portugal (Harper and Afonso 2016), having found each other through Afonso's co-edited volume *Working Images* (Pink, Kürti, and Afonso, 2004). The three of us put out a call for panel presenters in the hope of building a community of anthropologists interested in the potential for visual methodologies to foster a deeper form of participation and collaboration with the communities we study.

We learned that we were not alone in this hope: anthropologists, photographers, filmmakers, and curators from around Europe answered our call. We spent a full day in Tallinn sharing and discussing our projects. Our audience posed many challenging questions that have informed our thinking in the time since the panel. Some audience members asked us to consider the potential for the "tyranny of participation" (Cooke and Kothari 2001), for example, focusing on the power relations that reappear like a many-headed Hydra even in well-intentioned participatory projects. The final debate, fueled by the discussants, presented interesting topics for reflection. Dorle Dracklé sorted out the power of images, and conversely, the ethical dangers of visual research. Beate Engelbrecht, underlined the subtle difference between *cooperation* and *collaboration*, inviting panelists to reflect whether those two dimensions (one more technical, the other more participatory) could act in the field as parallel or convergent goals.

Following the conference, we continued to encounter scholars using participatory visual research in varied and innovative ways, employing diverse visual techniques (drawings, photos, archives, and videos) in diverse research settings from Brazil to Iran to Angola. The result is this special issue. Contributors in this issue creatively deploy visual methodologies, from using digital cameras to capture photos and videos to hand-sketching ideas and observations with a simple pencil and paper.

This leads us to question to what extent handmade drawings or digital images have the power to *re-present* our observations as researchers, and also *re-inforce* the concerns of research participants in a way that linear texts can not attain. Furthermore, how can the visual material generated in the field, *with* participants, can be also used *by* and *for* those same participants?

Martin Gruber's article begins by exploring the historical foundations of participatory and indigenous media production in anthropology. He then describes video workshops with village residents in Angola, Namibia, and Botswana and offers fine-grained insights on Participatory Ethnographic video as a process. Drawing inspiration from indigenous media around the world, Gruber and his partners integrated collaboration from planning the film projects to shooting, editing, and holding community screenings. Gruber takes a special interest in interrogating the "tyranny of participation" (Cooke and Kothari 2001) as it manifests itself in participatory video.

He acknowledges that one can never “escape” power relationships in research entirely. Nevertheless, Gruber shows the village filmmakers’ agency as media producers in their decision to make fictional films as a way of presenting critical views to local political leaders and their ways of presenting his position as a foreign ethnographer within the frame of their own films.

In the video section of this issue, Gruber also contributes one of the videos produced in the article, *Honey* (Hochi), co-directed by Adelina Antónia, Martin Gruber, Miguel S. Hilário, Henriques Bino Job, Fatima José & Evaristo Quintas. This video is the product of a participatory filmmaking workshop in which villagers in the highlands of Central Angola discussed the future of their region and the ecological, economic, and cultural value of the honey they collect.

Shireen Walton brings the discussion about participation to the digital landscape, with the theoretical/methodological proposition of the anthropologist as curator for digital ethnographic research on Iranian photobloggers. To explore and challenge the role of the anthropologist towards a collective epistemological frame, to what has been called “knowing beyond the self” (Horst, 2016:7), Walton becomes the curator of an online exhibition of Iranian Photography, constructing the digital field for her research.

Anne De Louis presents the results of her Photovoice research conducted with students and teachers at a German-language high school in Transylvania in Romania. She shows how youth use images to represent the changing ethnic composition of a region that once had a large German population and continues to value its “Saxon” heritage. De Louis presents the contrast between students’ images of the past, represented by folk architecture, costumes, and heritage sites, and their aspirations for a cosmopolitan future, represented by German language proficiency, western products, and multicultural youth. While students at this prestigious school unconsciously replicate hierarchies of value that place German ethnic culture above that of Romanian and Gypsy in their imagery, they also use the Photovoice process to subtly critique school discipline and to express the idea that the region’s inhabitants are legitimate inheritors of local Saxon heritage whether or not they are ethnic Germans. De Louis presents a compelling case for the use of participatory visual methodologies with youth.

Moving from digital photography to hand-made drawings, Karina Kuschnir describes how she mobilized her anthropology students to improve their powers of observation through drawing (and vice-versa). In her paper, she explores the potential of ethnographic drawings during fieldwork, based on this teaching experiment and supported by a longstanding tradition in the history of anthropology. Kuschnir cites the potential for hand-sketching as a way of building rapport and humanizing the researcher in the eyes of participants as benefits of using sketchbooks and drawings in ethnography.

But beyond that instrumental dimension, Kuschnir demonstrates the heuristic capacity of drawings to express the point of view of the researcher and spur dialogue in a way that texts cannot, shedding light into two central dimensions of drawing: the inner/outer one and the researcher/participant one. The students' drawings selected from Kuschnir's course are vivid illustrations of this potential participatory dimension of drawings from an applied anthropology perspective.

Aina Azevedo and Manuel João Ramos reflect anthropologically on the drawing practice, based on discussions from a workshop dedicated to "ethnographic drawing" in the University of Aberdeen. The workshop brought together anthropologists and artists to share their experiences of drawing in their respective fields. Their collaboration generated new questions to consider, in line with recent research conducted by Tim Ingold (present in the workshop) who conceives of drawing as a "knowledge from the inside", meaning by that a two-way immersive and endless mental practice (from the outside world to the hand, through the brain, and back again). In Ingold's sense, drawing practice could be envisaged as a powerful performative and communicational thinking tool, allowing the researcher to complement writing, interact with informants in the field, and to collaboratively map, exchange, and exhibit what and how the observer "sees" in the eyes of the observed (Ingold 2013). Like Kuschnir, in the previous paper, Aina Azevedo and Manuel João Ramos argue that drawings in anthropological practice are "good to think" (Lévi-Strauss 1962) and they address the specificities of "low-tech" drawing in contrast with photography and film.

This issue includes also two photo-essays, resulting from a participatory approach to photography in two different research projects. In the first one, Joana Roque de Pinho addresses the concept of *change* in collaboration with 27 farmers living inside Cantanhez National Park in southern Guinea-Bissau. They participated as photographers (even if none of them had used a camera before) and co-researchers, using images and storytelling to explore the idea of change (*mudansa*) in the region. Although the research project was initially focused on climate change, Roque de Pinho decided to approach the issue indirectly to avoid having local farmers simply echo the environmentalist discourses that they thought outsiders wanted to hear. This shift in the research opened up the possibility of an expanded view on local narratives of change. In this photo-essay, Roque De Pinho emphasizes the strategies of representation of the participants, like staging the past, to give a broader view on the local perception of change in its social, economic, ecological and cultural complexity, beyond dominant environmentalist narrative. The second photo-essay is the result of a double collaboration. In the first collaboration, two anthropologists and a photographer/social scientist, Gilles Reckinger, Diana Reiners and Carole Reckinger, decided to start a project about migration and agriculture in Southern Italy.

They wanted to follow migrants' experience beyond Lampe-dusa, after they are brought to the mainland and start a new life. This collaboration interlinked with a second level of collaboration--the one they established with five citrus workers in Calabria who migrated to Europe from several different African countries. Showing their everyday life from their perspective, the Bitter Oranges project developed into an exhibition travelling through Europe and North America, with the aim to show the bitter relationship between the control of migration and precarious labor market.

This special issue runs the spectrum of participatory image-making practices from handmade to digital, from sketching by hand to filmmaking and photoblogging. Recently, Tim Ingold (2013: 123) has discussed Leroi-Gourhan's (1993: 255) proposition that the use of machines represents the loss of a part of humanity, as a sort of post-human mind which has lost the link with the fingers. "In short, the button-pushing finger that operates the automatic machine is part of a hand that, although still anatomically human, has lost something of its humanity."

As scholars who came of age with Haraway's cyborg anthropology, we point instead to the ways that humans continue to create things, communicate, and extend their reach with both embodied hands and their technological prostheses (Haraway 1991). We recall the Latin etymology of digital, (*digitus*, finger), considering that depending on the use we give to them, both digital and handmade methods can be a way to "think with fingers" (as Leroi-Gourhan would say), to craft new shared knowledge, for the still challenging task of understanding our humanity. While one might think that the differences in visual technologies are great, we observe many common threads in these visual sensibilities across media and platforms in the following dimensions:

First, visual materials in general, and drawings in particular, can help to "objectify" (in the sense of making visible) the subjectivities of the researcher, and thus open up new dialogues with research participants. When anthropologists make the means of image-making available to research participants, they not only gain a new entry point to the "emic perspective," they also transform knowledge production itself and make collaborative analysis possible.

Second, contemporary anthropologists are reckoning with the new visual/virtual ubiquity of images. In a world saturated with an overwhelming flow of "easy images" (both "real" and virtual), we must attend to the ways in which images support participants' and academics' expression of concerns and social problems. As Collins and Durrington (2014) point out in their work on "networked anthropology," we need a new kind of ethnographic reflexivity in an age when many of our research participants are already online, creatively repurposing our research in their own social media activities. Finally, our contributors highlight the power and ethics of images. We have all heard that "a picture is worth a thousand words" -- and yes, images are powerful in terms of narrative and as a descriptive device.

Handmade drawings are quite flexible in terms of its plasticity to incorporate research participants' insights. Digital technologies now facilitate the spread of images, photos, and video clips for both popular and scholarly audiences. But images can also be dangerous due to the power of perspective -- an image "taken" and a drawing "done" have in common the special capability of cropping the reality in a way that reflects a position (from the researcher) towards the reality being observed, a positionality which is most of the time intangible and offstage. By way of making a drawing and taking a photograph in the field, imagemakers not only try to *represent* what they think deserve to be observed and registered but they also show (expose) their inner (sometimes unconscious) feelings about it. In that sense images, especially when disseminated, can be extremely powerful, in what they reveal, denounce or criticize. The participatory approach to the production of images, as exemplified in the different contexts presented of this special issue, tends to give the researcher a deeper sense of context. By interacting with the participants in the process of visual data construction, the anthropologist may capture the multiple dimensions of images and better understand the ethical consequences of their exhibition and circulation.

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PARTICIPATORY ETHNOGRAPHIC FILMMAKING: TRANSCULTURAL COLLABORATION IN RESEARCH AND FILMMAKING

ABSTRACT

This paper introduces an approach of Participatory Ethnographic Filmmaking I developed by making films together with rural dwellers in Namibia, Botswana and Angola. Grounded in the field of ethnographic filmmaking, it aims at making anthropologically informed films together with groups of people with no previous filmmaking experience. Workshop participants shape the form and content of the film and contribute to its practical making. In this paper, I explain how such films can be made in a wide range of different settings. Participatory Ethnographic Filmmaking gives the participants the possibility to shape their own media image and generates new forms of collaborative knowledge.

KEYWORDS

Visual anthropology, ethnographic film, participatory filmmaking, collaborative filmmaking, collaborative research, audio-visual ethnography, collaborative knowledge

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INTRODUCTION

Participatory elements have become fashionable in film, research, and development projects around the world. Today, it has become almost impossible to implement any major project without including those who are believed to be most affected. The rationale behind this is to put research participants, who are often marginalised, in the position to influence the decisions affecting their lives. In anthropology, since the authority of representation has come under debate, collaboration with research subjects seems like an effective way for ethnographers to not only continue making films about the people they study, but to possibly make even better films. Participatory filmmaking has also become an important asset in diverse fields, such as development cooperation, town planning, youth work and to academic research. However, generally speaking, while positive effects of “participation” or “collaboration” are usually taken for granted, the practices, underlying intentions and methods, as well as the outcomes, often remain obscure. In this paper I discuss an approach of Participatory Ethnographic Filmmaking I developed through making films in collaboration with natural resource users in the Okavango River Basin of Namibia, Botswana and Angola. The filmmaking combines my anthropological perspective with multiple local perspectives in a collaborative process of knowledge production. I will first give an overview of the context in which the filmmaking approach was developed and then discuss three overlapping fields that contributed to its formation, namely anthropological filmmaking, indigenous media and participatory video (PV). This is followed by an account of the production of three films in Namibia, Botswana and Angola, roughly in its chronological order. The paper will close with an evaluation of the approach and its epistemological implications.

BACKGROUND

I started experimenting with participatory elements of filmmaking during the production of “Wiza Wetu - Our Forest” in 2007. Aimed at local audiences, the film promotes the sustainable use of forest resources in the Kavango Region of Northern Namibia (Pröpper & Gruber 2007). Following my visual anthropological background, my co-director Michael Pröpper and I produced the film largely within the conventions of observational filmmaking combined with some reenactments and interviews. We included two Namibian project assistants into the film team, as we believed their input would make the film more meaningful for local audiences. Moreover, we worked closely together with representatives of the intended audience during the entire production. Two years later, I implemented a film workshop together with my commissioner Ute Schmiedel, based on ideas and methods originating in participatory video (PV) (Braden 1998; Lunch & Lunch 2006). The workshop was organised as training for

South African and Namibian research assistants of an international research project. The participants conceived and shot the entirety of the resulting film, “Bridging the Gap”, which depicts their daily work for the project (Schmiedel et al. 2009). The combination of methods from ethnographic filmmaking and PV seemed like a worthwhile activity. Firstly, the resulting films were extremely popular amongst local audiences, as they were based on local language, imagery and narratives. Secondly, they reached broad audiences in the countries of production and elsewhere, constituting a form of cross-cultural mediation (Ginsburg 1995). Thirdly, they resonated with the demands of donors of international research and development projects to include “local stakeholders” into their projects.

I advanced this approach during my PhD within an international research project investigating resource management and climate change in Angola, Namibia and Botswana (Gruber 2015). Based on a transdisciplinary agenda, over 100 social and natural scientists worked together in “The Future Okavango” research project (TFO).¹ Developed as a means by which to investigate the complex and interconnected character of environmental problems, transdisciplinary research intends to transcend disciplinary boundaries and develop overarching methodologies and perspectives. By definition, transdisciplinary research is collaborative, implying not only the collaboration with other researchers but, even more importantly, external stakeholders (Wickson et al. 2006; Russell et al. 2008). Therefore, the principal aim of the films I made was to include local stakeholders into the research process by feeding their knowledge back to the project so their perspectives could be taken into consideration in further research. A secondary task was to raise awareness and communicate their concerns to wider audiences in the respective countries and beyond.

METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Three overlapping fields, ethnographic filmmaking, indigenous media and participatory video, served as my methodological foundation. In the following I will discuss those aspects most relevant for my own practice. Participant observation has been anthropology’s central method since Bronisław Malinowski’s forced stay on the Trobriand Islands during the First World War. The researcher takes part in the everyday lives of his or her “informants” – usually through extended periods of fieldwork and in-depth relationships. This concept of participation is also widely perceived as an important asset of observational ethnographic filmmaking, intended to represent the fieldwork experience (MacDougall 1995; Grimshaw 2001; Henley 2004). At the same time, the more active inclusion of research participants into the filmmaking process also has a long tradition in ethnographic film and one can certainly speak of such participation as a distinctive or even defining characteristic of the genre (Durington 2009: 197). Both no-

¹ For further information see: future-okavango.org
last viewed on 4.4.2016

tions of participation – the filmmaker’s participation in the lives of his or her research participants and the protagonists’ participation in the filmmaking – can be traced back through the history of anthropological filmmaking.

Robert J. Flaherty’s (1922) *Nanook of the North*, shot in 1920 and 1921 was based on “intense and long-term engagement with the people and the landscape in which they lived” that made his filmmaking “akin to ethnographic fieldwork” (Grimshaw 2001: 48). However, guided by the idea of expressing his admiration for the people living in this harsh environment, Flaherty was not interested in showing his protagonists’ realities as experienced in the early 1920s, but rather in portraying a romantic and idealized version of their lives before Western contact. The film thus contains a lot of staging and re-enacting, for example of “traditional” subsistence activities. While this approach was later criticised as a distortion of reality and as “salvage anthropology”, it required the active and creative involvement of its protagonists. Jay Ruby (2000: 88-91) cites extensive passages from Flaherty’s records in order to demonstrate how these re-enactments were conceived in cooperation with his protagonists, rather than simply being directed by him. The protagonists’ active participation is both a prerequisite and an outcome of conceiving and enacting these sequences.

Jean Rouch, French filmmaker and anthropologist, took Flaherty’s ideas further and included his protagonists in the process of filmmaking more substantially. Rouch did not believe in an objective scientific truth and neither in the film camera as a passive recording device. For him the presence of the camera created the situations he wanted to document as the cinematic truth – *cinéma vérité*. He adhered to a principle of *shared anthropology* that was based on a mutual exchange with his protagonists (Rouch 2003: 43ff; see also Henley 2009: 310ff). As part of this reciprocal relationship, Rouch regularly screened his rushes and rough cuts back to his protagonists in order to discuss the ethnographic content of the footage and the filming yet to come. Moreover, he also went back to the communities that had participated in the filmmaking in order to show them his finished films as a form of reciprocal exchange.

However, Jean Rouch proposed a more radical shift in the politics of representation through a

camera that can so totally pass into the hands of those, who until now, have always been in front of the lens. At that point, anthropologists will no longer control the monopoly on observation; their culture and they themselves will be observed and recorded. (Rouch 2003: 46).

Despite these futuristic visions and his ground-breaking reflexive approach, Jean Rouch always retained a high level of control over his filmmaking and never literally handed the camera over to his protagonists. He later reinforced this position

through his rejection of video technology, with its democratising effects, as expressed in an interview I conducted with him in 2001 (Gruber 2006).² However, I want to direct the attention to another central element of Rouch's work, which is particularly important for my own filmmaking, namely the interaction with his protagonists during the shooting, described by himself as follows:

the filmmaker stages this reality like a director, improvising his shots, his movements or his shooting time, a subjective choice whose only key is his personal inspiration. And, no doubt, a masterpiece is achieved when this inspiration of the observer is in unison with the collective inspiration of what he is observing... (Rouch 2003: 185).

Visual anthropologist Paul Henley highlights that "the presence of some element of risk and chance, to which the filmmaker would be required to improvise an inspired response" was a central element of Rouch's filming (Henley 2009: 255). These *inspired performances* (Henley 2009) were certainly most keen and innovative in Rouch's early *ethnofiction*³ filmmaking. During his anthropological fieldwork on labour migration in West Africa, Rouch found it "impossible to show the full range of the migrants' experience within the limitations of a conventional documentary" (Henley 2009: 73). He therefore asked his protagonists to improvise significant situations from their daily-lives, resulting in two feature-length films *Jaguar* (1967) (shot in 1954/1955) and *Moi, un Noir* (1959). Situated between fiction and documentary, these films combine a "laboriously researched and carefully analyzed ethnography" with a fictional framework (Stoller 1992: 143). Rouch produced his ethnofictions largely as documentaries, "without a script and with minimal direction, relying primarily on the protagonists to determine the way in which the action of the film would develop" (Henley 2009: 259; see also Sjöberg 2009: 236). After agreeing with the protagonists upon what would happen in a particular scene, Rouch shot it without direction or interruption. They normally filmed the sequences in the chronological order of the storyline, and tried to film only one take and angle per shot (Jørgensen 2007: 63). This documentary style of filming allowed the presence of intuition, play, chance, and risk which Rouch found so important.

The role of ethnofiction as a form of ethnographic enquiry is elaborated by Johannes Sjöberg (2008, 2009) on the basis of his own filmmaking. Sjöberg's point of departure is Peter Loizos' notion of *projective improvisation*, "the use of improvisation and fantasy as projective methods" (Loizos 1993: 46). This implies that ethnofiction films are based on the protagonists' lived experiences, projected through improvised acting. Johannes Sjöberg differentiates between the *descriptive* and *expressive* functions of acting (Sjöberg 2009: 6ff).

² Various scholars and filmmakers criticised Rouch's practices as paternalistic, apolitical, colonialist and even racist. For a comprehensive overview of the critique see Henley (Henley 2009: 330ff).

³ While Rouch himself called this approach "ciné-fiction" or "science fiction", it later became referred to as ethnofiction. The origin of the term is however unclear (Henley 2009: 74f see also 441).

Expressive improvisations refer to the possibility of revealing the protagonists' feelings, dreams and fantasies. The anonymity provided by their fictive characters allows the protagonists to disclose emotions, secrets or other intimate issues that may be difficult to express otherwise. *Descriptive* improvisations, on the other hand, serve to illustrate or demonstrate certain activities, which may be especially helpful if the subject is difficult to represent through other filmic approaches, for example, in the case of illegal or socially unacceptable activities. They are, however, not merely applied out of necessity, "because there is *no other way to tell it* ... [but because] ethnofiction could be *a better way to tell it* from an ethnographic point of view" (Sjöberg 2009: 8; emphasis in the original). The anthropological knowledge is generated by the process of filmmaking, much as in conventional ethnographic filmmaking:

Unlike modern drama-documentaries where most of the research is conducted before the shooting and developed into a script, the research in Rouch's ethnofiction continued during the shooting ... The projective improvisation thus stands at the very centre of the research process in ethnofiction since the protagonists are not merely re-enacting events, but actually expressing partly subconscious knowledge of ethnographic value through their improvisations. (Sjöberg 2009: 7).

Inspired by the work of Jean Rouch, I adopted re-enactments and improvised acting into my filmmaking. Based on their shared experiences, imaginations, dreams and fantasies, as well as local narratives and all sorts of models from the media, these were extremely popular amongst the protagonists and local audiences. I want to argue that the introduction of a fictional layer not only has an effect on the protagonists but also changes the relationship between protagonists and filmmakers: they become players of the same (Rouchian) game rather than being bound into the more rigid hierarchical relationship between observer and observed that is characteristic of more conventional documentary filmmaking.

Ideas of *handing over the camera* (Rouch 2003), *filmmakers putting themselves at the disposal of their subjects* (MacDougall 1995) and other forms of *collaborative filmmaking* (Elder 1995) were extremely popular in the field of ethnographic filmmaking from the early 1970s. Nevertheless, none of the anthropological filmmakers actually gave up authorship and yielded practical aspects of filmmaking to their protagonists.⁴ This discrepancy was counteracted a number of years later, in the late 1980s, when indigenous peoples around the world started to produce their own films, television programmes and other media forms – often supported by anthropologists. In the same period, the authority of anthropological representations, and especially of ethnographic film, was being questioned both within and outside the field (Clifford

⁴ A notable exception is the "Navajo Project" undertaken by Sol Worth and John Adair (1972), who trained their Navajo participants to make 16mm films. However, they took these films as data to be analysed in order to find out if there was a distinctive Navajo way of seeing the world as well as to draw more general conclusions about their perception and culture.

& Marcus 1986; Nichols 1991; Weinberger 1994). Discussions of *indigenous media* (Ginsburg 1991) and its relationship to ethnographic filmmaking became extremely prominent in anthropology. While some scholars presented indigenous media as inauthentic, and its introduction as potentially harmful to the respective communities (Weiner 1997), others argued that the appropriation of video technology by indigenous peoples was an important step in their struggle for self-determination, and opened up an important new area of research and activism (Michaels 1986; Ginsburg 1991; Turner 1991; Aufderheide 1995).

Anthropologist Faye Ginsburg defines indigenous media rather exclusively as the work of “original inhabitants of areas later colonized by settler states ... struggling to sustain their own identities and claims to culture and land, surviving as *internal colonies* within encompassing nation-states” such as can be found in Australia, the United States, New Zealand, Canada, and Latin America (Ginsburg et al. 2002: 25; emphasis added). Their efforts to appropriate video and television technology were “provoked” (to use her term) by several factors, such as these peoples’ growing desire to control the images made of them, the often unwelcome introduction of cable television, and the advent of relatively inexpensive video equipment (1995: 67). In the context of increasing cultural and political pressure on indigenous communities, Ginsburg perceives their activities in this field as a form of “cultural activism” – a conscious form of “self-determination, cultural maintenance, and the prevention of cultural disruption” (Ginsburg 1995: 70). While their work is frequently produced and consumed exclusively within the communities to which its makers belong, it may also be shaped by a more cosmopolitan context and aimed at a wider, and even international, audience.

Indigenous media work has shown itself to be a particularly robust form of contemporary cultural objectification. From small-scale video and local radio to archival websites to national television stations and feature films, indigenous media makers have found opportunities for cultural creativity of all sorts. (Ginsburg 2011: 238).

Faye Ginsburg suggests that ethnographic and indigenous media are complementary expressions of the wider project of “representing, mediating, and understanding culture” (Ginsburg 1995: 65). Inspired by Jean Rouch’s “regards comparés”, Ginsburg proposes contrasting the work produced in different genres in order to provide a wider more comprehensive view of cultural or social phenomena.⁵ Although the individual works may have originally been intended for other purposes, in advocating the juxtaposition of multiple contrasting genres, Ginsburg proposes an approach to ethnographic and indigenous media that allows the consideration of individual cases within a common analytical framework (1995: 70).

⁵ Events he organised in order to provide insights into a certain ethnic group or geographical area by presenting films made by anthropologists, filmmakers and artists, along with those made by members of the group under consideration. For an overview see the website of the “Comité du Film Ethnographique” (2016).

Anthropologist and activist Terence Turner, who was involved in introducing video technology amongst the Kayapó in the Brazilian Amazon area, was interested in the social, political and cultural impact of filmmaking on indigenous communities and their relationships with the dominant society.

Turner offers a detailed description of the social and political dynamics triggered by the medium's introduction into Kayapó society (Turner 1992, 1991). While, in Turner's accounts, access to the technology was mainly regulated through existing power structures, he describes how specific actors tried to improve their position through filmmaking: the people who worked as camerapersons or video editors combined a prestigious position within the community with the possibility of mediating with the outside world, and thereby accumulated symbolic capital and other resources necessary for political leadership (see also Flores 2009: 215f). Many Kayapo working with Turner were thus able to gain or reinforce their political power, while some politically ambitious young men took up filmmaking in order to enhance their careers (Turner 1992: 6f; see also MacDougall 1987: 56). The "monopolization of control" over video production counteracted Turner's efforts to provide equal access to the whole community and reinforced numerous social conflicts (Turner 1991: 73). At the same time, filmmaking became significant for the Kayapo's relationship with the dominant society. During their protest against the planned "Belo Monte" hydroelectric dam near Altamira on the Xingu River, Kayapo camera-operators became a preferred image of international journalists. In order to achieve a high-profile media presence, they began to intensify their filming activities during public events, not only to make documents of their struggle but also to make their struggle visible to the public (Turner 1992: 7). The work of Terence Turner suggests that filmmaking can become a tool of political struggle.

Indigenous media relates to my work in numerous ways. Firstly, Terence Turner reminds us of the potential for (internal) conflict when introducing the medium of film into a small meshed community. It is important to note that dispute over access to such projects are by no means restricted to indigenous or non-Western contexts, but are likely to occur in any kind of setting. Secondly, both Turner and Ginsburg emphasise the significance of film as a form of cultural and political activism, which can be mobilised for different purposes. Thirdly, Ginsburg's work suggests viewing the films I make together with other media products (for example ethnographic films) in order to understand certain cultural phenomena. This suggests that they can be seen as a form of anthropological enquiry. However, while indigenous media aims at giving the respective communities long-term independent access to video technology and thus provide them sustainably with a tool of self-expression, my own projects were extremely short-term and took place under my constant guidance. This

mode of production situates them in the field of applied visual anthropology (Pink 2009).⁶

I incorporated an applied visual methodology into my filmmaking that until now has received little attention in anthropology. *Participatory Video* (PV) is an approach intended to enable representatives of marginalised groups to discuss and communicate their concerns by means of video – initially within their own peer group, and subsequently to outside audiences. The participants of PV workshops receive some basic training in operating a video camera (and sometimes editing), and are encouraged to make films about a subject that is agreed upon within the workshop (Braden 1998). The process of filmmaking is the central aspect of PV, viewed as a “tool to facilitate interaction and enable self-expression” (White 2003a: 65), while the resulting films are often perceived as less important.

They typically consist of interviews or activities filmed in a straightforward documentary style, but may also incorporate dance, drama, songs and poems (Braden 1998: 92). While PV is mostly employed within development projects, it may also be applied in a range of other contexts, such as academic research (Kindon 2003; Mistry & Berardi 2011), capacity development (Menter et al. 2006), and youth work (Wang et al. 2012). PV projects, by their very nature, are not supposed to follow a given template, but rather are meant to be carefully adapted to the given situation.

The foundations of PV lie in the 1960s, when scientists and policy makers started discussing the involvement of individuals in political processes under the notion of *citizen participation* (Verba & Nie 1972). The exclusion of marginalised groups from decision-making processes, and the question of how they could be included, played an important role in these discussions (Arnstein 2007). These developments must be seen in the context of the broader social and political developments of the time, such as the struggle for racial and gender equality. Community media projects that saw film as a possible tool of participation and social change emerged in different places in Europe and North America (Nigg & Wade 1980).⁷ Such concerns were paralleled by demands to liberate marginalised people in the so-called Third World. One work, often referred to as pioneering, is Brazilian Paulo Freire’s, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, in which he argues that the development of a critical consciousness “empowers” the poor to understand their situation and to take measures against poverty and oppression (Freire 1977). “Empowerment” was seen as a form of radical societal transformation through individual and class action, resulting in changes in law, property rights and other aspects of society (Cleaver 1999: 599). From the late 1970s, these ideas gained increasing acceptance amongst development scholars and practitioners: the rural poor who were usually the “beneficiaries” of development projects should be able to influence “the forces which control their livelihoods”

⁶ Applied visual anthropology encompasses a great variety of activities united to the extent that they are “using visual anthropological theory, methodology and practice to achieve applied non-academic ends” (Pink 2006: 87). At the same time these projects have the potential to feed back into academia, contributing to theory building and methodological innovation (Pink 2009: 25)

⁷ One such project that is usually represented as having contributed to the development of PV is the Fogo Process, which was part of the National Film Board of Canada’s (NFB) Challenge for Change programme (see for example Lunch & Lunch 2006; White 2003b; Frantz 2007).

(Oakley 1991). Due to the perceived shortcomings of the top-down approaches of donor-driven and outsider-led development, development workers and donors increasingly began to adopt participatory methods based on the inclusion of local perspectives, priorities, knowledge and skills in the planning and execution of their programmes (Cooke & Kothari 2004). Since the 1980s, participation has dominated the development discourse and practice to the extent that it has become its “new orthodoxy” (Henkel & Stirrat 2004).

Today it is, politically speaking, almost impossible to implement any substantial project in research, development or planning that does not incorporate elements addressing the issue of “stakeholder inclusion”. At the same time, participatory approaches have been placed under increasing critique since the 1990s. A basic argument is that local knowledge is not a commodity, readily available to local people, as it is often represented as being in participatory discourse, but is rather “culturally, socially and politically produced and ... continuously reformulated as a powerful normative construct” (Kothari 2004: 141).

Geographer Uma Kothari (2004: 144f) emphasises the difficulty of unveiling the underlying power relations, as these are accepted as given and reproduced through processes of self-surveillance and *normalization* (Foucault 1995).

David Mosse (2004) points out that participatory processes are themselves characterised by control and dominance: “project staff ‘own’ the research tools, choose the topics, record the information, and abstract and summarize according to project criteria of relevance” (19). He further argues that participants’ priorities and needs are usually shaped by their perception of what the project with which they are involved is able to deliver (23f). Participatory processes may therefore legitimise and implement decisions already made by development agencies or donors. This argument is supported by Uma Kothari (2004: 148f). Drawing on Erving Goffman (2010), she interprets participatory processes as performances:

The development practitioner ... is asking participants to adopt and play a role using certain techniques and tools, thus shaping and, in some instances, confining the way in which performers may have chosen to represent themselves. The stage and the props for the performance may be alien to the performer. The tools provided can limit the performance so that the performers are unable to convey what they want to; the stage has been set by others and the form of the performance similarly guided by them. (Kothari 2004: 149).

Kothari claims that the participants need to be “good actors” and that those people who either do not possess the required skills or do not wish to perform within these predetermined frameworks will be misrepresented, or even not represented at all. At the same time, drawing on Michel Foucault’s (2010)

and Anthony Giddens' (1984) work on structure and agency, Kothari acknowledges that the participants "can have enough power to carve out spaces of control" in these performances (2004: 150) and that individuals have capacity "to fashion their own existence" as active agents more generally (2004: 151). These ideas are elaborated by geographer, Mike Kesby (2005), who contends that agency, self-reflexivity and "empowerment" are not attributes of individuals, but have to be maintained through discursive and practical means. He argues that participatory workshops may constitute temporary social arenas in which it is possible to practice and perform discourses and activities leading to what he calls "empowered agency":

Within them, normal frameworks of privilege are circumvented by the discourses and practices of equity, free speech and collaboration. Participants ... can ... construct themselves as reflexive agents and constitute/represent their opinions and experiences to themselves, one another, and facilitators. Within this field, opportunities open up for people, first, to disentangle the complex web of everyday life ... second, to deconstruct norms and conventions; third, to reflect on the performativity of everyday life; and finally, to rehearse performances for alternative realities. (Kesby 2005: 2055).

In summary, assumptions of a direct causal connection between participation, "empowerment", and sustainable development seem out-dated in the light of the critique of the underlying concepts of participation and development (see Ferguson 2007). Nevertheless, the above discussion suggests that activities performed and discourses engaged with in participatory film workshops can be both meaningful and beneficial for the participants in various (albeit limited) ways. If undertaken critically and with a carefully defined focus, PV offers an interesting avenue of investigation for both academic and applied research. I thus borrowed from PV and incorporated some of its methods into my participatory filmmaking.

PARTICIPATORY ETHNOGRAPHIC FILMMAKING: CONTEXT

Between 2011 and 2013, I made three films for "The Future Okavango" (TFO) research project in villages situated in the Okavango Basin. They were conceived and shot by villagers during film workshops I organized together with local project members. The films are 32 to 39 minutes long and consist of observational footage, re-enactments and interviews. All three films deal with different aspects of natural resource use. The first film, "Liparu Lyetu – Our Life" (Gruber et al. 2011), was made in Mashare, Northern Namibia in 2011. It introduces techniques and problems related to farming, fishing and gathering wild fruits. The second film, "The Secret of

our Environment” (Gruber et al. 2013), was made in Seronga, North-West Botswana in 2013 and deals with different aspects of resource use but has an emphasis on the relationship between wildlife and tourism. The third film “Honey” (Antónia et al. 2013) was made in the Cusseque area in Central Angola in 2014 and depicts local beekeeping practices and the use of honey.

Following my project proposal, it was my task to make films together with “local stakeholders”. While the TFO project worked with an inclusive “stakeholder” notion encompassing local decision makers, NGOs, governmental institutions and so forth, I imagined that local villagers would be most directly affected by the project with the least say. I therefore decided to make my films with villagers exclusively. From my previous experience, I expected that the decision-making-process necessary to make a single film together with a group of people would be fruitful and result in a product with a high degree of audience-identification. I thus decided to make one film in each country with a group of residents of the respective research site. As with most of my previous films, I took the communities in which the films would be produced as my primary intended audience. These choices formed the framework of my filming – all the rest would be decided with my local co-workers and the participants of film production workshops I would recruit in each country. In the following, I will focus on different steps of Participatory Ethnographic Filmmaking along certain themes, which seem most significant to me.

LOCAL CO-WORKERS

In each of the three countries, I worked together closely with local project members who had been employed and trained to work as translators and research assistants. I needed those co-workers for translations and for their cultural expertise but made a central element of my work out of this necessity. I shifted as much control as possible to my collaborators: we conceived, organised and moderated each of the workshops together and I tried to step back and let them do the moderation independently at times. However, his position within the respective community and the different ways in which each collaborator interpreted his role changed the workshop dynamics and outcomes considerably. During the first workshop in Namibia, my two collaborators Raphael Sinkumba and Robert Mukuya came from the provincial capital Rundu, about 40 km away from the actual research site. They had worked with me on previous films and acquired a lot of expertise in filmmaking. In a way, they were outsiders too, and personally much closer to me than to the workshop participants. Their position was in between me and the villagers with whom they shared their language and ethnic background. During the production, we moderated the process mutually and tried to influence the group’s decisions as little as possible.



CO-MODERATOR RAPHAEL
SINKUMBA IN MASHARE,
NAMIBIA

In Botswana the situation was different. I had never met my co-worker Meshack Kwamovo before. He was native to the town of Seronga, where the workshop took place, and had close personal and kinship ties with the participants. With no previous film experience, he utterly wanted to learn how to make films, which he perceived as a professional qualification that might be beneficial for his future career. Meshack thus took part in the entire filming behind and in front of the camera and became a driving element in the process. His position was that of a moderator and participant at the same time, which, I believe, made the resulting film more engaged and messy. During the third film, I found myself in yet another situation. My co-moderator Miguel Hilarrio was neither from the villages in which we worked, nor did he speak the local language *Chokwe*. We had to communicate with the workshop participants, who perceived Miguel as an outsider, through the *linguae francae* Portuguese and *Umbundu*. In-depth discussions, which had formed the core of the two previous film productions, were impossible. In order to deal with this situation, we adopted the classical role of anthropologists, trying to understand what was going on around us by watching and taking part in activities. The resulting film is more exploratory than the others and probably the most visual. These examples show how collaboration with local co-workers was an essential aspect of my approach. Their impact on the dynamics within the group and the outcome of the entire project changed considerably depending on their personality and their position in relation to the work-shop participants.

FILMMAKING AS A RESOURCE

Together with my co-workers, I recruited between four and seven workshop participants for each film. Our aim was to organise a democratic selection process leading to a balanced team with participants of different gender, age, social background and with representatives from different locations within each research site (which often consisted of several villages). However, certainly reinforced by our decision to compensate workshop participants financially, the recruitment turned out to be extremely tricky – especially in rural Namibia and Angola where so-called “traditional leaders” play an important role in the social and political life. In Namibia, the participants were selected through consensual decisions during village meetings. These were however dominated by the respective head(wo)man – powerful political leaders introduced by the South African administration (d’Engelbronner-Kolff 2001).

In Angola, the Sobas appointed the workshop participants more or less directly. Our idea of recruiting workshop participants through a democratic process during village meetings only succeeded in Botswana, where comparable kinds of selection processes were common practice, for example in the case of casual labour offered by the government or NGOs, and where political processes seemed to be more transparent. While local decision-makers tried to manoeuvre family members and friends into our workshop in both Namibia and Angola, we experienced some resentments and rumours in Mashare, Namibia. This culminated when one person who apparently felt excluded, secretly told people not to attend our final village screening and personally discredited one of our participants. Filmmaking definitely was the contested resource with potential for conflict, anticipated by Terence Turner in the context of indigenous media (Turner 1992, 1991). Material aspects such as the catering we provided during the workshop and the financial compensation we paid the participants after the completion of the films thereby certainly played a role. However, unlike anthropologist Peter Anton Zoetl, who believes that the participants of research and development projects “rarely see any direct benefit (for themselves) in the doing of anthropologists and social activists” and mostly participate in order to “benefit from the monetary by-products of scientific research or humanitarian action” (Zoetl 2012: 5), my experience suggests a much broader notion of filmmaking as a form of social, cultural and political capital. While the participants themselves portrayed their engagement as an interesting personal experience and an important vocational training, I believe that participation in our project was also deployed to enhance an individual’s position in his or her community (see Turner 1992).

I assume that some of the various stakeholders of any participatory film project will try to influence the selection process according to their purposes, irrespective of the geographical or cultural setting. As long as filmmaking offers benefits to pos-

sible participants – financial, political, personal or otherwise – it has the potential to raise or reinforce conflicts. In order to minimise this unwelcome side-effect, more public and more transparent procedures should be applied. This would make powerful actors – including the researchers – more accountable. A more diverse mixture of participants within the production team could be achieved by implementing the recruitment according to a stricter matrix of selection criteria such as age, gender and social status, amongst others.

FILM TRAINING AND THE WORKSHOP SPACE

We started each workshop with an introduction to camera and sound recording as well as different camera exercises. I taught within the conventions of observational filmmaking and made use of peer-to-peer training and other methods I used for teaching ethnographic filmmaking to university students in Germany. At the same time my co-workers and I moderated the process of conceiving the film. We began very broadly by asking the workshop participants what they would like to make a film about within the broader topic of the natural environment.⁸ As most villagers depended heavily on natural resources for their livelihoods, they unanimously decided to make these the focus of their films. The workshop participants then chose different activities to be depicted in the films, they acquired protagonists and interviewees, devised questionnaires and developed production schedules. These parallel processes took place within two to three weeks before the actual shooting.

Learning how to operate the camera and how to film was generally seen as the most important aspect of the training. However, the participants developed diverse interests and acquired different skills such as acting, interviewing or composing and singing a song. While some of the groups found it

CAMERA TRAINING
IN CUSSEQUE, ANGOLA

⁸ In Angola, I decided to take a different approach, as I found it cinematically interesting to make a more focussed film. A TFO colleague conducting anthropological research in the area had told me that bees were an important means of subsistence and cash income. I therefore asked the participants if they would like to make a film honey. The participants confirmed its significance and decided to make a film about different aspects of beekeeping.



important that the different tasks of filmmaking were distributed equally, other groups were less rigid about this issue and each participant took over his or her preferred part. While we made use of roughly the same approach in each country, the outcomes are strikingly different, depending on the workshop participants' and my co-workers' differing intentions and the way we all negotiated the process differently during each workshop. One important factor was my increasing capability to "let go" and experiment in a playful manner.

It was our aim to moderate the process of filmmaking in a way that each participant found meaningful and felt adequately represented. The participants highlighted the intense discussions and negotiations across gaps of age, gender, as well as social and cultural background, as an extraordinary experience, supporting Kesby's notion of participatory workshops as "empowering performances" (2005). However, while Kesby believes that in order to render their effects sustainable, the associated discourses and practices have to be established in everyday space, for example through establishing long-term and self-sustaining social groups. I want to argue that even a temporally limited engagement has a positive impact on the participants' situation and their personal development. In the following paragraph, I want to discuss the act of shooting as a central element of participatory filmmaking.

COLLABORATIVE SHOOTING

As I outlined above, the workshop participants perceived filming as the most important activity and rapidly appropriated the technology. Consequently the films discussed here were shot almost entirely by villagers with no previous filming experience. The filmic approach varied considerably within each film and across the different films. On the one hand, each participant used the camera differently and developed a different style of shooting. More importantly, the workshop participants, my local co-workers and I interpreted and negotiated our roles differently in each film. In order to give an idea of the different forms of collaboration I will briefly describe each film.

The first film, "Wiza Wetu – Our Life" produced in Namibia, takes a somewhat romantic view on resource related activities perceived as "traditional" and "local" – such as traditional fishing, millet farming and the collection of wild fruits. The workshop participants had asked neighbours and friends to demonstrate their activities, while they operated the camera and directed the film. Except for an introductory scene, the filmmakers remain invisible behind the camera. The participants thus adopted the role of researchers and documentarians, while my local co-workers and I followed and supervised their work with as little interference as possible. This shift in roles was maybe most evident when the filmmakers interviewed local politicians and bureaucrats who were extremely irritated to be interviewed and filmed by local villagers instead of the outside expert.

SHOOTING IN SERONGA,
BOTSWANA



In the resulting film, farmers are portrayed as proud and knowledgeable experts of their environment, while the local elites seem more than disconnected and misplaced. While the participants included the interviews to valorise their film, their juxtaposition can be read as critique of the existing power relations.

“The Secret of Our Environment” produced in Botswana in 2012, is much more overtly political. While the film first introduces “traditional” resource use, such as fishing and gathering wild fruits, the film’s main focus are the conflicts in a social arena dominated by wildlife, tourism and farming. Wildlife and the natural environment are communal resources in Botswana, but international players of the tourist industry make the biggest share of the income through tourism in Seronga. A number of villagers earn small wages as tour-guides or service staff in one of the surrounding lodges, but most locals work as subsistence farmers and face problems as elephants and other game regularly destroy their fields. Significantly, the workshop participants decided not to film the “real” actors involved in the business, such as lodge owners or tour operators, but to re-enact significant situations and discussions through improvised acting. Most of the film shows the workshop participants following their regular jobs as farmers, fishermen and tour guides – however in self-ironic and somewhat theatrical performances facilitated by the introduction of a fictional layer, much as in ethnofictional filmmaking. At other times, these idealized self-representations slip into a more serious tone. In one particular sequence, the participants asked me (acting as a tourist), to raise the question of income disparities. The question was then elaborated through an improvised discussion of four Botswanan workshop participants. These re-enacted sequences are juxtaposed with a number of interviews with politicians and officeholders, on the same issue of uneven distribution of income through natural resources. The same subject matter was thus discussed in two different modes – fictional and realist. At first, I was surprised that the partici-

pants were so overtly critical towards their political representatives while they preferred to discuss other aspects of this issue through a fictional framework. Later, I realised that the participants discussed the issue with outsiders such as politicians and bureaucrats on realist terms, while they preferred the fictional framework to negotiate the situation within the village.

During this film, the roles and hierarchies within the workshop were more fluid than in the other two films. Firstly, my local co-moderator was simultaneously an active member of the production team. Secondly, the workshop participants decided to re-enact the activities to be filmed themselves. Their constant shifting from behind to the front of the camera blurred the boundaries between observers and observed. Thirdly, as mentioned above, the participants asked me to act for them in one of their plays, challenging the conventional hierarchy between workshop facilitator and participants more thoroughly. This had important consequences for the workshop dynamics and the way the participants related to the product. The significance of changing roles and the researchers' acting in front of the camera has been discussed by geographer Sara Kindon in the context of a PV workshop she organised during her research:

Such movements of our bodies behind and in front of the camera ... symbolize a degree of destabilization of conventional power relations in the research relationship and of particular claims to the unquestioned transparency of the image. As a result, these movements have facilitated a more explicit recognition of the agency and situatedness of all participants in the politics of knowledge production associated with the project's focus, and have contributed to a deeper level of trust and understanding within the research partnership itself. (Kindon 2003: 146f).

"Honey", produced in Angola in 2013, was yet a different experience, mostly because my co-worker Miguel Hilario and I were struggling to communicate verbally with the participants of our workshop. Miguel originated from a region a few hundred kilometres away and had only recently moved to a town near the research site. He spoke *Nganguela*, *Umbundu* and Portuguese, but not the local language *Chokwe*. While we managed to communicate some practical issues with the workshop participants, elaborate discussions on the form and content of the film, which had been a central element of the previous workshops, were impossible. When I realised this problem we used images as an additional means of exchange. For example, the participants made quite elaborate drawings of activities they wanted to film. However, while the participants of the previous workshops had perceived the extended discussions and negotiations as a new and enriching experience, it was rather frustrating for all parties in Chitembo.

I therefore asked the participants to show us what they wanted to make the film about. We took a long walk through the forest and the participants showed Miguel and me their beehives and demonstrated to us how they work. It was decided that Quintas, one of the workshop participants who was an experienced beekeeper, should demonstrate the making of a traditional beehive and the harvesting of honey for the film. Bino, a second participant who also had a lot of beekeeping experience and therefore knew all the different steps, proved to be an extremely talented camera-operator. During the filming the two men connected perfectly, resulting in some ethnographically dense observational material. The respective sequence first shows the beekeeper moving easily through the forest, serving himself of all the different materials needed for constructing a hive. Its production is then displayed in great detail: skilled hands and simple tools constructing a sophisticated piece of craft. The film represents this embodied knowledge perfectly and is a fine example of audio-visual ethnography.

Remarkably, the Angolan participants also negotiated their relationship with the researchers not verbally but by improvisation and play. When shooting a scene demonstrating the use of honey for cooking, the two women performing the activity, told Miguel and me during the shooting that they wanted to film us tasting the dish they just had prepared. While the participants of the Botswanan film discussed their decision to include me as an actor prior to the shooting, the Angolan participants improvised us into the story during the shooting itself. To our surprise, we found out only during the editing (with a translator) that Adelina and Fátima were already talking about us long before they told us to become a part of the film. By talking (rather patronizingly) about us (and not with us) they were forcefully positioning us as Others.

The three films described here exemplify different ways in which participatory filming can extend and enhance the performative space constituted by participatory workshops (Kothari 2004; Kesby 2005). While the medium of film has been portrayed as inappropriate or limiting for non-Westerners (Faris 1992; Weiner 1997), other scholars have pointed out how people from all over the world successfully appropriated the medium for their own purposes (Turner 1995, 1992; Ginsburg 1995, 1991; Flores 2009). My own experience suggests that the entire process of filmmaking with its inherent elements of joint decision-making, improvising and acting, constitutes a unique space to negotiate and construct meaning in collaboration between researchers, workshop participants and outside actors. The act of shooting is a central element, promoting improvisation, play, risk and chance – aspects that Jean Rouch found so important for calling forth an “inspired performance”. The introduction of a fictional framework creates an ambiguity between fiction and reality that facilitates the acting and flattens the hierarchies within the research and filming arena.

COLLABORATIVE EDITING

The basic idea of these films was to show aspects of resource use and talk to people that the workshop participants found interesting. Our filming was inspired by ethnographic filmmaking, combining observation and fictionalisation with informal conversations and interviews. As the limited time-frame made it impossible to teach the participants the editing software, I did the editing together with my respective co-worker(s) and under continuous feedback by the group.⁹ My editing was based on the conventions of continuity editing and self-contained sequences. The local co-workers and I usually made a pre-selection of material from the entire footage and presented it to the group. In the case of observational footage and re-enactments we made rough cuts to give an idea of how a certain activity would look like; in the case of dialogues and interviews we excluded the redundant or incomprehensible material. We would then meet with the group, view the material and discuss with the participants which activities, dialogues and interview extracts should be edited into the film and which could be left out. Usually these choices were based on consensual decisions, in some cases we organised a vote. We would then implement the participants' editorial decisions in the further editing and meet a few days later to continue this process of selection and montage. The overall narrative was agreed upon later during the editing process and we usually had to film some additional material to fill gaps, such as introductions or a song for the film's ending. The editing was framed by the conventions of documentary realism and ethnographic film as well as my personal preferences. At the same time, the workshop participants made important editorial choices. I want to argue that the way we implemented the editing constituted a collaborative process of meaning making.

PARTICIPATORY RECEPTION

Each film workshop ended with several screenings the participants organised in their respective villages. The feedback of community members was generally positive and initiated numerous discussions. At the end of the project, when all films were complete, we organized village screenings of all three films in several locations of the research sites in Angola, Namibia and Botswana. The audience reactions during these screenings strongly suggest that the viewers were able to relate their own situation to the ones represented in the films from the neighbouring countries. Apparently the images were able to convey a sense of common identity across gaps of nationality, language and ethnic background. The film screenings in the presence of the filmmakers and protagonists offered the opportunity for discussion (Stadler 2003; Englehardt 2003). I would like to argue that the powerful performances represented in these films are extended to the audience during their reception.

⁹ In Angola we hired a young man fluent in Chokwe and Portuguese to translate and give his cultural expertise during the editing.



COLLABORATIVE EDITING IN
SERONGA, BOTSWANA

OUTLOOK

One might perceive this kind of filmmaking as a form of “pseudo participation” – as the impact on the overall research and the people’s living conditions was clearly limited. However, I want to take a positive outlook. First and foremost, the workshop participants perceived the filmmaking as an important and worthwhile experience and local communities saw the films as one of the more important outputs of the project. On a broader level, the films visualise rural dwellers, which might otherwise stay invisible - within the research project and the broader public. The films portray them as experts of their environment and as active and multifaceted personalities. More importantly, representatives of marginalised communities largely decided the form and content of these films and had leading roles in their practical production. Finally, I understand these films as a form of anthropological enquiry.

Despite the numerous overlaps, there are a number of methodological and epistemological differences between ethnographic film and media made by non-anthropological filmmakers. Explorative in nature, ethnographic films “seek to interpret one society for another” (MacDougall 1992:96).



Informed by anthropological theory and based on ethnographic fieldwork, the genre usually (but not exclusively) represents an outsider's view of the culture or group under consideration (see for example MacDougall 1995; Ruby 2000). Indigenous film and other "subject-generated media" (Ruby 2000) are self-representations primarily aimed at members of the same society or culture (see Crawford 1995; Ginsburg 1995). These films are usually predicative and codifying rather than exploratory, often contributing to the negotiation of cultural identity (Ruby 2000:196). Participatory Ethnographic Film-making is not aimed at enabling individuals or groups to make their own films, such as indigenous media or the recent work of David MacDougal (MacDougall et al. 2013). The films I described here combine anthropological and local perspectives in a process of transcultural collaboration interesting and meaningful for local, broad and anthropological audiences alike. Participatory Ethnographic Filmmaking may be applied in a whole range of contexts. Literally handing the camera over to research participants is one of its principles utterly changing the process of filmmaking and consequently its outcome.

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THE ANTHROPOLOGIST AS CURATOR: INTRODUCING A DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION AS A COLLABORATIVE AND PARTICIPATORY FIELDWORK METHOD

ABSTRACT

Collaborative and participatory ethnographic methods present the possibility of an intriguing contemporary shift; from the anthropologist's role as author to one of curator in/of the digital landscape. Photographs, blogs, and digital exhibitions can all be incorporated into the methodology and storytelling of Internet-related ethnographic research. In this article, I reflect upon the rationale of curating a digital photography exhibition as a fieldwork method during my research with Iranian photobloggers. I discuss how the digital exhibition offered me unique way of collaborating – remotely and online – with my interlocutors and other participants physically based in different countries. I conclude by evaluating the digital exhibition's broader methodological and epistemological implications for digital/visual anthropology.

KEYWORDS

Digital photography, digital exhibitions, collaborative visual methods, digital curation, remote ethnography

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INTRODUCTION: COLLABORATIVE DIGITAL-VISUAL MEDIA ANTHROPOLOGY

Digital and visual methodologies in the Internet era open up avenues for conducting ethnographic research *with* (and not just *about*) participants (Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce and Taylor 2012; Horst and Miller 2012; Gubrium and Harper 2013; Underberg and Zorn 2013; Heidbrink and Statz 2014; Pink, Horst, Postill, Hjorth, Lewis et al. 2015). This emerging body of scholarship builds on a host of earlier engagements with websites and hypermedia in anthropological research (Biella 1994; Miller 2001; Forte 2003; Biella 2008), as well as visual anthropology's existing engagement with participatory media practices (Ginsburg 1991; Turner 1991; Ginsburg 1994). Today, research on and with the Internet presents a fertile ground for current and future digital-visual ethnographers. Those who utilise digital methods often do so with the groups of people with whom they conduct research, creating reflexive partnerships that develop and transform the research process itself. This process facilitates what Horst (2016: 7) describes as a 'knowing beyond the self'; shifting the subjective I of the solo researcher towards a collective epistemological framework that is socialised and developed through the research process. This particular emphasis on collaboration and participation in digital-visual ethnographic research presents the possibility of an intriguing contemporary shift from the anthropologist's traditional role as *author* to one of *curator* of/in the digital landscape.

It is from this theoretical and ontological stance – which takes websites, blogs and visual hypermedia seriously as sites and methods of anthropological knowledge production and curation – that I begin the following discussion. I hereby introduce a digital research exhibition (www.photoblogsiran.com), which I developed with some of the principal research participants involved in my PhD project studying photoblogging in Iran. I examine how the exhibition served as a tool for exploring my particular social research topic – popular online Iranian digital photography and the online creation of contemporary visualities of 'Iranianness' – with members of the specific community of media practitioners that I was studying: Iranian photobloggers.

As I will discuss throughout this article, issues of representation and identity politics were at the core of my research questions, since many Iranian photobloggers themselves seek to negotiate the historically and politically layered image of Iran and perceptions of 'Iranianness' through their photography. This field-specific factor, coupled with the fact that questions of identity and representation generally often characterise much of the political and cultural work that exhibitions perform (Karp 1991) explains something of the relevance of curating a digital exhibition as a fieldwork method; a notion that I will expand upon in this discussion. At the same time, digital exhibitions are not uniform, nor do they necessarily share any common intention or outcome. They vary according to the research rubric, researcher, participants and the social,

cultural and aesthetic frameworks from which the material is drawn (and feeds back into).

A useful starting point can be taken from Gubrium and Harper (2013: 173), who describe the digital exhibition as a *process*, whereby ‘a group of participants work together to create a web-based interface where users may access a multimedia collection of visual, audio and text files’. Notions of the interactive/‘participatory’ (Huvila 2008), and ‘operational archive’ (McQuire 2013) are all relevant components of the digital exhibition’s overall conceptual and ethical design, based primarily on a shared ethos of collaboration. For Huvila (Ibid), the participatory archive is contingent on a process of ‘decentralised curation’ and ‘radical user orientation’, involving placing the subject on an equal footing with the researcher as co-curators. McQuire’s concept similarly describes an active (and not passive) digital environment, wherein participants (indigenous Australians in his study) realise an active sense of cultural self-determination and reflexivity by coming into close contact with digital images pertaining to aspects of their socio-cultural heritage, such as those of their ancestors. In my research in/on Iran, as I will detail, both the rationale and its specific *digital* form emerged from, helped me navigate, and in turn represent my multi-sited ethnographic field site - comprised of physical, digital and social ‘spaces’ that were variously linked to notions of Iranian identity. I conclude by suggesting how the exhibition, in contributing to a nascent contemporary visuality of ‘Iranianness’, bears broader relevance for contemporary visual ethnographic research, particularly concerning groups of people wherein identity-based activism and issues of representation/self-representation are particularly prevalent.

But first, I will contextualise the broader significance of the digital exhibition within the specific epistemological, ontological and methodological framework of my research. I begin by giving an overview of my research topic and questions, before proceeding to discuss how I developed my methodological toolkit for studying photobloggers in Iran, the UK and online, which involved developing the digital exhibition as a fieldwork method. I conclude by assessing the broader relevance of this method – including the wider theoretical/methodological proposition of *anthropologist as curator* – for digital-visual ethnographic research.

PHOTOBLOGGING IN/OF IRAN

To begin my discussion, I will first outline the topic and central questions of my research in order to contextualise the broader intellectual rationale for developing the digital exhibition as a fieldwork method.

My research investigated the on and offline practices of Iranian popular photographers, with a special look at photobloggers (individuals/groups who blog predominantly with photographs rather than text). Photoblogging is a popular hobby the world over (Cohen 2005). However, like social me-

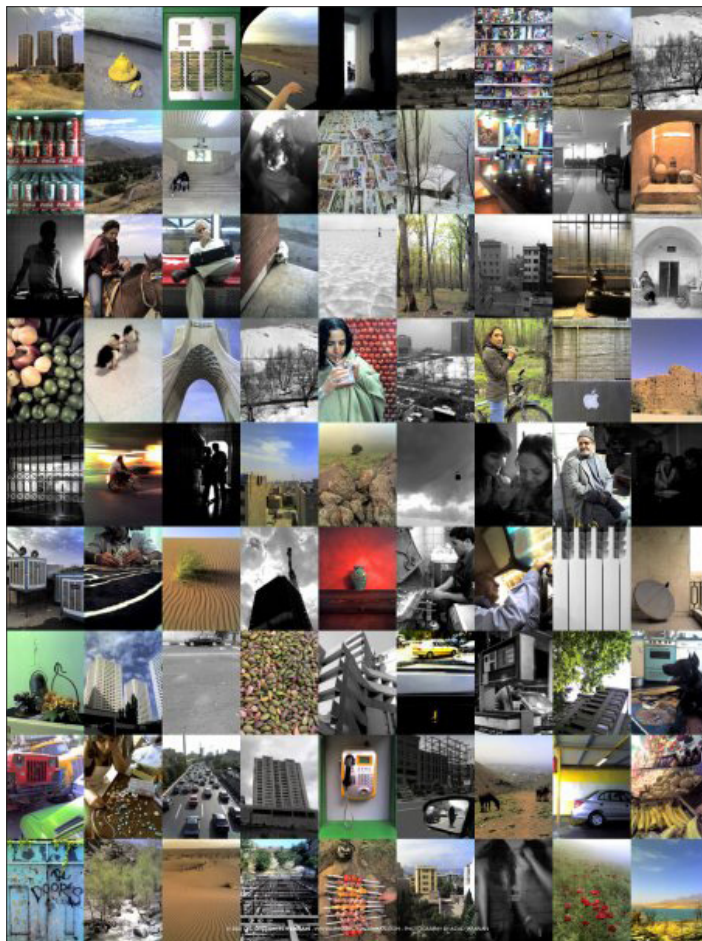


FIGURE 1 - A FACEBOOK PROFILE IMAGE CREATED BY THE PHOTOBLOGGER FROM THE LIFE GOES ON IN TEHRAN PHOTOBLOG. USED WITH PERMISSION

dia, it also has its local peculiarities. My research found, for instance, how many Iranian photobloggers, inside and outside of the country highlight Iran itself as the chief subject of their photography and visual storytelling practices. Photographs are taken in and across Iran on digital cameras and camera phones in order to be shared across the globe via the Internet, in many cases to perform a specific kind of cultural work; namely, to 'show Iran as it really is'. Viewers are thereby encouraged to reconsider their received assumptions about the country and its variety of peoples.

As I have also discussed elsewhere (Walton 2015), much of this showing reflects a 'soft political' intervention, whereby many Iranian photobloggers since the early 2000s, have been seeking to alter perceptions of Iran and Iranians as the 'enemy other' of the West and vice versa, propagated in official and mainstream visual/media narratives of the country in Iran and in 'the West'. This cultural polarisation became particularly exacerbated under the Ahmadinejad administration (2005-2013); a period of social and political conservatism, which re-enforced barriers to the West, and simultaneously, saw a significant amount of economic hardship brought about by

sanctions imposed on the country by western powers. Summing up how many photobloggers have viewed their practice as one of ‘humanizing’ Iran and Iranians in light of this fraught political climate, the anonymous photographer behind one of the most popular photoblogs, ‘Life Goes on in Tehran’ (LGOIT)¹, and one of my main research participants puts it as follows: ‘I knew early on that the most effective approach to humanizing Iranians was to show the daily life in my immediate surrounding...photoblogging is my medium of choice if for no other reason than the fact that it involves a camera and the Internet. Even a tiny barely functional camera phone provides the means to capture what I wanted to show to the world: the *truth* about Iran’ (online interview, LGOIT).

Here, LGOIT conveys the broader significance of photoblogging in Iran as a vehicle of Iranian cultural self-representation. Mobile digital technologies – even a ‘tiny barely functional camera phone’ – are hereby deemed as the appropriate means for capturing and deploying a certain everyday ‘truth’ about Iran ‘from below’ to viewers online - in Iran and across the globe. Crucial to Iranian photobloggers’ construction of a new ‘visual ontology’ in/of Iran, is their practice of rooting their photographic aesthetic in the everyday. Digital photographs shown on photoblogs convey the traditions, folklore, religious practices, material culture, food, history and ethnic diversities of Iran in rural and urban contexts - all of which are intended to serve as visual testaments of everyday life in a much-misunderstood country. As I will discuss, this visual emphasis on the everyday and the ‘soft politics’ of the Iranian banal similarly characterises the visual make-up of the digital exhibition, and its broader methodological intention to form a basis for discussing image politics in/of Iran during interviews and related research activities. In another capacity, photoblogs also serve as low-cost/free exhibition venues for showing and developing Iranian photography beyond official galleries and public museums inside and outside of Iran, and their respective politics, policies, and restrictions (Sreberny-Mohammadi 2014). Given the relationship introduced above between nascent mobile digital technologies and their being mobilised by photobloggers to bring about an epistemological shift in ways of seeing Iran, I will turn to discuss how I developed my visual-methodological toolkit for studying photobloggers and their practices in Iran, the UK and online, in ways which spoke, and contributed to the overall intervention on the image of Iran that I was studying.

DOING DIGITAL-VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY IN/OF IRAN

Firstly, a relevant contextual note about my ethnographic research, which explains many of the *digital* and *visual* choices I made when designing my methodological toolkit, to which the digital exhibition belongs. In my research, the

¹ lifegoesonintehran.com,
www.facebook.com/lgoit/?fref=ts

digital environment was not just a site of my topic, but became a principal field site. As a result of fraught international and domestic political climates when I began my fieldwork in 2012, travelling to Iran for British citizens (such as myself) had become a significant point of contention, as expressed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the UK and, in turn, my university division's health and safety committee. For this reason, I spent one month in Iran for my research; significantly less than I had hoped. My limited access to Iran is not a unique methodological predicament; it has been cited as a particular issue facing British and American anthropologists of Iran in the post-revolutionary period (1979 to the present) due to deep-rooted political tensions between Iran and western powers (Hegland 2009).² More broadly, limited access to field sites is something anthropologists are often faced with, and must find ways of adapting to. Postill (2016: 5) notes how restrictions of multiple kinds routinely affect how much time anthropologists spend in the field; ranging from war and natural disasters to local political turbulence, or more prosaically, lack of funds. Most recently, factors relating to restricted physical presence are being cited, to varying degrees, as a rationale for conducting 'remote ethnography' in *digital* environments (Ibid). This relies, for the most part, on establishing a series of relationships with participants over time online, based – true to the anthropologist's traditional commitment – on trust and 'intimate visual co-presence' (Ito 2005). Back in the UK following my trip to Iran, I sought to devise some such *digital* strategies to continue my fieldwork remotely, and maintain presence and connection with research participants I had met in Iran, as well as those who I connected with purely online. I will briefly account for some of these methods below as a precursor to introducing the digital exhibition.

Remote ethnographic research can take a variety of forms; from the use of remedial technologies (social media; Skype; email, and so forth), or via other layers of non-technological mediation, such as the use of research assistants, translators, and other influencing agents (Postill 2016: 5). All of these strategies contribute to and make up the digital ethnographer's mediating lens. In the case of my ethnography, participatory digital and visual methods allowed me to build *digital* and *epistemological* proximity to my participants in the absence of physical presence, and as I will discuss, proved central to my understanding of photoblogging from the perspectives of the people whom partake in it as producers and viewers across the globe.

An early *digital* step I took in my research was to set up a research photoblog for my visit to Iran. I did this fairly simply through Tumblr.com, a popular blogging platform. Via the research photoblog I documented and shared my travels to Iran with participants, which in turn, formed a useful basis for discussion with research participants, bringing together my experiences with their insights. With the increasing use of digital

² Due in part to broader political tensions between Iran and 'the West', brief research trips to Iran (sometimes on tourist visas) such as the one hereby described in relation to my case are reasonably common for anthropologists of Iran, leading to what Hegland (2004) describes as the often necessity of 'zip in and zip out fieldwork', particularly for British and American anthropologists of post-revolution Iran.

technologies in anthropological fieldwork, these kinds of digital practices, which actively include research participants in the research process, have been suitably termed 'e-Fieldnotes' (Sanjek and Tratner 2016) and have become increasingly widespread³. Technology-facilitated collaboration was something I developed throughout my research with Iranian photobloggers. In my broader fieldwork activities, I carried out online participant observation of Iranian photoblogging for twelve months, during which I became a 'consequential social actor in online space' (Boellstorff et al. 2012). With individuals permission, I took hand written notes and recorded video and audio calls on Skype using a relevant software application. I also printed and physically archived e-mails, chat correspondence and interview transcripts.⁴ Many of these research activities involved establishing live digital co-presence with participants across multiple physical locations; an ontological aspect that has been cited as one of the unique features of doing digital ethnography today (Boellstorff et al. 2012; Marcus 2012; Pink et al. 2015). After nine months of such remote digital-ethnographic activities, coupled with traditional ethnographic research conducted amongst the Iranian diaspora in London, I decided to develop a more specific methodological apparatus, a digital exhibition, for extrapolating greater ethnographic texture with my transnationally dispersed research participants. I turn to discuss this below before evaluating its broader relevance for collaborative and participatory research in digital anthropology.

THE DIGITAL EXHIBITION AS A VISUAL-ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK METHOD

The digital exhibition *www.photoblogsiran.com* was curated and employed as a formative part of my research process (see Figure 2). The rationale for developing it principally relates to the overall epistemological framework of my research; the study of self-representational storytelling practices by Iranians about Iran, through digital photography. In this sense, the digital exhibition forms what I term a 'site-specific methodology'; whereby the *form* of the method (a digital exhibition of digital photographs/photoblogs) was carved out of the *field site* (photographers practices in online environments). The exhibition also had the effect of carving out an 'art space' (simultaneously a research space), for exhibiting popular Iranian photography within the broader digital landscape. Here, participants and I could virtually 'meet', reflect upon and collectively explore the research theme within the safety and confines of a platform co-created precisely for this purpose. More specifically, we could talk about and explore issues concerning images of Iran that we were all in the business of producing and/or studying.

This had the effect of building upon the virtual co-presence (Postill 2013), which we had already established via the digital-ethnographic activities mentioned above.

³ For a relevant discussion on producing 'live fieldnotes' using digital applications see Tricia Wang's (2012) report: *ethnographymatters.net/blog/2012/08/02/writing-live-fieldnotes-towards-a-more-open-ethnography/*

⁴ See Horst (2016).



Photoblogs from Iran: A Digital Exhibition

Methodological component of a PhD research project in Anthropology (2011-2015) conducted at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford.

ENTER

FIGURE 2 - TITLE PAGE OF THE
DIGITAL EXHIBITION:
WWW.PHOTOBLOGSIRAN.COM

In developing the digital exhibition as a method, I made use of what Gubrium and Harper (2013: 173) suggest to be the primary goal of placing exhibitions online in the form of online web 2.0 platforms, namely 'to make materials available to a wider public', while fully attending to the ethical implications of this.⁵ From the onset, ethical considerations were intrinsic to the theoretical conception of the exhibition. It was agreed that participants would maintain copyright of all of their photographs, and these would be featured on the site in conjunction with their broader participation in my research project. The photographs would be introduced, contextualized and presented as part of one such wider research process, as described in the 'about' and background' sections of the site. Apart from LGOIT quoted earlier, who officially maintains public anonymity, each photographer is introduced with their real name (Figure 3). This reflects a conscious ethical policy implemented throughout my broader study, based on the desires of the principal participants, that their real names would be used, just as they also are in other online public platforms, including on their own photoblogs. The digital exhibition shares conceptual affinity with Varzi's (2006) (offline) methodology of the *dowreh* (circle or salon), used in her ethnographic study of Iranian youth in Tehran. Varzi's method similarly sought to involve individuals in an active manner during research process. While conducting research in Tehran, Varzi put together a *dowreh* of college students in the hope of establishing a 'comfortable environment (as opposed to an environment whereby the subject simply answers questions...)' (ibid: 14). This collaborative space aimed to

⁵ For a relevant discussion on the ethics of making digital research material public, see Gubrium and Harper (2013), pp.45-69.



FIGURE 3 - HOME PAGE OF THE DIGITAL EXHIBITION: WWW.PHOTOBLOGSIRAN.COM/BLOG/

move beyond a focus group governed by her research questions, and towards a more collective project that, as Varzi puts it, 'became their project' of examining their own lives, as they thought about how they consume their public space and public culture (ibid: 14). The exhibition methodology presented here extends these principles to the digital and transnational Iranian context. In addition, through curating the exhibition, I was able to generate and extrapolate ethnographic texture by obtaining first hand experience of what it takes to design, curate, maintain and monitor a photoblog, including 'behind the scenes' details of the process that the presented photoblogs themselves do not share with the general viewing public. A core ethos of the exhibition therefore is the idea of the anthropologist as a curator in and of the field; something I expand upon in the following discussion.

DIGITAL CO-CURATION

The essential template of the exhibition website was established with assistance from two of the eight participants, who were able to devote the most amount of their time to the project in its design phase. The working site was initially password protected, allowing for a period of one month's relaxed co-curating, developing and editing before the site was made public. Between the exhibiting photographers and I, we

decided that I was to be the sole editor of the page, with access to the main editorial dashboard of the site. Moreover, for the sake of consistency with many of the existing photoblog platforms Iranian photobloggers use (such as WordPress and related blogging platforms), but also in anticipation of the exhibition's future global publics, the site would be in English - as indeed much of the text on Iranian photoblogs themselves often is given their intended global reach (many use a combination of Persian written in the English alphabet, popularly known as 'PEnglish'). In practical terms, participants would make suggestions and changes to content and display during the developments stage by communicating through e-mail, Skype, Facebook and the general ways we had been digitally communicating during the research process as earlier described. My role and activities, as chief overseer of the exhibition raises relevant questions concerning the precise nature of collaboration in participatory research of this kind. Whilst it is fair to term the digital exhibition a collaborative and participatory project, the nature of the participation also varied amongst participants, and between them and myself. Given that I maintained my role and activities as chief overseer of the exhibition, it is perhaps useful to speak of the digital exhibition as an on-going point of collaborative contact, rather than a fully collaborative project; a 'contact zone' (Clifford 1997) of sorts, between myself and Iranian popular photographers, which relied on active participation and a good deal of transnational, digital collaboration.

REPRESENTING SELF-REPRESENTATION

In addition to practical and ethical considerations, an epistemological quandary posed by the exhibition pertains to the conceptual 'double bind' of the frame within a frame of representing self-representation. Visual anthropologists who work with the 'Photo Voice' method invite participants to explore aspects of their subjectivity and lived experience using cameras they either physically give to them, or by using modern technologies participants have themselves, such as smart phones and or digital cameras (Gubrium and Harper 2013). In the digital exhibition, the exhibited photographs are not created for the purposes of the research. Rather, they pre-exist and have an online presence in other digital contexts before (and after) my intervention on them as researcher, which draws them into the research process. In this sense, the digital exhibition presented here marks a subtle shift in the way in which anthropologists might carry out these kind of 'visual interventions' (Pink 2009). Though this issue of adoption and appropriation of subjects' own visual material is not altogether a new concern - anthropologists who study artists and their works admittedly also study pre-existing systems of visual [self-] representation (Schneider 1996) - studying visual media-producing self-representing subjects in the manner described in this article raises important methodological

questions for collaborative and participatory digital and visual anthropology. I will discuss some of these below as I detail the process of co-curating the exhibition online.

A first step my participants and I took during the curatorial process was to discuss which images (out of the potentially thousands from their own photoblogs) would be included in the exhibition. This meant deciding on what Kratz (2002) calls, in her work curating a travelling exhibition of photographic portraits she took of the Okiek people of Kenya, 'the ones that are wanted'. By the same token, it was equally important to consider in our exhibition, the ones that might be *unwanted*. This basic curatorial concern felt particularly pertinent given the fact that visual-cultural representations of Iran was itself a chief concern for the Iranian photobloggers I worked with, and which was also therefore a central analytical object of my study. In addressing this question, it is helpful to consider another of Kratz's (2002: 1) quandaries from her physical exhibition of Okiek portraits: 'How do we know and show who we are and who others are?' As discussed, this is a question that Iranian photobloggers themselves explore in their practices. Though by no means intending to offer any comprehensive portrayal of Iranian photobloggers, or the images of Iran that they create, the digital exhibition would capture, distil, and itself communicate aspects of the exhibiting photobloggers visual repertoires, drawn from their existing collections of digital photographs from across Iran, which would form a useful basis for exploring the broader socio-political, historical, and epistemological questions of my research of photography and visual culture in/of Iran.

Practically speaking, it was agreed that individuals would select as many images as they wanted for their individual exhibit pages in the exhibition. In a couple of cases, we negotiated processes of choosing together at some of the photographers' requests. This process explains the variation in size of the photographers' exhibits, as well as the various categories of image 'types' that emerged. The submitted/retrieved images totalled 173. This variation reflected the different sized photoblogs in the wider Iranian photoblogosphere; whilst some are prolific photographers, updating their photoblog on a daily basis, others take fewer, more stylised shots; the latter gallery size I found to be particularly common amongst those with aspirations of becoming professional photographers and photojournalists. Once the photographs had been submitted and uploaded to the exhibition site (still in draft form and not yet made public), we discussed their ordering and arrangement. One participant suggested that the 'tagging' function might be used (just as it is on photoblogs) to assign exhibiting photographers with certain types of images. Out of our conversations, thirteen main categories emerged from various themes and visual interests discussed. These include references to the landscape, material culture, arts and cultures of Iran, the movements of photographers themselves – between

urban and rural photography locations and subjects – as well as more ‘artful’ types of what exhibitors and I referred to (following some photobloggers use of the term on their own photoblogs) as ‘experimental’ photography; that which leans more towards artistic practice than documentary photorealism. The categories featured on the exhibition digitally group together the photographers – not their photographs in isolation – under the said category. This places emphasis on the photographers’ themselves; their interests and their journeys with photography, and keeps the images within their auto-photo-biographical contexts. In some sense the category types appear fairly conventional. Indeed, they were not intended to represent the broader visual complexities of the storytelling witnessed in Iranian photoblogging - including in captions and viewer comments. Of greater significance than the individual category, or photograph, arguably then is the sum of their parts; or rather, the overall aesthetic emphasis on the ‘Iranian everyday’ that the photobloggers, as a specific group of media practitioner, seek to communicate. In this manner, the ‘local’ categories that emerged through the digital exhibition strike up a direct relationship with the wider ‘global’ (but also national) mediascapes in which these photographs – pre-existing as they do on individuals own photoblogs– are in active visual dialogue.

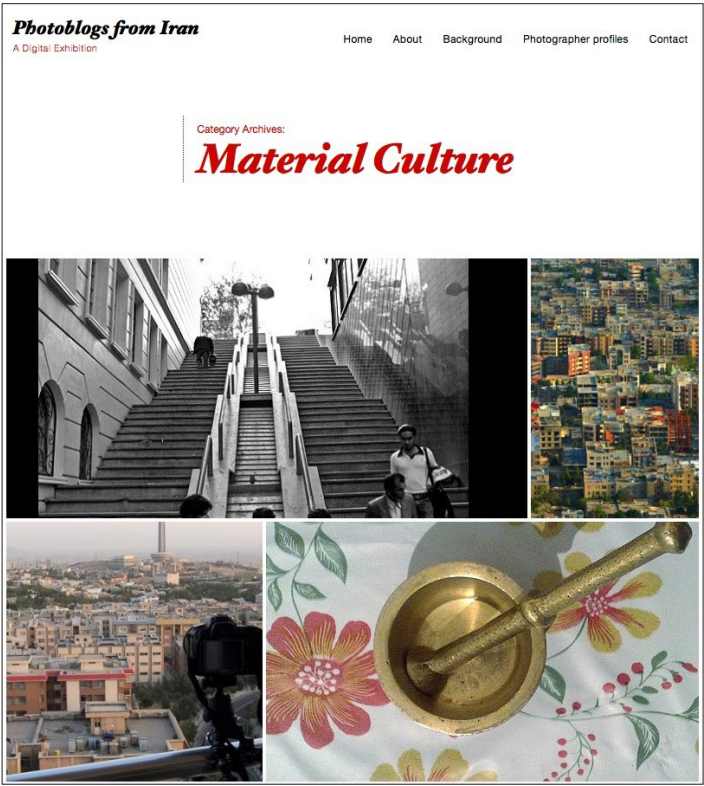


FIGURE 4 - MATERIAL CULTURE CATEGORY ON THE DIGITAL EXHIBITION: WWW.PHOTOBLOGSIRAN.COM/BLOG/CATEGORY/MATERIAL-CULTURE/

DIGITAL PHOTO-ELICITATION

Viewership is an important aspect of photoblogging. Here, digital photography is a dialogical social/media practice, rather than a one-way, flat or finished representation (Crang 2007; Larsen 2008). One of my main research activities as researcher/curator involved sharing the exhibition with relevant viewing publics, for research purposes. Between June 2013 and October 2013, the digital exhibition was incorporated into interviews, on- and offline. It was shared *digitally* (via the URL link), and *physically* (in the UK) by myself on my or participants’ own computers. Viewers included (i) Iranian photobloggers not taking part in the exhibition, (ii) Iranians in Iran, (iii) members of the Iranian diaspora in the UK, (iv) Iranians and non-Iranians in the UK, as well as (v) gallery curators, artists and journalists (Iranian and non-Iranian) in Tehran and London who were contributing to the wider ethnography (see Table 1).

This viewer base broadened the potential sample of physically participating subjects by allowing easier access (virtual and economical) than that traditionally afforded by visiting a physical exhibition in a fixed physical location. Sharing the exhibition in this manner allowed me to carry out *digital* photo elicitation: a digital form of the established visual method of photo elicitation (Collier and Collier 1986), which uses images to elicit discourse with participants, particularly in interview contexts, and which subsequently informs the researcher’s analysis.

I was able to investigate different (but fluid) categories of viewer ‘types’, and discuss different interpretations of image sets in relation to individuals’ physical location and their wider sense of proximity (cultural, political, affective) to Iran. The exhibition’s specific visual focus on Iran and photobloggers’ visual storytelling practices also aided my analytical capacity to construct what Pink (2011: 96) calls the ‘ethnographic place’, in which description and theory come together to create a representational rendering of the ethnography. This ethnographic ‘place’ becomes itself a contemporary anthropological

TABLE 1 - TABLE SHOWING VIEWERS OF WWW.PHOTOBLOGSIRAN.COM DURING THE RESEARCH PROCESS

IRAN (VIA URL LINK)	UK (IN PERSON WITH COMPUTER)
Photobloggers not participating in the exhibition	Members of Iranian diaspora in London
Other Iranians (students, young professionals, filmmakers, media professionals)	Students, academics, journalists, artists (Iranian/non-Iranian)
	Gallery owners, photography curators, London (Iranian / non-Iranian)
ACROSS THE GLOBE (via URL link)	
Iranians in diaspora	
Non-Iranians (with/without connections to Iran)	

archive, forming a digital 'cabinet of curiosity' of the field for viewers, while also standing as a testament to the research process itself, and individuals' participation in it. In more general terms, curating a digital research environment such as this can prove beneficial in constructing a discursive virtual space, made of an ensemble of people from across multiple countries and time zones, and whose multi-sited/multi-temporal ontology cannot exist in the offline setting in a physical sense. Here, the digital exhibition offers certain ways of knowing and being – namely, digitally and virtually co-presently across time/space – which extends the methodological and epistemological possibilities of what traditional physical fieldwork methods alone might provide.

DIGITAL AFTERLIVES

Finally, an important practical reason for setting up the digital photography exhibition pertains to the life span of photoblogs. Photoblogs are essentially vulnerable digital objects; they have no guaranteed presence or 'afterlife', but are both paid for (though some photobloggers use existing, free software programmes) and maintained by their creators. This means that their activity and longevity are largely contingent upon photobloggers' own attitudes towards them. In some cases, I found that individuals do not renew their photoblog's web presence after its scheduled online expiry date, due to a combination of the personal and/or financial commitments required in maintaining it. This potentially leaves the digital ethnographer suddenly devoid of a particular 'data set'. In these cases, the digital research exhibition intervenes. It extends the lifespan and virtual presence of the 'dead' photoblog, resurrecting it in another, protected digital space (and, if shared, other digital viewing publics). At first the exhibition was (and still is) preserved as a website under my own auspices. However, it will also be archived – digitally (and physically as a CD-ROM) – with my university library. During this process, the individual's photoblog, and its 'social life' (Appadurai 1986) are in part revived and reformulated by way of viewers' engagements with a digital simulacra of an otherwise 'dead' platform. In so doing, the exhibition simultaneously captures the present digital-visual 'moment' to which these photoblogs about Iran – constructed at specific time and places by particular individuals using certain technologies – belong.

This process of archiving and preserving recalls, and in some sense forms a digital contribution to established practices of late nineteenth and early twentieth century anthropology, involving the collecting, representing and exhibiting of ethnographic material. Critical debates in anthropology and museum studies have since addressed this tradition, of what has been termed 'salvage ethnography' (Clifford 1989: 73), denoting the 'desire', as Clifford puts it, to 'rescue something "authentic" out of destructive historical change'. Though not staking any claims to cultural 'authenticity' along these historical lines, my

efforts to preserve a dead photoblog through the digital exhibition 'salvages' something of a digital moment in Iranian online cultural production, whereby photoblogging was a prominent *modus operandi* of digital cultural self-representation. This endeavour raises wider questions concerning the expiry and obsolescence of digital objects and artefacts in current and future digital anthropological research. Thinking through the associated politics and practices of these issues arguably puts ancient cultural objects, dead photoblogs and even deceased persons (see provisions taken by Facebook to memorialise users' accounts after physical death⁶) on an ethico-methodological plane which, I suggest, should continue critical thinking about preservation, cultural heritage and digital participatory practices, from the museum/gallery to the web.

CONCLUSION: THE ANTHROPOLOGIST AS CURATOR

In this article, I have critically reflected upon the relevance and efficacy of developing various digital and visual methods drawn *from* and *within* the field (digital photography on the Internet) to simultaneously render, curate and study the field (the digital and social spaces collaboratively generated during the research process), showing how such methods can provide further options beyond physical collaboration. In particular, I have examined a site-specific fieldwork method, a digital photography exhibition, which I curated as a research technique that spoke directly to my multi-sited and multi-spatial field site. This raises the question of the anthropologist as curator in/of the field in the digital environment. As discussed, digital exhibitions of this kind enable anthropologists to access, convene and study groups similarly bound by the confines of wider offline social, political and economic conditions, and/or aesthetic frameworks. In the case of my research, the digital exhibition allowed me a unique way of collaborating discursively through image-based work, with my interlocutors based in different countries, and with other participants inside and outside of Iran. The implications of this fieldwork technique are both methodological and epistemological. As discussed, the digital exhibition became a method of anthropological research *and* representation amongst different viewing communities inside and outside of Iran. The exhibition allowed me to ask relevant questions about the politics of representing Iran via the lives and practices of the exhibiting individuals and their photographs. In this sense, it signals a subtle shift from the anthropologist predominantly as *author* to the possibility of her role as *curator* of visual-ethnographic knowledge (without negating the former). Acting as curator in/of the digital landscape not only gave me a special entry point into the practice, but it also established a unique way of collaborating with my interlocutors from outside of Iran, without physically being present with them.

I am not suggesting that this signals any replacement, nor arguably anything entirely 'new' in (visual) ethnography. How-

⁶ www.facebook.com/help/contact/651319028315841, accessed 08/06/15

ever, exploring such collaborative and participatory digital and visual methods, I contend, can prove particularly salient features of a broader ethnographic investigation, in cases when physical access to field sites may be knowingly or unexpectedly restricted.

The digital exhibition discussed in this article should ultimately be considered as part of a broader methodological moment in visual ethnography, whereby established approaches are converging with and readjusting themselves to the epistemological possibilities of the digital. One such potential identified in this article is the opportunity for intervention and methodological creativity afforded by digital and visual methods such as the exhibition - partly (but not necessarily) in response to physical access quandaries. The digital exhibition, as a mobile, material method responds to these challenges, whilst endorsing Pink's earlier (2011: 211) proposition that visual anthropologists can use collaborative methods, interactive hypermedia and the Internet to 'produce ethically responsible texts that engage with the corporeality of vision, have activist ambitions and might bridge the gap between written and visual academic anthropology'. In sum, collaborative methods such as the digital exhibition attend to these, and a host of related questions concerning how those involved in digital-ethnographic pursuits might collectively curate, mediate, and represent an increasingly interconnected world, off- and online.

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YOUNG TRANSYLVANIANS BETWEEN MEMORIES OF A MULTICULTURAL PAST AND ASPIRATIONS FOR A EUROPEAN FUTURE: A PHOTOVOICE PROJECT IN A GERMAN-LANGUAGE SCHOOL

ABSTRACT

Despite the drastically diminished size of the centuries-old German-speaking minority of Transylvania since 1989, German-language schools thrive as they attract an increasing number of students originating from the ethnic Romanian majority population.

A participatory photography project explored how these young multilingual Transylvanians position themselves in relation to the German-Saxon heritage in their social and physical environment. An important aim was to trace any shifts in ethnic self-identification, and to assess the actual importance of ethnic categories as opposed to socio-economic considerations.

The project also explored ways in which a Photovoice approach is useful combined with other, non-visual methods.

KEYWORDS

Ethnic minorities, migration, memory, Romania, Transylvania, schools, photography, Photovoice, mixed methods.

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INTRODUCTION

Transylvania, the region to the north and west of the Carpathian mountains, which has been part of the Romanian state for almost a century, has had a particularly changing political history. The past of Transylvania – as a province of the Roman Empire, part of the medieval kingdom of Hungary, independent principality under Ottoman suzerainty, later incorporated in the Austrian Empire, yielded to Hungary and finally merged with Romania – bestowed a legacy of relative toleration and mostly peaceful coexistence between the various ethnic groups that make up Transylvanian society.

A German-speaking community has lived in the area since a Hungarian ruler in the 12th century invited, or at least acknowledged, settlers from the medieval German Empire. People refer to this group of German-speaking Romanians by the name of “Saxons,” although they hailed not from Saxony but from various German territories, mostly the middle Rhine region close to today’s Luxemburg. For centuries, they have been a distinctive, mainly self-governed community with their own language, church and schools.¹ The Second World War brought disruption and upheaval to the Saxons as to all German-speaking minorities in Eastern and Central Europe. A part of the Saxon community fled in the wake of 1945, the Romanian state authorities deported others to Russia, expropriated and stripped most Saxons of their civil rights before rehabilitating them as members of a formally recognized minority in the mid-1950s. Socialist Romania set up a secret cash-for-migrants scheme that enabled thousands of Saxons to resettle in West Germany (Bayer and Hüsch 2013). Following the 1989 revolution, the steady trickle of emigration became a stream in what can only be called a mass exodus towards Germany. Once a prosperous and in many ways influential community,² the German-speaking population of this Carpathian region has been reduced to less than a tenth of its original size as a result of these different migration waves. In Hermannstadt/Sibiu, the former Saxon stronghold, merely 1,500, i.e. 1 % of the population, still considered themselves as part of the “German minority” in the latest official census (2011).³

Yet paradoxically, the schools set up by and for this vanishing minority thrive more than ever. Since 1989, German-language schools have proved extremely popular with the ethnic Romanian majority population.⁴ I first chanced upon Romanian students with a German-language educational background when I was at the University of Cluj, North-Western Transylvania, during a teaching exchange in early 2012. Their language skills were so impressive that it was easy to mistake them for ethnic Germans; only their names gave them away. The contrast with average West European German learners could not have been any starker: these students handled the language effortlessly and with an almost eerie accuracy that could put native Germans to shame. Since that first encounter, I won-

¹ Transylvanian Saxons of Transylvania have hardly been investigated by anthropologists. One exception is Katherine Verdery’s work on ethnic relations, property and battles over land ownership, based on field research in communities with a Saxon presence (e.g. Verdery 1983, 2003; Kligman and Verdery 2011). Literature on ethnicity in Transylvania tends to focus on Hungarian-Romanian relations (such as Kürti 1989 and Brubaker 2006). Folklorists, historians and (few) sociologists have published a number of German- and Romanian-language accounts about Saxon ethnography and history both before and since 1989.

² About 540.000 German-speaking people lived in Transylvania in the 1920s and 1930s, i.e. they made up about 10 % of the population (Varga 1989).

³ National Institute for Statistics, Results of the 2011 census, table 8, “Populația stabilă după etnie – județe, municipii, orașe, comune” (Institutul Național de Statistică 2013). In 1930, 43.8 % of the population of Sibiu were classified as Saxons (Roth 2006:199).

⁴ This phenomenon is new and has not been analysed in depth. Research on German-language schools in Transylvania has focused on their history, in particular in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century (e.g. König 1996 and von Puttkamer 2003), or on pedagogical and didactic issues, such as language acquisition (Ginghină 2015).

dered how this new generation of proficient German speakers positioned themselves in relation to the German-Saxon history of Romania. As they tread in the footsteps of the Saxons, are taught in German from kindergarten age onward, interact daily with their (rare) Saxon peers, Saxon and German teachers, do their ethnic self-identifications shift in any way? How do they negotiate the different ethnic categorizations that are available to them, and what significance does the German-Saxon heritage actually hold for this group? Do ethnic categories matter to this young generation at all, and if so, which ones and why?⁵

This article deals with a research project which explored these questions from September 2013 onward. I begin by discussing the choice of Photovoice as the central approach, in conjunction with other methods. The next section describes the main features of the project: the school setting, the participants, collaboration with other facilitators, the general timeframe and the different project stages. The third part of the article presents the key results of the participants' work: different ways in which students explored their relation to German/Saxon elements in their lives, as intended, but also a number of unforeseen topics which were uncovered in the course of the Photovoice project. Lastly, a final section assesses the contribution of this research to Transylvanian studies and discusses the advantages and limitations of a mixed methods approach in visual anthropology.

CHOICE OF METHODS

For several reasons, Photovoice appeared to be the most adequate method to reach the objectives of this research project. Affording an inside perspective, Photovoice encouraged the bilingual German-Romanian students to express themselves in a medium that was easily available to them rather than having various discourses about them recorded and analysed. Researchers often use visual anthropology, and Photovoice in particular, with young people as – at least to some extent – it evens out literacy differentials between the researcher and the participants, and it allows the less literate and articulate to make their viewpoints seen (Johnson, Pfister and Vindrola-Padros 2012:165; Oester and Brunner 2015:18). This proved to be a decisive aspect in the multilingual context of Transylvania, as we conducted the project in German, and not all young Romanian participants had yet reached the kind of linguistic proficiency that had impressed me at the university of Cluj two years earlier.

A certain educational ethos has informed Photovoice since its inception. In the 1990s, Paulo Freire's advocacy for critical pedagogy influenced Caroline Wang and her co-researchers; likewise, Aline Gubrium and Krista Harper list Appadurai's work with subaltern youth among their inspirations (Gubrium and Harper 2013:26). Capacity building and empowerment remain central elements of the Photovoice toolbox and objectives. As I planned to work in a school setting, Photo-

⁵ Pro-German attitudes in Romania, both past and present, have been investigated on the basis of literature and press reports, in the field of intellectual history or media studies (Boia 2003; Cercel 2015), but not ethnographically.

voice made the project acceptable to the teaching community on account of its pedagogical virtues, yet at the same time it gave the students freedom to move both physically and intellectually, thus transcending the traditional educational framework.

Practical advantages included the low training requirements (Gubrium and Harper 2013:37) as well as the feasibility of a Photovoice project given the group size and the time constraints that the school imposed.

Apart from Photovoice, we also used visual elicitation methods during several group discussions that preceded different photography sessions. More importantly, we devised a questionnaire and administered it in the “pre-production” phase of the actual Photovoice project, about 6 months before the work with the student group started. The aim was to find out what the community concerns were, which topics were salient in the school context, and to gather general information about the student body as a whole. In a later section of this article, I discuss the benefits of combining these seemingly contradictory methods, i.e. a written survey with open-ended questions and participatory visual research.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The project took place in the Colegiul National “Samuel von Brukenthal,” a prestigious state-owned school named after an 18th-century Saxon governor of Transylvania, art collector and benefactor.⁶ It is situated in Sibiu, a town visibly marked by its Saxon past and with a still palpable Saxon presence. A highly successful mayor, the Saxon Klaus Johannis, ruled the municipality from 2000 until 2014. Some people credit Johannis for thoroughly transforming the town, which culminated in its selection as European Capital of Culture in 2007, the year when Romania joined the EU. Based on his local success, as well as his sober approach, the people of Romania elected Johannis as president in November 2014. Before starting his political career, he worked as a physics teacher at the Brukenthal school. Written documents first mention the school in 1380; thus, it is one of the oldest German-language schools in Romania. Teaching takes place in an 18th-century building next to the main Protestant church in the very centre of Sibiu. Even after going through a selective admission process, students are so numerous that teaching them requires two separate shifts each day.

During the Photovoice project, I worked with a history teacher of the school. As a first step, we devised a questionnaire with 22 questions on such varied topics as language use in different contexts, media consumption, contact with the Saxon minority, travel experience or projects concerning German-speaking countries. 217 of the more than 800 students of the school (9 classes of the 14-17 year age range) completed the survey. Six months later, seventeen students volunteered for a Photovoice workshop. For one week, during about eight

⁶ With the consent of the school management and by deliberate choice, the name of the school has not been anonymised. A minimal description would make the school immediately recognisable to anyone familiar with Transylvania. Likewise, as the participants wished to be acknowledged as the authors of their photographic work, their names have not been changed.

hours per day, these 15 girls and 2 boys at the age of 16/17 (of whom 14 were ethnic Romanians, and 3 with Saxon family ties) worked through a number of questions concerning the significance of German and Saxon elements in their personal lives, their school experience and physical surroundings. We scheduled this period during “projects week” (“școala altfel”/“a different kind of school”). “Projects week” takes place just before the spring vacation when students all over Romania explore extracurricular activities or go on trips together.

The Photovoice literature sometimes uses the terms “participants” and “collaborators” interchangeably (Gubrium and Harper emphasize that both have a distinct history; 2013:16). It seems useful to make a distinction between the student *participants* and the adult *collaborators* in this particular context so as to discriminate between different degrees of involvement in the project. The organising team – the history teacher, a local ethnographer/museum professional, a young volunteer with Saxon origins but German citizenship, and myself – decided on the overall programme, prepared group outings, facilitated group decisions, took care of relations with the school management and the local press, among other responsibilities. We collaborated without always sharing exactly the same objectives, as will become clear later on. The student participants obviously produced, discussed, pre-selected and commented the photographs. They enjoyed as much liberty in the wording of their commentaries, and as much aesthetic leeway for their photography as they wanted, but could only marginally impose changes on the organisational framework.

The project week started with general introductions of the collaborators and participants, followed by a presentation of the Photovoice approach and, separately, another one on principles of photograph composition, framing, focus, colour and other photographic “techniques.” I took care not to give the impression that we wanted to impose any rules; the idea was to increase students’ “visual literacy” and to make them aware of the aesthetic and technical choices they had at their disposal when taking photographs. We divided the participants into 6 groups of 2-3 students and sent them out to two different locations: first the school itself, and then the town centre of Sibiu. Each group could use only one camera. After every photographic excursion, participants discussed and selected a maximum number of 10 photos that they wanted to present to the student group as a whole. Photographs received comments once more during these presentations attended by all participants and collaborators.

The second day started with a presentation of Saxon history and ethnographic heritage given by the museum professional, which I discuss later in this article.

Students then showed photographs taken the day before, reviewed which places of the town they had visited and why (marking them on maps), then left on another photographic excursion to yet unexplored parts of the town.

On the third day, we confronted the participants with a setting that turned out to be rather unfamiliar to most of them, i.e. a series of five formerly predominantly Saxon villages around Sibiu. We gathered again in the school on the forth day, sifting through the many photographs taken in the villages, presenting, commenting and discussing them as well as photographs that students had taken individually in their homes. We also started to prepare a slideshow and the final exhibition of the project, and visited one more village.

The history teacher suggested that the project co-leaders make this final selection rather than the participants themselves so as to gain time and avoid potential conflicts among students. Although this decision deviated somewhat from the traditional Photovoice approach, I am convinced that the choice was right under the circumstances. Even though only two people (the teacher and myself) discussed the about 350 photographs pre-selected by the student groups, we spent long hours weighing the different choices we had to make in order to narrow down the selection to 80 photographs that we would display in the exhibition. To preserve some degree of transparency – if not participation – we stated the criteria that we had agreed upon: equal representation of all excursions and themes; equal representation of all participants; and in case of doubt, a preference for photographs that were both aesthetically interesting and had powerful commentaries. It has to be said that the students were happy to leave us the choice and did not contest the selection we made.

We printed the photographs, mounted them on boards and exhibited them in the main hall of the school for several weeks. Students prepared a slideshow that they presented to the collaborators, the school director and the local German-language press, taking turns to read out the commentaries that they had written. Two and a half months later, the local museum of Saxon ethnography showed a second exhibition, with a narrower choice of photographs made by the museum professional.

RESULTS

As for any Photovoice project, the outcomes were so rich, multi-stranded and polysemic that it would be impossible to account for them fully within the scope of a single article. The following section singles out the most central issues raised by the photographic work of the project participants. These results include the local reaction to Photovoice as a method; students' relations with and their attitude toward their German-language school; the participants' perspective on ethnic categorizations; their reflections on the past and the future of the community, commodification – or re-appropriation – of ethnic traditions; and the importance of economic considerations, which inform most of the preceding issues. In the last part of the article, I discuss the significance of these findings, their contribution to Transylvanian studies on the one hand, and Photovoice research on the other.

TAKING PHOTOVOICE TO TRANSYLVANIA

From the beginning, the students embraced the very idea of Photovoice with enthusiasm. Figure 1 shows a photograph taken in the school on the first day. A picture of a 2010 Photovoice project I presented earlier that day⁷ inspired the photograph shown in Figure 1, and it exemplifies the adoption of the Photovoice approach both in its form and in its substance.

The participants staged a metaphorical scene to express their dissatisfaction with the traditional teaching methods that are prevalent in most classes: learning by heart and repetition. By contrast, students understood that our project insisted on their making their own choices and expressing their opinions and ideas.

My collaborators also eagerly approved the Photovoice approach, which I had earlier introduced to them. However, it proved to be sometimes more difficult for both the history teacher and the museum ethnographer to leave engrained habits behind. While fully encouraging free speech and creativity, the teacher had an eye on student attendance and discipline, as befitted his institutional role, and would not leave any parts of the day unplanned, thus creating sometimes a certain time pressure (as I must have done on other occasions as well). As

FIGURE 1 – RESTRICTIONS:
IN OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM, WE
ARE LIMITED TO A CERTAIN
NUMBER OF APPROACHES
AND MOST OF TIMES, WE
ARE SUPPOSED TO REPEAT
INFORMATION ONLY.
RALUCA GHELBERE, TEODORA
SANDU



⁷ “See it our way”, a World Vision/PhotoVoice project in Pakistan (2010). The photo in question is called “Sweet sixteen in my culture” and shows a veiled girl behind a fence (photovoice.org/methodologyseries/method_05/seeitourway/seeitourway.html, accessed 30 March 2014).

mentioned above, the museum ethnographer gave a presentation on the history of Saxon settlement in Transylvania, traditional Saxon architecture and handicrafts, which was undeniably highly interesting but not completely in keeping with the aim of letting students express themselves instead of reproducing information learnt at school. The presentation comprised questions that targeted specific knowledge in the domain of Saxon history and folklore, which put the students into a more active position than if they had only listened to the presentation, but rarely gave them the opportunity to contribute personal, unexpected answers. A task proposed by the museum ethnographer consisted of taking photographs of certain urban features or sites represented by professional photographers or painters in the past, to spot the differences and to comment on them. This assignment would be a welcome addition to the traditional history lessons, but did not correspond to the Photovoice approach. Time constraints and technical problems (some of the older paintings or engravings were taken from unrealistic perspectives and could not have been reproduced) prevented this idea from being realised during our project. While our collaboration worked perfectly well on the organisational level, and also as far as our common aim (the creation of two photo exhibitions) was concerned, our views on the best ways of implementing the agreed upon method could diverge at times.

A SCHOOL ALMOST LIKE ANY OTHER?

Initially, we conceived our invitation to students to explore their German-language school and what it meant to them as a “warm-up exercise.” It proved particularly popular with the project participants who engaged themselves fully and with troves of imagination, having to deal with an almost deserted school building during “projects week.” The photographs captured everyday impressions that showed how students appropriated or deviated the school day to their own purposes: drawing on school furniture, or using their mobile phone in secret. The motifs chosen expressed students’ emotional attachment to the school – the lady selling snacks during the breaks, their pride of attending a school with a long history and tradition – as well as their ironic detachment at other moments: watching the slowly advancing hands of the classroom clock during overlong lessons, for example. Other photographs illustrated the pressure to perform, fear of being sent to the director’s office and apprehension of the future. Viewed through the lens of the students’ cameras, the Brukenthal school seemed to be a school almost like any other. Explicitly “German” or “Saxon” themes were certainly not the main focus of the students’ productions in the school building. A student group found it noteworthy that German funds contributed toward acquiring some of the school’s IT material, as attested by stickers pasted on computers. The school library contains beautiful old German volumes, which prompted another group to point out that the school gave them access to a rich cultural heritage (figure 15).

In the pre-project survey, students explained in detail where they thought the differences with Romanian-language schools lay: better organisation, discipline, cleanliness, quality equipment, international reputation, teacher involvement, modern teaching methods, more school exchanges, excursions and extracurricular activities. The school suspends all teaching during “projects week”, as such, the project participants could not have illustrated this entire range of characteristics; their creations were often more personal and touching.

DEFINITION TROUBLE: GERMAN OR SAXON?

Concerning the main research question about the intimate experience and re-definition of ethnic boundaries in the context of a bilingual Transylvanian school, one of the rather striking, and immediately visible, results was an almost constant and pervasive confusion between the terms “Saxon” and “German” in the students’ commentaries of their photographs. These two expressions are generally thought to refer to two different groups: “Saxons” are part of the small protestant, German-speaking minority in Transylvania with its centuries-old history, while a “German,” at least in the general post-1945 definition of the term, needs to hold German citizenship. Saxon people may legally claim German citizenship on the grounds of their ethnic origins, and are “Germans” in that sense. Once they emigrate to Germany, native Romanians and their descendants can thus be both “Saxons” (as an ethnic category) and “Germans” (legally). Conversely, a German who was born and has grown up in Germany cannot become a Saxon, even if he or she chooses to live in Transylvania for many years.⁸ For both (self-defined) Saxons and Germans, the distinction is clear.

Yet, from the Brukenthal students’ point of view, and even when “half-Saxons” participated, the two ethnonyms seemed to be completely interchangeable, as became clear in several of the comments they wrote about their photographs. Many answers to our questionnaire confirmed this observation: students say that their school is a “German school,” one student even believes that she lives in a “German town.” When asked how many “Saxon or German” friends they have, typical answers are “I have no German friends,” or “I have two German friends,” without taking up the distinction between the two groups, Germans and Saxons. This conflation was not due to time pressure when filling in the questionnaire. Romanian has a word for “Saxon” (*saş* as an ethnonym, *săşesc* as an adjective), so that a missing category in most participants’ native language cannot account for this particular difficulty. It has to be said that state officials and politicians often expose the public to an undifferentiated use of the term “German”: the census includes an ethnic category called “German” (and not “Saxon”), and the minority lobby group which sends some representatives to the Romanian parliament goes by the name of “Democratic Forum of the Germans in Romania” (*Foru-*

⁸ All informants, be they Saxons or German nationals living in Transylvania, agree on this matter. Non-Saxons cannot join the association/political party of the “German minority”, according to its statutes. Paul Philippi, honorary president of the association, a retired university professor living in Sibiu, insists on the fact that language and customs are not sufficient to define Saxon identity; one needs to be part of a “community sharing the same fate” (Philippi 2010).

mul Democrat al Germanilor din România). In these two instances, people conflate Saxons with other German-speaking communities in Romania, such as the (traditionally Catholic) Swabians living close to the Hungarian and Serbian borders. But the project participants used the category "German" in an even more inclusive manner, obliterating the boundaries between Romanian and German citizenship, and making native language the paramount marker of difference and of belonging. On account of their common descent about eight centuries ago, i.e. long before the creation of the German and Romanian nation states, both "Germans" and "Saxons" speak different forms of German as a mother tongue.

Giving such an importance to one single token of difference very much annoyed a self-declared Saxon woman we met in one of the villages. When she challenged the students to explain the difference between her and myself, between "Saxon" and "German", project participants were genuinely unable to give an answer, showing their conviction that the two groups were identical. At the end of the project, several participants told us that one of the insights they had gained was new knowledge about "differences between Saxons and Germans" and "how Saxons are seen from a foreign, German perspective."

Whereas Saxons and Germans operate with a system of ethnic/national classification according to a number of criteria, such as official citizenship, residency, language, and descent, the project participants simplified the matter considerably. The indicator they pay most attention to, as their photographic productions and discussions show, is linguistic competence. Thus, by equating native language with ethnicity/nationality, young Transylvanians challenge the historically more sensitive, nation-state-bound vision that the elder generations endorse and which is taught at the Brukenthal school.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PAST

The paths of Saxons and "mainland" Germans ("inner" Germans, as Saxons often call them) separated more than 700 years ago, although the bond has never been completely severed (Schenk 1992:190). Was this interwoven history – culminating in the recent mass migration movement – of no interest to our young workshop participants?

The past became a dominant theme during our excursion to the villages surrounding Sibiu, where the recent changes had left more visible traces than in the town. We walked past abandoned Saxon houses, many of them in advanced states of decay, had sometimes difficulties in locating the keys for the abandoned village church, talked to the "last Saxon" in one village and met people who tried hard to revive the village community in others. As a consequence, many photographic productions of the participants capture a sense of nostalgia and ruin romanticism (figures 2-4). Saxon emigration was the basic predicament of the countryside, as the students discovered; they chose to photograph rundown buildings and broken objects covered in dust.

Whether in the town or in the villages, the dramatic reduction in size of the Saxon community, or in some cases, its complete or impending disappearance, was mostly recorded as a simple fact by our student participants. Many interpreted this change as the normal course of history, as illustrated by figure 5: student participants visualized time as a path leading from one iconic building to another, from the Saxon to the Orthodox



FIGURE 2 - DANDELION: THIS PHOTOGRAPH SYMBOLIZES THE EMIGRATION OF THE SAXONS. THE WIND HAS BLOWN MOST OF THEM TO OTHER PLACES - LIKE DANDELION GRAINS. THOSE WHO HAVE STAYED HERE REST IN THEIR GRAVES NOW. DIANA GÎNDILĂ, FLAVIA CRISTIAN.

FIGURE 3 - I'M STILL HERE! THIS FORGOTTEN LITTLE BELIEVER LIES ON THE FRONT BENCH OF THE NEUDORF CHURCH. IT IS A PAINTED SAXON VASE THAT HAS BEEN FORGOTTEN BY ITS OWNERS. MIHAI CARABULEA.





FIGURE 4 - BUILDING IN RUINS: THE BUILDING IN BURGBERG IS ABANDONED AND HAS BEEN ABOUT BY THE VILLAGERS, AND ALONGSIDE IT A PART OF THE HISTORY OF THE SAXONS. THIS IS SHOWN BY THE BROKEN WINDOW AND THE SHADOW THAT COVERS THE BUILDING.

CRISTINA MONICA ANDREI,
ASTRID PASCU.

village church. Participants portrayed the replacement of one community by another as an almost natural change.⁹

Architecture and routes were popular topics for photographs both in the town and in the villages; the photographers wanted to represent the effects of migration and the material legacy of the Saxon community, such as in figure 6 (taken at Sibiu). When Saxon emigration was interpreted, or even mourned, as a loss for Transylvania, this feeling seemed to be triggered by the fact that many formerly Saxon houses were now inhabited by Roma families. These types of negative value judgements informed comments such as: "A village road in Rothberg: the houses in which Saxons used to lived are now used almost exclusively by Roma. The memory of the Saxons is overshadowed in the true sense of the word." Figure 7 is a variation on the same theme. These two project participants associated the Roma presence with a loss of positive values and used photographic means (light, shadow and colour effects) to express this view.

Remarks in the student survey clearly showed widespread negative opinions on Roma. Students see Roma as a harmful

⁹ Two photographs compared "summer Saxons" (Saxons who have emigrated to Germany and bought holiday homes in Transylvania) with storks (leaving in autumn, returning in early summer), thus naturalising their absence to some extent.

FIGURE 5 - AN ORTHODOX CHURCH: THE DOORS OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCH CLOSE BECAUSE THERE ARE NO MORE SAXONS IN ROTHBERG. AT THE SAME TIME THE DOORS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OPEN.¹⁰ FLAVIA CRISTIAN, DIANA GÎNDILĂ.

FIGURE 6 - THE TRACES OF THE SAXONS: THE PATH SYMBOLISES THE EMIGRATION AND THE PAST OF THE SAXONS. DELIA COȚOFANĂ, ASTRID PASCU, BENJAMIN RUOPP.



¹⁰ The photographers stand inside the Protestant church and look towards the Orthodox church.

¹¹ Some of the students clearly have their facts wrong. Roma have lived in Transylvania for many hundreds of years and were enslaved in some parts of Romania. To my knowledge, hardly any students of the Brukenthal school have Romani origins. If the students we worked with had more contacts with and first-hand knowledge about the Romani population of Transylvania, they probably would have avoided these kinds of comments.



influence and a threat for the future of the country: Romania “was a beautiful country, but since the gypsies have arrived and given a bad image to foreigners, it is not beautiful anymore” (male student, 10th grade); the Roma “have a bad culture, gypsies have no respect” (male student, 9th grade); “in 50 years there will be only Roma left” in Romania (male student, 11th grade).¹¹

The Roma obviously do not have the financial means to restore the facades of their new homes. As a matter of fact, moving into solid housing and from the village periphery into its centre is a considerable improvement for many families. In addition, even from a conservation standpoint, one may wonder if it is preferable to let the Saxon houses fall into ruins, and leave them completely unheated in the harsh Transylvanian winters, rather than have new dwellers occupy them in their own ways. However, project participants did not take up these alternative interpretations; the excursion into the villages lasted one day, which did not allow them to gain a deeper understanding of the socio-economic quandaries of the villagers. Students talked to people, but the focus was on photography and the expression of their own reactions to what they saw, rather than on the development of new insights on tangential matters.

The students documented that from their point of view, the Saxon past is almost gone, which they only seemed to regret when there was visible degradation of the rural architecture, a sad appearance of neglected church interiors covered in dust, or when it led to the social isolation of the “last Saxons” in certain villages. As the majority of Saxons have left Transylvania, the Saxons’ importance now lays in the legacy that they have passed on to the remaining population.

FIGURE 7 - THE COLOURFUL HOUSES SLOWLY LOSE THEIR SMILE: THE COLOURFUL HOUSES OF THE SAXONS ARE NOW INHABITED BY ROMA. THESE HARDLY CARE ABOUT THE HOUSES. RALUCA GHELBERE.



SAXON TRADITION: A LIVING LEGACY OR A COMMODITY?

Official accounts of the Saxon legacy include – *a minima* – the architecture of Transylvanian towns and villages with a former Saxon majority population, and other aspects of material culture, arts and crafts,¹⁰ as well as institutions founded by Saxon communities: church parishes, schools, museums. But which, if any, of these seemed relevant to our student group?

In this respect, differences between participants with Saxon origins and “purely” ethnic Romanians became salient. As mentioned before, three of the participating students had Saxon family ties, i.e. at least one parent or a grandparent taught them German and handed down some family heirlooms. These students belonged to the protestant (Saxon) church, as opposed to their Orthodox classmates. When we asked the project participants to illustrate on what occasions they encountered German or Saxon elements in their everyday family life, only these three had stories about genuinely Saxon objects to tell. Their explanations included information about their family histories, the emotional value attached to handmade traditional decoration or clothing items, and the special occasions on which their families use these German or Saxon elements. For instance, one student photographed a pillow cover and explained: “It is handmade and very old, as my grandmother has inherited it from her grandmother. I will keep it to honour their memory and because of the value of Saxon things.” Figure 8, the photograph of an old photograph, is another example. A third student produced a picture of his (Saxon) mother holding an embroidered bedspread, thus making it clear that there were not only Saxon “things” but also people in his home.

Once we finished the Photovoice project, this series of photos was to play a particular role. Two months after the photo exhibition in the school, the ethnographer/museum curator, who had appreciated the “modern” approach of the project, selected a small number of photographs to include in an exhibition. The curator planned the exhibition to document the contribution of all ethnic minorities to Transylvanian society and culture. About half of the chosen Photovoice photographs featured Saxon folklore, with a particular focus on traditional costumes. Of course, these photographs and the commentaries made about them were of great interest to us, too, as they gave intimate insights to everyone involved (not all students knew about their friends’ family customs and histories). However, these “traditionalist” photographs were clearly an exception from the rule and not extremely representative of the Photovoice project as a whole.

In a rather extraordinary circular movement, one of the selected photographs showed puppets in Saxon traditional costumes that souvenir outlets offer for sale, such as the shop run by the ethnographic museum itself (“Saxon minions”, figure 9). The students’ comment referred to a Saxon dancing course at the Brukenthal school which is extremely popular with ethnic Romanians.

¹² The singularity of this Saxon legacy should not be exaggerated: Saxon traditional costumes and decorated household items are clearly influenced by the popular arts of neighbouring ethnic groups (Schenk 1992:65-66).



FIGURE 8 - MINIATURE COSTUME: ORIGINALLY, THIS TRADITIONAL COSTUME HAD BEEN SOWN BY HAND FOR A DOLL. I WORE IT WHEN I WAS THREE YEARS OLD, AND THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT I HAVE LEARNT ANYTHING ABOUT SAXON TRADITION. CRISTINA MONICA ANDREI.

In one of our discussions, a student explained her attitude toward Saxon dances: “I wonder if I feel anything at that. It’s just dressing up. Once an old [Saxon] man came to me and simply cried. He told me that he knew the costume and that his wife had worn it once. And he simply cried.” By means of contrast, the emotional reaction of the elderly man underlined the absence of emotional significance of Saxon customs for ethnic Romanian students.

Saxons of different generations disapprove of the contemporary afterlife of these former village dances which reminds them of a “carnival”: from their point of view, young Romanians dress up as somebody who they are not, and give the – arguably – false impression that in this way people continue to embody and honour Saxon “tradition.”

The ethnographer/museum curator managed almost the entirety of the second photo exhibition, with the teacher and myself only assisting in the writing of an explanatory note. To my surprise, they opened the exhibition in the presence of some of our group participants who dressed up as Saxons, displaying the costumes used in the dance class so as to fit in with the occasion (figure 10). The exhibition was not about all Transylvanian

minorities, including Roma, as the curator had announced at first, but only about Saxons and another minor German-speaking community. Only one of the volunteers at the opening ceremony had Saxon ancestry.

My first reaction was to view this choice critically, as it seemed to go in the direction of a certain reification of “Saxon culture”.¹³ Since the opening of the borders in 1989, and the mass emigration that ensued, Saxon émigrés, Transylvanians and tourists increasingly equate “Saxon culture” with visible and tangible objects such as pottery, costumes and other textiles which anyone can easily preserve, pass on, or carry away in emigrants’ luggage, produce anew and sell to anyone else. Saxons living in Germany, tourists of all nationalities, tourism and museum professionals constantly participate in this commodification. By focusing on

FIGURE 9 - SAXON MINIONS: ALTHOUGH THE SAXONS HAVE EMIGRATED, THEIR TRADITION LIVES ON. THERE IS AN OPTIONAL CLASS IN OUR SCHOOL IN WHICH STUDENTS LEARN SAXON DANCES. IULIA BOZOVICI, MIHAI CARABULEA, RALUCA GHELBERE.



FIGURE 10 - OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION “LANDLERI PRINTRI SAȘI” IN THE MUSEUM OF SAXON ETHNOGRAPHY, SIBIU, 27 JUNE 2014 DIANA TATU.



material culture, commodification silences the significance of traditional Saxon institutions such as neighbourhood, fraternity and sorority groups, and the importance of the complex and interwoven social relations which made up Transylvanian Saxon communities before their disintegration.

The costumes that the students donned at the opening, together with the biased selection of photos, seemed to partake in this drive towards commodification. At first sight, the folkloric dresses, worn by ethnic Romanians in a 21st century town, seemed utterly “out of place” at the exhibition opening. Yet, as will be shown later on, we can interpret the students’ choice in a rather different way.

SAXON LEGACY, GERMAN LANGUAGE: ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

When we asked the project participants to illustrate on what occasions they encountered German or Saxon elements in their everyday family life, most chose to photograph (school) books, tourist souvenirs from trips to Germany or German-made household items. The comments made it clear that they valued the supposedly superior quality of German brands, just as they appreciated the added value brought to their education by the Brukenthal school. Through everyday consumption habits, people associate Germany with higher living standards in purely material terms. While this is true for most Romanians, Brukenthal students are different in that, through education, German aspects also seep into their intellectual and cultural practices.

The idea of a German-Romanian “mixture” (figure 12) is noteworthy in that it also appeared in our pre-project student survey, albeit in a different context. A 16-year old female student wrote: “To my mind, Transylvanian Saxons are a mixture of Germans and Romanians. They are strict, but they also make exceptions.” Similarly, a 17-year old explained their conviction that Transylvania shared in “the best of the two countries (Germany and Romania).” This self-positioning in a liminal space relates as much to the present situation as to future aspirations, as will become clear later on.

In general, a hierarchical view of everything “Romanian” and “German,” from everyday consumer products, degrees of economic development, state governance to supposed behaviour standards, “culture,” and “civilisation,” was a consistent leitmotiv in students’ commentaries.

When asked about their opinions about Romania and Germany, most students spontaneously defined the two countries by setting up a contrast: “Germany is an organised country. Romania is an unorganised country.” “Germany is a very well organised and developed country. [...] Romania is a country that is not very well developed.” “Germany is clean, civilised, open to new things. Romania is dirty, uncivilised, 50 years behind.” “Germany is a clean place with educated people. In Romania there is dirt in the streets, the country is governed by corrupt people.” “Germany: good people, order, professionalism, clean-

¹³ Visual anthropologists are increasingly aware of the risk that the images produced in research contexts can be misused as agents of cultural reification (Gubrium and Harper 2013:26).

liness. Romania: disorder, dirt, bad people.” “Germany is the opposite of Romania. Romania is the opposite of Germany.” Obviously, this “Germany” was more of an imaginary construct than a real experience: “I have never been in Germany, but I imagine that it is a beautiful, disciplined, organised country,” said a 16 year-old girl.

Those hierarchically ordered associations also informed the photographic productions of the students in a subtle manner. For instance, students attributed everyday cleanliness and diligence to an alleged German/Saxon influence (figure 13).

Interestingly, a photograph of a museum courtyard (figure 14) triggered some debate among the students. The group chose to write the following commentary: “Order above all: This garden reflects German order.” Some participants contested the implication that the Saxons or Germans designed this garden. The photographers defended their photograph

FIGURE 11 - EVERYTHING A GIRL NEEDS: ALL THESE ARE COSMETIC PRODUCTS FROM GERMANY THAT I HAVE AT HOME. YOU CAN BUY HIGH-QUALITY PRODUCTS FROM GERMANY IN THE SHOPS. DIANA GÎNDILĂ.



FIGURE 12 - ON MY BOOKSHELVES, IN MY LIFE: MY LIFE IS A MIXTURE OF GERMAN AND ROMANIAN ELEMENTS IN DIFFERENT QUANTITIES. ANISIA MANEA.





FIGURE 13 -ROMANIANS CAN ALSO WORK HARD: EVEN THOUGH THE SAXONS EMIGRATED LONG AGO, THEIR DILIGENCE IS STILL REFLECTED IN THE CLEAN HOUSEHOLDS OF THE ROMANIANS. CRISTINA COTOARA.

by saying that even if that garden in particular did not owe its existence to Saxons, they wanted to express the idea of Saxon-inspired order symbolically.¹⁴

The desolate state of a building bewildered a student group which had set out to take photographs in the office of a local German-language newspaper: “We expected there to be something big and perhaps also new, but there was a dacha next to it. We did not want to photograph it, there was dirt everywhere.” Put off by the gloomy yard and entrance of the building, the students preferred to photograph a still life with the latest issue of the newspaper rather than to associate disorder and dirt with a “German” institution.

Another example was a photograph of German books in the school library (figure 15), or, even more explicitly, a photograph of an ancient Saxon manuscript in a museum: “The Saxons’ gateway to knowledge: if we had lived some centuries earlier, we would have remained stupid.”

As these examples show, students consistently ascribed a civilising influence to the Transylvanian Saxons. When asked in what ways Transylvania differed from the rest of Romania, they made explicit connections with the Saxon past: “Transylvania is better because the Saxons were here and they work with Germany”; “Saxons are the reason for which Transylvania is as it is today. They have improved a part of Romania.” “Transylvania is the most beautiful part of Romania, one notices the German influence on the people and on the manner of organisation.” “Many Saxons used to live in Transylvania. That’s why it’s cleaner and there is order.” “Saxons have improved Transylvania a lot. They have transformed Sibiu into the best town in Romania.” “Compared to the rest of Romania, there is a different mentality in Transylvania for we have contacts with other countries because of the Transylvanian Saxons and the German language. That’s why we are different, we are more open-mind-

¹⁴ The theme of “German” or “Saxon” order, as opposed to “Romanian” disorder, chaos and improvisation, has political resonances as well. In 2000, the Saxon mayor had been elected on a bet to “tidy up” the town after decades of “Romanian” rule, a task which he was apparently seen to deliver. Similar themes were developed in the presidential election campaign of 2014.

FIGURE 14 - ORDER ABOVE ALL: THIS GARDEN REFLECTS GERMAN ORDER. RALUCA GHELBERE, DIANA TATU, OANA VASIU.



ed.” “Transylvania is so well developed because of the Saxons.” “Transylvania is more like Germany.”

Clearly, in the minds of many project participants, “Saxon” and “German” stood for something else, something different from and only remotely related with the German-speaking teachers, neighbours, friends or family members with whom they interacted in everyday life. On occasions, these ethnonyms took on significations that were independent from the actual presence of Saxons or Germans in Transylvania. The past did not necessarily relate to Saxon or German culture or influence, nor to the present condition of the region, but could even refer to visions of the future. A photograph taken by two students, and widely appreciated by all project participants, illustrates this particular aspect. Students see the German-

FIGURE 15 - HISTORY AND CULTURE: THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IS A PRECIOUS SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE WHICH IS AVAILABLE FOR EACH BRUKENTHAL STUDENT. CRISTINA MONICA ANDREI, BENJAMIN RUOPP, DIANA TATU.



language school as a pathway toward the world outside Romania, a keyhole through which students can glance into a future that will take them beyond the limits of their Transylvanian hometown. The photographers wanted to express that the value of German-language education lays in its opening of future possibilities. The survey confirmed this idea. Students talked about Germany as “a country in which you have many opportunities,” “a civilised country where you can earn more money than here and where people treat you with respect,” “a very interesting country where you can have a better life.” In a way, students applied their individual career plans to the country at large: “We have to learn from the Germans for our future.” “Germany is the perfect country. Everything is more correct than in our place.” “Germany is a model for other countries.” “Romania tries to be more like other countries, more orderly and more civilised.”

The students portrayed Germans/Saxons as harbingers of “knowledge” and “civilisation” in the Transylvanian past and as purveyors of quality consumer goods in the present. What is more, an imagined Germany – a country of riches and opportunities, a clean, well-ordered, and rule-based paradise inhabited by educated, respectful people – has become an ideal that many students strive to attain individually and collectively.

WHAT MATTERS: ETHNICITY OR THE ECONOMY?

Read in conjunction with the statements made in the questionnaires, the keyhole photograph takes on an even greater resonance. Non-Saxon Transylvanian families pursue specific strategies in choosing German-language schools for their children. Foreign-language education is a project intended to open up international perspectives for young Romanians, prospects of higher education abroad, professional and material success.



FIGURE 16 - A GLANCE INTO THE FUTURE: THE BRUKENTHAL SCHOOL IS THE KEYHOLE THROUGH WHICH WE SEE THE WORLD OUTSIDE ROMANIA. RALUCA GHELBERE, TEODORA SANDU.

In the questionnaires, many students were extremely specific about their career plans, indicating the names of universities where they planned to enrol after leaving the Brukenthal school. For instance, a 15 year-old student wrote that he wanted to study "computing in Munich," another specified "in Vienna, Austria, or Munich, Germany, probably medicine, ophthalmology," a 16 year-old had plans of moving to "Frankfurt because there is a Lufthansa training centre. I want to be a doctor or a pilot." A student in 11th grade stated that he wanted to "study medicine in Heidelberg and work in Stuttgart".

Socio-economic considerations seem to be paramount for the attractiveness of German-language schools. Saxon traditions passed on by the school have an importance for families with Saxon background, but they are not a central incentive for ethnic Romanian parents encouraging their children to apply for schools like the Colegiul Brukenthal. Similarly, all throughout the Photovoice project, but particularly in the villages, the participants subtly reminded us of the fact that while they were fully aware of ethnic differences, ethnicity was not an all-pervasive factor in their lives. In their majority, the project participants came from urban middle-class families. For the Photovoice project, they documented village life with a certain amusement, showing that they were well aware of the economic – and cultural – gap that separated them from rural Transylvanians, whatever their ethnicity (figure 17). Farm animals and child work proved to be particularly noteworthy. Back in Sibiu, a student insisted on telling us: "I have seen the difference between us and the people in the villages. A very big difference."

Interestingly, the project participants often thought outside ethnic categories; they did not particularly notice that the educational facilities for Roma children which we showed them were run by German or Austrian expatriates, and very much enjoyed interacting with the children above all. The photograph "Culture cocktail" (figure 18) captures the pleasure of playing with the young Roma villagers: "Children's games have a stronger influence than the boundaries between the three ethnicities: Romanian, Saxon, Roma". We can read this photograph as a call to relativize the importance of ethnic categories, underlining the fact that the idiom of ethnicity could hide other interests or considerations.¹⁵

DISCUSSION

This final part of the article discusses the results of the Brukenthal Photovoice project, assessing its contribution to the understanding of the ethno-linguistic configurations in present-day Transylvania, as well as examining a number of questions the project raises with regard to the methods applied.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH COMMODIFICATION?

As shown by the students' motivations for choosing the Brukenthal school, the aspect of Germanness or Saxonness

¹⁵ Cf. Brubaker's, Loveman's and Stamatov's call not to take the universal salience of ethnic categories for granted (Brubaker et al. 2004:46). The relative lack of importance of ethnicity, outside of conflict situations, was confirmed by Brubaker's research in the Transylvanian town of Cluj (Brubaker 2006). While many students pointed out differences between "Germans"/"Saxons" and "Romanians" in the survey, others insisted that "we are all the same."



FIGURE 17 - DIFFERENCES: PEOPLE IN THE VILLAGE OF ROTHBERG ARE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE IN TOWN AS YOU CAN SEE IN THIS PHOTOGRAPH, TOO. YET I HAVE NOTICED THAT HAPPY AND OPTIMISTIC PEOPLE HIDE BEHIND THOSE DIRTY OLD CLOTHES. THEY WERE NOT AFRAID TO SHOW ME THEIR BEAUTIFUL SMILE AND TO BRIGHTEN UP MY DAY THIS WAY. TEODORA SANDU.

that is most highly valued in Romania, and that Transylvanians regardless of their ethnicity can and often want to acquire, is the German language, in as much as it guarantees a good secondary education in a selective school as well as access to German-language universities later on. German skills maximise young people's chances of entering a more lucrative section of the job market, even within Romania. Hopes for a better future, aspirations for upward social mobility hinge upon German language proficiency, and the positive valuation of anything related to Germany is contingent upon this linguistic-cum-economic strategy.¹⁶

The answers to our survey showed that the plan of getting access to more lucrative labour markets through investment in language skills goes hand-in-hand with a hierarchical vision that ascribes economic and organisational superiority to Germany, as opposed to "underdeveloped" Romania.

Arguably, this more metaphorical than real "Germany" serves as a metonymy for another loaded geographical concept that has made a come-back in post-1989 public debate in Romania.

¹⁶ According to the 2011 census data, 1.1 million Romanian nationals live abroad. Other estimates amount to 3 million. Most émigrés are young, urban, and skilled (OECD 2014: 290). One Brukenenthal student stated in the questionnaire that "everyone wants to leave".

FIGURE 18 - CULTURE COCKTAIL: CHILDREN'S GAMES HAVE A STRONGER INFLUENCE THAN THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THE THREE ETHNICITIES: ROMANIAN, SAXON, ROMA. CRISTINA COTOARĂ.



As several commentators have analysed, “Europe” stands as a cipher for progress, an economic benchmark or improvement ideal, a coveted alter ego, possibly even a civilizational and political utopia never to be realised, but nonetheless considered to be worth striving for (Heinen 2013; Maner 2013; Vidmar Horvat 2012). Like this imagined Europe, the “Germany” that many Brukenenthal students have in mind is partly a distortion (Hann 2012:91), rather than an accurate representation of economic and political realities, but this distinction hardly matters to the people concerned. Many students strive for German language proficiency and some degree of acculturation to what German standards are supposed to be because this increases their social prestige and economic opportunities. By stressing their particular relationship with the German language and Saxon influence in their history, Transylvanians can also position themselves as more “European” and less “Balkanised” than Transcarpathian Romanians.¹⁷

Pro-German choices have an economic and political subtext. This also adds a layer of meaning to the folkloristic show at the second photo exhibition that sprang from our Photovoice project and that I found so bewildering at first. Probing into what led to this peculiar presentation at the ethnographic museum made it possible to understand that the “dressing up” as Saxons was a revelatory incident rather than an anachronistic error. Listening to the project participants, it became clear that the dresses and dances are the only elements of “Saxon”/“German” culture that the bilingual Brukenenthal students can adapt rather easily, apart from the German

¹⁷ Incidentally, a few months after the Brukenenthal Photovoice project, the positive German/Saxon stereotype swept all over Romania when Klaus Johannis was elected president, promising to deliver high-quality work. Unsurprisingly, Johannis obtained his highest scores in Transylvania, the big cities and in the diaspora.

language. I learnt that the initiative to wear these dresses was theirs, and they proudly do so whenever they publicly display the presence of their school in the town, such as at the annual May festival. Unlike kinship, family history and name, which cannot be changed and nobody wishes to change, language skills and dress can be acquired voluntarily and, crucially, they may co-exist with other choices: students switch effortlessly between Romanian and German, between modern international and traditional Saxon (and on occasion Romanian) dress. While making German nationals wonder and smile, and triggering astonishment and sometimes criticism among Saxons, the traditional costumes, which only German-speaking students can wear, position them in the Romanian context close to anything German, thus enhancing their social prestige.¹⁸ Dancing or publicly speaking in Saxon costumes, ethnic Romanians testify as much to their present educational commitment as to their future ambitions.

Germany and Romania, or “Europe” and the “Balkans,” constitute the main dichotomy that informs students’ comments on their personal projects as much as their assessment of Romania’s economic and political situation. This observation also sheds light on another conundrum mentioned before, i.e. the constant confusion between “Saxon” and “German”. In a binary east-west, or rather northwest-southeast scheme, there is probably no need for an additional ethnic boundary between Germans and Saxons. This particular distinction is essential to Germans and Saxons themselves, being aware of what separates them, but bears little practical importance for the young ethnic Romanians who participated in the Photovoice project. Saxon history lessons are part of the school curriculum, but students hardly remember their content. Faced with this indifference, the school does not act as the “vector of memory” that it could theoretically be. For the generation born after 1989, the present and the future clearly hold more interest than their region’s or a specific ethnic group’s history.

Through the Photovoice project, these young Transylvanians taught us that the boundary that matters most for them is a linguistic one, language being the key to geographical and social mobility. Regardless of formal citizenship, the categories that they use divide their social environment primarily in German-speakers and Romanian-speakers, with themselves moving freely from one side to the other. Thus they sketch the outlines of a post-national world, catching up rather unexpectedly with Transylvania’s pre-national past.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM A SLIGHTLY UNORTHODOX PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

MIXED METHODS

The Brukenthal research project deviated from traditional Photovoice methodology in several ways. We opted for a cer-

¹⁸ Similarly, Jean and John Comaroff (2009) have demonstrated that the increasingly prevalent “ethno-commerce” or “identity industry” can also have emancipatory effects.

tain degree of methodological eclecticism, combining the photographic and explanatory work of the project participants with a questionnaire. As we show in the article, this survey often helped to spell out what were mere allusions in some photos or comments and might not have been noticed otherwise. The questions had a broader scope than the Photovoice work in the sense that they dealt with students' social relations, educational history, opinions and attitudes that went beyond everyday experience. Many of these issues would have been difficult to capture by means of photographs. Compared to the Photovoice project, the questionnaire reached more respondents and could thus help to assess the representativity of the project group sample. Only volunteers participated in our project, with ethnic Saxons (or "half-Saxons", as participants would put it) being over-represented compared to the overall student population of the school. Partially, the questionnaire also compensated for the shortness of the actual Photovoice project, which had to take place in a very intense form during a single week, instead of spreading out over a longer time-span.¹⁹

On the negative side, presenting students with a questionnaire during a school lesson, as my collaborator and co-project organiser did some months before the Photovoice project, puts students in the situation of a typical school exercise (the teacher hands out documents to be filled in). Once we finished the Photovoice project, some participants told me that they sometimes just write down anything in response to questionnaires because they have to. This "confession" showed that some measure of trust had been established during the project, but it also raised the question of reliability of the questionnaire data. With regards to surveys, or indeed any task proposed by a researcher, how can we tell apart what is sincere, from what is only written, said, or photographed to please us? Clearly, personal relations are indispensable to gauge the authenticity of participants' contributions.

Finally, even if filled in with utmost honesty, questionnaires will always favour the more articulate and literate individuals in the target group. The mixed methods approach allowed us to cater for two different kinds of literacy, one purely verbal, the other more visual.²⁰

PHOTOVOICE IN A SCHOOL CONTEXT: WHAT DOES "PARTICIPATION" MEAN?

Working in a school context and across an age divide, we could not disrupt the inherent power asymmetry at all times during this particular Photovoice project. At the very beginning, before fully assimilating the Photovoice approach, students expected to be "taught" something. The project co-leaders could not always resist the temptation to "teach," even if this only took the form of gentle feedback on some photos or comments.

What is more, it proved inevitable for some coercion to occur. The project took place during the week preceding the Easter holidays; other Brukenthal student groups had travelled

¹⁹ Many Photovoice projects are fast-paced; even one-day events are possible (Gubrium and Harper 2013:36, 75). In our case, the students' interest might have waned over a longer time period.

²⁰ For a balanced appreciation of mixed methods research cf. Creswell (2011) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011).

abroad with their teachers while we regularly came across students from other parts of Romania who visited Sibiu during the “a different kind of school” week. Given this “almost vacation” atmosphere, our participants’ work ethos was rather impressive. But given a choice, students would have preferred to start later and finish earlier on most days. After 4 pm, a certain restlessness set in, some students would leave the group even if the work at hand was not finished yet, or call their parents to fetch them when we were far from the town centre.

As mentioned earlier, we did not realise the full extent of student participation in the part of the project that entailed the final selection of photographs for the two exhibitions, even if this happened on the base of a mutual agreement. Left to their own devices (which they did not want to), students would probably have choose more “cute” and “funny” photographs of piglets, other farm animals, village children and themselves. Conversely, the history teacher and myself were not involved in the selection of photos for the exhibition in the ethnographic museum. So was this a project with imperfect participation? And does it matter? In all honesty, the answer to both questions must be affirmative – with a caveat. More student participation would have led to a different exhibition, but not necessarily a more interesting or an aesthetically more pleasing one (and perhaps it would not have been presentable on time). Most importantly, the project participants did not wish to be more involved and preferred to leave some of the organisational work and decision-making to the adult co-leaders of the project. Looking back, not only on the final stages of the project with the frantic preparation of an exhibition that made everyone proud, but also on the previous days, one notices that there were different degrees of participation depending on the individuals, the tasks and the times of the day concerned, as is probably true for many, if not most participatory visual research projects.²¹

THE LIMITS OF “COMMUNITY”

Ideally, there should be an almost complete concordance between the concerns and objectives of Photovoice participants and those of the project organisers. The latter identify with the difficulties of the community members, provide them with the tools that help them to express their points of view and to propose solutions to given problems so as to reach audiences that can make a difference.

In our case, finding a common focus was sometimes less obvious. On occasion, the project co-leaders would not entirely agree on what was interesting and important, as evidenced by the difference between the two photo exhibitions.

Ambiguous roles (teacher/project facilitator) caused some occasional dissonances and caused rather productive tensions. Lack of planning or prior consultation was not a factor as we took care to be in constant and open communication before, during and after the main part of the project. More importantly,

²¹ Similarly, Alicia Blum-Ross reported that the East London students participating in her video project were unequally involved during the postproduction phase (2013:97).

the collaborators' differences in outlook reveal an underlying conceptual problem: to what communities did the participants and the organisers belong, and what community was the immediate audience of our research project? The learning and teaching community of the Brukenenthal school? The Saxon minority? The linguistic community of native German speakers? German speakers with Romanian citizenship, whatever their ethnicity? Or non-native German speakers only? Was it the multi-ethnic community of inhabitants of Sibiu, or perhaps of the wider region? Depending on the answer, different group participants, organisers, and photographed people would find themselves either on the inside or the outside of the community. Given the complexity of the ethnic and linguistic situation, there could not be a clear-cut response to the question. We can best visualise all these communities as partly concentric, partly overlapping circles.²² Implementing a Photovoice approach was a particular challenge in these circumstances.

PHOTOVOICE WITHOUT ACTIVISM?

The project participants hardly qualified as "passive victims" (Harper 2012:202), which intensified the challenges of the project. Compared to typical target groups of Photovoice projects, the Brukenenthal students enjoy social privileges and have hopes for a future in which their educational efforts pay off, literally speaking. Admittedly, the empowerment aspect was subtler in this context, but one would be mistaken to assume that it did not play a role at all.

Insisting on discussions and written comments on each photograph selected by the students, we encouraged them to express and defend their choices and opinions, which is rarely the case in traditional school lessons. The school director listened to and read through the comments on the students' learning experience and visibly took them to heart, giving his point of view on different matters. The exhibitions were an object of pride and could be showed to fellow students and family. At the end of the project, we delivered colour-printed attendance certificates with official logos, stamped and signed, which could enhance the students' CVs if they wished. Thus, capacity-building took place in various ways, but not always in a manner that we had anticipated. For instance, it proved to be unnecessary to provide the students with the second-hand digital cameras that I had brought to Romania; some brought high-end photographic equipment with them, and others had all the technical skills needed to transfer photographs from different kinds of digital support to the school computers and to assemble slide shows for the group discussions.

While the students did not need any technical help, we could guide them in other respects: how to manage the digital information overflow that they tended to produce; how to use photography as a means of expression; how to argue their case when selecting and commenting their "best" photographs; and, how to arrange their photos for the purposes of an exhibition.

²² For a problematized assessment of the "community" concept, cf. the volume edited by Gerald W. Creed (2006).

With digital photographic devices becoming ever more affordable, and perhaps more importantly, integrated in the millions of mobile phones owned by people with very modest resources, Photovoice projects are probably less and less concerned with giving access to technology, and might increasingly concentrate on helping people put their already existing photographic skills to political uses.

Working with rather privileged, or at least not particularly disadvantaged, participants shaped the project in yet another way. Rather than exposing oppression or injustice, we explored everyday experience and identity issues with the main aim of making an unheard group's views known, of generating and spreading new knowledge. Our Photovoice project differed from most in that the activism element was less prevalent. Researchers use participatory visual research to help groups express their identity without claiming any public action apart from recognition. Yet methods such as mapping techniques, video diaries or digital storytelling (Fine 2012; Gauntlett and Holzwarth 2006; Prosser 2011:487), as well as in-depth interviews might be more adequate means for pursuing these research interests further, once the Photovoice approach has opened a discursive space, as it undoubtedly did in the Brukenenthal project.

CONCLUSIONS

Methodological eclecticism is clearly a path worth exploring, particularly when the full Photovoice canon cannot be applied. Ideally, researchers can combine the strengths of different approaches without jeopardizing the participatory ethos of Photovoice.²³

In the case of the Brukenenthal project, the combination of a visual with a more verbal-oriented method proved to be fruitful. The participant's productions, examined in conjunction with a careful analysis of the survey results, relativized the importance of ethnicity and underlined the impact of socio-economic concerns. The project also helped to learn more about the young Transylvanian generation's attitude to the past. In post-socialist countries, memory is said to oscillate between nostalgia and repudiation of the socialist era (Light and Young 2015).²⁴ Both attitudes imply value judgements about history. By contrast, the young Romanians who participated in our project displayed rather neutral feelings about the past. Born after 1989, they have witnessed neither the revolution nor the immediate transformation period. Indirectly, they benefit not only from Germany's soft power strategies to enlarge its sphere of influence in the East (by funding German-language schools), but also from Romanian policies under socialism. Romania was the only Eastern European country to preserve German-language schools, while creating a climate of insecurity and scarcity which motivated Saxons to leave in their thousands, "making place" for ethnic Romanians in their schools.

²³ For instance, questionnaires may be more participatory than ours was: community members can elaborate, administer and analyse by community members surveys by themselves.

²⁴ With "excision" or denial of the socialist era as a third option, particularly in official discourse in post-1989 Romania (Buchowski 2012:80; Light and Young 2015:225)

There is an uncanny parallel with the village Roma we met: the departure of the Saxons gave both groups, rural Roma and urban ethnic Romanian families, an opportunity to improve their situation to some extent, although they are at opposite ends of the socio-economic spectrum. In the post-post-socialist era, after EU accession and economic liberalisation, ethnic identifications seem to matter less than the “good life”, however defined: attainment of individual goals, social prestige or material success.

Where does this observation leave the Saxon community? The new Brukenthal students will not swell the ranks of the ethnic German minority, at best they are objective allies who appropriate the Saxon heritage by performing it in their everyday lives: dancing, wearing costumes and speaking the language. With time, Transylvanians will probably not see these performances as second-hand, less authentic imitations, but as a new tradition which expresses this generation’s specific subject position.

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ETHNOGRAPHIC DRAWING: ELEVEN BENEFITS OF USING A SKETCHBOOK FOR FIELDWORK

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to valorise and understand the potential of ethnographic drawings for anthropological fieldwork, exploring their relations to ways of making records and visual research. I argue that drawing contributes positively to anthropological research and vice-versa: researching anthropologically contributes to drawing the world about us. After a brief review of the literature, I present eleven benefits of using sketchbooks and drawings in ethnography, discussing topics related to the methodological challenges of fieldwork, such as accessibility, memory, temporality, spatiality, visual perception, forms of recording, dialogue with informants, participatory methods and the sharing of results.

KEYWORDS

anthropology, drawing, ethnography, methodology, visual anthropology, graphics, imagery.

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linked to the anthropological understanding that the symbolic meaning of an object is a product of social relationships and can never be taken for granted. As Roland Barthes (1990) put it, we read images in terms of the mentally associated images we already know.

Many authors from both the art world and the field of anthropology have persuaded me that a bridge can be built between fieldwork and observational sketching. On the art side, the books by Salavisa (2008), Gregory (2003) and Campanario (2011) were crucial in terms of defining a pathway for contemporary urban drawing. As I wrote in 2011, the drawings of these urban sketchers are not simply drawings: they are ‘informed-shaped’ by a particular ‘worldview.’ In many respects, a worldview similar to the anthropological one: the emphasis on drawing ‘on location,’ the use of direct observation, the search for a narrative, the providing of a context and the moral basis (to be truthful).⁴

The sketchbook is a common object both for the urban sketcher and for the anthropologist in the field. We know that it comprises a historical tool popularized in the fifteenth century, with Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) being one of its most famous users. “Without a drawing, one cannot express or clarify one’s idea,” wrote Francesco di Giorgio Martini (1481-1484), one of the authors who inspired Da Vinci to produce some 30,000 pages of notes and sketches. The concept of the “explanatory power of images” became consolidated during Da Vinci’s lifetime, leading to the use of drawing as a scientific research tool. Indeed it is Da Vinci himself who wrote next to one of his famous studies of anatomy: “Which words, O writer, will you use to describe with similar perfection the entire configuration that this drawing here provides?”⁵ In Massironi’s definition (2010: 17), the design becomes more and more a ‘simple’ instrument but, at the same time, ‘complex’ enough to describe or explain a wide range of phenomena.

The production of visual and graphic records is also part of anthropology’s history. In the pioneering volume *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* (1951 [1870]), clear mention is made of it in the ‘Methods’ chapter, included among the four “Essential Types of Documentation”: “1) Descriptive notes and records of investigation; 2) Maps, plans, diagrams, *drawings* and photographs; 3) Texts, etc.; 4) Genealogical and census-data.” From today’s perspective we know that virtually all concepts associated with the words of this list have been transformed.

In the ethnographic enterprise, however, the concept of drawing seems to have been little questioned within the discipline’s literature. Its formal roots are embedded in the eighteenth century when the Encyclopaedists systematized knowledge in thousands of articles and illustrations that eventually became sedimented as a model for the production of technical visual information (cf. Bloom 2004 and Gombrich 2000).⁶ In the plates published in the Encyclopaedia, parts, materials and tools are presented in detail, with their variations and modes of

⁴ On the many topics related to observational drawing, see Kuschner (2011, 2012) and Côte-Real (2014).

⁵ The source of the Martini citation and other quotes is Lester (2014), p. 26, p. 166 and p. 239, respectively. Richard Sennet (2009:111) also reminds us that drawing has long provided solutions to the problem of the limits of verbal language.

⁶ All the images included in this text’s first section can be seen at desenhosetnograficos.wordpress.com/

use. The drawings document the world, but also teach, ‘civilize’ and spread the knowledge of a once elite group. The graphic record adheres to Renaissance notions of perspective and a taxonomically accurate representation of the volumes, textures and sizes of objects. The main features of this visual model are its use of the frontal plane, an absence of background, the adoption of a fixed point of view and the apportioning of an ‘ideal model’ in parts and detailed plates (Massironi 2010:59). This was the graphic language employed by the publications and encyclopaedias of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the areas of anatomy, zoology and botany, from where many plates in the Encyclopaedia were directly copied (Pinault-Sørensen 1992). Eriksen and Nielsen (2007) show that it was revolutionary for the encyclopaedists to be interested in the material and professional culture of ‘ordinary people,’ such as craftsmen, technicians and farmers. They built the foundations of an academic environment interested in everyday life, in the world of labour relations and production, and in the possibilities for comparing different cultures and societies.

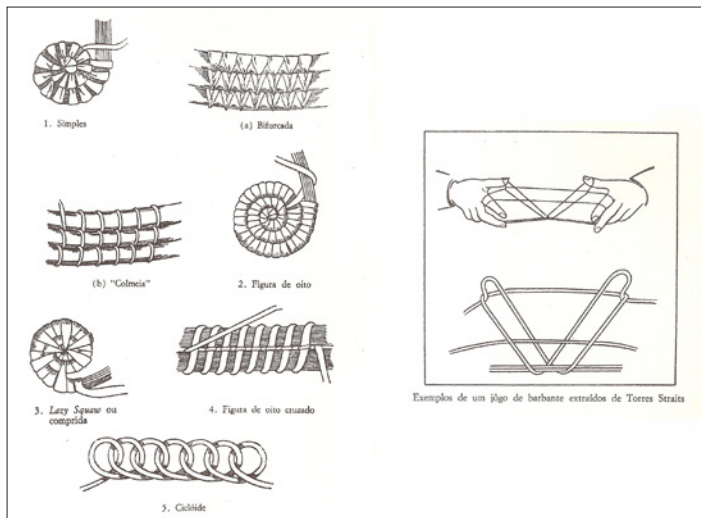
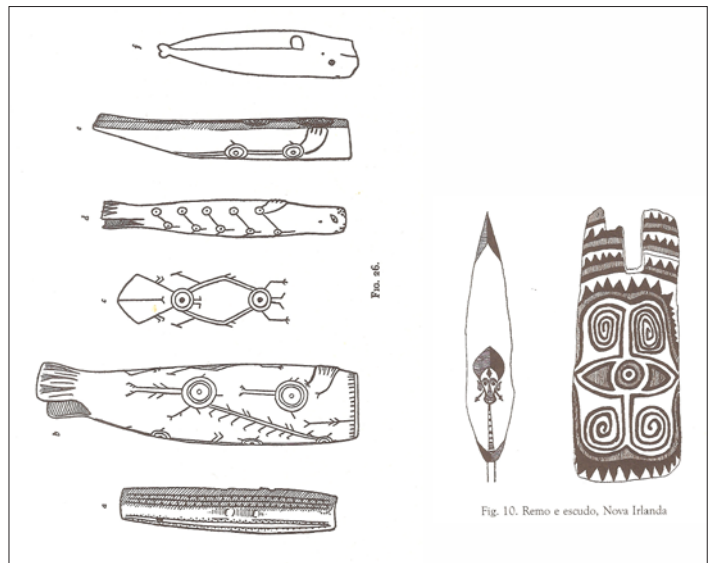


IMAGE 2 - "SPECIMENS OF EVERY KIND OF BASKET AND MATS SHOULD BE OBTAINED; IN VARIOUS STAGES OF PREPARATION ETC." (LEFT) "EXAMPLE OF A STRING TRICK FROM THE TORRES STRAITS" (RIGHT). DRAWINGS INCLUDED IN NOTES AND QUERIES ON ANTHROPOLOGY, P. 275 AND 338.

However, for now I wish to turn back to the drawings in the context of the nineteenth century when anthropology was born as an academic discipline. The first edition of the aforementioned *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* dates from 1870. According to Urry (1972: 51), the 1909 edition underwent considerable changes at the hands of William R. Rivers. Among other additions, Rivers revised the ‘Methods’ chapter, replacing the proposed lengthy questionnaires with the emphasis on learning the native language, collecting material, writing notes, and making drawings, plans and diagrams. Some plates added to the volume probably date from this edition (or later) since they include examples from the Torres Straits Expedition. The pictures above have been extracted from the ‘Material culture’ section of the book.

IMAGE 3 - STUDY OF NEEDLE CASES FROM ALASKA (LEFT); OAR AND SHIELD FROM NEW IRELAND (RIGHT). DRAWINGS INCLUDED IN BOAS, RACE, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE, P. 587 (LEFT) AND IN PRIMITIVE ART [ARTE PRIMITIVA], P. 17 (RIGHT).

These plates follow the same visual grammar of the Encyclopaedia. This setting of form and design is present in anthropological publications throughout the first half of the twentieth century. It comprises the same visual format reproduced by Malinowski (1978: 90) in his drawings on the principles of stability and conservation of canoes in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. In fact, this still remains the hegemonic model in the discipline today. Its importance and usage increase as the researcher's interest turns to aspects of art and material culture. The work of Franz Boas, for example, contains hundreds of pages filled with illustrations from this genre, as we will see below.



A few decades later, in 1955, the illustration of the penis sheath sets included by Levi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques* (2000:211) follows the same graphic style. However, this book also contains drawings that pointed in new aesthetic and symbolic directions. The first novelty is the appearance of the anthropologist's own graphic gesture, though his name does not appear next to the image. The second innovation is that this authorship is expressly amateurish, not done by a professional illustrator. Thus there is little concern with making a clean, precise and symmetrical line of the kind seen in the encyclopaedia visual model. The emphasis is on the experience, on the "I have been there," in the field, interacting with those who produced the original designs (as shown in the Caduveo face-paintings, below on the left). A third element in the graphical syntax of the illustrations is the inclusion of drawings produced by the natives themselves, again bringing the question of authorship to the foreground of the image's representation. Here, though, it is a 'native' authorship, neither amateur nor professional in the common acceptance of these terms (as shown in the captions to the image on the right, below).



This ‘combined authorship’ of illustrations is relatively frequent in contemporary publications in the anthropology of art, such as Vidal (1992). It is important to note that native drawings are not necessarily taken to be ‘just drawings,’ in the generic sense attributed to these terms, like illustrations of a set of baskets, for example. A whole range of theoretical problems and concepts – including those concerning the agency of art works – is raised in this anthropological field, as explored by Vidal (1992), Gell (2010) and Lagrou (2007) among others.

Returning to the universe of ethnographic drawings, some anthropologists stand out for their willingness and ability to draw systematically in their fieldwork diaries. Such material is seldom published or otherwise accessible. An exception are the notebooks of Monica Freeman (2009) recording her research among the Iban of Borneo (Malaysia). The anthropologist produced hundreds of illustrations in situ and from photographs, using both the encyclopaedic-scientific model and life-drawing scenes of native life, employing a variety of illustrative styles in ink and watercolour. The following are two examples from the published volume containing her ethnographic diaries.

Another key author in this setting is Alfred Gell (1993, 2006 and 2010) whose work, shaped by his personal history and a strong interest in the anthropology of art, is full of drawings within the visual frameworks we have seen thus far. In the in-

IMAGE 4 - CADUVEO FACE-DRAWINGS MADE BY THE ANTHROPOLOGIST WITH THE HELP OF A NATIVE WOMAN (LEFT) AND “DRAWINGS BY A CADUVEO LITTLE BOY” (RIGHT). DRAWINGS INCLUDED IN *TRISTES TRÓPICOS*, P. 176 (LEFT) AND P. 174 (RIGHT).



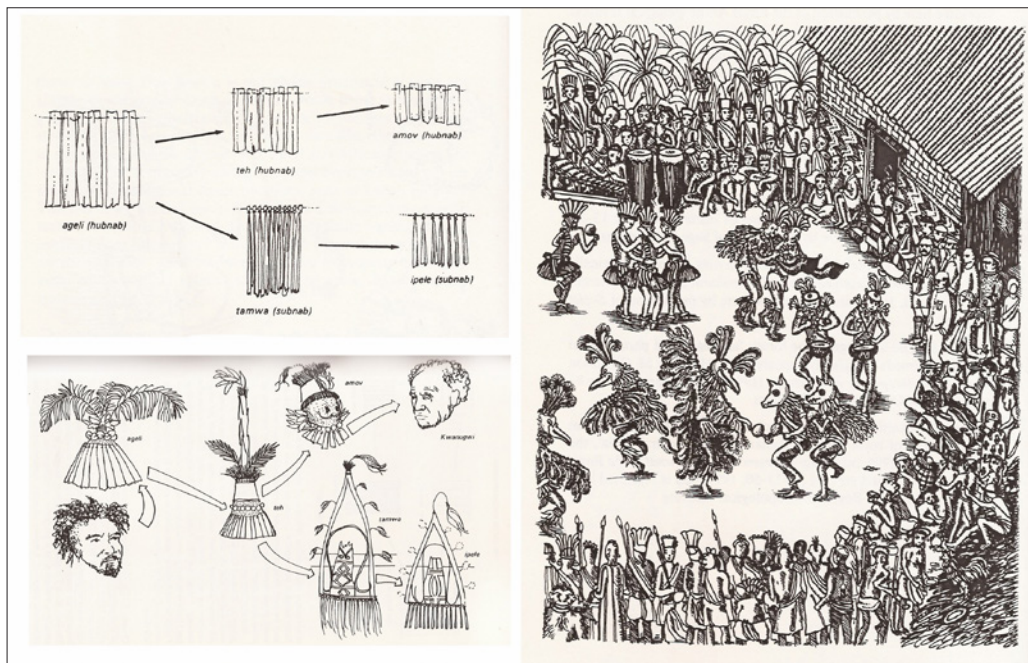
IMAGE 5 - DRAWINGS INCLUDED IN THE IBAN DIARIES OF MONICA FREEMAN, P. 86. (LEFT) AND P. 106 (RIGHT).

trodition to *The Art of Anthropology*, published posthumously, Gell recollects that he always liked to draw and was greatly encouraged by his parents to do so, especially by his mother, who was an illustrator of archaeological expeditions. His relationship to drawing was so strong that he once wrote that all his articles started out from an image (Gell 2006: 11).

In creating his ‘Strathernograms’ – diagrams that graphically translate the anthropological ideas of Marilyn Strathern – Gell undertakes a brief survey of the anthropologists who have resorted to this theoretical visual language, such as Claude Levi-Strauss, Edmund Leach, Meyer Fortes, Roy Wagner and Pierre Bourdieu, only regretting that the anthropology of the late twentieth century was too verbal and insufficiently graphic (2006: 31).⁷ The idea has also been emphasized by Ingold in *Making* (2013), but I will not engage in a more direct conversation with this work here since I mostly disagree with his ontological definitions of drawing (and anthropology). I prefer, as Gell proposed (2009: 252), to set out from the idea that “nothing can be decided in advance” concerning the nature of objects (and thus of drawings), opting to take each line, image or anthropology itself as a search for meaning in the context of social relations.

Gell not only draws himself but backs the notion that images facilitate the assimilation of ideas. Below I reproduce a small sample of his drawings. On the left, a collection of mask fringes and a drawing of the transformation in mask types (this example has a caption stating: “drawn by A. Gell”). On the right, a scene called “Society and the dance,” produced in a comic-book style for the cover of a publication.

⁷ It is important to note that brief surveys of the literature on the use of drawings have been conducted by other anthropologists too, including Afonso & Ramos (2004), Ramos (2010), Taussig (2011) and Wadle (2012).



Exploring very similar concerns to those of Gell, Els Lagrou (2007) also has the rare resourcefulness of an anthropologist who draws on her fieldwork notebook, while simultaneously taking designs and native drawings as the subject matter of her anthropological inquiries. One important aspect of this author's work (e.g. Lagrou 2007) is the presence of diagrams showing how the natives' designs are drawn, as well as the indication of the circumstances in which the designs are produced. Lagrou also pays careful attention to the different media on which the drawings are made (such as sketchbooks, loose sheets of paper, or native bodies, for example), building a complex analysis of the relationships between the artwork and Kaxinawa cosmology.

João Leal (2008), in his article "Retratos do povo: etnografia portuguesa e imagem," provides an important clue to understand the meaning of ethnographic drawings produced in the taxonomic style – or what the author calls the 'technical-ethnographic' style. Analysing the work produced by the research group led by Jorge Dias in Portugal, Leal proposes that we associate their visual records with an ethnographic approach grounded in two basic principles (p. 129): a) The documentation and preservation of images (through drawings, photographs and films) of Portuguese rural life "before it disappears"; and b) Focus on the materiality of peasant life, aimed at 'surveying techniques and technical objects' of their lifestyle in order to establish illustrated typologies. The work of Fernando Galhano (1985), an illustrator who produced hundreds of drawings for Dias's group, reflects these principles and also what Leal (2008: 122) considers an 'artistic mode' of ethnographic drawing.

IMAGE 6 – DRAWINGS INCLUDED IN THE ART OF ANTHROPOLOGY: ESSAYS AND DIAGRAMS, P. 14 (TOP LEFT), P. 15 (BOTTOM LEFT) AND P. XVI (RIGHT).

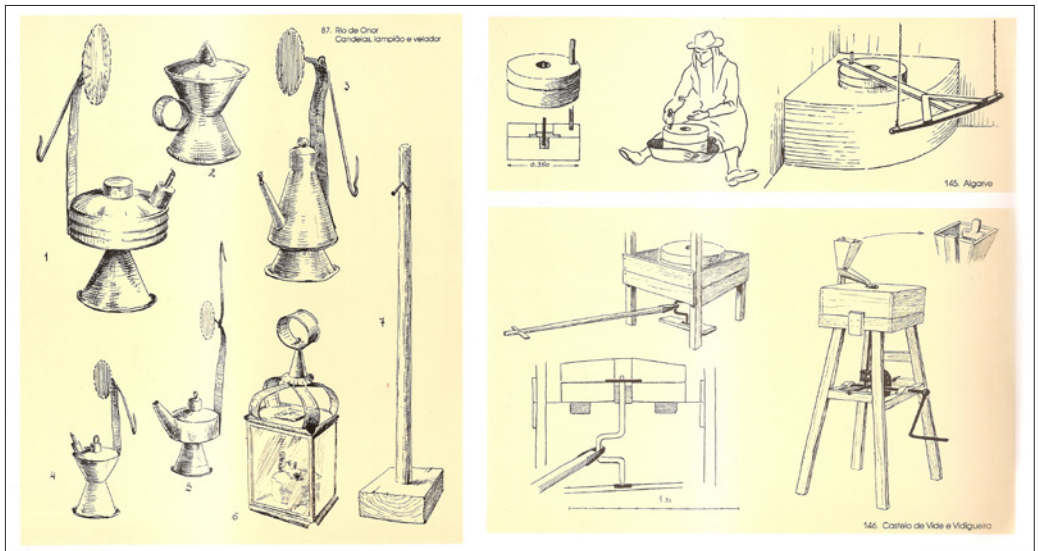


IMAGE 7 - DRAWINGS INCLUDED IN *DESENHO ETNOGRÁFICO* DE FERNANDO GALHANO, P. 87 (LEFT) AND P. 146 (RIGHT).

From the 1960 onward, however, Leal argues, there was a sharp decline in this kind of production to the point that the anthropological scene has become ‘visually mute’ (Leal 2008: 133). Investigations of objects and techniques gave way to new theoretical subjects like ‘social structure’ and ‘value systems,’ little receptive to visual representation. For Leal, it was only in the 1980s, and especially in the 1990s, that fresh anthropological approaches provided a renewed exploration of the visual in ethnography (Leal 2008). However, the use of drawings was not part of this shift...

Ana Isabel Afonso and Manuel João Ramos (2004) help us understand the continuation of this story in Portuguese anthropology, but also in the European and North American settings. The authors take up Leal’s theme, showing that the decline in the use of drawing as a research tool and as a method of ethnographic documentation occurred in a context involving the rejection of the anthropological principles with which the technique was associated. Drawing seems glued to the idea of craft, a ‘minor’ art. The use of illustration declined not only in the social sciences, but also in scientific fields of various disciplines, from biology to architecture. The Euro-American context after the 1970s is the time when ‘modernization’ entered the scientific laboratories, providing access to computers, photographic cameras and film technologies. And it is only in these media that visual anthropology flourishes (Afonso & Ramos 2004:74).

As well as focusing on these issues, Pink (2004) argues that the anthropological analysis of informants’ sketches and the use of drawings in anthropological monographs are examples “where the collaborative aspect of visual research is drawn out.” For the author, “it is not simply a matter of anthropologists analysing their informants’ drawings but one of learning through their images about how they feel, see and ex-

perience the world” (Pink 2004:9). This is one of the central goals of Afonso’s work in collaboration with Ramos, an artist-anthropologist who made drawings illustrating the narratives of their research interlocutors. The illustrations produced were then discussed again with the informants who, on seeing the images, were able to recover details and other elements from their memories and life trajectories. In seeking an experience that could not be recorded either verbally or photographically, there unfolded a rich collaboration that went “beyond mere illustration.” The drawings were actively redrawn, corrected and complemented by the comments of the interviewees, a process that proved to be a powerful methodological tool, as the authors argue: “it allowed us to deepen informants’ involvement (as sources, checkers and authenticators) and also served as a probe to trigger and explore their social memories, transcending the limits of lineal textual representation” (Afonso & Ramos 2004: 76).

The work of anthropologists Manuel João Ramos (Portugal) and Michael Taussig (USA) stands out in this context since it brings the act of drawing to the centre of their ethnographic investigations with populations in Ethiopia and Colombia, respectively. Ramos argues that drawing is an opportunity for the anthropologist to use “graphic means of recording and interpreting” field experiences “and to use them as a window to intercultural dialogue.” Drawing is not, therefore, “merely a documenting activity but also an important and creative tool for interacting with and relating to human beings, of different cultures and languages.” For Ramos, the act of drawing can be “more than just a pastime or an exercise of visual discipline: being a source of interaction that helps humanize me [the anthropologist-sketcher] in other people’s eyes, it becomes part of the anthropological process of tentatively bringing together observer and observed” (all quotes from Ramos 2004:149). His work covers various preoccupations, from experiments with narratives (Afonso & Ramos 2004 and Ramos 2004) to producing extensive and beautifully illustrated fieldwork and journal diaries (Ramos 2009, 2010). Below, we can see an example of his Ethiopian journal (Ramos, 2010:14-15).

Ramos’s drawing style takes us back to Jean-Baptiste Debret’s sketches of daily life in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro, with the cast of urban types drawn not through a realistic approach but rather through an interest in the experiences of both the observer and the observed. It has a symbolic atmosphere, associated less with the Enlightenment’s taxonomic-technical drawings and more with the Romanticism of watercolours (a technique developed precisely within this philosophical context). The focus is much more on the experience and process of drawing than on achieving plastically ‘correct’ results (as per the artistic paradigms of the era). Even when documenting the specific usage or typology of objects, Ramos deploys a visual language closer to comics than to encyclopaedic drawing (Ramos 2009: 18). I return to this author



IMAGE 8 - SKETCHBOOK PAGE FACSIMILES INCLUDED IN HISTÓRIAS ETÍOPES, P. 14-15.

later since his work is fundamental to the core argument of this article.

The emphasis on experience is also crucial in the work of Michael Taussig (2009, 2011), another anthropologist who not only draws on his field notebooks, but also makes this activity and its graphic output a central object of his reflections concerning a theory of the production of anthropological knowledge.⁸ For Taussig, the 'clinical accuracy' of the taxonomic-like drawings inserted in many ethnographic texts betray what he deems to be the most important feature of drawing: a process that leads you to see (Taussig 2009: 265). Taussig (2011:34) laments that drawing is viewed by Western culture as a second-rate activity, secondary to writing, even in schools and art schools – it seems like drawing is perceived as a 'prehistoric stage' in the individual's evolution, he writes.

Inspired by Berger (2005), Taussig argues that drawing integrates with writing in ethnographic fieldnotes, like a conversation. Shown below is one of the pages from Taussig's sketchbook (2011: 2) reproduced in facsimile so as to cover the entire page of the diary, making the word-drawing dialogue visible. The analysis of this and other images is central to his book on ethnographic drawing, published under the provocative title of *I Swear I Saw This*. For the author, showing his field notebooks in *the way they were made* is a means

⁸ In addition to the works cited, see Newman (1998), Garavaglia & Menna (1998), Wettstein (2011), Parisi (2010), Hendrickson (2008, 2010), Geismar (2014) and the review of comic ethnographies by Wadle (2012).

of avoiding the ‘betrayal’ that occurs in anthropological work when fieldwork experiences and dialogues are transformed into a mere pretext for abstract theorization: “This is why the fieldworker’s notebook, with at least one foot in the art of sensuous immediacy, is so valuable as an alternate form of knowledge to what eventually gets into print” (Taussig 2011:49).

Since 2011, when I first proposed a project on anthropology and drawing, I have been running a course called “Anthropology and Drawing Laboratory” with the goal of teaching students to conduct anthropological research while trying to draw during the ‘participant observation’ process. My adventure was both investigative and didactic, and involved a double challenge: (i) to teach drawing techniques that could be used in a very short term by anthropology students and (ii) to encourage them to practice this knowledge in small urban ethnographies that, in turn, would help me to think anthropological and graphically about the city of Rio de Janeiro (Kuschnir 2014).

My goal was for the drawings made in the field to be handled as material for analysis and for eventual presentation of the investigation’s findings. In adopting this approach, it is much more important *to learn a new form of seeing the*

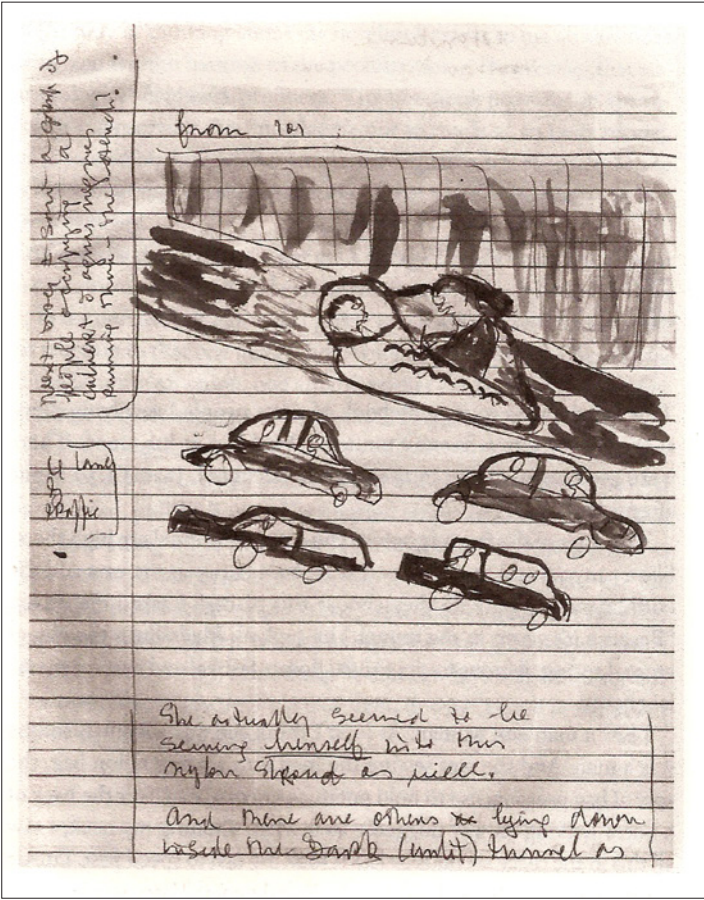


IMAGE 9 – SKETCHBOOK PAGE FACSIMILE INCLUDED IN I SWEAR I SAW THIS: DRAWINGS IN FIELDWORK NOTEBOOKS, NAMELY MY OWN, P. 2.

world than ‘drawing well.’ In fact it is easy to discern the proximity between this objective and the kind anticipated in the teaching of ethnographic methodology. Briefly, the objectives of the Laboratory workshops for students were: a) To be able to draw, while deconstructing the idea of the ‘perfect’ or realistic drawing; b) Learn through drawing: drawing as a way to understand; c) Learn to focus on slow and careful observation of people and places around us; d) Get to know some part of the city and its people; e) Undertake ethnographic research using drawing as way of seeing, registering and apprehending; f) And the final goal: Write an illustrated paper about a specific group and its symbolic narratives.

In our analysis of the final ethnographic works composed of texts and drawings produced during this process, it becomes clear just how much the skills acquired by the student researchers generated positive developments for them (Kuschnir 2014). The experience of drawing in the field and the reflections developed from the existing literature led us to propose a list of eleven potential benefits of the use of drawing in ethnography, as I enumerate below. I am completely aware that the empirical material presented here does not originate from in-depth ethnographic monographs. The sketches and situations that illustrate our arguments were ethnographic exercises that should be viewed as such. Nevertheless, I hope the reader agrees that they prove to be stimulating sources of anthropological insights.

1) DRAWING IN A SKETCHBOOK IS AN ACCESSIBLE, VERY LOW-COST TOOL FOR REGISTERING VISUAL DATA

A first topic to note is the low cost of drawing material compared to photographic and film equipment. Sketching gear is a very handy tool both in terms of actual costs and in terms of the costs involved in training students, given that teaching the necessary skills does not require sophisticated laboratories or expensive machinery. During the course “Anthropology and Drawing Laboratory” we had a three-hour workshop to learn how to make our own notebooks with everyday materials. The sketchbook was made using plain white A4 sheets of paper, an elastic binder and craft paper to make the cover that was later customized by the students (see images 10).

Making your own ‘field notebooks’ is also a way of foregrounding the importance of this documentation tool for ethnographers. Alongside the practical activity, we also discussed the use of sketchbooks in various areas of knowledge, including design, geography, arts, architecture and anthropology. The goal was to view the ethnographer as a ‘visual thinker’ too, as Lester (2014: 193) defined Da Vinci. Thinking along these lines makes it easier to realize that the ability to produce graphic records is accessible to anyone, and that you do not have to be an illustrator (or to get an illustrator to work with you) in order to use drawings in ethnography.



IMAGE 10 – STUDENTS FROM THE FIRST CLASS OF THE “DRAWING AND ANTHROPOLOGY LABORATORY” AT THE END OF A SKETCHBOOK BINDING WORKSHOP. AFTERWARDS, THE NOTEBOOKS (TOP RIGHT) BECAME A PERSONAL, FOND OBJECT (BOTTOM RIGHT).

Once immersed in the fieldwork process, the sketchbook becomes more and more marked by its owner and the investigation. Notebooks become stained, dirty, torn or wet with rain, spilled beverages or other liquids. The kind of binding we used made it possible to add or subtract inner sheets depending on the researcher’s requirements. The notebook covers were also customized with collaged papers, fabrics and other materials (as pictured in the image 10). All these processes forge an identity that transforms the notebook into a memory object of the ethnographic experience. As emphasized earlier, it becomes a unique tool that mixes not only “images and words” (Ramos 2010) but also “inner and outer worlds” (Taussig 2011).

2) THE SKETCHBOOK AND OTHER DRAWING TOOLS PROVIDE A PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR THE RESEARCHER

To be able to draw can help the anthropologist feel less lonely and uncomfortable in the field, a place where sometimes knowing what to do is difficult. It is very common to think that ‘nothing is happening’ in front of your eyes while you are undertaking fieldwork. That is how it is supposed to be. However, when engaged in drawing, both students and professional ethnographers report feeling calmer, more patient and productive. At the same time, drawing helps them to become more focused on observing and listening. In one self-reflection, a student reported that drawing made her realize how much she had been unaware of the world around her previously, the scenes and aspects of everyday life that passed unnoticed from haste and lack of attention. As Taussig testifies: “I like drawing, and in a strange way that I do not understand it settles me into my surroundings even though the act of drawing can be unsettling” (2011:30).

To have a sketchbook is also an essential tool when anthropologists need to learn complex processes with multiple steps and tools in the field. This point was more intensely explored in

the third edition of the course (run in 2014), which focused on artisans and manual labourers, such as road workers, carpenters, locksmiths, chemical workers, taxidermists, wool artisans, garbage collectors, among others. Various of these jobs involve complex procedures that needed to be drawn in order to be better understood. (The image that opens this article shows sketches of the workers who lay or repair the pavement made from Portuguese stones in Rio de Janeiro.)

A crucial aspect of going into the field to draw in a sketchbook is that the researcher is *seen* rather than being just someone who observes. Also the researcher does not look like an ‘investigator-researcher’ in the eyes of the public. As one student put it, he reaches a *sui generis* place as an ‘artist-researcher,’ apparently more empathetic, less invasive or inquisitive, as we discuss later.

3) DRAWING CAN PROVIDE A WAY TO RECORD AND DISCUSS MEMORIES (THOSE OF RESEARCHERS AND THEIR INTERLOCUTORS)

A graphic record also operates as a memory record. On our course, we use this idea to reveal the student’s preconceptions about the field – how they expect it to be. This self-analysis lies at the core of anthropological thinking, as so many authors have pointed out. Each student chose a place to conduct fieldwork and drew something based on their memory of it. Later they would compare these drawings made from memory with the observational sketches produced during fieldwork.

IMAGE 11 - SKETCH BY STUDENT PATRÍCIA DOMINGUES ROCHA PICTURING HER DRAWING HERSELF DURING FIELDWORK AT A HARE KRISHNA TEMPLE. THEY ACCEPTED AND ENCOURAGED HER TO DRAW BECAUSE IMAGE MAKING IS HIGHLY VALUED BY THE GROUP'S CULTURE.



A drawing can also function as a record enabling the visualization of people’s memories. This is one of the central contributions of the article by Afonso & Ramos (2004) discussed earlier. Their innovative approach showed that pictorial representation can serve as a ‘mnemonic device,’ helping render “visible implicit meanings abstracted from the interviews” and having the ability “to open paths to reflexivity” (2004:87-88).

Another interesting topic is the possibility of using photographs taken during fieldwork to produce further drawings. In some situations, due to a lack of time or suitable working conditions, the students took photos for this purpose. This process may afford a more detached view (or an ampler one) of certain aspects of the research. As one student reported, for example, a photograph allowed her to see general patterns on the sidewalks of her research site, a fact that her visual memory failed to register. Drawing from the observation of a photograph can also speed up the epistemological process of producing new knowledge, different from the knowledge that we would possess without these supports (photo and drawing). Some students also made use of collages, mixing photographs and drawings (as mentioned by Wadle 2012). Others decided to draw on the photographed images, a creative resource suggested by one of the course workshops taught by our guest lecturer Andrea Barbosa (2012).

A fourth aspect of the relationship between drawings and memory was pointed out by several students, who agreed with the finding of Ramos concerning his travel diaries. For Ramos, drawing is a means to “fixate the memory and the visions of places and people” (2010:17). But while the production of graphic records may appear to be secondary, on returning from the field (or when writing an academic paper on the research) these drawings become a trigger for remembering the lived experiences. The same is argued by Berger (2005: 68) who recalls how a drawing became the ‘immediate locus’ of his memories of his father. And also by Taussig (2011:25) for whom “the notebook becomes not just the guardian of experience but its continuous revision as well.”



IMAGE 12 – DRAWINGS MADE FROM IMAGINATION BY THE STUDENTS IN ORDER TO SHOW HOW THEY VISUALISE THE DOWNTOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD OF THE CITY WHERE THEY LIVE. THEY INDICATED NOISE, TRAFFIC, CITY LANDMARKS, MARKETS AND THE MULTIPLE COLOURS OF POPULAR STREET CULTURE.

4) DRAWING IN A SKETCHBOOK CAN BE AN INSTRUMENT TO EXTEND FIELDWORK, RECORD THE PASSAGE OF TIME, AND ANALYSE THE MEANING OF TIME

The act of drawing means that the researcher remains longer and more patiently in the field. This extended time can also be revealed through the ethnographic drawings themselves. This is a significant benefit of using a sketchbook, since prolonged time spent in the field forms the basis of anthropological research.

Students reported that drawing during fieldwork altered their perception of the passage of time. On many occasions, they mentioned that after finishing a drawing, they realized that one or two hours had gone by, yet the psychological feeling was that they had been working for much less time in situ. This sensation is reported by sketchers with some frequency. For Taussig, drawings “provide a welcome pause to the writing machine whereby another philosophy of representation and meditation takes over” (2011:30).

On the other hand, some researchers have noticed that the delay involved in the process of drawing may become a stress element during research where social actions take place at an accelerated pace. For example, student Mariana Barcelos, who worked with staff who organized celebrations, reports that her drawings were unable to keep up with the rapidly changing situations taking place before her eyes. So, she says, drawings must be perceived as a collection of overlapping moments, one that selects from field experiences, producing absences or ‘blanks’ in what has been observed. In her account, the drawing process is defined as a quest to abolish ‘disappearance,’ just as Berger sought to do when drawing his dead father (2005: 109). Unsurprisingly, the picture illustrating this topic is a house being demolished.

IMAGE 13 - STUDENT RAQUEL RIBEIRO DREW THESE IMAGES OVER THE COURSE OF THREE MONTHS OF FIELDWORK. SHE WAS INVESTIGATING A NEIGHBOURHOOD UNDERGOING A PROCESS OF URBAN GENTRIFICATION. WHEN SHE NOTICED THE HOUSE BEING DEMOLISHED, SHE KEPT RETURNING TO THE SITE TO DRAW UNTIL A SIGN BY PARADISE CONSTRUCTIONS APPEARED, ADVERTISING A NEW BUILDING TO BE BUILT THERE.



5) DRAWING IS AN ESSENTIAL TOOL FOR DOCUMENTING AND ANALYSING SPATIAL INFORMATION FROM RESEARCH SITES (MAPS, ROUTES, VIEWS AND PANORAMAS)

This is a benefit of sketchbooks that requires little explanation given that maps have never ceased to be integral to the anthropological enterprise. Our experience, however, generated two important lessons. First, by drawing their own maps and panoramic views, ethnographers were able to observe better the space of research and the social relations unfolding. Second, this record can be turned into a source for reflection and presented as one of the ethnographic findings. The students also considered the arrangement of their drawings on the sheet of paper as a way to think about the fieldwork space and how to convey to the reader-viewer's eyes a completed work that can help them picture the observed environment in perspective.

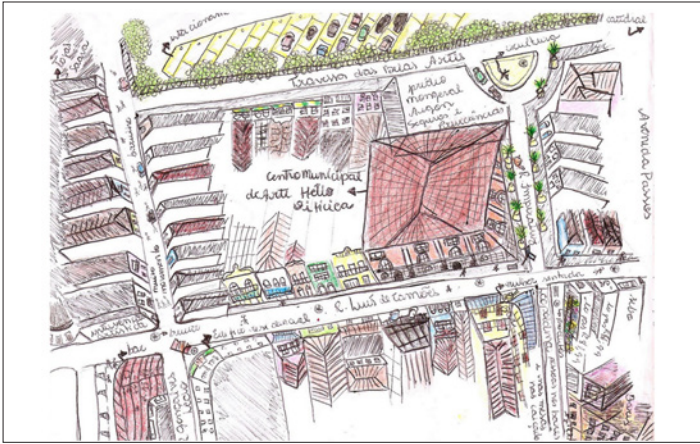


IMAGE 14 - HELIO OITICICA ART CENTRE AREA MAP MADE BY STUDENT LARISSA CARDOSO FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE GALLERY'S VISITORS DURING WEEKDAYS AND WEEKENDS. THE MAP HELPED HER UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PEOPLE FROM THE AREA AND THE MUSEUM.

6) DRAWING CAN REFRESH THE OBSERVER'S EYES, GENERATING NEW POINTS OF VIEW TO UNDERSTAND THE 'NATIVES'

In urban research situations, many environments are already known, which makes it difficult to produce a sense of estrangement. Even in biological terms, the eyes are unable to discern everything they see. It is human nature need to select what we look at from the world around us. As Horowitz writes, the culture of researchers restricts what they see on the basis of what they expect to see. Thus, in many situations "we see least the things we see most".⁹ Drawing proved an effective way to 'mess' with this selection, helping the ethnographer transform the familiar into the exotic. When drawing, we can establish a new relationship with people and places, creating renewed understandings of their relationships, thoughts and spatially-oriented experiences. Many students reported that the experience of drawing allowed them to see and discern what was previously 'invisible' to their eyes.¹⁰ Wadle (2012) also calls attention to the ability of drawings to "evoke emotions and worldviews that would have remained unexpressed in oral narrations."

⁹ The quote (page 155) and other complex discussions on the act of 'looking' can be found in Horowitz (2013).

¹⁰ Here I recall the important debate on visibility and invisibility in social research: see Baptista & Nunes (2010).

IMAGE 15 – STUDENT NATHALYA FERNANDES DE SOUZA SKETCHED THE HIGH SCHOOL PREMISES WHERE SHE HAD BEEN CONDUCTING HER FIELDWORK FOR A FEW MONTHS. FOLLOWING OUR DRAWING CLASSES, SHE DECIDED TO DRAW IN THE SCHOOL BACKYARD. THE CHANGE IN POINT OF VIEW ALLOWED HER TO UNDERSTAND THAT MEANINGFUL SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOMS WERE IMPORTANT TO KEEPING STUDENTS MOTIVATED TO ATTEND SCHOOL



7) DRAWING HELPS THE OBSERVER SEE AND HEAR NEW THINGS

As Horowitz (2013:9) puts it: “We see but we do not see [...]. We see the signs, but not their meanings. We are not blinded, but we have blinders.” When drawing, we beat this ‘blindness’ and observe everything more carefully and for longer. This helps us see more details in the world around us, even when our goal is not to make a rigorous or a realistic drawing. As many authors have said, a drawing is made with the eyes, not the hands or the graphic marks that they produce (Edwards, 2001). In the process of seeing and drawing, the researchers indeed reported that new elements ‘emerged’ before them, like people, things and landscapes. In many cases, the collaboration of the research partners was an essential part of ‘showing up’ this new element. It was a process of learning – literally – to see with the eyes of others.

Drawing can lead the observer to notice things he or she is not supposed to see or understand. Through drawing, the researchers had the chance to learn about things of which they were previously unaware, such as tools, objects and even the ability to distinguish certain colours in the same way seen by their interlocutors (see Turner 2005). In a work about laying Portuguese stone pavements, for example, the ethnographers had to learn how to discern various shades of grey and to distinguish between a variety of materials such as sand, dust, cement and stone powder. This learning was stimulated by the need to draw, which in turn induced the need to ask and to listen – a process closely linked to collaborative methods of research, as we will discuss later (item 9). In many situations, especially among the group of researchers who worked with artisans, photography was unable to record the details, the minute pieces and the ways in which the craft workers handled their tools. As has been argued apropos scientific illustration, “drawing has the advantage that you can formulate an image much more precise than when doing a photo-

graph.” Moreover, “when consciously composing a drawing you have to be clear about what you want to show, and the visual representation becomes a statement in your line of argumentation.”¹¹

Several students reported that they felt that their auditory perception was enhanced while drawing, allowing them to capture ambient sounds better, as well as phrases and revealing conversations overheard in the observed setting. The practice also encouraged them to ‘listen more’ and to ‘talk less,’ a basic precept of good ethnography. One researcher who did her fieldwork in what was, for her, a very familiar place noticed that only after the observational process with drawings began was she able to hear the sound of birds and other animals in the environment. This sensation was not unanimous, though: for some, the opposite occurred. The task of drawing had to be interrupted when they wished to listen better or when they wanted to hold a conversation with an interlocutor. Some sketchers reported that they felt a kind of suspension of auditory perception, as we noted in item 3 regarding the perception of the passage of time.

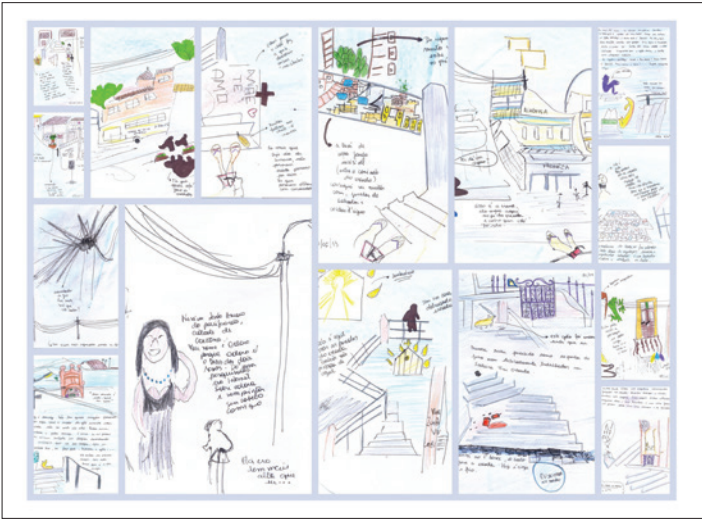


IMAGE 16 - SKETCHES BY STUDENT DIANA MELLO FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT ON A SERIES OF STEPS NEAR HER HOME IN THE SANTA TERESA NEIGHBOURHOOD, RIO DE JANEIRO. WHEN SHE STARTED TO DRAW, SHE BEGAN TO SEE THINGS SHE HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE. SIGNS THAT SHE THOUGHT WERE SCRIBBLES TURNED OUT TO BE MESSAGES TO PEOPLE LIVING NEARBY. SHE WAS APPROACHED BY A TRANSGESTITE WHO WAS PROUD TO BE DRAWN AND HAPPY TO TELL HER ABOUT HER LIFE AND THAT OF HER NEIGHBOURS.

8) DIFFERENT TYPES OF DRAWING (AND THIS INCLUDES DIAGRAMS) CAN HELP RECORD AND DOCUMENT NOT ONLY OBJECTS AND VISUAL INFORMATION, BUT ALSO ABSTRACT CONCEPTS LIKE EMOTIONS, MOTIVATIONS AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

As shown in Leal (2008), most ethnographic drawings are made as a way to document objects, artefacts, and visual information. This reveals the type of research questions and the concepts of drawing that researchers have in mind (what we called the technical-taxonomic or ethnographic-technical style of drawing). The use of diagrams is an exception in this scenario as a design so heavily used in kinship studies – a significant ele-

¹¹ Both quotes are from Wettstein (2011). On the same topic, see Garavaglia & Menna (1998).

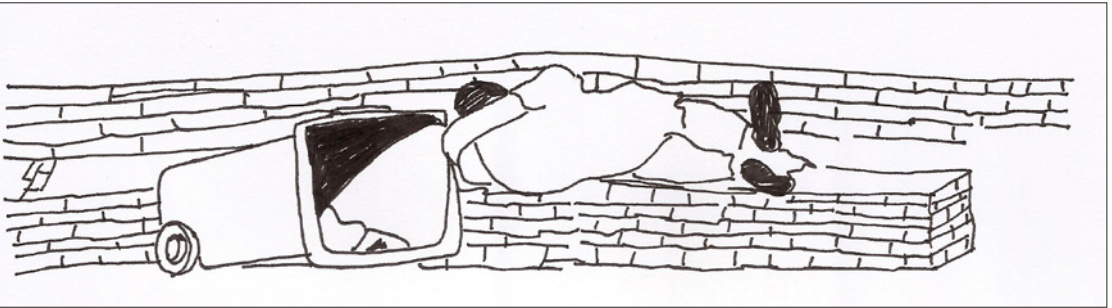


IMAGE 17 - WHILE CARRYING OUT FIELDWORK IN A PUBLIC SQUARE, THE STUDENT MAÍRA MAFRA SAW A MAN WHO SLEEPS ON THE FLOOR REGULARLY. SHE INITIALLY FAILED TO NOTICE THAT THE OLD TRASHCAN NEXT TO HIM WAS NOT ACTUALLY A RUBBISH BIN. AS SHE DREW, SHE BECAME AWARE THAT THE BIN WAS IN FACT HIS CUPBOARD, A PLACE WHERE HE CAREFULLY STORES HIS THINGS, DESPITE (OR BECAUSE OF) HIS SITUATION OF LIVING IN THE STREET.

ment in the multiple expressions of 'anthropological graphisms' (Ramos 2010: 21). The use of diagrams to illustrate unseen aspects of society has also been used to represent networks (Mitchell 1969), social connections of various types (Becker 2013) and the aforementioned complex Gell 'Strathernograms' (2006: 29), to name but a few.

Hence, what we call drawing is not necessarily an observational register that seeks verisimilitude with something that can be seen. It may be the other way around. For Taussig, a drawing "acquires its own reality" where "imagination and documentation coexist." After trying to draw a ghost, he argues: "I then tell myself that the result is pitiful but the struggle worth it because I looked at colour and I looked at the night and the river like I never had before and saw what I take so for granted with new eyes. Is there any activity that so rewards failure?" (Taussig 2011:31).

It is an innovation to realize that *observational* drawing can also record abstract dimensions of social life. We can create an image that refers to a relationship, a feeling, a motivation. Subsequently this image may help us gain a better understanding of our fieldwork conundrums. The bottom line is the researcher's stance to avoid seeing from what he knows, and to open up instead to new experiences and meanings. As Paul Valéry writes: "To see is to forget the name of the thing one sees" (cited in Horowitz 2013: 57).

The work of two of the students showed that drawings enable the researcher to see the creativity' of manual workers, who at first glance were just doing their job. Luisa Machado recalls her surprise on realizing that instead of following the line of the sidewalks as they had been instructed, the workers had decided to build a ramp (instead of a curb) due to the shortage of supplies. Creative improvisation is also clearly evident in the image illustrating this topic (below).

9) FIELDWORK DRAWING PROMOTES CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN RESEARCHERS AND THEIR INTERLOCUTORS, GENERATING CLOSENESS AND EMPATHY

It was a unanimous finding in our research group that drawing in the field encourages people to talk to the researcher. All students reported situations in which at least some of



IMAGE 18 - THIS IMAGE SHOWS THE MULTIPLE RESULTS OF A COLLECTIVE RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE CATS LIVING IN THE SAARA NEIGHBOURHOOD OF RIO DE JANEIRO. PEOPLE FOUND THE STUDENTS TRUSTWORTHY BECAUSE THEY COULD SEE THAT THEY WERE REALLY SKETCHING THE CATS. IT PROVED A PLEASANT WAY TO START A CONVERSATION. THE CATS WERE ON THE STREETS, BUT THEY WERE NOT STRAY CATS, AND THEIR STORY HELPED REVEAL THE SOCIAL NETWORKS BEHIND THEM.

his interlocutors expressed curiosity and a receptiveness and interest in talking about their ongoing projects. None of the students experienced an aggressive response from the public they wished to study. As noted above, this was also a key point in Ramos's experience (2010) in Ethiopia, where the author sensed that his sketchbook made him more 'human' in the eyes of the local people. We observed two complementary movements: drawing in a sketchbook can attract people around the sketcher, but can also provide a pretext for starting conversations with people the researcher wishes to talk to. In the experiments reported in the image 18, we took this second route. By asking for permission to draw stray cats, we had the opportunity to talk to the people who take care of these animals.

The question "can I sketch?" elicits a very different response compared to the question "can I take a photograph?" or "can I film?" In various fieldwork situations, we found what other scholars had already discovered: observational drawing is not an invasive or threatening approach. On the contrary, in some situations people specifically asked why the ethnographer did not take photos or film, while the sketchbook was welcomed. Most of the students' fieldwork interactions and dialogues emerged spontaneously from the act of drawing, without the need to formulate lots of questions. Wadle (2012) also appeals to the importance of visual language in establishing dialogues between researcher and interlocutors who do not speak the same language. By means of a sketchbook, they became "engaged in common sessions of drawing" and were able to achieve mutual learning. As we have seen, this theme of communication and collaboration is central too in the work of Ramos (2004, 2010), Afonso & Ramos (2004) and Taussig (2011) and is discussed immediately below (item 10).



IMAGE 19 - STUDENT LORAINÉ AMARAL CONDUCTED HER RESEARCH IN A BAR. BECAUSE OF HER SKETCHBOOK, PEOPLE BECAME INTERESTED IN WHAT SHE WAS DOING. TWO CHILDREN THOUGHT SHE WAS NOT A GOOD SKETCHER, SO THEY DECIDED TO DRAW THE WAITER MIGUEL FOR HER. MANY OF THE BAR'S CLIENTS BECAME INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH, INTERESTED IN WHAT SHE WAS DOING, AND ALSO IN WHAT GRADE SHE HAD OBTAINED FROM THIS WORK.

10) DRAWING OPENLY IN A SKETCHBOOK DURING FIELDWORK CAN GENERATE DIALOGUE AND COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

An open sketchbook can be a new way to share your research concerns and act as an invitation to talk about them. As stated in the previous section, this dialogue can be made through words but also through drawings and images.

Students who worked more closely with their informants reported strong collaboration generated by the ethnographic drawings as a research methodology. In many cases, the interlocutors were very interested in their sketches. Some participated explicitly, telling the researcher what he or she should draw and also helped in analysing their findings. In some cases, criticisms were made (“that isn’t drawn properly”) not for aesthetic reasons but because the person perceived that the anthropologist had not understood the object or the social setting. (Some researchers, however, did receive aesthetic criticism now and then.) In several studies, people watching the researcher’s work became more directly involved, helping to sort objects to be drawn (during a second field visit) or calling attention to angles, people, or experiences worth documenting in the sketchbook.

Collaborative research is a highlight in Afonso and Ramos (2004), where the memories recollection process involved the production of drawings that were later commented and re-drawn taking into account the respondents feedback. As summarized by Wadle (2012), drawing can help develop a “mutual collaboration, in which the informants were closely involved in controlling the recorded narrative and a representation of their stories, which were visually accessible for them,” as in Atkins’s comic-style ethnography.

In another fieldwork project (illustrated by the image that opens this article), collaboration between researchers and city

hall workers also spawned creative forms of documentation. The students made collages using sand and stone dust in their drawings. Portuguese stone pavement was also 'printed' on carbon paper and onto fabric with printing ink (final image on the right).

In some other cases, the researchers asked their informants to draw. One student recorded in her sketchbook drawings made by residents from the neighbourhood, seeking to document their recollections of the place. In another investigation, an interlocutor refused to draw, claiming he lacked the skill to do so. People's sketches often elicited jokes and fun games trying to recognize the physical characteristics of the person portrayed. In the example below, the student was assisted by two children, both keen to 'improve' her portrait of one of the waiters from the bar where the research took place.

11) DRAWING FIELDNOTES PROVIDES VISUAL DATA FOR SHARING THE RESULTS OF THE ETHNOGRAPHY (AND ALSO PROTECTS INFORMANT ANONYMITY)

As stated earlier, drawings produced during fieldwork make it easier for the audience to comprehend your research goals, developments and final results, allowing the generated data to be tested, reviewed and compared. Graphic visual language may not be 'universal' but it is much more accessible than written texts. Drawings can add considerably to the public dialogue on the topics raised by the ethnography. For Wadle (2012), this accessible language promotes ethnography among a wider public, a "necessary opening process for the anthropological researcher," amplifying its impact. "Instead of excluding informants from academic discourses about their own culture and way of living, anthropology could benefit from their critical readership," Wadle advocates (2012).

Another important aspect is that this material produces visual information from the field capable of preserving informant anonymity, a classic concern of the ethnographic enterprise, and especially relevant in urban anthropology. Wadle (2012) drew my attention to this problem in her review of Atkins's work on sexual encounters, where the latter author mixes landscape photographs with drawn portraits of people in vulnerable situations. For Newman (1998: 18), comic drawings can comprise an "experimentation in visual forms of ethnographic representation," provoking thought about "what counts for truth" and to "whose authority we submit in arriving at our fragile knowledge of the world."

Several of the people participating in the research asked the students to give them copies of the drawings for their own ends. One student, for example, authorized her drawings to be displayed on the website of the company she studied. Her interlocutors found that her images evoked an 'emotional approach' to their work. Another student was invited to present her findings to the entire team of the place where she conducted her fieldwork.

IMAGE 20 - DRAWINGS PRODUCED BY STUDENT ROSA RICHTER DURING A RESEARCH PROJECT ON GONÇALVES LEDO STREET, DOWNTOWN RIO DE JANEIRO. INFORMANTS DID NOT ACCEPT HER USING A FILM CAMERA BUT WERE HAPPY TO TALK WHEN SHE BROUGHT ALONG HER SKETCHBOOK. THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM EVOLVED INTO A MUTUAL COLLABORATION THAT HELPED HER COMPLETE HER ETHNOGRAPHY ON THE LOCAL WORKERS AND INHABITANTS.



These examples show the spirit of collaborative work expressed in section 9 above, when the material generated by ethnography is reframed and creatively appropriated by the world under study. The student Mariana Barcellos noted that the act of drawing in the field also gives ‘autonomy to the subjectivity of the researcher,’ questioning the logic of scientific work, which tends to obliterate this authorship while valuing the technical report, producing a ‘cold’ narrative of the results. Several students registered this aspect, feeling happy to be able to express some of their personal style in the material produced for the final work. Their works display, in part, the character of “ethnographic artistic drawing” described by Leal (2008: 123). The aesthetic power of these visual records is also highlighted positively in Afonso & Ramos (2004: 87).

Showing drawings in the way that they were produced in fieldwork is not only a kind of proof of what was observed – as Taussig put it in his book title *I swear I saw this* – but also a way to avoid the fallacy of disguising and distorting the inherent subjectiveness of the ethnographic enterprise (2011:49). It is also with a similar distrust of the discursive games of anthropological writing that Ramos appreciates the testimony of drawings. Limited by the urgency of materials and technology, the sketcher does not intend to ‘describe’ or ‘mimic’ a lived or observed reality. The sketcher becomes an “attendance sheet (been there, seen that)” that “contains in itself, invisible, the testimony of a look, the hypothesis of a memory and a sign of an osmosis of the senses and of *Dasein*, between who drew and who or what was drawn” (Ramos 2010: 19). Through a fascinating story of his research in Ethiopia, Ramos calls our attention to the limits that exist in practice to producing images for intercultural communication (the ‘intercultural *ekphrasis*,’ as he puts it). One must be careful with how these visual productions are “perceived, handled and interpreted” since not all images are possible (Ramos 2004:149).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The notion of 'ethnographic drawing' contains many meanings and possibilities still to be explored. As we saw at the outset, few books exist on the subject and there is an evident 'invisibility' of this resource in the field of visual anthropology. It is as though a drawing or dealing with drawn images were not an option amid the range of possibilities for documenting ethnographies.

Even when the literature deals directly with the subject of 'fieldnotes,' the theme of drawing is minimal or non-existent. Often we open classic monographs like *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* and simply do not see the drawings there, nor the maps and diagrams included as part of its visual language. Anthropologists and editors contribute to this invisibility of drawings when they fail to indicate their authorship or add captions or comments concerning the materials used or the forms of reproduction.¹² And just as an exercise in thinking comparatively, when we turn to literary, artistic or botanical publications, for example, it seems obvious that drawings are a vital part of the work in which they are embedded. The images are impregnated with meaning: from their authors themselves to the variety of frameworks that affect their appearance, such as tools, techniques, styles, focus of interest, production processes, etc.

In this article I sought to valorise and understand the multiple possibilities of ethnographic drawings, exploring their potential relations to other forms of documentation and research in anthropology. In the process, I worked with a provisional concept of drawing that encompasses the kind of illustrations included here. I am aware, however, of the need to deepen the discussion on diagrams and maps, which by themselves comprise a quite complex graphical universe (cf. Becker 2009, Gell 2006). I also need to make it clear that several of the eleven benefits of drawing summarized here can be achieved, of course, through other types of anthropological record, visual or otherwise.

Although the ethnographic method is very much alive in anthropology and other fields of knowledge, I think we are still afraid to discuss its challenges. We can even say, then, that there exists an eleventh contribution of drawing to the anthropological approach. After all, the meetings between people interested in working towards the study of social life have positive consequences that extend beyond any academic results per se – because this is the kind of encounter that produces a better society, more supportive, collaborative and respectful of social differences.

¹² Even photographs are often taken for granted, as shown in Samain's excellent paper about Malinowski's pictures (1995).

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DRAWING CLOSE - ON VISUAL ENGAGEMENTS IN FIELDWORK, DRAWING WORKSHOPS AND THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

ABSTRACT

Participatory visual methods are becoming the new hype in anthropology. Researchers tend to present participatory visual methods as attractive approaches to not only promote innovative research that engages informants in original and collaborative ways but to engage students eager to find bridges between the academic world and a world progressively addicted to visual consumerism. But while still and moving image-capturing devices are being democratized as anthropological tools thanks to their recent wide availability and ease of use, some view the practice of drawing (participatory or not) as a more serendipitous niche activity. Unlike photographing and filming, doodling-sketching-drawing – participatory or not – is more about linear image mental processing and communicating (and thus somewhat akin to handwriting, lack of linguistic encoding and propositionality notwithstanding) than an “objective” visual method. Drawing thus elicits a completely different kind of comprehension of the “field”, as well as new forms of social interaction, such as the “public and open spectacle of recording” that anthropologist-draftswoman Carol Hendrickson describes (2008: 119). Based on discussions from a workshop dedicated to “ethnographic

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drawing” in the University of Aberdeen, we propose to tackle some of the features of the drawing practice, hoping that its much-misunderstood potential as a knowledge tool helps us reconsider what anthropological understanding is.

KEYWORDS

Drawing, graphic anthropology, fieldwork methods, representation vs imagination

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Is drawing a suitable medium for acquiring and transmitting anthropological knowledge? If yes, is it definable as a visual method in anthropological research?

These are questions seldom put forward and answered in mainstream anthropological theoretical publications. These questions, however, are quite engaging for a growing number of researchers who are also practitioners of an equally increasing variety of graphic-based productions: sketchbooks made during fieldwork, illustrations of anthropologic materials, creation of comic art and graphic novels, and uses of drawing in participatory research approaches (Colloreto-Mansfield 1999: 49 ff, 2011; see also Afonso & Ramos, 2004).² There is a fundamental ambiguity upon which current research and teaching are based: anthropologists growingly use visual non-graphic recording techniques such as photographing and filming, to go about collecting field data, and also use visual materials produced by others to complementarily compose anthropological discourses.³ These activities tend not to be clearly distinguished from that other one that is to understand how cultures construct, constrain and direct visualisation, be it at an individual perceptive level or as collective imagining.⁴ The need to be clear about what we mean by visual anthropology, and to neatly distinguish the above two activities, are basic requirements when it comes to the use of participatory methods: when the anthropologist invites, requests, lures or gives people with whom they relate the opportunity of having a say at a specific phase of the production of a discourse (graphic or otherwise) that somehow involves them. Inter-subjectivity is an appealing catalyst for a discourse that aspires at richness in meaning, and participatory methods seem to have the potential to offer that possibility. But to which extent is this valid? Aren't they rather a rhetoric claim, on the part of the anthropologist, of effectiveness in bringing in the "other's" vision into work in his/her discourse, that becomes even less questionable when he/she uses non-graphic methods to frame that inter-subjective, participatory or collaborative discourse? As with everything in life, there are drawbacks to an excessive reliance in the benefits of the so-called visual methods in the production of anthropological knowledge. Some of these drawbacks are practical; others are more of the epistemological kind.

The present paper does not directly address these mud- dles. However, in discussing the use of drawings in anthropol- ogy, partly involving a measure of social participation by way of presenting the results of a recent group discussion on this same theme, we modestly wish to offer some clues for a future clarification of the questions delineated above.

² For further reference to drawing and anthropol- ogy see: Newman (1998), Ramos (2010 and 2015) and Azevedo (2014) explorations of drawing as a tool for field research in anthropology and a means to present its results; Ingold's approach on "graphic anthropol- ogy" (2011a, 2011b and 2013); Geismar's (2014) analysis of fieldwork sketches by Bernard Deacon; Kuschnir's (2014) work on teaching drawing to anthropology students as well as Colloreto- Mansfeld (1999 and 2011), Ramos (2004), Hen- drikson (2008), Taussig (2011), Kuschnir (2011) and Azevedo (2016) for general methodological reflections on drawing in anthropology.

³ On multidisciplinary visual participatory ap- proaches, see Pink, 2006: 90-96; 2013: 23.

⁴ On a good recent ex- ample of this, see Segre, 2007; on the ambiguous intersection of the two approaches, see Banks & Ruby, 2011: 3 ff. Already in 1996, Jay Ruby had identified this ambiguity, as well as the fragmen- tary nature of the field, the gap between the broadness of the subject and the limitedness of the practices (Ruby, 1996: 1345).

ETHNO-GRAPHIC DRAWING? AN ENGAGING WORKSHOP

At a recent two-day Workshop⁵ organized by the authors of the present paper at the University of Aberdeen, UK, a group of interested academics examined a number of aspects concerning past, present and potential future connections between drawing and anthropology. The participants ranged from anthropologists doing fieldwork with no prior training in drawing techniques but enjoyed (or aspired to) doodling and sketching to artists who had an appetite for, but lesser knowledge of, anthropological research heuristics. In between, there were people sketching during fieldwork and/or using various ways of graphic thinking and communicating as part of their anthropological or artistic production, and engaging others through their sketches at different stages of their research.

The most stimulating result of the workshop was participants' coming to a consensus around two ideas:

- that drawing is not to be seen as a specific area of what has come to be agreed as visual anthropology;⁶ and
- that such thing as "ethnographic drawing" – though a growingly attractive catch-word – is a highly questionable category.

Also quite relevant, but more contested, was the debate that participants generated around the blurring of borders between writing and drawing. In all, this was possibly the most epistemologically challenging debate we have participated in for years. What the workshop exposed was that by thinking through drawing, the centrality of "grand ideas" and the validity of argumentation formats in anthropological thinking and doing was as very much likened to the emperor's clothes. The strange exercise of "knowing from the inside" made possible, even if for a brief moment, looking at the discipline from the outside of its academic mental borders.⁷

Very much at stake was the concept of what it means to do "ethnography", and by implication, that of qualifying graphic practices in the field as method. The open-endedness that the drawing-writing activity implies goes against the grain of all talk of outputs, results and finished products as the *raison-d'être* of anthropological knowledge. We took the question, "how can all this translate into, and be reconciled with, the academic and publishing requirements that engulf us daily and shackle us permanently," as a fundamental, even if non-answerable, question.⁸

It is worth referring the above discussion here since the sort of questions that framed it point to a particularly acrid subject from which anthropologists ought not shy away. If drawing can be conceived, using Tim Ingold's terms, as a "knowledge from the inside," then it does not really relate to "visual anthropology" inasmuch as it is not a visual research method but a two-way (from the outside world to the hand, through the brain, and back again) immersive and unending understanding and imagining practice. As such, it is more engaged comprehension

⁵ The workshop was held at the Meeting Room of the King's Museum, Old Aberdeen Town House, University of Aberdeen on 22nd and 23rd October 2015, under the umbrella of the ERC project Knowing from the Inside: Anthropology, Art, Architecture and Design, led by anthropologist Tim Ingold,

⁶ At least not in the narrow, traditional, sense, where "Visual Anthropology" tends to be conflated with "ethnographic film" and "ethnographic photography".

⁷ It would be tempting at first sight, to qualify the issue in terms of pre- and post-processing, but that would imply the acceptance of rational thinking is fundamentally language-based – fascinating discussion but beyond the scope of the present paper.

⁸ All the more so as drawing isn't (at least yet) eligible for scientific financing in social sciences' programmes, part of mainstream teaching programmes, and quotable and countable in bibliometric platforms (Ramos 2015: 144).

than method, and more doing than done, thus being both beyond (academic) argumentative format and beneath (commercial) artistic format.

Originally titled “Ethnographic Drawing,” the Workshop had the following intentions, as stated in the announcement:⁹

Although drawings have been present in anthropological works from the dawn of the discipline, they have increasingly disappeared from view, side-lined by other visual practices such as photography and film. There is a forgotten history of ethnographic drawing that has still to be recovered and studied. Today, interest in drawing is being revived in a number of fields, including anthropology. This workshop will take a critical look at the practice of drawing in contemporary anthropology. Can anthropologists draw? Where, why and how should they do so?

The aim of the workshop was to consider the practice of drawing both as a method of anthropological research and as a way to present its results. Thus we are not concerned with the illustrative uses of drawings, nor with studies in which the drawings of our research subjects are to be analysed. Our concern is rather – and specifically – with drawing as a practice of anthropology, done by anthropologists, and as a way of anthropological thinking and knowing.

Around 20 people of differing backgrounds, ranging from PhD students, post-doc researchers and lecturers in anthropology to graphic artists, painters, designers and architects, of a variety of nationalities, enrolled in the workshop and enthusiastically attended it until the final celebration in a nearby pub.

CONFESSIONAL BRAINSTORMING

At the start of the first day, we invited the participants to present drawings produced during their fieldwork and to talk briefly about how they felt about the connection between the activity of drawing and anthropological research. The intention was two-fold: to perceive if drawings were present in the anthropological work and how participants faced this presence or absence. During this “Confessional Brainstorming Introduction (participants’ views),” we registered and grouped the following testimonials from the participants:

- *Drawing and/as writing*: Enrico Marcoré mentioned instances of suffering “sketching blocks” during his fieldwork with the villagers of Pescomaggiore, Italy, during the unofficial reconstruction of their dwellings after the 2009 Aquila earthquake; he would feel freer to draw upon return, as a complementary activity to writing. Just as it happens with writing, drawing has a set of internal rules that foster imaginative processes; as such, it is also naturally subject to blocks during fieldwork (Ramos 2014: 239). Sketching after fieldwork, when rounding up information, helps structuring the writing process.

- *Is “ethnographic drawing” what one does?* Paolo Gruppuso, who did fieldwork with the farmers and environmentalists of two protected wetlands in Agro Pontino, Italy, insisted on the unfinished nature of sketching in fieldwork: sketching would then

⁹ In www.abdn.ac.uk/research/kfi/news/7157/ retrieved on 8 March, 2016.

be part and parcel of the immersive understanding of a social context.

- *Doodling, sketching or drawing?* Germain Meulemans, who works on anthropogenic environments, and particularly on the epistemology and ontology of urban soils, introduced the notion of “minimal drawing” as an open-ended flow where sketching, mapping and writing meet.

- *Drawing and context:* Anne Douglas, who explores the role of the artist as a catalyst for social change, testified on the importance of drawing’s role in one’s being in a place, i.e. in discovering the meshwork of one’s relationships with that place.

- *Drawing and mapping as a way to understand social context:* Mitch Miller, who produces what he calls “dialectograms” (or dialectic diagrams) of urban locations, a meeting point between ethnography, documentary, socially engaged practice and mytho-geographic aesthetics, in depicting a range of often vulnerable urban locations, stressed the importance of drawing as a meditative practice in developing a “pigeon-eye” perspective of social and spatial contexts.

- *Thinking and drawing:* Tim Ingold, who presently leads the ERC-funded Project *Knowing From the Inside*, an inquiry into how knowledge derives from thinking with, from and through beings and things, which hosted the workshop, reflected on how drawing is a performative and communicational thinking tool.

- *Drawing and future memory:* for Peter Loovers, who investigates human-animal relations in the Canadian Arctic, drawing maps and plans of places, paths and tracks, is an essential pinpointing activity for memorization of a constructed imagination of the field.

- *Participatory drawing and mapping (making plans) during fieldwork:* Rachel Harkness, who has been researching into the interfaces between anthropology and architecture, expanded on the uses of populating maps and plans together with informants, insisting that drawing together is an *ad hoc* yet precious social ice-breaker.

- *Drawing, and painting:* Laura Siragusa, working on verbal and non-verbal communication between humans and animals with Russian Finno-Ugric speakers, reflected on the distinction between lines and colours: for her, colours are used for relaxing, non-verbal mind processes, namely memorisation, that help noticing a context; drawings, on the other hand, acts more as an exchanging material: drawings are offered and in some instances exchanged - people usually ask for her drawings, which thus enable conversation and comments from people.

- *Drawing as out-of-the-box thinking:* Caetano Sordi, who researches into feral pig trapping in Southern Brazil protected areas, a Brazilian, views drawing as a tactic to understand mental boundaries and overlapped spaces in fieldwork, and a way to gauge the relevancy of both the collected materials and the methodological tools used by the anthropologist.

- *Thinking through sketching or sketching through thinking*: Pelayo Benavides, currently studying knowledge dynamics around protected predators in south-central Chile, considered sketches a helping tool to (re)thinking processes, either in the field or during the subsequent writing process; they are also materializations of a wandering, imaginative thought.

- *Drawing and fictional work*: an unidentified participant referred that drawing can be part of thinking and imagining processes during the post-fieldwork writing process, but one that risks being blocked due to the requirements of the academic writing format.

- *Drawing practice and anthropologic research*: Ina Schröder, a PhD Candidate in Germany researching on moral education of indigenous youths in Western Siberia, dealt upon the difficulties of connecting drawing as a free graphic practice with the highly formatted production of knowledge in anthropology.

- *Drawing as embodied knowledge*: Kari Korolainen, who studies the place of the drawing in Finnish scientific production, hinted at the creative potential originating from the ontological connections between one's drawing activity, and one's research into earlier anthropologists' sketch- and notebooks.

- *Drawing as training in observation in the field*: for Maria Nakhshina, researching into fishing practices in North-western Russia, the play between photographing and drawing is not necessarily contrasting: drawings can be made life or from photos; as they are frequently a way to memorise aspects captured in photos, drawings are not about "objective" or "realist" visualization but about imagination and memorization.

- *On drawing and sketching in the field*: Christine Moderbacher, a ethnographic documentarist working with Arab-speaking migrants, noted that in her experience sketching tended to disturb and disrupt concentration of verbal and non-verbal interactions, but then again so was taking written notes, photographing and filming.

- *Contrasting drawing and photography*: for Jennifer Clarke, working on art and environmental issues in Britain and Japan, drawing tends to be less obtrusive than using a camera as it isn't an obstacle to eye contact.

- *Photographing, filming and drawing*: João Loguercio, who uses photographs and videos in his researches into animal-human relations in everyday working practices in Southern Brazil, preferably produces abstract sketches as thinking aid; in his case, drawing comes after, not during, fieldwork.

The main goal of the Workshop was clearly not the celebration of drawing in anthropology as a tool to produce final research outcomes; neither was it to look at the so-called "ethnographic turn(s)" in contemporary art and its rather predatory engagements with anthropology (on this, see Sansi 2014: 37, 44). It was rather a collective reflection on the relationships between perceiving, thinking and exercising graphic and linear hand skills as part of immersive experiences during and after fieldwork. This

meant that being blocked by lack of skill to draw or questioning the relevance of the connection between drawing and anthropology was not an obstacle but rather an added motivation to the debates taking place. Still, most participants in the Workshop declared their motivation to draw at some point in their research, either during or after fieldwork, which testifies to the presence of this kind of inscription in anthropological knowledge production. But the confessional recognition that drawings can be present in research and even in inter-personal communication is, to a certain degree at least, unrelated to the public use and recognition of the “art of drawing.” During the Workshop we looked at both these two aspects: the (subjective and even intimate) practice of drawing and drawing as an expression of anthropological knowledge - sharing (offering, exhibiting, publishing).

We hence propose to list the main questions raised by the participants of the Workshop as follows: (1) drawing during the fieldwork; (2) drawing as a communicational tool; (3) drawing in the post-fieldwork; and (4) the specificities of the drawing.

Basically, we brought the relation between drawing and fieldwork into the debate as part of the *process of observation* (what could be called “training in observation”), description, registration, comparison, memorisation, meditation, relaxing, thinking, understanding, noticing, finding relations and being present in a place. We also regarded the act of drawing *during fieldwork* as a communicational tool such as in participatory drawing, participatory mapping, populating maps and also as gifts – exchanging material that enables conversation. In the *post-fieldwork phase*, drawing practice complements the act of writing as a thinking-focusing tool. Actually, we discussed drawing through thinking and thinking through drawing as two sides of the same coin. So, we mentioned drawings as an important way to rounding up information and to structure the writing process. For some of the participants, to draw is something that relates mainly with the writing tasks that take place after fieldwork.

Participants best highlighted some *specificities of drawing* when contrasted to photographing and filming, drawings being regarded as less obstructive but also less used than photography and film during fieldwork.

We directed the debate to compare the notion of drawing with that of sketching, doodling and cartooning – and wonder about their differences and similarities – and to questioning the qualitative specificity of “ethnographic drawing,” not as practice but as a communicational (and self-legitimizing) tool.

We elected “minimal drawing” as a concept to encompass different styles of drawings that participants conceived and produced with anthropological intentions irrespective of its form. A more encompassing view of the specificities of drawing related to its capacity of producing future memories, of enabling non-verbal mind processes, and of being a performative action.

LINING UP ARGUMENTS AND SPLITTING HAIRS

Academic workshops generally intend to produce intellectual debate via verbal communication. But it is also a context where many other exchanges do occur – through eye contact, body postures, joint practice of attentiveness and sharing of images (in PowerPoints, for instance). In the case of a workshop such as this, where drawing was subject to verbal analysis, but also potentially promoted as a participative ritual, the reflexivity and self-referencing nature of the workshop activity became a ghostly presence. Drawing was both present and absent throughout the duration of the workshop, and a sense of possibility, and of potentiality, guided the spirit of the discussions. To draw is primarily defined as an individual action inhabiting the space of freedom, dream and fresh inquiries, that combines with, or runs parallel to, the concrete space of achievements and realisations. So, the major concern of the group seemed not to be what we accomplished in the workshop, but how we could, both individually and as a group, accomplish it. A feeling of doubt never left the room, as we all seemed to have more unformulated questions to ask than answers to offer (verbalized thought, anyway; but also paralysis and hesitation in the act of drawing itself). The main concern was to highlight the (actual or potential) coexistence of drawings and anthropology. Having started with a session on the previous presence, disappearance and current rise of drawing in anthropology, the challenge throughout the workshop was to establish, discuss and question how drawing connects with anthropology, and critically revisiting notions such as ethnography, visual anthropology, methodology, art, and so on.

A number of questions resurfaced frequently throughout the two-day workshop. In what follows, our objective is to provide an overview of the discussion, not any final words about it or achievements from it. These were, in our view, the major topics debated: (1) the specificities of the drawing; (2) time and drawing; (3) relations between drawing, visual anthropology and art; (4) drawing and imagining; (5) drawing and writing; (6) style; (7) methodology; (8) drawing and skill; (9) drawing, imprinting, impacting; and (10) terminology.

1. SPECIFICITIES OF DRAWING

Everyone knows, or thinks they know, what a drawing is, but when time comes to define it certainties seem to wane quickly.¹⁰ When trying to talk about drawing, notions such as doodling and sketching appeared again and again. For some people, the doubt about their own drawings as “real drawing” or simple doodling/sketching was quite central. The distinction between one and the other tended to relate to distinctions one would make between the private and public realms. If I am drawing to myself, a doodling is helpful and useful, but this same kind of inscription can be completely unintelligible to my peers. It is important to emphasize these doubts

¹⁰ Or, as J. T. Jacobs has put it, “What is drawing? At first glance the question seems simple enough to be superfluous; but upon reflection it becomes not only difficult, but perhaps not even definable” (J. T. Jacobs, in Ashton, 2014: 47).

about the nature of the drawing. As we highlighted before, the notion of a “minimum drawing” may be a way to assemble together drawing, doodling and sketching as traces, lines and inscriptions of different kinds. Nevertheless, it does not solve the question of inner differences. The debate around drawing as doodling, sketching or even painting led us to explore the notion of “intergraphicity” – as a tool to examine how, within a particular field, different graphic activities are joined.¹¹

2. TIME AND DRAWING

The connection between drawing and time surfaced in regard to thinking about the future, to the potential, in anthropological practice and knowledge formation. A question that arose from evoking personal cases of inevitable anxiety occurring during fieldwork was about the relevancy of one’s subject choices and research courses. “Is it possible to draw potential things?” “Can drawing help lining the future?” This unsolved and slightly pataphysical question led us to reflect about the temporalities of drawing as an (un)finished process. Searching for a common ground or a departure point, the discussion was tumultuous (in a good sense) and inconclusive, but with some interesting clues: we generally perceived a contrast between drawing as a finished product and sketching as an unfinished process. In this sense, we considered a drawing closer to the artistic object, as painting was, than “just” sketching. In turn, we perceived drawing, alone, as a process, as layers, as life. Inscribed in one’s research, the researcher can conceive even the finished drawing as just a step in an unfinished process. Finally, in what concerns its relation to anthropology specifically, we did not perceive a drawing as a finished product – an artistic form – but mostly as a process, even in those moments when drawings become part of the (exhibited and/or published) outcomes of one’s research.

3. RELATIONS BETWEEN DRAWING, VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND ART

Commonly, researchers tend to assign “ethnographic” drawing alongside visual anthropology and art. Some demarcation between these fields may be useful to emphasize their similitudes and differences. The main question in regard to anthropologists’ drawing and artistic drawing was: “do anthropologists have to be aware of the art-scholars’ views on what drawing is?” This question echoes a broader relation between anthropology and art: “how to address the views from both fields?” – which means an inquiry about the limits and possibilities of an interdisciplinary dialogue (see Ingold, 2013: 8 ff). But in regard to drawing, specifically, our major concern was: “is drawing to be considered a visual art?” Far from wishing to get at a definite answer to the question, the discussion gave us the opportunity to think about the place drawings occupy both in the outside world and in our par-

¹¹ Although interesting studies were carried out in the seventies and eighties at the intersection between iconology and structural analysis (see for instance Bucher 1977), intertextuality studies seldom thought fit to extend methods and heuristics to researching into corpuses of graphic images. The proposed meaning of “Intergraphicity” bears clear correspondence with that of “intertextuality”. It isn’t really a neologism, since the British sci-fi writer Brian Aldiss, in his novel *Life in the West*, had already cooked up a fictional First International Congress of Intergraphical Criticism (Aldiss 1980: 18 ff).

ticular mental processes. As doubts spread about the accepted view that drawing relates (as in minor relative) to visual art, we gave a bigger scope to the notion that drawing people should not necessarily tie to visualization and visual representation – even if this tends to be the accepted notion in visual anthropology (Pink *et al.*, 2004: 7-8), and in art studies in general. “When we think about drawing, are we thinking about visual anthropology or rather about something else?” By dissociating drawing-in-the-field from the boundaries of visual anthropology, we could see that the question “are drawings beyond the visual?” was essential for our endeavor. Thus, we could spell off the discomfort of dealing with previous debates in visual anthropology that were not concerned with drawings, while uncovering new possibilities for future and original developments in research.

4. DRAWING AND IMAGINING

Following the discussion that sometimes pushes drawing closer to and farther from other fields, we discussed the issue of imagination. Our question relates to inquiries such as: “what is abstract, what is visual and what is imagination?” It is not necessary to uphold a strongly determinist Sapir-Whorfian view of language and thought to accept that we are bound to frame our verbalizations by collective semantic and categorical enmeshments, and that abstractness, concreteness, imagination or reality can only acquire and produce meaning within language. When thinking through drawings and not through words, the coherence and functionality of a verbal-based worldview loses strength. In this sense, there is something particular about drawing that encompasses the imagination when it goes beyond the distinction between imagination and reality. As drawings are not exclusively tied to the visual world and the perceived reality, they are able to tap into the potential of the perceptive and imaginary processes that go on in our “spirit-bodies”.¹²

Another important aspect of the confluence between drawing and imagination is the possibility of including other people’s imaginations in the production and exhibition of one’s drawings. “How to integrate other people’s imagination in our own drawings and writing, as a self-critical stance, and as a way to communicate to a larger public, including peers and non-peers?” This kind of questioning relates to the communicational ability drawings can or cannot have during fieldwork and the crossing of the boundaries of the discipline. If we do not concentrate so much in drawings as finished products but as steps in an unfinished – and ending – process, their layered and connecting nature is revealed, be it in the individual drawing itself as it comes into being, in its paradigmatic relation with other drawings in a never-ending flow of (re)invented lines. What concerns anthropology in the drawing is not the artistic status of the drawing but the convolutions that its *intergraphic* nature causes among humans.

¹² The notion of “spirit body”, mentioned in the Workshop, was how an Ethiopian icon painter offered to translate into English his endeavour, during an interview to one of the authors of the present paper: “I’m painting the body-mind of Christ”, he said, as a way to try to describe in English what would be easily said in Amharic, his native language, to express a Christian monophysite (non-dualist) worldview (see Ramos, 2009: 293-297). Drawing, as Alex Ashton puts it (Ashton, 2014: 47), “provides interconnected ways of orientating knowledge that contribute to a multifaceted understanding of [Wilhelm Dilthey’s] ‘lived experience.’”

5. DRAWING AND WRITING

It seems unfair to discuss the written and the drawn tasks side by side in anthropology, since we have been so conscious about the former and so unaware about the later. Also, it seems easier to write about drawing than to draw about writing. Even so, both activities appeared to be extensively intertwined both during fieldwork and in post-field thought processes: “do we really need to distinguish between drawing and writing in the field, and even after the field?” Probably this distinction is not necessary, unless we are trying to give institutional room to drawings in the discipline. In this case, it will be useful to understand further what kinds of fiction we are dealing with when drawing and when writing. The questions “are drawing and writing convergent or divergent fictions?” and “is writing so different from drawing?” may be displaced, since beyond the comparisons between drawing and writing we may establish, what is definitely intriguing is their actual relationship and commonality. Of course, the question, “does a drawing stand by itself?” – which seems a natural query on the possibility of a drawing being displayed without a written text that explain it or contextualize it – pertains to language, written or spoken, and seems totally irrelevant from the perspective of drawing. Although we were not trying to reach any final consensus about the issue, the communicational sense seemed to be prevalent to us when drawing and anthropology walk together and this led us to the recognition of the need of a deeper dialogue between drawing and writing, where drawings do not appear as illustrations of texts, but, at least in some instances, the opposite. Then again, the function that Roland Barthes aptly called “l’effet de réel” (Barthes 1968: 84 ff) in literature, and which has been, since Herodotus at least, the spinal chord of ethnographic style, is becoming equally central in today’s use of drawing in anthropological published productions. The *I’ve been there* effect is a trope that lends itself to clichés and risks impoverishing the potentialities of drawing in anthropology. Of course, drawing is not a magical wand for anthropologists: it does not allow us to see completely through other people’s eyes, at best, we can try using other people’s styles, observational techniques and aesthetics.¹³ It is deeply subjective, but a kind of subjectivity that does away with the self-legitimizing stances upon which many of the self-referencing illusions of anthropological writing rely (Gomes da Silva 2006: 14, 19).

6. STYLE

Naively, the style motif can appear as a simple aesthetic choice. But according to the history of “ethnographic drawing” – a history that someone still has to recover, understand and revise – we can recognize different drawing styles abounding in anthropology, from the typical 19th century anatomic drawings (human types/human sizes), and illustrations of material culture (including tools, artefacts, animals and techniques), to all manner of “abstract” graphisms (diagrams, charts, maps and

¹³ As Rudi Colloredo-Mansfield puts it, writing about his “participatory” drawing experiences with the Tigua of the Andes, “after 6 weeks of drawing-mediated encounters, I began to see and feel in practical ways more of what they saw in their paintings. I also better understood what they intended them to do as cultural objects” (Colloredo-Mansfield 2011: 5).

plans, and other figures) and even in the various geometric and visual metaphors generally used in anthropological writing. Researchers do not frame contemporary drawing in anthropology in any particular acceptable style. But it is not style-free, either. On the contrary, researchers should view the revival of drawings in anthropology with caution. Free-style drawing risks people denying it as it is caught by an academic discourse that inevitably converts freedom into mandatory forms. On the other hand, there is inevitably an implicit grammar, a perceived choice of style, and recurring clichés. With these thoughts in our minds, we questioned whether “it is possible to do away with style, with the (rhetorical) claim to a subjective legitimacy as anthropological knowledge producer.”

Another development of this topic related directly to the constraints of the academic format that hurdle anthropological production. In the Workshop, we discussed the towering problems in which not only anthropology but all academic disciplines currently delve, is because academics frame them by an international consensus that tends to belie creativity and out-of-the-box productions, as an important site of dispute where drawing does have a roll: “can drawing help undo the usual academic format in anthropological production or will it be absorbed and formatted?” This is a question that someone can only answer once academics embrace a self-critical stance toward what Steve Pinker called, “the devilish curse of knowledge” (Pinker 2014: ch. 3).

7. METHODOLOGY

Drawing as a research method in anthropology was an overhanging discussion theme throughout the meeting, and we developed other topics as a corollary to it. If at all, drawing is a soft method, relying on informality, individual freedom, escapism in the face of writing formats. The chances that drawing could take centre-stage as a viable method, not just for in-the-field observation but to guide anthropological production of knowledge, the group considered bleak until one of our guest speakers, Mitch Miller (a graphic artist and post-doc researcher at the Glasgow School of Arts) presented his work and raised the following question: “can drawing itself offer a form to present a research methodology?” Working with what he calls “dialectograms” (Miller 2014: 193 ff), Miller presented his thesis methodology as a combination of drawings and written captions combined in a single large cartographic composition that invites the observer to engage with the paths inscribed in the “dialectogram”. Although acceptable and appraisable in an art & design school today, it may take some time until social science schools can open up to the possibilities of presenting drawing compositions as a research methodology in anthropology. Still, thanks to such examples, the group’s mood became more optimistic in regards to the inclusion of drawing in academic research toward the end of the Workshop.

Drawing is, admittedly, a poor reflective medium. Standing alone, it does not go far in reflective terms. However, when interacting with words, it can produce powerful and interesting results, as Will Eisner's and Scott McCloud's theoretical works in sequential art showed (Eisner 1985; McCloud 1993). It can also work as an important check on the traps of verbal thinking. Thinking is not limited to verbalization (Bloch 1998: ch. 2), as participants made clear in the Workshop: when discussing the imaginary ekphrastic depictions of unseen exotic animals (George Stubbs' painted kangaroo and Albrecht Dürer's engraved rhinoceros), and Dan Sperber's anti-relativist rhetoric, where ancient stories of Ethiopian unicorns become entangled with horned dragons in a purported dialogue with an aged Dorze informant (Sperber 1980: ch. 2).¹⁴ The practice of drawing promotes the observation of non-verbal interactions, an immersive way of knowing the place, of creating integrative memories, and of contouring them in a non-abstract way. Even when put in words, memories need framing hooks that are not simply computational: they are imaginary.

8. DRAWING AND SKILL

The distinction between drawing as an "acquired" or "natural" skill was a controversial point. Despite the common sense around the drawing skills of children, some participants were not so confident about their previous and actual ability to draw. So, we questioned: "is it essentialist romanticism to think that anyone can draw or should we recognise that not everyone draws?"

An extreme view was that there is not much that differentiates hand-writing and hand-drawing as mechanical projections of the imagining mind. In this view, writing is but a specialized form of drawing, one that school education over-values and teaches to contrast to the act of drawing anything other than letters. Regaining the ability to draw would then involve an undoing of the mental block that creates the conceptual contrast between drawing and writing. If one focuses more on the act of concentrating one's attention in capturing a particular context, and not on the end product itself, confidence is likely to build up and the ability to be rediscovered. This possible untying of the Gordian knot that is the "skill" or the "talent" to draw, would not, of course, address the problem of communication through drawings as an academic effort: "one thing is to draw and sketch, and the other is to communicate through drawing (the same applies to writing) – so, again, what is drawing anthropology?" Just as writing requires skill, training and proficiency, so too does drawing as a communicable research product entail a measure of acquired and trained ability. Yet, it can be democratically nurtured in academia as part of the teaching of anthropological tools and techniques.¹⁵

¹⁴ Dan Sperber begins the chapter "Apparently irrational beliefs" of his book *Le savoir des anthropologues* with a quasi-theatrical dialogue "extracted" from his purported fieldwork diary, in which the old man Filate tells the anthropologist of an unknown creature: "Its heart is made of gold, it has one horn on the nape of its neck. It is golden all over. It does not live far, two days' walk at most" (Sperber 1982: 149).

¹⁵ Tom McGuirk, reflecting on "drawing as a knowledge generating activity that integrates perception, action and cognition", alerts to the fact that the main drawback of absorbing drawing, and generally art and design in university education derives from what Pierre Bourdieu names the repressive exclusion of *métier* from scholastic practices (McGuirk 2014: 297).

9. DRAWING, IMPRINTING, IMPACTING

If drawing and writing are akin, that is chiefly because they are variations of a basic, universal and primal human behaviour: that of making marks in surfaces, of inscribing, of creating traits in surfaces, of carving materials. Tim Ingold's previous theoretical work on these matters (Ingold 2011a: 220-226; 2013: 129-132) chaperoned our exploration of the relationships between the diverse attributes of that behaviour: doodling, sketching, calligraphying do vary because they serve different purposes but they derive from the same double cradle: they are visible inscriptions that mirror and activate our mind processes, and they are tools and signs of our will to communicate the images in our mind to fellow humans. They are both creative developments of an evolutionary social need: that of sharing with others the imagery that flows in one's mind. Drawing in the field is helpful, not necessarily or primarily to share a finished result but for sparking further intellectual processes through memorized imaginations. Would we call this "knowledge from the inside" or as "embodied cognition"? No matter how we wish to define this gripping subject, the fact remains that a greater concern with the rapports between the oral, the written and the drawn would have made possible an alternative path in the history of the "discipline of words" that is anthropology,¹⁶ had field researchers been less obsessed with "knowledge from the outside" and "verbal-based cognition" (Bloch 1998: 15-17).

10. TERMINOLOGY

We initially titled the workshop, "Ethnographic Drawing Workshop", referring to the traditional relation between drawing and anthropology since the dawn of the discipline. Obviously, we distinguish "ethnographic drawings" from other kinds of drawings, and refer to the specificity of the anthropologist's practice. However, we soon considered the workshop's name an unhappy choice, since it was not our aim to endorse previous practices, but to imagine a new one. One possibility would be to endorse "graphics", a growingly popular catch-word, but "ethnographic graphics" would have sounded an oxymoronic pun. Instead, we focused in a more far-reaching conceptual doubt: "why *ethno* in the *graphic*? Why not simply graphic anthropology or drawing anthropology?"¹⁷ There is a paradoxical laxity in the accepted and generalized use of the expression "ethnography" as defining a practical research practice and writing style that directly contradicts the otherwise quasi-neurotic critical attitude to that has historically marked anthropologists' approaches to the discipline's lexicon. Furthermore, if colonial anthropology was partly responsible for popularizing anything "ethnic", people have long criticized and dropped this concept. So, we tried to move away from this misnomer that felt hardly a valid heuristic, and incapable to describe what was our topic: the uses of drawing as knowing and imagining practice by present-day anthropologists.

¹⁶ Though not at all concerned with drawing, Margaret Mead coined the notion of "discipline of words" to remind us of the belittled role of the "visual" in the history of Anthropological research (Mead 2003: 3-4).

¹⁷ Tim Ingold is clearly unsatisfied with associating drawing and ethnography. For him, ethnography is burdened with "descriptive accuracy" in a particularly formatted writing style, and as such opposed to world-engaged creative process; in his vision, anthropology gains in being taught by the world, "from the inside", and arts and crafts practices may foster a new anthropology, providing new directions in immersed research. Dan Sperber's view is worth noting here: although his prospects for the future of anthropology differ radically from Ingold's (on the debate, see Whitehouse 2001), he is even less benign on characterizing as flawed the "forced marriage" between anthropology and ethnography and he pushes for an outright divorce between the two (Sperber 1982: 16). Interestingly, it's the interpretative and creative character of ethnography that Sperber abhors, though he later in the text recognizes the highly formatted style of ethnographic academic monographs (1982: 46), whereas for Ingold, anthropology as an interpretative, engaged and creative process, needs to distance itself from formatted ethnography.

CONCLUSION: WHAT IS TO DRAW?

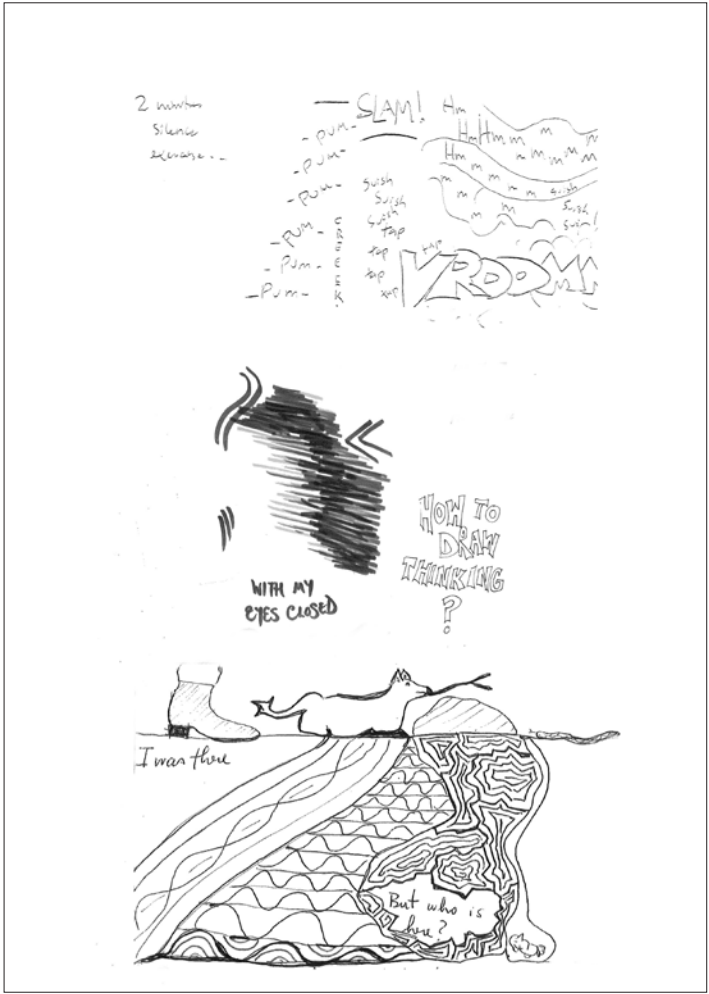
A question has been left hanging in the preceding pages: when we ask “what is it we do when we draw?” are we not actually asking, “can we know what ‘to draw’ through talking and writing about it?” We can of course talk and write about how drawing serves the purpose of knowing and imagining a place, a social context, etc. We can hint, as we did above, at its aptitudes as a tool for observation of social practices, as a medium for interaction and active participation in the field. We can even delve into its complex relationship with written and visual techniques of representation. But at the end of the day, we best answer the question, “what is to draw?”, “from the inside” – that is, through drawing. By saying this, we are not simply offering a poetic subterfuge to conclude a paper. We are, on the one hand, giving testimony of the tension felt during the two-day workshop between the various forms of verbal interaction among the participants on the subject of drawing and the doodling and sketching that kept recurring both as an individual (with a certain degree of privacy) practice and as a collective dialoguing endeavour. Participants took up drawing spontaneously and it acted as a mnemonic register of the workshop and as a silent dialogue with words that people uttered and ideas that popped up. On the other hand, we are inviting the reader to understand through the practice of drawing in the field that the academically formatted “graphic reason” (a term coined by Jack Goody, 1977: 81) has not been able to adequately tap into vast areas of non-verbal knowledge and communication prevalent in all human societies (on a critical take on Goody’s perspective, see Bloch 1998: 152 ff; Gomes da Silva 2006: 15 ff; Ramos 1999; Street 1984: 44 ff).

It is only fitting that this paper ends with a double cautionary word. The practice of drawing in the field helps make it clear that there are grave limitations in the stance that verbal *and* written (preferably in English) cognitive tools are sufficient to successfully forage the world of the human mind in society – and that such limitations are not understandable by simply erecting a categorical wall (as Edmund Leach would have put it: 1971: 3) between the written and the visual. But is also important to state that we are not naïf to the point of suggesting that the practice of drawing in the field ought to be elevated to the status of a wand that can magically clear the anthropological horizons from deeply ingrained epistemological and methodological conundrums. Ours is but a modest invitation to look into how much there is still to know about what drawing can and cannot do, and to inquire about it really is when practiced by an anthropologist during his/her fieldwork immersions.

It is our hope that the reader accepts this invitation. In regard to the testimonial nature of this paper, namely about what went on beyond-beneath-behind-beside words in the Aberdeen workshop, we feel it is appropriate to conclude it with a non-filtered presentation of the drawings made by its

participants. Like most doodles and sketches, the intention was not for publication, and indeed, no one did them consciously thinking we would share the drawings at all beyond the four walls of the meeting room of the Old Aberdeen Town House. That later decision was somewhat external to the practice and, even if the participants authorized their use, the organizers are to be held solely responsible for publishing them. We depicted the main topics of this paper, which includes, the situation of the workshop itself, its participants, variations of a Stubbs-like Ethiopian dragon-rhinoceros-unicorn,¹⁸ dialectograms, and illustrations made during a “field” visit to the hyper-modernist building of the new Sir Duncan Rice Library of the Aberdeen University.¹⁹ So, let the sketches become drawings and talk to the reader-become-watcher.

IMAGES

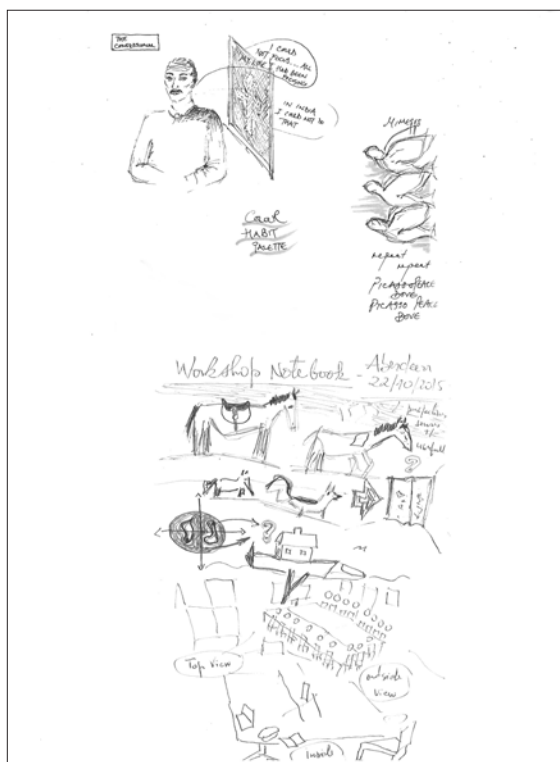


1. BEGINNING WITH EYES CLOSED. PARTICIPANTS STARTED THE WORKSHOP BY CLOSING THEIR EYES FOR FIVE MINUTES; THEREAFTER, THEY WERE INVITED TO DRAW WHAT THEY “SAW”, HEARD, IMAGINED (DRAWINGS BY PELAYO BENAVIDES, RACHEL JOY HAARKNESS AND JOÃO LOUGUERCIO).

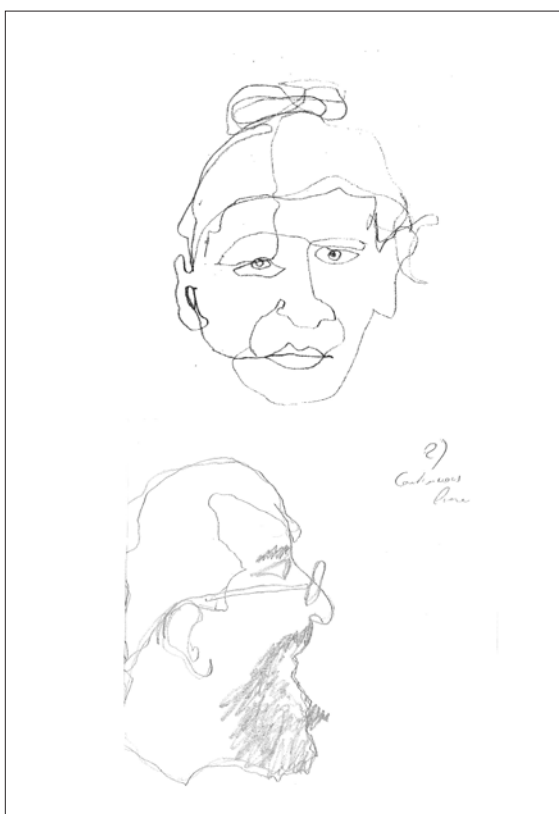
¹⁸ An ironical take on Dan Sperber’s “extract of my fieldwork diary” where a Dorze informant describes an animal with a horn, a golden heart and golden skin, and the researcher oddly classifies it as a “dragon”, setting him out to analyse the outlandish and apparently irrational exotic beliefs of (Christian) Ethiopians, as if the concept was totally alien to French religious symbolism (Sperber, 1982: 51).

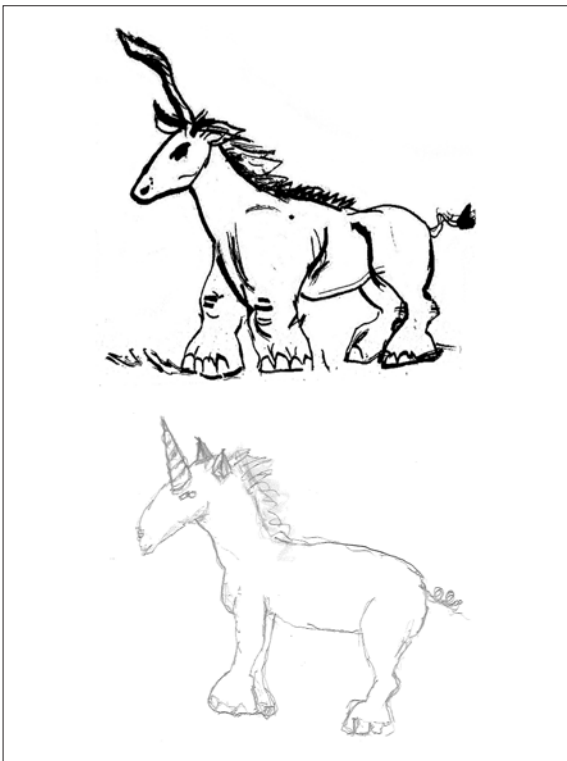
¹⁹ Designed by the Danish architect group Schmidt, Hammer & Lassen, the Sir Duncan Rice Library was inaugurated in 2012. The £57m zebra-skinned cube-shaped building stands in the university’s grounds and towers over all the surrounding area. It’s most striking feature is the oval spiraling atrium connecting all eight stories.

2. CONFESSONAL
BRAINSTORM. THE FIRST
HOURS OF THE DRAWING
WORKSHOP: TALKING,
LISTENING, IMAGINING
(DRAWINGS BY RACHEL
JOY HARKNESS AND JOÃO
LOUGUERCIO).



3. DRAWING A LINE. DRAWING CONTINUOUS LINES WAS A PROPOSED STARTING POINT FOR THOSE PARTICIPANTS WHO WEREN'T FEELING CONFIDENT ABOUT THEIR OWN ABILITY TO DRAW (DRAWINGS BY AN UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT AND ENRICO MARCORE).





4. DRAWING LIKE STUBBS.
INSPIRED BY GEORGE STUBBS
- AND ALBRECHT DURER
- WHO USED EKPHRASTIC
DESCRIPTIONS TO DRAW
ANIMALS THEY'D NEVER
SEEN, SOME PARTICIPANTS
DREW AN UNKNOWN ANIMAL
DESCRIBED BY AN OLD
DORZE MAN TO DAN SPERBER
(1982: 149) (DRAWINGS BY
MITCH MILLER AND PAOLO
GRUPPUSO).

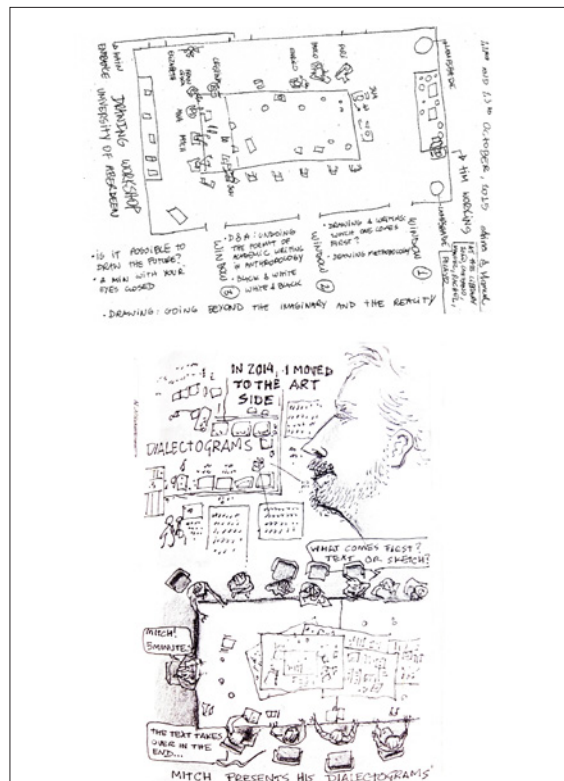


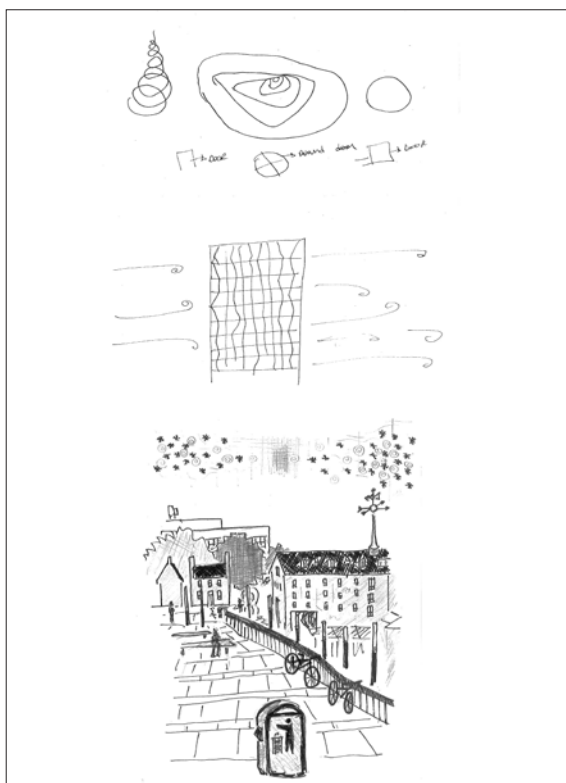
5. THE NOT-ROUND TABLE. THE
LARGE TABLE AROUND WHICH
THE PARTICIPANTS GATHERED
DURING THE WORKSHOP
WAS DEPICTED IN DIFFERENT
WAYS (DRAWINGS BY JOÃO
LOUGUERCIO AND RACHEL
JOY HARKNESS).

6. EXPERIMENTING WITH MATERIALS. ONE AIM OF THE WORKSHOP WAS TO TRY OUT DRAWING MATERIALS, TECHNIQUES, STYLES AND TOPICS (WATERCOLOUR BY CHRISTINE MODERBACHER, BALL PEN AND CHARCOAL DRAWINGS BY ANNE DOUGLAS).

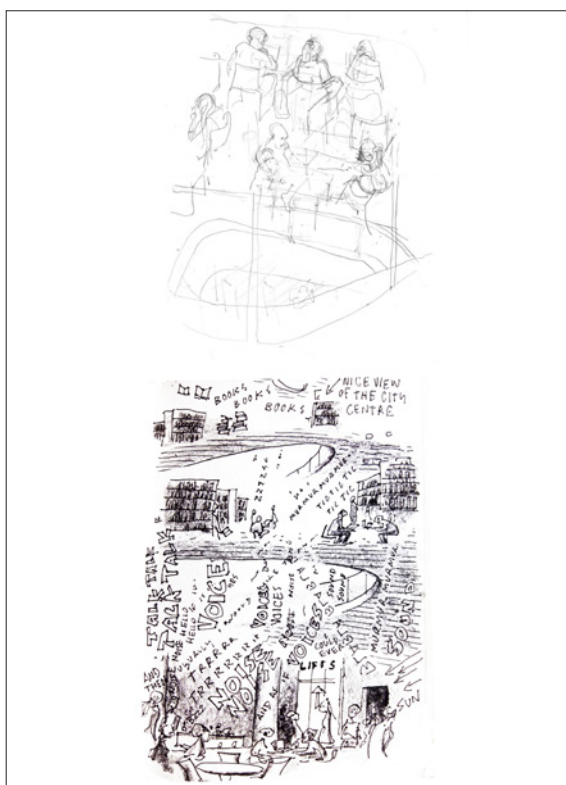


7. DIALECTOGRAMS. THIS DRAWING-WRITING STYLE INTRODUCED BY MITCH MILLER – ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS – FAVOURS A PIGEON'S EYE VIEW TO MAP A PARTICULAR SOCIAL CONTEXT (DRAWINGS BY AINA AZEVEDO AND MANUEL JOÃO RAMOS).





8A AND 8B. DRAWING SIR DUNCAN LIBRARY. WHILE SOME PARTICIPANTS STAYED AT THE OLD TOWN HOUSE EXPERIENCING AND DISCOVERING NEW MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES - OTHERS LEFT ON A "OBSERVATIONAL FIELDTRIP" TO THE MODERNIST SIR DUNCAN RICE LIBRARY BUILDING THAT TOWERS ABOVE THE OLD CITY (8: DRAWINGS BY AINA AZEVEDO AND CAETANO SORDI; 9: DRAWINGS BY ANNE DOUGLAS AND MANUEL JOÃO RAMOS).



9. CADAVRE EXQUIS. DURING THE TWO-DAY WORKSHOP, THE PARTICIPANTS WERE OFFERED A COLLABORATIVE DRAWING EXPERIENCE: EACH WAS INVITED TO DRAW A SECTION OF A PIECE OF WRAPPING PAPER, FOLD IT AND LEAVE ONLY THE BOTTOM TIP OF THE DRAWING VISIBLE - THE FOLLOWING PERSON TAKING THESE VISIBLE LINES AS THE STARTING POINT OF HIS/HER OWN CONTRIBUTION, LIKEWISE PARTIALLY FOLDED.



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PHOTO-ESSAY

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PORTRAITS OF CHANGE BY FARMERS IN SOUTHERN GUINEA-BISSAU

ABSTRACT

This photo essay, whose images and captions were created by farmers living in Cantanhez National Park, Guinea-Bissau, illustrates and analyzes the diverse ways in which these West African photographers and collaborative researchers chose to represent change. Some of the visual and narrative devices employed by the photographers include staging the past; representing before/after situations; and thoughtful composition in the visual depiction of changed and changing physical environments. Beyond our initial research focus on perceptions of climatic changes, these farmers turned photographers shared compelling portrayals of change in its social, economic, ecological and cultural complexity, in some cases offering counter-narratives to the dominant environmentalist narrative about this protected area.

KEYWORDS

Participatory photography, local knowledge, climate change, change, West Africa, Guinea-Bissau, Cantanhez National Park

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INTRODUCTION

All the images and captions in this photo essay were created by Bissau-Guinean farmers who participated as photographers and researchers in a collaborative research project on local knowledge of climate change. This essay seeks to illustrate the diverse and creative ways in which these West African farmers turned photographers chose to represent the tricky concept of *change* in its local social, economic, cultural and ecological complexity.

The change this research project addressed was climatic change. The goal was to examine how rice farmers living inside Cantanhez National Park in southern Guinea-Bissau perceive climate change, explain it and cope with its impacts on their livelihoods and landscapes. In a context of political economic changes affecting natural resource management and local livelihoods, including increasingly restrictive biodiversity conservation policies (Temudo 2012; unpublished data, 2011), labor shortage and global commodity prices (Sousa et al, 2014), preliminary exploratory research (unpublished data, 2010 and 2011) had shown land users to be concerned about the loss of one month of rain in the rainy season (June - September/October), increasing weather variability and unpredictability, and increased salinity in the mangrove rice fields (*bolanhas*) on which numerous households depend. To investigate local perceptions of environmental changes, this research project methodologically involved farmers affected by climatic changes as co-researchers through their use of photography and storytelling – an approach known as participatory photography (Gubrium & Harper 2013; Pauwels 2015; Wang et al. 1996; Wang 1999).

Because of the remoteness (both geographic and infrastructural) of Cantanhez National Park - a 1,142 km² area that coincides with the Cubucaré peninsula in the coastal region of Tombali (Temudo 2012) - I had expected that using photography as a research methodology would be challenging, given people's limited exposure to it. However, in this protected area that is home to about 25,000 people of more than 10 ethnic groups, photography (mainly in its digital form) is actually a familiar activity. It is even a thriving business responding to a high demand for pictures of people and events. In the past years, covering the entire peninsula, three local professional photographers armed with compact digital cameras have complemented their agricultural livelihoods with shooting portraits of paying customers and creating printed memories of ceremonies and other social events. These businessmen then have their pictures "washed" (*laba*, kriol, hereafter, kr.), i.e., printed, in Bissau, the distant capital city. Buying pictures comes at a high price for the customers, who pay a hefty value in advance and sometimes are left empty handed as the pictures they paid for are sold to someone else. Still, notwithstanding these locally condemned unethical practices, pictures of family members, friends and events are cherished by their owners, who fetch them out of locked metal trunks or worn out paper envelopes

to display them with pride. Clearly, although the work of these professional photographers was initially not perceived as a respectable activity (i.e., “not real work”) and photography was mostly seen as something *brankus* (white people, i.e., tourists, NGO staff, scientists) do, these locally produced images are treasured. As their owners explain, they are invaluable records of people and places. And while the scope of photography is locally limited, both in terms of access to cameras and ability to purchase pictures, engaging local farmers as photographers in our collaborative research project was thus not difficult.

Importantly, from a methodological standpoint, this participatory photography approach sought to circumvent two related constraints to conducting research in the area: on the one hand, the negative effect of decades of externally implemented, authoritarian development and conservation interventions on local people’s relationships with scientists and NGO staff and among various ethnic groups (Temudo 2005, 2012), which is reflected in widespread interview and “project fatigue”; and, on the other hand, the deployment by local farmers of a pervasive environmentalist discourse in which fragments of threatened “primary forests” (see Campredon 1997) are valued over other ecosystems (e.g., savannas and mangroves; unpublished data, 2010 and 2011) and local farmers are depicted as insensitive to the value of the forests and environmentally destructive (Campredon 1997; see also Temudo 2009). The local appropriation of this “environmental degradation narrative” (Temudo 2009: 237) was strongly confirmed at our first meeting with the community of Cafal, a village in the south of the park, when we explained the project and invited volunteers for it. As we mentioned our climate change related research questions, voices in the audience responded that “the rain is staying away” and the area is “becoming a desert because we are cutting down the forests”. People were echoing conservationist messages that are conveyed through local radio programs and “sensitization actions” conducted by conservation NGOs and park authorities (i.e., meetings in villages) - even though this discourse contradicts farmers’ perceptions about local ecological dynamics and their own valuation of ecosystems (unpublished data, 2011).

Seeing our expectation of local adoption of the environmentalist discourse so strikingly confirmed, we decided to approach the question of climate change indirectly. This we did by proposing that our research collaborators explore change (*mudansa*, kr.) from different perspectives, anticipating that unsolicited information about climate change would emerge amidst other narratives of change. In Cafal, after convening a meeting with the community and explaining the project, 27 men and women between the ages of 25 and 75 and from the three local ethnic groups (i.e., Nalu, Balanta and Pepel), joined the project as collaborators. We answered questions, offered training in photography and related ethics, and invited our collaborators to conduct three separate “research projects” by using photography as their research methodology and simple digital camera as their tools.

We invited them to combine photography and storytelling to represent three types of changes people have experienced locally, starting with “Changes inside the village of Cafal”, followed by “Changes outside the village” and then “Changes in water”.

I hoped that this later research focus would yield visual representations of perceived alterations in precipitation and/or sea level. Over four months during the dry season, the collaborative research process was conducted as an iterative cycle of individual picture taking, followed by collective discussion and analysis of each photographer’s favorite images in small groups (i.e., “storytelling sessions”). In each session, the photographers’ images and associated narratives acted as prompts facilitating dialog and co-production of knowledge about local changes and any aspect participants (including non-photographers) wished to discuss. All narratives and commentary on the images were audio-recorded and qualitatively analyzed. The fieldwork concluded with a public screening of the photographers’ work.

At this “closing ceremony” (*encerramento*, kr.), organized by the photographers, each photographer stood in front of an audience of about 200 people from Cafal and neighboring villages (including local leaders, park authorities and other policy-makers) and narrated the story of one of their pictures projected on the village discotheque’s wall, sparking debate with and among the audience.

In parallel to these well-defined (yet flexible) data collection and analysis stages aimed at exploring socio-ecological changes, the question remained, however, of how the Cafal photographers would capture the conceptually and visually elusive concept of change. From the outset, I was curious about the visual and narrative devices they would use in their portrayals of this issue. Would they photograph changed physical environments? How would they capture change in progress? Would they focus on “things” or social environments? Or depict practices? While these questions are in no way central to the research project, I analyzed images and narratives for the ways in which their creators (none of whom had used a camera before) engaged the concept of change. What follows is a representative sample of the contrasting and creative strategies the photographers used to represent change in its diverse manifestations - sometimes in unexpected ways - beyond our initial focus on climate change. The image captions are verbatim transcriptions of the photographers’ narratives, translated from Kriol or Portuguese. Some captions were shortened because of space limitation. All images are published with both their authors’ and their subjects’ consent.

A prevalent, and unanticipated, strategy to represent change was the use of staging - more specifically, staging of the past. Figure 1, the first photo to be shared in a storytelling session, by Lissa Turé, a Nalu 41-year old grandmother, vividly illustrates this approach. To achieve it, Lissa had two children to put old clothes on and act as travelers, thus depicting the way Nalus “from the past” traveled (in this case, a grand-mother and her grandson) and implying that people’s conditions today are better. After

Lissa, other photographers resorted to deliberately “staging the past” to emphasize present improved livelihood conditions, such as Bulutna Nancussa (Figure 2). With increasing sophistication, some photographers staged the past *and* the present, telling a story in two pictures. Directing a large group of people, Papis Demba Camará staged the “old school” of the Nalu (Figure 3) and then the current educational system (Figure 4) to compare both systems. Tracing the origin of the “staging the past” strategy and determining the reason for its prevalence is not straightforward. Photographers who later used it might have been inspired by Lissa Turé’s idea (indeed, participants in the storytelling session in which she shared her image were impressed by her approach and some later employed it). It could also reflect the local popularity of theater plays and participation in drama groups (*grupos teatrais*) (see Mitras 2004).

Another broad strategy used by photographers was to focus on everyday practices. In some cases, by portraying traditions they perceive as disappearing, the photographers suggested cultural change and a sense of “loss” (Figure 5). In other cases, technological and institutional changes, in the form of new practices (e.g., new land tenure arrangements), represent progress – “development” (Figures 6 and 7). Some photographers, again, combined two pictures to create “before and after” stories of positive changes – technological ones – that have improved people’s lives (Figures 8 and 9).

More along the lines of the types of images I intuitively had expected to see emerge are images of changed physical environments. These narratives focused on tangible deleterious changes affecting livelihoods, such as sea water damage to the extensive mangrove rice fields (Figure 10) and fresh water sources (Figure 11). To capture ecological change that is actually in progress, some photographers carefully framed their pictures, for instance conceptually and visually bringing together three different ecosystems in a well-balanced composition that highlights far from static ecological dynamics (Figure 12); or symbolically weaving past and present in the same image: in Figure 13, death creates life – albeit through human intervention. A final set of pictures and narratives depicted changes in the physical environment that are clearly brought about by human agency. Contradicting the environmental degradation narrative (Temudo 2009) that highlights deforestation by local land users and undervalues local ecological knowledge (unpublished data, 2011), these images tell stories of purposeful wild tree planting by farmers, in these cases conserving the very species the environmentalist discourse accuses them of threatening (e.g., large trees like *Ceiba pentandra*; *Borassus aethiopum* palms) (Figures 14 and 15). Exposing evidence of past human activity that has shaped the landscape, some photographers chose to highlight the rich historical and cultural heritage that is also mostly absent in the dominant environmentalist narrative about Cantanhez. This includes, for instance, ruins of colonial and postcolonial commercial buildings (again, conveying a

sense of loss, as well as reflecting the rich history of trade in the peninsula; Figure 16); and what on a first impression looks like forest, but is actually the site of a former village, as revealed by the presence of past fruticulture activity (Figure 17).

Expanding our initial research focus beyond climatic changes and their impacts on livelihoods, our Cafal research collaborators, through their imagery and storytelling, shared a wealth of interpretations of *change* in its various interrelated local guises, be they ecological, cultural and socio-economic. In most of their stories (only a sample of which is shared in this photo essay), humans and their well-being take center stage, whether at the receiving end of the impacts of socio-ecological changes; or as agents of change - technologically, institutionally, and through their use *and* active conservation of biodiversity. By resorting to creative visual and narrative devices in their pictures of change, our research collaborators portrayed their knowledge of a deeply valuable cultural and evolving landscape. In the process, they dispute popular notions about “the wild character of Cantanhez” (Campredon 1997: 4).

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Fig. 1. Photo by Lissa Turé (41 years old, farmer, palm oil producer)

I took this photo to recall the past. In the past, when my grand-mother traveled, she would take clothes and put them in a calabash that would travel on top of a boy's head. There were no backpacks at the time. The boy and the grandmother would go bare feet ("with their feet on the ground": pata na tchon, kr.); and clothes did not have a good quality. That's why I recalled that time with this image.



Fig. 2. Photo by Bulutna Nancussa (48 years old, farmer)

This is an old water spring. Do you see this boy with the calabash and his clean feet [i.e., bare feet]? The way he is standing there, inside the spring, with his foot on the ground [i.e., bare feet], he is fetching water to put in that bucket. In the old springs like this one, people would get in the water, fetch water and pass the bucket to their companion who hauls it up. What made me take this picture is that nowadays we have different water sources. The ones we have now are covered wells.



Fig. 3. Photo by Papis Demba Camará (48 years old, farmer, mason, bike mechanic, former adult education teacher, football referee)

I call this picture “Cafal of yesterday”. The second image is called “Cafal of today”. I took these pictures to record a change. This is the trunk of an old mango tree. In the past, our school was this one [under the mango tree]. This is the school that took our elders to Terra Branku [Europe]. This is the school that helped our elders free this land [Guinea-Bissau; he is referring to the 1963-74 Independence War]. This was their school. If today we see the greatness of this village, it is thanks to this tree and the advices that people received underneath it. All the elements you see in this picture play a role. That elder with the barkafon [a traditional bag] is the advisor. Inside, are his secrets: the pipe; the tobacco container; the palm tree fiber for [spiritual] safety while traveling. The bottle of “that other thing” is also there – I cannot mention its name. The three youth touching the trunk are receiving advice. The man with his hand in the air is calling people. The boy is carrying fire for the elder’s pipe. This is how our elders’ school used to be. This is how people were taught from Class One all the way to Class Seven, here underneath this tree around which people are seated. Many [youth] do not know this school. Under this tree has passed all the population of Cafal. Many elders sat here [he cites five names]. All received teachings underneath it. People also received advice before a journey. When drums were here, everyone from [nearby villages] would meet here. The Portuguese colonial head of administrative post (Chefe de Posto) would collect taxes here. Before, Cafal used to be darker, as this tree was planted in the middle of it. But it was felled [in 2008] because we wanted light. Because of the wind and to avoid darkness, people decided to cut this tree down, and the village got light. This also happened because of another change: cars and motorbikes – to avoid accidents. This changed Cafal’s character. When the mango tree was felled, lots of people cried.



Fig. 4. Photo by Papis Demba Camará (48 years old, farmer, mason, bike mechanic, former adult education teacher, football referee)

Today, we have a new method to teach children. The man with the black pants is the teacher walking his students to school and is looking at a student playing [on all fours]. The man with the white shirt [a student] is advising his colleagues to go to school. Because if they don't, nothing good will come of it. Thanks to such advice, we now have students graduating in our and other villages. Thanks to this change, things are better. Change your environment. Change even the character of your thoughts so that you know that other things will come. But never forget this is a big change. Take this type of change as an example; come out of the bad things and welcome the good things. The school from the past and today's school have their differences, but we need to follow both, a little of each. Children's education starts at home, and then teachers do the rest. This is why I took these pictures, to remind people that there used to be a type of school [under the mango tree] and today we have the schools where pupils sit at desks.



Fig. 5. Photo by Bebe Naman (31 years old, farmer)

This is an ancient thing, called *ngae*, which the Balanta used to do in the past. Today it's difficult to find people that still put these lianas [malilas, kr.] on. People have changed. They wear good clothes and stroll around. In the past, youth would wear these lianas and would walk shirtless all the way to Bissau. I found this boy on that day, on the eve of his ninth birthday party, and I saw how he was dressed. I was very happy. Today, it is very difficult to find someone going shirtless. I took this picture to show the youth of today this custom that boys no longer do. In the past, this is how our elders would do. Why did this practice diminish? People have become careless. In the past, the majority did not go to school. That's why today, people want to kill this tradition so that the youth stay in school.



Fig. 6. Photo by Manuel Camará (75 years old, farmer, Independence War veteran)

My comrades, my brothers, my uncles, and my children, I will tell you the story of this motor boat, the first one in Cafine. In the past, we didn't have such motor boats. We would row all the way to Catió [neighboring peninsula] to take someone sick for treatment. It was very difficult. When there was wind, we would sail. But when the wind disappeared, no one could go anywhere. But today we have development. Motor boats are development. With a motor boat, no one gets tired [i.e., there is no difficulty]. Not unless the engine breaks down. I took this picture to show development, which feeds and helps us.

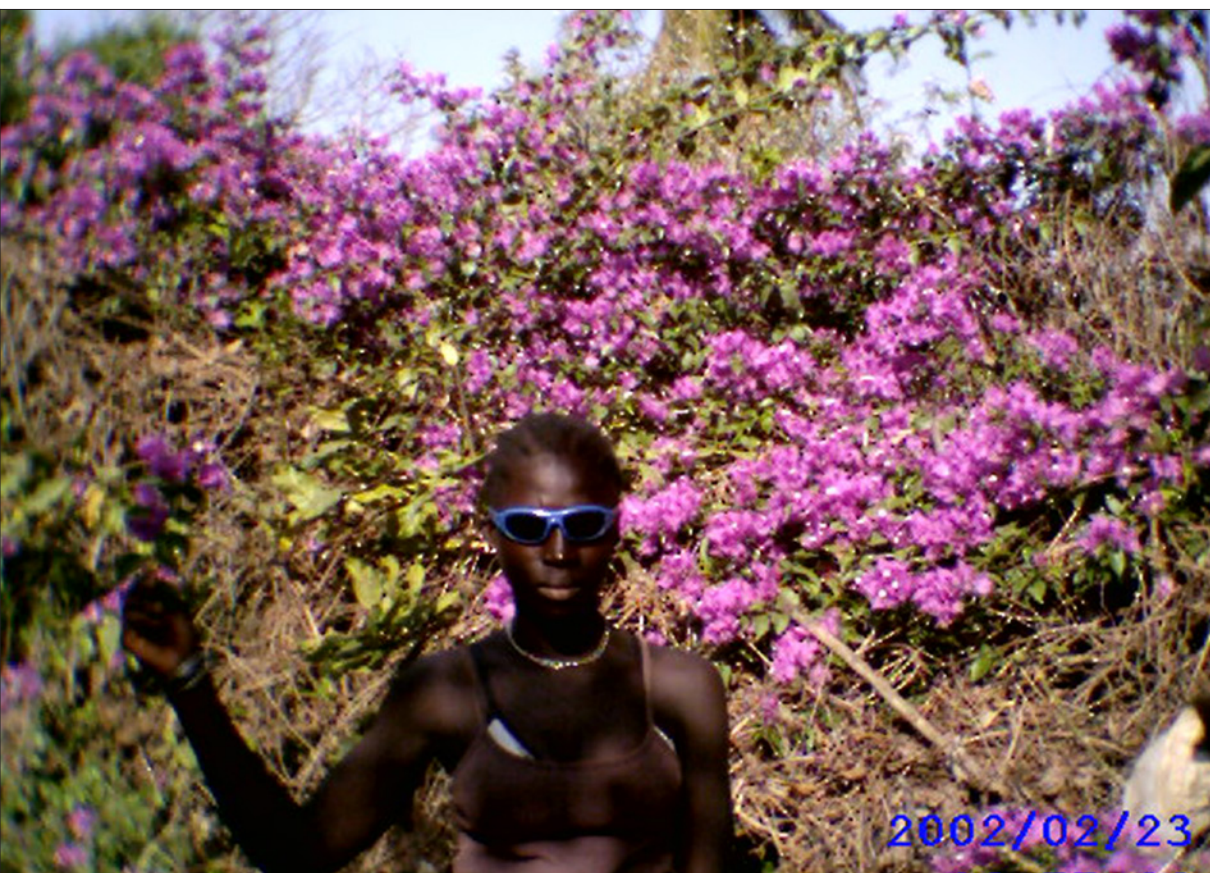


Fig. 7. Photo by Mussa Conté (44 years old, farmer, bike and motorbike mechanic)

Here was located the first village [tabanca, kr.] of Calaque. During the [Independence] war people lived here. At the end of the war, they moved to a new village. [I took this picture] near an old house. The owner of this piece of land planted these flowers so that his children know that "Our father planted these flowers to show us this is our piece of land". The father planted these flowers for his family's future. When this young woman was a girl, the mother took her by the hand [around] her father's plot: "This is the land of your late father, which was near the house, where these flowers are. You now take care of [it]. This piece of land is yours". Later on, the young woman can take the hand of her younger brother and show him their father's plot, identified by the flowers. In the past, our elders would not demarcate their pieces of land. They would simply build houses. But this man thought of his children to come. So he planted these flowers on his plot. Some people would sow kola trees; others, mango or orange trees. Others would sow nothing. In that time, everyone had their own idea. They would think "This is the war, I don't know if I will make it, why make a plantation?" Even before the war, our elders did not think of doing something for the future. But now we are in the world of development. Every day, things change and this is how the idea of development increases and people are starting to delimit plots for their children. I want to identify my plot of land with cement slabs, with the name of my first son, Mussa. Tomorrow, if I die, my children will have evidence that "this piece of land belongs to our father". If people do not mark their plots today, tomorrow they'll have problems. Someone can say "This plot is mine. I had loaned it to your father". But if I have a mark with my name on it or flowers, I can prove the plot is mine.



Fig. 8. Photo by Pedro Nancussa (70 years old, farmer, Independence War veteran, manager of the mangrove rice fields' water management system)

In the past, we used to use husk rice with a mortar (pilon, kr.). When the rice was clean, people carried it inside that basket (kufo, balanta). My grandmother and my mother worked like this until they died. Our elders had no other way of doing it. This is the only way they had to husk rice. It is extremely difficult for women. I took this picture among traditional houses to show this is in the past. Now (2nd image), change has come. Difficulty ("fatigue": kansera, kr.) is over. If someone has 10 bags of rice, they can take it to the husking machine and the rice gets husked in two hours.



Fig. 9. Photo by Sene Cassamá (36 years old, farmer)

This (first image) is a story from the past. In the past, if you wanted to talk with a family member, you had to write and send a letter. But the person to whom you gave your letter might not find the recipient. Or the letter would stay in their hands for months and wouldn't find its owner. And the family would be worried. In the second image, we have a cell phone. Since cell phones exist, the whole world is relieved. Today, someone might be in Portugal and they can talk to their family. Even money can be transferred by cell phone. You can send letters [SMS messages] by cell phones. [The time of paid] radio messages informing someone that a letter was on its way and that used to reveal people's secrets is over. Everyone, even in other countries, would know what the letter said. Now, this is over, we're in the phase of development. I give you money for you to give my brother. Before you get there, i inform my brother [that you're on your way] to make sure you don't misbehave.



Fig. 10. Photo by Bebe Naman (31 years old, farmer)

I'm the one who took this picture. This is the bolanha (mangrove rice field; kr.) of Cadique-N'bitna. In the past, all of this was cultivated. But now it's all damaged and abandoned because (sea) water came from the river and destroyed the dikes [in 2008]. The main dike (dique de cintura; Portuguese) was close to the river, and it broke first. Then the other dikes lost their support and also broke down. Only that bridge that we see over there remained, where people still cultivate rice. Over there, they are restoring the bolanha. This is a change. My family is there. They were affected, they're suffering, they now have fewer cultivated parcels. People want to restore the bolanha and rebuild the main dike over there. Right now, people depend on cashew. They collect the nuts and trade them for rice.



Fig. 11. Photo by Albat lalá (29 years old, farmer, primary school teacher, secondary school student)

In the past, this pond was good. Our cows used to drink there. I took this picture to show that cows cannot drink there now because sea water got in there and the cows feel bad. Before, we didn't worry about water for cattle. But in the past four years, it's been a great source of worry because sea water has invaded this drinking place. It's a negative change. That's what motivated me to take this picture; to show the youth that this is not how this pond used to be. A high tide [yagu sin bibu, kr. – literally, water that leaves no one alive] damaged it. Underneath those rocks are freshwater springs and crocodile (lagartu, kr.) holes. One day, an elder found a baby crocodile and placed it in this pond. The crocodile grew up, then went to the river to get married and had many children here. People wanted to kill these crocodiles but the elders didn't allow it. These elders had adopted these crocodiles like people in India have adopted the cow. One day, when the water was dirty, we went to clean the water springs, we found a crocodile in its hole. We had wanted to kill it but the elders stopped us: "You grew up and found this crocodile. It is not for you to kill it". [...] When I saw this picture on my camera's screen, it was a surprise to see the trees reflected in the water! The sun was going down. I didn't know that the trees would come out like this, in the water...



Fig. 12. Photo by Mussa Conté (44 years old, farmer, bike and motorbike mechanic)

This is a lala (a humid savanna) and this grass is karatá [a valuable roof thatching resource]. On the left is the forest. On the right is the mangrove. Today, the forest is coming in and taking the lala over and so the lala is getting finished. The mangrove is linked to the forest because the river has entered all the way to the forest. The forest and the mangrove are coming together to finish the lala. It's fresh water that has brought the forest. The land here has a slope. So, during the rainy season, water comes down from the village and accumulates here. With the entry of freshwater, the lala has lost its strength. Water always helps the trees. When it rains a lot, fresh water increases. But when there is little rain, fresh water decrease [...]. In the past, it used to rain a lot. But now rain varies: one year it rains a lot; another year, rain is little. One year, it may rain for only two months, August and September; another year, it may rain from May to October. In the past, it rained so much that houses fell down. It no longer happens.



Fig. 13. Photo by Paulo Nanfuta (34 years old, farmer)

This trunk belongs to a polon (kr.; silk cotton tree or *Ceiba pentandra*; a forest tree) that was cut down more than two years ago and died like this. Another polon, a little polon, was born inside the trunk of the dead polon. It's the owner of the big polon, who had cut it down, who sowed the little polon inside the trunk of the old polon. The dead polon's trunk allowed this change to happen: it had rotten and the little polon was sown inside of it and then it grew. These are two varieties of polon: one is reddish; the other one is bright yellow.



Fig. 14. Photo by Haruna Cassamá (33 years old, farmer, mason, carpenter, auxiliary nurse)

I took this picture in Calaque, in the orchard of a man called Umáro. There are six silk cotton trees (polon, kr.; *Ceiba pentandra*), which were planted. The first day I went to this place, I saw three polon on one side and three polon on the other side. I wondered about this as I didn't know that these polon had been sown. The garden's owner explained: "These polon were planted by my grandfather because he thought that in the future they might have value".



Fig. 15. Photo by Papis Demba Camará (48 years old, farmer, mason, bike mechanic, former adult education teacher, football referee)

This is a cibe (*Borassus aethiopum*; a wild palm tree) plantation. Before, this was a rice nursery. The rice seedlings would be transplanted to the bolanha [mangrove rice field]. More than 10 years ago, the owner of this plot realized his land was degraded. So he had the idea of planting cibe, thinking that one day it would be worth money. He brought cibe seeds from a neighbor's plot and sowed it. This is how he managed to obtain a cibe plantation of this size. He discovered the value of cibe after traveling to Quínara and seeing that one cibe tree is worth CFA 10000 [EUR 15]. If it is felled and divided in boards, each boards costs CFA 500 [EUR 0.76]. Seeing that this is something that is very valuable, he decided to experiment and plant cibe on his plot. He is the first person in the region to do it, and without any NGO support. His children water the trees. This is a beautiful change because the land owner changed his land several times. It has been a clean space, with nothing, no trees, no grass, a rice field dominated by sand [erosion] - you can still see the parcels and the dike. Then the owner transformed that land into a rice nursery. Then he had wanted to make it a palm tree [*Elaeis guineensis*; for palm oil production] nursery. But when he discovered the value of cibe, he decided to experiment with it.



Fig. 16. Photo by Sene Cassamá (36 years old, farmer)

What we see here is the former store of Calaque. When I was born, I found stores like these in all the villages. Everyone would go to this store in Calaque to sell and buy things. This store even bought palm kernel oil. People would take their products there, like palm oil, for the store to buy and sell. Then after its owner's death in 1999, the store was abandoned. Behind this store was located the old Portuguese store, the Casa Gouveia. The manager of that store planted these coconut trees. It's a big change, this place is damaged now.



Fig. 17. Photo by Haruna Cassamá (33 years old, farmer, mason, carpenter, auxiliary nurse)

I got this story through my father. Cafal started here. The person who discovered this place was Manuel Camará's grandfather [a 75 year old project photographer], called Torongos Camará. He used to live in Calaque and was a great hunter. While hunting, he arrived here, well before these planted mango trees existed. Nowadays, there are mango trees, and kola trees. Torongos returned to Calaque and told his neighbors: "I found the place that I want to settle". There was no road to there at that time. Torongos was the first to build his home here. After his family increased, people from Cafal moved to the low lying area, to get closer to the bolanha [mangrove rice fields]. This used to be a village; now it's almost forest. It's a good change because we got out of the forest and settled closer to the [new] road.



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BITTER ORANGES. AFRICAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN CALABRIA

ABSTRACT

The working conditions of African labourers in Calabria are characterized by severe precariousness, exploitation and poor remuneration, which lead to deplorable living conditions. Thousands of migrant workers live in unheated tent camps and makeshift barracks.

The catastrophic living and working conditions of orange pickers in Calabria are widely unknown to the general public. The Bitter Oranges project combines documentary photography, self-representation and short captions explaining the economic and political conditions that provide a framework to the visual ethnographic material. The goal of the visual ethnographic exhibition is to show the widely ignored working and living conditions of African migrants in Southern Italy to a broad public all over Europe. The exhibition responds to one of the urgent needs migrants in Calabria's camps expressed: to overcome the structural and epistemological violence of their hidden and unseen exploitation. The participatory approach of this visual anthropological study further aims to render "voicing" possible: giving the people the means to photographically document their destitute everyday living conditions. Finally, this visual anthropological study aims to empower people who are ostracized and forced to live at the margins of European society by offering the opportunity to represent themselves and gain a public platform. This exhibition contributes to a decolonized gaze, putting a focus on people's agency despite the slave-like conditions that are imposed on them structurally.

KEYWORDS

African migrants, refugees, participatory action research (PAR), Photovoice, precariousness, deprivation, inequality, postcolonial perspective, visual ethnography

THE AUTHORS

*Social anthropologists Dr. Diana Reiners (contract professor at Free University of Bozen (I), University of St. Gallen (CH) and University of Graz (A), Prof. Dr. Gilles Reckinger (Professor at University of Innsbruck, Austria), and the photographer and social scientist Carole Reckinger, M.Sc., (www.carolereckinger.co.uk) inquired the migrant workers about their daily realities, their day-to-day survival, their life stories and perspectives. Further information: www.bitter-oranges.com.
E-mail: carole81@gmail.com - gilles.reckinger@uibk.ac.at*

CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

The Bitter Oranges project started in 2012, and was funded by the Luxembourg Ministry of Culture Higher Education and Research, the Luxembourg National Research Fund as well as the University of Innsbruck. It was a continuation from past research projects by the researchers on migration, precariousness and the European border regime (Reckinger 2013, Reiners 2010). The Bitter Oranges project addresses some desiderata in recent sociological and anthropological research about boat migration to Southern Italy by ethnographically following the migrants after they are brought from Lampedusa to the Italian mainland, and by trying to understand how the control of migration movements on national and EU levels are intertwined with precarious labour markets.

The exhibition, "Bitter Oranges. African Migrant Workers in Calabria," was first launched on December 2nd, 2014 at Abbaye Neumunster Cultural Centre, Luxembourg. It has since been shown in different cities in Europe and North America.

BITTER ORANGES

Thousands of immigrants arrive by boat to Italy every year, widely overstretching the access to housing facilities and state support. More and more immigrants, including asylum seekers as well as refugees, are left to their own devices. To survive, they have no other choice than to seek seasonal day-to-day labour on fruit and vegetable plantations in Southern Italy. The declining sale prices for oranges in the 1990s forced Calabrian small-scale farmers to increasingly employ migrant seasonal workers from Eastern Europe on lower wages in order to remain competitive. A new reservoir of even cheaper labour became available with the increasing number of boat migrants from Africa a decade later. In recent times, the situation has become more critical with the heavy influx of refugees. With more nation states closing their borders as the Schengen area falls apart, it has become impossible for many migrants to leave Italy.

African harvest workers are hired on a daily basis without legal contracts. On average, a daily wage for 12 - 14 hours of work amounts to 25 euro. Competition is intense and most African harvest workers only find work a few days a month, resulting in monthly incomes ranging from 100 to 300 euro.

REFERENCES

RECKINGER, Gilles

2013 *Lampedusa. Begegnungen am Rande Europas*, Wuppertal.

REINERS, Diana

2010 *Verinnerlichte Prekarität. Jugendliche MigrantInnen am Rande der Arbeitsgesellschaft*, Konstanz.



Photo 01 (Orange picker) Carole Reckinger

Most African harvest workers live in emergency shelters built outside of town in a remote industrial area. This distance from the heart of the city was intentional. After an uprising in 2010, when African migrants protested against exploitation and recurrent assaults by local youth, the workers were forced out of town and the abandoned factories where migrants lived were demolished. Many workers returned shortly afterward, as no alternative harvest work was available during the winter season. Italian civil defence provided tents for a maximum of 500 people, but neither electricity nor any organisational or administrative institutional structure was provided.

Authorities demolished the tent camp citing hygienic reasons in the summer of 2013, but the ragged tents were never disposed of. A new tent camp was built only 200 meters away. Presently, access to water is only available in four sanitary containers. These are not connected to a sewage system, and a tank truck empties the septic tank once a week. As the camp is not connected to the power grid, the residents have tapped into the street lighting for electricity.



Photo 03 (slum) Carole Reckinger

During the 2015/2016 winter season, the camp spread out even further when several hundred additional African migrants joined the camp in hope for work. For many migrants, the orange harvest is a last resource for migrants that have not managed to find decent work anywhere else in Italy. A new slum has developed a few hundred meters further in and around an abandoned industrial building. Those who cannot afford to migrate within Italy at the end of the harvest season to find other seasonal work remain during the hot summer months. With no available jobs, many of them suffer from hunger and malnutrition.



Photo 4 – (tents summer) Carole Reckinger

How can people whose voice is continuously excluded from public discourse make themselves heard? This concern also challenges ethnological methodology: how can ethnographers discuss the grievances of participants without adopting the role of a spokesperson, thus again silencing the voices of the people affected? The participatory approach of the photographic project takes this concern into account. Originally conceived as a text-only project, the researchers quickly understood that the flagrant humiliation of illegalized migrants in Calabria could not be documented nor analysed and conveyed to the scientific community and the general public through texts alone. Therefore, they teamed up with photographer Carole Reckinger who had a long experience with working with deprived populations. To raise Europeans' awareness of these hidden realities, they decided that the research results should also be made available outside academia through a photo exhibition combining ethnographic narratives and interview passages as well as photos and video material. We reflected on the power relationship of three privileged white Europeans documenting the social violence inflicted upon hundreds of black males by European bureaucracy and white Europeans inside Europe, in light of the critical perspectives of postcolonial, feminist and critical whiteness studies. Recognizing migrants' urgent desire to speak out for themselves, the research team developed a more participatory way of conducting empirical research. The researchers handed digital photographic cameras to migrant men who asked to participate in the project, wanting to document their daily lives. The photographers wanted to capture migrants' perspectives for the outside world and to document voices of the socially disenfranchised. Some men also contributed pictures and video recordings using their own mobile phones. Moreover, the cameras facilitated administrative needs, e.g. taking passport pictures, and could in turn be used as a resource to the community. In total, five men participated in documenting their living conditions. As some migrants wished to stay anonymous, the team collectively decided to use only the first letter of each name in photo credits. The exhibition combines documentary photography, self-representation and short captions explaining the economic and political conditions that provide a framework to the visual ethnographic material. The goal of the visual ethnographic exhibition is to show the widely ignored working and living conditions of African migrants in Southern Italy to a broad public all over Europe, while responding to one of the urgent needs people expressed: to overcome the structural and epistemological violence of their hidden and unseen exploitation. Taking pictures and accusing the structural living conditions publicly is thus a strategy of agency that gives people back their role as social and political subjects that is structurally refused to them.



Photo 5 F.



Photo 6 S.



Photo 7 I.



Photo 8 Carole Reckinger

R. has one of the few fridges in the tent city and sells some typical African ingredients besides canned food and drinks. To buy the former, she regularly takes a train to Naples, 400 km to the north.



Photo 9 I.

The mobile phone is an indispensable possession. It serves as a connection to the family, a way to share information with each other, and as a replacement for a residential address. The authorities notify the migrants by phone if they need to pick up or renew their documents. Often, family members who depend on the support of the migrants call several times a day asking them to send money.



Photo 10 I.

Many of the workers' pictures show people putting their skills and resources to work as a means of earning a supplementary income, and running micro-businesses such as a bicycle repair workshop, offering services as a barber or selling buckets of hot water heated over an open fire. The prices vary according to what the customer is able to pay. The shared conditions of deprivation thus create an economic coping structure among the inhabitants of the tent city that relies on both solidarity and mutual interdependence.



Photo 11 M.

Most of the men had fled persecution or poverty by immigrating to economically well-off North African countries, which offered job opportunities and decent housing conditions. As foreign workers, they could earn a living that allowed them to send remittances for their relatives. Violent crises and civil wars that followed the Arab Spring forced many sub-Saharan migrants re-emigrate to Europe.



Photo 12 F.

A number of pictures by the camp inhabitants focus on the most urgent aspect of poverty: the scarcity of food and the problems of food conservation and health-threatening conditions. F., the author of the picture, belonged to the economic elite of his country of origin before his family was killed in a political overthrow.

HUCHI - HONEY

Directed & shot by: Adelina Antónia,
Martin Gruber, Miguel S. Hilario,
Henriques Bino Job, Fatima Jose &
Evaristo Quintas

2013, 39 mins

Shooting location: Cusseque, Angola

Password: yenh2016



SYNOPSIS

The film "Huchi - Honey" depicts the production of honey from wild bees as well as different aspects of honey use in Central

Angola. In the highlands of Central Angola honey is an important means of subsistence and cash income. It is used for cooking and medicinal purposes as well as to brew mead. Honey is deeply imbedded in Chokwe oral tradition, as a way to survive in times of crisis. The film "Honey" was conceived and shot by a group of villagers from the Cusseque area during a participatory film workshop organised for the international research project "The Future Okavango", investigating resource management in the Okavango Basin.

PRIZES

Green Film Award, Bristol

KEYWORDS

honey, apiculture, bee, Angola, Cusseque, Chitembo, Chokwe, anthropology, human-animal relationships, multispecies ethnography, visual anthropology, ethnographic film, participatory filmmaking, collaborative filmmaking, collaborative research, The Future Okavango, audio-visual ethnography



Collecting leaves for the smoker (Photo by M. Gruber)

FESTIVALS

- Peloponnisos International Documentary Festival, Kalamata, Greece 2016
- Royal Anthropological Institute Film Festival, Bristol, UK 2015
- Days of Ethnographic Film, Ljubljana Slovenia 2015
- World Film Festival, Tartu, Estonia 2015
- Antropofest Prague 2015
- Ethnological Film Festival Kratovo, Macedonia 2014
- Days of Ethnographic Cinema, Moscow 2014
- EASA Conference Film Program, Tallinn, Estonia 2014
- NAFA Film Festival Isafjordur, Iceland 2014
- Days of Ethnographic Film, Bremen, Germany 2013.



Harvesting Honey (Photo by M. Gruber)



Making honey beer (Photo by M. Gruber)

Martin Gruber is a researcher and lecturer at the Department of Anthropology and Cultural Studies, University of Bremen. He conducts long-term ethnographic research on the relationships between bees and humans. Before completing a PhD on participatory ethnographic filmmaking at the University of Bremen, Martin worked as a freelance anthropologist and filmmaker. He studied Visual Anthropology at Goldsmiths College, London and Social Anthropology at the University of Hamburg. Martin Gruber's complete CV can be found here:

www.kultur.uni-bremen.de/en/staff/alphab

BOOKS RECEIVED



Sarah Pink,
Elisenda Ardèvol,
Dèbora Lanzeni (Eds)
**DIGITAL
MATERIALITIES.
DESIGN AND
ANTHROPOLOGY**
2016, Bloomsbury

As the distinction
between the digital
and the material world

becomes increasingly blurred, the ways in which we think about design are also shifting and evolving. How can the human, digital and material be brought together to intervene in the world? What constitutes our digital-material environments? How can we engage with digital technologies to make sustainable, healthy and meaningful decisions, both now and in the future? *Digital Materialities* presents twelve chapters by scholars and practitioners working at the intersection between design and digital research in the UK, Spain, Australia and the USA. By incorporating in-depth understandings of the digital-material world from both the social sciences and design, the book considers how this combined knowledge might advance our capacity to design for the future. Divided into three parts, the focus of the book moves from the theoretical to the practical: how different digital materialities are imagined and emerge, through software emulation, urban sensors and smart homes; how new digital designs are sparked through collaborations between social scientists and designers; and finally, how digital design emerges from the insider work of everyday designers.

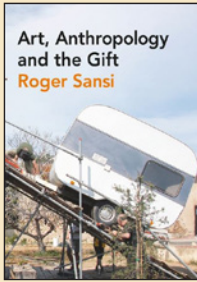


Christopher Morton,
Darren Newbury.
**THE AFRICAN
PHOTOGRAPHIC
ARCHIVE. RESEARCH
AND CURATORIAL
STRATEGIES**
2016, Bloomsbury

African photography
has emerged as a
significant focus of

research and scholarship over the last twenty years, the result of a growing interest in postcolonial societies and cultures and a turn towards visual evidence across the humanities and social sciences. At the same time, many rich and fascinating photographic collections have come to light.

This volume explores the complex theoretical and practical issues involved in the study of African photographic archives, based on case studies drawn from across the continent dating from the 19th century to the present day. Chapters consider what constitutes an archive, from the familiar mission and state archives to more local, vernacular and personal accumulations of photographs; the importance of a critical and reflexive engagement with photographic collections; and the question of where and what is 'Africa', as constructed in the photographic archive.

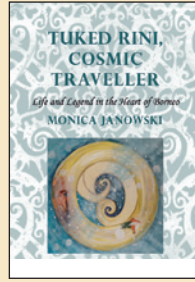


Roger Sansi
**ART, ANTHROPOLOGY
AND THE GIFT**
2014, Bloomsbury

In recent decades, the dialogue between art and anthropology has been both intense and controversial. Art, Anthropology and

the Gift provides a much-needed and comprehensive overview of this dialogue, whilst also exploring the reciprocal nature of the two subjects through practice, theory and politics.

Fully engaging with anthropology and art theory, this book innovatively argues that art and anthropology don't just share methodologies, but also deeper intellectual, theoretical and even political concerns, inviting scholars and students alike to look at this contentious relationship in a more critical light. One of the central arguments of the book is that the problem of the 'gift' has been central to both anthropological and artistic practice. This very idea connects the different chapters on topics including aesthetics, politics, participation and fieldwork.



Monica Janowski
**TUKED RINI, COSMIC
TRAVELLER. LIFE AND
LEGEND IN THE HEART
OF BORNEO**

2014, Nias Press
www.niaspress.dk

This innovative and visually engaging study presents a legend from

Borneo in which the Kelabit hero Toked Rini ventures out into the cosmos to do battle in remote spirit-laden places, returning to his wife with the heads of his enemies. Accompanied by audio material and additional resources that will be developed on a companion website, the work uses the legend to explore Kelabit ideas about life and cosmology – ideas of power or life force, the world of women centred on rice-growing and the relationship of men with the wild. Especially innovative is the way it brings together an orally told legend and a highly visually-oriented exploration of the way of life of the people who tell it. The book will be of interest to academics studying the culture, language and stories of Borneo but will also – with its striking illustrations – appeal to a wider audience.

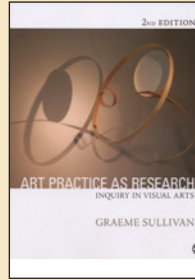


Fiona Candlin
**MICROMUSEOLOGY.
 AN ANALYSIS OF
 SMALL INDEPENDENT
 MUSEUMS**
 2015, Bloomsbury

How would our understanding of museums change if we used the Vintage

Wireless Museum or the Museum of Witchcraft as examples – rather than the British Museum or the Louvre? Although there are thousands of small, independent, single-subject museums in the UK, Europe and North America, the field of museum studies remains focused almost exclusively on major institutions.

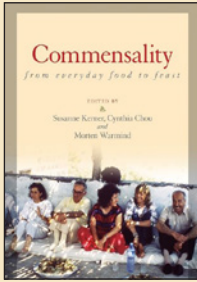
In this ground-breaking new book, Fiona Candlin reveals how micromuseums challenge preconceived ideas about what museums are and how they operate. Based on extensive fieldwork and analysis of more than fifty micromuseums, she shows how they offer dramatically different models of curation, interpretation and visitor experience, and how their analysis generates new perspectives on subjects such as display, objects, collections, architecture, and the public sphere. The first-ever book dedicated to the subject, *Micromuseology* provides a platform for radically rethinking key debates within museum studies. Destined to transform the field, it is essential reading for students and researchers in museum studies, anthropology, material culture studies, and visual culture.



Graeme Sullivan
**ART PRACTICE AS
 RESEARCH. INQUIRY
 IN VISUAL ARTS**
 2010, Sage Publications

Art Practice as Research, Second Edition continues to present a compelling argument that the

creative and cultural inquiry undertaken by artists is a form of research. The text explores themes, practices, and contexts of artistic inquiry and positions them within the discourse of research. Sullivan argues that legitimate research goals can be achieved by choosing different methods than those offered by the social sciences. The common denominator in both approaches is the attention given to rigor and systematic inquiry. Artists emphasize the role of the imaginative intellect in creating, criticizing, and constructing knowledge that is not only new but also has the capacity to transform human understanding.



Susanne Kerner,
Cynthia Chou,
Morten Warmind (Eds)
**COMMENSALITY:
FROM EVERYDAY
FOOD TO FEAST**
2015, Bloomsbury

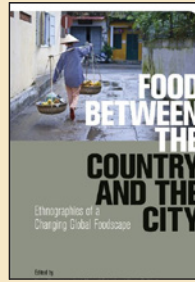
Throughout time
and in every culture,
human beings have

eaten together. Commensality – eating and drinking at the same table – is a fundamental social activity, which creates and cements relationships. It also sets boundaries, including or excluding people according to a set of criteria defined by the society. Particular scholarly attention has been paid to banquets and feasts, often hosted for religious, ritualistic or political purposes, but few studies have considered everyday commensality.

Commensality: From Everyday Food to Feast offers an insight into this social practice in all its forms, from the most basic and mundane meals to the grandest occasions. Bringing together insights from anthropologists, archaeologists and historians, this volume offers a vast historical scope, ranging from the Late Neolithic period (6th millennium BC), through the Middle Ages, to the present day. The sixteen chapters include case studies from across the world, including the USA, Bolivia, China, Southeast Asia, Iran, Turkey, Portugal, Denmark and the UK. Connecting these diverse analyses is an understanding of commensality's role as a social and political tool, integral to the formation of personal and national identities.

From first experiences of commensality in the sharing of food between a mother and child, to the inaugural dinner of the American president, this collection of essays celebrates the variety of human life and society.

increasing focus on the individual and giving a voice to service users, that are resulting in an increase of interest in narrative research. Creating Autoethnographies is a timely contribution to the field.

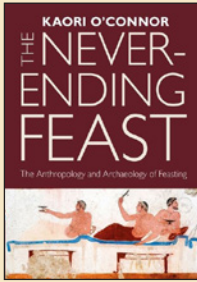


Nuno Domingos,
José Manuel Sobral,
Harry G. West (Eds)
**FOOD BETWEEN THE
COUNTRY AND THE
CITY. ETHNOGRAPHIES
OF A CHANGING
GLOBAL FOODSCAPE**
2014, Bloomsbury

At a time when the

relationship between 'the country' and 'the city' is in flux worldwide, the value and meanings of food associated with both places continue to be debated. Building upon the foundation of Raymond Williams' classic work, *The Country and the City*, this volume examines how conceptions of the country and the city invoked in relation to food not only reflect their changing relationship but have also been used to alter the very dynamics through which countryside and cities, and the food grown and eaten within them, are produced and sustained.

Leading scholars in the study of food offer ethnographic studies of peasant homesteads, family farms, community gardens, state food industries, transnational supermarkets, planning offices, tourist boards, and government ministries in locales across the globe. This fascinating collection provides vital new insight into the contested dynamics of food and will be key reading for upper-level students and scholars of food studies, anthropology, history and geography.

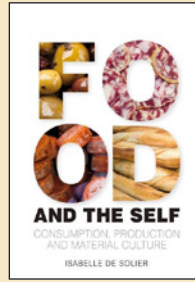


Nuno Domingos,
José Manuel Sobral,
Kaori O'Connor
**THE NEVER-
ENDING FEAST. THE
ANTHROPOLOGY AND
ARCHAEOLOGY OF
FEASTING**
2015, Bloomsbury

Feast! Throughout human history, and in all parts of the world, feasts have been at the heart of life. The great museums of the world are full of the remains of countless ghostly feasts – dishes that once bore rich meats, pitchers used to pour choice wines, tall jars that held beer sipped through long straws of gold and lapis, immense cauldrons from which hundreds of people could be served. Why were feasts so important, and is there more to feasting than abundance and enjoyment?

The Never-Ending Feast is a pioneering work that draws on anthropology, archaeology and history to look at the dynamics of feasting among the great societies of antiquity renowned for their magnificence and might. Reflecting new directions in academic study, the focus shifts beyond the medieval and early modern periods in Western Europe, eastwards to Mesopotamia, Assyria and Achaemenid Persia, early Greece, the Mongol Empire, Shang China and Heian Japan. The past speaks through texts and artefacts. We see how feasts were the primary arena for displays of hierarchy, status and power; a stage upon which loyalties and alliances were negotiated; the occasion for the mobilization and distribution of resources, a means of pleasing the gods, and the place where identities were created, consolidated – and destroyed.

The Never-Ending Feast transforms our understanding of feasting past and present, revitalising the fields of anthropology, archaeology, history, museum studies, material culture and food studies, for all of which it is essential reading.



Isabelle de Solier
**FOOD AND THE SELF.
CONSUMPTION,
PRODUCTION AND
MATERIAL CULTURE**
2013, Bloomsbury

We often hear that selves are no longer formed through producing material

things at work, but by consuming them in leisure, leading to 'meaningless' modern lives. This important book reveals the cultural shift to be more complex, demonstrating how people in postindustrial societies strive to form meaningful and moral selves through both the consumption and production of material culture in leisure.

Focusing on the material culture of food, the book explores these theoretical questions through an ethnography of those individuals for whom food is central to their self: 'foodies'. It examines what foodies do, and why they do it, through an in-depth study of their lived experiences. The book uncovers how food offers a means of shaping the self not as a consumer but as an amateur who engages in both the production and consumption of material culture and adopts a professional approach which reveals the new moralities of productive leisure in self-formation. The chapters examine a variety of practices, from fine dining and shopping to cooking and blogging, and include rare data on how people use media such as cookbooks, food television, and digital food media in their everyday life.

VIDEOS RECEIVED

CONFLUENCES. EMERILLON OF FRENCH GUYANA

A film by Perle Møhl

(2007, 86 mins.)

Distribution: Semiosis.fr

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jne4vJiMT6Q



Perle Møhl is an independent researcher and teacher of visual anthropology at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Like forceful omens, scientific reports have hitherto depicted the Amerindian Emerillon of French Guiana as cultureless and doomed to disappear. With this film, a Danish anthropologist proposes to defy these negative images of the Emerillon, by the same token delving into their world. Several young Emerillon take up the challenge, and through their resourceful and often stumbling efforts to maintain a life in the forest while profiting from their status as French citizens, they present another version of what being Emerillon is all about. We follow them through communal fishing trips, forest foraging, artistic creativity, French schooling and municipal elections, discovering how they, always with humour, manage to bridge the gaps and make their lives whole. A rare, profoundly generous and non-ethnocentric discourse emerges, one that asserts that; to feel Emerillon does not necessarily imply feeling fundamentally different from others lands.

Best Film at the Society for Visual Anthropology's 2015 Film and Media Festival.

ANTHROPOCENE

A film by Steve Bradshaw

2015, 97 mins

Distribution: Bullfrog Films

vimeo.com/158350427



A Working Group of international scientists is deciding whether to declare a new geological epoch - the Anthropocene - a planet shaped more

by mankind than nature. Its members tell the story of the Anthropocene and argue whether it's a tragedy, a comedy, or something more surreal. With archival footage, award-winning stills and interviews, ANTHROPOCENE proposes a common secular narrative for mankind but leaves viewers to decide how we should write the ending. The film has the blessing of Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen, who coined the term, and is the first feature film about the Anthropocene. It is now our turn to decide--in this decade--how the Anthropocene will end.



EAST OF SALINAS

A film by Laura Pacheco and Jackie Mow

2015, 53 mins

Distribution: Bullfrog Films

vimeo.com/159076110



“East of Salinas” begins with 3rd grader José Anzaldo telling us what he wants to be when he grows up. His parents work from sun up to sun down



in the heart of California's “Steinbeck Country,” the Salinas Valley. With little support available at home, José often turns to his teacher, Oscar Ramos, once a migrant farm kid himself. In fourth grade his teacher told him if he worked hard he could have a different life. Oscar won a scholarship to the University of California, Berkeley. The day he earned his degree, he bought a car and drove home to the fields. He's been teaching ever since.

José is Oscar's most gifted student. But how do you teach students like José who have no place to do their homework? How do you teach a kid who moves every few months? This is what Oscar is up against every day. Oscar not only teaches his students reading, math and science, he gives them access to a world beyond their reach. But José was born in Mexico-and he's on the cusp of understanding the implications of that. As we watch this play out over three years, we begin to understand the cruelty of circumstance-for José and the many millions of undocumented kids like him.