

CULTURAL ANALYSIS

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY FORUM ON FOLKLORE AND POPULAR CULTURE

CREATIVE METHODOLOGIES

VOL. 21.1



GUEST EDITORS

Jenni Rinne & Kim Silow Kallenberg

Cover image by Cecilia Fredriksson

CULTURAL ANALYSIS

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY FORUM ON FOLKLORE AND POPULAR CULTURE

Creative Methodologies

Special Issue

Vol. 21.1

Guest Editors

Jenni Rinne & Kim Silow Kallenberg

© 2023 by The University of California

Editorial Board

Pertti J. Anttonen, University of Eastern Finland, Finland
Anastasiya Astapova, University of Tartu, Estonia
Hande Birkalan, Yeditepe University, Istanbul, Turkey
Charles Briggs, University of California, Berkeley, U.S.A.
Anthony Bak Buccitelli, Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg, U.S.A.
Oscar Chamosa, University of Georgia, U.S.A.
JoAnn Conrad, Diablo Valley College, U.S.A.
Chao Gejin, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China
Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, University of Iceland, Reykjavik
Jawaharlal Handoo, Central Institute of Indian Languages, India
Galit Hasan-Rokem, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem
James R. Lewis, University of Tromsø, Norway
Fabio Mugnaini, University of Siena, Italy
Sadhana Naithani, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India
Peter Shand, University of Auckland, New Zealand
Francisco Vaz da Silva, University of Lisbon, Portugal
Maiken Umbach, University of Nottingham, England
Fionnuala Carson Williams, Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Ulrika Wolf-Knuts, Åbo Academy, Finland

Editorial Collective

Senior Editors: Sophie Elpers, Karen Miller
Associate Editors: Robert Guyker, Jr., Semontee Mitra
Review Editor: Peter Cullen Bryan
Copy Editors: Daisy Ahlstone, Deldar Golchehreh
Website Manager: Kiesha Oliver

Table of Contents

Jenni Rinne & Kim Silow Kallenberg

Introduction: Creative Ethnographic Methodologies..... I

Ann-Charlotte Palmgren

Your Roundabout in My Ear Lobe: Poetic Inquiry as Creative and Embodied Knowledge Production.....8

Robert Willim

Probing Mundania: Using Art and Cultural Analysis to Explore Emerging Technologies.....22

Cecilia Frederiksson

Beyond Urban Sketching: Ethnographic Drawing as a Visual Analytical Method.....38

Response

Helena Wulff

Calling for Creative Ethnography.....56

Reviews

Myriam Odile Blin, *Nomads of Mauritania* (Himpan & Sabatier-Himpan).....RI

Introduction: Creative Ethnographic Methodologies

Jenni Rinne

University of Turku

Kim Silow Kallenberg

Södertörn University

One could argue that creativity is an inevitable part of all research; if you define creativity as making something or as the ability to perceive the world in new ways, it is indeed true. Every research project is in some sense unique and even if you use methods and theories used by many researchers before you, you need to put them together in your own way. For that, you need to be creative. Ever since the *reflexive turn* in anthropology and ethnology, creativity can be understood as an inevitable part of ethnographic epistemology. As discussed by James Clifford and George Marcus in the influential book *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986), ethnographers do not merely collect the ethnographic material, we write it or create it as well. Conceptions such as ‘thick descriptions’ and ‘faction’ suggest that creative approaches are part of a longer tradition that problematize the division between facts and fiction, reason and affect, as well as objectivity and subjectivity in ethnographic practice. Ethnographic research does not strive to be replicable – not many ethnographers would even believe that it would be possible for someone else to carry out an ethnographic study in the exact same way as a predecessor. Creativity is therefore an integral part of ethnographic practice.

In this theme issue, however, we will discuss and show examples of research that is creative in a way that pushes the boundaries of traditional research a bit further. Research that not only recognizes how the researcher is a co-producer of all ethnography but also actively seeks out collaborations with artistic research practices or creative writing for example. The articles in this issue all describe and analyze how creativity can take place in ethnographic research and how that influences the ethnographic work. This editorial is to be read as an introduction to the collected articles and here we will also contextualize ethnographic creativity by giving some examples on how ethnography and creativity can go hand in hand.

Ethnography as a Creative Process

Ethnography is understood here as something that permeates the whole research process. It is thus not only a research data collection method, but a more holistic approach of doing research that can be incorporated to the whole research process from project planning to research output including fieldwork, analysis, and writing. Thus, creativity can be part of all or some of the parts of the ethnographic research process.

Creativity might mean to use methods and concepts such as ethnographic fiction (Silow Kallenberg 2017), dirty ethnography (Jauregui 2013; Silow Kallenberg 2015), ethnographic film making (Vannini 2020), the using of drawings and art in ethnographic work (Siim 2020), as well as the inspiration one can get from reading fiction (Ingridsdotter 2017), listening to music or in other ways being creative in the ethnographic research processes (cf. Ingridsdotter and Silow Kallenberg 2018). Further, creative methods can also include collaborative, experimental and embodied ways of doing fieldwork.

Other scholars have also suggested that creativity is an important part of ethnographic research. For example, in the introduction of the edited volume *Creative Practice Ethnographies* the editors argue that creativity can be used in three ways in the ethnographic process, namely: “techniques, translation and transmission” (Hjorth et al. 2021). *Techniques* refers to the actual methods and concepts, *translation* is about movement of ideas from one form to another and finally, *transmission* is about making and communicating research. These parts are not however understood to happen in linear processes separate from each other, but are rather viewed as dynamic, generative, and intertwined.

Furthermore, in a recent edited volume *Challenges and Solutions in Ethnographic Research. Ethnography with a twist* the editors argue for a “twist” that emphasizes creativity as one of the ways to conduct ethnographic research with novel and innovative approaches. Creativity is here understood as something that can be utilized when approaching fields as co-produced and co-created (Lähdesmäki et al. 2020). In addition to new ways of doing ethnography and producing research material with others, this means for example collaborations with other professionals, such as artists, filmmakers, programmers, and game designers (2020, xxi). Creative approaches that utilize collaborations with participants and professionals can also dismantle or address power issues of ethnography by problematizing who the producer of knowledge is. Creative methods and genres can be a means to highlight social complexities that are excluded or simplified in more traditional scholarly texts and research processes (cf. Ingridsdotter and Silow Kallenberg 2018). However, in this issue the articles focus on the researchers or artist/researchers’ creativity when doing ethnography.

Finally, in a volume called *A Different Kind of Ethnography* (2016), one of the editors claims that our everyday lives are composed by creative practices and use of imagination that in turn shape and are shaped by our social relations, politics, and cultural formations (Culhane 2016, 3). Thus, creative methods to this kind of everydayness are needed. The ethnography is then understood as “entangled relationships” among different actors such as humans, non-humans, natural, social, and virtual environments. This kind of methodology questions the epistemological starting point in what ethnographic knowledge emerges from detached observations. But instead, the knowledge emerges from conversations, co-practices, and conversation among people active in different kinds of entanglements (Culhane 2016).

Creative Academic Writing

Following discussions on self-reflexivity and “writing culture” (Clifford and Marcus 1986), ethnographic writing has been widely discussed and experimented with. It seems as if the creativity of ethnographers is often expressed in writing. And that makes sense, because writing is what most researchers have in common however different fields of research we are engaged in. “What does the ethnographer do? - He writes,” as Clifford Geertz writes in his influential book *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973, 19). Writing is often also the common denominator even when other creative approaches are explored.

Creative academic writing need not necessarily culminate in published texts, instead it can be used as a method for processing and exploring one’s material (cf. e.g., Petö 2014, 89). Sociologist Laurel Richardson has defined writing as just such a “method of inquiry” (Richardson 2000b); to her, writing is as much a matter of knowing as it is of telling (Richardson 2000b; cf. Koobak 2014, 96; cf. Rosaldo 2014). Gender studies researcher Nina Lykke has also emphasized that writing is indivisible from the research process and that writing should be considered part of the analytical process (Lykke 2014). The argument is that we do not simply think first and then write down our thoughts, our scientific ideas are stimulated by the act of writing in different styles (Lykke 2014, 2; cf. Richardson 2000a).

Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo also thinks in similar terms when he reflects on his own method for using ethnographic poetry to achieve insight into a subject (Rosaldo 2014, 106). Rosaldo argues that his mission as a poet “is to render intelligible what is complex and to bring home to the reader the uneven and contradictory shape of that moment” (Rosaldo 2014, 107). In her texts about “poetic inquiry,” Sandra L. Faulkner suggests that writing poems can work as a method to connect body and mind – intellect and emotion, and as a means to remain embodied and reflexive in one’s research (Faulkner 2020, 2). To write poetry in the realm of research is to play with the form of writing to “meld the scientific and the emotive” (Faulkner 2020, 14).

Many scholars have also recognized that other genres are needed to depict certain aspects of life. For example, Mary Louise Pratt discussed how the emotional aspects that are a part of human interactions—and that are accentuated in contexts characterized by social vulnerability and human hardship—are often difficult to combine with the expectations for academic writing (Pratt 1986, 32). Other authors have also recognized the creative potential and practices of autoethnography—another strand of research that allows to bend the form of academic writing a bit (e.g., Ellis 1999; Custer 2014). One could argue that creative research demands creative forms of writing. Anthropologist Tami Spry (2001) has described how autoethnographic writing often comes to her in a more poetic form than the forms normally associated with traditional scholarly prose (Spry 2001, 721).

Several researchers emphasize the creative potential and practices of autoethnography (e.g., Ellis 1999; Custer 2014). As with the genre known as ethnographic fiction, it is also the interpretive aspects that are highlighted when the inherent creativity of autoethnography is discussed.

Visual and Sensory Ethnography

Visual ethnography was long associated mainly with ethnographic film making (Banks and Howard 1997), which has a long history on its own starting from the birth of the observational documentary film called *Cinema vérité*, which was developed by anthropologist Jean Rouch. Visual ethnography then referred mainly to the representation of ethnographic knowledge and research outcomes.

It has also been common to understand visual ethnography as visual research material. It might mean many things, such as pictures, drawings and audiovisual recordings of the researched phenomenon and cultural products in visual forms. This kind of material has then been analyzed as cultural texts that represent ethnographic knowledge and as sites of cultural productions, social interaction and individual experiences constituted in the fieldwork (Pink 2007, 1).

In the recent 10–15 years visual ethnography has had a new context. That is to combine ethnography and art practices that can be about co-operations or researchers own artistic practice. One such co-operation can be found in *Inequalities in Motion*—a research project in what a cartoonist was involved to document and tell the story of Estonian translocal families. In the same project the children's experiences of translocal every day was studied with the help of the children's drawings (Siim 2020). Thus, artistic practice does not necessarily mean deploying an artist in the project, but ethnographers can also be the one who uses art-based methods (see e.g., Willim in this volume).

The artistic practices and visual ethnography are also understood to address the sensory end embodied part of culture and cultural understandings which is oftentimes perceived as difficult to access through interview talk for instance (Pink 2005, 20; Culhane 2017; Alexandra 2017). Images and video can then address the knowledge that is hard to put into words. Nowadays video and photography are part of everyday life through digital devices such as smartphones. This has increased the possibilities of the researcher to relate to our sensory environments with creativity and imagination through recording and editing visual and other sensory material (Boudreault-Fournier 2017, 70). Furthermore, digital storytelling is a method in which computer based audio-visual videos are used to construct narratives that can be used to study sensory and embodied experiences and cultural phenomenon and meanings (Nuñez-Janes et al. 2017).

In this issue we understand the epistemological starting points of visual ethnography connected to 1980's understanding about ethnography as fiction that questioned the positivists arguments of the ethnographic knowledge and emphasized the subjective nature of it. Because of this, visuals became as acceptable as being no less subjective than written text in ethnographic inquiry (Pink 2007, 2). The following reflexive turn that introduced new ideas of knowledge and postmodern theoretical approaches to experience, subjectivity and representation combined with the developments in visual technology raised the interests to the possibilities of visual ethnography.

This Issue: Creative Ethnographic Methodologies

Alternative methodologies as well as mixed genres and other creative approaches, helps us to multiply our views on the world, ourselves as researchers, as well as on our research subjects. In this issue we have collected papers that use imaginative and creative methods to ethnographic inquiries as well as to ethnographic writing. This includes using creative writing such as poetry, visual arts such as watercolor painting and audiovisual arts to convey research outcomes.

Represented in this volume are researchers that were a part of a session at the SIEF 2019 congress in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. We, the guest editors, together with our colleague Jenny Ingridsson convened the panel “Tracking changes through creative research methodologies,” where several aspects of creativity in relation to ethnography were addressed. The articles in this issue are further developments of a few of the papers presented in our panel at the SIEF congress.

Ann-Charlotte Palmgren discusses poetic inquiry as a creative method and as an instrument of knowledge production. In the article Palmgren writes poems to access embodied experience and intertwines them with more traditional academic prose. For Palmgren, poetic inquiry opens for a more multilayered writing.

Robert Willim writes about his work in the intersection of research and art – what he refers to as “more-than-academic practice.” This is something that challenges the idea of academic work as following a linear path, where the outcome is predicted beforehand, and instead introduces a more playful approach where imaginative creativity is embraced.

In the article written by Willim creativity is also present in the way the author create new concepts to understand their material and to open for further thoughts. This shows that research creativity is not just an issue of methods but of theory as well.

Cecilia Fredriksson is working with visual methods and artistic practice in her contribution. She uses urban sketching in watercolors to explore public places from an autoethnographic starting point. She reflects over the knowledge produced through water coloring and her own position in that practice as both an artist and an ethnographer.

We suggest that these articles in different ways address and show that creativity is essential both for gaining knowledge about a field of research and for communicating research results, both in- and outside of academia. We also hope that this collection of articles can invoke interest and curiosity in other researchers to try out more creative approaches to ethnography and to think about in what ways ethnography is intertwined with creative practices.

Works Cited

- Alexandra, Darcy. 2017. "More Than Words: Co-Creative Visual Ethnography." In *Practicing, Teaching and Learning Anthropology with Digital Storytelling*, edited by Mariela Nuñez-Janes, Aaron Thornburg, Angela Booker. De Gruyter open Poland.
- Banks, Marcus and Howard Morphy. 1997. Introduction: Rethinking Visual Anthropology. In *Rethinking Visual Anthropology*, edited by Marcus Banks and Howard Morphy. New Haven: Yale University press.
- Boudreault-Fournier, Alexandrine. 2016. "Recording and Editing." In *A Different Kind of Ethnography. Imaginative Practices and Creative Methodologies*, edited by Danielle Elliot and Dara Culhane. University of Toronto Press.
- Clifford, James and George Marcus, eds. 1986. *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Culhane, Dara. 2016. Imagining: An Introduction. In *A Different Kind of Ethnography. Imaginative Practices and Creative Methodologies*, edited by Danielle Elliot and Dara Culhane. University of Toronto Press.
- Custer, Dwayne. 2014. "Autoethnography as a Transformative Research Method." *The Qualitative Report* 19, no. 37.
- Ellis, Carolyn. 1999. "Heartful Autoethnography". *Qualitative Health Research* 9, no. 5.
- Faulkner, Sandra L. 2020. *Poetic Inquiry. Craft, Method and Practice*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hjorth, Larissa, Anne M. Harris, Kat Jungnickel and Gretchen Coombs, eds. 2021. *Creative Practice Ethnographies*. Washington DC: Lexington Books.
- Ingridsdotter, Jenny & Kim Silow Kallenberg. 2018. "Ethnography and the Arts: Examining Social Complexities through Ethnographic Fiction." *Etnofoor* (theme issue: Stories) 30, no. 1.
- Ingridsdotter, Jenny. 2017. "Att läsa sig in och skriva sig ut: litterär gestaltning som medel för att förstå en erfarenhet." *Kulturella Perspektiv. Svensk etnologisk tidskrift* 26, no. 2.
- Jauregui, Beatrice. 2013. "Dirty Anthropology: Epistemologies of Violence and Ethical Entanglements in Police Ethnography." In *Policing and Contemporary Governance. The Anthropology of Police in Practice*, edited by Garriott, William Garriot. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Koobak, Redi. 2014. "Six Impossible Things before Breakfast. How I Came across My Research Topic and What Happened Next." In *Writing Academic Texts Differently: Intersectional Feminist Methodologies and the Playful Art of Writing*, edited by Nina Lykke. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.
- Lykke, Nina, ed. 2014. *Writing Academic Texts Differently: Intersectional Feminist Methodologies and the Playful Art of Writing*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.
- Lähdesmäki, Tuuli, Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto, Viktorija L. A. Čeginskas and Aino-Kaisa Koistinen. *Challenges and Solutions in Ethnographic Research: Ethnography with a Twist* London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis group.

- Núñez-Janes, Mariela, Aaron Thorburg and Angela Booker. 2017. *Practicing, Teaching and Learning Anthropology with Digital Storytelling*. De Gruyter open Poland.
- Petö, Andrea. 2014. "Feminist Crime Fiction as a Model for Writing History Differently". In *Writing Academic Texts Differently: Intersectional Feminist Methodologies and the Playful Art of Writing*, edited by Lykke, Nina. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.
- Pink, Sarah. 2007. *Doing Visual Ethnography. Images, Media and Representation*. Sage Research Methods Core.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. 1986. "Fieldwork in common places." In *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* edited by Clifford, James och George Marcus. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Richardson, Laurel. 2000a. "New Writing Practices in Qualitative Research." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 17 no. 1.
- Richardson, Laurel. 2000b. "Writing: A Method of Inquiry." In *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* edited by Denzin, Norman K. Och Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 2014. *The Day of Shelly's Death: The Poetry and Ethnography of Grief*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Siim, Pihla. 2020. Drawing and Storycrafting with Estonian Children. Sharing Experiences of Mobility. In *Challenges and Solutions in Ethnographic Research: Ethnography with a Twist* edited by Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto; Viktorija A.L. Čeginskas; Aino-Kaisa, Koistinen. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis group.
- Silow Kallenberg, Kim 2015. "Smutsig etnografi – en metoddiskussion." *Kulturella Perspektiv. Svensk etnologisk tidskrift* 24, no. 2.
- Silow Kallenberg, Kim. 2017. "Tabanjan. Ett exempel på etnografisk fiktion." *Kulturella Perspektiv. Svensk etnologisk tidskrift* 26, no. 2.
- Spry, Tami. 2001. "Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis". *Qualitative Inquiry* 7, no. 6.
- Vannini, Phillip, ed. 2020. *The Routledge International Handbook of Ethnographic Film and Video*. London and New York: Routledge.

Your Roundabout in My Ear Lobe: Poetic Inquiry as Creative and Embodied Knowledge Production¹

Ann-Charlotte Palmgren
Åbo Akademi University
Turku, Finland

Abstract

A starting point of this article is that all writing is multiplex and collaborative, creative and critical, and a form of knowledge production and representation. The article discusses poetic inquiry as a creative method and an instrument of knowledge production. Throughout the methodological discussion, poems from the author's research project on connections between public and private urban spaces, dis/identifications, and embodiment are included as illustrations and starting points for the discussion. The author shows how poetic inquiry is part of poststructuralist theory and methodology, how poetic inquiry can access embodied experience, and such inquiry's possibilities for multiplicity and multilayered writing.

Keywords: poetic inquiry, knowledge production, writing, embodied experience, creativity

Entry Points

*you embrace me
with your yellow brick wall,
with your familiar pavement
leading me to school
a/temporalities as our mortar
im/movement of bus wheels as our plaster
I move through you
I am moved
by you*

The entry points of this article, as well as of my research as a whole, are manifold. I could start by writing about my relationship with the city of my childhood and youth, which I left for studies, or by describing how I wrote poems about this relationship for a poetry competition twenty years later. I could begin by depicting how the poems I wrote for the competition became part of my conference paper in a workshop on imaginative and creative methods, ethnographic inquiries, and ethnographic writing a year after the competition. The story could begin at a poetry course a couple of months after the conference. In this writing course, which was part of the winning prize of the earlier competition, I received feedback on my poems: where are the people of the city in my poetry? Where are all the bodies?

I could start with how, for the first time in years, I allowed myself to think about

Cultural Analysis 21.1 (2023): 8–21
© 2023 by The University of California.
All rights reserved

my body instead of only feeling the pain in it. I allowed myself to really think about how after twenty-five years of increasing pain, I was now in a surgery queue for, among other things, a hysterectomy because of adenomyosis and endometriosis.² These are all the beginnings that started the poems included and discussed in this article. Some poems are from before the surgery, some were written during my hospital stay, and some are from after the surgery. They contain pieces of much earlier writing, from before the diagnosis and from the time I had just moved away from the city of my childhood. For me, the various entry points of the article demonstrate instances of serendipity in the creative process of my research project,³ in which I explore connections between public and private urban spaces, dis/identifications, and embodiment. Following Lie (2014), serendipity is my combination of unexpected information, meetings with others, comments by others, and inspirational texts I happened to come across, which I will return to later in the text.

The aim of this article is to discuss poetic inquiry as a method of research within the humanities. I ask what role creativity plays in poetic inquiry and how the form of writing and poetic inquiry affects knowledge production. In addition, I discuss the relationship between embodied experiences, a theoretical framework, and text form with my poetry suite as a concrete example throughout the article. In the first section, I provide an introduction to poetic inquiry. Next, I discuss creativity's relationship to poetic inquiry. I then focus on this method as knowledge production and as a way to access embodied experiences. This is discussed, in the subsequent section, through (poststructuralist) theory, form, and audience as parts of epistemology in poetic inquiry. The penultimate section develops this by discussing the poststructural possibilities for multiplicity and multilayered writing in poetic inquiry.

Writing and Poetic Inquiry

A starting point for this article is that writing is multiplex and collaborative, creative and critical, and a form of knowledge production and representation. Sociologist Laurel Richardson (2000a) states that writing is a method of inquiry, of coming to know through and in connection to creativity. Author and art theorist Mara Lee (2014) argues that writing is an act and place where the binary between thinking and doing is no longer maintained. In addition, writing is always political, as how we are situated affects how we write (Clifford and Marcus 1986). This corresponds to Richardson (1990), who explains how we are expected to write as scholars affects what we can write about. In addition, text formats and the existing view of writing as inquiry within a given discipline also influences academic texts.

The specific writing and research method I discuss in this article is poetic inquiry (cf. Prendergast, Leggo, and Sameshima 2009; Galvin and Prendergast 2016; Owton 2017; Faulkner and Cloud 2019). In short, poetic inquiry turns research interviews, transcripts, observations, personal experiences, and reflections into poems or poetic forms (Faulkner 2019). As a methodological approach, poetic inquiry reveals and communicates multiple truths via intuitive contemplation and creative expression. Methodology scholar Valerie Janesick (2016, 61) argues that poetry as inquiry sparks,

among other things, creativity, as it forces the writer to actively push their imagination to where it has never gone before. Throughout the article, I combine poems, which form a poetry suite, with my methodological discussion. I argue that poetic inquiry is connected to writing as inquiry and creative analytic practices. By understanding writing as inquiry, someone's thought process is present through writing. The structure of a text or argument does not need to be ready before the researcher starts to write. The same applies to creative analytic practices, in which the writing process and the writing product are viewed as being deeply intertwined (Richardson and St. Pierre 2008, 478). Therefore, writing is a method of analysis, not solely the writing of a research article.

According to the classification of poetic inquiry proposed by theater scholar Monica Prendergast (2009, 545), my poems can be described as researcher-voiced poems with reflective autoethnographic⁴ writing as their data source. This category of poems differs from the other two classifications: participant-voiced poems and literature-voiced poems. In participant-voiced poems, poems are written based on interview transcripts or solicited directly from participants (Prendergast 2009). In contrast, literature-voiced poems are created from or in response to works of literature or theory (Prendergast 2009). In addition, I argue that the description of this kind of poem and writing should include a theoretical framework and theory as analytical tools, as well as combining research and literary ambitions. This argument follows Brady (2004), who states that poetry can turn researchers back to their bodies and highlight how theory comes from our embodied experiences. The following short poem is an example of this type of poem:

*I lean my head,
let the asphalt flow
into my ear*

In the poem, I combine urban spaces with my body. I merge them by letting the asphalt enter my body and stabilizing my body through a material that will stiffen as it cools. By doing poetic inquiry, of which the poem is an outcome, I investigate my embodied experiences of urban space. I inquire which revelation can be illuminated or uncovered through, for example, metaphors, rhythms, and silences.

Creativity and Poetic Inquiry

Richardson (2000a) states that writing, regardless of its form, is connected to creativity. Likewise, gender scholar Nina Lykke (2014, 142) considers the process of writing "a choreographed dance where academically structured and planned moves work together with creatively improvised and intuitive moments in an embodied synergy." For philosopher and literary critic Hélène Cixous, writing creativity has a utopian character, and the form of writing is full of desire, as the style is often passionate, poetic, and full of contradictions (Lee 2014). In this section, the focus is on defining and describing poetic inquiry as creative. I first focus briefly on poetic inquiry and then on

creativity in previous research and theoretical work emphasizing creativity in connection to poetic inquiry and writing.

First, creative analytic practices acknowledge that the writer cannot separate form and content (Richardson 2000a). Aligning with Richardson, I understand writing as a theoretical and practical processes

...through which we can reveal epistemological assumptions, discover grounds for questioning received scripts and hegemonic ideals—both those within the academy and those incorporated within ourselves, find ways to change those scripts, connect to others and form community, and nurture our emergent selves (2000b, 153).

In this article, I focus more on the writing process of the—at this stage—final version of the poems. However, displaying the writing and rewriting at much earlier stages of the research process would be interesting. It is, unfortunately, not possible to show the full process in this article, as the research process began much earlier—something I will get back to in the next section. I want to emphasize, however, that creativity and writing are very present for me as an ethnographer during fieldwork, for example, when writing field notes, preparing, conducting, and analyzing interviews, and looking for literature or writing memos.

For me, poetic inquiry and creative analytic practices overlap, as they advocate for evocative, empathetic, and creative writing, which means staying open. While the form of writing can vary in creative analytic practices, in poetic inquiry, it is poetry. The approach to poetry in poetic inquiry can differ, from one interview transcript formed into poems to data collection that encourages informants to write poetry, which is then analyzed by the researcher, to fieldwork poems, which can also be called autoethnographical poetry. The examples in this article consist of the latter form.

Until now, I have used the word “creative” concerning poetic inquiry a few times in this article, but I have not defined it. I argue that it is common to describe poetic inquiry and writing as creative without addressing “creativity” or what it entails. Creativity theory is often interlinked with a psychological, business, educational, or organizational perspective. In the following, however, I will attempt to discuss creativity within the humanities.

Creativity means creating something. Nevertheless, I argue that creativity is not creating something through a routine. Rather, creativity is the production of ideas or things that are in some sense novel and useful or meaningful (Klausen 2010). This line of reasoning does not necessarily mean that others view it as useful or meaningful. As education scholar Robert Fisher writes, creativity “requires the courage to take risks—the risk to be different” (2004, 8). In addition, “serendipity, the effect by which one accidentally discovers something fortunate while looking for something else entirely, [is] a form of chance in relation to the creative process” (Lie 2014, 111). I understand the risk-taking mentioned by Fisher (2004) as being open to serendipity and pursuing accidental discoveries, as mentioned by gender scholar Sissel Lie (2014). Furthermore, literature scholar Rob Pope (2005, 52) discusses creativity as “extra/ordinary, original and fitting, full filling, in(ter)ventive, co-operative, un/conscious, fe< >male, [and] re

... creation." Some of these definitions align with how I characterize creativity in this article, while others do not. Subsequently, I briefly focus on the aspects "extra/ordinary," "original," "co-operative," and "re/creation," while leaving others out of the discussion.

I do not see creativity as extraordinary and, therefore, as the prerogative of a few individuals, but as ordinary, in the sense that creativity is commonly available and a latent capacity in everyone (Pope 2005). Furthermore, creativity may be original in that it is drawing on earlier origins and/or originating (Pope 2005) or original in relation to one's previous thoughts, words, or deeds (Fisher, 2004). A characteristic of creativity that I stress is cooperation. This cooperation can be intended or unintended. Furthermore, cooperation can also refer to creativity as a shared, ongoing process of change through an exchange (Pope 2005). According to psychologist Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi (1996), creativity happens in the interaction between a person and the sociocultural context. In addition, creativity is connected to recreation. In this article, I do not define recreation as a repetitive creation, thought, or replicating something. Instead, it refers to the ongoing process of making something afresh (Pope 2005). For the discussion in this article, I view re/creation and cooperation as closely interlinked. Hence, creativity is an "activity that produces something new through the recombination and transformation of existing cultural practices or forms" (Liep 2001, 2). Furthermore, I perceive creativity as universal because the desire to create something different and new is universal. This reasoning does not mean that imagining something is connected to a universal cultural meaning.

This article's point of departure is that creativity and writing are interlinked through the characteristics presented in this section. The arguments on what creativity apply to writing as well. Writing is ordinary, original, cooperative, and re/creative. Writing and creativity are processes, in dialogue with the world and other writing or phenomena, and reflexive within themselves (cf. Gibbs 2015). Creativity is not only part of writing, as it is present throughout any research process within the humanities. Furthermore, writing and creativity are not only present at the phase of writing up the research results; they are also essential in all stages of the research process. The following section describes this by introducing my path to the research project, poems, and this article.

Embodied Experiences, Imaginations, and Knowledge Production through Poetic Inquiry

As ethnologist Jenny Ingridsson (2017) states, writing oneself out of an empirical field by trying out different genre-specific forms, and creative writing can be a way of seeing empirical data with new eyes. The following poem marked the start of this shifted perspective of letting myself get closer to an embodied experience, which I had for a long time disassociated from:

*your constructions of steel
in my uterus,
your weldings,*

*your rebars
 as knots around my fallopian tube,
 your shafts,
 your sluices, together,
 separates,
 claps,
 shuts
 in a way, you, the city – a masse
 in a way, my body, me – already in late autumn
 my concrete foundations,
 my block complexes,
 my bus lines around your roundabout,
 past your street crossings
 in a way, you, the city – a circle
 in a way, my body, me – a cavity
 your colossus structures
 in my cysts,
 your chaos, channels, chambers, corridors,
 your clods as my myoma
 in a way, you, the city – peace and order
 in a way, I, my body – bigger than a terraced house*

The entry points for the poem were a fascination with cities, my experiences with endometriosis and adenomyosis, and a visit to the library. During the library visit, the poetry book *det* (2012 [1969]) by Danish poet Inger Christensen caught my eye. While thumbing through the book, I caught the words *constructions of steel* and *welding*. In the poem above, I not only describe my intestines, uterus, and fallopian tubes as having grown together into a lump, but I also merge them with the materiality of the city and buildings. The materiality of buildings ambivalently creates comfort through their sturdiness and familiarity while simultaneously creating a feeling of being stuck in past spaces. The interpretations become metaphors to help me understand and attempt to express my embodied experiences and refuse the mind-body dialectic. Through embodied experiences, I aim to obtain embodied knowledge. Experiences, thoughts, and acts transpire through the body – forming a connection to and knowledge of the world (Uotinen 2010). This connection, however, does not move in one direction only, as the world also impacts experiences, and bodies impact the world. In the poem, this is one of the experiences I want to convey. Embodied knowledge is situated knowledge. Both offer “a critical methodology that emphasizes knowledge in the body, offering the researcher an en fleshed epistemology and ontology” (Spry 2001, 716). It becomes a counterpart to the epistemic habit of emphasizing reason or mind before embodiment.

When I aim to feel, understand, express, and convey embodied experiences, both in and to myself and others, I lean toward the poetic form. The poems become representations of metaphors that are always lacking, as it is hard or impossible to express embodied experiences. At the same time, poetic inquiry is one way of staying with the

complex and hence not immediately condensing it into the well-defined (cf. Kusserow 2017; Rosaldo 2014). In this way, it extends the possibility of conveying something to the reader that cannot be conveyed by writing another form of text. Apart from attention to moments of serendipity, a temporal resistance to habits of writing or habits of form is central as well. As I am not new to writing poetry, I have acquired some poetic habits, one of which is repetition. While writing and rewriting the poetry suite, I paused to concentrate on repetitions and let go and play with avoiding repetition. As one never knows what may lead to the following poem, one must be open and attentive. Knowledge production through embodied imaginary is a process, as organization scholars Carl Rhodes and Arne Carlsen (2018) write, that puts the researcher at risk while letting go.

Consequently, this opens up avenues to ongoing and open research and deliberately fails to reach conclusions, instead always wanting to know more and accepting that any knowledge is imperfect and incomplete. Hence, as geographer Leila Alexandra Dawney (2011, 75) writes, “embodied imagination is a way of considering the interrelationship between bodies, affect and materiality which refuses any subjectivist or objectivist reading.” In fieldwork, everyday life with my body, feeling and expressing experiences and imaginations of the intertwined city and body, and finding the words for this in poetic inquiry, knowledge production takes place. Thus, imaginaries are material, affective, and embodied (cf. Dawney 2011) and spring from collective and individual narratives, memories, experiences, and theoretical readings and inspirations. The fieldwork is both embodied and linguistic, as creative analytic practices acknowledge that form and content are interconnected. Therefore, the fieldwork continues in the writing process and is consequently linguistic. I will discuss this further in the following sections.

Theory/Form/Epistemology/Audience

For researchers, writing is the primary means of communicating our knowledge production and research work. When illustrating or representing complexity and openness, it is imperative to think about and experiment with writing and text as form. Poetic analytic writing pushes the limits of scholarly production (cf. Ingridsdotter and Silow Kallenberg 2018). A starting point in this article is that any text, a report, poem, or essay, aims for dialogue between writer and reader or listener. Hence, a text has a social dimension, and it is relational. In this article, I do not discuss dialogues between reader and writer, or readers’ interpretations of poems, in-depth. I do, however, believe that the process of knowledge production is as much a result of the act of writing as it is of the act of reading, although this falls beyond the scope of this paper. This section focuses on the relationship between text form, theory, epistemology, and audience. These relations influence writing and research in academic disciplines, which I will touch upon. In this section, I pay particular attention to poetic inquiry concerning poststructuralist theory and writing, and how theory has been a creative part of writing and researching.

Most of my earlier published writing as a scholar took the form of academic prose.

However, I also engaged in poetic inquiry and drama, where embodiment and relations between the researcher and researched are central. An article (Palmgren 2018) focusing on urban spaces, rhythms, and power relations took the form of a poem over seven pages long. In the poem-article, interview data is represented so that the poem's layout reflects spatial experiences. This article is not just a peer-reviewed article read by other scholars, and as its form is poetry, I was invited to non-academic events to perform it. The knowledge created in the research project thus met other recipients through the form it was written and performed in. While research written as poetry – both the current poetry suite and earlier projects – was performed at non-academic and academic events, most of my more traditional write-ups were presented at and invited to academic events only. The broader audience also applies to my previous research project on constructions of girlhood and eating disorders online, where part of the text was written as drama (Palmgren 2014). For me, the form of the text made it possible to broaden the audience and, through performance, allow for the exchange of knowledge across bodies. Apart from the poems representing embodied experiences, poems themselves can be embodied experiences (cf. Faulkner 2018) for the reader or audience. The embodied experiences happens if the reader experiences feelings of being in situ. The use of, for example, rhythm in a poem may have this impact. The poem is not only text that can be read; it also takes the shape of my embodied voice in the same space as the listener, even going inside the listener.

I argue that poetic inquiry is not only connected to or in dialogue with the audience or readers, but that this dialogue is also present as the text is written into a network of other texts (cf. Lie 2014). This line of argumentation moves us to a discussion on theory, epistemology, and poetic inquiry. I argue that creative analytic practices such as poetic inquiry connect well with social constructionist epistemology and post-structuralist theory (cf. Berbary 2019).⁵ As St. Pierre and Pillow write, poststructuralist and feminist theory⁶ are both viewed as troubling “foundational ontologies, methodologies, and epistemologies” (2000, 2). In poststructuralist theory, there is “doubt that any discourse has a privileged place, any method or theory a universal and general claim to authoritative knowledge” (Richardson 2001, 878). To this claim, I would add that no text form should be viewed as privileged or universal in research. Research entails academic prose just as much as poetry. This does not, however, mean that form does not matter, which I will return to below. The reasons for not placing one form above others are that the empirical data or the research questions and aim should influence the form and possibly more experimental writing.

Another way theory has played a part in my poetic inquiry is by being a catalyst—drawing on gender scholar and poet Hanna Hallgren (2013), my poems and my writing move and travel both within and through other texts. For me, theory seeps in and out of poetic inquiry. After writing the poems in this article for a while, before consciously relating the poems to a theoretical framework, I began to see and later use and consciously incorporate non/human intra-action as a theoretical framework for the poems (see Barad 2003). For example, the intra-action between my uterus and hormone treatment and opioid-based drugs or between my body and the street's surface, which triggered contractions, resulted in the following poem:

*my library
of street names and pills
in chronological order
as coordinates on the skin
as stitches in the phone book
injecting spinal anesthesia
in the holes
of the asphalt*

These intra-acted, instead of interacted, body, city, and treatments presume a prior existence of independent entities (see Barad 2003). In literary theorist Roland Barthes's (1986, 169) sense, theory became reflexivity instead of an abstraction or a generalization. In other words, the notion of non/human intra-action became a way to write reflexively and creatively and encouraged me to stretch my imagination. At the same time, theory and empiricism are amalgamated in the poem (cf. Hallgren 2015).

Possibilities for Multiplicity and Multilayered Writing in Poetic Inquiry

As mentioned earlier, a similarity between poststructuralist theory and poetic inquiry is understanding knowledge as contextual and truth as multiple and subjective. I argue that writing in poetic inquiry encourages, borrowing St. Pierre and Pillow's (2000, 1) words, "a lusty, rigorous, enabling confusion," which is central in poststructuralism. As in previous poems, I used poetic and multilayered writing in the following poem. Layered writing is an attempt to recognize eclipsing or clashing discourses, partly through new images, analogies, or metaphors, which I will discuss in this poem:

*the bark of the maple tree,
as the surface of my intestine
the sports ground's round
after round
after round,
like all the organs
which my intestine has choked
the roundabout's towering tufts of grass,
like everything which should not grow anymore
but grow,
and bow
inwards and outwards*

In the poem, the sports ground is not a symbol of exercise or movement but a symbol of the pain that exercising would cause because of my inner organs' immobility. The uncared-for lawn by the roundabout is a reminder of the norms of neatly cut lawns in urban spaces and the abnormal growth of tissue inside the body. I argue that possible subjectivities and discourses are present through escapes, small slides, plays, crossings, and flights (cf. Davies and Gannon 2005). These are connected to the body and

symptoms of the illnesses associated with urban material structures. New images and analogies create new possibilities for our understanding (cf. Lie 2016). Through these subjectivities, images, metaphors, knowledge of the symptoms, and effects connected to the symptoms and body image become visible in the layered poem. In addition, the poems are not only, as anthropologist Adrie Kusserow states, “about accurately describing an experience, but [also about] using the insight of its acute nuances language and artistic aesthetic to bring a wider array of meaning(s)” (2020, 430).

Furthermore, poetic inquiry extends the possibilities to express something to the reader that cannot be expressed in the same way or to the same extent through another form of inquiry. At the same time, I am aware that the reader of this article is possibly prevented from reading a wider array of meanings in the poems, as I have chosen to discuss the poems through a theoretical framework. In other settings, such as performing the poems at different events, the reader or listener receives only the poem and sometimes my use of voice. The possibility for multiplicity and multilayeredness can be seen in the following poem:

*your ~~mouth~~ railway bridge
 against my ~~mouth~~ spleen,
 giving a ~~saved~~ breath
 your ~~hand~~ pedestrian street
 against my ~~hand~~-liver
 your ~~collar bone~~ city arms
 against my ~~collar bone~~ skeleton
 your ~~elbow~~ recycling plant
 against my ~~elbow~~ kidney
 your ~~hip~~ skate park
 against my ~~hip~~ tongue
 you give everything ~~away~~
 I give everything away*

In the poem, we return once again to a “you” – the city of my childhood and youth – and my body or, more precisely, certain body parts. I used strikethrough to incorporate complexity, contradictions, inconsistency, ambiguity, a second imagination, deconstruction of binaries, or adding something that is not true but that I may be wishing for, remembering but never happening. The strikethroughs are applied to body parts that are visible or outside the body, while the other body parts are hidden and inside. Hence, the poem, as well as poetic inquiry, offers multiple possibilities for interpretation, multiple truths, and realities.

Concluding Remarks

In this article, I have discussed poetic inquiry as a method in research within the humanities. The focus has been on creativity, knowledge production, epistemology, embodied experience, poststructuralist writing and theory, and the possibilities of the poetic form. I have argued that poetic inquiry is a means to communicate and reveal

complexities and openness. As Ingridsdotter and Silow Kallenberg (2018) writes, a text not only illustrates openness, but the researcher also needs to imagine the empirical material in new ways. Poetic inquiry is an emergent field. Like Hallgren's (2013) writing on the lack of researchers in queer theories experimenting with or incorporating self-reflexive stylistics in the text form when writing about performativity, I see a similar lack concerning researchers writing in poststructuralist theory. This observation does not mean that I argue that poetic inquiry can be combined with poststructuralist theory only. I see possibilities in using poetic inquiry as a method for researchers working with ethnography, affect theory, and postcolonial theory, just to name a few.

Notes

- 1 I thank the editors and anonymous reviewers for their careful reading of my manuscript and their many insightful comments and suggestions.
- 2 Endometriosis is a condition in which tissue, such as the lining of the uterus, grows in other places in the body. Adenomyosis occurs when the same tissue that lines the uterus grows within and into the muscular walls of the uterus.
- 3 My research and poems in this article are situated in autoethnography and gender studies and are influenced by poststructuralist theory. The approach in the article is, however, interdisciplinary, and I view the discussion as valid for a broader range of researchers in the humanities and social sciences.
- 4 Autoethnographic research involves "turning of the ethnographic gaze inwards on the self [...], while maintaining the outward gaze of ethnography, looking at the larger context wherein self experiences occur" (Denzin 1997, 227).
- 5 Apart from poststructuralist theory, poems within poetic inquiry have also emerged in response to other theoretical developments, such as postmodern theory, postcolonial theory, and feminist postmodernism (Leavy 2015). These are all concerned with articulating the human experience by breaking down binaries and focusing on participant voices and relational power. These theoretical perspectives all discuss, for example, how binaries such as self/other, colonizer/colonized, man/woman, or nature/culture entail violent hierarchies.
- 6 For a thorough text on the central principles of a feminist poststructuralist analysis of gendered texts, see Davies and Gannon (2005).

Works Cited

- Barad, Karen. 2003. "Posthumanist Performativity: Towards an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs* 28, no. 3 : 801–831. <https://doi.org/10.1086/345321>
- Barthes, Roland. 1986. *The Rustle of Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Berbary, Lisbeth. 2019. "Creative Analytic Practices: Onto-Epistemological and Theoretical Attachments, Uses, and Constructions within Humanist Qualitative Leisure Research." *Leisure Sciences* 41, no. 3: 148–166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1490400.2018.1526999>
- Brady, Ivan. 2004. "In Defense of the Sensual: Meaning Construction in Ethnography and Poetics." *Qualitative Inquiry* 10, no. 4: 622–644.
- Christensen, Inger. *det. [it]* 2012. First published 1969. Reprinted Stockholm: Moderna. sta.
- Clifford, James and George E. Marcus. 1986. *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Csíkzentmihályi, Mihaly. 1996. *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Davies, Bronwyn and Susanne Gannon. 2005. "Feminism/Poststructuralism." In *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, edited by Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin, 318–325. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dawney, Leila Alexandra. 2011. *The Embodied Imagination. Affect, Bodies, Experience*. PhD diss., University of Exeter.
- Denzin, Norman K. 1997. *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*. London: Sage.
- Faulkner, Sandra L. 2018. "Crank up the Feminism: Poetic Inquiry as Feminist Methodology." *Humanities* 7, no. 3: 85. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h7030085>
- . 2019. *Poetic Inquiry: Craft, Method and Practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Faulkner, Sandra L. and Abigail Cloud. 2019. *Poetic Inquiry as Social Justice and Political Response*. Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press.
- Fisher, Robert. 2004. "What is Creativity?" In *Unlocking Creativity. Teaching Across the Curriculum*, edited by Robert Fisher and Mary Williams, 6–20. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Galvin, Kathleen T. and Monica Prendergast. 2016. *Poetic Inquiry II – Seeing, Caring, Understanding*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Gibbs, Anna. 2015. "Writing as Method: Attunement, Resonance, and Rhythm." In *Affective Methodologies. Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect*, edited by Britta Timm Knudsen and Carsten Stage, 183–200. Hampshire, MA: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hallgren, Hanna. 2013. "En queer introduktion till texten Gränslösa hundar. Om queerteori, performativitet och subversiva repetitioner i skönlitterära, kritiska och vetenskapliga texter." [A queer introduction to the text Boundless dogs. On queer theory, performativity and subversive repetitions in fictional, critical and scientific texts], *Kvinder, Kön & Forskning*, no. 1. <https://doi.org/10.7146/>

- kkf.v0i1.28161.
- . 2015. "Skrivandet som metod. En studie i poesi, skrivprocess och det reflexiva akademiska skrivandets möjligheter." [Writing as method. A study of poetry, the writing process and the possibilities for reflective academic writing], In *Från konstnärlig högskola till universitet: Konstnärlig forskning – Årsbok 2015*, edited by Torbjörn Lind, 76–88. Stockholm: Vetenskapsrådet.
- Ingridsdotter, Jenny. 2017. "Att läsa in och skriva sig ut. Litterär gestaltning som medel för att förstå en erfarenhet." [To read oneself in and write oneself out. Literary conformation as means to understand an experience], *Kulturella Perspektiv. Svensk etnologisk tidskrift* 26, no. 2: 28–34.
- Ingridsdotter, Jenny and Kim Silow Kallenberg. 2018. "Ethnography and the Arts: Examining Social Complexities through Ethnographic Fiction." *Etnofoor* 30, no. 1: 57–76. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26469014>.
- Janesick, Valerie. 2016. "Poetic Inquiry: Transforming Qualitative Data into Poetry." In *Qualitative Inquiry Through a Critical Lens*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Michael D. Giardina, 59–72. London: Routledge.
- Klausen, Harnow Søren. 2010. "The Notion of Creativity Revisited: A Philosophical Perspective on Creativity Research." *Creativity Research Journal* 22, no. 4: 347–360. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2010.523390>
- Kusserow, Adrie. 2017. "Anthropoetry." In *Crumpled Paper Boat. Experiments in Ethnographic Writing*, edited by Ananda Pandian and Stuart McLean, 71–90. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- . 2020. "Opening Up Fieldwork with Ethnographic Poetry." *Anthropologica* 62, no. 2: 430–436. <https://doi.org/10.3138/anth-2019-0068>
- Leavy, Patricia. 2015. *Method Meets Art: Arts-based Research Practice*. New York: Guilford.
- Lee, Mara. 2014. *När Andra skriver. Skrivande som motstånd, ansvar och tid*. [When Others write. Writing as resistance, responsibility and time] Gothenburg: Glänta.
- Lie, Sissel. 2014. "The Infinite Resources for Writing." In *Writing Academic Texts Differently: Intersectional Feminist Methodologies and the Playful Art of Writing*, edited by Nina Lykke, 111–125. New York: Routledge.
- Liep, John. 2001. *Locating Cultural Creativity*, London: Pluto Press.
- Lykke, Nina. 2014. "The Choreography of Writing an Introduction." In *Writing Academic Texts Differently: Intersectional Feminist Methodologies and the Playful Art of Writing*, edited by Nina Lykke, 142–160. New York: Routledge.
- Owton, Helen. 2017. *Doing Poetic Inquiry*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Palmgren, Ann-Charlotte. 2014. *Göra ätstörd. Om normativitet, taktik och flickskap i bloggar*. [Doing eating-disorders. On normativity, tactics and girlhood in blogs] Turku: Åbo Akademi University Press.
- . 2018. "Standing Still. Walking Interviews and Poetic Spatial Inquiry." *Area* 50, no. 1: 372–383. <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12410>
- Pope, Rob. 2005. *Creativity: Theory, History, Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Prendergast, Monica, Carl Leggo, and Pauline Sameshima (eds.). 2009. *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences*. Leiden: Brill.

- Prendergast, Monica. 2009. "'Poem Is What?'" Poetic Inquiry in Qualitative Social Science Research." *International Review of Qualitative Research* 1, no. 4: 541–568. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/irqr.2009.1.4.541>
- Rhodes, Carl and Arne Carlsen. 2018. "The Teaching of the Other: Ethical Vulnerability and Generous Reciprocity in the Research Process." *Human Relations* 71, no. 10: 1295–1318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726717741530>
- Richardson, Laurel. 1990. *Writing Strategies. Researching Diverse Audiences*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412986526>
- . 2000a. "Writing. A Method of Inquiry." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 818–838. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- . 2000b. "Skirting a Pleated Text: De-Disciplining an Academic Life." In *Working the Ruins: Feminist Poststructural Theory and Methods in Education*, edited by Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre and Wanda S. Pillow, 153–163. New York: Routledge.
- . 2001. "Poetic Representation of Interviews." In *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*, edited by Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, 876–891. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Richardson, Laurel and Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre. 2008. "Writing. A Method of Inquiry." In *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 473–499. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 2014. *The Day of Shelley's Death*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- St. Pierre, Elizabeth Adams and Wanda S. Pillow. 2000. "Introduction: Inquiry among the Ruins." In *Working the Ruins: Feminist Poststructural Theory and Methods in Education*, edited by Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre and Wanda S. Pillow, 1–24. New York: Routledge.
- Spry, Tami. 2001. "Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis." *Qualitative Inquiry* 7, no. 6: 706–732. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040100700605>
- Uotinen, Johanna. 2010. "Aistimuksellisuus, autoetnografia ja ruumiillinen tietäminen." [Sensibility, autoethnography and embodied knowledge], *Elore* 17, no. 1: 86–95.

Probing Mundania: Using Art and Cultural Analysis to Explore Emerging Technologies

Robert Willim
Lund University
Sweden

Abstract

This essay will discuss my work in the interstices between art and cultural analysis. I will expound on how I've used a certain concept as part of artistic practice and cultural analytic research. The concept, which I've chosen to call Mundania, is used to grapple with the role of emerging technologies in everyday life. The concept is used to discharge imaginations about everyday life characterised by a looming uncertainty and the comingling with ungraspable complex technologies that gradually become ordinary. I will show and discuss how the work with the Mundania-concept is based on processes of probing.

Keywords: art, emerging technologies, digital, media, probing

Introduction

Since the 1990's I've done research around tech-related phenomena and tried to understand the role new digital technologies have in people's everyday life. How do technologies transform everyday life and how does everyday life transform technologies (Löfgren 2015)? How do imaginaries relate to different practices and how is life entwined with infrastructural, technological, corporate, and organisational processes and structures?

I have studied how the first Internet consultants in Sweden during the shift of the Millennium promoted and contributed to the rise of a society permeated by digital technologies in which everyday life is dependent on uninterrupted Internet connections and arcane techno-organisational workings (Willim 2003). As an extension of that work, I have also studied imaginaries about factories and industries in a society that has been promoted as being postindustrial (Willim 2005).

I have gradually developed a strand of artistic practice that has been sometimes entwined with, sometimes semi-detached from my research. This progression of art and a kind of cultural analysis which has been developed within ethnology and related disciplines at Lund University is the focus of this article. I will end by showing how I have been working with art and cultural analysis in relation to research about emerging technologies and the uses of technology in domestic settings.¹

Before showing and discussing how emerging technologies can be addressed through art and cultural analysis, I will begin to discuss how I approach research, art, and analysis. I will start by referring to a selection of scholarly discussions that are relevant to my approach. I will then go on to discuss some central aspects of my work, before connecting it more specifically to questions about emerging technologies and

the ways I have engaged with the concept *Mundania*.

Art and Cultural Analysis

It is no exaggeration that a prevailing idea within academia is that the practices of research should follow a linear and rationally consistent trajectory. The idea about a predictable linearity of research, and the possibilities to beforehand design research projects has however also been extensively questioned and discussed, especially within different strands of qualitative research.

In the everyday practice of qualitative research, what takes place is often an interplay between the methodological and the irregular and serendipitous. Plans and commitments are fused with detours, shifts and unexpected iterations (O'Dell and Willim 2011a). It is difficult to separate a cultural analytic research process from external activities. If research is considered as something taking place in a certain imagined space, the border to this space is highly permeable (Wilk 2011). This is especially the case when systematic research is also supposed to be creative or methodologically inventive. In the following part of the article, I will approach these issues by presenting some ways to deal with the interplay between systematic scholarly practice and imaginative creativity when it comes to cultural analysis. I will then relate this to the ways emerging technologies can be studied.

I have a background in ethnological cultural analysis as it was developed at Lund University in Sweden during the 1980's and onwards. The core of these practices has been a heterogeneous approach, using a mix of methods, theories, and material. How to manage the interplay between the serendipitous and the systematic has been a recurring question in this strand of cultural analysis (Ehn and Löfgren 2010, 217ff).

When academic practice is discussed from within different scholarly disciplines there is often a focus on theoretical standpoints, how to describe methods according to roadmaps or flowcharts, or when approached in a broader manner, how "schools" and paradigms shift over time and how so called "turns" take place. Orvar Löfgren has stressed that we should instead focus more on how materials, tools, milieus, and devices influence research practices. "Rolls of maps, boxes of excerpts, filing cabinets, photos and styles of doing fieldwork do something to lofty theories" (Löfgren 2014, 116, see also Lury and Wakeford 2014; Law and Ruppert 2013). This means that the way we engage with the world, with devices, places, and relations is formative for research processes and thereby it influences how knowledge take form.

Similar issues have been discussed recently from different scholarly perspectives. Anthropologist Tim Ingold have for some time developed what he calls an *art of inquiry* to break with ideas about rigid forms of academic research and to acknowledge that much research has similarities with the creative practices of making within for an example art. He promotes an anthropology that is not based on the routinised model through which a first phase of fieldwork and data collection leads to a second phase where the scholar write-up results based on collected material. Instead Ingold's art of inquiry is characterised by a more unpredictable process.

In this art, every work is an experiment: not in the natural scientific sense of testing a preconceived hypothesis or of engineering a confrontation between ideas 'in the head' and facts 'on the ground', but in the sense of prising an opening and following where it leads. You try things out and see what happens. Thus, the art of inquiry moves forward in real time along with the lives of those who are touched by it, and with the world to which both it and they belong. Far from matching up to their plans and predictions, it joins with them in their hopes and dreams. (Ingold 2018, 218)

This kind of practice is not aimed at collecting or creating data, or at documenting the world by compiling, organising and subsequently analysing material. Instead, it is a transformative practice, related more to practices of making than to documentation. "We need it not to accumulate more and more data about the world, but to better correspond with it" (ibid).

Ingold's thoughts resonates with some recent developments of design anthropology, which explicitly engages with the world. This is an expansion of anthropology that is often coupled to technology studies. It is intended to be used "to create interventions in how possible human futures with emerging technologies are understood and imagined" (Pink et.al. 2020:1, see also Gunn et.al. 2013). These scholars argue that the design anthropological approach can significantly contribute to debate and practice around contemporary social and technological transformations "because it brings a critical theoretical anthropological agenda together with in-depth ethnography and an exploratory, future-focused design research practice" (Pink et.al. 2020, 1).

Another strand within social sciences and humanities that can be associated with both design anthropology as well as my own practices has appeared within cultural or human geography and sociology during the last decades. It has been framed as non (or more than)-representational theories and methodologies. This approach has been developed and advocated by cultural geographers Nigel Thrift (2007) and Hayden Lorimer (2005) as well as sociologist Phillip Vannini (2014) among others. It has also been used to extend media studies to studies of everyday life and the quotidian (Moores 2021, 54).

According to Phillip Vannini, non-representational methodologies are to a lesser degree focused on correct and appropriate representation of empirical material, of life-worlds and events, instead they are used to animate, to enliven, to resonate and create rupture and even to "generate possibilities for fabulation" (ibid:320). This methodological strand is often related to or characterised by fusions with creative practices and creative arts (Boyd & Edwardes 2019).

Another way to reframe qualitative inquiry in a creative manner is by utilising what Annette Markham has called a remix approach or remix methods. It takes the point of departure in bricolage and then shifts to engaging with everyday practices of sense-making.

The concept of remix highlights activities that are not often discussed as part of a method and may not be noticed, such as using serendipity, playing with different perspectives, generating partial renderings, moving through multiple variations, bor-

rowing from disparate and perhaps disjunctive concepts, and so forth. (Markham 2013, 65)

The remix methods, as promoted by Markham, have some resemblances with the way ethnologists Billy Ehn and Orvar Löfgren have worked with bricolage and their eclectic cultural analysis. It also resonates with the ways I, together with Tom O'Dell have been discussing ethnography as a practice of composition (O'Dell and Willim 2011b, 2013).² A cultural analysis as a practice of composition can be related to the making of worlds and concrete engagement with things and stakeholders, blurring the borders between what is defined as applied and non-applied research.

When I have been developing projects in the interstices between art and cultural analysis the role of traditional ethnographic fieldwork has become less important, even if the engagement with people's stories and doings is still part of my work. Instead, what have become foregrounded are constant movements between art and cultural analysis based on explorative and reflexive practices of making and the engagement with materials, techniques, and technologies in relation to my studies of technology-permeated everyday life in countries like Sweden.

To understand this way of working with art and cultural analysis it is necessary to also look beyond the discussions within scholarly disciplines. The aim for me has been to work along an open-ended path of discovery and experimentation and to also challenge taken for granted routes and forms of academia. When is a book or an article a good way to communicate or to evoke something, and when are other modalities and formats to be preferred? As a researcher I started with ethnology and ethnography some decades ago, but I have then moved more towards mixes of art, making, and various extensions of cultural analysis. I have also worked with people and organisations outside academia, breaking with the preconceived idea about an academic career-track (Willim 2017c).

When developing my work, I have gradually incorporated devices and techniques from beyond the academic world of cultural analysis and the humanities, especially from music production, and artistic work. This is art and research, analysis + making, a practice taking place in different contexts. Sometimes inside the university, sometimes outside.

Probing (and Spawning)

Here I will outline a way to understand the practice I advocate. It will circulate around the word *probing*, but also play with the idea about *spawning*. I will briefly mention a set of older projects, partly because these projects have led to the way I today work with the concept of Mundania.

In 2003 I had researched the way the Internet and associated technologies permeated society for some years. The Internet consultancies and businesses that I had been studying around the turn of the Millennium often rhetorically positioned themselves as part of a new industrial order, part of a knowledge economy and a postindustrial society (Willim 2003; see also Löfgren and Willim 2005). The rhetoric and its associated imaginaries about progression and pioneering endeavours had made me increasingly

interested in the ways imaginaries about factories were going through changes. What is a factory, really? How are ideas about the industrial brought in and out of various contexts? What did the word *factory* mean in societies that were often described as postindustrial? Even if Internet by many proponents was imagined as generating a new world order and new possibilities, it was all very much based on material and labour of other industries. I wanted to grasp the ambiguous relationship between imaginaries about a new tech-infused order and revolutionary businesses and what was framed as traditional industry. While concentrating on the questions about the contemporary role of industry, I came up with the concept *Industrial Cool*. Initially, I used it to loosely refer to ways in which factories became aestheticized.

The concept was there as a point of departure. It was a point from which to initiate something, from which to set something in motion. This was the *spawning* of the concept *Industrial Cool*, and the beginning of an open-ended process through which I followed and tried different ways to create things and to let subsequent projects grow from the concept. This is the process I call *probing*, a way to engage with provisional renditions and insights.³

I started to read and write about industries and factories, in a quite traditional academic way. What were the genealogies of the factory concept and how was it described and used at the beginning of the new Millennium? In combination with this more scholarly approach, I also initiated projects that moved beyond seminar rooms and literature lists, such as the curation and compilation of two electronic music albums and subsequent events and activities. I also made several mostly autoethnographic studies of what I called resurrected factories and staged factories, for an example in the Ruhr-area and in Dresden in Germany and in various places in Sweden and Finland.

I have written some texts based on the *Industrial Cool*-concept (eg. Willim 2006 and 2008) and presented it in numerous contexts both within and outside academia, and I still follow how the concept develops when other people use it in their work. This way of following and reengaging with the concept is a continuous process of probing. I probe how the concept transforms, and I also revisit the things that have been the result from earlier work. I reflect on earlier parts of the practice. How can the concept be developed and how can I spawn something new that grows from the earlier work when I combine it with new insights and inspiration?

There is an apt tension between the words spawn and probe. Spawning suggests associations to organic processes, to procreation and how something starts to grow, while probing has got a more scientific ring to it, evoking associations to scientific devices, like space probes that are sent away to search or explore something. I find this tension inspirational and possibly productive. A tension that is “good to think and work with,” to also explore possible juxtapositions of associated words like “research procreation” or maybe “organic method.”

As part of this practice I read and write, I present, learn, and discuss. I collaborate. But foremost, I try things out. I explore and examine during an extensive period. Earlier works, in different formats and modalities, can hereby become steppingstones and parts of new projects. An experiment in sound can lead to arguments and sug-

gestions presented in a text. Conceptual and theoretical development can spark an art installation, and so forth. When working in this way things often happen when practically doing and making things, during the processes of writing and painting, during editing and recording, during collecting, transforming, and composing materials. But likewise, several insights might emerge in the moments in-between, in the situations when seemingly “doing nothing” (Ehn & Löfgren 2010).

Mundania—Where and When Emerging Technologies Disappear from Attention

The last ten years I have been working with the concept Mundania. Mundania is a way to imagine people’s everyday life together with complex technologies. I started working with the concept while I was interested in mobile technologies and how satellites could be connected to movements in the landscape.

During the first decade of the 21st Century I started an ethnographic project, studying the practices of *geocaching*, which has been a label describing a multiplicity of treasure hunts, using GPS-technology. At this time, I also initiated several art projects that dealt with the relationships between technologies and geographies. This was during the same period that I was working with Industrial Cool. My research about the visibilities and invisibilities of industries became partly enmeshed with my explorations of GPS use. What were the industries lurking in the background of tech-infused outdoor experiences?

While doing fieldwork with geo-cachers, fascination came up as a topic for discussion and an affective focal point. Stories were told, not about overwhelming and sublime experiences, but more about small thrills. A kind of story that recurred was about the practice of walking through the landscape with a GPS-receiver while looking at the small screen of the receiver. On the screen, an arrow represented the user’s location. While walking around, the arrow moved. When the small moving arrow approached some feature on the map, the user could look up from the GPS-receiver and see the actual feature in the landscape. Or hear it. Like a bubbling brook or roaring river. The virtual map on the screen of the device with its’ small and animated arrow gave a new dimension to the experience of the landscape.

Like all digital or advanced technologies, a complex infrastructure was supporting this experience of the small moving arrow on a screen. It was the awareness of this opaque complexity that was part of the fascination. It was probably even the awareness about the complexity together with the invisibility of infrastructure that made it fascinating. To engender the small moving arrow and the other features on the screen, an enormously complex (military)-industrial assemblage of technologies and organizations had to be developed and maintained; around 30 satellites orbit the Earth. A number of these would have to synchronize their signals with the GPS-receiver. The absence of these complex and opaque workings standing there by a bubbling brook with the GPS-receiver in hand surrounded by woods and singing birds could enhance the feeling of fascination.

In the first decade of the new Millennium, mobile technologies became more and more widespread. Smart phones like the iPhone were soon introduced. Much of the locative and communicative technologies which were introduced around 2006 were

within some years incorporated in new things. These new phones became key devices that bundled several complex technological systems and services together. The services were soon taken for granted. Much of the technology that could be experienced as fascinating during the first years of geo-caching, wouldn't get any certain attention just a couple of years later. With a smartphone, users could soon use locative services and augmented reality applications on a daily basis. This merged physical surroundings with digital visual layers in complex ways.

When new apps and devices are introduced, they are seldom marketed with a presentation of the infrastructural workings beyond the user interface. Novel technologies are often promoted as something revolutionary, spectacular, and almost magical. GPS, The Internet of Things and various ways to use sensors, radar, AI and other technological tricks and infrastructures are expected to fascinate when they are introduced. This is when technologies are categorized as emerging. The fascination is enhanced by the experience that "it just works" without the visibility of any of the complex systems supporting applications and services. It's like when an illusionist performs for an audience without showing the real workings behind tricks. The audience is captivated by what takes place under the spotlight, suspecting but also ignoring that something is happening beyond their attention (cf. Löfgren and Willim 2005). Digital applications are often promoted as almost magical endeavors supported by an invisible infrastructure.

After a while of use, technologies often lose their aura. Emerging technologies escape out of consciousness and debate. Technologies can become taken-for-granted, infrastructural. This is what has happened with GPS and several associated services. How to capture this gradual shift? When analyzing emerging technologies based on GPS and digital devices, I felt a need to spawn a concept that could capture the process of gradual disenchantment and acceptance of incomprehensibly complex technologies in everyday life. A concept that captured how emerging technologies withdraw and gradually escape attention. A concept that also captured people's acceptance of the fact that it would be impossible to fully grasp the obscure and arcane workings of the techno-organisational amalgamations that make several mundane actions and routines possible (Beyes & Pias 2019; Bridle 2018). After some time, I went for the word *mundanisation*. And what could be a name for this dimension, or this imagined realm of everyday life characterized by mundanisation? *Mundania*. When fascination wears away, when the ungraspably complex become part of the fabric of everyday life, this is how Mundania takes form.

The ideas about Mundania and the mundanisation-concept can be a supplement to media-theoretical ideas about domestication. Since the 1990's the word domestication has been used to describe how technology is incorporated in people's everyday life (Silverstone et.al. 1992; Berker et.al. 2006). It captures how technology is adopted, how negotiations take place, and even how people may affect future strategies of producers. But it doesn't quite capture the processes through which incomprehensible complexity is turned into the ordinary, without really being "tamed." Here, mundanisation can capture how incomprehensible and even ominous complexity is maintained, while yet becoming part of the commonplace infrastructures of everyday life.

Complex technologies are often only seemingly converted step-by-step into controlled parts of everyday life. Where are the ends of control? How are dependencies engendered? Mundanisation is an attempt to address these questions. It is meant to capture how complex arrangements of technologies and human organisation maintain its incomprehensible unmanageability while still being transmuted into the ordinary, the mundane, the commonplace in people's everyday lives. Normalising what before, or at its introduction, was seen as impossible, frightening, or fantastic.

To somewhat simplify it, mundanisation is built on a two-part logic through which complex emerging technologies are transformed into the fabric of everyday life. First the underpinnings of complex technologies are camouflaged for users to integrate them in their lives. A user of GPS-powered services should not have to think about neither satellites nor software. This is obfuscation by design and organisation, or black boxing (Latour 1987; Pasquale 2015). The aim for many producers of products and services is to make the use of technologies simple and smooth at the expense of their inner and distant workings and underpinnings becoming more and more obscure. When these new technologies have become successful, when they are part of routinised everyday life, people normally do not actively think about the workings of the technologies. This is ignorance by routinisation. At this point technologies have become mundanised, and the two parts of the process continue to reinforce each other, engendering the everyday realm of Mundania.

There are of course variations and openings in the process of mundanisation. It is important to not see it as a unidirectional and universal process without discrepancies. The logic described above is a simplification. Incorporation of technologies in everyday life doesn't always happen in a smooth way. Some technologies are never accepted, there is resistance, friction, and debates as well as controversies on issues such as integrity, autonomy, power, and control. Several technologies and services are discontinued and do never reach any larger success. Others are however in various ways becoming enmeshed in people's lives, sometimes in ways not intended by developers, promoters, and planners. At some point in the life cycle of a popular technology, extensive critical reflection and discussion seems to vanish, to then sometimes re-occur. As Frank Trentmann has pointed out: "Rhythms and habits are interspersed with disjunctures and connected via suspensions, interferences and repair work" (Trentmann 2009, 69). Disruption and maintenance as well as failure is intrinsic to and even expected parts of lives with complex technologies (cf. Pink et.al 2017; Appadurai and Alexander 2020). This raises questions how the everyday rhythms between configuration, ignorance and maintenance are engendered and related to processes of mundanisation.

Even though there are obvious uncertainties and even risks, many technologies are still used. They are promoted and then adopted while they also paradoxically introduce new (and reproduce old) problems and risks (Kitchin and Dodge 2019). Taken for granted infrastructures are furthermore almost impossible to even bring up for discussion or small talk. Emerging technologies seem to gradually disappear from the attention of people. We need to know more about when and how this transformation really happens. Despite wide-spread awareness about potential threats or undesirable

circumstances, these are often ignored when emerging technologies are mundanised.

Variations of Mundania

A major part of the work with the Mundania-concept is to relate it to theoretical and cultural analytic discussions on emerging technologies, media, imaginaries, and everyday life. I elaborate on this in publications and talks at conferences and seminars and use the concept in research within various projects. I also probe the concept by testing out different ways to make things that relate to Mundania. Several of the things have been geared towards hybrid forms that could open unforeseen processes. I involve different people in these processes, to gain insights, reflection, and reactions. I also spark related concepts and projects. It is a way to probe the ends and variations of Mundania.

When the pandemic started in 2020, I wanted to quickly respond to the ways domestic life, societal changes and the role of technologies unfolded by creating an online outlet based on the Mundania-concept. I set up a website where I could publish short essays, images, reflections as well as embedded media such as video. I called it *The Mundania Files* and it was framed as a living online archive or book. It was based on the WordPress-platform and was a way to communicate and to create a repository for ideas to further elaborate on. I played with the idea of extensively using presets and templates to probe the tension between uses of the prefabricated and ideas about innovation when it comes to so called digital creative practice. The idea about prefab creativity was something I had explored early in my studies of digital cultures (Willim 2003).

The files were based on a growing number of essays called for an example *Waiting for Events*, *Walled Gardens*, *Curve Surfing* and *Smooth Operations*. These essays meandered between cultural analytic arguments and a serendipitous flow that juxtaposed examples and discussions that could tweak the ideas about Mundania and life during the pandemic. It was a way to communicate with different people in different contexts and a way to test ideas.

During 2020, *The Mundania Files* became a crucial point of reference for my work with *AI Lund*, an open network for research, education, and innovation in the field of Artificial Intelligence based in southern Sweden. This network gathered scholars from Lund University as well as several people and organisations beyond the university to further the knowledge about AI. *The Mundania Files* were used as one starting point to discuss societal and cultural dimensions of AI and related technologies, and during the year it became part of the communications from the network.

Before Christmas 2020 I was asked by *AI Lund* to make a video work that could extend some of the *Mundania Files*. As a response, I made a video essay titled *Waiting*. I tried to evoke the affective atmosphere amid the COVID-19 crisis. It was a hybrid work that connected occurrences in Sweden related to the virus during the time just before Christmas with the ways author Tom McCarthy in the novel *Satin Island* (2015) had been writing about buffering as a state of mind and as characterisation of contemporary society. I also referred to the book *Doing Nothing* (2010) by Ehn and Löfgren.

The book deals quite thoroughly with ideas about waiting. Foremost, I tried to work with video and sound in an evocative way that would expand ideas and emotions beyond textual articulations and concrete arguments. By composing sound and moving images in conjunction with spoken words, the affective dimensions of buffering and waiting could be probed, and a concept from technological discourse could be applied in relation to the atmospheres that had emerged during the COVID-19 crisis.

When a computer or other digital device buffer data, it stores it in a temporary memory. When for an example streamed online video is played, data is downloaded to a buffer before it is played back. When this process comes to a halt or when the stream of data is choked, the video will pause. The viewer will see an interface feature that show that the data stream does not flow as expected. This feature is often a spinning circle. While the buffering circle spin on a screen, the user is put in a state of idling suspense (McCarthy 2015, see also Appadurai and Alexander 2020). Waiting for something to happen. Knowing that things are not working as expected. The only indicator is the spinning circle. How could the buffering-concept be used to comprehend the uncertainty, the waiting, and the tension between nervousity and boredom that emerged during virus-induced societal lock-downs and restrictions? This was one of the questions raised by the video essay, *Waiting*.

Works such as *The Mundania Files* and *Waiting* are part of an open-ended process of probing. I try to use them as devices to think with, to communicate and to also learn by reflexively engaging with them. During the work with Mundania, I have continued to develop my thinking through processes of making. For some time, I have continuously made artworks and various hybrid works to probe Mundania. Some of these are made as commissions, others are more open-ended explorations and ways to think, reflect and feel through a process of making. I experiment with very different formats. I use sound and video, but I also use other media and materials. For an example, I use construction material for domestic settings to make things that can evoke ideas and emotions about Mundania. I make paintings on cement boards and tiles to address the relationship between mundanisation and distant infrastructures and to evoke images of imaginary landscapes. The very sensory engagement with media and material gives me inspiration and is a way to feel and to contemplate Mundania, but the result can also be exhibited and used as tools for evocation for others while I further explore the ways ungraspable infrastructures are entangled with everyday life.

I refer to the series of paintings as *The Provisional Titles Series*. I continuously attach different names for the series of paintings to probe what names evoke in relation to them. Eg. *Infratopia*, *Floating Points*, *Erratic Horizons*, or *Provisional Textures of Reality* (see Kokoli and Hiller 2008). How do the different names tweak associations and how do the names make me and others experience new things in the material? Name-giving is an evocative act, a way to spawn possibly also something new (cf. Hagström 2012).

The paintings are based on an open-ended array of materials, standardized components, and make-shift solutions. Industrially produced commodities as well as material extracted from the ground. Industrially produced cement boards, tiles and plywood, adhesives and plaster, a variety of acrylic paint, clay and chalk, spray paint as

well as iron powder and iron oxide pigments and varnishes. This is combined with non-industrially extracted materials like soil, sand and ashes collected from different geographical locations. The plethora of different materials used in the paintings is comparable to the way I imagine Mundania to be comprised. Domestic everyday life with complex technologies is a mix of standardised arrangements and makeshift juxtapositions and entanglements.

During the last years several researchers, designers and artists have done works that address the complexity of infrastructures and technological assemblages. Such as the creative and critical mapping project *Anatomy of an AI System* (2018) by Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler (see also Mattern 2013). Their work is a map depicting the complex arrangements and relations of the voice-controlled device Amazon Echo. My Provisional Titles-series is a kind of counterpoint to this kind of works. The series is not a map, but a messy and open-ended way to probe the infrastructures, relations, and dimensions of domestic technologies.

Mundania and Beyond

While engaging with material and while making and probing as part of my explorations of Mundania I also research and learn from how different artists and creators have approached concepts and how they have developed techniques that can be inspiration for my work. In this practice, learning is much more than reading up on something and collecting empirical material that is then related to what has been read.

This approach to learning also characterizes some probing projects at the borderlands to my work with Mundania. One such project started 2021 was called *Infra-museology*. It was a collaboration with the museum Kulturen in Lund and involved a professional photographer. The idea was to probe museum infrastructures and the dynamics between what is made visible or invisible in the world of museums. In this sense I wanted to create an interplay between my work with mundanisation in domestic settings and the role of infrastructures in a museum. Since major parts of Kulturen, an open-air museum, are reconstructions of living environments and domestic milieus from southern Sweden, it was fruitful to probe how the infrastructural took form in the museum. Which infrastructures are hidden? What are the practices and dynamics of blackboxing, emergences and disappearances in the constructed (domestic) environments of this museum? Here we could for an example learn about different aspects of light and electricity (cf. Bille 2019). When should an electric wire or device be visible? What are the concealment practices and aesthetics when it comes to electric devices and accessories? How should for an example the early electrification of homes be exhibited and shown and how should this relate to novel electrical systems and devices that are installed as part of the present infrastructures of the museum? As an extension of this, should earlier museum infrastructures that were once used as part of exhibitions designs be made visible? When could earlier museum technologies turn from something that is hidden in the background to something at the centre of attention? The project included smaller workshops and visual experiments and it might be continued and further merged with my work with mundanisation.

To extend and probe Mundania I have also used sound and sound art. For an example in an *audio paper* named *Mundania - Just Above The Noise Floor* (2019), made for the journal and platform *Seismograf*. In the audio paper I used sound art and spoken word to evoke ideas about noise and mundanisation. Sanne Krogh Groth and Kristine Samson, who initiated the audio paper series have called the format a way to extend written scholarship with sonic aesthetics:

Audio papers resemble the regular essay or the academic text in that they deal with a certain topic of interest, but presented in the form of an audio production. The audio paper is an extension of the written paper through its specific use of media, a sonic awareness of aesthetics and materiality, and creative approach towards communication. The audio paper is a performative format working together with an affective and elaborate understanding of language. It is an experiment embracing intellectual arguments and creative work, papers and performances, written scholarship and sonic aesthetics. (Groth and Samson 2016, 1)

The audio papers embrace intellectual arguments and creative work, something that resonates well with the way I work with probes. Several of my probes are based on sound. In October 2021 I made the work *Taking Seat*, for an installation called *The Sound Bench* by organisation Audiorama.⁴ The idea with *Taking Seat* was to concentrate on the mundane practice of sitting. How is it related to mobility as well as politics? And what do practices of sitting mean for the ways in which media and technologies have been conceived and implemented? Computer workstations often require that the user sit down, and the laptop is hard to use while walking or standing. What is the media history of chairs, benches, and sofas?

These are some examples of the ways through which I have been working with art and cultural analysis to probe Mundania. Through this way of working, processes are initiated, thoughts formulated, and things set in motion. It embraces how practices beyond words are entwined with the evolution of concepts.

Conclusion

My use of Mundania was spawned in a certain context. Every time it is used and referred to, the concept mutates, and possibly lives on. It can of course also perish and become forgotten. What take place through the engagement with the concept, through the process of probing, is a gradual metamorphosis. Probing merges the concept with different aspects of the world. Probing is not neutral instruments. They intervene. They transform or rather transmute both that which is probed and the ones involved in the probing. In an open-ended process.

How does probing relate to the methodological and theoretical standpoints of the scholars I mentioned earlier? Probing is not about documentation or about representation of empirical material. In that sense it is aligned with the arguments by proponents of non (or more than) representational methodologies. It is about open-ended experimentation (Ingold 2018, 218). It is about making and generation (Pink et.al. 2020), appreciating remix and iteration (cf. Markham 2013).

Probing is an explorative activity, merging art and cultural analysis. It combines practical and sensory engagement, centred around a specific concept, with theoretical and analytical work. The stories and imaginaries that are transmuted through the processes of probing are also relational. Probing can be used to reflect upon various phenomena, to possibly increase awareness about complex matters, eg. in relation to emerging technologies.

To use probing to explore Mundania has been a way for me to open new ways to analyse, understand, and present the role of technologies in people's lives. When presenting ideas and imaginaries based on the Mundania concept, through the exploratory means of probing I have been able to suggest alternative perspectives and hopefully to also offer possible insights among stakeholders working within eg. the development of technologies and services. Probing can be used to facilitate knowledge exchange and possibly the border between research and practice-based activities can also be challenged. This exploratory transgression of borders raised around academia characterize much of my practice. In this sense I use Mundania not only to learn about emerging technologies but also to challenge what academia is and could become.

Notes

- 1 My work with emerging technologies has to a large extent been done within the research project "Connected Homes and Distant Infrastructures", financed by The Swedish Research Council (Dnr 2017-00789). The project about *Inframuseology* was supported by the Birgit and Sven Håkan Ohlsson foundation.
- 2 The way I integrate reflexive processes of making in my work can to some extent be seen as a methodological extension of autoethnography (Bylund et.al. 2021 (in Swedish); Ehn 2011). Recently, there has been some discussion on the role and meaning of the word ethnography. This is not the place where to dive deeper into this debate. I can however shortly note that in my practices, if referring to it as having an (auto)ethnographic feature, I mostly focus on the second part of the word, *graphy* (graphein), and less on the part *ethno* (cf. Ingold 2014; Rees 2018). I see these "graphic" practices as a way to create inscriptions, not just written text, using various media and modalities. There have been several ways in which scholars have moved along with the inscriptive (*graphy*) aspect of ethnography by playing with different "-graphy-words", such as *praxiography* (Mol 2002), *technography* (Kien 2008), *autotechnography* (Hildebrand 2020), *digital technography* (Berg 2022). Why not also try *hybridography* or *relatiography*. This play with the definition of words can of course also be extended to the word cultural *analysis*. I have discussed the relation between analysis and exploration in other places (Willim 2017 b, 2017c).
- 3 When I have been using probing as part of art projects I have been using the word art probing (Willim 2017 b and c). Partly to distinguish it from ideas about scientific probes or "cultural probes" (Gaver et.al. 2004). The latter has a more empirical orientation than how I understand my practices of (art) probing as an open-ended and non-representational methodology, even if cultural probes is not about systematic collection of information. Cultural probes have been used eg. as part of design processes to inspire designers. "Probes are collections of evocative tasks meant to elicit inspirational responses from people—not comprehensive information about them, but fragmentary clues about their lives

- and thoughts” (ibid:53).
- 4 The Sound Bench (Ljudbänken) was based on a specially constructed bench with a 4-channel speaker system. More info: <https://www.audiorama.se/events/2020/10/12/ljudbnken-co-lund-taking-seat> . It was commissioned by The Sound Environment Centre at Lund University.

Works Cited

- Appadurai, Arjun, and Neta Alexander. 2020. *Failure*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Berg, Martin. 2022. “Digital Technography: A Methodology for Interrogating Emerging Digital Technologies and Their Futures.” *Qualitative Inquiry*: 1–10.
- Berker, Thomas, Maren Hartmann, and Yves Punie. 2006. *Domestication of Media and Technology*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Beyes, Timon, and Claus Pias. 2019. “The Media Arcane’. *Grey Room* 75 (Spring): 84–105.
- Bille, Mikkel. 2019. *Homely Atmosphere and Lighting Technologies in Denmark: Living with Light*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Boyd, Candice P., and Christian Edwardes, eds. 2019. *Non-Representational Theory and the Creative Arts*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bridle, James. 2018. *New Dark Age. Technology and The End of The Future*. London: Verso.
- Bylund, Christine, Evelina Liliequist, and Kim Silow Kallenberg. 2021. “Autoetnografisk Etnologi – En Inledning.” *Kulturella Perspektiv - Svensk Etnologisk Tidskrift* 30, no. 1. <https://publicera.kb.se/kp/article/view/1327>.
- Crawford, Kate, and Vladan Joler. 2018. *Anatomy of an AI System: The Amazon Echo as an Anatomical Map of Human Labor, Data and Planetary Resources*. <https://anatomyof.ai>.
- Ehn, Billy. 2011. “Doing-It Yourself. Autoethnography of Manual Work.” *Ethnologia Europaea* 41, no. 1: 53–64.
- Ehn, Billy and Orvar Löfgren. 2010. *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gaver, William, Andy Boucher, Sarah Pennington, and Brendan Walker. 2004. “Cultural Probes and The Value of Uncertainty.” *Interactions - Funology* 11, no. 5: 53–56.
- Groth, Sanne Krogh, and Kristine Samson. 2018. “Audio Papers - A Manifesto.” *Seismograf*, no. (August 30). <https://doi.org/HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.48233/SEISMOGRAF1601>.
- Gunn, Wendy, Otto, Ton, and Rachel Charlotte Smith. 2013. *Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice*, 1st ed. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Hildebrand, Julia M. 2020. “Drone Mobilities and Auto-Technography Monika , Malene , Sven Kesselring and Nikolaj Grauslund Kristensen.” In *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications for Mobilities*, edited by Monika Büscher, Malene Freudendal-Pedersen, Sven Kesselring, and Nikolaj Grauslund Kris-

- tensen, 92–101. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishers.
- Ingold, Tim. 2018. “From Science to Art and Back Again: The Pendulum of an Anthropologist.” *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 43, no. 3–4: 213–27.
- . 2014. “That’s Enough about Ethnography!” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 1: 383.
- Kien, Grant. 2008. “Technography = Technology + Ethnography.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 14, no. 7: 1101–9.
- Kitchin, Rob, and Martin Dodge. 2019. ‘The (In)Security of Smart Cities: Vulnerabilities, Risks, Mitigation, and Prevention’. *Journal of Urban Technology* 26, no. 2 (April 3): 47–65.
- Kokoli, Alexandra, and Susan Hiller. Susan Hiller: *The Provisional Texture of Reality: Selected Texts and Talks, 1977–2007*. Zürich: JRP | Ringier, 2008.
- Latour, Bruno. 1987. Introduction: Opening Pandora’s Black Box. In *Science in Action. How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*, 1–17. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Law, John, and Evelyn Ruppert. 2013. ‘The Social Life of Methods: Devices’. *Journal of Cultural Economy* 6, no. 3 (August): 229–40.
- Lorimer, Hayden. 2005. “Cultural Geography: The Busyness of Being ‘More-than-Representational.’” *Progress in Human Geography* 29, no. 1: 83–94.
- Lury, Celia, and Nina Wakeford. 2014. ‘Introduction: A Perpetual Inventory’. In *Inventive Methods: The Happening of The Social*, edited by Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford, 1–24. Oxon: Routledge.
- Löfgren, Orvar. 2015. “The Black Box of Everyday Life. Entanglements of Stuff, Affects, and Activities.” *Cultural Analysis* 13: 77–98.
- . 2014. “At The Ethnologists’ Ball. Changing an Academic Habitus.” *Ethnologia Europaea: Journal of European Ethnology* 44, no. 2: 116–22.
- Löfgren, Orvar and Robert Willim. 2005. *Magic, Culture and The New Economy*. Oxford: Berg.
- Markham, Annette. 2013. ‘Remix Culture, Remix Methods: Reframing Qualitative Inquiry for Social Media Contexts’. In *Global Dimensions of Qualitative Inquiry*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Michael D. Giardina, 63–81. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- McCarthy, Tom. 2015. *Satin Island*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2015.
- Mol, Annemarie. 2002. *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Moores, Shaun. 2021. “Investigating ‘Communities of Co-Movers’: Motricity, Spatiality and Sequentiality in Social Life.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Mobile Socialities*, edited by Annette Hill, Maren Hartmann and Magnus Andersson, 53–68. Oxon: Routledge.
- O’Dell, Thomas, and Robert Willim. 2013. “Transcription and the Senses: Cultural Analysis When It Entails More Than Words.” *Senses and Society* 8, no. 3: 314–34.
- O’Dell, Thomas and Robert Willim. 2011a. ‘Irregular Ethnographies: An Introduction’. *Ethnologia Europaea. Journal of European Ethnology* 41, no. 1: 4–13.
- . 2011b. ‘Composing Ethnography’. *Ethnologia Europaea. Journal of European Eth-*

- nology* 41, no. 1: 26–39.
- Pasquale, Frank. 2015. "The Black Box Society." In *The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Pink, Sarah, Katalin Osz, Kaspar Raats, Thomas Lindgren, and Vaike Fors. 2020. "Design Anthropology for Emerging Technologies: Trust and Sharing in Autonomous Driving Futures." *Design Studies* 69: 1–21.
- Pink, Sarah, Minna Ruckenstein, Robert Willim, and Melisa Duque. 2018. "Broken Data: Conceptualising Data in an Emerging World." *Big Data & Society* 5, no. 1 (June): 1–13.
- Rees, Tobias. 2018. *After Ethnos*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Silverstone, Robert, Eric Hirsch, and David Morley. 1992. "Information and Communication Technologies and The Moral Economy of The Household." In *Consuming Technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*, edited by Robert Silverstone and Eric Hirsch, 115–31. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Thrift, Nigel. 2007. *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Trentmann, Frank. 2009. "Disruption Is Normal: Blackouts, Breakdowns and the Elasticity of Everyday Life." In *Time, Consumption and Everyday Life. Practice, Materiality and Culture*, edited by Elizabeth Shove, Frank Trentmann, and Richard Wilk, 67–84. Oxford: Berg.
- Vannini, Phillip. 2014. "Non-Representational Ethnography: New Ways of Animating Lifeworlds." *Cultural Geographies* 22, no. 2: 317–27.
- Wilk, Richard. 2011. "Reflections on Orderly and Disorderly Ethnography." *Ethnologica Europaea. Journal of European Ethnology*.
- Willim, Robert. 2019. "Mundania - Just Above The Noise Floor." *Seismograf*, no. 18 (December). <https://doi.org/10.48233/SEISMOGRAF2301>.
- . 2017a. "Imperfect Imaginaries. Digitization, Mundanisation and The Ungraspable." In *Digitisation: Theories and Concepts for Empirical Cultural Research*, edited by Gertraud Koch, 53–77. London: Routledge.
- . 2017b. "Art Probing and Worldmaking. Exploring Museum Imaginaries." *Hamburger Journal Für Kulturanthropologie* 7: 77–97.
- . 2017c. "Evoking Imaginaries: Art Probing, Ethnography and More-than-Academic Practice." *Sociological Research Online* 22, no. 3: 1–24.
- . 2005. "Looking With New Eyes On The Old Factory. On The Rise of Industrial Cool." In *Experiencescapes. Tourism, Culture and Economy*, edited by Thomas O'Dell and Peter Billing. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press.
- . 2003. "Claiming The Future: Speed, Business Rhetoric and Computer Practice in a Swedish IT Company." In *New Technologies at Work: People, Screens and Social Virtuality*, edited by Christina Garsten and Helena Wulff. Oxford: Berg.



Beyond Urban Sketching: Ethnographic Drawing as a Visual Analytical Method

Cecilia Fredriksson
Lund University

Abstract

In this article I have chosen a contemporary phenomenon, urban sketching, as an empirical starting point. Through active participation as an urban sketcher through digital publishing, dialogue and interaction, I analyze my analytical process and urban sketching practice. The aim is to examine ethnographic drawing as a visual cultural analytical method. My contribution is based the connection between urban ideals and innovative, creative environments in a local context. An overall knowledge goal is to develop visual methods and perspectives in the borderland between cultural analysis, artistic research, and new academic formats. Sketching and drawing can be compared to written ethnographic notes made during fieldwork or observation. The relationship between drawing and taking notes can be regarded as a dialogue, an ongoing conversation in which the importance of adopting a new vision is more important than the competence to draw.

Keywords: Urban sketching, ethnographic drawing, visual methods, urban transformation, autoethnography

Cultural Analysis 21.1 (2023): 38–55
© 2023 by The University of California.
All rights reserved

When in Europe, Don't Miss Skurup

Urban sketching is part of a global movement that encourages us to draw what we see in our immediate environment. It's not about sitting at home and painting by the help of photos, it's about going out and painting on the spot. As an urban sketcher, you do not beautify what you see, you are true to your motive - of documentation of our time.¹

This is how a five-day course in Urban Sketching is described, a course given in a small southern Sweden town in the summer of 2021. The course is aimed at both beginners and experienced artists. According to the course information on the website, you will go through perspectives and different techniques to learn how to draw houses and buildings in a personal style. In addition to houses, vehicles, vegetation, and people will also be in focus. Since it can be "scary" to draw people, one of the ambitions is de-dramatizing such fears.

The interest in depicting and documenting urban life in various ways is a growing field. Photography has become an obvious everyday practice to share on social media, often in combination with some text. Focus on the local urban environment and the self-experience is a recurring theme, and the degree of authenticity claims varies. New interest groups, social movements, and digital communities, that extend far beyond geographical and social boundaries are constantly being created. One of these movements is the global network "Urban Sketchers". Those in the network are interested in drawing different cities around the world and describe themselves as part of a "worldwide non-profit organization" to promote "drawing and visual storytelling done on site and from observation".² When Urban Sketchers calls for "practice drawing on location in the cities, towns and villages", it can also be about helping a community gain visibility and putting a place on the map.³

From anthropological and sociological perspectives, the city's diversity and mosaic of different cultures have gained much of methodological attention (Hannerz 1983, Marcus 1986). For the urban ethnographer, the urban fieldwork has primarily been focused on the observation of "people in situ" (Schwanhäußer 2016). The act of "being there" has, since the 1980s, become an important practice for thinking about the city (Jackson 1985). This was also a time when the European industrial cities were transformed into urban experiences, and the service industry called for a new kind of urban landscape infrastructure. Cities and urban environments are today characterized by an ongoing aestheticization where urban culture is shaped based on artistic ambitions. Consultants, marketers, and site developers like Richard Florida (2002) or Charles Landry (2008) have written many manuals on the optimal toolbox for creating creative sites. In the tourism industry and destination development, there is a strong belief in the power and potential of culture and creativity in terms of making a place visible. These ambitions are often shaped in the form of various projects and events linked to specific values.

The empirical focus in this article is the contemporary development of coastal destinations and urban transformation projects. Here is an ongoing dialogue in various

forums about who is responsible for developing the urban space and how a “living city” should be designed. Along with visions of a living city, follow visions of what kind of attractions and what kind of environments and atmosphere such a city needs. In order to develop attractive environments, inspiration is increasingly drawn from art, culture, and the creative industries (cf. Reckwitz 2017). Concepts such as “culture-driven innovation” or “culture-driven growth” have had a strong impact when it comes to a specific type of planning and site development process (Evans 2001; Kay Smith 2010; Grodach 2013; Fredriksson 2013).

I have chosen a contemporary phenomenon, such as urban sketching, as an empirical starting point. Through active participation as an urban sketcher through digital publishing, dialogue and interaction, I will analyze my analytical process and urban sketching practice. The aim is to examine ethnographic drawing as a visual cultural analytical method. Here, more research and analyzes of ethnographic drawing, or graphic anthropology, are requested. In ethnology and the humanities, there is a lack of concrete and practical experience of what the method can entail and a lack of a developed methodological and theoretical discussion of process and approach. My contribution is based the connection between urban ideals and innovative, creative environments in a local context. I will use an exploratory and autoethnographic approach, as well as a broader understanding of ethnographic drawing as a visual technique, as a tool for interpretation, communication, and as a way to present research results. An overall knowledge goal is to develop visual methods and perspectives in the borderland between cultural analysis, artistic research, and new academic formats.

In the following, I give a brief literature review and some empirical and autoethnographic reflections about my experiences of visual documentation in the field. When it comes to my own practice, the autoethnographic approach becomes an important part of a wider understanding of how a global movement as urban sketchers approaches different environments, people, situations, and relations. How can sketching and observation-based drawing develop the visual thinking of the ethnographer?

Thinking by the Line

The transformation of empirical material into a scientific text is a process that involves various elements of interpretation and representation. Exploring the well-known is one of the recurring fieldwork challenges (Ehn & Löfgren 2016). The art of making oneself alien to places, phenomena, or situations tends to become more difficult the closer we get. Ethnographic drawing and visual thinking can be challenging starting points. By composing and using drawings and paintings in my recent fieldworks I have become more aware of what matters and the importance of thinking along the lines as creative method, representation, statement, and as tool for further interpretation. Sketching and drawing can be compared to written ethnographic notes made during fieldwork or observation. The relationship between drawing and taking notes can be regarded as a dialogue, an ongoing conversation in which the importance of adopting a new vision is more important than the competence to draw.

In contemporary anthropology, ethnographic drawing has become a rare visual

practice with straggling roots that give rise to many questions concerning methodology, documentation, and ethics. However, in the constant stream of photos and films, ethnographic drawing can offer other forms of documentation, problematize ingrained culturally-analytical translation techniques, and enable new spaces of interpretation. Within the cultural analytical and anthropological tradition, the thick ethnographic description has long had a specific value as a form of representation (cf. Pink 2004; Clifford & Marcus 1986). Today we see a search for new visual methods and forms for representations in the field of anthropological and humanities research (Kuschnir 2016; Causey 2017). However, there is still a significant research gap in cultural theoretical perspectives and issues. As the ethnologist Billy Ehn (2012) has pointed out, it is not enough for a cultural analyst to just adopt artistic or creative methods. Instead, we should see art “as an alternative form of knowledge production, with other purposes, rules and methods” and actually ask ourselves what it accomplishes.

Drawing, photographing, and writing are forms of representation that have been problematic in different ways (Soukup 2014). During the 1980s, anthropological texts were questioned in a fundamental way, but photography and drawing have also been questioned in terms of analysis, interpretation, and representation. As Michael Taussig (2011) has pointed out, the difference between a drawing and a photograph becomes clear when comparing a photograph of one drawing and a photograph of something else. The photo of the drawing has a different credibility, perhaps because it is a kind of representation of a representation. The photo of the drawing does not appear to be a first-hand representation and therefore loses credibility. The connection between photography and technology makes it appear more objective. Nevertheless, according to Roland Barthes (1981), such a claim is also an inherent problem of photography. A photo is not an objective form of representation but can be interpreted in different ways by the viewer. Often the photograph may serve as an illustration or support for an argument or reasoning. Drawing works here as the opposite of photography; instead of freezing a context or environment on a special occasion, ethnographic drawing becomes a transformative collaboration in dialogue between subject and object, between the artist and the depicted (cf. Ingold 2016).

As photography developed during the latter part of the 19th century, ethnographic drawing became less common in anthropology. At the same time, anthropologists and ethnologists became interested in drawings made by the people and cultures that were the focus of field studies. Such drawings became part of the empirical material and were interpreted as a direct representation of the studied culture (Johansson 2016; Soukup 2014). It is also common to use children’s drawings in a more or less psychologizing way. The anthropologists’ text-based studies of cultures without texts or literacy reinforced the image of the “primitive” societies. Nor were the oral statements seen as particularly reliable. From such a perspective, “the native drawing” became a wordless, but credible representation of the culture studied, just as photography became a reliable source for documenting the foreign and exotic.

Between Fieldwork and Observation-based Drawing

Drawing can be compared to the field notes that often are created during fieldwork or observation (Piga et al 2021). The relationship between drawing and taking notes can also be regarded as a dialogue, an ongoing conversation (Ramos 2004; Berger 2007; Becker 2007; Taussig 2009; Kuschmir 2011) where the importance of adopting a new vision is more important than the ability to be able to draw. During an ethnographic observation, it is common to experience that nothing special happens. Here, observation-based drawing can help us become more responsive to the seemingly mundane and trivial. The sketchbook functions as a memory object for the ethnographic experience. It creates connections between words and images and, as Taussig puts it, new connections between “inner and outer worlds” (Taussig 2011).

Can ethnographic drawing be a method that facilitates the distance that is needed in doing observations and fieldwork? Even human nature seems to prevent us from being distanced in a well-known environment (cf. Horowitz 2013), and we must somehow “choose” what we see. We often see what we expect to see, and we become more or less blind to the familiar. What we “naturally” see is what is new to us. Ethnographic drawing functions as a way of disrupting our everyday selection process and transforming the familiar into something unknown and exotic. Unlike writing or writing down, drawing requires some form of spatial spatiality. A motif is often placed in a context. An interesting aspect of ethnographic drawing when doing fieldwork or observations is that the researcher also is seen and can be observed by others. Such dramatization is an important part of the cultural analysis tradition.

Another possibility is to use photos taken during fieldwork and observations to translate selected parts into drawings and sketches later. Such a translation process can provide opportunities for new interpretations of an environment, an event, or a phenomenon. Drawing and sketching do not take place in a social or cultural vacuum. The visual transformation from photo to drawing can make us see new things or connections. The photo needs to be simplified, framed, and selected in various ways to make sense visually. How can the dialogue between photography and drawing result in new perspectives and create other research questions (cf. Wadle 2012)?

Into the Field

I intuitively tried to use drawn or painted sketches during later empirical studies to interpret and analyze my material. Such translation processes, mainly from a number of quickly taken photographs in the field, have made me aware and curious about the possibilities and challenges of the method (Fredriksson 2018; Fredriksson 2019; Fredriksson 2021). As a watercolorist, I have gained experience drawing people, contexts, and environments. The drawing practice is usually joyful and relaxing. I received my artistic education during a few intensive years during the early 1980s. In my academic activities, I have mainly devoted myself to producing scientific texts. However, in recent years the two worlds have crossed each other more often, and it happens that I combine text with illustrations or make book covers. Sometimes I take courses to immerse myself and develop a specific theme in watercolor or other techniques. Such learning processes develop my writing in different ways.

The description of the planned summer course in urban sketching quoted in the introduction differs from the courses I have come in contact with before. The connection to a global movement is central to the course description. It also seems to be less about learning a particular technique and more about learning a particular approach:

The purpose of the course is to get you started as urban sketchers and send you out into the world! You will discover a rewarding hobby that can be practiced wherever you are and gives you a chance to make future contacts with urban sketchers from around the world. / --- / As a course participant, you are expected to come out with me and draw! I will show you that it is perfectly OK with a curious audience and we always show each other what we have drawn to get feedback and encouragement.⁴

Being a “participant in the world” as a course participant sets specific requirements and creates expectations. At the same time, it is emphasized in the course description that everyone is welcome and those individual expressions are essential. Social interaction involves, among other things, drawing in front of an audience and sharing their results with other course participants. In the following, instead of taking the summer course, I will explore urban sketching in relation to my ongoing fieldwork in a small-scale environment that is facing extensive urban transformation.

“Kuststad 2025” is an urban development project in Trelleborg in southern Sweden, which involves major investments in business and infrastructure. 4,000 new homes will be produced near the sea, and more than five kilometers of quayside will be available for residents and visitors. The “city of palm trees” will, in the next few years, be transformed into “Sjöstaden, the city by the sea”. The municipality of Trelleborg wants to take a holistic approach so that the city will “regain contact with the sea”. The border between the port and city will be moved, and new districts will emerge. It will be a mix of housing, premises for business, and attractive meeting places:

Trelleborg is the city of palm trees! You can stroll along Sweden’s only palm-lined avenue, visit a genuine Viking fort and feed peacocks in the City Park. The shopping on offer is varied, with everything from market stalls to Valen Gallerian, hosting 30 or so different stores. The city is known for its public art and beautiful gardens. For example, you will find one of Europe’s most northerly avenues of Ginkgo Biloba trees! Culture enthusiasts can enjoy a varied selection of museums, but most worthy of a visit is the recreated Viking fortress Trelleborgen.⁵

“The new districts will be full of life”, says one of the planners on the municipality’s website, and it is also possible to take part in a film posted on Youtube with a guided tour of the coming city transformation. The digital future visions present new places for meetings, socializing, and play, focusing on a circular economy. Traffic will be diverted away from the city center, and residents and visitors will get closer to the water as the city gets ready to once again “meet the sea”.

The historical perspective is an important element in putting Trelleborg back on the map. When the ferry route between Trelleborg and Sassnitz was inaugurated in the early 20th century, the city became a transit arena for global events and a gateway to the wider world. Back then, “the people of Trelleborg could go straight out to the harbor and look at the arriving boats”, and now the journey to become an “attractive coastal city” has begun.⁶



With the help of a pencil and watercolor, I approach the book cover. The cover photo caught my attention as the book lay on the shelf in a second-hand shop a few years ago. Maybe it was the seventies motif with flower sales and people in the square in front of the water tower that appealed to me. Or the well-dressed woman in a suit and purple hat who so definitely points to the bouquet of orange-red asters she has chosen.

At the square, some people happened to be caught in a photograph in a small town in southern Sweden in the mid-1970s. On the inside of the book cover, it says that the book was printed in 1977, information that makes me assume that the photo was taken a few, or some years, earlier. I focus the image while I sketch lightly with the pencil. The woman with the violet hat. The face that is shaded, the light that falls on the nose and chin. The body and the suit become lines and cylinders, the belt that breaks the direction of movement,

and the bag that rests on the left arm. Unlike the suit and hat, the bag feels more modern, a really big city bag. Who is she, the woman in the purple hat?⁷

Maybe she had come by bus to town. The train station, which was closed down in the 1940s, was still closed. Before that, the railway between Trelleborg and Lund took the road over Minnesberg, Alstad, and other places that I had heard about a long time ago but then forgot. Minnesberg had a brick factory, and in the small community, all the houses were still made of brick. Brick walls, brick pattern, brick pond. But the mill is quiet and still in the sun when we take the car there on a Sunday in May.



The chimney still sticks out, marking itself in the landscape: few kilometers away, another chimney, another brick factory. No church towers can be seen here, a place that God forgot?

We follow the road in the footsteps of the old railway. More than 60 years ago, it was closed down. But the sun is still shining on the station building. The vanilla-yellow plaster over the brick shines like a magic window in the landscape. I can't manage to catch it, although I try several times. I cannot open the window that remains closed.

I fail and switch to other pens, capture the perspective in 60 seconds, and mix watercolor with black ink. But my sketch lacks direction and content. I don't know what I am trying to catch or how to open that window which, in different ways, seems to be about a place I have never visited.



When leaving, we pass by a resting place with a view and make a stop. This is the old road between Lund and

Trelleborg. The table with benches on each side is cast in cement, ingrown with moss, and many decades of patina. It seems to have stood there since the railway was closed and private motoring took off. It is a fantastic place in the sun and wind; we eat our packed lunch at the table and look out over the landscape.

Here I may have sat before, right at this table.⁸



Back to the marketplace in 1977. This time I get closer to the picture, sketch myself into it, and recognition arises. It is the photo on the back of the book that is in focus, probably taken the same day as the woman in the purple hat chose asters at the marketplace. In the shadow of an orange parasol, apples in wooden boxes are offered for sale, and customers flock around the stand this autumn day more than forty years ago.

In the foreground are red berries that look like lingonberries, it is a sunny day in the autumn in southern Sweden, and Trelleborg is a city with big plans even though the railway station has been closed since the 1940s.

I sketch and let the watercolor paint spread over a light blue sky and orange fabric parasol. The typical seventies flowers in yellow and brown, with a short fringe that borders the parasol. I can almost feel the rough fabric when I drip paint here and there, marking the fringe that stands out against the sunlight. It looks like it's a cold day; men wear hats or caps and some scarves.

I paint quickly and create lines on the wet paper before the paint dries. There are a few minutes when the window is open, before the moment is over. The process is focused, but also relaxing because the action prevents too many thoughts from taking place. Thinking by the line. Yet the reflection is always there. The translation between images creates a mood, a certain feeling. Is this what I'm looking for? What am I trying to capture?⁹

When I publish the picture on Instagram and tag it with keywords such as #streetlife, #urbanillustration, #watercolorpeople, and of course #urbansketching, I get some comments that say things like "Wow!" or "So dynamic! Love it!". But I also get different interpretations of the red berries in the foreground. Here, new contexts are created through the viewer's eyes where one sees red carpets for sale at a Central European bazaar, while another sees a demonstration with

fluttering red flags and adds, "like first May if everything was normal !!!"

The comments make me start to look at the picture in a different way. The red berries, which I did not attach much importance to more than trying to reproduce the intense color, open up for other interpretations. The red fields in the foreground lead to different images depending on the association.¹⁰

*

I have started to think about whether my interpretation of the image should really be published together with this text. I have perceived the cover image as an object to depict, interpret, and transfer to create reflection. But when the new image is ready, questions about copyright will be raised. Depicting a photo or other work of art is permitted as long as the new work is not sold, exhibited, or otherwise distributed. What does it mean to multiply the image on the cover of the book? Should I contact the photographer who took the picture sometime during the 1970s?

Urban sketching based on historical material seems problematic in terms of copyright if the sketches are spread in different ways. On the other hand, the process is less problematic as long as it takes place in the private sphere. When I use information material that the city has posted on youtube or its website, there are no problems in quoting and stating the source, but the depiction is more complicated. Can I solve this difficulty? Is it a problem at all? I'm thinking about focusing on the book as an object instead of an image. The book as a material object lying on my table. Is this a context that changes the regulations? ¹¹

Breaking the Rules?

While I am working on this text, Urban Sketchers is announcing a contest on their website. There is an opportunity to become an observer of an urban environment in the autumn of 2021. I quickly write an application and attach some watercolors with Trelleborg motifs. Information on who has been selected by local observers will be presented during the summer. The application process leads to new reflections on what I am actually doing. What happens if I am selected as a local observer? How do I handle my dual roles as a researcher and cultural analyst while participating in the production of the visual practice I study? At the same time, I am already involved. On my Instagram account, I share several watercolors and tag them with keywords like #urbansketching, #urbanillustration, and other versions of the theme.

The application process also provides in-depth insight into the challenges that such a commitment requires. Above all, the first and perhaps most important point in the organization's manifesto, "We draw on location, indoors or out, capturing what we see from direct observation", will be difficult to fulfill.¹²

I do not draw on-site, and I do not always document the present. In addition, my activities as an urban sketcher are quite lonely and rarely in dialogue with others. The feedback given in digital forums is sparse and is mostly about likes or a heart given here and there. Still, it is something that drives me to constantly draw and paint myself into the research object. As if the translation and transformation itself are what matters. The method is still a rather new experience, and the visual activity is often

governed by a kind of flow, a desire to get behind what I have just experienced. Or maybe see it another way. In the immediate experience, I can get really close to what I am investigating.

Watercolor is a complicated and difficult technique. The water and the color often behave in unexpected ways. The achieved effects are mostly the result of processes beyond your own control. Maybe it is that kind of challenge that contributes to the benefits of the method. The unexpected result requires a flexible approach, a kind of adjustment when the whole project takes a different direction. Not always being in control of the process can be liberating. If that experience also includes the release of the cultural analytical ability, I am prepared to challenge the exploration. In the following, I continue to explore an art event that took place in Trelleborg in 2021.

“Konstkiosk” as a Social Space

Konstkiosk imagines a society where the public space exists without private infiltration which undermines its importance of being a social space.¹³

The densification of cities often means that public space is shrinking and common meeting places are becoming fewer and fewer. In connection with the transformation of the city of Trelleborg, the project “Konstkiosk” (Art Kiosk) was established, a project that has also generated similar exhibitions in other municipalities in southern Sweden.

When the curators of the exhibition are interviewed by the local newspaper, they say that the purpose is to draw attention to “the kiosk as an important place for dialogue”.¹⁴ Protecting the kiosk as a meeting place is a recurring ambition for

artists and architects. The curators Christel Lundberg and Peter Dacke further explain that they managed to save an old flower kiosk in Malmö a few years ago, and “since then they have been the kiosk’s patrons.”¹⁵ The project is funded by Region Skåne, the Swedish Arts Council, and Trelleborg Museum.

*

A yellow kiosk has been built at the truck station near the entrance to the port. It’s May, and the weather is beautiful, warm enough. Not many cars can be seen in the parking lot, but the exhibition has just begun. The characteristic shape of a kiosk is recognizable in the distance. The shape is square and modernist, but the color is



wrong. I remember that kind of kiosk as murky green. Almost invisible, they blended into the urban landscape.

As we get closer, it becomes obvious that the yellow kiosk is form without content. The kiosk is closed, and everything takes place outside. Here you can buy a few things: a small exhibition catalog and postcards of the works of art that sit on lamp posts along the coastal road. Coffee and cakes are also available. The kiosk's closed door consists of a screen where movies are displayed.

In the conversation that takes place between some of the visitors and the exhibition group, it becomes clear that the postcards attract great attention. General Motors' previous activities in the area seem to evoke memories and interest for several of the men studying the postcards. The black and white images are mixed with neon colors in green, orange, turquoise, purple or pink. As waxed by contemporary aesthetics, the photographs invite reinterpretation of a past service industry and hard work life.

"But it shouldn't be nostalgia", says one of the exhibitors.

The same pictures on the postcards are set up as works of art on the lamp posts along the road along the former industrial area. Here is also a poetic story about the Oxels that line the road. The illustrations by Catherine Dee want to convey the trees' relationship to the place from an eco-centric approach:

I imagined how the Oxels have watched over industry workers and ships passing and how they sing lullabies each season in milky blossom to bees and Trelleborg's infants since they were planted half a century ago. I dreamt about how with leaves they have heard in constance every human-and-sea-mood.¹⁶

After the art walk, we continue along the coastline in the opposite direction. Suddenly I find myself in a place I don't recognize. Windowless gables form a zigzagging silhouette against the water. A high net fence surrounds the buildings, and the beach strip is lined with boulders and cement formations. Despite the fact that a couple of benches are set up here and there along the gravel path, the place doesn't seem intended for strolled visitors. After the row of windowless buildings, trucks with their noses pressed against the net fence appear. Side by side, they are waiting for the next ferry, or maybe they have just arrived. The laundry is hanging in the sun between the shiny trucks. Some of the drivers take the opportunity to have a coffee together, but not many of them are visible. Yet we feel observed as we pass the endless line of seemingly empty vehicles. The high fence indicates that this is a place for logistics that should be kept separate from visitors.



After the closed logistics area, the small gravel road ends, and a port area opens up behind a new fence. It is not allowed for us to continue, but a small opening has been made towards a lookout height. We follow the path, and soon we see far beyond trucks and fences. At the top of the hill, the whole city and the port area suddenly appear. The place doesn't seem well visited, but binoculars and some signs indicate the distance to other destinations in Europe, telling us that we have arrived at a hidden tourist destination. Far away, we see how new trucks arrive from the ferry that just entered the port.¹⁷

In Dialogue with the Event

Within coastal destination development, the port often has a specific function when staging the local cultural heritage (Fredriksson & Larsson 2013). The harbor becomes a significant metaphor around which the cultural heritage is directed, and through various events, contemporary contexts are created around places with a changed function. This is partly a result of the increasing competition between cities and regions. It's about being on the map of attractive places to live and visit; it's about creating growth and developing creative meeting places. Here, cultural themes are linked to the local or regional context, while unexpected historical references are taken from a diffuse past.

Marketing of cities and places balances different fields of knowledge. In order to develop successful planning strategies, inspiration is often drawn from creative industries that have a more or less critical approach to how places are produced socially and culturally. On the other hand, cultural studies strongly tend to link qualitative methods such as ethnography and cultural mapping to ongoing urban development. This knowledge has been transformed into a specific practice in community planning with a focus on place development and sustainability. The process of initiating and or-

ganizing urban transformations involves various elements of discernment, thematization, and choices. Confidence in the potential of culture and creativity when it comes to city planning has been criticized for paving the way for cultural structures that society finds desirable (Zukin 2011). Culture becomes a magical shortcut and universal solution to win the national or regional competition between places and cities. Here, the changing conditions for cities when it comes to aesthetics, history, and authenticity, becomes visible in the context of a global social movement as Urban Sketchers. The desire to document the ongoing urban life becomes clear in the demands for authenticity and immediacy that the movement advocates.

What did I gain from the experience of using ethnographic drawing as a visual cultural analytical method? Did I explore the field differently from ordinary field-work? When looking at the drawings and the watercolors used in this text, I find an overarching theme focusing on the explorative search for possible entrances to the field. I try to get close to the urban space by drawing and painting myself in an area of ambience, first through historical documentation concerning the turning point when Trelleborg was still a dynamic hub in the southern part of Sweden. Then through an excursion in the forgotten landscape outside the city where abandoned activities and rest areas bring personal memories to life. Finally, by following an art installation that takes place in the coastal landscape and the deserted lanes along the shores of the Baltic Sea.

While transforming the photo of the kiosk into a watercolor, the specific aesthetics of the kiosk became obvious. The painting practice worked as the opposite of taking a photograph of freezing the moment, it became a transformative collaboration in dialogue with the event. Moreover, even if former service facilities in the urban landscape convert into history and cultural heritage through temporary artistic installations, it still seems like small shops and services like the kiosk creates accessibility and unexpected meetings.

The contemporary interest in coastal cultural heritage is reflected in specific settings loaded with norms and values. The poetic story about the kiosk and the local trees watching over industry workers while ships were passing by is also a story about the making of cultural heritage, based on a process where specific themes were



selected, historized, and given a new meaning. When it comes to place marketing, the focus is often on dynamics, excitement, movement, and diversity. The notion of mobility, in combination with diversity, can also be linked to the social and cultural mobility that is an important theme in the field of social sustainability in community planning: a place or a city must be accessible to all. Here, conflicts of interest often arise between different actors and between different ideas about accessibility and diversity.

Re-establishing contact between the city and the water is an important part of the future vision in Trelleborg. Nevertheless, radical changes such as moving a port or redirecting traffic also mean major changes in people's everyday lives. Accessibility might create other barriers. The establishing processes take time, and there is a strong belief in the transformative abilities of art and culture. Here, culture and creativity are described as necessary tools to enable innovation, growth, and tolerance. Such manuals also include advice on what kind of people and environments a creative city needs to be successful, as well as how to go about creating the conditions for the mixed, tolerant, and ever-growing city.



Notes

- 1 <https://sommar.skurupsfolkhogskola.se/Kursutbud-2021-Urban-Sketching>, translated from Swedish by the author.
- 2 www.urbansketchers.org
- 3 <http://www.urbansketchers.org/p/usk-members.html>
- 4 <https://sommar.skurupsfolkhogskola.se/Kursutbud-2021-Urban-Sketching>, translated by the author.
- 5 <https://www.visittrelleborg.se/en/>
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Field notes, April 30th, 2021
- 8 Field notes, Minnesberg May 8th, 2021
- 9 Field notes, May 14th, 2021
- 10 Field notes, May 15th, 2021
- 11 Field notes, May 20th, 2021
- 12 <http://www.urbansketchers.org/p/our-manifesto.html>
- 13 <http://konstkiosk.se/konstkiosk/vision/>
- 14 <https://www.trelleborgsallehanda.se/trelleborg/en-konstkiosk-har-tagit-plats-i-trelleborg-df82109c/>
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Exhibition catalog
- 17 Field notes, May 22th 2021

Works Cited

- Becker, Howard S. 2007. "Charts: thinking with Drawings." *Telling About Society*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Berger, John 2007. *Berger on Drawing*. Jim Savage (ed.) Aghabullogue: Occasional Press.
- Casey, Andrew. 2017. *Drawn to See: Drawing as an Ethnographic Method*. Toronto Press.
- Clifford, James and Marcus, Georg. 1986. *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ehn, Billy. 2012. "Mellan konst och kulturanalys. Om alternativ kunskapsproduktion." *RIG: Kulturhistorisk tidskrift*, nr 1, s. 1-13.
- Ehn, Billy and Löfgren, Orvar. 2016. "Doing an Ethnography of 'Non-Events' ". In: Schwanhäußer, A (ed) *Sensing the City. A Companion to Urban Anthropology*. Basel: Birkhauser.
- Evans, Graeme. 2001. *Cultural Planning. An Urban Renaissance?* London: Routledge.
- Florida, Richard. 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.
- Fredriksson, Cecilia and Larson, Mia, eds. 2013). *Framtidskuster. Hållbar utveckling i kustsamhällen*, Göteborg: Makadam.
- . 2013. "När kust blir konst. Om kultur och kreativitet som hållbarhetsgeneratorer i ett stadsförnyelseprojekt." In: Fredriksson, C and Larson, M (eds), *Framtidskuster. Hållbar utveckling i kustsamhällen*, Göteborg: Makadam.
- . 2018. "What I didn't see. On Ethnographic Illustrations, Interpretation and Text." *Conference paper* presented at the 34th Nordic Ethnology and Folklore

- Conference in Uppsala, 12-15 juni 2018, Sweden.
- . 2019. "Thinking along the lines. On ethnographic drawing, interpretation and text." *Conference paper SIEF 2019 14th Congress Santiago de Compostela, Spain 14-17 April 2019 Track Changes: Reflecting on a Transforming World*.
- Fredriksson, Cecilia. 2021. "På spaning efter tången." In *ETN: H20*, Etnologisk skriftserie, Etnologiska avdelningen, Institutionen för kulturvetenskaper, Lund University.
- Grodach, Carl. 2013. "Cultural Economy Planning in Creative Cities: Discourse and Practice" In: *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37, 1747–65.
- Hannerz, Ulf. 1983. *Exploring the City: Inquiries toward Urban Anthropology*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Horowitz, Alexandra. 2013. *On Looking - Eleven walks with expert eyes*. New York: Scribner.
- Ingold, Tom. 2007. *Lines: A Brief History*. London: Routledge.
- . 2013. *Making - Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. London: Routledge.
- Jackson, Peter. 1985/2016. "Urban Ethnography", in Schwanhäußer, A (ed): *Sensing the City. A Companion to Urban Anthropology*. Basel: Birkhauser.
- Johansson, David. 2016. "Vad innebär tecknande för den antropologiska observationssprocessen idag?" *C-uppsats i kulturanthropologi*, Institutionen för kulturanthropologi och etnologi Uppsala Universitet.
- Kay Smith, Melanie. 2010. *Cultural Planning for Urban Regeneration. A Thirdspace Approach*. Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert.
- Kuschnir, Karina. 2011. "Drawing the city - a proposal for an ethnographic study in Rio de Janeiro" in *Vibrant - Virtual Brazilian Anthropology* 8, no. 2: 609–42.
- . 2016. "Ethnographic drawing: eleven benefits of using a sketchbook for fieldwork." In *Visual Ethnography* 5, no. 1.
- Landry, Charles. 2008. *The Creative City. A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*. London: Earthscan Ltd.
- Marcus, George E. 1986. "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95–117.
- Piga, Barbara E A et al, eds. 2021. *Experiential Walks for Urban Design*. Springer Tracts in Civil Engineering.
- Pink, Sarah. 2004. "Introduction: situating visual research." In *Working Images: Visual Research and Representation in Ethnography*, edited by S. Pink, L. Kürti and A. I. Afonso, 1–12. London/New York: Routledge.
- Ramos, Manuel J. 2004. "Drawing the Lines: The Limitations of Intercultural Ekphrasis." In *Working Images: Visual Research and Representation in Ethnography*, edited by S. Pink, L. Kürti & A. I. Afonso, 147–61. London/New York: Routledge.
- Reckwitz, Andreas. 2017. *The Invention of Creativity. Modern Society and the Culture of the New*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press.
- Schwanhäußer, Anja. 2016. *Sensing the City. A Companion to Urban Anthropology*. Basel: Birkhauser.

- Soukup, Martin. 2014. "Photography and drawing in anthropology" in *Slovak Ethnology* (Discussion 4: 62).
- Taussig, Michael. 2009. "What do Drawings Want?" *Culture, Theory and Critique* 50, no. 2: 263–74.
- Taussig, Michael. 2011. *I swear I saw this: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wadle, Hanna. 2012. "Anthropology goes Comics." Comics Forum Blog. comicsforum.org/2012/02/03/anthropology-goes-comics-by-hannah-wadle
- Zukin, Sharon. 2011. *Naken stad. Autentiska urbana platser liv och förfall*. Göteborg: Daidalos.

Response

Calling for Creative Ethnography

Helena Wulff
Stockholm University

While there is an expectation that academic research is driven by some level of creativity, often referred to as “originality,” it tends in fact to be restricted to certain formats when it comes to research methodology, and writing style, as well as ways of conveying results. There is a reluctance in academia to push boundaries and break rules, even though this is how research truly develops. In this mouthwatering issue of *Cultural Analysis* on “Creative ethnographic methodologies,” editors Jenni Rinne and Kim Silow Kallenberg and their contributors are taking the quest for creative ethnography into new terrains: at stake are instances of imagination released by poetic inquiry, collaborative creative writing, visual arts and emerging technologies. Here academic endeavours are guided by artistic creativity which can be different from everyday creativity (Narayan 2016), but also overlapping, whether you are an academic, an artist or both.

So how does creativity happen? As the editors rightly point out in their Editorial, creativity can be defined as “making something or the ability to perceive the world in new ways.” This, they go on, entails applying methods and theories “in your own way.” In my ethnographic work on firstly, contemporary dance and ballet, and secondly, creative writing, creativity sprung up when practitioners put

together existing elements in new combinations, often adding one or two novel parts (Wulff 1998, 2017). These parts could come from other modalities, such as when spoken word is included in dance productions, or a novel is organized in rhythmical sections like a piece of music. But the point that everyone I interviewed and observed insisted on, from dancers and choreographers to writers, was that creativity does not happen without technique. In other words, you have to know the rules, or the technique in dance and writing—just as in research—to break them. Then you can let go. And, my interlocutors explained, a sudden zone of artistry can appear, unexpectedly, for dancers in performance or rehearsal, and for writers at the desk while they are writing away. Key is the insight that there is no point to wait for inspiration—you have to start choreographing, dancing or writing before this force is released: it strikes during the process. This has famously been conceptualized in terms of a state of flow (Csíkszentmihályi 1996), an epiphany or a revelation as it captures a feeling of freedom and control, of lightness, when the technique is there but can be forgotten as new dance, text or ethnographic methodology is created (Rethmann and Wulff forthcoming, 2023).

To the discussion of how creativity happens belongs the question of training. To what extent can an artist and an ethnographer learn to be creative? Is this a sensibility that some people have more of than others, and if so, can it be taught to those who might be short of it? When I asked Irish writer John Banville in an interview if creative writing can be taught, his reply was honest: “You can be taught what *not* to do. But not what is needed – dedication, ruthlessness, love of lan-

Cultural Analysis 21.1 (2023): 56–58
© 2023 by The University of California.
All rights reserved

guage, insights of tips you don't really think about" (Wulff 2017, 1). There was agreement among the writers in my study that formal technique can be taught, and be useful also for those with a natural talent for writing. The editors and contributors to this issue all demonstrate convincingly that they have what it takes to be creative.

Having started out by identifying a reluctance to push boundaries in research, it is time to acknowledge a growing acceptance of more flexible forms of fieldwork, including sensorial (Stoller 1997), multi-sited (Hannerz 2001), digital (Uimonen 2012), and visual (Favero 2021) ethnography. This openness to new strategies has generated a palpable interest in "writing otherwise" as suggested by Ulf Hannerz (2016, 256). He is making "a plea for experimenting with a greater diversity in styles of writing, more ways of using (anthropological) ideas and materials, perhaps developing new genres" and engaging more with synthesis and comparison of various materials in new ways. The usefulness for academics of writing in different genres ranging from creative nonfiction to memoirs, journalism and travel writing, and bringing back stylistic traits to academic prose is at the centre in *The Anthropologist as Writer: Genres and Contexts in the Twenty-First Century* (Wulff 2016). And in the article "Writing Anthropology" (Wulff 2001), I draw on the idea that experimental ethnographic writing "might convey social life more accurately than conventional academic writing." Two of the articles in this issue discuss creative writing as method. The first one, by Ann-Charlotte Palmgren, is a lyrical explanation of how she carried out poetic inquiry by writing poems about her field, referred to as autoethnographic

poetry, and thereby was able to combine different layers of understanding in one analysis.

Though not completely new (Schneider and Wright 2010, 2013 among others), working across academia and the arts is a quickly growing approach. It is also increasingly diversified as there is a multitude of ways to do it, and more keep appearing. An academic-cum-artist, Robert Willim, describes in his article an intriguing engagement in both art and academic research, calling it a "more-than-academic practice." The ethnographic focus is on the unexpected and explosive everyday use of emerging technologies, such as digital media, during the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden, referred to as Mundania by Willim and developed further with sound and sound art. This can be fruitfully related to how Petra Rethmann (2021) includes sound files in order to illustrate the sound of ice breaking in an essay in the digital journal *Edge Effects*. Just like Willim, Cecilia Fredriksson is an academic *and* a practicing artist, a watercolorist in her case. In her inspiring article, she explores ethnographic drawing as a method while drawing people and their milieux in her field. This is in line with an emerging graphic anthropology, investigated also by Alisse Waterston in *Light in Dark Times* (2020) with drawings by Charlotte Corden. Together with the drawings and the accessible writing style, this book has been successfully marketed to a wider public. This is one way of conveying research results more broadly, which Fredriksson did when she posted her field drawings on Instagram. Willim's audiovisual research also works well as output.

One more point before I end: creative ethnography is thriving in many places.

Yet, there is a lingering reluctance to accept publications and various creative textual, visual, aural and digital formats as academic qualifications. How can, and should, creative ethnography be evaluated, and by whom? While creative ethnography is challenging certain academic traditions, it is bringing much-needed vitality to what can be a rather stuffy academic world. So we note with pleasure that creative ethnography is moving onwards and upwards—now also strengthened by this set of articles.

Works Cited

- Csíkzentmihályi, Mihaly. 1996. *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Favero, Paolo. 2021. *Image-Making-India: Visual Culture, Technology, Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Hannerz, Ulf. 2003. "Being There...and There...and There! Reflections on Multi-site Ethnography." *Ethnography* 4: 229–44.
- Hannerz, Ulf. 2016. "Writing Otherwise." In *The Anthropologist as Writer: Genres and Contexts in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Helena Wulff, 254–70. Oxford: Berghahn.
- Narayan, Kirin. 2016. *Everyday Creativity: Singing Giddesses in the Himalayan Foothills*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Rethmann, Petra. 2021. "Attuning the Senses." *Edge Effects*, May 6. <https://edgeeffects.net/sensorial-attunement/>
- Rethmann, Petra and Wulff, Helena eds. (forthcoming, 2023). *Exceptional Experiences: Engaging with Jolting Events in Art and Fieldwork*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- Schneider, Arnd and Christopher Wright, eds. 2010. *Between Art and Anthropology: Contemporary Ethnographic Practices*. London: Berg/Bloomsbury.
- Schneider, Arnd and Christopher Wright, eds. 2013. *Anthropology and Art Practice*. London: Berg/Bloomsbury.
- Stoller, Paul. 1997. *Sensuous Scholarship*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Uimonen, Paula. 2012. *Digital Drama: Teaching and Learning Art and Media in Tanzania*. New York: Routledge.
- Waterston, Alisse and Corden Charlotte. 2020. *Light in Dark Times: The Human Search for Meaning*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- Wulff, Helena. 1998. *Ballet Across Borders: Career and Culture in the World of Dancers*. London: Routledge.
- . 2016. ed. *The Anthropologist as Writer: Genres and Contexts in the Twenty-First Century*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- . 2017. *Rhythms of Writing: An Anthropology of Irish Literature*. London: Routledge.
- . 2021. "Writing Anthropology." *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, edited by Felix Stein. <http://doi.org/10.29164/21writing>

Reviews

Nomads of Mauritania. By Brigitte Himpan & Diane Himpan-Sabatier. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2018. Pp. 460, foreword, introduction, notes, lexicology, bibliography, index

Brigitte Himpan and Diane Himpan Sabatier's *Nomads of Marutania* uncovers the cultural wealth of the "Nomades de Mauritanie." This work is essential for those who wish to understand the cultural history, the nomadic lifestyle, and the social organization of one of the last nomadic peoples—the titular nomads of Marutania—with insight. The text raises the question of whether urbanization threatens the survival of their values: their ways of living and artistic expressions, built through adaptation to survival and travelling in the notoriously harsh environment of the Sahara Desert. A 40-page lexicon completes the work and offers the definitions for Ḥassāniyyah (the dialect of Maghrebi Arabic spoken by the nomads) terms and technical phrasing used in the text. Included as well is an iconography, a cartography, as well as drawings made by the authors themselves usefully illustrate the subjects in their respective chapters.

The first two chapters focus on geography and history of Marutania. The desertification of the Sahara, which went through an equatorial period, is the result of a long process with several climatic and human causes which are well explained in this book. The settlement of Mauritania results from an incredible diversity of migratory flows, producing a history rich in twists and turns. The book

charts the history of the region's inhabitants: first the Black ethnic groups, then white Canarians, Persians, joined by Berbers and Arabs who are politically dominant today. This offers a sense of how the modern groups came to comprise so many unique traditions. The authors go deeper still, exploring the influence of the Almoravid Empire from 1054 to 1147, from Africa to Andalusia, then the strong resistance to French colonization, constitute different stages of their history, and their presentation is the result of a serious reconstruction work from the different existing sources, creating a tapestry of influences that results in a unique bounded culture.

Chapters 3 to 8 cover different socio-anthropological topics of Mauritanian cultures organized by through the characterization of this group of people with great freedom, moving at will on the vast expanses of the Sahara, their rigid and hierarchical caste system (including slavery), eating habits, and forms of crafts. The authors also engage with the nomads' majority language, Ḥassāniyyah, which is very close to classical Arabic, in a multilingual context. They further examine the beliefs and values deriving from this community's religious practice, a vein of Islam of multiple currents including Sufism. The authors further explore artistic forms that may be classified into two categories: "ephemeral daily art" and "ephemeral body art." The eighth chapter seeks to describe the survival and transformation of nomadic forms in the contemporary, young Mauritanian state. Less than two percent of the Mauritanian population still practice the nomadic way of life permanently. This final

Cultural Analysis 21.1 (2023): R1–R3
© 2023 by The University of California.
All rights reserved

chapter, based on census data, explains the family and matrimonial practices of this population, their level of literacy and schooling, and ends with a focus on their presence, in the political system of the contemporary fledgling democratic state, at least that of the former chiefs of tribes and their allies who possess authority. In other words, the transition from an entirely nomadic society, without a state and without borders, to a sedentary state society, in the age of globalization, is implicitly described.

The two authors develop a theory on the forms of traditional Mauritanian arts in the chapter dealing with the cultural identity. At the origin of Mauritanian art, there are two sources of inspiration: life in the desert and the disposition to meditation and the spirituality that it engenders, and the framework of Muslim beliefs, especially Sufism. These arts have not yet given rise to serious analyses, apart from those of Jean Gabus, with his *Connaissance de l'art et de la culture matérielle, Sahara, 1960–1961* (1961), who the authors widely quote. The authors specify the hierarchy of values of noble warriors and nomadic marabouts for whom music, poetry, and literature are of utmost importance because they are works of the mind. Anything related to matter is considered inferior, which is why their scientific research is also more often concerned with music and letters. The visual arts of Mauritania are of infinite richness and one of the focal points of this work is to reveal that wealth, to propose a first grammar of the forms of this traditional art and to allow it to establish its pedigree.

For the authors, ephemerality, geometrization, abstraction, play with two-dimensionality or three-dimensionality,

spirituality, “view from above” (in other words, “the divine gaze”), are the main characteristics of Mauritanian arts. The “ephemeral daily arts” appear in such objects as the tent: its ridge, mats, cushions, bags, camel saddles, calabashes, milking pots serve as art materials. These objects are ephemeral insofar as they are made of degradable materials. Hence the name “ephemeral daily art.” Further significance is found in the philosophy of the Mauritanian nomads, inspired by Sufism, in which material life is ephemeral and must be despised. The “ephemeral body art” is painted on the body of the bride and created with her hair. Henna designs, hairstyles inlaid with gold beads, glass paste, and semi-precious stones will not last. The body of the woman at the wedding is an exceptional material for art, for a privileged moment. With these categories, the authors build the premises of an original theory of Moorish visual arts, presenting their present shape as the result of historical and geographic influences, filtered through multitudinous cultural interactions.

Overall, there is space a more critical approach to a patriarchal society in which the condition of women seems so inferior, as evidenced by the very early marriage, low schooling, and illiteracy among women in the contemporary nomadic society, and a more critical examination of the caste system, including slavery. The authors, who are living in India, consider more or less as a bulwark against the standardization of societies on the Western model, which further raises the question of the limits of cultural relativism. We can also think of the pioneer Odette de Puigodeau, who published the ethnography *Pieds nus à tra-*

vers la Mauritanie (1936), with whom they share an inside knowledge of nomadic societies in Mauritania. Still, the empathy cast on nomadic society by the authors invites understanding and makes for pleasant reading. The two authors obviously share a great passion for such a relatively unknown culture.

Myriam Odile Blin
Normandy University, Rouen
France

