

CREATIVITY AND CORPORATE RESEARCH

USER DRIVEN INNOVATION AND NEW INVOCATIONS OF ETHNOGRAPHY IN BUSINESS PRACTICES¹

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To sustain a competitive edge, more focus must be given to meeting users' needs...and not simply those explicitly sated in market research – but rather those latent user needs which can be revealed by alternative analytical methods, and by users themselves. This is what user driven innovation is all about... (Hansson 2006:10).

As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, we find ourselves living in a time in which businesses, are constantly under pressure to maximize their competitive prowess by optimizing their creative potential. But the push for creativity even extends far beyond the bounds of any particular business, reaching into the manner in which cities, regions, and entire nations view, market, and physically reorganizes themselves. Creativity is in this context often framed as the root to innovation, and a basis to new forms of economic development, growth, and viability. “Be creative and innovative, or perish” might be understood to be the slogan of the new millennium's opening years.

However, the road to being creatively innovative remains perilous, and the answer as to how one can best be innovative, remains contested and uncertain. But as others have pointed out (Anderson forthcoming) uncertainty has the potential to function as a



productive course of creativity – catalyzing the search for new ways of proceeding, and challenging existing taken for granted truths. Where competitive advantage was once primarily understood in terms of cost efficiency and pricing, the role of “knowledge” and an understanding of consumer needs and wants is increasingly being appreciated. The time in which product and service development could be entrusted to the desk activities of engineers, urban planners, Madison Avenue marketers and their likes may not be fully behind us yet, but it is at least being challenged by a growing cadre of scholars who point out that traditional modes of R & D and innovation have been far too linear in their nature – moving from phases of research, to development, to production, and finally marketing (Svensson, Ihlström & Ebbesson 2010; Hansson 2006:11). The linearity of this process helped alleviate a sense of uncertainty by providing a standardized route to innovation and product development. But we see the signs of an increased and callous economic competition in a number of contexts. Cities around the world are marketing themselves by a common appeal to the “uniqueness” of their cultural heritage or their creative metropolitan buzz. Producers of electronic devices compete with increasingly similar functions and solutions.

In this world actors need (and are increasingly struggling) try to gain knowledge over the question of what consumers really want and need. Over the past few decades we have seen a number of attempts to find systematic metrics and formulaic solutions to navigate this world of increased competition. In Scandinavia the import of thoughts and ideas by thinkers like Richard Florida (*The Creative Class*) and Joseph Pine and James Gilmore (*The Experience Economy*) have been particularly strong. Meanwhile Scandinavia has exported similar formulas by management gurus like Kjell Nordström and Jonas Ridderstråle (*Funky Business*) and Rolf Jensen (*The Dream Society*). These formulas with their cookbook like recipes for supposed success, are fast becoming non exclusive staple goods.

While the ideas represented in these works have provoked quite a bit of discussion, the question is how do we reach beyond these very general formulaic solutions? Applying ethnographic methods may be one road to choose. Ethnography is increasingly being recognized as an important means of studying and learning from consumers, as well as a



creative tool. The rise of companies like the design consultancy IDEO who apply ethnographic methods and innovative design approaches have proven that the use of ethnography can be highly successful as a component in business development. The application of ethnography pushes the desire to understand consumers from the realms of corporate focus group interview rooms, and into the everyday lives of consumers – the very place in which they assign meaning to the products and service they use as well as the activities they engage in. But as Grant McCracken has pointed out (2009), there remains a discrepancy here between an awareness of the role that ethnography may play in consumer and user-driven research, and the degree to which companies, cities, and organizations employ trained ethnographers. As McCracken argues:

Ethnography survived its infancy... This is, in other words, a crucial moment in the history of the method. It will either grow up to dispatch the larger and more important responsibilities it is now assigned. Or it will continue its descent into naive empiricism, charismatic performance, or the commodity basement (2009:6).

The problem here is that ethnography is much more than a method of observation. To merely use ethnography to answer questions like “do our users want the on/off button of our device to the left or the right” or “why do people prefer strawberry ice cream in pink shades?” may be to underestimate the potential of ethnographic methods. Ethnography can be very well suited as an innovative method when developing new corporate roadmaps or strategic knowledge.

Ethnography involves a series of competencies, methods, and theoretically anchored stances whose composition shift as they are moved from one context to another. In what follows we wish to interrogate the question of what ethnography is and can be as a creative process in and of itself. Our point of departure lies in a belief that in a world preoccupied with the significance attached to questions of creativity, innovation, and knowledge based industries, all too little attention is being placed on the issue of methods and representations of knowledge.



Ethnography has long been a method tightly bound to the practice of anthropology. But it is increasingly leaving the realm of academic anthropology and finding relevance in the world of business as well as segments of the creative industries associated with the arts. In what follows we shall address the manner in which ethnography is used outside of the academy as a mode of expression in the arts, and tool of analysis in business. Our ambition in turning to the world of ethnography beyond the academy is to address the question of what ethnography “can be” when appropriated into new contexts. While the merits of applied anthropology have been debated for the better part of the past century (see O’Dell 2009), we opt to acknowledge those debates, but also move beyond them and ask, what can we learn from those who use ethnography outside of the academy, how do the processes of appropriation affect ethnography, and having studied them, what can we bring back into the academy to further our own methods as well as those of our students?² In this regard, a very important and central focus of this paper concerns the issues of education and pedagogy, and how we can better prepare coming generations of graduates to use ethnography (creatively, productively, and responsibly) outside of the academy.

The Composition:

From field notebooks to notes in a score

Speak of ethnography and one enters an ambivalent world which at times seems to address issues of representation and writing (Calzadilla & Marcus 2006; Clifford & Marcus 1986; Macdonald & Basu 2007; Schneider 2008;), and at times concern questions of methods of investigation (Davies 2008; Handwerker 2001; Sunderland & Denny 2007). To be sure, the two are intimately entangled, but there is a common perception of the process of ethnography as a rather linear process of observing and collecting empirical materials which leads to the act of writing. This is part and parcel of the problem of “naïve empiricism” which McCracken warns us of (above). As a means of moving us away from this position we wish to destabilize this linearity by arguing for a need to understand the way ethnographies evolve as compositions, not produced in any one place, but developing out of ethnographic activities occurring in multiple overlapping sites. In moving in this direction our intention is to call attention to the degree to which composing ethnography implicates the practice of methods, but it neither begins nor ends with methods of data collection.



From the get go, students of ethnography are encouraged to sharpen their skills at producing thick descriptions, and empirically anchored texts. We've struggled with "the crisis of representation", and debated the limits of "writing culture" (Clifford & Marcus 1986). Nonetheless, writing still remains the preferred mode of representation for anthropologists to use and discuss. But as Christopher Kelty has argued (Kelty et. al. 2009) writing might not be the best way for us to envision the representational practice of ethnography. Instead of writing, he urges us to think of ethnography as the act of composition. As he explains:

We say 'composition' here because it is more inclusive than 'writing' (paintings, musical works, and software all need to be composed, as poetry and novels do). Writing implies the textual and narrative organization of languages..., but it leaves out the composition of images and sounds, or especially how other kinds of objects are composed as part of an ethnographic project... (2009:186).

Kelty and his peers are primarily interested in questions pertaining to the internet in which images, sounds, and words all co-exist. And while the notion of composition may help him take these dimensions of his field into account, he fails to develop the concept of composition or reflect over the variety of ways different forms of expression can engage processes of composition. Compositions, after all, need some forms of materials which they are arranged out of or in conjunction with. But the composing of this material (and decisions to add, mix, or remove pieces of material) requires some form of analytical competence: a force field of sorts that encompasses the bringing together of theory, methods, and material. This being so, why is it easier to think of the formation of texts in terms of "rewriting" while the making of films involves cutting, splicing, and editing, and music may awake association to the layering and remixing of sound? If we jumble our metaphors, how might we think of ethnographies in terms of cutting, editing, mixing and layering as well as re-writing? What types of splicing are necessary for us to create a sense of proximity to the field or the formation of a "thick description"?



Pushing the notion of composition moves us one step further away from viewing ethnography as a singular project. Our use of the concept of composition is to a certain extent in line with the manner in which Bruno Latour invokes the term in a recent attempt to write his own “Compositionist Manifesto”. As he points out:

Even though the word ‘composition’ is a bit too long and windy, what is nice is that it underlines that things have to be put together (Latin *componere*) while retaining their heterogeneity. Also it is connected with composure... it is not too far from ‘compromise’ and ‘compromising’ retaining with it a certain diplomatic and prudential flavor (forthcoming: 3)

For Latour, the compositionist manifesto is intended as a tool with which to confront the metaphysics of the modern world, the rationality of the natural sciences and the manner in which they jointly contribute to a prevailing view of nature as an intact whole. As Latour sees it, the problem with the ongoing climate debate is that nature, as it is constructed in science and politics is based on the conception that “nature is *always already assembled...*” (forthcoming: 10). Here we see parallels to the manner in which the ethnographic field is so often conceived of as an external whole, and the manner in which ethnographic practices are, in a parallel fashion, portrayed as a logically ordered set of integrated activities leading to the production of the final text. But more than logically ordered wholes, ethnographies are made out of a multitude of bits and pieces (which we are more or less consciously coproducing in collaboration with informants and through our confrontation with a new cultural context) that are not “naturally” connected, but which have to be linked together by the ethnographer.

What we as cultural analysts usually focus upon are discussions of the completed wholes (our books and articles), but before “wholes” are created, what happens in the spaces of disjuncture in which our methodological activities don’t seem to work or leave us questioning our own capabilities? How do we compose (and compromise together) our ethnographies? In order to begin unpacking this question we shall turn to two ethnographic examples from our own work. For purposes of argumentation, we call them “*Art and concept driven ethnography*” and “*Ethnography on demand*”. After discussing some of the practices of



composition involved in the making of these ethnographies, we shall turn to the world of ethnography beyond the academy. We shall describe each “case study” separately, as if they represented uniquely different forms of ethnographic praxes, but our ambition is not to construct a taxonomy of ethnography, nor is it to assert that there are “pure” ethnographic forms. Our intention is to illustrate a few of the different kinds of compositional processes that are at work in many ethnographies that provide them with a weight of explanation that cannot simply be understood in terms of the methods used in a study.

Industrial Cool: Art and concept driven ethnography

In a recent study of the ways earlier manufacturing industries have been aesthetized in the western world Robert Willim used the concept *Industrial Cool* as a driving force. The combination of words “industrial” and “cool” accentuates the ways industries in a time often thought of as postindustrial are more and more associated with pleasure and leisure. The word cool also connotes the ways that many industries are experienced as something distant, something that metaphorically is disappearing in the historical rear view mirror.

The idea started as an art and music project. Willim used the words industrial cool to curate and produce a number of art pieces, starting with a CD compilation with 20 electronica artists from different parts of the world. Sound and video was captured in a sugar plant in southern Sweden. The sounds were then used by the different artists in their production of tracks for the CD. The character of the tracks ranged from ambient pieces and sound art to more club oriented electronic music. Here ideas of aesthetization, appropriation, manipulation and the remixing of material from industrial contexts was dominant, thus reflecting a series of ideas linked to industrial cool. As the art project developed ideas concerning an ethnographically anchored research project successively emerged. In the research project the concept industrial cool as well as the experiences from the art project worked simultaneously to drive the ethnographic work forward. The process was characterized by a continuous ambulation between observations made in a series of industrial localities, discussions held with colleagues, and theoretical impetuses ranging from the field of cultural heritage to those of the cultural economy.

There are congruities between the ways digital computer based tools were utilized in the music and art project and the arrangement of the ethnographic cultural analysis conducted.



When producing the music a number of digital filters and effects were applied to the sonic raw material, tools that transformed the material. The collected samples were also spliced and layered into compositions in order to gain new form and potential. In a similar fashion the ethnography was organized. The concept Industrial Cool can in itself be seen as a filter or effect applied to the observed world. In many ways the research project was also comprised of *looping*, *splicing* and *layering* activities as Willim moved between ethnographic sites and layered these experiences with those derived from diverse literary exoduses, as well as reflections emerging from the artistic practice.

The field out of which Industrial cool evolved stemmed from the art project, but along the way it came to be more and more organized and facilitated by the concept itself: and in this sense one could say that the project was highly *concept driven*. It was concept driven to the extent that the project endeavored to test the degree to which a problematization of industrial cool could further our understanding of everyday life and tourism in late-modernity, but it was also driven by a desire to test the limits of the concept in search for answers to such questions as: “how far can this concept be used?”, “What happens when the concept travels between different contexts?” (Bal, 2002), “What kind of perspective on the world does Industrial Cool induce?” Theoretical inspiration was taken from scholars studying urban transformations, culture and economy, cultural heritage, etc. and these were composed and merged with observations in a variety of contexts as well as artistic explorations.

Ethnography on Demand:

The second project we wish to address here began at the request of a representative for a large hotel chain. The representative had heard O’Dell hold an open lecture on culture and the experience economy and asked him to hold a keynote address on the experiences of spa patrons. Responding to the fact that O’Dell had never been to a spa, the representative offered to open one of her chain’s spas to him, providing access to employees, facilities and even treatments.



But interviewing proved difficult. Both the personnel and patrons of spas had difficulty putting their experiences into words. “We just did nothing” or “We just relaxed” or “They come here to be pampered” were common responses to questions, but when pressed further people had a difficult time explaining what they meant.

Interviews had to be intertwined with fieldwork, but doing fieldwork here meant learning the field. What do people usually wear under their terry cloth robes? When was a bathing suit appropriate, and when wasn't it? What does one wear to an aloe vera treatment, a seaweed massage, or a floating session? (as it turned out, the bathing suit was required at the seaweed massage, a thong-like piece of clothing was provided at the aloe vera treatment, and nudity was required to float). Days were spent sitting in sun chairs watching other people sit in sun chairs... doing nothing (or so it seemed). The ethnographer's capacity to observe, even if it had been developed over years of practice, seemed to fail. Thus, the two most predominant anthropological methods of data collection – interviewing and participant observation – had failed to produce any immediate insight of value. Anxiety became a driving force continuously troubling the ethnographer. “When is something going to happen?” “What am I going to write about this?” The field itself rapidly expanded to several different spas. The people being observed changed from day to day, and usually, the ethnographer was given strict orders (by the person in charge of the spa) not to speak to, or bother patrons.

Fieldwork was, methodologically as well as psychologically, a testing process. The process of ethnographic composition involved the *layering* of corporeal experiences,³ and the ultimate realization that one's own experiences were an important source of information. However, it also required the *splicing* together of very different materials in order to produce an analysis that could explain the cultural organization of the spa experience and what made that experience “work” in some contexts, but perhaps not others. Materials from different spas were brought together to establish patterns and rather diverse kinds of literature (from glossy magazines and medical reports to Deleuze's philosophy and Mauss' reflections on magic in Western society) were needed to sew everything together to a comprehensible text – a whole of sorts, that was in its own way “loyal... to the context” (Pink 2009:8) – but a whole which could have looked very different had other materials and sources of theoretical



inspiration been used, or if other spas had been attended – a realization which forces us to once again ponder the question of what it means to be loyal to the context or the field ... and as viewed from which perspective?

Depth of Field

Where the *Industrial Cool* project was driven by the concept itself, the spa project began more as a commissioned assignment in which the ethnographer's work took its point of departure in such rather naïve questions as, "What am I studying?" and "What's interesting here?" Chance, and perhaps a degree of serendipity, played a seldom acknowledged role as part of the research project, but to the degree that this was so, it is perhaps important not to underestimate the manner in which all of this was shaped, affected, and even guided by such processes as gut feelings and emotional leanings on the part of the ethnographer that were less steered by logical decision making than some form of ethnographic intuition.⁴

While some ethnographic projects seem to be characterized by some form of submersion in the field on the part of the ethnographer, we are struck by the fact that several of the projects we have been engaged in have involved serial connections to the places in which we have conducted observations, resulting in a practice that might be referred to as a form of serial ethnography – of immersion and re-immersion in the field. However, as we are arguing, the field is not just out there. The activities the ethnographer engages in during the commute to work, behind the desk (a metaphoric place in need of further problematization in and of itself), and in discussions with colleagues is an integral part of the ethnographic process. As Arnd Schneider argues, fieldwork might better be "conceived of as a set of fluctuating relationships between anthropologists and their ethnographic subjects than as a compact and solidly demarcated method" (2008:173). Rather than just being "out there" fieldwork and the field are very much a part of the ethnographer. And it is here that we believe it is important to reflect upon what might be understood as ethnographic forms of *depth of field*. Descriptions, no matter how detailed and "thick" they may be, need to be given analytical depth to provide them with significance. *Depth of field* involves the analytical and compositional processes through which we develop understandings of our observations. It is part of the process we try to imbue upon our students which will move them from detailed note taking to cultural insightfulness.



Wrapping-it up: Openings and closures

The objective of establishing some form of depth of field is ultimately to bring about understanding, but how do the final products that we compose bring about closure to the questions we have raised and works we have engaged in, or how might they open to new possibilities? The studies named above, like most academic works, resulted in the production of textual presentation (books and articles). However, for a number of ethnographers working outside of the academy, the text is either not enough, or simply not the most appropriate (or desired) form of representation. In these contexts ethnographic compositions are being remixed to add new dimensions to them that go beyond the written word.

For anthropologists working in applied contexts as consultants or for corporations or private businesses this has been partially facilitated by the degree to which these practitioners have found themselves in need of developing new ways of communicating ethnography.⁵ The problem here is that most clients don't have the time to either read thick descriptions in long manuscripts, or decipher the anthropological conceptual apparatus which we take for granted. In this context many ethnographers working in applied contexts argue that the visualization of ethnographic results can be a particularly effective means of capturing a client's attention, engaging them, and reaching them with a specific message (Pink 2004:10; Sunderland & Denny 2007:259). As Markus, one of the Scandinavian practitioners we have been in contact with, points out, "Images are evidence. And they are convincing when used correctly to show your viewpoints". And he continues, "They can help us focus insights. Images really bring insights across. It's one thing to write about something, another to show it... They (images) can be used to argue, and often they tend to be the best argument. They are very, very powerful". In his line of work the ethnographic composition often takes its point of departure in rather traditional anthropological methods including interviewing and participant observation, but it then bifurcates including visual elements such as posters, PowerPoint images, and video footage as well as written texts. More than a "thick description" or "representation" the ethnographic composition becomes a *deliverable* (it is "evidence" in Markus' words) that includes the performance of "the presentation". As elements of the composition the visual materials and the performance of



the presentation work to highlight aspects of the ethnography in the hopes of making it stick – to bring about a convincing closure that may itself open the way for new courses of action.

In these contexts, the objectives of the ethnographic composition shifts increasingly towards an ambition to facilitate the production of solutions, or possible courses of action.⁶ In order to do this Markus has to transform the register of his ethnographic presentation (and please note, in this case his objective – in his own mind – is one of presentation and not representation, although he is well aware of the differences). This switch in register can in some ways be understood as a form of translation, as he converts ideas he has borne with him from an anthropological education and makes them more comprehensible to people with educations in business administration. This is a world in which words such as “intersectionality”, “governmentality”, or “hermeneutics” are used far less frequently than “Development strategies”, “Bottom Line”, “User Driven Innovation”, “tailor-made Logistics” or “stakeholders”. But the switch in register that we have observed is also more than a translation as the applied ethnographer also has to (at least partially) switch the form through which his message is mediated. In some ways this might be understood as a kind of *cultural dubbing* in which not only the language of the message has to be changed, but as part of the process, also the voice. Images, diagrams, and video footage (and the soundtrack that accompanies it) are ethnography, as much as any text they present. But they are also “evidence”. The people viewed on the video film are understood to be “informants” or “locals”, but in a way they are also “witnesses” who testify and provide evidence. In this sense the switch in register that we note is one which in some ways moves back towards a notion of Science with a capital “S” (cf. Latour forthcoming): a science capable of providing more than a representation of reality, but one with hopes of offering something closer to the “truth” to its client or stakeholder.

The switch in register is something which the applied anthropologist may help us illuminate here, but it is also something we are increasingly encountering as ethnographers in Scandinavia. For the first time ever, we are accepting students into programs of applied cultural analysis who do want to be able to wrap things up with clear conclusions and suggestions for new courses of action – and in this way participate in the innovative



processes of business, city planning, place marketing, and routes to social action. In order to handle this new situation we are finding ourselves striving to teach our student the art of composing ethnography and finding appropriate depths of fields, but we are also forced to rethink the manner in which the ethnographies we produce open and close themselves to the problems and questions of the contexts they are generated out of. Some have pointed accusing fingers at applied anthropology and made references to its superficiality (whether defined in terms of all too short periods of ethnographic immersion or tendencies towards “form before content”). We find ourselves trying to rethink, and better understand the interplay that exists between different compositional processes (and techniques) and the manner in which they can meet the demands placed upon ethnography in shifting contexts. In arguing for a better understanding of ethnography as composition we want to call attention to the often unarticulated analytical work that moves the ethnographer from methods to representation. Words such as “superficial”, “thick,” “thin”, etc. might work well to establish professional borders for those who feel threatened, but if we can put such words on hold and focus more on the analytical processes that bind ethnographies together and make them possible, we might be able to better understand how ethnography can actually work to meet the expectations of those working in the creative industries as well as those inhabiting very different contexts in the cultural economy we live in today.

As we are arguing, the question of what consumers, tourists, and local citizens want and need are important and complicated questions which need to be addressed as an aspect of the development of the cultural economy around us. Ethnography is by no means a cure-all, but it has an important role to play here which needs to be investigated more. But doing ethnography implicates much more than making of observations, compilation of field notes, and conducting of interviews – all leading in a linear manner to the production of a final text/report. And this is a point we must inculcate upon our students – and make clear to those interested in exploring the potential of ethnography in business contexts beyond the academy – for if ethnography is to be invoked to its fullest potential, we must not reduce it to a simple question of methods, and push instead to appreciate it as an activity interlinking a multiplicity of practices, analytical movements, and representational forms.



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² It should be noted that while these debates have a slightly longer history in the United States than in Great Britain, France or Germany (see Ervin 2005:6ff; Jorgensen 1971; Mills 2006; Pink 2006:6ff; Wright 2006, for examples of the discussions of the debates surrounding applied anthropology in these settings), the phenomenon of applied cultural analysis in Sweden is only now congealing into something that might be called a field of its own. And while forms of applied cultural analysis and applied anthropology are viewed with scepticism by some within the academic community it would be an exaggeration to say that they were hotly debated – silence or mutterings of disapproval are still the more prevalent forms of critique applied research receives here. Nonetheless, this is a young and growing field whose development coincides with an increasing in the use of ethnography within the arts. It is this dual bifurcation of ethnography which has attracted our attention and interest.

³ In speaking of the layering of corporeal experiences here we would draw parallels to the manner in which symphonic score works. Each instrument plays the notes assigned to it,



but it is accumulated resonance of all the instruments together and the linkage of the separate notes being played which leads to understandings of what all the separate sounds mean for those playing and conducting them as well as listening to them. In the ethnographic context, it is the layering of the senses and their accumulated affect which leads to forms of understanding the field experience.

⁴ “Ethnographic intuition” is a rather slippery term that pops up occasionally in research seminars but which remains hard to pin down (Tjora 2008:431). In part it seems to be based on the idea of ethnographic experience which the individual ethnographer accumulates through years of work. This perspective is itself undoubtedly perpetuated by popular perceptions of intuition as a phenomenon internally bound to the individual. But as the growing literature on emotions, feelings and affect argue, phenomena of affect, such as intuition, may often be generated out of our relation to space around us (Thrift 2000) as well as our interaction with others in that space (Lutz 1998). And here it might be appropriate to reflect upon the manner in which “ethnographic intuition” is culturally derived out of our interaction with others as we receive feedback on drafts of papers, discuss our work with colleagues, and converse with the people we study. George Marcus (2009) argues for a need to re-approach the concept of “collaboration”, but he is mostly interested in the relationship between scholars and those being studied. Here we are pointing to the manner in which ethnographies can be understood as collaborative work engaging not only the ethnographer and “informants” but very much related to practices occurring between colleagues and peers. We even want to extend the ideas of collaboration and interaction to the ways researchers encounter a variety of artefacts and object which all influence the flows and meanderings of the research. We want to stress that these artefacts are not only a demarcated material culture being studied or what we encounter in our empirical investigations but also what we create ourselves. Stuff like texts, images and recordings will keep haunting us once we’ve let them loose in the world. A question worth a great deal of reflection is when these artefacts (these compositions) control us and when we control them.

⁵ For purposes of brevity, we have primarily opted to concentrate our discussion to the manner in which ethnography is presented/represented and “wrapped-up” in consulting contexts. We are aware that these processes are also linked to the slightly different time limits encountered by these practitioners and the methods they use to adapt to them. As



others have noted, where traditional anthropological fieldwork is expected to be long in duration, lasting up to a year or more, applied anthropologists find themselves working on projects under much tighter time constraints of a few weeks or months (cf. Sillitoe 2007: 156). The demand for “quick ethnography” has led to the development of strategies of team-based ethnography, guerilla ethnography, rapid ethnography, and so on (see Roberts 2006:86 for a longer list of ethnographic buzz-words), in which an anthropologist’s managerial skills and an ability to meet deadlines, are at least as important as her cultural analytical skills. This being said, we will leave a discussion of the connection between methods, perceptions of ethnography, and the representations that come out of them for a future article.

⁶ Please note, we do not want to fall into an argumentation about words vs. images, a battlefield already filled with too many victims. Instead, by using the composition concept our ambition is to argue for a need to appreciate the manner in which a variety of expressions can be utilized in combination.