Inside: Ethnography from Margin to Centre: Celebrating 25 years of the Anthropological Association of Ireland

This was St Patrick’s Day, it was so beautiful. I love the way they were dressed, and the colours, the colours of the flowers and the kids from different places.

Emmanuelle
The *Irish Journal of Anthropology* is the organ of the Anthropological Association of Ireland. As such, it aims to promote the discipline of anthropology on the island of Ireland, north and south. It seeks to provide coverage of Irish-related matters and of issues in general anthropology and to be of interest to anthropologists inside and outside academia, as well as to colleagues in a range of other disciplines, such as Archaeology, Cultural Studies, Development Studies, Ethnology and Folk Studies, Gaeilge, Irish Studies, and Sociology.

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The *Irish Journal of Anthropology* appears twice a year, in Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter.

Members of the AAI receive the journal as part of their membership subscription. Information about membership can be found on the AAI web-site: www.anthropologyireland.org

**Advertising Rates:** Full Page: €100; Half Page: €60; Quarter Page: €40
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Notes on Contributors

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Fiona Murphy is an anthropologist working in DCU business school. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow in the marketing department and is working on a number of projects in the area of sustainability. She received her PhD in 2009 from the Department of Anthropology, NUIM, and is co-author of *Integration in Ireland: The Everyday Lives of African Migrants* (Manchester Uni Press: 2012).

Sabina Stan is lecturing in sociology and anthropology at Dublin City University, Ireland. She completed her PhD at the Universite de Montreal, Canada, on the post-socialist transformation of the Romanian countryside. Her post-doctoral work tackled healthcare reform, with a focus on privatization and the use of information technologies. Dr. Stan’s current research interests moved towards the link between migration, healthcare and citizenship from a political economy perspective. She has published *L’agriculture roumaine en mutation* (CNRS 2005), and articles on post-socialist transformations, healthcare reform and informal healthcare practices in journals such as *Dialectical Anthropology Anthropologica* and *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute.* Her co-edited volume *Life in Post-Communist Eastern Europe after EU Membership* was recently published by Routledge (May 2012). Personal webpage: http://www.dcu.ie/info/staff_member.php?id_no=2632

Anne Byrne is a sociologist teaching and writing at the National University of Ireland, Galway (see http://www.nuigalway.ie/soc/staff/byrne_anne.html). Anne is inspired by narrative and visual inquiry, community based research methodologies, biography and the creative force that comes from the juxtaposition of history and story, image and text, art and ethnography. Epistolary narratives and the consequences of anthropological and other representational practices are an ongoing interest; working with the field diaries and archives of the Harvard-Irish Mission to Ireland (1930-1936) are a current preoccupation. Anne is a member of the Social Sciences Committee (Royal Irish Academy), the Gender ARC NUIG/UL research consortium (http://www.genderarc.org/) and is a founder member of the Narrative Studies Group at NUI, Galway. Recent publications are concerned with issues of identity, gender, stigma, rural community relations, participative research methodologies and creative pedagogies.

Deirdre O’Mahony is an artist and lecturer in the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and recently completed her PhD at the University of Brighton. In her latest research she has been exploring three themes, all arising from her earlier work on the perception and representation of rural landscapes. This concerns firstly, the mechanics of belonging in rural communities, secondly, the creativity of tacit, practice-led knowledge and thirdly, the relational dynamic between the local/rural and the national/global. Public art projects include SPUD ongoing, T.U.R.F...
Clíona O’Carroll is a Lecturer with Béaloideas/Folklore and Ethnology at University College Cork, and Research Director with the community-based Cork Folklore Project (http://www.ucc.ie/en/cfp/). Her research and teaching interest include public folklore, ethnographic methodology, migration and material culture. She participates in and advises a range of public folklore projects and provides oral history/folklore fieldwork training to diverse groups. Projects include the dissemination of oral history through print media, radio broadcast and online narrative mapping (the Cork Memory Map: www.corkmemorymap.org).

Fidel Taguinod is a Filipino nurse who immigrated to Ireland in 2000. He finished his nursing degree at Saint Louis University in the Philippines, and completed a Masters of Science in Nursing (Applied Healthcare Management) in University College Dublin in 2004. He has just completed PhD by Research as a Research and Development scholar at the Centre for Transcultural Research and Media Practice, Dublin Institute of Technology, with a PhD dissertation entitled ‘Licensed to Care: Inhabiting the Transnational Economy of Global Pinoy’. Fidel was the first national chairperson of the Overseas Nurses Section of the Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) and the former chairperson of the League of Filipino Nurses. He is presently the Manager of Patient Safety, Quality and Innovation of UPMC Beacon Hospital in Dublin. His research interests are varied, but range from migration, citizenship and cultural diversity to leadership, quality and patient safety.

Zoë O’Reilly has recently completed her PhD at NUI Maynooth. Her thesis explores the experiences of asylum seekers living in the ‘direct provision’ system in Ireland through the use of photography and participatory visual methodologies.

Anthony Kelly is about to commence a PhD in Media and Communications at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He previously served as Second Year Tutor and Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at NUI Maynooth. His research interests include digital media, queer sociability, and political communication.

Jaime Rollins McCollan graduated from Queen’s University Belfast in 2012. Her PhD research examined the interplay between music, memory and identity in Northern Ireland through the context of republican parading bands. Her research interests include expressions of identity, memory, emotions, music and performance, and cultural concepts of motherhood.

Siún Carden’s research interests include tourism, cultural industries, minority languages and national identity. Her PhD research, in social anthropology, looked at the reinvention of an urban neighbourhood as an Irish-language themed tourist destination, Belfast’s ‘Gaeltacht Quarter’. Based at Queen’s University Belfast, she is now research assistant on a Leverhulme-funded project examining Derry/Londonderry’s experience of being UK City of Culture.

Cormac Sheehan, Ph.D., is the research officer at the Department of General Practice in UCC, and is based in Mallow Primary Healthcare Centre. He is currently working on a series of three papers on dementia, dementia care and experiences of cognitive assessments.

Sheena Cadoo is an occupational therapist working in a dementia role in Mallow Primary Healthcare Centre.

Dr. Audrey Russell completed the Southwest GP Training Scheme in 2011. In 2012 she commenced an Academic Clinical Fellowship in General Practice. She works as a general practitioner in Mallow Primary Healthcare Centre and is based in the Department of General Practice in University College Cork.
This special issue of the Irish Journal of Anthropology serves as a commemoration of 25 years of the Anthropological Association of Ireland. In December 2012, a conference was held in the Royal Irish Academy titled ‘Ethnography from Margin to Centre’, which brought together a diverse and stimulating range of papers on the changing, multifaceted nature of ethnography in contemporary anthropological practice. The importance of celebrating twenty-five years of an Association that has crossed borders, imaginations and different kinds of anthropological traditions was made explicit in the opening conference founding members’ session, comprising panelists Joseph Ruane, Séamas Ó Síocháin, Hastings Donnan and Graham McFarlane. In their contribution to this issue Jaime Rollins McColgan and Siún Carden provide a summary account of this illuminating panel conversation, which reflected back to the Association’s inauguration in 1987, together with the current and future professional status of anthropology as a discipline. Anthropology on the island of Ireland some twenty-five years ago was certainly in its infancy; the foundation of the AAI was an attempt to network, bridge gaps, both theoretical and political, and to begin the project of imagining an anthropology of the island of Ireland. This special edition reveals how twenty-five years later, following numerous AAI conferences, workshops and seminars conducted in the North and South, an important scholarly tradition of Irish and Northern-Irish anthropology has been developed. Both anthropology departments on the island (QUB and NUIM) have produced impressive numbers of anthropology PhDs, who have worked on a range of projects across multiple locations on the island and beyond. Significant, relevant and valuable research continues to be produced and the AAI and the IJA remain crucial outlets for the presentation and dissemination of this work. Today anthropologists and ethnographers are employed across different university departments, in various industries and in other professional contexts. Anthropology has much expanded its reach embracing the challenges of our times, and indeed the history of the AAI further reflects this shift. Whether situated against the backdrop of political troubles, large-scale emigration and recession, or large-scale immigration and economic success, corruption or a building and housing crisis, research conducted through and by members of the AAI has critically engaged with the challenges of the contemporary moment. The 2012 conference, unique in its celebratory tone and significant in content in terms of engaging with the pressing concerns of a changing ethnographic practice, is reflected in this edition of the Irish Journal of Anthropology.

Several of the papers gathered here were presented at the conference, while others were commissioned with a view to editorially imposing thematic coherence, one deliberately slanted towards an emphasis on eclectic approaches to ethnographic inquiry, posing timely methodological and theoretical questions, ranging from the utilisation of visual methods and online ethnography, to participatory photographic research and the reflexive re-construction of the anthropological archive. This year’s conference further brought together two internationally renowned keynote speakers Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Michal Buchowski. Both these keynotes reflected the debates, conflicts, and reimagining of ethnographic practice so key to the evolution of an anthropology of the island of Ireland.

The Papers

Taken together the following eight papers traverse the history of anthropology of/in Ireland, alongside contemporary appropriations of ethnographic methods:

Byrne and O’Mahony, a collaboration between a sociologist and artist, conceptually and analytically frame a methodological opportunity in revisiting a classic anthropological study, namely the Harvard-Irish Survey (1930-1936) with a view to mounting a site-specific re-configured installation involving accounts of descendants of families whose lives were detailed in published and unpublished texts. Written in first and third-person voices and incorporating both archival photography and contemporary exhibition material including ‘traces of all actors – anthropologists, artist, sociologist and successors’ – the paper instantiates a collaborative and empathetic approach, necessary following the work of Kester (2004), within a ‘dialogical aesthetic’ inquiry in which new forms of subjectivities and social relations emerge.

Engaging with a historical anthropological archival formation is further pursued in the contribution by photographic curator Ciarán Walsh, examining the legacy of Charles R. Browne with regard to his role in the Irish Ethnographic Survey (1891-1903) in the west of Ireland, alongside his place and standing in the development of anthropology in Ireland. Drawing on the photographic albums and field records of Browne, together with his association with Alfred Haddon, Walsh mobilises a series of archival photographs to depict the complexity of an Irish Victorian medical doctor and ‘anthropologist’.

O’Carroll’s contribution engages with the creation and working practices of an urban community-based folklore collection and archiving centre titled ‘The Cork Folklore Project’. Drawing selectively on various research projects with an open agenda, characterised by a collaborative engagement with a cross section of communities and age groups, in addition to using multiple formats (radio, film, online mapping and print publication) for the purpose of exhibition and dissemination, O’Carroll poses the following key
question: ‘What is the place of such a centre where expectations of the focus and scope of folklore practice are somewhat limited, yet where there is more space and power structures and policies of exclusion touch the intimacies of everyday life for those living under the direct provision system in Ireland and, through them, to challenge damaging and stereotyped representations produced in the dominant media, O’Reilly undertakes participatory photographic research where alternative representations are conjointly created with asylum seekers. O’Reilly thus seeks to move beyond verbal testimony synonymous with official interrogations and assessments of asylum seekers, exploring instead their experience in Ireland through visual and other sensory methods. She demonstrates how the process of representing work created together with asylum seekers required constant negotiation, as fear, vulnerability and the power of censorship and self-censorship came into play. The project ultimately reflected the ways in which power structures and policies of exclusion touch the intimacies of everyday life for those living under the direct provision system.

In foregrounding the regulation of talk on an online social network site targeted at gay users, Kelly engages in an online ethnography where fieldwork is centred on a digitally mediated and virtual landscape rather than on the online-offline divide. He advances the argument that online interactions can be the dominant modes of sociality in the context of a given set of relationships. Therefore, the most socially salient boundaries need not necessarily be constructed around what’s on and what’s offline, but rather between different digital frames. According to Kelly, the core question then becomes one of the complexities of digital participation frameworks and the dynamics of navigation across and through digital intercontexts.

An interview with Michal Buchowski from the University of Poznan in Poland provides complementary discussion to Irish-based forays into ethnographic experimentation. Drawing on Buchowski’s keynote speech at the 2012 AAI conference on knowledge hierarchies between eastern and western Europe, Sabina Stan invites him to discuss Central and Eastern Europe’s specific take on ethnography. Buchowski frames the advantages and successes of the ‘intermittent fieldwork’ method, where researchers, often accompanied by teams of students, engage in short stints of fieldwork repeated over extended periods of time.

As to the AAI founders’ challenge of bridging the (Irish) North–South anthropological divide, the current IJA number invites us to similarly address numerous challenges: that of bridging the divide between eastern and western anthropologies (Buchowski); the need to account for the researcher’s subject position in the processes we study (Taguinod); the inclusion of research participants in the co-creation of knowledge production (O’Reilly); and those challenges resulting from current transformations such as the use of digital media to create digital social spaces (Kelly).

The final paper continues this wrestling with present challenges posed to ethnography but is also the most explicit call to arms. Starting from another major challenge of our contemporary world – population ageing and the rising increase in the number of people affected by dementia – Sheehan, Cadoo and Russell invite us to consider the professionalization of ethnography as a means to instruct researchers in their endeavours, but also and most importantly, to protect anthropology’s classical methodological accomplishment of long-term fieldwork. This responds to the need to account for and engage with people who experience life not as a linear and coherent narrative but rather as a series of prerreflective events. The authors advocate anthropology as a professional discipline that stands up, especially in the current audit academic environment, to its values of deep, long-term engagement with those whom we study.

Alan Grossman
Fiona Murphy
Sabina Stan

July 2013
Revisiting and Reframing the Anthropological Archive: the Harvard-Irish Survey (1930-1936)

Anne Byrne* and Deirdre O’Mahony*

Abstract: We consider a methodological opportunity when revisiting classical anthropological studies, namely the social anthropological archive of the Harvard-Irish Survey (1930-1936). A gift of the Irish field diaries of Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball, together with the with familial and community effects of being written about in published accounts is our departure point. We explore the potential of collaborative research that is dialogical, aesthetic, community based and generates knowledge that fosters ‘empathetic insight’ (Kester 2004). Our approach is a form of ‘reflexive revisiting’ of the archive via field diaries and photographs from the 1930s, suggesting an alternative methodology for mutually engaging successor participants, artist and sociologist in transformative acts in relation to community effects of anthropological research (Barawoy 2003).

Keywords: Arensberg, Kimball, archive, art, dialogical aesthetic, community, successors.

Introduction

In the early 1930s, Ireland was the focus of an archaeological and anthropological study of a modern nation conducted by academics from Harvard University. Known as the Harvard-Irish Survey, it had three strands: archaeology, physical anthropology and social anthropology. The site of the latter included Rinnamona in the heart of the Burren, adjacent to what was to become the Burren National Park in 1991. Survey publications, The Irish Countryman (1937) by Conrad Arensberg, and Family and Community in Ireland (1940) by Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball, are considered 'classic' texts and remain influential within sociological and anthropological spheres (Byrne, Edmondson, Varley 2001). Family and Community in Ireland continues to be regarded as a baseline ethnographic study of the interconnectedness of farm and family life in rural Ireland in the 1930s, providing a snapshot of rural society in transition between traditional and modern culture. The classic accounts inspired not only generations of academics; for example, on reading The Irish Countryman, Dorothea Lange visited Clare producing a photo essay based on scenes from the text for LIFE magazine (Lange 1955).

The history and publications of the Harvard-Irish Survey have been debated in Irish anthropology and sociology (Gibbon 1973, Peace 1989, Wilson 1984, Wilson and Donnan 2006). It is claimed as the starting point for the professionalisation of Irish archaeology while subject to judgement by Irish sociologists critical of the functionalist theoretical framework employed, for substantive omissions and for lack of attention to the effects of institutional and ecclesiatical power and conflict in Irish society (Byrne et al 2001, French 2013). The force and tensions of these positioning and debates frame academic reengagement with the archives of the Harvard-Irish Survey. Zeitlyn (2012) considers that the archive, anthropological or governmental, is associated with the exercise of power while pointing to Foucault and Derrida's idea of its subversive potential to 'excavate and recover subjugated voices' (2012: 464) if 'read across or along the archival grain' (2012: 462). When considering the subjects (and their descendants) of anthropological fieldwork, how do we acknowledge concerns and make space for groups that 'historically have not been party to discussions' (2012: 474). What opportunities exist, what invitations are extended to subjects or successors to reengage with the anthropological archive?

This paper tells a story of academic and successor participant reengagement with the archives of the Harvard-Irish Survey by sociologist Anne Byrne, artist Deirdre O'Mahony and the descendants of some of the families whose lives are detailed in published and unpublished texts; Mary Moroney, John Ruane, Sean

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Roche and Frances Whelan. This latter grouping with Anne Byrne became the *Rinnamona Research Group* and with Deirdre O’Mahony, collectively represented another perspective on the families and community of Rinnamona as depicted in the anthropological accounts. A gift of the field diaries prompted Byrne to revisit Rinnamona in 2002. Byrne was aware that the social anthropological publications continued to be a source of unease and dispute in the locality, despite the passing of time, and was conscious of the risk and unknown consequences for local relations in returning to the locality with the field diary.

The outline of this story is familiar to those who practice ethnographic anthropology and sociology. The public narrative of returning anthropologists who choose to address those studied can be apologetic for causing unintended harm or valedictory pointing to the historical benefits of the study for future scholars (Burawoy 2003). A few reconsider what they have authored and use the opportunity to update and write another account (see Schepher-Hughes 2001). In this particular instance, the authors are long dead. However the concerns of the families of those written about endures across the generations. But where can this unease about personal privacy, the instrusiveness of research and the disruption of trust be expressed or listened for? This is a complicated history with partial tellings, ambivalences and unresolved elements; for some, the perceived poor representation of family members and the use of real names of people and places continues to grate while aware that this place and these events were of interest for a sustained academic study over a period of years. In the interests of community and family solidarity, the stories of the study were quietly and deliberately not recollected.

Conscious of the legacy of aesthetic representations of the landscape of the West (Scott 2005), O’Mahony’s research has been directed towards a mode of aesthetic engagement that can represent the complexity of agencies, actors and agendas, consciously and unconsciously at play in the Burren. To this end she activated a social and cultural space as a frame for a durational public art project to allow room for an extended, collective discourse on the future of the region in the former post-office in Killinaboy, renamed, X-PO (O’Mahony 2012). The two strands of anthropological and artistic archival engagement converged when the *Rinnamona Research Group* decided to present their additions and amendments to the anthropological archive within the space of X-PO.

In this paper we describe our transdisciplinary, collaborative process in engaging with and extending the anthropological archive. In first and third person voices, we describe the paths that brought us together, the routes to articulating another story of family and community in Rinnamona, linking local representations to future discourses on the *Harvard-Irish Survey.*

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**The gift: Revisiting the Archive**

*Anne Byrne:* As I prepared for the US fl ight to Ireland, Kelly Arensberg handed me a bundle of notebooks, paper browned and soft with age, a cover I faintly recognised ‘Abbey Series Exercise Book’ and the ‘Luogh Diary 3 with Diagram, Interviews 146-198’ handwritten in black ink (Figure 1). There are five diaries in all, recording the first hand observations of American anthropologists Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball, who wrote about the familial ties and working lives of the rural people of Clare from 1930-1934. Arensberg’s diaries of his time in west Clare, namely Luogh, record the preoccupations of people, their work on the land, rearing, selling and buying cattle, conventions of marriage and inheritance, the dominance of religion and politics in conversation, the scarcity of money and the significance of ‘influence’ for procuring work.

Immersed in reading Kimball’s diary from Rinnamona, this partial record, I am brought back to another time and place. I can hear people speak, I know in which house the anthropologist stood and the individual or family about whom he writes. The attitudes, opinions, stories and reminiscences of the people of Rinnamona are recorded in pencil, transcribing verbatim speech, interspersed by the anthropologist’s notes to himself; beginning interpretations of the life and culture which surrounded him. The Solon Kimball diary is 115 pages long, spanning December to January as the year turned from 1930 to 1931. Kimball is staying with Mr and Mrs Quinn; he is directed there by the schoolteacher Kelleher. Kimball is accompanied by Quinn on his daily visits to each of the 17 households in Rinnamona. Kimball writes about religious rituals, the authority of priests and teachers, tuberculosis and its communal effects, card-playing, music and dancing, power and resistance, land agents and land lords, memories of the famine, national and international politics. He writes that he is teased and asked if he would like some female company; he places himself within the account, a move which is in sympathy with the perspective of the anthropologist as living both inside and outside the community he observes and about

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**Fig. 2:** Michael ‘the judge’ O’Donoghue, photograph courtesy of Mary Moroney
whom he makes interpretations. The anthropologists collected and recorded all that they saw, heard, listened to and were told. The diaries, letters and unpublished archives of the Harvard-Irish Survey are testament to this (Byrne 2011, French 2013).

The paper records and archives of the Harvard-Irish Survey are located in repositories throughout the US; the receipt and return of these field notes, this partial archive, to the sites in which they were made needed careful consideration (Byrne 2014, forthcoming). Having received the diary and feeling its emotional burden, I contemplated my role and options to pass on this particular gift. Perhaps the gift of the diaries from Kelly Arensberg is symbolically reciprocal, referencing the assistance extended by local people to the American anthropologists during their time in Ireland? Perhaps it is an act of altruism, one that extends the sociality of the gift into the future? (Tolland 2012). The factors that motivate giving, receiving and reciprocating require deeper consideration than can be given here, but in the context of the persistent unease with the published work, I decided that the successor community be first introduced to the field diaries, prior to academic engagement with the material.

In a review of the ‘divergent orbits’ of ethnography in sociology and anthropology, Burawoy (2003) considers the types of ‘revisits’ that are possible when the ethnographer (or surrogate) returns to the site of a previous study. He distinguishes replication (concerned with constancy and reliability of findings over time) from the focussed revisit (an ethnographic study of people and place in the present, compared to an earlier study in the same place with predecessors), arguing for a more ‘reflexive ethnography’ that takes into account history, context and theory. The capacity to position and reposition oneself inside and outside the study is arguably gained through reflexive practice. Collaboration with others with diverse points of contact with the study may also enhance reflexivity. Burawoy (2003) concerned with the rituals of the anthropological revisit, castigates the sociological practitioner for neglecting this aspect of inquiry. His range of types of academic revisit include ‘rolling, punctuated, heuristic, archaeological and valedictory’ (2003: 668). The ‘archaeological revisit’ in which the history of relations between observers and participants is excavated through documents, publications and archives of the project is somewhat aligned to our present practice. The ethnographer tracks forward and backwards in time, linking past to present, making new interpretations. None of us are the original ethnographers or participants; all of us are ‘successors’ in one way or another as we collectively engage with the original archive, in the original site in which the study took place, to confront once again the anthropological narrative and the disparate responses to it. Revisiting ‘from below’, by participants or their successors is not considered by Burawoy. Our revisit engages with the published anthropological account via the field notes complied by the anthropologist in the performance of his work and from the vantage of artist, sociologist and successor participants. We do not assume the mantle of anthropology and do not argue here with the anthropological narrative of how rural communities were formed and maintained or how and why individuals were recruited into their communal, economic and familial roles. Contesting the lack of opportunity for successors to speak back to the account, we redeploy the field notes to create such an opportunity, inviting subjects to read and work with the archive. ‘This approach to archives is recognised by French (2013) as ‘democratising’, one that ‘…enlivens contemporary, local, public, and scholarly debates and concerns’ (2013: 170).

Private lives

Any rereading of the Arensberg and Kimball diaries involves a form of revisiting, as is writing about the content or making decisions about where to archive the field diaries in the future. The publication of the third edition of Family and Community in Ireland (2001) involved cautious consultation with successor families; there was no wish to further disrupt private lives, yet I go back to the sites in which the original study took place, engaging in revisiting, despite myself. The
publication was merited on the grounds that it provided a socio-historical context for telling the relatively unknown story of the three strands of the Harvard-Irish Survey in Ireland. Though the named persons, the predecessors, were long gone, the successors continued to carry unresolved aspects of the community story, of being made visible without consent. The ‘community studies’ approach pioneered by Arensberg and Kimball in Ireland involved close scrutiny of the perspectives, speech, actions and interactions of named individuals, theoretically assuming these as a reflection of position and power in the social structure of community. In documenting farm family structure and culture, the anthropologist observed people as they went about their daily business, aware but unaware of his presence in so far that this was possible. The field diaries record the observations of the anthropologists in their attempt to move closer to those who lived here. Investigating the private life is precisely their concern.

I return to Rinnamona with Kimball’s diary, contacting those whom I knew from previous visits. All had read the publications and predecessors who were directly mentioned by name in Family and Community in Ireland.

Sean: That study was the first that ever came back, where the descendants were able to to look for it I suppose…we saw the end result as well, that was different.

(Sean Roche, RRG Member, 25th August 2008).

In 2008 we read the diaries aloud, told stories and corrected the details in the diary, errors of naming, as winter turned to spring (see Byrne and O’Mahony 2012). I listened and sketched a map of family relationships in 1930s Rinnamona, visualising the movement of people as households reformed over time through birth, marriage, death and emigration. Though the catalyst for this recounting and tracing was ostensibly the temporary possession of the gift of the field note diary, we began to make another record from the reflections and interactions of the successors. We walked the village and its boundaries, reconstructing and imagining the seventeen households of the 1930s, remembering the family names of adults and children, photographing ruins, farm tools, rusting churns, delph. This revisit was a collaborative sharing of knowledge in situ. The field notes featured the perceptions of elders comparing their own work ethic with the easier lives of the young men and women in the village. These and other stories resonated among us, provoking present-past comparisons of family relationships, community connectedness and the exigencies of agricultural work. The photographic survey of buildings prompted more comparisons, reflecting on social and economic changes and the consequences for this place and these people. Reading Kimball’s diary together, correcting and amending details, tracing relationship across the generations, bringing stories of the past to bear, facilitated the repositioning of the successors inside rather than outside the history of the Harvard-Irish Survey. The successors became informed observers; their subject the anthropological account via the mediating entity of the field notes diary. The Rinnamona Research Group reoccupied the original field site, reading about the past, engaging with the archive slowly while considering the next step. A desire to invite others into the intertwining histories of observer and observed was expressed, a process that involved extending and visualising the archive and a move into the public space of the X-PO.

Sharing the Field: Archival Collaboration

Deirdre O’Mahony: As an artist, based in the Burren, my practice is both site and context-specific. In the 1990s my primary concern was the aesthetic of the landscape (O’Mahony 2006). That detached, estranged perspective was shattered by a decade-long environmental conflict in nearby Mullaghmore (O’Mahony 2012). In its wake there remained a reluctance to either discuss the controversy, or its effects on local relationships (O’Rourke 2005). Anxieties resurface when new policies and planning strategies are proposed in the region. To find a way of addressing the complexity of this landscape through my practice, I directed my research towards a process-based methodology that might actively and visibly negotiate the polarity between an aesthetic and a cultivator’s perspective on landscape and engage with different publics in the area (Jackson 1974). My subsequent art practice focused on negotiating between both perspectives, activating public, discursive spaces where the social, cultural, environmental and economic future of the region might be discussed. Re-opening the former post-office in Killinaboy, two miles from Rinnamona and the site of the environmental conflict represents this practice.

Re-framed as an artwork and renamed X-PO, it became a locus for a re-examination and articulation of place-based knowledge and a reminder of the social function of the post office. The X-PO provides a physical and symbolic space in which to re-view local/global
The opening exhibition in December 2007 draws audiences from both the immediate locality and wider cultural and academic spheres. This coincides with the initial stage of the Rinnamona Research Group archival project. Anne Byrne visits and we begin a conversation about the power of visualising an archive. The group asks if I will join them in making a public exhibition of their research.

Reframing the Archive

We begin a process of reflexive, situated enquiry in order to redress the calcifying effect and affect of the anthropological publications.

Growing up as a young lad we always heard the old people talking about this American guy who came. While he was here they didn’t know he was writing the book but of course they all heard about the book afterwards when somebody sent it home from America. A lot of them weren’t too pleased about what was written in the book either, maybe you know, he told it as it was and it doesn’t always go down well. You know, some of the stories. It wasn’t too bad, you know but sure like everything, people chatting around the fire, what they say – you’re inside in a private house talking … things will be said that weren’t meant to be published but they were published of course. This guy was writing it all down and they didn’t know that, they’d have been much warier I’m sure if they did.

(Francis Whelan RRG 2012)

We listen, carefully and actively to one another during the weeks prior to mounting the exhibition. A dialogical, intersubjective exchange process requires trust; we are not, in the words of one of the successors, to ‘repeat the sins of the fathers’. Our shared project is to reframe the original anthropological account thinking through the archive and mounting an exhibition of materials in the locality. Through this ‘archeological’ process, digging, excavating and unearthing the untold histories of family and community lives in the 1930s, the group can disrupt and question the ‘already-said’ by placing another representation of Rinnamona within the public domain (Foucault 1969). Connected knowing and empathetic insight necessary to a dialogical aesthetic process, are activated as names are traced and relationships mapped. The successor group mobilizes friends and relations from Australia to New York in the hunt for photographs of farm and family life in the 1930s. Permissions are granted for their use and they are scanned and reprinted in the X-PO. We connect people and place, tangibly spatialising relationships. Images play a key part in this process:

The partial, fragmentary archive did more than speak to one man’s story; it was read and understood by visitors as ‘a gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory’ that spoke to subjectivities around overlooked and often disregarded aspects of rural life (Foster 2004: 4). The Mattie Rynne archive and to an extent, X-PO, represented Pierre Nora’s idea of lieu de mémoire; the defunct rural post office, as art, takes on a new function as a site ‘where memory crystallises and secretes itself’ (Nora 1989:7).

relational connections through a mix of local archival installations, events and exhibitions. I was committed to an extended process of engagement not only as an artist and academic but also as a local resident, engaging publicly in a transdisciplinary enquiry into location and belonging. In order to activate the space I make use of the visual alongside the dialogical within my aesthetic language. Art historian and critical theorist Kester uses the term ‘dialogical aesthetic’ to define collaborative art practices that have a conscious, ethical dimension. He argues that a dialogical aesthetic process based on communication and intersubjective exchange can help us to ‘speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities, official discourse, and the perceived inevitability of partisan political conflict’ (Kester 2004:8). However presuming that individuals have the capacity and desire to set aside deeply ingrained notions of difference is perhaps hopelessly optimistic, particularly in contested situations where there are manifest differentials in power relations. Recognising this problem, Kester proposes two further necessary steps in the process: connected knowing, which takes into account the social context from which others speak, judge and act, and empathetic insight. This can be produced upon a series of axes, in the rapport between artists and their collaborators, among the collaborators themselves, and between the collaborators and the community of viewers. This methodology was deployed in responding to the Rinnamona Research Group’s invitation to join them in an archival exhibition-making process in the X-PO.

At X-PO the creation and installation of archives that reframed overlooked, obscured or forgotten aspects of local knowledge, history and events was the primary tool of engagement. The archive has been examined, contested, deployed and re-invented within contemporary art practice to interrogate the power of representational practices (O’Mahony 2006, 2012). The opening installation at X-PO used the abandoned contents of the building, the belongings of the former postmaster, John Martin, ‘Mattie’ Rynne. The broken radios, electronic manuals, books, papers, cassette tapes, files and notebooks were installed within the familiar space and set alongside a monumental portrait drawing of the postmaster made with soot. These material traces pointed to a man who lived his life on his own terms, reading, listening, learning, curious about communicating with the wider world. The partial, fragmentary archive did more than speak to one man’s story; it was read and understood by visitors as ‘a gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory’ that spoke to subjectivities around overlooked and often disregarded aspects of rural life (Foster 2004: 4). The Mattie Rynne archive and to an extent, X-PO, represented Pierre Nora’s idea of lieu de mémoire; the defunct rural post office, as art, takes on a new function as a site ‘where memory crystallises and secretes itself’ (Nora 1989:7).
We had heard all those different names that were in Rinnamona, we had no face to them, no image at all, so we got a lot of the photographs, collected a lot of different material from different people and then, they all told us different things. (Figure 2)

(Mary Moroney RRG 25th August 2008)

We think about how to process and reproduce this material and decisions are rejected and adopted. All bring different competencies to the table - place-based knowledge, artistic skills and academic knowledge of the texts and their wider relevance. For the anthropologists, relationships with subjects are shaped by disciplinary concerns and ‘scientific’ distance; this is not the case with us. We are aware that we are, to use artist Suzanne Lacy’s term, ‘idiosyncratic’ outsiders as we reflexively try to articulate and extend what our combined knowledges can ‘do’ as we engage with the archive (Paget-Clarke, citing Lacy 2000).

All work long into the evenings prior to the exhibition, printing, mounting and framing photographs (Figure 3). We collate three books: local children’s contributions to the Schools Folklore Scheme (1937-38), including school photographs dating back to the 1920s, a collection of family photographs of each of the 12 households named in Family and Community in Ireland, and a facsimile copy of Kimball’s diary. A wall drawing of the townland map is painted in a faint wash of ink. Black frames order the photographs and the members of the ‘Rinnamona Dáil’ are placed in relation to the spatial location of the houses in the original field site (Figure 4).

There are individuals for whom no photograph exists and so group photographs are scrutinised, faces are identified, cropped, enlarged and reprinted. Some images are blurred, scanned from Mass cards that are already indistinct and the possibility of making drawings that can stand as a more symbolic, layered representation is discussed. This is rejected; the primary concern is to stay with the reality of the family photographs, just as they are, taken in that moment in time, without another layer of representation or interpretation. Kimball’s portrait and photographs he sent back after his return visit in 1968 are also included in the exhibition (Figure 5).

Foster points to the ‘archival impulse’ as a desire to make often displaced or lost historical information physically present through the use of material objects, images and texts and retrieved in a gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory (Foster 2004: 4). The installation carries traces of all the actors - anthropologists, artist, sociologist and successors. Byrne’s handwriting inscribes the names of families, correctly, on the images; O’Mahony’s map provides the ground for their placement, and objects are excavated from houses and barns, labeled and carefully installed by the successors, acknowledging a place for tacit, knowledge. The presence of those named is felt through the images and the materiality of the objects, including the anthropologist’s pipe.

Voices are also present, an audio recording of a radio programme on the Harvard-Irish Survey in Clare whispers through headphones, (Owens 2006). A slideshow flickers with images of the houses as they are now. First edition copies of the published works of the Survey are assembled and exhibited. The archive provides a dense, multi-layered representation of Rinnamona in the 1930s, present again through the agency of Solon Kimball’s diary and Kelly Arensberg’s generosity. It is a counter-archive, ‘a form of re-collection of that which has been buried’ (Mereweather 2006), better suited to the business of finding the gaps between discursive practices and challenging the enunciative field of the texts (Foucault 1969). Through the actions of the successors, the disruptive potential comes into play; the smells, textures, sounds and speech haunt the anthropological texts.

Successors Meet Predecessors was the name of the exhibition. The Rinnamona Research Group mediate and explain the work to various ‘publics’, including academics. The objects serve as prompts for visitors, triggering memories into stories through skillful interviewing. Photographs of family members are found where none were thought to exist, and new names put to faces. Memories are evoked, reminders of the social and agricultural life when mutual co-operation, the Meitheal, was commonplace. This is a reflective and not a restorative nostalgia (Boym 2001). It is felt more keenly as the effects of boom-time excesses are playing out and emigration, once more, is felt in Rinnamona.

Towards Transformatory Archival Engagements

We began with the gift of the 1930s field diaries from the Harvard-Irish Survey. The published anthropological account, we argue, colonised familial and communal recollection of the Survey in Rinnamona. The archival gift, a tacit acknowledgement of the shared ownership of research data, enabled successors to read first hand observations made about predecessors, providing an opportunity to publicly think through anthropological representations of family and community and to extend the archive using communal resources. The process was cathartic as the descendants of those observed became the observers - examining, surveying visualising and re-presenting their own, new account. The research, exhibition-making process and subsequent mediation reflect the axes of empathetic enquiry. Kester argues that a dialogical aesthetic is potentially transformative; it can produce new forms of subjectivity out of social relations and dialogical interactions. The successors took up the invitation to add own voices to academic discourses on the texts, engaging with the archive and transforming own relations to it.

Some of them [were] not correct either, he had bachelors when they were married men, they
weren’t identified correctly and we have corrected that now in the space, which was important to us as a group.

(Mary Moroney, RRG June 14 2008)

The archival installation provided a more nuanced understanding of the enduring power relations set in motion, consciously and unconsciously through the texts. Meeting, making and mediating the exhibition allowed an exchange of knowledge across and beyond individual disciplines and positions. This was made possible by a durational commitment to a process more associated with ethnographic practice. Durational sitedness is now an important marker of critical visibility and a central part of a creative praxis between participants in contemporary art practice (Kester 2011: 226). Family and Community in Ireland is an important text and continues to be a subject of interest to anthropologists, artists, sociologists and now successors (RRG 2011, 2012). In this project we collectively address the bigger story of how disciplinary endeavors affect the lives of others across generations and propose that these elements can be brought into meaningful conversation with each other through contact with and access to the archive. Through the collaborative methodology outlined here we create a space for the emergence of alternative accounts and extending the archive, linking successors’ stories to the story of Family and Community in Ireland.

References


**Acknowledgements:**

We appreciate the guidance from two anonymous reviewers, the financial support received from ’Bright Ideas’, Community Engaged Research Funding Scheme, NUI, Galway 2012, IRCHSS 2006/7 Senior Fellowship Scheme, the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíonn, and our special gratitude and heartfelt thanks to Dr V. Garrison Arensberg, whose generosity prompted these actions and reflections.

**Notes:**

1 For an extended discussion of the ’Rynamona Dáil’, the name given to the meeting of the elders in the community, see Chapter 9, Arensberg and Kimball (1968, 2001).
Charles R. Browne, The Irish ‘Headhunter’

Ciarán Walsh*

Abstract: This essay draws on my experience as a curator of photographs to examine the contribution Charles R. Browne made to the development of anthropology in Ireland. I deal with the reticence of historians to consider photography as evidence and place the albums compiled by Browne in a series of contexts, his career as an anthropologist and his association with Haddon in particular. I examine the issues raised by the centrality of cranialometry in his work, especially the impact it has had on contemporary perceptions of anthropology. I argue that Browne’s real legacy is his archive of ethnographic material and its value as social history in a contemporary context.

Keywords: Charles R. Browne, Photography, Anthropometry, Anthropology, Darwinism, Trinity College Dublin, Alfred Cort Haddon, Irish Ethnographic Survey, social history, documentation

Charles R. Browne, The Irish ‘Headhunter’

It is a bold statement but I believe that the complex origins of anthropology in Ireland can be summed up in one image. The portrait of Philip Lavelle, King of North Inishkea, was photographed in 1894 by Charles Robert Browne, a medical doctor and ‘anthropologist’ who spent the last decade of the 19th century carrying out a series of ethnographic surveys on the west coast of Ireland. The photograph (Figure 1: TCD MS 10961/4/12r) was published in The Ethnography of The Mullet, Inishkea Islands and Paortacloy, County Mayo in the proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy (Browne 1895). Lavelle was one of 62 subjects featured in various tables of anthropometric data recorded by Browne. He was 33, of fair average stature (1775mm standing) with blue eyes and a ruddy complexion. The table of indices tells us that his head is mesaticephalic, the mean cranial index being 77.4. Browne has portrayed Lavelle as a ‘type,’ an exemplary specimen of the natives who inhabited The Mullet in the 1890s.

The attitude of Lavelle is striking in its defiance of the anthropometric gaze. Unwilling or ‘fugitive’ subjects were common and the conspicuous involvement of the Royal Irish Constabulary in Browne’s survey of Inishbofin (Figure 2: TCD MS 10961/4/5v) underscores the complex social, cultural and political situation that Browne had to deal with. The Irish Ethnographic Survey took place between 1891 and 1903, a period of extraordinary social change in the west of Ireland. Liberal outrage at the impoverishment of large sections of the Irish population had led to an intense political campaign against ‘landlordism’ and economic intervention by the state in the shape of the Congested Districts Board (Morrissey 2001, Breathnach 2005). Home Rule was at the top of the political agenda, the Irish Ireland movement was gaining momentum and Irish Victorians were trying to come to terms with the other Ireland west of the Shannon. In the middle of all of this were the Irish Darwinists who were trying to figure out the origins of the Irish ‘primitives’ who inhabited the western fringe of the United Kingdom. The Irish Ethnographic Survey involved men from Dublin subjecting the natives on the periphery of Victorian society to anthropometric scrutiny. Confrontation was inevitable and Lavelle’s attitude personifies the relationship between the ‘native’ and the ‘anthropologist.’

In 2012 the photograph of Lavelle was included in an exhibition of 63 photographs from the Irish Ethnographic Survey and the Anthropometry Laboratory in TCD in which it was based. The exhibition was part of the Irish ‘Headhunter’ project that I developed in association with Jane Maxwell of TCD and Dáithí de Mórdha of The Great Blasket Centre (De Mórdha and Walsh 2012). The primary objective of the project was to consider the social documentary aspects of the photographs from the contemporary perspective of the communities surveyed. The exhibition has been shown in most of the districts surveyed by Browne in the 1890s and the reaction has been somewhat surprising. The centrality of craniometry in Browne’s methodology raised the spectre of the ethnologist as ‘headhunter.’ The evidence is mainly anecdotal but it seems that the development of ‘anthropology’ or ethnology/physical anthropology in Ireland is widely regarded as a colonial project informed by an inherently racist attitude to the native Irish. Despite being titled the “Irish ‘Headhunter’”, media coverage described Browne and his colleagues as British scientists (Irish Independent, Weekend Magazine, Saturday 28 April, 2012; RTE News, 5 May, 2012) with the implicit understanding that it was British scientists who had inflicted anthropology on the ordinary Irish as an extension of a wider Anglo-Saxon hegemony.

This raises a lot of issues about the perception of anthropology in contemporary Ireland and this article aims to deal with some of these issues - from the perspective of a curator with a background in visual arts and education rather than anthropology. In the article I make use of the records of the Irish Ethnographic Survey to create a context for Browne’s photograph albums and I reflect on public reaction to the Irish ‘Headhunter’ project, specifically the perception that ‘anthropology’ was a racially inspired colonial project. I assess Browne’s impact on the development of anthropology in Ireland and argue that his real legacy is a series of albums that document the beginning of the end of the 19th century in the west of Ireland.

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The photograph albums of Charles R. Browne

My interest in the photograph albums of Charles R. Browne centres on the role photography plays in the construction of Irish identities in the 19th and early 20th century. The *Irish ‘Headhunter’* exhibition is the third in a series of projects that deal with the representation of the Irish ‘peasant’ in photography. In 2007 I considered how photographs taken by Robert J. Welch achieved a second life as visual components of Irish folk culture (Walsh 2007). In 2009 I curated an exhibition of photography by John Millington Synge (Walsh 2012b) that was subsequently incorporated into *The Moderns* in the Irish Museum of Modern Art, a major exhibition that surveyed the development of Modernism in Ireland (Juncosa and Kennedy 2011).

Synge led to Browne. Both had worked in Aran (Browne in 1891 and 1892, Synge from 1898 to 1902) and both had attempted to systematically document the lives of the islanders with a combination of photography and text that was ethnographical in some respects. Browne’s archive is much more extensive however. It consists of six albums that cover the period 1886 to 1902. They include a remarkable record of his career as an ‘anthropologist,’ his involvement in the Irish Ethnographic Survey and his society. Two of the albums contain photographic surveys of the Aran Islands (1892); Inishbofin and Inishshark (1893); North Erris / The Mullet, Inishkea Islands and Portacloy (1894); Ballycroy (1895), Clare Island, Inishturk (1896) and Dun Chaoin and the Blasket Islands (1897). The albums were assembled in accordance with the anthropometric guidelines published in *Notes and Queries* (Beddoe 1873-4) and categories devised by Haddon in 1892 (Brabrook 1893: 262-274). Each survey (with the exception of Dun Chaoin and the Blasket Islands) is divided into sections covering ‘Coastline and Surface’, ‘The People’, ‘Modes of Life’ (Dwellings, Transport, Customs etc) and ‘Antiquities’.

This essay focuses on ‘The People.’ Browne systematically recorded anthropographic material including anthropometric types. His taxonomic discipline means that many of his ‘specimens’ are named, a feature that is uncommon in documentary photography in the west of Ireland at this time. This feature is reinforced by the text of the ethnographies that accompanied each survey (again, with the exception of Dun Chaoin and the Blasket Islands). Michael O’Halloran, The King of Shark, is identified in a photograph and the associated *Ethnography of Inishbofin and Inishshark, County Galway* contains a detailed account of his prowess as a hunter of ‘Sun Fish’ or basking sharks (Browne 1893: 349-350). This combination transforms raw ‘anthropographic’ material into a rich resource for local historians but photography is often regarded as being problematic in a historiographical context.

Historians, as a rule, do not like photographs. ‘Irish historians and social scientists have been slow to adopt the photographic image’ according to Cormac Ó’Gráda (Breathnach 2007: xiii). Perhaps it is the way photographs can escape timelines and illustration can be confused with evidence, the desire to illustrate being a powerful incentive to use historic photographs out of context, to disregard the circumstance and/or provenance of the photograph. The issue is not the veracity of photography in itself so much as the rules of evidence as they pertain to the use of photographs in historical texts (Walsh 2012b). To consider Browne’s photography as documentary evidence one has also to consider his role in the early development of anthropology in Ireland.

Charles R. Browne

Very little was known about Browne himself before Dáithí de Mordha and I published our research in the *Irish ‘Headhunter’* catalogue. The archive in TCD consists mainly of the albums and key records are missing and presumed lost (Maxwell 2012: 27-31). He was a Member of the Royal Irish Academy but...
biographical information in the records of the Academy is limited to details of his membership. His death in 1931 is recorded in a one-line motion of notice; there was no obituary as was usual with esteemed members of the Academy (Royal Irish Academy 1931). Indeed, compiling a biography was surprisingly tricky and involved extensive use of online genealogical research tools, starting with the bare bones of his record as a graduate of TCD and trawling through census returns, death notices and wills to arrive at some semblance of a biography (Walsh, 2012:15-19).

Browne was Irish. He was born in Tipperary, educated in Cork Grammar School and Trinity College Dublin where he studied under the Darwinist Daniel J. Cunningham, Professor of Anatomy and Surgery between 1883 and 1903. He graduated as a Medical Doctor in 1893 and set up a general practice in 66 Harcourt Street Dublin. He continued to work with Cunningham and, in the census of 1901, he gave his occupation as ‘General Practitioner/Anthropologist’ (National Archive/ Census 1901). His career as an ‘anthropologist’ is recorded in outline in the minutes of the Science Committee of the Royal Irish Academy (Royal Irish Academy Records 1887 – 1902). He was elected to the Academy in 1892 as a member of the Science Section and his main disciplines were recorded as Medicine and Anthropology. He was nominated as being eligible for membership of the Committee of Science in 1897 (ibid).

Haddon and Browne
Browne is best known for his association with Alfred Cort Haddon with whom he undertook the seminal Ethnography of the Aran Islands (Haddon and Browne 1892). Haddon, a marine zoologist, was Professor of Zoology in the Royal College of Science in Dublin. He had taken part in an expedition to the Torres Straits in 1888 and had become interested in the study of ‘our fellow countrymen’ from an anthropological point of view, seeking out the relics of previous millenniums of savagery and barbarism before they were swept aside by the levelling up of less advanced folk (Haddon 1892). Haddon was developing an integrated approach to research and was heavily involved in attempts to get various organisations to collaborate in the development and roll out of the British Ethnographic Survey. Haddon made contact with Cunningham who was carrying out research in line with the physical evolutionary hypothesis that underpinned comparative anatomy in TCD (Jones 2008). Browne was assisting Cunningham. In 1891 Haddon and Browne set up the Anthropometry Laboratory with a grant from the Royal Irish Academy. The plan was to transfer the laboratory during the ‘long vacation’ to a carefully selected district in order to carry out surveys of the physical characters and habits of the inhabitants. The aim was to assist ‘the anthropologist in his endeavours to unravel the tangled skein of the so-called Irish race’ (Haddon and Cunningham 1892, Browne 1898b).

They commenced the Irish Ethnographic Survey in Aran in 1891. It was overseen by the Anthropological Committee, a subcommittee of the Science Committee of the Royal Irish Academy. The work appears to have been directed by Haddon, an energetic organiser and researcher with fixed views on many things (Collins 1993: 143). Scott Ashley concedes that the ‘division of labour’ during fieldwork is unclear and his subsequent treatment of ‘Haddon and Browne’ as a unit (with Haddon as the principle constituent) is not unusual (Ashley 2001: 8). However seven other districts were surveyed after Aran. Browne managed ‘operations in the field’ and six ethnographies were published in his name alone (Browne 1893, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898 and 1900). Nevertheless Browne was the most junior member of the Anthropological Committee that consisted of Rev. Dr. Haughton, Cunningham, Haddon, and Browne. Haughton was president of the Royal Irish Academy from 1886 to 1891; Cunningham and Haddon were professors whilst Browne had only just graduated (1893). Haddon and Cunningham liaised with E. P. Wright of the Academy while Browne applied for funding, carried out the surveys and compiled the reports that were published afterward. This committee disbanded in 1902/3; Haughton had died in 1897, Haddon had been appointed as a lecturer in Cambridge in 1900 and Cunningham retired in 1903. In May 1903 the Academy awarded a grant of £15 to a committee consisting of Browne and T. J. Westropp to assist the Anthropometry Laboratory in a survey of a district in Donegal (RIA Committee of Science Minutes 1903). This did not take place, marking the end of the Anthropometry Laboratory and its programme of ethnographical enquiries in Ireland. Browne left Dublin and spent the rest of his life working as a doctor in England.
A Contribution?

Browne's role in the administration of the Irish Ethnographic Survey suggests that his contribution to the early development of anthropology was limited. Wilson and Donnan describe the 'ethnographic activity' undertaken by Haddon and Browne as the beginning of 'modern' anthropology in Ireland in the 1930s but do not elaborate on this (Wilson and Donnan 2006: 17). Castle and Ashley argue that the reliance on second hand sources and small size of the sample undermine the ethnographic integrity of the survey in Aran; that the broadly conceived study of the 'ethnical characteristics' of the inhabitants (Ashley 2001: 7, Haddon and Browne 1892: 798) amounts to little more than the 'unscientific primitivism' characteristic of revivalists like Synge who were concerned with the redemption of the fast disappearing folklife and folklore of the islanders at a time of rapid social change (Castle 2001: 102-107). This places the ethnographical activity of Browne outside of contemporary definitions of anthropology and conditions any consideration of his contribution to the consolidation of Darwinism in Ireland and the early development of ethnology in Ireland and the United Kingdom. That contribution is probably limited to the fact that he assisted Haddon in creating the organisational framework and methodologies that transformed ethnology in the 1890s. The establishment of the Anthropometry Laboratory is indeed significant. Greta Jones acknowledges the role the Anatomy Department in TCD played in the early development of anthropology but credits Haddon alone - the Cambridge anthropologist and pupil of Huxley – as extending the basis of its enquiry beyond physical evolutionary anthropology and into the cultural sphere (Jones 2008). Cunningham does not make her list of key Darwinists. Neither does Browne. He is overshadowed somewhat by the emergence of Haddon as one of the 'founding fathers of British anthropology' (Ashley 2001: 8). Reference to 'Haddon and Browne' invariably conflates into a discussion of Haddon in Aran as a prelude to the development of ethnology in Cambridge. Browne had existed more or less as the silent partner in Haddon's ethnography of the Aran Islands until the publication of the Browne albums. The 'division of labour' involved in the Ethnography of the Aran Islands is a little clearer and the timeline for the development of ethnology has shifted a little. The evidence suggests that there was an overlap between Dublin and Cambridge for almost a decade longer than the conventional narrative allows. This may be significant but the 're-emergence' of the Anthropometry Laboratory and the centrality of cranimetry in the Irish Ethnographic Survey have had much more of an impact.

The Irish 'Headhunter'

The idea of the prognathic 'Black Irishman' as developed by Justin Carville in his catalogue essay (Carville 2012a) was a revelation in the sense that science rather than racist politics had motivated the Irish Ethnographic Survey. The suspicion that hegemony, racialism and racism were embedded in ethnology in the 1890s has been a feature of every discussion that has accompanied the exhibition in Dun Chaoin, Aran, Connemara, Rath Chairn and Mayo (May 2012 to July 2013). One of the questions that is most often asked is whether, on the evidence of these photographs and the associated ethnographies, Browne could be described as a racist, whether the Survey was as racially inscribed as colonial policy in general. A second and related source of sceptical curiosity is whether the Survey had 'proved' anything, whether Browne had found any evidence of the 'Black Irishman.' These questions raise all sorts of issues, not least the ownership of anthropology in a contemporary Irish context and the idea that we, the natives, were objectified by their anthropology.
issues are beyond the scope of this paper but I will consider whether Browne was indeed racist.

The survey of Clare Island in 1896 was prompted by the acquisition of the island by the Congested Districts Board. Browne believed that there had been no great change in the composition of the population for three or four centuries, that it was an undisturbed pool of racial continuity and a potential source of Irish aboriginals. Browne had arrived too late. ‘The changes had already begun, and have by now advanced so far that much of what is said in the report of 1896 relative to the dwellings and mode of life of the people is now a record of the past’ (Browne 1897: 40-41). The Irish Ethnographic Survey was in a race against time. The impact of the CDB was becoming evident in every district and a network of new roads was bringing the isolation of communities to an end. Something else had changed. Opaque at the best of times, Browne includes the odd comment that suggests that he was affected by the conditions he witnessed. ‘The charge of laziness has been brought against the men of Clare Island, and with some degree of justification; but the manner in which they worked when organised by the CDB, and when they had some real inducement to do so, leads one to think that they did not work on account of having no real interest in doing so’ (1897: 58).

Browne’s comments anticipate the auto-ethnographic stance attributed to Synge by Castle -

an attitude to the primitive that is inherently critical of colonial and anthropological concepts (Castle 2001: 108). Browne can be sympathetic when faced with the terrible hardship in the townlands, but he appears to lack the reflection and emotional empathy required for an auto-ethnographic response. Scott Ashley attributes these comments to a refraction of the hopes, fears, perceptions and prejudices of the scientific establishment as the poetics of racial discourse was confronted with the social and economic reality for people on the periphery of Victorian Ireland especially when a definitive interpretation of all the data evaded them (Ashley 2001: 6-11). The charge of racism remains open, embedded in a wider debate about the origins of Irish anthropology and the development of anthropological thought in Ireland.

A Legacy?

I am not sure if I am in a position to assess Browne’s contribution to the development of anthropological thought in Ireland on the basis of this project. The evidence we uncovered is limited to the administration of the Irish Ethnographic Survey and Browne’s career in Ireland between 1891 and 1903. This supports the view that Browne was an administrator and not a theorist; that Haddon was developing the organisational networks and methodologies that transformed ethnology in the 1890s with assistance from Browne and Cunningham and others. The question here is whether Browne and the Anthropological Committee of the Royal Irish Academy influenced the development of Haddon’s methodologies and thereby contributed to the success of the 1898 Torres Straits expedition; whether Haddon ‘of Cambridge’ adequately reflects the role played by Irish Darwinists in the early development anthropology in Ireland. This is outside of the scope of the project which, as stated earlier, was primarily concerned with creating an historiographical context for a very significant photographic archive of life in Ireland in the 1890s.

Browne’s main legacy is the ethnographic record he compiled between 1891 and 1903, especially the photographic archive that he assembled in his albums between 1894 and 1897. There were two forces at work here, the development of field photography and the shift toward a social and cultural focus in ethnography. Photography offered ethnologists the solution to ethical problems posed by the idea of the ‘human zoo’. The collection of human specimens was necessarily restricted to skeletal remains but even this was problematic. Turnbull’s account of the trade in aboriginal human remains between Australia and London (Turnbull, 2008) provides an interesting perspective on the craniometry of Haddon and Browne. The use of photography resolved the problem of collecting ‘soft tissue’ specimens, somewhat. ‘Despite photography’s promise to provide empirical visible evidence of the Irish face, however, Browne’s photographic types failed to provide anything other than the dull pattern of
the conventions of anthropological portraits (Carville 2012: 105-66). As the survey progressed the focus widened however. Browne abandoned anthropometric portraiture in favour of a more generalised social documentary photography covering material culture, housing and social customs (Carville 2012a: 40) and the result is a remarkable record of the beginning of the end of the 19th century in the west of Ireland.

Browne, according to Dáithí De Mórdha, took the first photographs of the Blasket islanders and has left a record of life in Dún Chaoín in 1897 (De Mórdha & Walsh 2012: 21-26). Its value as social history is considerable, once the context is understood and acknowledged. The identification by de Mórdha of a young Tomás Ó Críomhthain, An tOileáinach, amongst a group of Blasket Islanders represented in standard anthropometric pose (Figure 5: TCD MS 10961/3/22r) caused a lot of excitement. It also indicates the way that the power relations that underpinned the Irish Ethnographic Survey are inverted in a contemporary reading of these photographs: the meticulous mapping of aboriginal types matters much less than the documentation of communities and the identification of the people in the photographs, the great-grandparents of the people who live in these communities today.

Conclusion
Sometime between 1903 and 1904 Browne left Dublin and disappeared from view. He took his albums with him. In 1997 his daughter Gwendolen (born in Dublin in 1903) gave the albums to the Library in TCD. The publication of the albums in 2012 had an extraordinary impact, bringing life in the west of Ireland in the 1890s into sharp focus and forcing contemporary audiences to deal with the perceptions and even prejudices that underpin the origins of anthropology in Ireland. I'm not quite sure why the project had such an impact. The ‘headhunter’ tag and the fact that the photographs had been missing for so long are factors but there is more going on in my opinion. It is only 6 years since Breathnach and Ó Gráda considered the reticence of historians to deal with the perceptions and even prejudices that underpin the origins of anthropology in Ireland. I’m not quite sure why the project had such an impact. The ‘headhunter’ tag and the fact that the photographs had been missing for so long are factors but there is more going on in my opinion. It is only 6 years since Breathnach and Ó Gráda considered the reticence of historians to take photographs seriously (Breathnach 2007) but it is clear that the value of photographic archives has, at last, been recognised. The photography of John Millington Synge was represented as the beginning of Modernism in Ireland in 2010 (Juncosa and Kennedy 2011) but this followed in the wake of a small exhibition in Cniętáil Inis Meáin in 2009 and the intense public interest that followed it (McQuillan 2009, O’Sullivan 2009). The work that Christian Corlett (Corlett 2012) is doing with the archive of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland – part of Haddon’s network - shows that the contribution of Irish Victorian photographers to the construction of Irish identity is being appreciated more and more. Browne, the quintessential Irish Victorian, is the object of intense curiosity because of his role in the Irish Ethnographic Survey. Like Lavelle, we may look askance at the man behind the camera but the photograph albums of Charles R. Browne are singular in their depiction of life in the west of Ireland in the 1890s, mainly because of Browne’s ‘anthropology’ and the way that it frames his representation of the Irish ‘race.’

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Public Folklore Operating between Aspiration and Expediency: The Cork Folklore Project

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Abstract: The practice of public folklore involves interaction with a constellation of possible positionings and choices regarding the representation of groups and shared expressive culture. Some of these issues are examined in the context of an urban community-based folklore collection and archiving centre, the Cork Folklore Project. The Project engages with questions of community representation and identity through its working methods and dissemination of material, and follows an opportunistic and open research agenda that dovetails with and is shaped by its duties and concerns as a training unit and a community member in its own right. What is the place of such a centre in a context where expectations of the focus and scope of folklore practice are somewhat limited, yet where there is more space than ever in the public, social scientific, artistic/creative and media imaginations for material generated by listening to the everyday?

Key words: Public folklore, participatory methods, ethnographic radio, oral narrative, digital dissemination, digital archives, ethical issues, duty of care, the everyday

Public folklore and engagement

Public folklore, defined by Baron and Spitzer (1992: 1) as ‘the representation and application of folk traditions in new contours and contexts within and beyond the communities in which they originated’, has been most salient as a practice and a focus of debate in the USA (Bendix and Welz 1999). From the late 1960s, the development of folklore programmes within state bodies and public cultural institutions, such as the Smithsonian Institution’s Office of Folklore Programmes, and the ‘growth of ethnic and multicultural programs in education and cultural politics’ (Bendix and Welz 1999: 117) fostered a climate where the activities and role of ‘public folklorist’ became established in federal, educational and arts institutions. This is not a job title that one finds in Europe generally, where public folklore activities tend to occur under the umbrella of heritage.1 The role closest to, for example, State Folklorist in Ireland would be that of County or City Heritage Officer, posts often held by individuals with a background in archaeology, environmental science, planning or geography. Projects similar to those operating under the title ‘public (interest) folklore’ in the USA tend to occur in Western Europe in the areas of heritage, broadcast and online media, museums, community and place-based arts, oral history, therapeutic intervention, cultural tourism and (particularly in the case of marginalised groups and migration) social inclusion.

A general tendency within public folklore discourse and practice in the USA to foreground creative performance and folk crafts is reflected in Haring’s reference, following Baron and Spitzer (1992), to public folklore as ‘the presentation of traditional arts to new audiences—which has grown out of festival production, museology, and involvement with broadcast media’ (Haring 2008: 3). One factor contributing to this tendency was the strategic adoption by folklorists of the terms folklife and folk arts as alternatives to an entity that had been associated with Un-American Activities: folklore (Abrahams 1999). Also, the widespread adoption of performance theory among folklorists in the US from the 1960s and 1970s onwards has led to a foregrounding of the individual creative act in contrast to a focus on the social and shared elements of (everyday) expressive culture (Hafstein 2004, O’Carroll 2012a). Although many public folklore projects in the USA do explore the latter, much of the work foregrounds ethnic traditions and folk and performative arts.

A concurrent broadening of the conception of the constituency of folklore, folkloristics and the folk was occurring in US folklore studies from the 1960s onwards. The inclusivity of Dan Ben-Amos’ definition of folklore as ‘artistic communication in small groups’ (1971: 13), Dell Hymes’ definition of folkloristics as “the study of communicative behavior with an esthetic, expressive, or stylistic dimension” (1974:133), and Alan Dundes’ exclamation “Who are the folk? Among others, we are!” (Dundes 1980: 19), reflect an understanding of folkloristics as the study of a particularly broad field of expressive culture. This understanding is somewhat in line with my own working definition of folklore studies as the investigation of the construction of meaning in everyday life. The conception of folklore as existing in the present as well as the past and among diverse groups is somewhat at odds with the public perception (and may run the risk of lessening conceptual clarity, broadening the focus of folkloristics so much that it becomes a vanishing field (Haring 2008)), yet it underpinned the motivation to set up a (folklore) centre for the study of contemporary urban culture in Cork.2

The folklorist’s role in the representation of cultures, groups and worldviews is a central concern of the discipline. Acts of representation involve engagement with contexts of power, and folklorists are all too aware that their actions may contribute to increased visibility for vernacular worlds (leading to increased access to public sphere participation), the

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articulation of cultural, ethnic or regional identities leading to appropriation or essentialization by nation states and other actors, or the production of cultural resources that may be commoditized by various groups. Critical engagement with expectations that the folklorist would function as an authority on specific cultural realms or on questions of ‘authenticity’ (or, indeed, would be best placed to know what is ‘good for’ or benefits a certain community), often central to public folklore practice, has come to the fore in recent years as folklorist and community expectations regarding the validity and authority of insider and outsider perspectives in processes of representation and advocacy have fluctuated. Public folklore practice cannot ignore value positions and judgements regarding the aims and methodology of a project, be they in the context of advocacy work, engagement with public folklore as a ‘radical regenerative public health practice’ (Kodish 2012: 592), or collection or dissemination with economic growth strategies or rights-based developmental paradigms in mind (Feltault 2006). For more discussion of these issues, see Baron 2010, Baron and Spitzer 1992, Kodish 2012 and Wells 2006. Although collaboration with a community or group from the conception of a project throughout the process to and including dissemination may maximise true participation, empowerment and self-representation, there is a tension inherent in the way that ‘collaboration in turn can lead to concessions toward essentialisms held by the constituencies we work with’ (Bendix and Welz 1999: 123).

These central categories for public folklore are also relevant to discussions of collaborative and engaged ethnography and engaged/public anthropology. However, the approaches differ generally in the ways in which practitioners expect to engage with the public sphere. An anthropological focus (advocacy and some collaborative anthropology aside) on the production of ethnographic texts, analysis and knowledge through which to engage with particular issues and with the circulation of ideas at a societal level is evident (see for example Eriksen 2006, Foley and Valenzuela 2008, Lassiter 2005). The public folklore emphasis on process, provision of long-term community access to ethnographic materials gathered, and the relatively unmediated (re)presentation of the voices, activities and creative production of contributors results in a rather different and sometimes more diffuse manner of engagement in the public sphere, and brings resources into being that may be drawn upon again and again by a range of actors in the imagining and re-imagining of communities and modes of life. In what follows, I will discuss the activities of the Cork Folklore Project (CFP) as an example of one possible inflection of public or engaged folklore.

**Folklore and Oral History in Ireland**

Folklore collection with long-term archival preservation for future research and public use is by no means news to Ireland. The Irish Folklore Commission, active from 1935-1970, carried out a sustained collection project, with full-time and part-time collectors contributing to what is now one of the largest folklore and ethnographic collections in the world. Urban folklore and popular culture have not gone undocumented by academic folklore or community groups in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Ni Dhuibhne (2005) chronicles the Urban Folklore Project of 1979-1980, and the North Inner City Folklore Project, established during the same period, is still active but does not possess the resources to provide widespread public access to its collections.

Individuals and local groups have been carrying out folklore and oral history collection in some numbers for the past two or more decades, often operating in relative isolation. Due to the ad hoc and voluntary nature of many of the undertakings, they have not had the resources to address issues such as that of long-term, secure storage and access to collections. The community-based Cuimhneamh an Chláir/The Clare Oral History and Folklore group, active since 2009, has built up a large and well-managed collections of ethnographic interviews with older Clare people and engaged in a wide range of innovative dissemination methods, from public listening events to recipes and cards of locally-used Irish language phrases (including ‘words of endearment’ and ‘jibes and taunts’), to a website with a range of archival audio extracts. Their activities, along with those of the CFP, herald a shift in folklore/oral history practice towards an increase in the range of forms of dissemination of collected material and the frequency of dissemination, from infrequent publications and exhibitions to a more intensive, creative and iterative process of engagement with the public and communities from whom the material is collected.

The emergence of the Oral History Network of Ireland in 2010 has served to provide a forum of exchange for a broad range of oral history and folklore practitioners. With the support of local authorities, Heritage Officers, archives and libraries, the OHNI is likely to provide a catalyst for debate and action relating to questions of best practice and long-term consolidation of collections.

**Background and activities of the Cork Folklore Project**

The Project was established in 1996 as an initiative supported by the Department of Folklore and Ethnology, University College Cork, FÁS (the Irish National Training and Employment Agency) and Northside Community Enterprises, a community training and development centre. Its establishment followed a lengthy process of engagement between the staff and students of Folklore and Ethnology, local cultural heritage groups and Historical Societies, and Cork City Partnership (a local development company operating under the National Development Plan). The project researcher posts are supported by FÁS through...
schemes related to Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) such as Community Employment schemes (O’Connell and McGinnity 1997), and outreach schemes supporting people dealing with addiction and mental health issues.

From its conception, the project had a dual aim: to further and support cultural/social scientific research and community development. The research centre is physically located in the Northside of the city, with full community access. Project researchers receive training in folklore theory and methodology from UCC Folklore staff and bring existing skills to the work. Audio interviewing is at the core of the Project’s activities, with folklore interviews transcribed and archived with field notes. Our central goal when interviewing is to establish a pace and tone that elicits rich, textured accounts and narratives.

The Project regularly acts as a community-based facilitator, advising and mentoring individuals and groups from all over Munster who wish to set up folklore and oral history projects and groups, or who wish to incorporate an oral history dimension into creative, historical or social inclusion projects. Contact with other community groups in a spirit of reciprocity has always been a feature of the Project’s activities, whether with local community filmmakers, boatbuilders, ‘Travellers’ and arts organisations, and cultural heritage and social inclusion initiatives.

Down through the years, the Project has disseminated its work in multiple formats, including radio production, online mapping, films and books (Hunter 1999, O’Carroll 2006). The annual journal, *The Archive*, is written by project researchers, members of the public, Project supporters and Folklore Department staff and students, and is distributed without charge digitally and in hard copy.

Our Cork Memory Map project involves an online mapping of extracts from ongoing and past interviews. Map users can click on a point to hear a story or memory from that place, accompanied by a transcript and images. Outreach activities to assess and promote the use of the map in schools, local projects, contexts of tourism and migrancy, and by adult learners of literacy are in development. Through these and other activities, we hope to avoid the ‘scan and dump’ approach outlined by Terras (2010) in her discussion of cultural heritage organisations’ online dissemination strategies, and to go beyond mere website analytics in project assessment that is iterative and substantive. The Memory Map interviews, designed to elicit narratives of the everyday without privileging particular themes, are yielding a compelling composite picture of life in Cork city from the 1930s to the present day (O’Carroll 2011). Themes emerging from interviews, such as community resilience (Wilson 2012) and the ubiquity of multiple, diversified livelihood strategies, and themes for which we wish to make room in interviews, such as negative aspects of lived experience, will be investigated in more depth in future interviews.

The overall archival collection of over four hundred interviews will in its composite and richly intertextual nature be a particularly rich resource for investigations of the interactions (or inextricable nature) of individual and social memory and the role of narrative as a crucial memory practice (Brockmeier 2002), of the spatial nature of memory (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004), and of placemaking and place attachment (Altman and Low 1992).

### Engagement, expectations and choices

Our public folklore practice involves constant choices regarding our engagement with expectations of us a folklore project in terms of our ‘parish of interest’ and ethnographic material generated, and with challenges and opportunities in terms of digital dissemination.

A common challenge to ethnographers faces the Project: how to meaningfully engage in the representation of a ‘community’ without reducing it to a ‘unified, homogenous collectivity’ (Goldstein 2002, 495). The Project maintains a critical engagement with the question of who our communities of contributors and resource users might be, and how they might be meaningfully represented, served and/or challenged. In contrast to public expectations of folklore practice, we eschew an idea that older native members of the community would be the only, or best possible, contributors to an investigation of a living urban culture, and have worked with a broad range of people as contributors and researchers. When proposing a project connected to Cork’s tenure as European Capital of Culture in 2005, research director Marie-Annick Desplanques suggested that the project broaden our archival holdings by investigating the changing etnoscapes (Appadurai 1990) of the city in a relatively new context of inward migration, and at a time when negative attitudes to migrants were rife in the media, public sphere and bus stop talk. The resulting ‘How’s it goin’, boy?’ radio project focused on people’s interactions with place, but, with two-thirds of the forty-six interviewees having migrated to Cork from elsewhere, subverted the expectation of an exclusive focus on older Cork residents in this context of celebration of the situated everyday. We explored all interviewees’ memories of their elders, childhood neighbourhoods and games, experiences of migrancy into and out of Cork, and interactions with the physical and cultural landscape of the city, mixing the voices, stories and insights of native Corkonians, young and old, with the voices of those who came to Cork from elsewhere.

The project also engaged critically with trends in broadcast media. As project co-ordinator, I felt that the use of the category ‘diversity programing’ in the national broadcaster’s programming policies posed a risk of contributing to the unthinking reinforcement of the category of ‘the other’, highlighting difference and creating niche programming for minorities or those already open to or interested in minority ‘issues’, thus
releasing mainstream programming from an obligation to represent diverse experiences and viewpoints. In our own programming, by mixing it up a little and confounding expectations, we hoped to provide a critical alternative to this approach, and also to generate a counterstream of kitchen-table experience of ‘the other’ through researchers’ and interviewees’ personal contact with each other.

Rather than working exclusively with an expected base of interviewees (with overtones of popular conceptions of ‘the folk’), or designing creative or research projects that worked exclusively with a group or groups deemed to be marginalised (as can be a tendency in some arts and research practice), the project opts to work, often opportunistically, with a cross-section of people. We do so in recognition of the multiple layers of experience of empowerment and marginality that cut through each individual’s and community’s experience. Additionally, we interact critically with the exclusively positive ‘narratives of nostalgia’ that often emerge as a default frame for memories in interviews about life in the past. Our interviews make space for the negative aspects of human experience through the use of detailed descriptions of the everyday and directed discussion.

Technological advances in the collection, safeguarding and dissemination of ‘cultural heritage’ bring their own challenges and opportunities. We are currently working on the construction of systems that will allow external researchers to meaningfully search our holdings remotely, in order to make the resource visible to a broader researcher cohort. Developing a policy of access that will maintain duty of care towards the material and the individuals and community from which it came is central to our concerns. An expectation that oral history or folklore groups will ‘be able to put all the interviews online’ is at odds with our work methods. There is a tension inherent in the way in which we as interviewers work to make the format and tone of interviews as informal as possible in order to generate richly textured ethnographic material (that is frequently intimate in its expression or content), yet these interviews are recorded and become relatively stable cultural texts. The conditions that we create in an interview are conducive to a type of self-representation on the part of the interviewee that is very different to that of, for example, a written, revised and edited memoir. In the light of this, and of the fact that we are not in the habit of regarding informal oral expression as a fixed and enduring rather than an ephemeral form of communication (not least the ‘in the moment’ experience of an extended speech act/ interview), it is unlikely that signed deposit forms can create in an interview are conducive to a type of self-representation on the part of the interviewee that is very different to that of, for example, a written, revised and edited memoir. In the light of this, and of the fact that we are not in the habit of regarding informal oral expression as a fixed and enduring rather than an ephemeral form of communication, it is unlikely that signed deposit forms can be taken to represent meaningful ‘informed consent’, regardless of how many existing and yet-to-be-invented forms of dissemination are listed in the permissions. In terms of the increased access to and replicability of digital dissemination of ethnographic materials, then, the debates regarding representation, duty of care and ownership in public folklore practice need to be reconsidered, perhaps in conjunction with ongoing conversations in Digital Arts and Humanities.

**Imagining and negotiating our ‘place’ within academia and the public sphere.**

A number of developments in the art, heritage, therapeutic, and academic arenas and in the media have created a context where the worth and potential of the work of this Irish public folklore project is arguably the most easily apprehended by academic institutions and in public that it has been since its foundation. What remains to be seen is whether and how the organisation might come ‘in from the margins’ in order to establish itself as a visible and recognised actor in community, creative and academic fields.

There has been a marked increase in public, artistic/creative and media interest in material generated by listening to the everyday in the last two decades (O’Carroll 2012; see also Coles 2000, Culyba et al. 2004, Kwon 2004, Lacy 1995, Schneider and Wright 2006), paralleled by an increased use and appreciation of reminiscing, memory work and narrative approaches in therapeutic practice. A shift towards regarding ethnographic material and ‘the voices of the ordinary people’ as a worthwhile component of artistic, media, publishing, therapeutic and social inclusion projects has been complimented in the heritage arena by the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The recognition of ‘the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills… that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage’ (UNESCO 2003) as being of value in the international cultural heritage arena is having an impact on heritage policy internationally and in Ireland, creating space for the ‘stuff of folklore’ to be more meaningfully apprehended by heritage organisations whose official definitions of ‘heritage’ had been largely limited to built and environmental aspects, with consequences for funding, support and public expectations.15

When pressed to define the Project’s public folklore work within academic institutions, it is difficult in the context of the current administrative ethos to find a meaningful label that will lead to the justification of continuing institutional support, despite the Project archive’s potential as a rich research resource in studies of social history, linguistics, memory, migration, place-making and social and cultural process. Community Based Research (CBR) is one focus of a recent initiative by Campus Engage, a HEA-funded Network for the promotion of civic engagement activities in Irish higher education: this initiative may bring about more meaningful institutional recognition for such research. The Project aligns with CBR in terms of its community engagement, preoccupation with an ethic of care (Manzo and Brightbill 2007), an emphasis on process and the well-being of the researchers and contributors, an iterative research process and a more participative
and open approach to knowledge production (Kindon et al. 2007, Goodson and Phillimore 2012).16

In the absence of existing imaginative space for a multifaceted conception of ‘public folklore’, to the extent that we often publicly refer to our interviews as oral history for ease of communication, it remains to be seen how the CFP might situate itself in terms of rendering itself visible to those who would find its work interesting or worthy of collaboration or support. The use of the label ‘folklore’ seems to mask certain aspects of what we do both to the public and within academia, yet ‘intangible cultural heritage’ has few communicative advantages. As many of our outputs have much in common with locative and community art practice, one possible pathway includes increased artistic collaboration and creative output as folklore practitioners. Engaging in work that may associate with art or therapeutic practice, but on our own terms and clearly under the banner of folklore, may contribute to an assertive public redefinition of the potential role of folkloristic practice in cultural investigation and the public sphere. Technological advances that enable simultaneous dissemination of audio, still and moving images and transcripts, coupled with new modes of visualisation such as geographic browsing on the Cork Memory Map, explode the potential of our resources in terms of users (tourists, browsing on the Cork Memory Map, explode the potential of our resources in terms of users (tourists, migrants, diaspora, researchers worldwide) and uses (some of which may not be immediately foreseeable, such as the potential relevance of the Memory Map to adult learners of literacy).

The Project is singular in its constitution, range of activities and longevity, and has survived due to the confluence of a number of favourable and unique conditions.17

This ability to give ethnographic undertakings the time and space to grow through open enquiry may not be possible to achieve to the same extent in funded, time-bounded research, which tends to be well-defined from an early stage in terms of themes and outcomes, and to lack the flexibility to follow new leads and achieve the same kind of time-depth. Our specific situation enables us to engage in a mode of open social enquiry that is gentle and slow-burning with outcomes that cannot be comprehensively foreseen, developing as they do in the iterative process of practice. This approach to research and practice is particularly rewarding in terms of the generation of ethnographic material of integrity, and in terms of engaging as a positive yet critical actor within the community and broader public sphere. A constellation of factors suggest that the time may be right for the Project to engage with a range of areas of practice in academia and in the public sphere in order to put the potential of public folklore practice on the map.

References:


Notes

1 See Hafstein (2012) for a discussion of cultural heritage as a category constructed and used by actors ‘to mobilize people and resources, to reform discourses, and to transform practices’ (ibid: 502).

2 This conception of folklore studies has informed folklore study in UCC since the 1970s, but is not always apprehended by the public or other, potentially cognate, disciplines, a fact illustrated by Richard Johnson’s account of his confusion at hearing of the department’s plans to set up a centre for urban ethnology: ‘I realize now that this visit confused me because Folklore Studies did not figure at all in the version of culture study developed at [the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in] Birmingham, but was a major component in the Irish version’ (Henkes and Johnson 2002: 129).

3 For example, the Indian National Folklore Support Centre lists the construction of community archives as a step in their project activities cycle. http://wiki.indianfolklore.org/index.php?title=NFSC_Organizational_Details, accessed 06 October 2012.

4 See Briody (2007) for a detailed discussion of the methodology of the Commission and of the gaps and strengths of the collection, which had extremely high contextualisation and metadata standards for its time, rendering the resource particularly valuable to researchers.

5 Space does not allow me to enter into a discussion of oral history as a practice that from the 1960s onwards has had a strong tradition of advocacy and empowerment work in the U.K. and U.S.A., coupled with a desire to document ‘history from below’ and give a voice to lost or hidden experiences (in Ireland, however, less so). Perks and Thomson (1998) give a good overview of the field, including insights into the often-tense relationship with the discipline of history regarding the ‘validity of sources’.

6 The group is volunteer-run and receives little institutional support, and despite its real and potential contribution to social inclusion and cultural heritage preservation, the risk of burn-out among its members is high.

7 See Desplanques (2000, 2005) for a discussion of the consultation process with community groups and of ethical issues relating to the project’s formation and operation.

8 For an outline of the process of meaningfully engaging with the concept of a ‘Northside community’, establishing common ground between research and community interests, and the role of the insider/outside view in this project, see Ó Cruailaoich et al. (1993), Desplanques (2000, 2005) and Sugrue (1996). Linehan (2005) discusses the Northside as an economically and socially marginalised area.

9 The reader can consult the website of the Project (www.ucc.ie/en/cfp) and the Cork Memory Map (www.corkmemorymap.org) in order to access and browse our outputs.

10 Similar projects include City of Memory (New York), Hackney Hear (London) and Murmur (worldwide).

11 The initial map and database design was carried out by Cheryl Donagheue (UCC) as part of dissertation for an MSc in Interactive Media, assisted by Colin Mac Hale. The Project received support for the further technical development of the map from the Heritage Council in 2012.

12 I follow Cohen (1985) in thinking of ‘community’ as both a felt reality and a symbolic construct, one that may unify (regardless of whether the understanding of its significance differs from individual to individual), and which is always open to differing interpretations and contestation.

13 An understanding that is likely to be flavoured, now and in the future, by experiences of Facebook-type ‘spontaneous’, informal self-representation that has high potential for replicability and longevity.

14 As duty of care to individuals, materials, and communities has been generally understood within folkloristics to be relational, whether in terms of relationships between individuals/communities and individual folklorists or archival institutions, the question of whether this duty can or should be passed on to the ‘user’ (as with much online dissemination) and whether it can exist outside the original relational matrix, needs to be addressed on an ongoing basis.

15 The Irish Heritage Act of 1995 lists Heritage as including elements such as monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways, but does not refer to elements now associated with Intangible Cultural Heritage (ITC) (Government of Ireland 1995). However, expertise in ITC was sought for the Irish National Consultation Panel on Cultural Heritage in 2012. For discussion of the background and complex range of implications of the Convention (including the opportunities and dangers of recognition and codification) see Hafstein 2012 and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004.

16 These approaches align with the practice, methodologies and preoccupations of much public folklore, particularly with regard to the themes of representation and ownership of processes and outputs. See for example Baron 2010, Wells 2006 and Westerner 2006.

17 Among these are dedicated UCC staff and project researchers, and a tripartite support structure that makes it difficult for any one supporting institution to make the decision to withdraw support lightly.
Abstract: Autoethnography has been criticised for being vain, self-indulgent and narcissistic (Coffey 1999) – a contention that may discourage new ethnographers from engaging in a more personal and reflexive form of writing. But what if the ethnographer shares the same culture with his social actors? What happens when the observer is part of the social phenomenon that is being observed? This paper foregrounds the methodological framework of autoethnography in the study of Filipino nurse migration. Through ethnographic fieldwork and my personal experience of migration and the trajectories it took as a result of my being a nursing student, a professional nurse, a migrant nurse, an activist and a researcher, this paper reflects on the concept and practice of autoethnography as a credible and scholarly mode of ethnographic inquiry.

Keywords: nurse migration, Philippines, autoethnography

Nursing the World
As an active source of professional nurses to the developed world, the Philippines continues to assert itself at the epicentre of international nurse migration through the aggressive marketing of nursing (for example, see Figure 1) and of Filipino nurses as the ‘nurses-of-choice’ for rich and industrialised nations. The active role of the Philippine government as a labour broker that prepares and facilitates the out-migration of its citizens is examined in detail by scholars such as Guevarra (2010) and Rodriguez (2010). Likewise, Choy (2003) argues that the history of US colonialism in the Philippines has shaped nursing education and practice in the country and has further influenced the motivations and expectations of Filipino nurses. The Philippine state and the nursing educational system’s concerted interventions and global market orientation resulted in an increased local production of nurses which aims to facilitate an early migration of Filipino nursing students.

This paper forms part of my doctoral thesis Licensed to Care: Inhabiting the Transnational Economy of ‘Global Pinoy’ (2013) that interrogates Filipino nurse migration by critically examining the country’s institutionalised migration regime. It focuses on the methodological framework of autoethnography in the study of Filipino nurse migration drawing on first-hand experience and reflexive accounts, interviews, photographs, policy documents and material cultural artefacts, to question and problematise the dominant discourse of migration and to challenge existing notions about the Philippines and its culture of migration. As one of the very first Filipino nurses to arrive in Ireland and work in an Irish hospital and, later, to become the first chairperson of the Overseas Nurses section of the Irish Nurses Organisation (INO), I draw from my personal narratives to explore the relationships between myself and my object of study; my life story and my ethnographic practices; and my personal desires, motives and experiences as a nursing student, a professional nurse, a Filipino migrant, and a scholar.

Autoethnography: Bridging the Social and the Personal
The adoption of an autoethnographic approach in my thesis is the result of constant reflexive exploration and questioning. I draw from my personal experiences of nursing and migration to discover for myself, to construct from my own experiences, the links between such reflexivity and the analytical insights it produces, between the personal and the theoretical (Motzafi-Haller 1997: 219). Reed-Danahay (1997) describes autoethnography as a genre of writing and research that connects the personal to the cultural, placing the self within a social context. Usually written in the first person and featuring dialogue, emotion, and self-consciousness as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure and culture (Ellis and Bochner 2000), autoethnographic stories ‘are highly personalised accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding’ (Sparkes 2000: 21). Denzin writes: ‘First-person narrative texts allow Third World and indigenous persons to share in the ownership of the research endeavour’ (2001: 7885). Writing myself into this work on migration not only challenges accepted views about silent authorship, where the researcher’s voice is not included in the presentation of findings (Charmaz and Mitchell 1996), it exposes my own experiences to critique and debate.

As a novice ethnographer, locating, let alone embodying, an autobiographical voice in my ethnographic work presents some personal and methodological challenges, which have also been identified by other scholars. For example, research textbooks warn of problems of deception, self-disclosure, and going native (Lofland and Lofland 1971) in the process of fieldwork. This ‘nativist’ turn, according to Kuper, has ‘potentially dangerous implications’, while the question of the ‘ethnic identity

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of the investigator' raises 'fundamental questions about the nature of anthropology and its uses' (1994: 547). Some authors further advise ethnographers to 'turn away from local scenes and their participants, from relations formed and personal debts incurred in the field' when moving from field notes to writing ethnographic texts (Emerson et al. 1995: 169).

Earlier ethnographers have been concerned with the methodological aspects of their autoethnographic work (Aguilar 1981; Kim 1990; Chavez 2008; Maydell 2010), while others have experienced personal tensions between their personal and professional identities (Kondo 1990, Narayan 1993). Wall (2008), writing about international adoption, realises that autoethnography can be a very difficult undertaking, confronting anxiety-producing questions pertaining to representation, balance and ethics. Ethnographers also describe facing issues such as the legitimacy of story-as-scholarship and the criteria used to judge narratives of the self (Sparkes 2000), including questions about validity, motivations, and self as data (Holt 2003). As Coffey warns us: 'it would be wrong to suggest that most of us ever really become part of the cultural setting we study, and that our identities have a lasting impact on those cultural settings' (1999: 37).

Concerned by these admonitions, I initially approached the field with a guarded attitude and a fear of breaking methodological protocols and crossing ethnographic boundaries. I restrained myself from excessively discussing my subjectivity so as not to lead to 'hyper self-consciousness or self-absorption' (Clifford 1986: 15). I avoided dwelling at length on my personal and cultural background as both a Filipino and a nurse with the people I met during the course of fieldwork. But this early experience of being an objective and detached observer felt unreal and uncomfortable; it left me dissatisfied. Could I really pretend that I was somehow outside what I study and not impacted upon by the same forces as others (Okely 1992)? Behar observes: 'we ask for revelations from others, but we reveal little or nothing of ourselves; we make others vulnerable, but we ourselves remain invulnerable' (1993: 273). How could I effectively communicate and write the experiences of others without understanding my own? Goodall further asks:

In life conversations, whom do you trust – the person who never discloses his or her own feelings, who has no interesting life stories to offer in exchange for the details of yours? Or do you trust the person who merges in the talk as someone living a passionate and reflexive life, someone willing to share with you its joy, its pain, its speculations, its ambiguities (2000: 23).

My experience of fieldwork challenges Coffey's and Emerson's theoretical claims that despite immersion and intensive resocialisation, the ethnographer remains a non-member of the group – an 'outsider, and at an extreme, a cultural alien' (Emerson et al 1995: 4). Rather, it affirms that, despite years of working and studying abroad, the subject of my study is far from strange and exotic. I need not be somebody other than myself – a Filipino nurse migrant studying and exploring Filipino nurse migration; the commonalities are real and not incidental. Throughout the research process, my subject formation as Filipino and migrant nurse not only defines my object of study but, crucially, provides a methodological and epistemological basis for incorporating 'elements of life experience when writing about others' rather than being merely an 'objective outsider' (Denzin 1989, cited by Reed-Danahay 1997: 6). Inhabiting the same cultural background as those of my social actors and having 'the advantage of a very long personal field experience' (Alasuutari 1999: 8) instils in me the confidence not to suppress subjective accounts but to recognise my own experiences as a co-source of knowledge alongside the other works in the field that I intend to study.

My reflexive accounts and engagement with my social actors exposed the macro and microstructures and processes that have transformed the Philippines into the most prolific source of professional nurses in the world. Throughout the research process, I met, spoke to and encountered familiar people and revisited places in the Philippines where I had been in my capacity as a nursing student, as a professional nurse and as a Filipino migrant. This time, under my more purposeful and critical gaze, the familiar people became...
social actors and the familiar locations and events were transformed into ethnographic sites and moments; all were worthy of further probing and interrogation and, in the process, urged me to question my own subject positioning and authority.

Abu-Lughod asks: ‘what happens when the “other” that the anthropologist is studying is simultaneously constructed as, at least partially, a self’ (1991: 140). Despite my early reluctance, I feel fortunate to be writing in an era where a fixed distinction between native and non-native ethnographers and the dichotomy between outsider/insider or observer/observed have gradually diminished. As Rosaldo argues:

A sea change in cultural studies has eroded once-dominant conceptions of truth and objectivity. The truth of objectivism – absolute, universal, and timeless – has lost its monopoly status. It now competes, on more nearly equal terms, with the truths of case studies that are embedded in local contexts, shaped by local interests, and coloured by local perceptions. The agenda for social analysis has shifted to include not only eternal verities and law-like generalisations but also political processes, social changes, and human differences (1989: 20).

Locating the Personal Voice

As a Filipino scholar, born, raised and educated in the Philippines, and writing in English as a second language, adopting an autoethnographic genre has been both a challenge and an opportunity. The dearth of published autobiographies, let alone autoethnographic work, by native Filipino writers and scholars in the Philippines has been conspicuous although hardly surprising. Postgraduate students in the country are often encouraged to subscribe to statistical research or to the traditional methods of the social sciences.

While in the West, autobiographies and memoirs compete with best-selling fiction; in the Philippines, the narration of one’s life, even among celebrities, has been very limited. Because the autoethnographic genre ‘often discloses hidden details of private life and highlights emotional experience’ (Ellis 2004: 30) and can be ‘painful sometimes’ (2004: 23), academia in the Philippines has been very slow to accept the genre as a genuine and legitimate academic mode of inquiry. This could be attributed to the recognised Filipino concept of hiya [shame] – a ‘painful emotion arising from a relationship with an authority figure or with society, inhibiting self-assertions in a situation which is perceived as dangerous to one’s ego’ (Bulatao 1964: 426). This ‘fear of being left exposed, unprotected and unaccepted’ (Andres 1981: 18) could possibly have inhibited ethnographic development. Similarly, while establishing intimacy with readers or developing personal character (Van Maanen 1983) is not alien to Philippine literature as seen in movies or telenovela (television series), this has not translated fully into academic scholarship.

Okely argues that ‘the extent to which autobiography can be written into the ethnography is a matter for creative experimentation (1992: 24). She adds:

There are ways of exploring new forms appropriate to the anthropological endeavour. The genre need be fixed neither in a Great Man, western tradition nor within established literary conventions... There are alternative possibilities which anthropology might imagine (1992: 24).

I draw inspiration from the various autoethnographic approaches used by other researchers. Ellis (2004), for example, explored several avenues to autoethnography: personal narrative, where social scientists view themselves as the phenomenon and write evocative stories focusing on their personal lives; indigenous or native ethnographies, written by researchers who share a history of colonialism or economic subordination; reflexive or narrative ethnography, which focuses on a culture or sub-culture while the author uses his/her life story in that culture to look at more deeply at self-other interactions. The other methods include complete member researcher, confessional tales and contingent autoethnography. More recently, Anderson (2006: 386) proposes a new approach, ‘analytic autoethnography,’ that is committed to ‘analytic agenda’.

Through the application of a narrative autoethnographic approach in the study of Filipino nurse migration, I utilise reflexive voice to learn about the other (Okely 1992), to reflect critically on how these experiences shaped my personal motives and desires and to seek to provide ‘insight that (befits) the complexity of human lives’ (Josselson 2006: 4). Jackson (1989) deploys the term ‘radical empiricism’ to describe the ethnographer’s experiences and interaction with other participants as a vital part of what is being studied.

My personal history apart, I approach this autoethnography in a manner that draws reflexively on my own experiences in the culture to bend back on myself, with a view to looking more deeply at interactions between myself and others (Ellis and Bohner 2000). By unveiling my own story the paper ‘foregrounds the multiple natures of selfhood and opens up new ways of writing about social life’ (Reed-Danahay 1997: 3). Utilising reflections in my personal life, I link my own experiences to others and to theoretical positions that have hitherto only partially explored the nuances of Filipino nurse migration.

Autoethnography allows me to write and reflect about personal experiences I vividly remember; significant moments that have changed my perspective about things and about life. Scholars refer to such incidents as ‘epiphanies’– remembered moments perceived to have impacted significantly on the
trajectory of a person's life (Denzin 1989, Ellis and Bochner 1992). Goodall described them as 'subjective positioning' which is 'usually derived from deeply felt lived experiences' because they recall a life's self-defining moments, decisions or turning points' (2000: 133, original emphasis). For example, my experience of arrival at Dublin Airport became not only an experience of voyage but also of endless discovery; an act of 'seeing the world' in both the geographical and metaphorical sense as it opened my eyes about my identity as a Filipino citizen outside his native country – a non-EU and non-Irish national with limited rights and opportunities.

My reflexive discussion of my experiences working in an Irish hospital provides further insight into how I was socially constructed as a Filipino migrant nurse – hardworking, high-skilled and subservient – and how I challenged such a construction by politicising the plight of migrant nurses and questioning existing practices and policies in relation to international recruitment, the danger of the short and temporary contracts offered to us, the lack of promotional opportunities for migrant nurses and the weaknesses of the Irish immigration regime. By highlighting these personal experiences from the beginning, I want to 'confront the notion of objectivity in research by starting with the subjective, working from the self outwards' (Okely 1978: 110, cited by Callaway 1992), and to articulate the central connection of my personal experiences with my object of study. For as Okely further argues:

[T]he reflexive I of the ethnographer subverts the idea of observer as impersonal machine.
The autobiographical insertion is different from the stamp of author's authority: not simply 'I was there', but the self and category whom the others confronted, received and confided in' (1992: 24).

Similar retrospective accounts depicting stories of personal hardship, struggle, vulnerability and success are observed throughout this paper, which has been approached 'though the double lens of refracted memories and professional analysis' (Callaway 1992: 43). For example, I juxtaposed my past experiential accounts of my own education and training as a nurse and working in a government hospital in the Philippines with the ethnographic present to establish clearly the inherent relationship between my autobiography and the culture I examined through what Ellis calls 'systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall' (2004: xvii). Embarking on this autoethnographic study allows me to acknowledge personal motivations and contingencies underlying my decision to leave my home country and pursue a nursing career abroad.

While it is tempting to endlessly internalise and indulge one's own personal experiences, I look reflexively at how these experiences form the relationships I negotiated throughout the several stages of my personal life and built or rebuilt with others. Van Maanen foregrounds the need for balance between introspection and objectification to avoid a resultant 'vanity ethnography' (1988: 93). He adds:

In skilled hands, the personal voice can be a gift to readers and the confessional becomes a self-reflective meditation on the nature of ethnographic understanding; the reader comes away with a deeper sense of the problems posed by the enterprise itself (1988: 92)

Which experiences, then, deserve to be analysed? Which ones should be written into representation? What impact would the written text have on individuals or groups I have met and worked with or on those with whom I maintain intimate relationships? Constantly moving between two continents, situated between my personal life and that of others, for whom am I writing? If I am writing for Filipino students and nurses whose experiences I chose to explore around my own, after 'nursing the world', do I still see things from the same perspective?

Van Maanen argues that these considerations are 'dependent on an uncountable number of strategic choices and active constructions' (1988: 73). Ellis et al. (2011) argue that we implicate others in our work when we conduct and write research – our family, friends, colleagues, institutions we work for, our community. Issues around relational ethics are heightened for autoethnographers (Ellis 2007) and must be considered when writing personal stories. Reed-Danahay further adds that 'the ability to transcend everyday conceptions of selfhood and social life is related to the ability to write or do autoethnography' (1997: 4). Therefore, a good autoethnography must be 'capable of being respected by critics of literature as well as by social scientists' (Denzin 1997: 200); must be emotionally engaging (Behar 1996); and 'strives to use relational language and styles to create purposeful dialogue between the reader and the author' (Goodall 2000: 7).

Tillmann-Healy contextualises that autoethnography is a 'discourse from the margins and identifies the material, political and transformative dimensions of representational politics' (2009: 191). Pratt (1994) takes the readers back to Peru in the sixteenth century and uses the term 'contact zones', referring to the space of colonial encounters (1994: 29) to argue that autoethnographers must engage with representations others have made of them. Migration as a social, cultural and political phenomenon cannot be examined in isolation from the macrostructural processes that continually influence the movement of people. It is within this premise that I examined the transnational economy of Filipino nurse migration by juxtaposing local perceptions, cultural practices and individual experiences with national politics and the broader discourse of globalisation.
Conclusion: Writing the ‘Ethnographic Self’
To be a migrant of colour in the developed world is to be scrutinised relentlessly, to be observed incessantly, and to be written and rewritten according to the dominant politics of the host country. Migrant nurses have generally remained as the passive ‘native’ subjects of research; their personal stories collectively are dramatised in migration conferences and publications under the generic heading ‘migrant’. This paper reflects on how I deviated from this convention by personally foregrounding my country’s migration practices within the scope of my own lived experiences.

The presence of Filipino migrants is pervasive in many destination countries. Interestingly, most of the published ethnographic work on Philippine migration to date has been authored by Filipino-American academics (see, for example Manalansan, 2003, Choy 2003, Espiritu 2003, Guevarra 2010, Rodriguez 2010), who either grew up or were born in the United States. The extensive work of these scholars on Filipino migration is helpful in framing and advancing further migration studies including mine. But rather than being the subject of other’s work, I propose a more reflexive examination of the migration phenomenon through an autoethnographic genre of writing that ‘announces its own politics and evidences a political consciousness . . . interrogates the realities it represents . . . invokes the teller’s story in the history that is told’ (Trihn 1991: 188).

Autoethnographies have been criticised for being too self-indulgent and narcissistic (Coffey 1999). Autobiographical accounts are also critiqued as no more ‘authentic than other modes of representation: a narrative of a personal experience is not a clear route into the truth’ (Atkinson and Delamont 2006: 166). My decision to pursue an autoethnographic exploration of the Filipino nurse migration is not driven by reasons to do with self-promotion. If that were my intention, I could have chosen an object of study that would further my present career prospects as a nurse or indeed opt for the popular methods of the social sciences (interviews, focus groups, statistical analysis), with which I have been familiar. But how or why should I ignore such a striking reality? Migration is part of who I am and what I have become. Not all migrants or Filipino nurses can become researchers, or are interested in becoming one. Like Denzin, I believe there is a ‘need for a reflexive form of writing that turns ethnographic and theoretical texts back on to each other’ (1997: xii), and migration and its multidimensionality is an area that has the potential to achieve this objective.

Goodall maintains that ‘learning to write “who you are” – the character of your narrator or persona – is the soul of good writing. Good ethnographic writing’ (2001: 136, original emphasis). Being a Filipino by birth, a nurse by profession, an activist by heart, and a scholar, it would have been a grave error to ignore these realities in this undertaking. To detach myself from my object of study would have been a disservice to my sense of selfhood and to the experiences that I shared with the many Filipinos and migrant nurses I have known in both a personal and a professional capacity. The truth is that I am not an ethnographer who has left the field after gathering the material needed for my research project. I remain firmly in the field that I study. This is not by choice or from necessity; this is simply who I am and what I do.

We do not choose to become ethnographers; ethnography chooses and defines us (Goodall 2001). Goodall (2001) adds that becoming a writer, and I would add, a researcher, necessitates finding something worth writing about and acquiring an ability to write about it. In my doctoral study, I have attempted to break away from the prevailing tendency to write a migrant’s life story through the narrative of third-person voice. Behar anticipated this occurring when she predicted, ‘the need for “life history” that speaks for the other will lessen, and the “natives” will tell their own stories’ (1996: 18). Telling my own migration story was initially an overwhelming prospect and writing one’s self has proven to be emotionally exhausting. But through the process, performing autoethnography has become a rewarding journey of personal and cultural reflections about experiences, including those embarrassing and awkward moments, which have shaped my being, desires and motivations and transformed my work into ‘a vehicle of emancipation from cultural and familial identity scripts’ (Spry 2001: 708).

References


**Notes:**


2 I refer to Ireland, the UK and the US, countries with which I am more familiar in terms of published material.

3 One of the very limited examples of an autobiographical work written by a Filipino is Fanny A. García’s *Journeys with My Autistic Son* (2004). It is the very first biographical/autobiographical book written from the perspective of a parent with an autistic child in the Philippines.

4 For further readings on these approaches, see Tedlock 1991; Goodall 2001; Ellis 2004; Anderson 2006; Tillmann 2009.

5 Analytic autoethnography, according to Anderson (2006), has the following key features: complete member researcher status (CMR); analytic reflexivity; and narrative visibility of the researcher’s self. For a critique of analytic autoethnography, see Denzin (2006).
Abstract: This paper looks at an ethnographic participatory photographic project, which was carried out in 2010 with a group of people seeking asylum and living in a ‘direct provision’ centre in Ireland. Through developing a methodological approach which aimed to include the subjects of research as co-collaborators - participants in the process as far as possible - this research project sought to explore the experiences of living in the ‘temporary permanent’ space of direct provision, alongside people living within that space, and to create with them alternative representations which might challenge the ultimately damaging ‘convenient images’ (Wood 1985) in much mainstream media. The paper situates participatory photography as a research method, and looks at the way in which it was developed and applied in the context of this research. It illustrates some of the work which emerged from the collaborative project, and the ways in which this work, and the processes of its creation, reflected aspects of the experiences of participants in the direct provision system in Ireland.

Key words: Participatory visual research, asylum seekers, direct provision, participatory photography, ethnographic research.

Introduction
There are around five thousand people living in accommodation centres all over Ireland – former hotels, hostels and army barracks – waiting for their claims for asylum to be processed. Over half of these people have been waiting for over three years (RIA 2013), and many for longer: seven, eight, nine years for some. Reduced to ‘sixty nine’ numbers instead of names, they wait in an institutional limbo for a final decision on their claims. Fed and housed through the ‘direct provision’ system, these people are kept on the margins of society, unable to access employment or education, and forced to live a ‘life without choice’ (Nic Giolla Choille 2010). They are simultaneously inside and outside: inside a system which controls their everyday life and decisions, and yet kept outside of mainstream society, prevented from integrating through a series of deliberate measures. A weekly allowance of nineteen euro and ten cents ensures that for most people, informal integration in terms of ‘normal’ social activities with local communities is limited and difficult. Direct provision is the main system in Ireland, which accommodates asylum seekers awaiting claims for refugee status. Established in 2000 as an ‘emergency measure’ to deal with the increasing numbers of people seeking asylum at that time, the system was originally designed to accommodate people for up to six months while their claims were being processed. Thirteen years later, it is still the main system in place.

This paper looks at an ethnographic participatory photographic project that was carried out in 2010 with a group of people seeking asylum and living in a direct provision centre in Ireland. The project was the basis for doctoral research based at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, aiming to explore the experiences of living in the ‘temporary permanent’ space of direct provision, alongside people living within that space. Both in academic studies and mainstream media, much is written about refugees and asylum seekers, but the voices of asylum seekers themselves are rarely heard. As O’Neill and Harindranath (2006) point out…

…the nearly complete absence – apart from a few exemplary reports and television documentaries – of an alternative voice from the perspective of the refugee or asylum seeker raises important ethico political issues relating to the politics of representation, democracy, and immigration (2006: 41).

Through developing a methodological approach which aimed to include the subjects of research as co-collaborators - participants in the process as far as possible - this research project sought to foreground the voices of people living within the direct provision system in Ireland and to create with them alternative representations which might challenge the ultimately damaging ‘convenient images’ (Wood 1985, cited in Zetter 2007) in much mainstream media. I begin by situating participatory photography as a research method, and looking at the way in which it was developed and applied in the context of this research. I then briefly illustrate some of the work that emerged from the collaborative project, and the ways in which this work reflected aspects of experience in the direct provision system in Ireland.

Situating Participatory Visual Research
‘Visual methods’ in social science research refers to a range of methods and practices that involve the use of visual media and technologies at all stages of research (Pink 2004: 1185. See also Banks 2001, Rose 2007). The usage and validation of visual methods as part of social science research methods has become more widespread since the 1990s; the ways in which they are used and understood differing across the social sciences,
Even when we have arguments, we keep our voices down so that the corridor remains calm and quiet. I think most people will do that. Abiye

There is no way you can go to your room unless through that corridor. It’s always there, when you come back. The kids, they like to play in that corridor. Sometimes you find them with all the doors open, all the doors up to the end. You can see them racing their bicycles, it’s nice for the kids because they don’t have any ground to race their bicycles, this is the racing course for them. It’s so nice when you find kids playing, very happy, and they don’t have any idea what’s going on. Emmanuelle

Basically it’s like a street, you’ve got no control over it, people might leave it dirty, might leave it clean, that’s the way it goes. Benjamin

When I’m walking towards my room, there’s a wall with a door that’s not a door and that’s how I feel every time I’m in here. To me it’s a representation of my life. There is a door, but it’s not a door. Elizabeth

It looks calm, it looks quiet, it looks deserted, but definitely a lot going on in the rooms, a lot of pain, a lot of trouble, a lot of crises, going on in the rooms certainly, but everybody comes out, you wipe your face off, pretend as if everything is fine, walk the corridors… Abiye
informed by the theoretical and methodological priorities of each discipline.

While the term ‘visual research’, or ‘visual methods’, covers a wide range of activities, the methodology used in this particular research falls into the broad category of production of images as part of the research process, in collaboration with participants: ‘participatory visual research’. While this approach, in part, uses images to elicit responses from participants, it is different from ‘photo elicitation’ (see Harper 2002 for example) or ‘participatory photo interviewing’ (Hurworth 2003, Kolb 2008), in that it sought to use images as a means to collaborate with participants as far as possible, in all stages of the research. The project sought to use the visual, and more specifically photography, to engage participants in collaborative creation of images and long-term critical dialogue around these images.

Participatory photography is a method that puts cameras into the hands of participants in order that they document their own lives and experiences, and then uses the resulting images to articulate and communicate those experiences in various ways. The origins of participatory photography lie at the intersection between participatory approaches to communication and community development, Freirean dialogic pedagogy, feminist approaches to research and documentary photography.

Shifts towards more participatory approaches and communication strategies gained momentum in the 1970s, particularly in the area of rural community development, where methods such as ‘participatory rural appraisal’ (PRA) (Chambers 1994) were developed for the inclusion of local populations in needs analysis and policy development. Also influencing these shifts, both in community development work and social science research, were the development of participatory action research (PAR) (Fals-Borda 1996) and Freire’s dialogic pedagogy (Freire 1970). Dialogic pedagogy provided a radical alternative to traditional presentational modes of teaching. Significantly, Freire believed in the importance of visualization to engage participants in their own learning, and to stimulate reflection, discussion and action (Freire 1970). Participatory approaches have in common the desire to include the traditional subjects of research as active participants in the research process, to explore directly issues concerning them, and to work with them towards positive change. The term ‘participatory research’ now covers a range of approaches in which the subjects of the research are included to varying degrees in its processes, a ‘set of methodologies and epistemologies that aim to effect change for and with research participants’ (Pain and Francis 2003:46), or aiming to achieve ‘social change from below’ (Dona 2007: 214).

Feminist critiques of conventional research, both inside and outside the academy, which since the 1980s have explored reciprocity and questioned who benefits from research (Pain 2004), have also influenced movements towards more participatory and activist work since the mid 1990s (Fuller and Kitchin 2004). Such approaches to research challenge traditional hierarchies between researcher and researched, moving away from researcher-subject, or subject-object relations towards subject-subject relations (O’Neill 2008: 41). They shift the role of the researcher to enabler or facilitator, and the role of participant to co-researcher or co-activist (Fuller and Kitchin 2004), allowing for research which is ‘more reflexive, reciprocal and representative’ (Fuller and Kitchin 2004: 4).

Similar to critiques of conventional research in the 1970s and 1980s, documentary photography also began to be challenged at this time. The idea that acts of looking and recording could be neutral,
disinterested or innocent began to be rejected, and instead described in terms of the relations of power and control that they contained (Price 1996: 103). Documentary photography could be seen to be reinforcing patriarchal values, with predominantly privileged male photographers pointing their cameras downwards towards working class and impoverished subjects, reinforcing a hegemonic imperialist power/powerless nexus and ‘complicit in the discourses which function to exert social control’ (Price 1996: 105). It has been argued that documentary photographs are usually taken from the photographer’s outside perspective, and can thus fail to capture an insider perspective (Wang and Burris 1994, 1997, Strack et al. 2004). More recently, alternatives have been sought to traditional documentary photography in which unequal power relations and issues of representation are addressed through a more involved relationship with the subject (PhotoVoice 2012).

There is an increasing body of work which recognizes the potential of visual and participatory research for exploring experiences of forced migration and the spaces it creates, as well as for challenging essentialising or stereotyping representations around asylum seekers and refugees by creating alternative representations and narratives. Representations of refugees and asylum seekers, both visual and verbal, by others are far more common than words or images created by themselves (Malkki 1996, Jackson 2002). Collaborative visual methods, such as participatory photography, provide a way of working directly with refugees and asylum seekers, creating spaces to explore experiences and developing ways to foreground voices, stories and opinions. Practitioners and researchers who work in this way often attempt to counter exclusion and stereotyping through foregrounding the experiences and perspectives of migrants themselves (see for example Alexandra 2008, Friend 2007, 2010, Grossman and O’Brien 2007, 2011, Haughey 2009, 2010, O’Neill 2002, 2007, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, O’Neill and Harindranath 2006).

Visual and other creative approaches also allow for a shift away from dominantly linguistic frameworks, which may limit the expression of sensory experiences. In this research, I sought to move beyond verbal testimony, the means by which asylum seekers are asked on arrival in the ‘host’ country to ‘prove’ that they are ‘genuine refugees’ and by which they are more often than not refused protection. The move away from dependency solely on language is important in a multicultural setting and allows participants to explore issues through visual and other sensory methods, and to have the possibility of responding outside the linguistic framework of the researcher. I sought through this project to move towards a more embodied and sensuous research, or a ‘sensuous scholarship’ (Stoller 1997), using participatory photography as a ‘passageway to processes of subjectivisation’ (Pollock 2008: 255), exploring everyday life and subjective experience.

As well as the positive applications of participatory photography or ‘photovoice’ methods, there are also critiques and questions around working in this way. Feminist scholars have long criticized vision as a dominant patriarchal sensory apparatus (see for example Haraway 1988), questioning who is looking at whom and how. Similarly, giving participants cameras does not automatically overcome power issues between researcher and researched, or around issues of representation; indeed that the power relation persists in some way is revealed also in the direction of the

Fig. 3: These are packed suitcases, as we are staying in the hostel in suspense, you don’t know what is coming next, so you are ever ready with your things packed. Mary

Fig. 4: The bright side of the wall represents the present for asylum seekers, and this dark aspect represents the future – why? Because you don’t know what the future holds for you. You might get a letter tomorrow that says you have been given leave to remain, fine, or at the end of the day... I heard the case of someone that spent more than seven years here and then was deported back to our country. That was a very sad situation. Ade

Ironically, Ade was deported with his family to Nigeria shortly after the project ended, after almost six years waiting in the asylum system. Two of his three children were born in Ireland, and two were in school in the local area.
exchange involved in ‘giving participants cameras’. There are questions around the benefits for participants of such projects, and the sustainability of those benefits. Words such as ‘empowerment’, ‘transformation’ and ‘positive change’ are often used around participatory photography projects, as well as participatory projects more generally, which may be (unintentionally) patronizing, as well as being unrealistic. There is also the question of whether this type of work can cause more harm than good to participants or communities. Ballerini points to the ‘complicity of photography in the processes of objectification and subjection’ (1997: 175), and the potential of participatory photography projects to ‘reinforce the status quo rather than question it’ (1997: 169). In addition to this, the interdependency of image and text in methods which create images as part of research has raised questions around the power of the visual to communicate something which may not be able to be expressed or conveyed by the verbal or written:

This interdependency points to a certain paradox at the heart of this body of work, though, which is that while it advocates the unique abilities of visual materials to convey information or affect in ways that words find hard or impossible, those visual materials still need some written context to make their effects evident (Rose 2007: 255).

Despite these important questions and critiques, I chose to work with participatory photography due to its power as a vehicle for discussion and for working collaboratively and creatively with participants over a prolonged period of time, as well as its potential to represent experiences and perspectives in an immediate and compelling way. Participatory photography is one way of moving towards a more democratic means of representation, towards ‘subject-subject relations’ between researcher and research subjects, creating visual representations by refugees and asylum seekers, alongside their words and voices. While participatory photography certainly doesn’t eliminate issues around power relations and representation, it does offer one way to explore, express and represent issues from an insider perspective. By working collaboratively with asylum seekers through visual and creative methods, I hoped to create ‘dialogic texts’ (Bakhtin 1981), which could create dialogue with broader audiences in order to communicate, create awareness and challenge stereotypes surrounding asylum seekers and work towards creating alternative representations.

**Research Process/Methodology in Action**

The project began in March 2010 in a direct provision centre in a town about an hour outside Dublin. A group consisting originally of ten adult asylum seekers, a volunteer assistant and myself, the researcher, met weekly for three hours over a period of four months. The eight participants who were able to complete the project were from Somalia, Nigeria, Liberia, Uganda, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Cameroon. Each participant was provided with a digital camera for the duration of the project. Through the use of participatory photography, the project sought to create a space where experiences as far as possible could emerge without being anticipated or limited by frameworks or boundaries set by the research or researcher. While the structure of the project was pre-defined to a certain extent, the approach was designed to be as dialogical and collaborative as possible, allowing for the process and its outcomes to emerge from the ‘encounter’ between researcher and participants, between the participants themselves, and with the work created.

Throughout the four months, a double trajectory was traced; the gradual development of visual awareness as well as technical knowledge and practice of photography, was combined with discussions around various themes and issues - identity; belonging and the daily experiences of being in Ireland as an asylum seeker; living in the direct provision system; and navigating the asylum system. Exploiting and understanding individual, subjective and everyday experiences is one means of stepping behind the label of ‘asylum seeker’, which essentialises, homogenizes and stereotypes a very diverse group of people. The aim was that during each session a theme would be discussed by the group, which participants would then have time to think about and develop during the week and photograph in whatever way made sense to them. I developed a number of broad themes or topics in order to begin the process. I hoped that these themes would stimulate interest and kick-start discussions, which would in turn lead to further themes and topics decided on a collaborative basis or emerging from the preliminary
ones. I was also aware that from these broader themes, sub-themes or more specific ones may begin to emerge. These preliminary themes began the processes of documenting and exploring everyday experiences and immediate environments, and expressing opinions and feelings through the images and the subsequent description of these images. The sessions became a 'dialogic space' (Tolia-Kelly 2007): exchange of ideas and experiences through exploration and critique of the photographs which began to emerge, as well as the storytelling, debate and discussions which led from these.

In each session, we made time for each participant to discuss their photographs, or a selection of these, with the group. Photographs were projected on to the wall, and each photographer described the background to the photograph, its meaning to him or her, and why he or she had taken it in relation to the particular theme or discussion that week. Others then commented on and critiqued the photograph, both in terms of content and technique. This also served to develop the dynamics of the group, and to gradually create trust and rapport between its members. All sessions were audio recorded and later transcribed.

Descriptions of each image by the photographers became the captions that went alongside the images, gradually creating a body of image-text as the project progressed. Captions, or accompanying texts, are important for this type of work for several reasons, at the point of collaboratively producing the work and during the processes of co-creating meaning from the work created, as well as for communicating the intentions of the photographer to broader audiences at a later stage. The processes of describing photographs, and explaining their meaning by the photographer him or herself, allows participants to focus on what they are photographing, and understand better how to communicate meaning and intention. Captions can be important where political advocacy is concerned, helping an audience to understand the photographer’s intentions more clearly, and putting culturally specific visual references into context (PhotoVoice 2007).

While this use of, or even dependency on, the caption may seem paradoxical here for work which seeks to move away from dependency on language towards more affective or sensual means of communication, the combination of the image with text does not diminish the power of the image to convey meaning in a different way, or to convey different meaning to the verbal or written. The text and image work symbiotically here, in a non-hierarchical relationship, to convey a meaning that is based on the subjectivity of the photographer at a particular time. While there is interdependency between the image and the text, there is also interplay, each providing a different form of understanding as well as complementing the other.

As the project progressed, the themes did emerge from the 'dialogic space' of the workshops, through discussions, previous photographs, or direct suggestions by participants of what they felt they wanted to explore and discuss. The themes were not designed to limit or categorise the photographs, but were rather catalysts for discussions and further themes to arise, lenses through which subjective experience could be explored. The project gradually emerged from itself, constantly having to be reviewed and re-structured as ideas emerged and changed, and different needs were addressed.

Emerging from discussions as the project progressed, we planned to exhibit the created work in a gallery space near where the direct provision centre was located, in order to stimulate dialogue and to work towards breaking down some of the barriers and stereotypes which were felt to exist with the local community. However, due to substantial media attention around asylum seekers at the time of the planned exhibition due to issues at another direct provision centre, and the subsequent vulnerability felt by participants, we made a collective decision to postpone this exhibition. This brought up issues and discussions around vulnerability, fear and anxiety of participants in relation to the asylum system, and brought to the surface concerns around fear of speaking out and the censorship inherent in the system. The group came together four months later to exhibit the work in the university at NUI Maynooth. The exhibition consisted of twentyone images with accompanying texts, and five digital stories with recorded voices, all edited and selected by the participants themselves. While it was decided together at this point that the work should be exhibited anonymously due to fears around repercussions of speaking out, the participants took ownership of the exhibition, and gave members of the
Fig. 7: This was St Patrick’s Day, it was so beautiful. I love the way they were dressed, and the colours, the colours of the flowers and the kids from different places. Emmanuelle

public an opportunity to discuss the work with them, thus allowing the work to function as a ‘dialogic text’.

The visual methodology and the processes of the collaborative project also allowed for the creation of an autonomous book project: a means of giving integrity to the voices of the participants, creating a stand alone document with a life beyond the research project and the thesis. The book, titled *New Bridges: experiences of seeking asylum in Ireland* and self-published in 2012 (Figure 2), can be seen as a combination, or culmination, of the material outcomes of the project as well as the processes and events, in that it shows the images that were selected by the participants and the accompanying texts edited by them. Through the book, the work has the potential to reach broader audiences than the more limited ones the thesis, or further physical exhibitions, can reach, allowing for the possibility of further political advocacy and awareness.

**Imaging experience**

Working through a participatory visual methodology allowed for a ‘processual’ approach to the research, in which the visual became a tool for dialogue, for co-creation, for the exploration of experience and for the representation of that experience beyond the research space. The combination of visual and verbal in the work which was co-created allows for an insight into subjective experiences of living in the direct provision system. Both through the images, texts and stories as well as through the processes of their creation and representation during the collaborative project, the research is an exploration and analysis of living within the ‘temporary permanent’ space of direct provision, and the ‘microphysics of power’ (Foucault 1975) inherent within this system.

The ‘image-text’ (Mitchell 1994) created through this project communicates affectively (through the senses) the textures of everyday life in a direct provision centre, and the ways in which policies and structures of exclusion and othering touch the intimacies of the everyday, the ways in which ‘exclusionary state practices reverberate through the daily lives of migrants’ (Mountz 2010:145). The work brings alive experiences of living in this space, and the daily paradoxes of living within this system: being marginalized yet controlled, outside and yet somehow belonging, in a place between citizenship and non-citizenship, as well as the position of direct provision as a place of ‘hostipitality’ (Derrida 2000), a paradoxical combination of hospitality and hostility.

The images (see Figure 1) show the spatiality of this ‘liminal’ (Turner 1967) experience, the textures of the everyday spaces representing waiting, control and powerlessness. The corridors of the centre, a former hotel, photographed by each participant at some point during the project, seemed to represent what being in the asylum system, and in a direct provision centre, meant for so many people: lack of control over one’s own life, confinement, sadness and in-between-ness. When putting together the images and words around corridors at a later stage for the exhibition, we ended up placing these images into a singular tiled mosaic style image. On looking at this, it is strangely reminiscent of images from a CCTV camera, an eerie reminder perhaps of the sense of control and surveillance that emerged through various images and discussions and events throughout the project.

The spaces of direct provision sit alongside various manifestations of the temporality of this experience: waiting, suspense, and a lack of control over one’s own future. Packed bags in the bedrooms (Figure 3) symbolised the ‘permanent temporariness’ (Bailey et al. 2002:125) of the situation, showing on the one hand the lack of space and overcrowding and, on the other, the sense of never really unpacking, of being ready to leave at any moment, to a new place or to be deported. Ade’s ‘darkness and light’ image (Figure 4) similarly evokes this sense of uncertainty and lack of control.

The image-text reveals at times the powerlessness of an in between existence, and the internalization of this ‘in between-ness’ and of the imposed label of ‘asylum seeker’. The ways in which in this existence touches the intimacies of self and identity may be expressed as a kind of ‘ontological liminality’, manifested through powerlessness, depression, feeling like a number, and a fear of speaking out. Participants often expressed feeling like merely a number, not a human being with a voice that would be listened to:

You know you hear all these things, nobody cares, we are just reference numbers, you know, 69 numbers…if you go to them all they want is your 69 number….if you call them on the phone all they want is your 69 number… Abiye

Similarly, Mary’s photograph of her bedroom door highlights the temporary nature of the space and the sense of being seen as merely a number (Figure 6). It
is important to point out that the material emerging from the project also strongly reveals the power and agency of people living within this limiting system to negotiate their situation in positive ways and to find ways of belonging, creating lives for themselves through various kinds of ‘informal citizenship’ (Sassen 2003) and ‘ambiguous belongings’ (Mountz 2011), and the attachments to place and community that are formed as a temporary existence for many people becomes semi-permanent. Being a non-citizen and feeling like a number are lived alongside various forms of ‘informal citizenship’ in the form of voluntary work and involvement and belonging in the local community in various ways (Figure 5).

Despite the deliberate situation of distancing and exclusion into which asylum seekers are placed, the social and affective spaces of many people seeking asylum extend beyond the direct provision centres, and the liminal non-citizen spaces of asylum to which they are assigned, and into the communities and places in which they find themselves. The work, both through the co-created material as well as through the processes of its creation, thus highlights some of the paradoxes of being in a space between hospitality and hostility, citizenship and non-citizenship, inside yet outside, of negotiating this in between space, and at the same time trying to create a life within it. Distance and exclusion from mainstream society sit side by side with several years of involvement and belonging in the local community for many people, and pride in where they live and in Ireland and Irishness. This pride particularly emerged through Saint Patrick’s Day celebrations, and the ways in which participants photographed, described and participated in these (Figure 7).

Such involvement and forms of ‘informal citizenship’ reflected some of the daily paradoxes of the direct provision system and of living within this system.

Conclusion
Working visually and collaboratively created an encounter between researcher and participants, allowing us to work together to explore and represent some of the experiences of the asylum system in Ireland and living in direct provision, in turn providing insights into the system itself and the power structures inherent within it. The use of participatory visual methodology allowed for an ethnographic research which not only aimed to connect the experiences of participants with broader structures and contexts, but which also collaborated with them to co-create material which might challenge dominant representations of asylum seekers in the public realm. The dialogue between researcher, participants, the work created and audiences viewing the work also allowed for a challenging of researcher-subject relations of traditional research approaches, moving towards what O’Neill (2008:41) calls ‘subject subject relations’.

Insights into the everyday experiences of living in the precarious stability of the direct provision system in Ireland and of the intimacies of exclusion and control came not only through the body of image-text which was created, but also through the processes of co-creation of the work. The processes of the encounter of this collaborative project highlight some of the lived realities of direct provision, and the ways in which policies and structures of exclusion and distancings embodied through the direct provision system, touch the intimacies of everyday life. Dialogue between the work we were creating and the ongoing experiences of participants of living within this system revealed the ‘microphysics of power’ which trickle down into everyday life, lack of transparency within the system, fear, angst and self-censorship. Fear, anxiety, censorship and self-censorship around what is spoken or shown, and the possible consequences of this, revealed how power structures are internalized by those living in a simultaneously controlling yet excluding system.

Working with people in a vulnerable and marginalized situation in a collaborative and creative way threw up challenges and difficulties, both during the collaborative project, and afterwards, in making sense of the work, representing it to a broader public, and later transferring it into the format of a doctoral thesis. The processes of representing the work required constant negotiation, as fear, vulnerability and the power of censorship and self-censorship came to play. These processes of negotiation and the ways in which power and fear touched the processes of the collaborative project itself revealed or reflected the ways in which power structures and policies of exclusion touch the intimacies of everyday life for those living within this system.

The project thus opened up questions and discussions on collaborative practice, power and representation, the role of the researcher and the benefits, or indeed potential negative impacts of such work for participants. Work such as this highlights the importance of critical approaches to visual participatory methodologies, making clear links between the claims made by participatory practices around empowerment and change for example, and what actually happens in practice. Awareness of the different positions of those involved, and the relations of power between them, is imperative, as well as viewing power relations as enmeshed in participatory approaches, rather than assuming that they will be overcome by such approaches. Such awareness may help to avoid either a ‘salvage paradigm’ (Kester 2000:7), in which the artist or researcher attempts to improve an ‘implicitly flawed subject’, or an ‘aesthetics of injury’ (Salverson 2001:123), where the well meaning artist or researcher creates more damage than good. No method, including those which are collaborative or participatory, is without its power relations.

Despite the challenges of working in this way, there is potential for rich and insightful work through
the use of visual methods as well as when those we are researching become collaborators in the research. Both the work that was created alongside participants during the collaborative project, in the form of images, texts, and stories, and the processes of creating and representing this work, provide insight into the everyday lived and subjective experiences of living in the direct provision system. Working visually, processually and collaboratively with research participants can provide access to more subjective realms of experience, that which often cannot be expressed solely in words, and allows for a means to explore subjective experience in relation to broader structures and contexts, in this case providing insight into lived experiences of the direct provision system in Ireland. Dialogue, and a focus on the ‘encounter’ through collaborative visual work can provide, in the words of Grant Kester, ‘new and unanticipated forms of knowledge’ (2000:4).

References:


Notes:
1 On application for asylum in Ireland, applicants are provided with a reference number in the format 69/---/--. These are often referred to as ’69 numbers’.
Doing it Digitally: Methodological Tensions in Online Ethnography

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Abstract: Although irregularly distributed across diverse and complex topographies of economy, gender, and geography, digital media and technologies are becoming a nearly ubiquitous feature of human social lives and imaginaries. The appearance of a growing number of ethnographic titles dealing with these and related themes is illustrative of the fact that such digital phenomena now experience increasing mainstream acceptance as important sites for, and objects of, ethnographic investigation. By focusing on my research into the regulation of talk on an online social network site targeted at gay users, this article explores some of the tensions surrounding emerging and established ethnographic approaches to computer-mediated sociality as well as some of the various ways in which those approaches have been integrated into an anthropology that is ever more opening itself up to the manifold domains of the digital.

Keywords: ethnography, authenticity, social network sites, digital media, computer-mediated communication, indexicality, queer.

Introduction

Although irregularly distributed across diverse and complex topographies of economy, gender, and geography, digital media and technologies are becoming a nearly ubiquitous feature of human social lives and imaginaries. Their deployment and uptake present an array of challenges to established conceptions of work in which the keystroke, mouse-over, and click become instances of distributed labour. Their usage likewise leads to new possibilities for political engagement and mobilisation through a dissemination of the power to produce, recycle, and modify computer code and media representations. Furthermore, even the most ‘private’ of embodied functions find their public corollaries and expressions in virtual contexts, as users participate in digital markets targeted at access to sex and physical intimacy.

There exists a relatively substantial history of anthropological engagement with questions of digital culture. In his articulation of a nascent cyberanthropology, Escobar already noted in 1994 that ‘[n]ew trends in the social study of technology are dramatically changing conventional notions of the field’ (1994: 211). Gray and Driscoll (1992) offer a pertinent example of such shifting notions in their work on an anthropology both of and in cyberspace. Turkle likewise wrote about the impact of digital technologies on the development of self as long ago as 1984. Yet despite these historical trends and the veritable explosion in contemporary cultural forms and practices tied to the expansive (if uneven) global proliferation of digital culture(s), anthropology was for a long time notably slow to adapt its mainstream theoretical and methodological frameworks to account for the challenging fact of computer-mediated sociality (Coleman 2010: 2).

But the appearance of a growing number of ethnographic titles dealing with these and related themes – for example, Cyber Selves (Gajjala 2004), Coming of Age in Second Life (Boellstorff 2008), Two Bits (Kelty 2008), and Coding Freedom (Coleman 2013) – is also illustrative of the fact that digital media and technologies now experience increasing mainstream acceptance as important sites for and objects of not just anthropological but specifically ethnographic investigation.

How have anthropologists sought to reconstitute the constructs of ethnography in order to accommodate the emergence of what have been termed virtual communities? How do these new frameworks for ethnographic investigation challenge established notions of the spatiotemporal organisation(s) of culture and communication? Bound up in debates about the lines that mark the division between the actual and the virtual, what sorts of insights can the study of online environments offer us into emic and etic discourses of authenticity in anthropology?

With these questions in mind, this article explores some of the tensions surrounding emerging and established ethnographic approaches to computer-mediated sociality as well as some of the various ways in which those approaches have been integrated into an anthropology that is in parts ever more opening itself up to the manifold domains of the digital. In so doing, I will introduce some of the research that I have been conducting over the past several years into the metalinguistic regulation of talk on an online social network site targeted at gay users, integrating this ethnographic material into a wider discussion of how online sociality has been constituted as a methodological problem in ethnography.

Siting Digital Methodologies

Anthropology has demonstrated a distinct epistemological as well as affective investment in its articulation of ethnographic methodologies, not just as a practical project but also as a set of theoretical and analytical orientations towards its objects, scopes, and rhetorics. Ethnography, in other words, is properly understood to be both theory and...
Fig. 1

Re: posted by: [redacted] 1 day ago
men who like men women who like women and those who can't decide! cesspit filled with waspish homosexual vipers.

bookmark

Fig. 2

Re: posted by: [redacted] 5 days ago
So...
Here I am with an afternoon off and looking to pay a visit to a randy gayer for some "tea and cake" and my phone won't let me access the 'dar.
How does one go about finding a "tea and cake" buddy on this site?
bookmark

Fig. 3

ru str8-acting m8 lol?
Gaydar – Destroying homosexual literacy since 1999

Fig. 4

[redacted] said:
This is getting a bit Gaydar, isn't it?
If only Gaydar was that interesting. It's VERY rättled though. too many vowels. not enough "LOL"s...

Fig. 5

posted by: [redacted] about 1 hour ago
I wish there was a "did you even bother reading my profile before sending that abortion of a message?" button.

Fig. 6

I really find it fascinating that this guy has apparently been doing the rounds on the Irish version of the internet for years without everyone cottoning on.

The rest of the gay internet is full of horned-up hots who are too busy having sex with each other to worry about the occasional fake Irish Giant.

Fig. 7
value and legitimacy of studying online culture. Suspicion manifest most saliently is in beliefs about the discipline as much from without. One of the ethnography so jealously from assault – from within or one of them, at least – that anthropologists guard anthropological, and it is perhaps for this reason – disciplinary roots, many anthropologists view as dependent on that which is ‘real.’ In this sense, studying ‘the’ internet becomes instead more understood as a spatiotemporally specific and contingent assemblage of diverse technologies and potentials. Nevertheless, both texts signify an attempt to engage with the pressing need for methodological adaptation in the face of the actual fact of digital culture, on the one hand and, on the other, a simultaneous attempt to explicitly situate such adaptation firmly within the remit of traditional ethnographic approaches – the common sense of the discipline (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 25) – that privilege established methods as much as they do conventional notions of how the ethnographic field is to be situated and sited.

Miller and Slater focus on the ways in which internet technologies have been integrated into Trinidadian society and culture. This is in fact the same ethnographic context that forms a central strand in Miller’s later work on Facebook (2011). A core theme in their argumentation posits that there is something specific about ‘being Trini’ that promotes a relation that is to some extent akin to a ‘natural affinity’ to the internet (Miller and Slater 2000: 3). In focusing on the question of how internet technologies take shape somewhere in particular, Miller and Slater’s approach is marked by an aversion to the virtual, an attitude which underlies their insistence that online sociality can only be understood as dependent on that which is ‘real.’ In this sense, studying the ‘internet becomes instead more a question of studying ‘an’ internet. The internet is here seen as a spatiotemporally specific and contingent assemblage of diverse technologies and potentials (Miller and Slater 2000: 1) that is fundamentally tied to ‘real-world’ social contexts rather than productive of some ‘monolithic or placeless cyberspace’ (Miller and Slater 2000: 1) from which offline sociality is radically disconnected. In other words, there is no singular internet. Rather, what constitutes ‘the internet’ shifts depending on the ethnographic context.

Theirs is therefore a position that specifically tasks itself with a refusal of a previous generation of internet research that overlays disembodied and virtuality, and it does so through this insistence on the material dimensions of digital culture. As such, the notion of the field that such a perspective promotes is one that appears every bit as physically delimitable – however problematic that might theoretically be – as the field sites of any traditional ethnography. That is, as anthropologists, we can study the ways in which technologies get used somewhere in particular. Miller and Slater’s argumentation goes beyond questions of use, certainly, but use is the context that orients the construction of research landscapes in this model. Within this construction of the field, we can appreciate the deployment of well-established ethnographic research methods, in particular informant interviews and participant-observation conducted in face-to-face contexts.

In the second case, however, Boellstorff takes a different approach. Whereas Miller and Slater eschew the virtual for the fact of its connoting a sense of placelessness, Boellstorff fully engages with the virtual (now conceived of in its relation to the actual, as opposed to the real), focusing not primarily on the ‘real-world’ embeddedness of online social contexts but rather on the ways in which the emergence and evolution of digital culture is itself bound up in the production of new, digitally-mediated forms of social world. The ethnographic location of Boellstorff’s work was the virtual world Second Life, an immersive 3D environment in which users’ avatars – digital representations of their physical selves – interact with one another in digitally-mediated spaces modelled on the metaphor of the actual world. Such worlds might be virtual in form, true, but they must nevertheless be viewed, as in Miller and Slater’s model, as inextricable from the physical worlds they reference in index and in metaphor. That is to say, the user is inevitably embodied. This introduces an unavoidable calculation into all theorisations of online culture: there can be no online without an offline.

However, Boellstorff’s approach, in sharp contradistinction to Miller and Slater’s, seizes on the possibility of purely online field sites as legitimate anthropological locations. That is, as ethnographers, we can study the ways in which technologies are co-opted into the virtual production of somewhere in particular, and that somewhere may very well be digital. In this case, the online basis of the field prompts the need for newly mediated methods in which an adapted interactional model for ethnographic engagement is brought forth, one in which participant-observation and informant interviews get conducted through the medium of digital technologies. Instant messaging (IM) and text-based chat are here firmly integrated into the body of methodological possibility.
Whilst the authors I have mentioned in this section broached the interrelated issues of validity and legitimacy from a methodological angle that privileges long-established approaches that can be traced to Malinowski (1922), my approach was to dive headlong into the application of linguistic anthropological theory to the domain of computer-mediated communication as a means of underlining the ethnographic relevance of online social networking to linguistic anthropological research. As I saw it, by engaging this body of anthropological canon in the context of online ethnography, I could demonstrate its general applicability, not just to face-to-face interaction – what Schegloff referred to as a ‘species-specific embodiment of the primordial site of sociality’ (Schegloff in Stivers & Sidnell 1998: 1) – but also to those social spaces within which talk gets digitally mediated. Computer mediated communication, that is, was to be seen as every bit as anthropological - or anthropologisable! – as its less apparently mediated cousin.

As has been argued by Miller and Horst (2012), however, even face-to-face interaction is shaped by and effected through cultural mediations of diverse kinds (2012: 11-12). In fact, this is presented as a core principle of the digital anthropology their text seeks to outline. They go further, however, by arguing that ‘digital anthropology will be insightful to the degree that it reveals the mediated and framed nature of the nondigital world’ (Miller and Horst 2012: 13). This is a perspective that lay at the heart of my own attempts to carve out a fieldsite that would offer a view onto a specific example of what social life can look like online.

**Delimiting the Form of the Social Network Site**

Information and communications technologies have over the past two decades been instrumental in the emergence of a variety of digital spaces within which homosexual behaviours and their sometimes-concomitant queer identifications are to varying degrees foregrounded as prerequisites to participation. Dating sites such as Gaydar and Manhunt have millions of active users, whilst smartphone apps like Scruff and Grindr have opened up this market for queer proximity to the mainstreaming of geosocial networking. It is in the context of this shifting diversity of services that the site at the centre of my research was launched in July 2005, although still prior to technologies such as Scruff and Grindr, which came a little later with the advent of smartphones.

Yet this emergence is a particularly motivated emergence. That is, there is a trajectory of oppositionality that marks these developments, where a reaction to the sexualisation of sites such as Gaydar played a role in the re-launching and rebranding of the online community OUTintheUK as OUTeverywhere. In seeking to define themselves as an alternative to Gaydar’s facilitation of open solicitations for sex, OUTeverywhere upon re-launch focused their attentions on moderating and desexualizing all user-produced content as a means of fostering some sort of sense of community that would have both online and offline manifestations but which would detach gay identities from the actual fact of gay sex.

The site where I conducted my research was designed as a form of middle ground, where desexualisation was not *institutionally* regimented at the level of site management and where public discourse and actual-life social activities likewise became core elements. Although the bridging of offline and online relationships also strongly marks the social life of the network, the most notable element of the site’s design is the way in which it centers on an extensive, diverse, and highly active set of effectively un-moderated discussion forums.

In the forums and elsewhere on the site, users spend a great deal of time engaging in explicit discussions about their participation and the sorts of characters that exemplify the network. A banner on an earlier version of the homepage, for instance, described the site as for ‘men who like men, women who like women, and those who can’t decide.’ This description is popularly reformulated in Figure 1. as ‘cesspit filled with waspish homosexual vipers,’ receiving nine thumbs up. This waspishness, irritability, or cantankerousness manifests in various forms of direct and indirect address, and criticism comes in the form of commentary on users’ public speech as well as their photos. The effect this critical attitude has on the dynamics of the user base is notable: people frequently leave the site because of it. Identified by a strikethrough obscuring any instance of their username across the site, the users that remain usually refer to it as a ‘flounce delete.’ Folk theories as to the dynamics of the flounce delete often make reference to the need for the recently deleted to just ‘man the fuck up.’

Although not an essential fact, Gaydar, like Grindr, is explicitly and very openly targeted towards ‘hooking up’, something that is not true of this site, even when euphemizing ‘sex’ as the more context-appropriate ‘tea and cake.’ This is an issue raised unpopularly in Figure 2. But it is a form of distinction that extends beyond the simple shape of public speech to entail other semiotic modes, particularly publicly shared photos, as in Figure 3.

Commentary on photos, like the public discussion forums, is a core feature of the public space of the network – certain physical traits and presentations garner greater degrees of attention or something akin to the ‘fantastic fawning response’ they might receive on Gaydar. Hairy guys, guys with bellies, guys who like cake, alternigays: there is a general attitude that something distinguishes the site’s users from Gaydar users, something that is manifest in part in their visual presentation of the self. In that regard, photos should tread a line of just-right sexualisation, eschewing anything of the form ‘look at me I’m so hot,’ in the sense of how that might look on Gaydar.
Behind the scenes, however, there is a significant private trade in the sort of sexualised images that would more than adhere to standards seen to characterise Gaydar. Access is often granted to these images solely on the terms of reciprocal forms of exchange and involves sending and receiving private gallery invites. There is even a forum thread titled ‘Hands up if you DO have a private gallery’ where offers of exchange are publicly registered and discussed at length; the thread is still active after seven years and features more than fourteen thousand posts.

Like speech in the forums, though, comments on photos are open to critique in terms of their grammatical correctness, syntactic structure, or context-appropriateness. In other words, they are subject to various forms of metalinguistic regulation. If there is something in particular that characterises users, then that something has a great deal to do with how users use language. And how they use language is classed as fundamentally distinct from how Gaydar users use language, as in Figure 4. It was apparent from my earliest days as a member that this focus on the semiotic practices and repertoires of interlocutors, whether implicit or explicit, played a central role in managing the social life of the network, and trying to grasp the processes and perspectives underlying these attempts to police user behaviour became a core aim of my research. My approach was shaped by these aims, with the result that a large part of my data was derived from screen grabs of forum interactions as well as private messages with other users discussing them.

**The Online/Offline Distinction and Intercontextuality**

One way of approaching the theme of computer mediated sociability has been to draw attention to what has commonly been termed the online/offline distinction, a relationship that is at the core of Boellstorff's conceptualisation of digital anthropology (2012: 40-43). Theorisations as to the relation between the online and the offline have demonstrated a tendency to focus on the embeddedness of one in the other: most likely, online behaviours will be referred to as embedded in some offline framework. Miller and Slater, above, offer a prime example of this; their position is a nod to the fact of the inevitably embodied author – the user who keys in from somewhere in particular.

There is somehow a sense that filters through arguments of this sort that the boundaries that are most relevant are those that exist between old and new, on and off, between what is digital and what is not. My research demonstrates the partial incompleteness of that picture through the analysis of how users of the social network site define their speech habits against the semiotic repertoires deemed characteristic of other online and digital spaces. Digital media are thus here conceived in terms of the wider social fields – and hence participation frameworks – from which they emerge, within which they circulate, and to which they are complexly and indexically related.

It is imperative to note, therefore, that the social network site at the centre of my research does not exist in isolation. As earlier noted, it can be situated along a complex historical trajectory of developments in the modern market for queer proximity that draws the search for connection out of the gay bar and onto the internet and the smartphone. This is a history that also maps a plurality of experiences of and orientations towards homosexual practices and the gay identities that sometimes accompany them onto a diversity of social spaces both digital and physical.

In that sense, it was interesting to learn that talk on the site was marked by an often remarkably explicit public negotiation of the relationship between it and other sites like Gaydar and OUTeverywhere, further evidenced in Figures 5, 6, and 7. What was revealed in my research was not simply a relationship between the online and the offline, then – at least not a relationship modelled on an offline within which the online is neatly embedded. What came to light, rather, was an image of a complexly articulated ideological order of contextual interimbrication, within which certain modes of being and certain communicatory repertoires came to be indexically linked to given and unequally valued social spaces. The regulatory metadiscourse that had been so immediately captivating was revealed through numerous informal interviews and many months of online participant-observation to be a means of patrolling publicly contested standards of and boundaries for community participation that took explicit account of the sorts of persons such communicatory habits modelled as well as how these compared to the users of other websites.

Although it is fundamental to maintain a sense of why and from where any user keys into digitally mediated spaces, the underlying argument to be articulated here is that online interactions can be the dominant modes of sociability in the context of given sets of relationships and that, therefore, the most socially salient boundaries need not necessarily be constructed around what’s on and what’s off but rather between different digital frames enclosed by shifting boundaries that get publicly and privately contested. A core question then becomes one of the complexities of digital participation frameworks and the dynamics of navigation across and through digital intercontexts. This logic guides my methodological approach, which is one that at its most basic refuses to argue for the necessary primacy of the offline, even while admitting its essential relevance in terms of the actual location of users and the ‘real-world’ social worlds they inhabit.

My focus on the online, rather, functions as a means of demonstrating how places get constructed out of ideological orientations towards online spaces. The site, that is, becomes not just a space but a place, one that emerges from but also hosts the communicatory practices of users. In that regard, and with reference
again to Miller and Slater, I would argue that cyberspace doesn’t necessarily need to be defined in relation with offline contexts of use in order to be rendered placeful. Referring to the embeddedness of the virtual in the actual world alone, then, is not what will make ‘the internet’ any less of a monolith. Rather, an openness to the principle of intercontextuality can guide us to greater understandings of how computer-mediated locations are experienced as places in their own right, each framed with its own contested rules about who should be present and what should happen there. In this sense, it seemed to me a logical step to define my fieldsite around the central focus of the website itself and from there move to trace any connections that emerged to contexts both online and off.

**Discourses of Authenticity and Online Ethnographies**

Digital media might be marked by complex layers of intercontextuality, but they also essentially reorder the spacetime of interaction, admitting the potential for asynchrony and absence into the spatiotemporal frameworks within which communication takes place. In my own research, the tensions this introduces into human relationships are extremely salient and rendered explicit in discourse. One example seems particularly relevant: the arrival to the site of a new member, Scaffboi.

Tim – Scaffboi – was a nineteen year old, purportedly ‘straight guy,’ a scaffolder who had joined the site with the aim of exploring his suddenly questionable sexuality. A recent breakup with a now former girlfriend had revolved around this new uncertainty. His profile images presented an attractive, athletic figure that garnered a great deal of attention from the outset. Within a matter of days, however, Tim’s biography had become particularly convoluted. The former girlfriend had reported to his father the incident lives on in infamy amongst the site’s long-term users. The exposure of fake profiles is, it turns out, a regular occurrence on the site, but Scaffboi remains the archetypal example. The above is a narrative increasingly concretised through the repeated resurrection of the forum discourse that surrounded what was, in a sense, Scaffboi’s double outing, resurrected again each time another user is revealed to be the ‘sock puppet’ of some actual but invisible offline individual.

Whilst it may be the case that interactions with fake personas are prevalent online more generally (Stone 1991) and that it has been established in the literature that the consequences of such trickery for computer-mediated communicators can be complex and far-reaching (Kunstman 2008: 276-277), the impact that Scaffboi has had on the people who feature in my research is a hugely important part of how they experience what it is to be a member of the site. Any attempt to understand the dynamics of the social network and their community therefore needs to account for the sorts of notions that members have about what constitutes an authentic self. This is closely bound up in the ways in which the site’s users idealise personhood and the contexts within which social types belong. Insofar as my approach was largely mediated by digital media in which the actual existence of an informant was potentially an open question, my research was thus shaped as much by those who were absent as those who were not.

**Conclusion**

With this paper, I have attempted to offer an overview of some of the issues I encountered in conceptualising a methodological approach to studying the role of language regulation on an online social network site within an ethnographic framework. What I ended up with was a research project in which the field itself was centred on a digitally mediated and virtual...
landscape, bounded in ways by the structural limits of the social network site itself and opened in others by the ways in which it was marked by a complex system of intercontextual relations bridging both online and offline settings. As the ethnographic study of computer-mediated sociality becomes an established presence within anthropological research, though, an extensive body of work is emerging that stretches from more traditional ethnographies of digital technologies and media to predominantly online ethnographies of virtual environments and communities. The most notable element of this ethnographic dimension in digital anthropology is a palpable variation in methodological frameworks, particularly in terms of how fields in each case get constructed out of digital and physical locations. A key conclusion is that this variation is illustrative of the great diversity of ways that exist of being digital, modes of being that often come into contact in the complex intercontextuality that marks the shape and experience of digital culture. Anthropologists will continue to grapple with these issues as digital technologies evolve and with them our very notions of what constitutes ‘the internet.’

References:
Interview with Prof. Michal Buchowski. April 2013

Sabina Stan: You recently visited Ireland on the occasion of the Annual Conference of the Anthropological Association of Ireland, the topic of which was ‘Ethnography from Margin to Centre: A Conference Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of the Anthropological Association of Ireland’. In your keynote speech you talked to us about hierarchies of knowledge between Western, Central and East European (CEE) anthropologies and the quasi post-colonial situation in what came to be known as the ‘anthropology of post-socialism’. I would like to enlarge our discussion today by looking not so much at differentials in how theories on socialism and post-socialism produced in the two regions of the world are differently valued in dominant anthropological knowledge, but also at the differentials in how ethnographic fieldwork and methods are differentially produced and valued in these two locations.

So, first of all, are there any specificities in the way in which native CEE anthropologists construct ethnographic fieldwork and methods?

Michal Bucowski: Yes, indeed I was presenting a paper at this very special celebratory conference. First of all, I would like to thank the Society for inviting me. It was an honour and a challenge at the same time, which also turned into a great intellectual endeavour. The main topic of the meeting prompted me to talk about the situation of the anthropological enterprise at the other than Irish end of the EU, and this is why I talked about ‘Provincial Central European Anthropology: How to Change the Discipline from a Panopticon to a Hall of Mirrors’. The question of creating a more egalitarian global anthropology, openly challenged by the movement of World Anthropologies and by its organisational extension, i.e., World Council of Anthropological Associations, has always been present and is extremely pertinent in the globalised world.

Creating hierarchies of knowledge is inevitably inherent in the mechanism of functioning of any discipline, particularly anthropology. It operates at various levels, globally, regionally, internationally, nationally and locally. It becomes visible in a self-congratulatory view that ‘my/our’ kind of anthropology is better than others and therefore anthropological knowledge produced otherwise is not worth attention. This leads to ignorance towards other than one’s own nationally or linguistically circumscribed scholarship. Arturo Escobar and Gustavo Lins Ribeiro call this phenomenon ‘cosmopolitan provincialism’, which means that several people located in the ‘centres of knowledge production’ are interested in the scholarship practiced in very few places and by few persons, and therefore closed in an intellectual ghetto.

It is surprising that anthropologists, who are so sensitive to so many economically and socio-culturally established inequalities in the societies they study, are so blind to similar mechanisms and injustices taking place in their own community. One may claim that only the quality of research conditions existing pecking order of anthropologies, but this would be the case of a superficial explanatory attempt I call ‘culturalism’. It tries to find determinants of social relations in culture itself. The ‘quality of knowledge’ argument ignores relations of power ensuing also from economic disparities, historically determined possession of symbolic capital as well as domination of English. Privileged position in the system of knowledge production concentrated in few countries and academic centres serve as an explanation, or rather excuse, for arrogance towards knowledge produced by exotic tribes of anthropologists living on the ‘peripheries’.

In their attempt to legitimise the existing pecking order of anthropologies produced in various regions, privileged and dominant schools and traditions can resort to various criteria. One of them is a different value attached to various fieldwork methods. Classical British tradition, paradoxically to a large extent established by a Pole, Bronisław Malinowski, holds that only long-lasting fieldwork is a truly valid empirical method in anthropology. I do not think this is a fair criterion in itself. Nobody in CEE would deny the value of extended fieldwork and participant observation. Whenever possible and suitable, scholars do it and I can easily give examples of books concerned with their authors’ own societies based on such method, both in the past and today – e.g., Kazimiera Zawistowicz-Adamska’s monograph entitled Rural Community (1958), and Michal Łuczewski’s monumental book on Eternal Nation: a Pole and Catholic in Zmiąca (2012). But continental scholars, unlike British social anthropologists, have more often studied their own societies than distant groups. It is assumed by ethnologists that understanding local cultures does not require such a long stay with one’s own folks and therefore intermittent studies, frequently done with the help of students, is a method that brings valuable material also. Bulgarian ethnologists Elena Marushiakova and Veselin Popov, who have done brilliant research on Roma in their home country, told me once that living for a long time in the communities they know so well thanks to frequent visits and permanent contact, will not be seen as proper by their hosts who, in many cases, live in the close neighbourhood. Many Scandinavian

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and German anthropologists act similarly and it does not cause the books written by Orvar Löfgren, Jonas Frykman, Séamas O’Siocháin or Werner Schiffauer to be any less exciting and revealing than those authored by Marylin Strathern, Chirs Hann or Kirsten Hastrup. No wonder that representatives of the continental European tradition defend their own methods with its intermittent fieldwork as well as collective research projects. Tomas Hoffer, an outstanding Hungarian scholar, paid open attention to this issue of difference in methods and their equal value in Current Anthropology as early as in 1968.

**Q:** Does ‘long-lasting fieldwork’ form the divide between ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ kinds of anthropology?

**A:** Intermittent fieldwork and collective research is not a CEE invention, it was also practiced by others from Charles G. Seligman, Franz Boas to Marcel Griaule, just to mention past representatives of the three dominant traditions. Besides, the world has changed and methods of studying people have changed too. In his book Ethnography Through Thick and Thin (1998), George E. Marcus identifies seven modes of doing fieldwork and interpreting materials; single-site ethnography is just one of them. Today anthropologists want to study various subjects and different issues in a much more complicated and complex global world. Therefore the list of how to do ethnography is a very long one. I would say that currently most anthropologists in various regions of the world apply a variety of empirical methods, and the borders between diverse traditions in this respect have become blurred. It all depends on the topic and problem. It is not that important how precisely materials are collected, but the quality of them and what new insights they bring. As in any other domain of life fundamentalism is the worst possible option in judging the importance of anthropological work.

**Q:** Little is known in the West about CEE anthropological and ethnographic research. There is, however, a long tradition of fieldwork studies even going back before the socialist period. I have in mind an example I know better - namely the Romanian school of sociology from between the two world wars - that used large teams of various specialists to engage in sociological but also anthropological fieldwork and which was continued after 1989 by Vintila Mihaieliscu in what became a tradition of student teams engaging in collective anthropological fieldwork. I have an intuition that the latter tradition is also drawn upon in post-socialist Poland, and you also mentioned in one of your articles the ‘intermittent fieldwork methodology’ used by CEE anthropologists (Buchowski 2004). Was there any convergence between different ethnographic traditions in CEE and, if so, what was their origin?

**A:** One can identify different modes of doing fieldwork in Anglo-American anthropology and continental ethnology that were most popular in various parts of post-war Europe. There was a variety of reasons for this. British and American scholars remained faithful to Malinowski’s habits. His instructions were definitely suitable for studying alien, most often overseas, societies. One should keep in mind, however, that sometimes such individual research ‘deep in the forest’ was part of a larger design, as was the case in British Africa or in Indonesia, where the Geerertz, among others, were sent in the 1950s. True, also in these cases single-site ethnography carried out by individuals was the most preferred method. It became a standard for which a complex methodological and philosophical rationale was provided.

Meanwhile, in some countries sending scholars abroad was almost unthinkable for a long time both for economic and political reasons. Former Eastern Europe was such a case. Simultaneously and in contrast to anthropologists who were ‘empire builders’, the majority of scholars in CEE were ‘nation builders’ (to use George Stocking’s distinction), and trained in a tradition, in which intermittent fieldwork was a commonly accepted method. It was invented already in the 19th century and excelled in the interwar period. Ethnologists in the region were not alone in this, since many scholars in Scandinavia, Austria, Germany, the Mediterranean and, last but not least, Ireland, did the same. The method elaborated in the 1930s by Dimitrie Gusti in Romania, to which you refer in your question, was a case in point. It was complex, effective and fruitful research that got international recognition, even if it looks a bit odd today. The method of interdisciplinary and collective study was applied in a modified form for many similar studies, e.g. in the community of Dolní Roven in the Czech Republic or Siolkowice in Polish Silesia. There was nothing wrong with this ethnography and it served its purpose. What went wrong was that a method was turned into theory. Meticulously collected data were supposed to speak for themselves and the whole enterprise of writing monographs boiled down to the ‘collection of snapshots’, as Katarzyna Kaniowska called it. Data were put in conceptually vague frameworks of an enormous (socialist) modernisation, which no doubt took place, but was presented in a spirit of an urge to document in a romanticised way a vanishing world of the traditional folk culture. This theoretical stagnation ensued ultimately from a political situation that resulted in a separation from the outside world. It did not last forever and in some countries like Poland, Yugoslavia or Hungary ethnology rapidly entered into a dialogue with western semiotic, structuralist and critique of anthropology studies already in the early 1970s.

There was one value preserved by CEE ethnologists that Western anthropologists lost and now try to retrieve, namely historical perspective. It
was used brilliantly for instance by Józef Burszt a in his book on Village and Inn, published as early as 1950, deep in the murky Stalinist period. Burszt a’s historical analysis of the birth of production and consumption in a precapitalist society anticipated Sidney Mintz’s famous ideas presented in his book on Sweetness and Power more than three decades later! The intermittent fieldwork method and collective work in the field, also with students, if only informed by theoretical thinking can produce extraordinary studies. Let me mention just two studies of this type that I value very much – Legends on the Blood: An Anthropology of Prejudice by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir (2008), and Hunters, Collectors and Practitioners of Impotence: Anthropology of a Degraded Man by Tomasz Rakowski (2010). I cannot imagine more thorough studies on both topics, original in content and interpretation, in many ways revealing, both written in a hermeneutic tradition (as we know, not very popular in Anglo-American anthropology), based in both cases on materials collected by authors and their students during intermittent field stints, and in the first case supplemented by scrutiny of archival records. One can get a clue about the type of anthropology they present by reaching out to the special issue on Poland published in “Ethnologie française” in 2010 – of course in French. The point I try to make is that not only single-site and single-handed ethnography is a sine qua non for, and warrant of, a good anthropology.

Q: You mentioned in some of your articles (Buchowski 2004, 2005, 2012) the negative image CEE socialist societies had in the West during the Cold War. One result of this negative view was to devalue locally produced knowledge as ideologically tainted. If, at least in Poland (and, I would also add Romania), socialism did not preclude CEE anthropologists from accessing work produced in the West or from producing their own theories, what was the impact of politics on ethnographic fieldwork in CEE during the socialist period?

A: In a sense, during the Cold War western anthropologists shared a popular knowledge about the communist societies as backward, poor, gloomy, uninteresting, and with respect to research ideologically petrified. The first western scholars who managed to conduct fieldwork in socialist camp countries as early as the 1960s and in bigger numbers in the 1970s, cut against the grain of this ideological opinion showing that for some ‘ordinary people’ and local, especially rural communities, socialism meant social advancement and relative living security; sometimes this first-hand anthropological picture was idealised, detached from general unpleasant political context, but analytically correct. Nevertheless, with few exceptions, e.g. Chris Hann or David Kideckel, they did not enter into any intellectual dialogue with indigenous scholars, since they assumed that nothing interesting could be produced in this ‘red desert’. Most recently, for instance, Katherine Verdery acknowledged it in her presentation at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting in San Francisco in 2012 (available at WCAA website). Meanwhile, intellectual life was quite vibrant in many places behind the Iron Curtain.

The impact of politics on ethnographic fieldwork was very indirect. Zofia Sokolewicz and Aleksander Posern-Zielinski remarked in the publication on ethnology in socialist Europe (Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia, 2005) that the discipline was perceived as marginal and ideologically innocent, therefore the authorities paid little attention to what ethnographers did. It seems that this statement cannot be applied universally and Czech scholar Vaclav Hubinger held a contrary view. Probably personal experience and different situations in each country causes this dissent in opinions.

One should also consider the way funding for research was arranged. First, money was directed to certain kinds of research that authorities considered worth study, e.g. rural communities, modernisation of countryside, workers’ culture as a creative extent of peasant culture. I would say that we witness the same today when, for instance, the European Commission announces its thematically determined calls for applications. For the first two decades after WWII these were also topics ethnologists considered most important. Second, because ethnologists preferred a method of intermittent fieldwork their activities were also financed in a fitting way. One should also keep in mind that the system of grants we know today was largely absent, and sabbaticals were not granted. Most scholars at the universities had to teach during the academic year and usually only in the long summer break could go to the field. Fieldtrips were often used for training purposes, and material simultaneously gathered by students was considered reliable, especially given that they were collected under the supervision of their mentors. Third, in the 1970s, at least in Poland, an opportunity to conduct study abroad opened. Also in this case individual yearly fieldwork was inconceivable, but organizing team expeditions somehow worked. Maybe even the same name for these undertakings sounds ridiculous today, but thanks to this quite a few groups of scholars managed to spend several months or more in the field in far-away countries, collected rich materials and published many books and articles. I can immediately recall in my mind five such expeditions – to Mongolia, Afghanistan, Africa, India and Latin America. In most cases they were interdisciplinary with linguists and regional studies experts, but always ethnologists prevailed. In this dire time in terms of foreign currency, funds and other resources were contributed by various institution: a truck was provided by the plant that manufactured it, cans of meat and bread by the army from its reserves, and in a similar way sleeping bags, cameras, photo materials and many other things were ‘arranged’.
Q: You also mentioned that after 1989 part of CEE anthropologists came to understand anthropology as a ‘purely theoretical, almost philosophical enterprise’. Did engagements with the post-modernism that underlined this understanding also lead to engaging in experiments with ethnographic writing on the model of those triggered in the West by ‘Writing culture’?

A: This purely ‘theoretical enterprise’ was just a strand in a larger whole. The majority of researchers whom I call elsewhere ‘scientists’ have always practiced empirical anthropology, which starting from the 1970s was increasingly often interpreted in terms of original native theories or imported from the West. Theoretical anthropology has had a good tradition in Poland and in the 1980s and 1990s I also considered myself an expert in this domain. The delayed influence of postmodernism coincided with the fall of the communist system and some thinkers attempt to connect these two developments. From the 1970s many ethnologists were keen on phenomenology, heremeneutics and symbolic interpretation, but they referred to concrete ethnographic material, either recorded in the past or collected in the field, so, for example, Geertz was not a novelty. Experimental writing was a new fashion and some colleagues tried to follow suit, but the result was rather disastrous. They started to thrive on the border of literature and understood anthropology very idiosyncratically, as a sort of intellectual pun with an anthropologist as a flaneur in the library. This I could not stand. In general, I had no problems with accepting many insights associated with postmodernism related to self-reflexivity, the discipline’s involvement in ideological projects like colonialism and nationalism, appreciation of difference, and critique of rationalism (but one should keep in mind that some of these conceptions were known long before a postmodern manifesto was published). At that time in philosophy Richard Rorty’s pragmatism was close to my heart and in my book published in English on The Rational Other (1997) I tried to develop the idea of ‘rationality relativised’, a sort of ‘anti-anti-rationalism’, which of course referred to Geertz’ article on ‘anti-anti-relativism’. Shortly after Marcin Lubaś published a thorough critique of postmodernism in anthropology and the chapter was closed although, I think, postmodernism also left its positive imprint on anthropology everywhere; it helped us all to abandon for good a positivist dream of social reality that can be studied objectively.

However, besides this intellectual history there was a much more important question about what anthropology in CEE Europe should do in the period of an enormous economic and social transformation. Study texts of other anthropologists and literature? The answer was rather obvious for me: it should study people involved in this new structural context - historical circumstances; the dynamic situation of societies involved in a unique historical process; justify the term post-socialist studies (often called infelicitously ‘transition studies’) that evokes teleology, i.e. defined by economists and politicians as progress towards ‘capitalist normality’. Anthropology of post-socialism was a direct bridge to many Western anthropological experts on the region, to whom I am grateful for the exchange of ideas. Thanks to their influence and my training in an ‘indigenous’ socio-regulative theory of culture and social practice developed by my mentor, late professor Jerzy Kmita in the 1980s, I managed to remain aloof to interpretivism, a tradition well-established, and having superb achievements in Polish ethnology, but focused on culture itself and usually less interested in social transformations. Social anthropology’s perspective has helped to study post-socialism in terms of social critique.

Q: Is the retreat from fieldwork following the adoption of post-modernist theories a specificity of CEE, or could we also think of it as a larger process affecting Western as well as Eastern anthropologies?

A: This retreat is not really the case. It was a fancy trend that affected a small group of scholars who work in anthropological departments, who often use anthropological terms in interpreting culture and see themselves as theoreticians. There are some very good scholars like Wojciech J., Burszta, Janusz Baranski or Waldemar Kuligowski who do well in this respect. Their exercise brings them close to non-empirical cultural studies, but their presence in the discipline is, for me, fully justified and healthy for its overall functioning.

Q: In what ways are current CEE anthropologists engaging with new media technologies and how do they use these technologies to conduct and represent their fieldwork?

A: I do not think there is any divergence between especially young scholars in different parts of Europe. From my own experience, I can say that tape recording and filming is not considered an advanced technology today. Using examples I know personally will give you an idea about the state of the art in this respect. In my department at the University in Poznań there is a special audio-visual section in which students and faculty can benefit from the knowledge of persons who specialise in this domain and use technologically sophisticated devices to record and represent their field materials. Ethnographic films are directed (and one of them, Chimney Sweep, was even given some international recognition); Anthropophone, a special project with interviews with scholars is available on the department’s website; in the EU Framework Project on ‘Football Research in Enlarged Europe’ my team in collaboration with colleagues form Loughborough University will use an innovative research method based on smartphone application; last week my student...
defended his M.A. thesis about Tetovo, an ethnically divided city in Republic of Macedonia, with radio reportage as an integral part of it.

Q: How could we think of the new political and economic context in which anthropology has to function in CEE? What is the impact of neoliberalism and of the implementation of ‘pure capitalism’ in the East on how anthropological knowledge is produced and particularly on how ethnography is designed in that part of the world?

A: Capitalism changed the research environment in many ways and these changes are perpetual. On the one hand, new research possibilities have been opened. Several scholars do fieldwork abroad that is often based on long-lasting, multiple-stay research. Both young and experienced scholars conduct their studies in various corners of Europe, such as Ukraine, Russia, Baltic States, the Balkans, as well as in India, Africa, Japan, Mongolia, Central Asia, Fiji, Jamaica, Ecuador, etc. Increasingly more research in the country or region depends on grants. International cooperation, joint research projects and training as well as exchange of students are common. The topics studied are similar to those addressed in other world anthropologies. In my department four out of twenty five faculty members were trained in western universities. This kind of situation is obvious for western scholars and has become ‘normality’ for scholars in CEE. On the other hand, research funds are scarce and the proportion of GNP spent for research is very low (for instance, 0.77% of GNP in Poland). Scholars in the region are dreadfully underpaid, even relative to average national incomes, but especially so in relation to their western counterparts. Economics is the major factor that, alongside entrenched stereotypes, still contributes to the existing hierarchies of knowledge. In this respect, neoliberalism does not help much in reducing inequalities.

Q: Increasingly CEE anthropologists (like their Western colleagues) function within the ‘audit culture’, which permeates universities and research institutions. What is the impact of this on how ethnography is constructed?

A: A new and competitive system of grants and auditing has arrived. No doubt, evaluation of the quality of research is a necessary and beneficial part of scientific enterprise. But as you know, it has assumed parabolic forms in contemporary academia. In the case of Poland it appears to me as a caricature of anything reasonable. The whole system is based on the so-called ‘effectiveness’, which is modelled on hard sciences practices. Publication in highly ranked, mostly American, journals is overvalued, monographs are depreciated, works in edited volumes regarded as invaluable. It leads to further centralisation of knowledge and strengthens the position of Anglo-Saxon gatekeepers. Reality is supposed to be reflected in numbers and credits assigned to research output on an arbitrary basis. But quantity does not translate into quality. Actual excellence of knowledge produced does not refer to peer-review and scholarly opinion, but hinges on purely bureaucratic measures. Now the tail wags the dog. The whole situation reminds me of the communist system in which statistics were produced just for the sake of themselves and it led to the breakdown of the system. This kind of research politics does not fit anthropology at all. Standardised procedures do not take into account a necessity of long empirical research and lengthier time needed between research and publication than in many other disciplines; at the same time teaching obligations prevent longer fieldwork visits. These are problems which anthropologists face in many parts of the world. However, they seem especially acute in the region in which the discipline is weaker in relation to sociology, political sciences, cultural studies and psychology than elsewhere. The picture seems bleak, but we are still around and I hope that we all will survive.

Q: Despite the different size of their populations, Ireland and Poland share a relatively marginal position with regard to their locally produced anthropologies in the dominant currents of the discipline. Is there a future for anthropology and ethnography in peripheral European societies?

A: Today there are three important differences between Irish and Polish anthropology. There are many more Polish anthropologists/ethnologists than Irish, and the main reason for this is that Poland’s population is simply eight times bigger than Ireland’s. Irish scholars have much richer resources at their disposal for subsistence, teaching and research. Several Polish scholars are good at English, but in contrast to the Irish, this is not their primary language. This differentiates the situation of anthropologies by others perceived commonly as marginal. Simultaneously and in comparison to, for instance, American and Brazilian anthropological communities, both Polish and Irish tribes are small, and this disproportion should be kept in mind. Still, despite its size these anthropologies are part and parcel of world anthropologies. If anthropologists in the ‘centres’ think anthropologically as they claim, they will free themselves from cosmopolitan provincialism and open their ears to multivocality and minds to multiple anthropologies produced everywhere. We, as representatives of ‘provincial anthropologies’ should do the same and build horizontal ties with other ‘provincial anthropologies’, not only with the dominant ones. To paraphrase Marx, ‘provincial anthropologists of all countries unite’. This is the litmus test for anthropological ethos and a precondition for building truly transversal and cosmopolitan anthropology.
'Provincialism' of any knowledge production is the future of anthropology, which wants to be pluralistic, vibrant, insightful and intellectually attractive. In that sense the future is 'ours' – all 'provincials'.

References:
Abstract: In December 2012 the AAI held its annual conference - Ethnography from Margin to Centre: A Conference Celebrating 25 years of the Anthropological Association of Ireland. In addition to the insightful and thought-provoking talks given by keynote speakers Nancy Scheper-Hughes (University of California, Berkeley) and Michal Buchowski (University of Poznan), the conference convened a Founders’ Panel to discuss and celebrate the foundation of the Anthropological Association of Ireland 25 years ago. This was an exciting opportunity to hear about the catalysts that led to the Association’s inauguration and the questions that faced its founders.

When the four founders of the AAI first sought a mandate to establish an Association back in 1987, they envisaged a group that would bring together those who had an interest and an investment in anthropological studies of Ireland, as well as offering a meeting point for researchers from Ireland studying other parts of the world, with professional anthropologists at its core.

In 1987, the Internet was only in its infancy and email did not exist. With limited contact, anthropologists sought ways to connect and network through organisations and societies. The founders, Joseph Ruane, Séamas Ó Síocháin, Hastings Donnan, and Graham McFarlane (two based in the Republic and two based in the North) faced critical questions regarding the placement of such an association within the politics of the time. The Association strove to bridge the anthropological divide between the North and South. In the North, anthropology was headed by Professor John Blacking at Queen’s University Belfast and Professor Peter Morton-Williams at the University of Ulster, and oriented towards British methods of anthropological research. In the South, scholars at what was then St Patrick’s College Maynooth (and later NUIM) were led by Dr Eileen Kane and tended to follow an American tradition of cultural anthropology, primarily because of the American researchers who came to study Ireland and made it their home (such as Dr Eileen Kane, Dr A.J. Saris, Dr Steve Coleman and, later, Prof. Lawrence Taylor).

However, bringing the two together would prove valuable in providing an overall perspective of the discipline of anthropology on the island of Ireland. At the time of the AAI’s inception there existed an Anthropological Society of Ireland, founded in 1976, but it was a small group that met only rarely. The founders of the AAI sought a more organised, inclusive and dynamic association for professionals that would not only create a central register of research but would encourage equality amongst its members and ensure that all researchers including those visiting the island remain answerable to the Irish communities they studied by making their research available locally. In May 1987, the AAI held its first conference in Dublin, organised by Séamas Ó Síocháin, with a total of 39 participants. As the discipline of anthropology grew and branched out to other disciplines, the AAI grew in strength and presence.

Looking back to the very beginning of the AAI, the founders recalled early challenges and debates about what sort of association it should be. One issue, for example, was the sense in which the AAI would be ‘Irish’; was it to be primarily a society for Irish anthropologists, or for anthropologists who were studying (or had ever studied) Ireland, or for anthropologists working in Irish universities? Hastings suggested that the Association was a way of encouraging participation in discussions regarding Anthropology across disciplines and academic settings, including those within the academy as well as those beyond, and that this was ‘one of the defining rationales for the founding of the Association’. The debate around boundaries and membership was not particular to the AAI, but a question many others were also struggling with. As Joseph remarked, the idea of doing anthropology ‘at home’, versus doing anthropology abroad, was very current at the time, across the discipline. He touched on the question of how Irish anthropologists oriented themselves with regards to international colleagues, noting that while the British school of anthropology was most influential north of the border, in the South there was more emphasis on the American tradition of cultural anthropology. Given the political context, there were also differences of opinion within academia in Northern Ireland about the relevance or desirability of an all-island organisation. Joseph pointed out that ‘The Association was set up to be as inclusive as possible and not to have more sway towards either North or South.’

As might be expected, the 25-year anniversary provoked reflection on change and continuity during the life of the Association. As Hastings put it, ‘we’re anthropologists, we like context’, and the social and technological world of 1987 created different conditions for anthropology. In immediate practical terms, the relative difficulty of travel and communication imposed constraints that do not exist today. The implications of this change for anthropology have been especially great. As Hastings pointed out, the mystique, and perhaps the value, of anthropological accounts of far-away places is changed when anyone can ‘see’ them for themselves at any time via the internet. The democratization of travel has shifted the parameters of the old question of working ‘at home’ or ‘abroad’.

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while the increased internationalisation of academia in general has transformed the competition for resources that governs individual and institutional fortunes.

While universities in the UK were quicker than those in the Republic of Ireland to prioritise structures such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the international emphasis on impact factors and citation measurements has played an increasing role south of the border in recent years as well. Séamas talked about the increased drive towards specialism in academic careers, and how this has created new challenges for national, discipline-wide organisations such as the Association. Discussing the history of AAI conferences, the panel broadly agreed that events covering a plethora of topics from a local angle were more attractive in the past, while pressure to specialise in terms of research interests and to build international links with fellow specialists makes such conferences more difficult for academics to justify today. Similarly, the panel identified these global developments as an ongoing challenge for the *Irish Journal of Anthropology*, because, given the overwhelming need to publish in high-impact journals in order to secure funding and professional progression, there is less interest in placing articles in small national publications.

One area in which there has been a remarkable absence of change is the institutional footprint of anthropology within Ireland. Séamas talked about the striking fact that the two departments (NUI Maynooth and Queen's University Belfast), which existed at the founding of the Association, are still the only two departments on the island. This was interpreted in various ways: on the one hand, as a troubling failure to expand or to consolidate an institutional base; on the other, as a relative victory, given that (as chair Chandana Mathur remarked) some disciplines have disappeared completely in that 25-year span. Hastings and Joseph argued that there are a significant number of anthropologists by training working in universities under different departmental affiliations, who are often overlooked but should be counted as a sign of the value of an anthropological education and perspective (for an indication of the range of occupations in which anthropologists were working in the early days of the Association, see Donnan and Ruane, *Social Anthropology in Ireland: A Sourcebook*, 1991). As Séamas suggested, ‘The AAI can provide a professional home for these anthropologists, but to date as a whole they have not taken ownership of the AAI. I believe that, if it is to survive, the AAI must re-invent itself and the new generations actively identify with it.’

Some AAI conferences have been themed around topics related to Ireland, such as ‘Social Thought and the Irish Question in the Nineteenth Century’ (2005), ‘Race, Racism and Interculturalism: The Role of Anthropology in a Changing World of Ireland’ (2002), or ‘St Patrick’s Day: Paraders, Performers and Promoters’ (2006). Others have focused on contemporary issues in the discipline, such as ‘Dis-ease with Postmodern Anthropology: Anthropologists Facing the 21st Century’ (1999), ‘Anthropological Crossings: Memory, Identity and Belonging in an Interconnected World’ (2009), and ‘Ethnography beyond Ethnos?’ (2010). Sometimes the AAI pioneered new areas of interest, exemplified by the conference on ‘Anthropologists’ and Journalists’ Accounts’ organised by Graham in 1994.

AAI conferences have been particularly useful for the growing number of postgraduate anthropology students, enabling them to gain experience of running an event, presenting their own research and making professional contacts. Postgraduate conferences have been organised at both Maynooth and Queen’s, receiving very positive feedback from students. The AAI has also offered postgraduates (and other members) opportunities to disseminate their writing, whether through the post-graduate prize essay, the *Irish Journal of Anthropology* (first published in 1996) and its predecessor *Anthropology Ireland* (first published in 1991), or in books such as *Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity* (McCann, Ó Síocháin and Ruane, 1994) and *Border Approaches: Anthropological Perspectives on Frontiers* (Donnan and Wilson 1994), the latter based on the AAI’s first and only all-residential conference.

Currently, the AAI offers a level of interaction that goes beyond departmental affiliations, but that takes place on a more personal scale than that of international anthropological organisations, such as the ASA, EASA and AAA. While the greatest concentrations of members are in the QUB and NUIM anthropology departments, others are located in University of Ulster, University of Limerick, University College Cork, National University of Ireland in Galway, Trinity College Dublin, and Dublin City University; as well as quite a few outside academia.

Looking to the future, the panel saw possibilities as well as challenges for the AAI. One recent event that was picked out as particularly successful was the writing retreat organised by Fiona Murphy and Keith Egan in 2010, which Hastings suggested might provide inspiration for future projects. Another very successful event was the 1991 conference ‘Irish Travellers: History, Culture, Society’, organised by Ó Síocháin, Ruane and McCann, which drew in Travellers, social and community workers, and public sector administrators as well as the anthropological community. This engaged a wide range of academics, politicians, community activists and Travelling people in what was the largest AAI conference then or since and testifying to the public policy and non-academic impact of Irish anthropology. It was clear that a degree of creativity will be required in order for the AAI to face continuing changes. The panel’s tentative suggestions for avenues the Association might explore included building that ‘professional home’ for anthropologists in other departments and outside academia, and using the Association as a platform from which to promote anthropology as a discipline more vigorously, in today’s aggressive academic environment.
References:
Abstract: The prevalence of dementia is increasing dramatically as the global population ages. The upward shift in prevalence rates in dementia comes at a time when ethnographic processes, and definitions of what ethnography is, are being contested and reimagined. This paper explores the parallel changes in dementia rates and the new models of ethnography. Further, it draws on the complexity of ethnographic encounters with memory loss to elucidate the need for a professionalization of ethnography as a way of preparing for a new reality; a reality where over 115 million people globally will have dementia by 2050 and experience life not in a coherent, narrative order, but in a series of prereflexive events. It is essential that ethnography and ethnographers prepare for the limits of ethnographic encounters with dementia.

Key Words: Cognitive Assessment, Dementia, Ethnography, Professionalization, Personhood

Introduction

Cognitive assessments are central to the diagnostic pathway to dementia and cognitive impairment. Cognitive assessments are standardised measures of a person’s ability to recall places, objects, dates, times, locations and associations. For a person without dementia or cognitive impairment, cognitive assessments are not challenging; but for a person with dementia and cognitive impairment, questions about dates, locations or word associations can be troubling, disconcerting and unanswerable. Ethnography also asks very basic questions of people, sometimes naïvely, at other times deliberately, to elucidate information from the participant, who may not appreciate the process of ethnography. This paper is part of a series of papers concerning the ethnography of cognitive assessment and, more broadly, dementia. This paper presents case studies of ethnographic encounters, where the participants’ abilities to remember and communicate were diminished. From this discussion, the paper questions the value of the ethnographic process and scrutinises the devaluing of ethnography in the context of economic and academic pressure. This paper argues that there is now an overwhelming need to create a professional governing body to guide and protect those who claim to be ethnographers, or who are working in the field of ethnography. Without such a body, ethnography will become a meaningless catchphrase in the field of ethnography. Without such a body, ethnography will become a meaningless catchphrase in the field of ethnography. Without such a body, ethnography will become a meaningless catchphrase in the field of ethnography. Without such a body, ethnography will become a meaningless catchphrase in the field of ethnography.

Dementia – the big picture

Dementia is a broad term used to describe various diseases and conditions resulting from the death or abnormal functioning of neurons. Dementia is characterised by changes in memory, in the ability to perform tasks, in behaviour and communication and in the ability to think with clarity. Alzheimer’s disease is the main cause of dementia but there are other causes, mainly: vascular dementia, Lewy bodies, frontotemporal lobar degeneration, Parkinson’s disease, and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. Alcoholism and Down syndrome are also associated with an increased risk of dementia.

Globally, increasing rates of dementia are potentially catastrophic on health systems and on economies. Currently, 600 billion dollars are spent annually on informal and formal care of people with dementia. With the growth of an ageing population in developed and developing countries, the current estimates range from 36 million sufferers by 2013 to 65.7 million by 2030 and to 111.5 million by 2050. These increases will be acutely felt in China, India and South-East Asia, where there will be an increase of up to 300% (WHO 2012). As the single biggest risk factor to developing dementia is age, there is little doubt that as the global population ages, the prevalence of dementia will increase. In Ireland, the rates (depending on demographics and migration) suggest an increase from 45,000 in 2013 to 115,000 in 2041, or 2,500 new cases per year (Cahill et al 2012). Where this ethnographic research was conducted in Mallow, Co Cork, rates will increase from 310 in 2012 to 1,805 in 2041. Globally, nationally and locally dementia is a significant cause for concern.

The Study: Background and Rationale

In 2012, a brief study was conducted with patients who self-identified as being worried about their memory and who considered themselves forgetful. For this study, people were invited to attend a local primary healthcare centre and complete an open interview concerning changes in lifestyle, memory and biographical points of interest that may have health implications. Those invited also completed the Montreal Cognitive Assessment or MoCa (see http://www.mocatest.org/), a Standardised Mini-Mental State Exam and the Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale. A full medical assessment was also conducted (Molly and Standish 1997). The findings from this study were given to their doctors and referrals were made to appropriate health services. The majority of those participating displayed little or no cognitive impairment; however, a small number of participants displayed cause for concern in their cognitive functioning.

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made to all participants by an anthropologist with fifteen years’ experience of ethnographic research (for this research Sheehan conducted all the interviews and home visits). The purpose of these home visits was to obtain the participants’ experiences of the battery of tests in the primary care medical centre.

In this case it is questionable that these interviews/home visits alone could be considered ethnography. However, the researcher has spent time training in cognitive assessments, conducting participant observation during cognitive assessments and medical examinations and with medical professionals involved in the treatment of, and care for, those with dementia and their families. These interviews should be considered part of the continuum of ethnographic engagement, and not in isolation.

There is almost no research done on participants’ experiences of cognitive assessment, with the main emphasis being on validation and ease of use which were to the forefront of the research (Kronhe et al 2011). Through a detailed literature review of similar studies and personal correspondence with authors of the Kronhe study, a template for interviews was drafted. Mainly, the questions referred directly to the cognitive assessments, the nature of the questions and if participants believed they were involved in a test. Broader questions were asked about memory, dementia and general well-being and health. The findings of this study are being submitted for publication. Most of these ethnographic encounters could be considered successful, with the participants giving detailed insights into the cognitive assessment process and also into their experiences and knowledge of dementia and cognitive impairment. However, some interactions could be considered to be failed ethnographic encounters. The following case studies are presented here with two purposes in mind: first, as a means to explore the reimagining of personhood, and second, as a way of grounding the need for the professionalization of ethnography in a real research context.

Mr Davies is a tall man in his late 70s, who lives with his wife in rural North Cork. He attended the primary care centre and took part in the cognitive assessments, with no obvious problems with his cognitive function. He did complain that he was vexed by a chronic pain in the head, located on the right side of his forehead. He has been treated for the chronic pain over the years; the general medical opinion is that it is like a shooting pain in my head. I get this terrible pain in my head. I can’t handle this now; it is like a shooting pain in my forehead. I get worried and this pain comes on and I am not able to deal with this pain now. I won’t be able to deal with this now, and they [family] know that. I’m sorry I can’t remember. You seem like a good man. I don’t want to waste your time driving out here… I don’t know you, do I? …would you like more tea?

It is not the business of the ethnographer to offer diagnosis; however, in the case of Mr Davies, he was clearly troubled by a chronic pain, which debilitated him and rendered him ‘useless’ to his family. He was unable to recall any of the questions with any clarity. When he did recognise some questions, he answered them but he was never able to make the distinction between questions about the experience of partaking in the cognitive assessment and the cognitive assessment questions. We talked for about an hour about GAA games, drinking in his local pub and his working life. Over the course of the hour, Mr Davies asked me my name a couple of times, and also asked what I was doing in the house. He also asked me why I was chatting to him, but he said he was very happy for the company.

Mr Whyte is an elderly man in his 80s living on the border of North Cork and Limerick. He lives with his wife. His adult son lives in a house nearby and runs a sales business - specializing in household machinery - from the family homestead. Mr Whyte is a big man who wears thick glasses and who has poor mobility. His wife is a small woman who seems to be younger and considerably more active and alert than her husband. When I arrived at the Whytes’ home, I was met by their son who thanked me for calling out. He showed me around the house with the specific purpose of demonstrating the improvements that he had made to make it ‘safer for the father’. I explained that I was not an occupational therapist, but this did not stop the tour of the house. Eventually, Mrs Whyte brought me into the heart of the house, and showed me the family bathroom - kitted with raised toilet seat - and the master bedroom with two separate beds, one of which had bars on the side of the bed to stop Mr Whyte from falling out. I sat down in the room with Mr and Mrs
Whyte, both of whom I had met in the primary care centre on the day of his cognitive assessment.

I spoke to Mr Whyte directly; I asked him how he was. He answered ‘fine’. I asked him if he remembered me; he looked to his wife, and she answered ‘of course’. I spoke louder as his wife pointed to his ears, but he gave little response. I asked if he remembered any of the questions from the day he came to the primary care centre; he said nothing in response and he glanced at his wife again. His wife bit her bottom lip and, after a while, said:

He can’t remember, but it is okay. He has been going this way for some time. He is grand there, and he is well looked after.

I stopped the interview. Mrs Whyte then brought me into the hall, and I offered my thanks. I reassured her that I was not there to assess their ability to look after Mr Whyte. She offered me money for petrol for driving out to see them; I refused and, soon after, I left. Mr Whyte’s health has subsequently diminished further. In simple terms, the information sought was ethnographically unattainable directly from Mr Whyte.

The Need for Professionalization

Traditionally, it was considered that the brain to be incapable of changing shape, and the creation of new neurons ceased at puberty. James (1890) hinted that the brain may be more malleable than believed, but it was not until recently that science has shown that the brain itself changes in size and shape over time. The brain has the ability to create new neural pathways to compensate for damage or injury; this ability is called neuroplasticity or brain malleability (Lilliard and Erisir 2011).

In much the same way George Marcus’s rethinking of the Malinoskian ethos of ethnography (Marcus 1995) is as important to anthropology, as neuroplasticity is to neuroscience.

Rethinking the ethnographic field site as multi-sited is challenging. Within this multi-sited paradigm, the ethnographer has to move with and respond to para-ethnographers within a continuously unfolding experience. Para-ethnographers are not situated subjects who in Malinoskian paradigm were constituted by tradition and the past, instead Marcus’s multi-sited paradigm offers an emergent and novel view of interaction, reflecting on those within the production of knowledge and technology; experts realising visions of technologically enhanced futures. Marcus does not simply deconstruct the Malinoskian paradigm and its proponents; instead there is a commitment to the core of ethnography, through the strategic engagement with para-ethnographers, as there is within the Malinoskian paradigm; Marcus explains:

What is distinctive about anthropology and precious to preserve in the Malinoskian ethos of ethnography is the pretense and claim to be able to work through subjects positions, perspectives and the meaning in order to establish one’s own knowledge. What produces this commitment at the core of ethnography in multi-sited research is the strategic engagement with para-ethnographic perspective in research, epistemologically equivalent to one’s own, and working through them literally into others sites of fieldwork. Independent ethnographic knowledge is a derivation of his process (Marcus 2011: 23).

Within the multi-sited paradigm the rigor and commitment to ethnographic process is not diluted and it is perhaps even more challenging. The following of threads of ideas, in an emergent setting, such as the creation of knowledge in neuroscience is deeply challenging, indeed, the following of ideas through discourses and technologies surrounding dementia pushes the boundaries of multi-sited research, when subjects are existing in prereflexive moments of experiences. The commitment to ethnographic process in the two paradigms should not be understated, however, in corporate and commercial ethnography neither paradigm is being exercised to the same level of commitment. Roberts (2005) argues that there are increasingly different forms of ethnographic encounters, listing well above one hundred types, from accompanied shopping, daily routine shadowing, deep hanging out, immersion, naked behaviour research, store walks, and guerrilla ethnography, etc. Ethnographies can now be done ‘in a day’, or called ‘ethnography-lite’ or ‘guerrilla ethnography’ (Mariampolski 2006). Often commercial or corporate research is “quick and dirty ethnography” where research is not lengthy, for example research into consumer habits (Handwerker 2002). As Ehn and Löfgren (2009) explain ‘In its most watered-down version “ethnography” is trivialized into a simple technique of “hanging out with real people”’ (2009: 36). With such quick and dirty commitment, the outcomes cannot really satisfy ethnography as a traditional reservoir of knowledge protecting cultures from vanishing, or an emergent understanding of unfolding human experience. The commitment needed to establish one’s own knowledge is never quick and dirty. The commitment to follow ‘chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations’ is never quick and dirty (Marcus 1995:105). What then is this type of ethnography? Hanging out with real people- is that the value of ethnography or anthropological training?

In attempt to reconcile what this ethnography is, in the recent book ‘Advancing Ethnography in Corporate Environments’ (Jordan, 2013) in a series of dyad positions, the authors and editors constantly remind the readers that reality is king and that reality is the corporate environment demand outcomes that are quick and useful, and largely the subject is a consumer or potential consumer. It is in this very constant
reminder that the commitment to ethnography is lost, and perhaps all claims to be variations of the ethnographic tradition.

Some may argue that the pressure to find jobs in academia or to create niches, has forced this flexibility and that being adaptive and a generalist in the survival of the fittest is something to consider. Others may contend that ethnography itself was never a hard science; rather it is a mere engagement with the ‘other’. Others may argue that this paper is purist propaganda. It is the contention of this paper to offer a solution to these paradigmatic problems, through a practical solution - the professionalization of ethnography.

People like Mr Whyte and Mr Davies are of interest to new ethnographers who attempt to understand their needs as consumers or users of products, devices and technologies (see Squires and Byrne eds. 2002). Sheehan has first-hand experience of this type of ethnography, having been employed in a large research project involving several universities and industry partners. This experience has given insight into the pressures applied to researchers to produce information that was both positive and useful. At times, the pressure was applied also to abandon the long-term ethnographic experience and nuances of the ethnographic encounter. There are also considerable parallels to be noted regarding the growth of ‘ethnography of design’ being linked not only to ‘normal consumers’, but also to ageing populations and people with physical and cognitive impairments. If age presents as the most significant risk of developing dementia, then it is the youthful exuberance of the new flexible ‘plastic’ ethnography that is the most significant risk to ethnography as a respectable means of understanding humanity. The possibility of learning a person’s habits and cultural positioning in ‘ethnography in a day’ is impossible, given that contradiction is at the heart of humanity, as Montaigne states in his essay, “Of the Inconsistency of Our Actions” (1580):

> Anyone who turns his prime attention on to himself will hardly ever find himself in the same state twice . . . Every sort of contradiction can be found in me, depending on some twist or attribute: timid, insolent; chaste, lecherous; talkative, taciturn; tough, sickly; clever, dull; brooding, affable; lying; truthful; learned, ignorant; generous, miserly and then prodigal—I can see something of all that in myself, depending on how I gyrate… (Montaigne quoted in Frame et al., 1966:11)

If anything will remind us of the contradiction of humanity— it is dementia. A man can become decoupled from his own personal narrative where the past, present and future are now looked at through an opaque lens. Mr Whyte and Mr Davies are examples of Montaigne’s contradictions magnified. In the presence of Mr Whyte, I was truthful and brooding. How could I claim to understand the nature of their contradictions in one day, or they mine? No one does ‘simple ethnography; you are an ethnographer and depending on how you ‘gyrate’, all those human qualities are within ethnography, its subjects and the ethnographer.

It is our opinion that a professional body needs to be established that would assume responsibility for supervising and monitoring the actions of those who claim to be ethnographers and who are doing ethnographic research in Ireland. Ethnographers need to be trained to professional level, not for the sake of academic lip service, but to protect the likes of Mr Whyte and the future 111.5 million like him. Dementia is part of our near future; it is you, me, us, our friends, colleagues, family and our kin. Mr Whyte, in his diminished state of unknowing, is perhaps all our futures and it would be insulting to ourselves and to him in his vulnerable state, if we do not take the opportunity to professionalize ethnography. The professionalization of a discipline is nothing new. There are examples to be found in Ireland and elsewhere, where a licence to practise is maintained by a central registration governing body, e.g., nursing and social work (see Hyde et al. 2004). These governing bodies act to protect both the practitioner and ‘client’ or ‘patient’. By creating a system in Ireland to professionalize ethnographic research, it would be imagined that those using ethnography would have to adhere to the best practices laid down by the governing body. These practices need not be complex or prohibitive, but should be able to respond to the needs of different researchers and research objects. But ultimately, this governing body would offer an insight and the possibility to learn from each other. Governing bodies need not be oppressive; they can be democratic, useful and sympathetic to the researcher and the researched.

Our fear is what would have happened to us as researchers sitting in Mr Whyte’s living room, asking questions and not getting answers. Would we have responded in the same way or would we have been ‘tough’ or ‘lying? What if we needed to produce positive research results, would we have simply abandoned Mr Whyte and disregarded his contradictions? What if we had to have an interview to show for my ‘ethnography in a day’? What then? If there was in existence a professional body that offered support and time to reflect on situations, even simply knowing that there were other professionals registered, would that give enough solace and protection for the naïve ethnographer? We have done things in our past when in the field that we would never repeat, but nobody is completely immune to the pressures of research and funders. The professionalization of ethnography would provide a first defence against the pressure that we have all felt and experienced in the field. Such pressure can often force researchers to cut corners, force interviews and speed through observations, limiting the effect of the ethnographic process.
The time for change is now

With a global crisis facing health systems and economies alike from the tripling of dementia patients globally from 32 million to over 115 million in 37 years, it will become increasingly necessary for the establishment of a professional body to govern ethnographic research. That is not just because ethnographers will encounter more people with dementia, but also because the very concept of ethnography and human interaction will have to change. It’s not that human interactions are static, but the global dementia crisis will force ethnographers to reimage and reconceptualise concepts of narratives and personhood (see Liebing and Cohen 2006). What will constitute an understanding of ‘being in the world’ will greatly alter (Kontos 2006). Often, we are concerned with health and economic impacts of disease prevalence, but we also need - as professionals - to prepare for this reality (especially those working in industry and in the business sector where the older population are important ‘consumers’).

Robertson argues that ‘Alzheimer’s disease represents the loss of all those qualities by which we have come to define our humaneness’ (Robertson 1991:143). There appears to be a presumed loss of selfhood which is itself a product of the Western assumption that status as full human beings is completely dependent on cognition and memory (Kontos 2006:195). Framing this type of existence without a coherent order is difficult, as Chartterji argues when reflecting on Desjarlais’s work (1994) with the homeless, mentally-ill in America:

For some persons who live precariously on the margins of society, under conditions of extreme deprivation, existence maybe reduced to a succession of discrete events that cannot be configured into a temporally coherent narrative that looks back to a past and forward to an anticipated future. For such persons, he (Desjarlais) says that life becomes an exteriority. It is not experienced as a continuous narrative that can be made available to a community of listeners. (Chartterji 1998: 356)

Dementia can be considered as an extreme deprivation, where existence is nothing more than a series of events, with no past or future concerns, and where a person is in a moment and not part of coherent, biographical schema. In Kontos’ study of an Orthodox Jewish, old-age home, dementia patients were observed and interacted with over a period of eight months. Kontos, drawing from the work of Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bourdieu, argues that the dementia patients in the home act and react to the world in prereflexive ways. Kontos argues that the prereflexive level of interaction and action is the foundation for the dynamics of personhood. So, even in the dementia patient, the loss of cognition and memory does not mean the end of personhood. If we apply Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological construct that the body acts and reacts on its environment, the cognition is not necessary for all tasks to be performed (Kontos 2006: 205). Kontos develops this argument further by arguing that the social body is also evident in the dementia patient; that the way the body acts, applying Bourdieu’s paradigm of habitus, allows for the ethnographer to understand sociocultural structures of bodily practices. For Bourdieu, ‘the schemes of habitus, the primary forms of classification, owe their specific efficacy to the fact they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of the introspective scrutiny or control by the will’ (Bourdieu 1984: 466). Kontos goes on to explain:

… selfhood, in addition to having a primordial source, consists in the dispositions and generative schemes of habitus and thus, in the same way the dispositions are embodied and materialize in practice, selfhood is embodied and manifested in a sociocultural specific way of being in the world…(2006: 208).

This prereflexive selfhood is sociocultural, and so voice, mannerisms, intonation and body movements have a tendency and inclination to reflect the sociocultural environment. Mr Whyte, dressed in his typical ‘Irish’ clothes and with his facial expression and glance to his wife when I asked questions, reflected the continued existence of embodied sociocultural self, prereflexive, but persistent none the less. The rush to uncover the truth of the human condition, to do ‘ethnography in a day’ or ‘guerrilla ethnography’ is at odds with the pace of prereflexive, embodied sociocultural self. In efforts to speed up the ethnographic encounter, the loss of such detail is a failure of due process.

Just as cognitive assessments are designed to be short for the sake of the doctor and other medical professionals, the new ethnography has shortened to hours, minutes and seconds of people’s time. But to what purpose - to make life easier for the participant, or to satisfy the need for quick production of positive data? I called to see Mr Whyte, not to force him to narrate his experience of cognitive assessment, but to learn from his experience. He was not able to communicate, but this does not mean that he is an empty vessel.

Conclusions

The central aim of this paper was to call for the professionalization of ethnography through the establishment of a governing body that would set down the codes of conduct of ethnographic research. This body should be democratic and supportive of ethnographic research practice in Ireland, and be a point of reference for those embarking on ethnographic research at any career stage. It should be a place for the building of an ‘ethnographic community’ placing emphasis on training, collegiality and best practice. Other professions have this as a central structure of their culture and identity, and it would be developed
over a period of years through investment by higher level institutions and partners in the business and health sectors.

By demonstrating that ethnography cannot always produce results, it is clear that, in the current academic and economic contexts, it is only a matter of time before an ethnographer would compromise their own values and ethical considerations, and give positive results regardless of the human costs.

Dementia, as presented here, is a global problem which is increasing exponentially. Tied to this growth is an ageing population. It is a reality of the future that more and more people will live longer and experience life in different ways, not always in clear narratives, but in the prereflexive. There is no real reason for ethnographers to rush their time with their participants; on the contrary, taking time and becoming involved in their realities will surely lead to a more positive understanding of humanity in all its contradictions.

There is no future in ethnography until some level of control is achieved through professionalization. Of course, there is not enough room at the academic table, but allowing students - young and old - to venture out into the opaque and surreal world of new, ‘flexible ethnography’ is short-sighted. Only through a long period of training and the building of a community, can an ethnographer turn the attention inward and say: ‘I know what I am doing and it takes time’ to understand Mr Whyte and Mr Davies, and all the contradictions within.

References


The wife of my landlord’s estranged brother died while I was doing fieldwork in their village in India. They lived in an adjoining house and though I had had several very good conversations with him, I had found her less easy to talk to. Our awkwardness wasn’t helped by the fact that my host family were fiercely antagonistic towards her, accusing her of having commissioned an attack of sorcery against my landlord that had brought him close to death for a year. This stance conditioned my relations with her and I too felt ambivalent about her presence, trying to be at one with my family’s position that she made a reconciliation between brothers ever more difficult. When she died, I attended her funeral and stood as her shrouded body was lowered into the freshly dug pit of the hard summer earth. The mourners took a handful of soil and cast it down on to the body but I hesitated and then refrained from the act. One of the others asked someone whether I had thrown the earth; he looked at me, I nodded, and he reported this back. I lied and I think the others knew that I had lied. What had made me hesitate and act so disrespectfully to an old woman I barely knew?

This is just one of the questions that Michael Jackson considers in his fascinating and utterly compelling meditation on anthropology and the practice of scholarship. We wander with him as he reflects on ‘companionship’ in relation to his life and work and the people he has known. The sense of accompanying and being accompanied captures the delicate oscillation between detachment and involvement that he sees as central not only to the anthropological endeavour but to human existence more broadly. Reading Jackson’s passages about mistakes, shame, detachment and intimacy led me to understand my own moment of failure in a way I had been hitherto unable to articulate. My reaction to the woman’s burial was both a clumsy attempt at identification with the family who resented her and a distancing from the whole messiness of the sociality of death from which I would have been apart were it not for the fact of fieldwork.

The ethical dilemma of ‘being in between’ echoes others working in the phenomenological tradition. Jackson suggests that this is not a stable state but neither is it undefined; rather it is produced by the constant pull between sociality and solitude, between involvement with others and retreat into oneself. Importantly, these are not completely attainable ones but exist in dialectical relationship with one another; they are aspects of one phenomenon. Jackson explores this relationship in its many manifestations by introducing us to a great array of teachers, fieldwork interlocutors, writers, and scholars and draws eclectically on anthropological and non-anthropological work. Indeed, he suggests that social science cannot but give a partial account of the richness of this fundamental human experience and that artists, novelists and others might supply more apposite techniques. Through this weaving and wandering, he proposes a vision for an anthropology that is at once fully complete and more than itself.

Each chapter provides a connected series of reflections, some more elliptical than others. Jackson’s discussion of death and transformation towards the end of the book is one of the most arresting. It is a tribute to the late anthropologist Galina Lindquist who worked on practices of healing in post-Soviet Russia. He attends to the struggles she faced in achieving a mode of analysis that could embrace both the politics of the state and of individual lifeworlds, a struggle that was reflected in the broader and longstanding tension in anthropological theorising between political economy and phenomenological approaches, and between objective knowledge and subjective experience. He traces her increased focus on the exploration of alternative and multiple epistemologies and ontologies, achieved through a close attention to the intersubjective experience of transformation through healing. As her own death approaches, however, he notes a shift again in her writing on religion and politics, away from uncertainty and reflexivity and towards a search for manifestations of power and mastery that objectify and fix. Jackson tentatively suggests that this responded to her need to make herself present again, to emerge from a deep involvement that made her invisible at a time when she was also slipping away.

For Jackson, separation, loss and mourning also often reveal the truth that human experience is intersubjective, that one understands oneself through other people and vice versa. When that stops at death, one is also forced to ask about knowing rather than experiencing; through this process, the other emerges from a place beyond relations. A penetrating attack on positivistic social science follows: Jackson suggests that in seeking knowledge of the world, it ends up addressing the world as if it were dead, shorn of the companionable sharing that makes life possible.

These concerns bring to mind Rane Willerslev’s (2007) remarkable study of Siberian hunters. Willerslev shows how Yukaghir hunters must constantly shift perspectives between themselves and the elk that they hunt. They do so in a way that never surrenders completely to the point of view of elk but nor can they behave as fully human persons. To do the former would be to extinguish one’s humanness and to become elk; the latter would result in an unsuccessful hunt. One is therefore at the same time not elk but also not-not...
Willerslev takes seriously the ontological bases for Yukaghir hunters' actions and refuses to evaluate them according to Western ones. And by producing a work of scholarship, Willerslev shows that he himself has not succumbed totally to the Yukaghir point-of-view; but then neither has he not-succumbed. One might say, in Jackson's terms, that Willerslev accompanies the Yukaghir hunters, striking a balance between absorption and identification. In doing so, he produces a Yukaghir anthropology rather than simply an ethnography of the Yukaghirs, a vision fully commensurate with Jackson's articulation of the possibilities of our discipline.

Between One and One Another is a thoughtful appeal for and presentation of an existentialist anthropology, of the awareness of humanness as a struggle for being, explored through an intensely personal portrait of the author's companions. Jackson's commitment to 'sound writing' elevates us as readers to the status of companion too, enfolding us in the oscillation, enabling us to trace and to participate in the contours of his being as they alternately emerge and fade from view.

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University of California Press

Integration in Ireland: The everyday lives of African Migrants, by Mark Maguire & Fiona Murphy (New Ethnographies)

A significant contribution to contemporary anthropological studies pertaining to migration, Maguire and Murphy's co-written ethnography brings to light a number of issues concerning the integration of African migrants in Ireland. Focusing on fieldwork in Drogheda, Dundalk, and Dublin during the period from 2009 to 2011, the researchers' main objective is to analyse integration from the perspective of everyday life and furthermore to reveal ways in which integration can and should be approached as a lived experience. Former asylum seekers and immigrants, particularly from Nigeria and Congo, constitute the voices through which the ethnography is built. While largely influenced by the work of Michael Jackson and Veena Das on everyday life, the ethnography implements a polyphonic, interdisciplinary range of literature and theory with regards to work, civic and political activism, religious organizations and beliefs, education, and youth identity.

The first chapter examines integration through experiences of working within the Irish taxi industry. The ethnographers knit together voices of African taxi drivers and representatives of the Irish Taxi Drivers' Association and Federation, while recounting deregulatory policies in the Irish taxi industry in conjunction with neo-liberal economic theory. The description of taxi drivers' vigil in memory of three of their colleagues who committed suicide, as well as the examination of their discourse on rumours, racialization and racism, offer an engaging account of the struggle of African taxi drivers to integrate in the Irish industry. An emotionally charged closure to the chapter is provided by the account of a taxi driver, who discusses the role of his skin colour in people's preference to get into any other taxi, even Osama Bin Laden's, rather than his.

The second ethnographic chapter is built upon the stories of two Nigerian women involved in political activism during the 2009 national and European elections. Politics here are treated as a means of understanding senses of self. The authors, thus, aim to unpack political experiences rather than political systems, while referring to the contemporary shift within political science from rational-choice theory to emotions and affect (41). Well-presented descriptions of canvassing, encompassing one of the few reflexive points to be found in the ethnography, give an overall fulfilling sense to the reader. An adoption of Jackson's approach of 'stories' (59), along with reflections on the work of writers such as Robby-Doyle, who notably approaches integration as illusio (60), add to the conceptual framework of understanding political integration through everyday experiences and sentiments. Moving from the political to the religious sphere, the third chapter departs from the narration of Jesus Walk, a religious practice of enchanting Ireland among African Pentecostal worshippers in Drogheda, and comprises accounts of religious encounters that shape and reflect everyday experiences of belonging and home-construction. Important literature on Pentecostalism along with discourses on transnational features of contemporary African Pentecostal practices, are taken into account. Detailed and reflexive descriptions of the researchers' involvement in sacred places take place to illustrate the experience of 'blending of the sacred and the everyday' (80). Das’ influential discussion of ‘events’ (80), as well as Jackson's contribution to affect theory and embodied experience are highlighted (83). Finally, the authors expose scholarly consideration that relates the emergence of new forms of Pentecostalism with neo-
liberalism, without claiming an absolute association between the two.

The fourth chapter portrays intercultural education policy in Ireland, while focusing on everyday experiences of integration in a primary school in Dundalk. The case of the Nigerian teacher, author and protagonist of the chapter, who stands for a ‘desirable form’ of integration according to governmental and school representatives (93-94), drives the authors to examine the Irish educational system through a historical spectrum, focusing on the denominational character of primary education in Ireland. References in this chapter range from Jackson’s consideration of ‘stories’ to be capable of revealing the flux and unpredictability of everyday experiences (94) to Du Bois’ legacy on ‘double-consciousness’ and O’Connor’s literary accounts of racism as experienced by generations of opt-out children (99). Teachers, focus groups, parents and the school’s principal are the voices heard throughout the chapter, which provides a rich unpacking of the diversity of beliefs, experiences and practices of intercultural education in Ireland. Following educational experiences and policies of integration, the final chapter is concerned with the everyday experiences of a youth standing between ‘African-minded’ parents, as one of the participants puts it (134), and an Irish youth calling. A vivid description of the 2009 Miss Nigeria Ireland pageant paves the way for discussions on the uncertainty of cultural identity and the experiences of growing up ‘between two worlds’ (131). Youth voices consider their identities in relation to colour, networking, everyday practices and experiences that seem unfeasible to categorize, as the ethnographers conclude. Significantly, the authors argue for ‘no-clear pattern of youth identity’ but an African-Irish one that still encompasses a multitude of viewpoints and experiences. (136)

Even though one might have anticipated that a larger volume would have been needed to cover the wide arenas of ‘integration’, ‘Ireland’ and ‘African’, for the most part the authors’ theoretical framework and research material meet the reader’s expectations. Interestingly enough, voices of the key participants are brought from one chapter into the other, woven into a network of integration experiences. This accentuates a deliberate story-telling approach that is, as the ethnographers themselves claim, ‘self-consciously partial’, since they ‘cannot tell the whole story’ (4). Throughout the text, integration is approached spherically; multi-sitedness does not only accentuate a deliberate story-telling approach that characterizes the fieldwork itself, but also the unfolding of the textual discourse. A great example can be seen in the multi-voiced discussion of intercultural education, where teachers, parents and the school principal’s viewpoints are conveyed along with a criticism of interculturalism to be a ‘slippery and elusive term for inclusiveness policies emanating outwards from the largely denominational mainstream’ and of education policy to be ‘characterized by a suspiciously neo-liberal form of government-at-a-distance, [while] integration is left to be worked out by those on the ground’ (116-117).

In spite of this overall positive perception, at times, interpretations of the participants’ quotes appear somewhat misguided. For example, the authors seem to interpret an African Pentecostal pastor’s distinction between mere church attendance and deep spirituality as a distinction between his Anglican-surrounded upbringing and the Pentecostal settings in which he later became involved. However, what the pastor seems to speak of is the ‘difference between religion and knowing Jesus Christ’, without clarifying how distinct Christian denominations contribute to this difference (80). A second case concerns a former Congolese asylum seeker whose way of narration is regarded by the authors as indicative of ‘trauma’ (68). The conceptualization and use of ‘trauma’, however, could be argued to be elusive here, as it widely varies within and across different assemblages of ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’ thought, practice, and experience. Similar instances are rarely found in the text, since the authors have managed well to carry out an ethnography that employs everyday stories of being-in-world from the viewpoints of their consultants.

Overall, the ethnography is quite an ambitious endeavor, promising to fill in gaps in the scholarly deliberation of integration as shaped and understood through everyday experiences. The book is a must-read for scholars, educationists, political activists and general readers interested in a wide range of contemporary critical subjects including migration, integration, identity, as well as multicultural discourse.

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I was gripped by a feeling of unease when I first realized that the queues for European Union and non-European passport holders at Amsterdam International airport (Schiphol) had been further divided into economic classes. Those willing and able to pay more could move more quickly through the passport check. The privileges of citizenship have always been differentiated by wealth, but this division seems to have become more pervasive and visible. Market thinking, which purports the superiority of individualized, market-based competition over other sorts of organization, has become an increasingly dominant paradigm shaping citizenship. In their book The crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age (2011) Alana Lentin and
Gavan Titley discuss calls in the United Kingdom to teach foreigners to wait in line: “queuing is an expression of the internalized discipline of social order and civil society…” (198). However, with enough economic capital one neither needs to adhere to such forms of social order nor to participate in civic society. Market rational has come not only to determine who can jump the airport queues but more profoundly who is a desirable citizen and who is not.

Lentin and Titley challenge the neoliberal supposition that the market project is colour blind by examining the breakdown of multiculturalism in Europe and North America. What the horrors of Nazi concentration camps and the struggle for African American civil rights did for racism is similar to what Muslim extremist terrorism did for multiculturalism and the breakdown of Keynesian-welfarism did for multiculturalism. Racism became a ‘dirty idea’ in mainstream politics in the latter half of the twentieth century and multiculturalism followed suit in the twenty-first. What makes this analogy rather ironic is that multiculturalism - a notoriously difficult concept to define, which seems to refer to forms of social and political acceptance of cultural difference - was understood to be a remedy for racism, but few of its contemporary critics identify with the pseudo-scientific colonial era discourse. Racism today, according to Lentin and Titley is not justified by biological reasoning but by assumptions about the culture of the Other.

The denial that discrimination is based on skin colour or phenotype does not make it less racist. Lentin and Gavan advance this argument by examining the racialisation of Jewish cultural attributes within European anti-Semitism (52-53). In the contemporary West, the racial other is shunned because of what is regarded as ‘illiberal’ cultural beliefs and practices such as a supposed inequality between the sexes symbolized by women’s headscarves and an intolerance of homosexuality. The problem with the “era of post-racialism” in which we live is that it is difficult to talk about racism because it is believed to no longer exist (67). As such, critiques of a racist political system of exclusion and differential privilege are easily blown off. Cultural and religious beliefs are seen as malleable where race is not. Thus, to be excluded and underprivileged is conceptualised by some as a choice.

The threat of the racial Other is believed by many to have been exacerbated by multiculturalist relativism, which “valorised difference over commonalities, cultural particularity over social cohesion and an apologetic relativism at the expense of shared values and a commitment to liberty of expression, women’s rights and sexual freedom” (13). Lentin and Titley deny that there ever was a coherent era of multiculturalism and argue that the demise of multiculturalism is the result of neoliberal fears about the multicultural reality of western societies. Within neoliberal thought, “individual morality is …judged according to our capacity for ‘self care’” (Brown 2005: 42 as cited in page 163). Thus, the authors argue, neoliberal governmentality creates the conditions for people to be “free”. Integration regimes address undesirable cultural traits, which are not in line with supposed liberal freedoms, and encourage market participation. Integration policies are culturalist and thus racist.

Not all migrants are however considered to need such cultural disciplining. Within the new politics of diversity, which has replaced multiculturalism, economically profitable difference is celebrated in order to establish a nation, region or municipality as a site for global investment. Within my own research in the Netherlands this irregular approach to the migrant other is painfully clear: the supposed Hindu culture of high skilled Indian migrants is celebrated through government sponsored cultural events at a time when funding Turkish and Moroccan cultural events in underprivileged neighbourhoods has all but stopped in the name of integration. In a recent focus group meeting, the relatively dark skinned wife of a high skilled Indian migrant told us about a conversation in which a Dutch man told her that Amsterdam was being destroyed by “blacks”. When he registered her shocked reaction he was quick to assure her that she was “not black”. Lentin and Titley have helped me to conceptualise her story; “being black” in a neoliberal age is about having a culture that is imagined to be incompatible with the needs of a market driven society.

This ambitious book uses examples from across Europe and North America, which make clear that this new form of racism is a transnational trend mediated by politicians, the media, and “negative intellectuals” (154). The picture that Lentin and Titley paint of the communicable nature of the multicultural crisis is vivid and gripping. However, the book does not consider the particular historical contexts in which this transnational trend manifests itself in any great detail. As such the authors do not address the lived reality of neoliberal racism individuals and groups. The term “black” referred in the vignette above, has followed a specific social-historical trajectory; it is difficult to comprehend what “black” means in the Netherlands without understanding colonial and migration history. I must, therefore, take my analysis of this story beyond Lentin and Titley’s framework. At the same time, the book is essential for our colleagues who are trying to conceptualize the impact of integration policies and anti-immigrant political discourses on the ground: we cannot understand local experiences without understanding the global movement of ideas.

Unfortunately this is a proposal that will not be easy to execute. Many of our students and non-native speakers of English may be baffled by the language and left struggling to get through the prose. The publisher, Zed Books, makes the admirable claim to be “committed to increasing awareness of important international issues and to promote diversity, alternative voices and progressive social change.” In order to meet this lofty goal, I would encourage talented intellectuals
like Lentin and Titley to strengthen the accessibility of their work by simplifying their language.

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Notes:
1 Focus group discussion (April 2012, Amsterdam)
2 The term “negative intellectual” is borrowed from Bourdieu’s critique of intellectuals such as Bernard-Henri Lévy “who have found a civilization justification of simplistic dichotomies” (154).
3 http://www.zedbooks.co.uk/about (accessed: 26/5/13)
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Bibliographical references in the body of the text should be given in parentheses in standard author-date form: (Lee and Devore 1968: 236). A complete list of references cited, arranged alphabetically by author's surname, should be typed at the end of the article and adhere to the following style:


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