

Culture Unbound:
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Thematic Section:
Communicating Culture in Practice

Edited by
Samantha Hyler

Extraction from Volume 5, 2013

Linköping University Electronic Press
Culture Unbound: ISSN 2000-1525 (online)
URL: <http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se/>

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Communicating Culture in Practice

Edited by Samantha Hyler

Volume 1 of *Culture Unbound* raised the questions of “What’s the use of cultural research?” (Fornäs, Fredriksson & Johannisson 2009). This question attests to a deep-rooted and ongoing discussion implicit within the social sciences and humanities (cf. Pink 2006). While this thematic section cannot directly answer the question, it intends to engage with the conversation surrounding this topic. *Communicating Culture in Practice* contributes to this topic with examples of applied cultural research, the specific contexts the research has contributed to, and the issues the authors have grappled with in conducting their research.

Being engaged in public discourse as a researcher is a key part of disseminating knowledge and engaging with new contexts. At times, the need to legitimate disciplines that do cultural research, or find research and employment opportunities, pushes researchers towards exploring new contexts and audiences. But this is not the only reason to do applied cultural research.

What anthropology has to offer appears to be irreducible complexity and ambiguity; in other words, apparently non-marketable commodities with respect to the mass media and the general reader. (Hylland Eriksen 2006: 30)

Thomas Hylland Eriksen points to the difficulty in translating and explaining knowledge and insights from anthropology, but he nevertheless comments on its fundamental importance to general education, or *Bildung* (2006: 130). There is an essential component of sharing knowledge and engaging in critical thought here. Applied research is perhaps a step further, by not only being intellectually engaged with a wider audience, but also being involved in processes of change through research designed with specific questions in mind. And yet, not all applied cultural analysts are researchers in the academic sense, and thus their engagement is something else entirely. Applied cultural research begins with, but goes beyond questions of ‘what’s happening?’ to ask ‘how can this be changed, helped, or done in a better way?’ Applied cultural research makes “visible the invisible” (Sunderland & Denny 2007: 48) and puts these insights to work.

But this kind of research naturally raises ethical concerns and challenges. The agendas behind applied cultural research are important, and the practical challenges of *how* culture is used in it should be considered critically. To work directly as an applied researcher with the ability to control what research is conducted and how the results are presented is tricky, if not simply initiated and constrained otherwise from academic research. Practitioners must be wary of, for example, the colonial past upon which disciplines like anthropology sits, and the potential dan-

ger of becoming accomplices to new kinds of manipulation or deceitful practices achievable based on how applied cultural research is used. Working for clients can place control of the *use* of research results and *ethical decisions* into their hands to a greater degree, as many clients are seeking targeted results for commercial or other interests. In a broad sense, this kind of applied work may be in opposition to the interests and needs of research participants. O'Dell has already pointed to these ethical questions and challenges by arguing for the contextualization of the 'usefulness' question and exploring the border zone of academic research and applied cultural research (O'Dell 2009). O'Dell (2009), Silltoe (2007) and others have also noted the obstructive nature of an 'applied/pure' distinction in research. Even so, applied cultural researchers have to contend with questions of ethical standards and other challenges in their work in different ways than researchers within academia. This is perhaps a reason for researchers working in various contexts both inside and outside academia proper to engage with these questions, to contend with applied cultural research and establish parameters and prospects for it.

Responding to these challenges, this thematic section explores the practical applicability of cultural research by presenting different examples of applied research areas with their contexts and contentions. The four articles included highlight challenges faced by the practitioners as well as the insights they gained from their applied research. The articles explore how cultural research is being conducted and communicated both inside and outside of academia, and aim to show the circumstances and dilemmas of this kind of research.

The section begins with Elias Mellander and Anna-Mari Fagerström's article *Balancing Acts: Culture as Commodity Among Business Consultants*. In analyzing a cross-cultural consultancy, the authors uncover how culture is turned into a commodity for the company to use as a tool. Their research finds that tensions exist between theoretical approaches to culture within the consultancy's work, and delivering tools and approaches to clients becomes more difficult as a result of that complexity. This article points to the challenge of using culture outside of academia, and notes the need to critically reflect on the process.

The second article in the section considers how work is changing, and what it means when the space and time of work is flexible. In *Time-Space Flexibility and Work: Analyzing the "Anywhere and Anytime Office" in the Entertainment, New Media, and Arts Sector*, Leila Valoura discusses blurring boundaries between work and home, and how new boundaries between these realms are materialized through objects and routines. Using the notion of bridging, the reader is invited to rethink realms of work and leisure as well as those of academic and non-academic spaces.

The final two articles concern cities and urban planning. Samantha Hyler presents research from Helsingborg, Sweden in *Invisible Lines Crossing the City: Ethnographic Strategies for Place-making*. This article addresses the significance

of culture and everyday life in cities, and discusses a method of incorporating this knowledge into strategic city planning. The invisible lines alludes to divisions and segregation in the city of Helsingborg, and how processes of othering can be broken down in order to understand what the 'Tolerant City' vision, chosen by the city at the start of the urban renewal project named 'H+,' could mean now and in the future.

Disciplinary ambiguity and pressing situation of graduate employment, together with the ongoing need for legitimizing anthropology, ethnology, and other humanities and social science disciplines pressure researchers to explore new applications of research (Sillitoe 2007: 161). In *From Creep to Co-Op: Research(er) Paying the Cost of Displacement?* Joakim Forsemalm asks what ethnography is, if it is not engaged? He takes up this debate by addressing the phenomena of research 'creeping' into policy work. Using examples from his own research and work in urban planning in Gothenburg, Sweden, Forsemalm motivates why being in the middle of, and engaged in the process is better than being a 'creepy' researcher.

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Balancing Acts: Culture as Commodity Among Business Consultants

By Elias Mellander & Anna-Mari Fagerström

Abstract

In this article the authors intend to analyze how the concept of culture is packaged, sold and delivered as a commodity. It is based on an ethnographic study of a Swedish consultancy in the field of cross-cultural communication and the relationship between the company and its clients. The clients were primarily foreign executives working in Sweden or Swedish expatriates, preparing for life abroad. The significance of culture-as-commodity will be explored from the perspective of the company as well as its clients in order to shed light on how the concept of culture can be communicated and what happens to it in the process. The study shows how the company combines theoretical perspectives from anthropology and intercultural communication with the aim to deliver a complex yet accessible understanding of culture to its clients.

The analysis shows that these perspectives both clash and synergize, creating contradictions as well as turning culture into an accessible and useful tool for clients. The authors argue that researchers in the field of applied cultural analysis can learn from the example put forth by the balancing act between these two perspectives on culture performed by the company. The authors conclude that although the commodification process reduces and simplifies the meaning(s) of culture, the company still manages to put culture on the agenda, demonstrating to its clients how, why, and in what ways it matters to them.

Keywords: Applied cultural research, intercultural communication, cross-cultural communication, anthropology, expatriate, consulting, cultural analysis

Commodifying Culture

The amalgamation of culture and economy seems to be increasingly common in today's globalized society. Ethnologists Orvar Löfgren and Robert Willim (2005) claim that a more intimate connection between the two emerged during what has been called "the new economy," where culture began to play a more prominent role in business as companies started to borrow concepts from the humanities and social sciences. In order to turn intangible experiences into tangible goods, analytical tools such as ritualization and narration were adopted. A higher demand for "soft" knowledge, like ethnographic research and training in cultural awareness, opened new opportunities for academics to lecture and perform research outside of academia. This in turn has created much debate surrounding what scholars such as anthropologists and ethnologists can, and ought to, do with their methodological and theoretical skills (Jespersen, Krogh Petersen, Ren & Sandberg 2012: 4). The fast-paced and action-oriented world of business is often driven by goals that seem far removed from the complex and relativistic perspectives that are employed within cultural analysis.

As cultural analysts we, the authors, do not regard culture as a rational, systematic and well thought out structure, but rather as something that is constantly negotiated and fluctuating. In everyday life, culture is often used in one of three ways; as a quality one possesses, i.e. being "refined"; as expressive forms such as art, music, or film; or as qualities shared by a certain group. Through these definitions, culture is treated as the result of a process, rather than as a process in itself (Öhlander 2005). As cultural analysts, we view culture as something found in codes, conceptions, values and experiences that people share, communicate and deal with through the social actions of everyday life (Ehn & Löfgren 2001: 9). As such, it must be regarded as an ever-evolving set of relationships.

This ephemeral understanding of culture can be a somewhat precarious basis for decisive and immediate action (Pripp & Öhlander 2005: 14). More often than not, something happens to the concept of culture when it is introduced into this new context; it is reinterpreted, it is transformed, and it is changed. According to the ethnologist Tom O'Dell, the etic understanding of culture as something processual must be left behind. Instead, for culture to be traded as a commodity, it must be turned into a tangible object. It becomes delimited, segmented, enclosed, and reified – or made real – which is necessary if the potential consumers shall be able to differentiate it from other services and products (2009: 20ff).

The aim of this article is to analyze the processes in which the concept of culture is transformed from an analytical and theoretical category, as described above, into a commodity.¹ In order to do this, we perform a case study of the Swedish consultancy Interkommunikation, a company that sells cross-cultural training and education to organizations operating in the global market.² The company delivers tailored courses for single incoming and outgoing expatriates as

well as workshops for entire teams in Sweden or abroad.³ The products Interkommunikation sell are developed from theories within intercultural communication as well as anthropology. This is done with the goal to create a genuine curiosity and awareness of cultural issues; helping the clients resolve frictions⁴ they encounter in their professional as well as private lives. In a sense, Interkommunikation is in the business of what anthropologist Karen Lisa Goldschmidt Salomon refers to as “turning values into value” (2005: 48). This means turning the often ephemeral and contextually bound concept of culture into something that can be packaged, traded and put to use. The company is relatively small, consisting of two full-time employees responsible for designing training sessions as well as providing a theoretical foundation, and a network of consultants with specialized knowledge of different geographical areas. In order to create an encompassing analysis of Interkommunikation’s practices and philosophical foundation, we performed a number of interviews with the company’s consultants and its clients, as well as participant observations at a number of training sessions.

We will begin by giving a brief outline of the history of intercultural communication as a research subject. This is followed by a description of Interkommunikation’s relationship to its clients and a detailed account of its strategies for teaching cultural awareness and theoretical foundation. We will then move on to analyze what balancing acts the company must manage in producing an accessible yet complex product and what implications this has for the concept of culture. The concluding section discusses what lessons anthropologists and other social scientists can gain from considering these balancing acts, as well as what can be lost along the way when culture is turned into a commodity.

Communicating Culture

In an increasingly globalized work market, where transnational connections are commonplace, more than just language barriers cloud communication. In a business context, the breakdown of communication spells financial trouble. These issues may manifest themselves in a number of ways, ranging from the feeling of isolation and frustration that an expatriate may experience working in a location far from home, to teams that must cooperate across cultural and geographical borders. This has in turn given birth to a “culture shock prevention industry,” where training in cultural sensitivity and know-how is employed to limit the effects such problems (Hannerz 1996: 108). Research within intercultural communication has increased since the turn of the millennium, but there still exists uncertainty within the scientific community on what theoretical foundation this kind of training should be built (Larsson 2010).

The field of intercultural communication can be traced back to the 1950s and the anthropologist Edward T. Hall, who developed theoretical and methodological frameworks for dealing with communication across national borders. Claiming

that “There is no way to teach culture in the same way that language is taught”, he touches upon one of the core elements of our study – the difficulty of teaching and learning culture (1973: 25). In later years, the field has turned from its anthropological roots, making greater use of a more functionalist understanding of culture and treating it as static sets of categories, characteristics, and values (Larsson 2010). Among the most widely recognized theorists within intercultural communication today is Geert Hofstede, being a prime representative of the functionalist approach. This becomes evident in the fixed categories employed by Hofstede (2001) for representing differences in national cultures for a large number of countries.⁵ Hofstede argues that, “there must be mechanisms in societies that permit the maintenance of stability in culture patterns across many generations” (2001: 11). He refers to “mental programs,” a type of conditioning that stays stable over time, learned in very early childhood, and containing basic values (2001: 2).

The popularity of theorists like Hofstede has been explored by the anthropologist Tommy Dahlén in his study *Among the Interculturalists: An Emergent Profession & Its Packaging of Knowledge* (1997), concerning consultants in the field of cross-cultural communication. Dahlén claims that the advantage of treating culture as number of distinct, atemporal, and fixed categories is that it “thereby has an advantageous commodity form, being readily accessible” (1997: 178). This highly general use of culture has been widely criticized within anthropology as well as intercultural communication. In her dissertation, *Att bygga broar över kulturgränser* (2010), media and communications scientist Inger Larsson summarizes some of the critiques raised against Hofstede and his peers.⁶ She also questions the usefulness of a functionalist perspective within intercultural communication, instead advocating for a social constructivist perspective, closer to that employed within anthropology. According to Larsson, social constructivism provides a point of view where it is possible to follow the development, changes, and fast transformation of everyday experiences, something that is closer to what actually happens in the interaction between people. Thus, social constructivism should be regarded as a key concept when talking about national identity, instead of resorting to the often misused notion of national culture.

Interkommunikation and its Clients

While Interkommunikation has much in common with the ‘interculturalists’ described by Dahlén (1997), the company prides itself on providing a more complex product than its competitors, striving to transcend the chasm between functionalist and constructivist perspectives. By combining theories from anthropology and intercultural communication, the company aims to deliver a complex, yet accessible understanding of culture to its clients. The anthropological perspective is used to urge clients to go beyond the surface level and try to understand cultural differ-

ences in order to resolve frictions they experience. Theorists within intercultural communication provide models that are easy to adapt to the business setting in which the company operates due to their extensive use of quantitative data. During workshops, Interkommunikation employs Hofstede's categories of national cultures and value systems while at the same time promoting a constructivist approach for understanding culture. One of the company's consultants interviewed for the study praised the usefulness of Hofstede, while at the same time being aware of his limitations and acknowledging that every anthropologist is trained to criticize his theoretical framework because of its inflexibility.

Like other cultural consultancies, Interkommunikation combines different theories in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issues at hand, without ignoring the potential weaknesses of any given perspective. Considering the anthropological theories the company builds upon, it is hardly surprising that most interpretations of culture can be negotiated and that functionalist theories are treated more as tools than as 'truths.' In the end, the goal is always to deliver an accessible and applicable product without compromising with its scientific background. As one consultant put it, the company strives to deliver the whole "package":

But I think still that our method is quite unique... I think, but I have no idea, it's just a feeling I have and sometimes something I hear from the clients. Some of our clients who've been to one of those courses and say 'you are so completely different', what we see there is some very schematic thing about the 'others', 'that's how they are in Asia or China', but the idea of cultural understanding is neglected. For us it's a package and it's very important for us to keep it as a package.

In practice, this means keeping the educational material up to date with the most recent developments in the field of intercultural communication. However, it is an anthropological perspective that the company claims truly sets them apart. The company's chief consultant reasons that intercultural communication training only gives someone the mere basics for operating in a foreign culture and interacting with 'others,' which might be enough to survive, but hardly to live. Teaching 'the basics' is something the company's competitors already do, and the bare minimum does not fit with the company's ideal of superior quality. Instead, the company strives to convey a more anthropologically flavored understanding of culture, encouraging the clients to be curious about the 'others' they may encounter and try to understand why they are acting 'differently.'

Typically, Interkommunikation employs a three-stage model for conveying this to the clients. The first step, 'awareness,' aims to give the clients an understanding of what culture is and why it matters to them. The second step, referred to as 'orientation,' provides an outline of the factors in which people from various national contexts tend to differ, pointing out 'the differences that make a difference.' During the third step the company tries to make the clients' own backgrounds and preconceptions visible to them, helping them see that they are as different as the 'others.'

Through the combination of these three steps, the company delivers a mixture of functionalist ‘hard facts’ about culture and encourages clients to be curious, reflexive, and analytical rather than resorting to presumptions. For the clients, this three-stage model translates into both listening to lectures and participating actively, for example by sharing their personal experiences of frictions in their everyday life. In order to make the message even more accessible to the clients, the consultants emphasize the importance of keeping the training entertaining, claiming that people are more open to challenging concepts when they confront them with a laugh. During the trainings, focus is put on Swedish culture, making the story about “the Swede” work as both a source of information about Swedish society and a reflective surface that makes the clients’ own cultural background visible.

Culture 101

Yes, the “do’s and don’ts,” every time when I am approached by a client who wants to... like the guy who just called, they all say “We want tools!;” “It has to be applicable!” My first answer is that “The fool with the tool is still a fool!”

While the specific ways Interkommunikation teaches cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication are numerous and varied, there are several reoccurring themes. In the following segment, we will take an in-depth look at two prevalent strategies employed by the company, roughly corresponding to the steps of creating ‘awareness’ and performing ‘orientation.’ The courses and workshops are carefully framed, taking place in an exclusive conference center and providing the clients with an intimate atmosphere where the consultants engage in a direct dialogue with them. The consultants perform in a charismatic and convincing manner, appearing to have answers to any and all questions, while at the same time striving to help the clients make their own analysis rather than delivering simple solutions to complex cultural issues.

Throughout the sessions, the consultants stress the importance of keeping an open mind when moving into new territory by, for example, avoiding the question “why” when trying to uncover the underlying reasons for certain habits or behaviors. Questioning traditions and habits that people often do not reflected upon might embarrass them. Instead the participants are encouraged to ask about what happens in certain situations, letting the natives explain to them in their own words. The consultants claim that culture is not rational and that the clients need to understand this if they are going to be able to live in a foreign country for an extended period of time. An explicit aim within the company, as mentioned, is to keep the training entertaining and fun, mixing lecturing and PowerPoint slides with exercises, jokes about Swedish peculiarities, and movie clips. During the sessions we participated in the consultants made good use of the 2006 movie *Borat*, exemplifying cultural friction through the main character’s chaotic arrival in New York as a tourist from Kazakhstan, where he immediately starts breaking

every conceivable norm. This was used as a conversation starter, getting the participants to discuss what they had seen, what they thought happened and how the inability to interpret tacit codes can lead to feelings of insecurity and anxiety. In this way the entertaining aspects are tightly intertwined with scientific reasoning and reference, in order to prove certain points or to serve as a basis for further discussion within the group.

Naturally, not every little joke serves an analytical purpose, but they help create an atmosphere of friendliness where the participants feel free to speak their minds. This is in many ways an essential part in the company's strategy to help the clients become aware of their own biases and keep the lesson taught in mind. According to the ethnologist Per-Markku Ristilammi (2000), the management of expectations and suspense are important when arranging any kind of event, but especially when the participants are expected to interact and not merely observe. By being emotionally stimulating, an event can engage its participants to a higher degree, making them more likely to continue the process instigated at the event afterward. Since simply telling the clients that culture plays an important role in day-to-day dealings would not suffice. The company must actively put the clients' own experiences to work, encouraging them to share their own views on what culture is and problems they have faced when moving into a new context. Interkommunikation's high level of interaction is something praised by their clients. One client, having attended several courses arranged by other companies, recognizes this as something that sets Interkommunikation apart from their competition.

Yes and it is funny because I have done cross-cultural training courses before and I have worked with the US for so many years and I still learned a lot. [...] I think what worked well was that it was so interactive. We were part of it and we had to analyze ourselves, we had to discuss it and then things came out of the blue. Like all these things, you know, they came from our daily life. It was more active, I think, than the other courses have been. I have been in a course on India because I worked with an Indian company once and I also went to a course with Japanese and American culture. There was this lecture. A nice lecture and nice pictures and of course you take some messages from there but this here, we were really using ourselves, so that was different.

Rather than telling the clients that culture matters, the company helps them experience it. One can draw parallels between this method of raising cultural awareness and 'consciousness raising;' an organizational form, a political theory, and an analytical tool originally developed within the United States' feminist movement in the 1970s.

Consciousness raising is a method where the participants gather and share their experiences of gendered oppression. Even though the sharing of experiences might have a therapeutic effect for the participants, this is not the point of consciousness raising. The goal is to create a greater awareness of the individual's place within a certain group and in society as a whole. By sharing stories, the participants are able to see that their experiences are not isolated incidents, but rather

parts of a larger oppressing structure. By identifying the problem, a more effective movement for change can be mobilized. Thus personal experience is transformed into a political issue and the individual becomes part of a collective (MacKinnon 1982; Gemzöe 2003).

By encouraging the clients to share their experiences and thoughts on being in a new culture or country, Interkommunikation creates an interpretive frame where the issues faced by the clients can be treated as something culturally dependent. Thus the individual narratives that clients share with each other become part of the company's greater narrative, and the problems or challenges they describe are framed as cultural. What the individual has experienced is not an isolated incident, but part of something greater, i.e. culture. Jespersen, Krogh Petersen, Ren and Sandberg claim that cultural analysis can be understood as "ontological tools that act things into being" (2011: 6). In this case, through the joint analysis of the clients and the consultants, culture is made real. Simultaneously, it is a way for the company to exert discursive power by using scientific authority, claiming the right to interpret individual experience. While this process allows the clients' narratives to become part of a greater narrative defined by Interkommunikation, they simultaneously shape the company's organizational narrative. In a sense, the courses serve as a form of fieldwork where the consultants are able to gather empirical material to further develop the education by adjusting the narration to the listeners and gather further evidence for the validity of their claim. One should also consider the air of authenticity that the use of examples from "real life" gives to the training sessions, letting short anecdotes illustrate a certain problem or serve as a basis for a discussion. After the first step of instilling "awareness" in their clients, Interkommunikation moves on to "orientation". Focus is then put on the ways in which people tend to differ and cultural issues that are of significance to the client, pointing out 'the differences that make a difference,' as one of the consultants put it. This is exemplified through the story of 'the Swede,' which concerns Swedish culture and society today as well as providing an historical framework. Eventually, this story leads up to the factors that are relevant when dealing with Swedes in a business context: Swedes are allowed to challenge authority and crave consensus; they view their culture as superior while avoiding bold claims on a personal level; and they are very dedicated at work but do not let it intrude on their private life.

The list can go on and on, the point here not being *how* the Swedes are described, but *why*. When training foreign expatriates the story about the Swedes serves as a source of information, a script of how to act in the new context, but also as what Ehn and Löfgren call a "symbolical inversion" (2001: 49). By making the Swedes' culture explicit the expatriate can compare and make her own cultural background visible by contrast. When training Swedes, the story serves as a surface for reflection, illustrating that culture is not just something that 'others' carry. The story of the Swedes thus functions as an interpretive tool on several

levels, fundamentally becoming a 'we' or 'others' by displaying the categories of cultural difference that are deemed relevant. It can be interpreted as what Pripp and Öhlander call a nodal point, a normal state around which different discourses of cultural difference can be arranged, but also as a tool that helps the clients reflect on their own background so that they may move on and explore other backgrounds (2005: 14).

However, by telling the story about the Swedes, the company does what it tells its clients to avoid; it creates a stereotype. Since the company operates within the Swedish market and continuously strives to stay up to date with the latest research on Sweden, it possesses a lot of information on how the country functions on both a societal and cultural level. The Swede in Interkommunikation's narrative isn't a "mere" stereotype. Rather, it is what Hofstede, Pedersen and Hofstede (2002) would call a "synthetic culture." Through the exaggeration and simplification of national elements of culture, the company aims to illustrate certain aspects of everyday life that are relevant for the client. Nevertheless, the consultants take great care in pointing out that it is in fact a stereotypical image they are painting and that few people in 'real life' actually will correspond to it. There is, however, an anxiety within the company, regarding the question whether the clients actually understand the pedagogic purpose of the stereotype or if they just incorporate it at face value.

While it is impossible to say how the story of the Swedes is put to use in the clients' everyday practices, we can see how it is put to use on a discursive level, functioning as a source of explanation for why things are the way they are. This is apparent in the stories of both Swedes and foreign expatriates. One recurring example of this in the clients' stories is the 'tribe concept,' used to explain the low cultural variation, high level of trust, and possibility of challenging authority within Swedish society. One of the clients uses the concept to explain how he must change his managerial approach when going abroad:

I think a lot of this is actually that we learn how we are to other people and the way we act and behave but, for instance, this being a tribe; what can you say coming from a tribe country and to another country than a tribe country? We question the leader all the time but they never question anything the manager down there says

This goes to show the great explanatory potential of these concepts at the same time as it highlights the potential risk of unreflected use, turning a pedagogic image into a truth about the self or the 'other,' turning culture into a 'being' rather than a 'becoming.' Once a stereotype is transmitted there is little control over how it is put to use when entering new contexts. This illustrates the delicate balance Interkommunikation must tread between using concepts that are simple to understand and apply, while at the same time explaining the complex realities of culture. The story of the Swedes might however serve an additional purpose as an ideal picture. The level of 'truth' present in the stereotype becomes less of an issue in this case, its main function instead being to serve as a catalyst in a process

of change. One example of this is a client who participated in a workshop with the goal to get an American and a Swedish team to work better together. She points out how the strengths and weaknesses of Interkommunikation's Swede helped them see what the teams could learn from each other:

We recommended to each other... what can the Americans learn from the Swedish? One thing that came up, that they could learn from us, was trust. Learn to trust us, because we trust them. But they should also learn how to trust us. I think that was the main thing that came out from that. I think what we could learn from them was the diversity, it is a very diverse society they come from and we can learn from them in managing that.

While these approaches also can be interpreted as examples on internalized discourses of difference, with an enclosed risk of objectifying culture, they can also be seen as the opposite. Using stereotypes as an inspirational model fundamentally builds on the assumption that we can change, that we can learn from "others" and that culture is neither essential nor fixed. In the third and final step of the training, the two previous steps are combined in order to help the clients question and explore their own preconceptions. Thus, they are made aware that culture is not just something that "others" carry and that what one carries within oneself inevitably colors encounters with others. The consultants encourage the clients to look at what norms they are using for comparison, and what it is that makes things stand out as different, thus shedding some light on their own habits and preconceptions. One of the clients makes a fond recount of how the consultants helped her challenge her prejudice, using pictures of the Kaaba and a Christmas tree:

I think the exercise where you look at some pictures and you have to decide which one you trust. In one picture was Mecca, you know the stone you walk around, and then he showed a Christmas tree and it is just... it turned the picture to ourselves so that we could see that we are also different from other people. It is not the other people who are different from us and it was like he just kept on pushing it. I think it was brilliant.

Using simple examples the company illuminates the fact that the habits of home may be viewed as exotic in a different setting. In brief, one can say that the company combines what Hofstede (2001) calls the culture-specific and culture-general approaches, dealing with both information about specific 'target' cultures and cultural awareness in a broader sense. The claim that this combination is a necessity plays a central role in the consultants' stories about the company, since the former is seen as useless without the latter. This is another nodal point of sorts; an idea around which the company's narrative is constructed and which this discourse strives to uphold as true.

The clients interviewed for this study have unanimously praised the training as well executed, having found it engaging and informative. While some have expressed complaints concerning details, like not finding it sufficiently business oriented, most clients claim to be satisfied. The degree to which the clients have perceived the training as useful varies, as do the ways in which they have put it to

use. Some still feel uncertain about the usefulness of cultural awareness, while admitting that the training did help them resolve some of the frictions they faced. One client went so far as to completely deny the significance of culture in a business setting, instead choosing to interpret perceived frictions as a result of individuals' personalities. Others have taken it completely to heart, approaching their new surroundings with an almost anthropological inquisitiveness. Some have started to act as the go-to person for perceived cultural issues within their companies.

Simple and accessible tools are both highly valued and sought after among these clients. Since the consultants to a large extent avoid giving simple answers, it is clear that some of the clients express a mild frustration over the extensive scope of the training. Several of them wish for more directly applicable tools to help them manage their work life. The question then becomes: who benefits from the focus on reaching cultural awareness, as opposed to the delivery of quick answers? The consultants claim it is in the clients' best interest, regardless of their own opinion. One cannot, however, overlook the purpose that the narrative that conveys these values serves. It is a foundation for a company culture and corporate identity, profiling Interkommunikation against its competitors (Czarniawska 1998: 16ff).

One thing that unites all clients is that the training they received has instigated some kind of process, either on a personal or an organizational level. The training has unanimously been a turning point in their view on culture. While this to some degree proves the impact of the company's message, it raises the issue of Interkommunikation's seeming lack of continuous contact with its clients. It is therefore relevant to examine the ways in which the training flows into the clients' organizations, often entering at a managerial level, no doubt affecting managerial strategies. Several of the clients claim to function as 'champions,' spreading the word of culture's importance in their respective organizations and functioning as mediators where need be. The relationship between the single event and the process also mirrors the discussion surrounding the concept of culture itself, raising the question if it can be understood as an isolated entity or if it has to be treated as an ever-evolving set of relationships.

Effects on Culture

By using profitability as the main argument for cross-cultural training, Interkommunikation's consultants give their own product legitimacy within the field of business. This position is consolidated further by the format in which the training is provided. The training events focus on the participants' experiences and turn them into pedagogic subjects, creating a social space with a common ground for identification. By inscribing itself in memory, the event continues to exist for the clients, materialized through the cultural frictions they face in everyday life.

However, memory is unreliable and thus the effects of an event are unpredictable over time. Interkommunikation can only hope the lessons given are transformed into embodied practice, yet even then they cannot guarantee the ways in which it is practiced (Ristilammi 2000: 101ff). The company operates in a context with high tempo, focusing on profit with little space for theoretical extravagances. Most of the clients testify that it has been hard for them to find even a single day in their busy schedules to attend the training. The time spent in training must thus yield visible results or it will be considered a waste of time.

Because of this, it is hardly surprising that the understanding of culture provided to the clients is somewhat limited in comparison to how it is applied in anthropology. As with any situation, when one uses categories to help make the world easier to grasp, some things become magnified while others become blurry and out of focus. In general, the understanding of culture provided by the company intersects with Hofstede's categories of cultural difference, told through the story of the Swedes. Regarded from a wider perspective, one can say that the narrative circles around the things that set the Swedes apart and describe the peculiarities one needs to know if one is going to interact with, or as one of, them. In essence, it becomes a story about difference, turning culture into a list of distinctions one needs to keep in mind. Here one can discern the functionalist perspective being at the forefront, providing explanations to the potential problems that the clients might encounter in terms of cultural belonging. On the level of discourse, this equates culture with difference or at least as something that is only relevant when it manifests itself as difference, especially as differences between national territories.

The close relationship between culture and nationality in the company's narrative carries with it a number of problematic implications. According to Hannerz (1996), national belonging has a tendency to overshadow other kinds of belonging, even though it is highly incorporeal and not dependent on personal relationships. A factor that sets it farther apart is the fact that it, most of the time, is tied to a geographical territory. Since people move around, national and cultural belonging is transported into a multitude of contexts, all bestowing new meaning upon the two concepts. Ethnologist René Léon Rosales (2005) points out that one of the largest risks of equating culture with ethnic or national belonging is that all the people who share the same nationality are seen as sharing the same culture, missing the fact that belonging is highly contextual; largely dependent on the situation a person is in. Regarding nationality as the principal influence on the concept of culture also eclipses other important 'genres of difference.' Class and gender are examples of categories that are not clearly visible in the company's training sessions. One must however take the company's "mandate" into account; many clients already find it hard to relate the extensive narrative of national culture to their everyday business practices. Thus the addition of the seemingly unrelated topics, such as gender, might threaten Interkommunikation's claim on authority. This

does, however, obscure the potential power relations residing in the concept of culture, turning differences into mere questions of overcoming communication problems. The functionalist perspective employed by the company further reduces this into *specific* categories of difference within national culture, meaning that people are different, but in the same ways. According to Öhlander, this is a way of objectifying culture, turning it into a concept independent from human existence, obscuring its contextual dependency (2005: 15). Every difference, failing, or misunderstanding cannot be attributed to culture, as one consultant puts it:

That is also important for us to tell from time to time; “Well, it’s because of his culture that he is doing like this, it is impossible to work with”, no, he might be an idiot. He simply might just have a personality disorder [laughter], it has nothing to do with culture! He’s just an idiot.

Culture presumes that we have something in common and it can therefore be an imprecise concept from time to time. In some cases it is more useful to speak about the individual and identity. However, identities can hardly be understood as existing autonomously in relation to culture. Rather, identities are constructed through the use of ‘cultural props’ and processes of differentiation (Alsmark 1997: 11). If the individual identity is treated as an alternative to cultural belonging, explaining differences becomes a case of ‘either/or,’ turning the relationship between individual and social context invisible. This further illustrates the problem of the heavy emphasis on national belonging since it makes the individual ‘cultureless’ in situations where the national is not judged to be important. Naturally, culture is not always a fruitful concept for interpreting the world, but when equating it with nationality or treating it as an opposite of individual identity one loses sight of the cultural dimensions permeating all of society.

This brings us back to the split between a functionalist and constructivist perspective. Interkommunikation produces certain logics of difference and belonging, based on a constructivist approach but expressed through a functionalist one. The company is largely dependent on the explanatory power that the latter carries, but keeps the former’s complex understanding of culture as one of its core values. When it comes to explaining experienced difference however, the functionalist approach appears to be dominant. According to Larsson there is always an inherent risk when using stereotypes for describing a national, regional or ethnic community. When treating culture as synonymous with ethnicity or nationality in a pedagogic situation, the reflexive nuances are easily lost in the transferal of knowledge (2010: 18). The strong connection between nationality and culture has a tendency to overshadow other categories of cultural difference in the stories of the clients. Without a more intersectional perspective there is a risk of losing track of how differences are created in specific historical and geographical contexts, and of the ways in which they are bound to the power relations that exist there (see de los Reyes & Martinsson 2005).

On several occasions, the consultants express worry concerning whether the clients will actually understand the educational purpose of stereotypes and not just take them at face value. However, when studying the clients' narratives it becomes apparent that the analytical concepts of Interkommunikation are to a great extent incorporated as explanatory discourses rather than as analytical tools. At first glance, it might seem like the cultural awareness of the clients is not extensive enough to use the concepts in the ways intended by the consultants. On the other hand, one cannot deny the impact the training has had on the individual clients' narratives. Many concepts presented by the company return in the clients' stories, helping them to make sense of their everyday lives and problems they have encountered. Even in the case of the client who chose to renounce culture's significance, one can trace concepts from the training, albeit under a different 'flag' – re-framed as 'personality.'

This goes to show that no discourse can ever totally define and dominate meaning and that people can put analytical concepts to use in order to suit their own needs. Discourses may function as a repertoire for personal narratives, but people use them actively, not just carrying them passively 'on their backs' (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000: 105). According to Ristilampi the significance of any form of event is only realized when recognized by a third party not present at the event itself (2000: 97). In effect, this means that the explanatory power of the discourse promoted by Interkommunikation is limited by its perceived usefulness in the clients' everyday practices. Despite its scientific authority, the discourse must be recognized as valid within the clients' organizations in order for it to become a useful management tool. However, under the best conditions, Interkommunikation's training gives something back to the client that cannot easily be measured, a 'quality of life' for lack of a better term. Culture becomes a practical effect, helping the client organize and make sense of the new context, recognizing its inherent logics and categories. The increased ability to deal with the small frictions of everyday life should not be underestimated, even though it might be hard to see the direct correlation to business productivity.

Concluding Contemplations

A number of tensions reside between Interkommunikation's ideals, its practices, and clients' reception of the training. The most apparent tension can be seen within the company's use of the seemingly incompatible constructivist and functionalist perspectives on culture. For the company, these perspectives function more as tools than as epistemological truths, serving specific purposes in the teaching of cultural knowledge. The consultants aim to deliver a complex understanding of culture in an accessible package by drawing on concepts from both traditions. The constructivist approach by itself might appear too academic and multifaceted, as well as without obvious applicability. Where action is called for, the complex

constructivist perspective is often perceived as being too cumbersome to be useful (Pripp & Öhlander 2005: 14). The functionalist approach, while accessible, runs the risk of creating a simplistic and static notion of culture that is too distant from the company's ideals of inquisitive cultural awareness. In a way, this could also be explained as the tension between ideals and practice. While Interkommunikation might promote a constructivist perspective, the company must also consider what actually works in relation to the clients. Their goal is to deliver awareness and knowledge, not to preach theory for theory's sake. The functionalist approach can then be interpreted as a Trojan horse of sorts, giving a familiar shape to an unfamiliar message through the use of business-oriented language and imagery. Within the short time span afforded to the company in its interaction with the clients, functionalist models might serve as a powerful tool for communication. While these models might be easy to criticize for being too simplistic, one should consider that it might be necessary to simplify some aspects of culture in order to reach a more complex understanding in other areas.

Yet another interpretation of this tension concerns finding the balance between delivering explanatory or analytical concepts. The consultants endeavor to avoid giving the clients simple answers, and instead encourage them to explore and analyze their own situation. Through the joint analysis of the clients' everyday experiences, culture is brought into being as something experienced, something real (Jespersen, Krogh Petersen, Ren & Sandberg 2011: 6). There is little guarantee that the clients will use the analytical concepts as intended. They may instead view them as explanatory examples, taking stereotypes at face value and unreflexively internalizing discourses. In the clients' stories, national culture often is the primary tool with which differences are explained. The result may be that issues that cannot be explained by way of nationality are regarded as 'mere' individual differences, rather than as culturally dependent. While this demonstrates the explanatory strength of Interkommunikation's cultural discourse, it also illuminates the potential downside of it. If wholeheartedly incorporated, it may lead to clients viewing these explanations as 'truths' about the 'other' as well as of themselves. In short, what the company views as analytical tools can easily be interpreted as an instruction manual, which, more often than not, is what the clients ask for.

One can also discern a tension between what can be seen as a single eye-opening event loaded with meaning, and the long-term experiential process of cultivating cultural awareness present in everyday practices. Interkommunikation depends on the staying power of its message rather than on a maintained presence in the clients' organizations. The question is whether the complex understanding of culture that the company advocates for can be successfully conveyed through a single event, or if a more processual way of teaching is necessary for the concept to become truly effective. Compared to the anthropological understanding of culture as an ever-evolving process, the compact time-frame seems to contribute to

culture becoming objectified when packaged and sold, as discussed by O'Dell (2009).

For future studies, it would be useful to study the clients, who are the buyers of cultural commodities and a group that has rarely been studied (Thrift 1999). While we have made an effort to capture the client's opinions on the training, we still have little knowledge as to how said training is put into practice in their respective organizations. Cultural analysis works by making the strange familiar and the familiar strange, and thus it is hard to judge whether someone has started to think along new lines just by studying their expressed praise or disapproval for a certain product (Ehn & Löfgren 2009: 35). For Interkommunikation and many other business consultants, their short interaction with clients can in a sense be likened to "throwing your results over a wall", as Ehn & Löfgren puts it (2009: 41). Not knowing whether the lessons taught have the desired effect is doubtlessly a familiar situation for anyone working with education, but in the closed-off world of business it seems to be even more so. Ethnologist Mine Sylow points out that while a cultural and qualitative perspective is increasingly in demand within the world of business, there is not always an understanding for how such knowledge can be put into practice. Part of a cultural analysts' mission is to explain this and to manage the client's expectations (2008: 23). Interkommunikation's combination of entertainment, education, and self-analysis is one possible way of accomplishing this.

Donning the garb of the expert consultant is a way of asserting power, but the privilege of interpretation is not unconditional. As we have discussed, power seems to oscillate between consultant and client, raising further questions. What strategies must be employed to claim the authority necessary to pose challenging questions and introduce novel interpretations? What pitfalls must one navigate to retain said authority? Which blinders should one place on the client through claims of expertise? Is power even desirable and useful for the applied cultural analyst? While we have touched on some of these subjects they could certainly be explored further.

Similarly to Ehn & Löfgren (2009), we believe there is much to gain from a closer relationship between academia and practicing consultants and that this type of collaboration has great potential for the development of new skills and methods. The utilitarian approach to theory and methods that one must adopt when applying academic skills can be a good reminder of its actual purpose – to help us make sense of the complex world in which we live. At the same time, a critical perspective on the transformation of culture into a commodity is called for, and there must be an ongoing conversation between those promoting the usefulness of culture and those who perform critical deconstructions of it (Fornäs, Fredriksson & Johannisson 2009: 9).

As cultural analysts, we are naturally interested in the ways in which culture is put to use, especially when it carries the anthropological connotations utilized by

Interkommunikation. Consequently, it is easy to appropriate a critical stance when a static, functionalist understanding of culture is put to use. The fact that Interkommunikation seems to be able to help the clients resolve their problems can easily be obscured by such criticism. It also tends to overshadow the critique voiced by clients who find the training overly theoretical and not instrumental enough. Complexity should then perhaps not be sought in the concept of culture, but within the balancing act itself. Interkommunikation's strategies for creating cultural awareness are relevant to consider for any academic wanting to apply his or her skills outside of academia. Creating a balance between theoretical depth, applicable suggestions, methodological approaches and relevantly adapted communication is no easy task, but it is only by consciously performing these balancing acts that we can hope to apply our knowledge while retaining the perspectives that make us unique.

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Notes

- ¹ The article is based on the authors' master's thesis *Striking a Balance: A Cultural Analytical Study of a Cross-Cultural Consultancy* (Fagerström & Mellander 2010). The study's original aim was to function as a kind of para-ethnography (see Jespersen, Krogh Petersen, Ren & Sandberg 2012: 6), examining the company as well as its clients in order to help the company evaluate and develop its products. The thesis included suggestions for developing the training provided by the company and the results were discussed with the company's manager.
- ² The consultancy's name has been changed for the sake of anonymity.
- ³ In this article, we use the definition of expatriate from Hannerz (1996), referring to a person who has chosen to live abroad to work for a period of time and who can choose to return 'home' whenever she or he likes.

- ⁴ Within intercultural communication the concept of ‘cultural shock’ is often discussed. It can be understood as result of immersing oneself in a new cultural context and becoming overwhelmed by feelings of frustration and confusion. According to Hofstede (2001), most people overcome cultural shock and adapt to their new setting. But time, as already mentioned, is often a scarce resource in the world of business, and ‘riding out the storm’ might not always be deemed profitable. As a result, cultural shock might end up costing companies a lot of money, e.g. through the failed integration of an expatriate. This is one of the main arguments for companies to invest in intercultural training. We have chosen to avoid using the concept of cultural shock throughout this article, speaking instead of cultural frictions, since it places focus on the contextual and interactive aspects of culture, rather than treating it as a state to which one succumbs.
- ⁵ According to Hofstede there are “five independent dimensions of national culture differences, each rooted in a basic problem with which all societies have to cope, but on which their answer vary” (2001: 29). The dimensions he has identified are: *power distance*, *uncertainty avoidance*, *individualism versus collectivism*, *masculinity versus femininity* and *long-term orientation versus short-term orientation*. For a more comprehensive summary of Hofstede’s theory, see Dahlén (1997) and Larsson (2010).
- ⁶ To build bridges over cultural borders, authors’ translation.

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Time-Space Flexibility and Work: Analyzing the “Anywhere and Anytime Office” in the Entertainment, New Media, and Arts Sector

By Leila Valoura

Abstract

The applied cultural analysis work presented in this article was conducted with independent professionals who work in a flexible time-space format – known as telework – for the entertainment, new media, and arts sector in the Los Angeles area. Most participants are associates of the production and post-production boutique “Studio Can” as well as the curatorial new media and arts nonprofit organization “PalMarte.” When working in a flexible time-space format, boundaries between leisure/family life and work at home, or personal and public realms, tend to become blurred. This blurred context involves a web of cultural complexity that exists behind the materialization of boundaries. Through empirical material, this article examines rhythms and mechanisms between flexibility and stability, unveiling a viscous consistency of everyday life. This work helps to better understand the relation between leisure/family life and work at home, as well as stability and change, to rethink these realms and how they relate to each other but also how they transform one another. Although culturally different, these realms are bridged through the material culture that surrounds them. As conveyors, objects (such as a heating pad) and activities culturally transport participants between realms. Research methods combined time-diaries, interviews, observation, visual ethnography, and autoethnography. While applying academic knowledge into a non-academic setting to rethink realms and how they relate and transform each other in a bridged relationship, this work is also an invitation to rethink the relationship between the realms of academia and non-academia.

Keywords: Applied cultural analysis, flexibility, telework, boundaries, routines, home, work, leisure, entertainment, new media and arts.

Introduction

The aim with this article is to uncover layers of cultural processes that help enact boundaries and structure the lives of independent professionals working from home for the entertainment, new media and arts sector. Fieldwork was conducted with five professionals whose ages range from early 30s to mid 60s. These professionals work in a flexible time-space structure primarily from their homes in the Los Angeles area. These participants have chosen to develop their creative careers from home or a flexible studio space in proximity to leisure/family as a philosophy of life. For them, personal and professional lives are integrated and define one another.

Most participants are associates of the production and post-production boutique “Studio Can” as well as the curatorial new media and arts nonprofit organization “PalMarte,” both fictitious names to anonymize their identities. Studio Can is a production and post-production boutique that creates special features for DVD and Blu-ray (optical disc for high definition video), Movie Trailers, and TV Spots, as well as original video and new media content for the web. PalMarte is a nonprofit organization that promotes networking among filmmakers, artists, and business through information, dialogue forums, global Q&A’s, and consulting on how to build creative communities around the arts. While Studio Can has a small studio space, it works primarily with a number of freelance professionals who primarily carry out their work through satellite home offices. PalMarte has no formal ‘office’ space, and members work from their own homes in different states within the US and in other countries.

The two organizations in this study raised the need of having a person in an ‘outside’ role to provide them with a more global perspective on how they work. They want to be able to move forward in a more informed manner. However, as pointed out by one of the participants, Bettina, “you can’t always see the forest through the trees when you’re building your business or organization. We do a lot of reacting to events”. In other words, gaining perspective sometimes requires a wider perspective. ‘Seeing the forest’ – or developing the organizations’ perspective of their work – was my job as a cultural analyst in this research. By taking the time to look into everyday practices, questions such as what participants value in their work, what they miss, and how they do their work are key factors in this research.

Research methods used in this article combined time-diaries (a daily activities log) interviews, observation, visual ethnography, and autoethnography. Autoethnography is understood here as “research, writing and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social” (Qtd. in Denzin 2006: 419). Since I, myself, am a co-founder and member of the nonprofit organization PalMarte, I bring this experience to the research analysis. Nevertheless, my personal, social and cultural experience related to the research

topic in this case goes beyond my participation at PalMarte. The fact that I now live in the country where the boundary limitations of this research are placed, but grew up in a different country, adds another set of references to this analysis. I, myself, experience aspects of boundary and placement that are part of the scope of this research.

One specificity of this sector is the requirements for inspired artistic and creative elements, which are not predictable. If flexibility may benefit these participants' creative process through a more autonomous and integrated organization of time and space, it may challenge team creativity, work and leisure boundaries, as well as stability. Therefore, although the findings of this research may help rethink telework practices in other sectors, they pertain specifically to the entertainment, new media, and arts sector, and are not meant to be general for other types of work being accomplished at home.

Some of the chosen concepts in this article are: work/leisure, home/office, private/public, and the individual/collective or family. Through practice, these concepts have historically revealed cultural values and changes in society because they involve defining cultural realms of life. In this context, the present study is relevant to illuminating less dichotomic relationships between these cultural realms in a time when dichotomy is being challenged by the integration of digital technology in our everyday lives, regardless of where and when one is located. Going beyond the traditional dichotomy of the concepts of home, leisure, and work, these concepts are amplified and can reveal other facets in a more complex interaction.

Where Am I? Work Place and Private Space

I step into the spacious house through its front door and suddenly a tall dog runs, barking from inside, and begins sniffing my feet and legs. I am welcomed by the participants I will interview while I am still accompanied by the dog named Porter. The owner of the house is Jason, whose work consists mainly of the editing of feature films, which can take between six to eight months and involves other editors and editor assistants who also work from their homes. Sometimes, depending on the phase of a project, these editors go to Jason's house to work together. On the day of my visit, two other editors are working in the house, one of them, Brendan, also interviewed for this research.

They point to where the main editing suite they work at is located, a separate room with a door, but we go to the kitchen pantry and sit around the dining table. The flowery design of a Portmeirion pottery set of china in the rustic cupboard that I can see right across from where I am sitting adds coziness to the atmosphere and invites me to imagine breakfast with family happening in this same space. On the four walls of the room, pictures of Jason's family printed in different sizes situate me at a home where family, coziness and work coexist.

Home Sweet (and Busy) Home

Later that day, at my home, comfortably wearing sweatpants and a used shirt from a film festival I once produced as part of my work, I am sitting on the couch with my laptop to type notes from fieldwork and transcribe the interviews. While I play that day's recorded interviews, the soundscape of Jason's home is amplified in my ears. Mixing the sound of utensils in the kitchen with barking, the light creaking of doors and popping wood from the floors and furniture, I think about the cozy and safe feeling of being home that I was experiencing. But, I also find myself questioning how much of this coziness and safety is reality, and how much is in fact imagined.

Moving from sounds to images, on my laptop I open a digital folder with photos from the research, where I find an 1800's painting. The Swedish artist Carl Larsson (1894), in one of the watercolors of his own home, depicts a secluded and peaceful nook which he calls *Cozy Corner*, a place where he "experienced that unspeakably sweet feeling of seclusion from the noise of the world" (Curator section, para. 1):

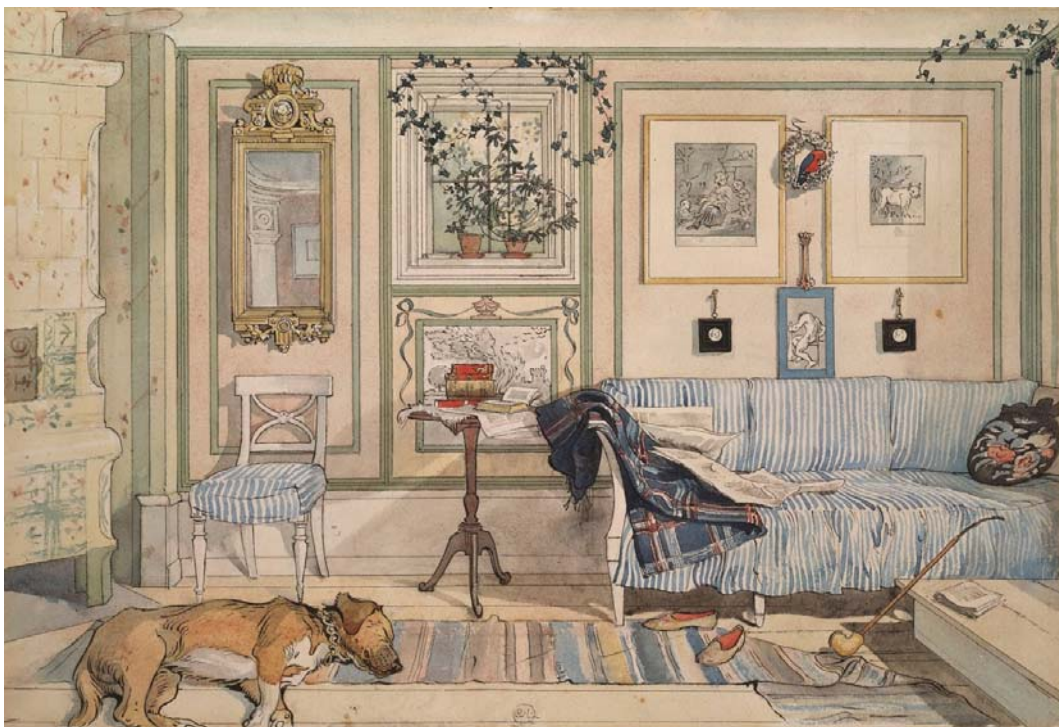


Figure 1. *Cozy Corner* – Watercolor on paper (32 x 43 cm)

Looking at Larsson's artwork I see his dog and inevitably remember Porter, Jason's dog. I select the folder with pictures that participants took in their routines and find one of Porter. In a similarly cozy environment as depicted in Larsson's painting, I also see a dog who, instead of placidly sleeping on the floor, sits on the same chair as his owners and leaves dirty spots on the cushions. This participant's

home also seems busier than the cozy corner depicted by Larsson's painting. Here, the marks on the fireplace signal that it has been used, as not all of the candles are straight, art decorations are mixed with a cinema competition trophy, and a clock reminds us of the time dimension that runs on the other side of the room, where a laptop is used to do some work on the dining table. Instead of being secluded from the noise of the world, this home is filled not only with the sound of family and pets but also with work.

The producer of the film on which Jason and Brendan are finalizing the edit arrives. Barking, Porter runs to the door and comes back following this newcomer as he did with me. The kitchen pantry fills up. Now we have a team of filmmakers, a researcher, participants of the research, a family, and pets, all these roles in one space. Jason says to the producer: "Come in! We're here being interviewed from Sweden."

I am introduced to the producer, who asks if I am Swedish. I explain that I am finishing my master's degree at a Swedish University and that I lived there, but that I do not come from Sweden. I tell him that I come from Brazil. He then speaks a little Portuguese, tells me where he had visited in the country, and next asks me where I live in Brazil. I answer that I actually moved from Brazil and live now in Redondo Beach, around a 35 minute drive from where we are, at Jason's home in the Los Angeles area.

For an instant, motivated by the producer's questions, I think about the complexity involved in these answers and the feeling of having more than one home that coexists but as Mallet notes, hold "differing symbolic meaning and salience" (Mallet 2004: 79). Where does home begin and end when one moves to another country or when one works from home? Boundaries here are not clearly defined. Home, to me, means occupying a space where I have some sense of ownership, familiarity and understanding. In my home equation, I include references of my childhood, different places where my close family members live, as well as places where I have lived and live currently without those family members. They are all my homes, and although they bring different architectures, temperatures, textures, and people, they coexist and communicate with each other. These different homes ultimately help form my understanding of how I occupy spaces, concentrating the notion of home into my own body and existence in the world.

While I briefly stroll through my memories of my homes, Francis, Jason's cat, apparently bothered by so much conversation in the kitchen pantry, gets up from his chair, steps on the dining room table, crosses between all of us and jumps to the floor, leaving the room. Over the same table, the producer hands out envelopes with the team's paychecks. Around the dining table they talk for a while about details related to work.

Home and Away: Creating Other Combinations

Seeing this variable use of furniture, space, and time, I begin wondering when and how home and work became separated or put together. Historically, moving from the craftsman model where work and leisure/family life blended in the same space – home – Western societies separated these realms into different spheres of time and space materialized in the split of weekdays vs. weekends and office vs. house (Nippert-Eng 1996). Such a dichotomic cultural separation of the meaning of home, work, and leisure is challenged in the case of telework, revealing other combinations.

While interviewing Mary, a motion graphic artist who does graphics and animation for ads, TV, and feature films from her apartment, she tells me that she sometimes works on the weekend but might not work on a Wednesday to travel instead. Mary used to work for a film company in Hollywood, but quit to work full-time from home because she wanted more autonomy, as she defined it:

I like working independently because if I decide I want to take a vacation, I can plan and say no to work, and say that I'll not be around. I like that opposed to when you're working for someone where you have this kind of set amount of days and you can't go beyond that (Mary).

The dichotomic division of work place and private space creates a more compartmentalized relationship with time, objects, and routines that are understood as belonging to separated realms. For example, the preparation for leaving home to go to work at an office involves specific routines and a different use of objects from a more integrated work/private space approach. For a worker who follows a Monday through Friday and '9 to 5' routine of work at an office, a piece of clothing, such as his or her pajamas, cannot belong to both work and private realms, since wearing pajamas at an office is not usually accepted. But when working from home, this same piece of clothing can fit into both realms.

Another aspect involving one's routine in a dichotomic division of work place and private space is the commute to and from work. That moment in the enclosed space of a vehicle creates a transition between home and work both in space and time. Having to *go* to an office, on top of wearing something other than pajamas, one minimally needs to carry a wallet with money, a bus or train pass or the car keys, and plan his or her schedule according to the rush hour. As a consequence of the division of work place and private space, objects and routines become the dividers that materialize separation between a more personal realm and an external realm of work in this case.

During fieldwork, home was felt neither as sanctuary and refuge nor work usurpation as described by Penny Gurstein (2001) in her book about telework in daily life. Being at home was felt here as an experience that contains both the outside world and the warming ambiance, which helps fill the desire of "proofs or illusions of stability" (Bachelard 1994: 16), although not perfectly organized as in a framed watercolor.

Symbolically, a t-shirt that is related to my work, which I wear while working in the warm environment of my home or a table that is also used to have breakfast with family, characterizes ‘being home’ as an act of “inhabiting a second skin” (Ahmed 1999: 341). Sara Ahmed, who was born in England, grew up in Australia, and whose family lives in Pakistan, argues that this second skin contains the homely subject and at the same time “allows the subject to be touched and touch the world that is neither simply in the home or away from the home” (Ahmed 1999: 341). This relationship between home and away brings the warm feelings linked to home closer to the uncertainties and constraints of the world that are also part of this home enactment.

As described by Gary, another participant who has a three-year-old son, home is for him “the nurturing feeling of hearing the steps of my son running in the house and the rustle of the trees brushing up against the window.” However, reflecting “both reality and ideal” (Qtd. in Moore 2000: 209), together with the rustle of the trees, Gary’s home is also filled with some practical concerns. Such concerns include a carefully planned time logistic to take care of his son, paying the rent, getting more work, and even fighting with the owner of the house next door who, looking for a better view of the ocean, cut down the tree that used to give shade to Gary’s house and creates a familiar feeling of home to him. Home in this case means personal nourishment, but at the same time it means demands from an uncertain world.

Boundary Permeability: Shaping Categories

If boundaries between leisure/family life at home and work at home are not precisely defined, how do professionals working from home delineate and organize these realms in a time-space flexible schedule? Searching for objects and activities that participants enact boundaries with, I turned my attention to some “goods-to-think-with” (Turkle 2007: 4) or artifacts that could materialize participant’s boundaries and how they swing from one realm to another.

Folding and Unfolding Versatile Boundaries

While interviewing Mary in her apartment, the door between her work room and the living room called my attention. From her couch (which is also her bed), I noticed that the door of Mary’s bedroom (which is also her office) was actually a two sided panel that revolves on its center, creating two passage ways as it opens, giving the illusion of more space. The feeling was as if spaces had multiple uses here and were easily made into different places in a kind of a folding and unfolding wall process as seen in Gary Chang’s architecture project *Domestic Transformer* (Planetgreen.com 2010, January 7)¹. In this versatile composition, a space of approximately 30 m² changes into 24 different rooms through sliding

panels and walls. Similarly to the *Domestic Transformer*, boundaries are transformed here as if they worked in a reversible partition system, expanding to become one realm, contracting to become another realm or mixing both realms at the same time. To help fold and unfold these boundary partitions, objects play a fundamental role of conveyors, culturally transporting participants to bridge these realms and produce continuity.

This process of transforming spaces takes me to my own desk, where I also fold and unfold boundaries between the kind of work I do in the same area. On one morning I might unfold my laptop and work at my desk at 6 AM, doing an interview for PalMarte on Skype with an artist who is located in a different time zone than me. Then I might fold my laptop, push it to the back of my desk and spread out the books I need to read or assignments I need to evaluate for classes I teach. Meanwhile, I might unfold another window with my e-mails and answer a message my family sent to me, which not only rearranges the screen space I am enacting but also unfolds another dimension of my life, combining both personal and professional in the same space. Folding and unfolding windows and moving objects on my desk are in a way also a transforming process that helps create boundaries through materiality.

The multiuse of a desk and the transitions of laptop windows opening and closing may work here as a type of commute. For a worker who must commute to an office, the time spent in an enclosed space divides personal space and work. When working from home, the transitioning between realms and its necessary objects gives place to integration, which is materialized through the opening and closing of a laptop or simply a walk to the kitchen to pour some coffee and go to another part of the house with a mug in hand. Here one does not travel physically, but makes a transition, not quite to a different realm (as in the physical commute), but instead to an integration of realms.

Developing Strategies to Keep Focused

Still focusing on what objects actually *do* and what participants *do* with objects (Frykman & Gilje 2009), I turned my attention to how participants take their breaks during a workday. These pauses range from reading the news or doing something online, making some calls, doing other types of work, spending time with family, cooking, going to the grocery store or to the gym, and taking the dog for a walk or taking a nap. However, boundary transition between actual breaks and diversion from work can be easily trespassed in one direction, but it is harder to transition in the other direction depending on the phase of work in which creative teleworkers are currently engaged.

For example, in the beginning of a creative project, when participants are still not sure of how to write a screenplay and edit or animate a story, and when they have the selections of interviews, images, and drawings scattered in their minds, it is easy to transcend the boundary from work to leisure/family or personal life at

home. However, it is harder to transcend the boundary in the other direction when going back to work. As described by another participant: “At that stage of the process, I feel overloaded trying to organize so much, in a short amount of time. It’s a challenge to keep focused and not go do something else.” Feeling overloaded in this phase of work creates the desire of wanting to escape from the challenge of organizing by going “home,” or a state of mind that represents home as leisure/family life. Home in this case works as a category that goes beyond a physical location, meaning a reference of stability when facing uncertainty and a place where there is already a structure and where we do not have to deal with the unknown.

Switching to practice, boundary work in this case involves personal strategies that participants create in order to keep focused when they take a break from work. They know that permeability makes it easy to cross the boundary in one direction, to procrastination for example, but makes it hard to go back. As another participant, Bettina, a director-producer and editor, pointed out, it is a question of playing games with oneself:

You need to have a break. You can’t be consciously creating all the time. If you need to push things off for a day or two, maybe you’re not ready to begin that project mentally. But when that one or two day break becomes four or five days because you are avoiding the work, then there’s something wrong [she laughs]. That’s when I begin playing games with myself. I keep a heating pad under my feet under the desk and it feels so nice to have the heat under my feet... Then it keeps me sitting there and working. (Bettina)



Figure 2. Heating pad used under feet

For Bettina, who works as a producer-director and editor of entertainment advertising, playing games with herself works as a strategy to build boundaries

and create stability. Here, her body and senses are accessing the material world surrounding her, while the heating pad is not only emitting heat but also evoking a feeling of comfort and safety that helps her to face the challenge of the unknown.

Other participants described similar strategies such as having something to munch on to keep them working. Trail mix, peanuts, and chocolates are some of the “munchies” mentioned by them. Having a bowl with something to munch on was defined “like cigarettes for people who smoke, not simply because of the nicotine but because you are doing something else, which keeps you engaged,” said one of the participants.

In one of the interviews conducted together, Bettina and Gary called attention to the difficulty for some people to manage their own time and becoming self-motivated to finish a project without anyone telling them when to work and when not to work.

People we haven't called back or that we had trouble with it's primarily due to time management and passion. They might have passion but they might not know how to manage their time or vice versa. Passion and time management is really where you are at when working on your own (Gary).

Following this thought, Gary emphasizes that the philosophy in his organization is about working in a partnership, communicating in an open minded way, and asking for ideas. “I think (the) partnership will last longer than employees or contractor workers,” he said. Both participants showed concerns about the difficulty of finding partners as opposed to what they called “the employees' mentality.” They conclude that it comes down to commitment and passion.

Leisure/Family and Work at Home: Threads that are Woven Together

In addition to using a heating pad, another way participants create warm temperatures that help to materialize boundaries is through the use of pictures of loved ones in their work space. In a way, these pictures connect participants' workplace to their life outside of work.

When asked how he differentiates leisure/family and work at home, Gary says: “All of the same philosophies of work are translated into my family and my family philosophies are translated into my work.” He explains that rather than being separated, he strives to integrate these two realms even further. When I interviewed Gary, he had just returned from a project that he had to work on while abroad for three weeks. He explained to me how painful it was for him to be far away from his wife and son while working abroad. For him, not being able to blend time working and time spent with his family made work feel less like his desired definition of work, i.e. as highly integrated with home.

Looking for participants' definition of work, Brendan tells me that for him his work is a creative calling and therefore it is not an intrusion if he is talking about it on a Sunday or Saturday, for example. He complements his thought saying: “If I

didn't like my work as much, that would not be okay and I would have to find a more defined separation" (Brendan).

Satisfaction and autonomy play an important role for these professionals by defining free time not as a dichotomic separation from work as if one wants to be far from it with the kind of "Thank God is Friday!" relief or a Monday moan.

As Bettina described it, while holding the colorful embroidered throw that decorates the couch at Studio Can, rather than being separated, leisure/family life and work are like the threads that are woven together to make a throw or a blanket for her. Although it has different colors, the threads can only form the whole because they are integrated. If one of the colorful threads is missing, it will affect the other. To weave these threads together and integrate these realms, objects and activities play a fundamental role of conveyors, culturally transporting participants to bridge these realms and produce continuity. Fieldwork showed that flexible work involves more materiality than we tend to think. Contrary to the idea of a hovering virtuality, these teleworkers are placed in and through cultural materiality that not only creates boundaries, but also routines. How these routines may help create stability within flexibility is a subject further explored in the next part of this article.

What Flexible Routines Look Like

Since I was busy because the deadline for the project was coming up fast, I couldn't read the New York Times in the morning as I like to do. I jumped out of bed, took a shower to wake me up, grabbed a banana in the kitchen and went to the computer to work. I kept the shades closed... the darkness helps me remain immersed in the images and sounds I'm working with. I kept my cell phone on but only answered calls that were urgent. For lunch I went to the corner and grabbed a turkey sandwich at Subway. That nourishes me but also takes me away from work for a while. When getting my sandwich I get fresh air, I talk to other people and then when I come back I have more energy to work. For dinner I cooked a great pasta dish. I love pasta and cooking also helps me step out of work to then go back (Bettina).

The passage above came from my interview with Bettina after she showed me her time-diary and when we talked about routines in the entertainment, new media, and arts sector being based on the projects' deadlines.

However, certain patterns or routinized rituals are the same, although participants' schedules change. For Bettina, reading the news is like exercising and running on the beach for another participant, or drinking a mandatory glass of wine after work for another one. These are components that "create continuity and exert some control over time" (Ehn & Löfgren 2010: 121) and no matter how busy participants are, they strive to keep it in their routines, even if the time that they do it varies.

Structuring a Routine

When deadlines are not as tight, most participants try to create a structured routine to organize their days. “I don’t like having no routine,” says Mary, the motion graphic designer and animator. Mary tries to follow a routine where she sets her alarm for 7:30 AM, checks her e-mails, has breakfast and opens up her *to do* list to move on in her work day.

Jason, who works as an editor from his home, used to alternate taking his kids to school in the morning and picking them up in the afternoon. Today Jason’s kids are adults, and whenever possible Jason tries to follow a set schedule. Sometimes he works alone and at other times, depending on the phase of a project, he needs to work together with other associates at his home. He tries to begin working at 10 AM and takes a break by making some coffee. He stops working for lunch at home or sometimes he goes to a restaurant between 1 and 2 PM, and then goes back to work until 6 PM. Jason emphasizes the importance of stopping for lunch as an essential moment of pause that he values. Amid demands from work, family, and social life, developing some sort of schedule helps these professionals to create a sense of “social time” (Qtd. in Shove 2009: 30), a time that is lived based on social practices.

Keeping a Porous Routine

However, although structuring their schedules participants’ routines are more porous than the traditional ‘9 to 5’ schedule of an office. They might start working at 9 or 10 AM, but may work until midnight or 2 AM because they broke up the day to go out, take a walk or a nap, or take care of necessary domestic matters. For example, having dinner at a culturally acceptable time with their family may integrate their unorthodox routine with society’s schedule but it may also necessitate having to work later into the evening. Porosity in this case comes from the possibility of having some ‘breathing room’ during work time. When working from home, participants sometimes describe situations in which they step away from work a few times in an hour to take two consecutive walks around the block or to smoke. But stepping away from their work helped them unlock creative solutions for their work. Porosity here is characterized by an integration between work and other activities.

Participants’ routines are also susceptible to changes. With a young child (called Eugene), Gary frequently has to rearrange his routine together with his wife Angie in order to cope with demands from family life and work, as Gary explains:

My wife works three days a week. It's not odd to text her at work saying: Angie, can you come home as soon as you leave work? Don't stop at the supermarket because I have a meeting at 5 today. Or: Angie, I can't take Eugene tomorrow morning, I need to be in Hollywood at 9. Can you drop him off before you go to work? Or the

opposite: Angie, don't worry, take your time coming home. I got Eugene and there's nothing going on at the studio, I will take care of dinner.

Gary tells me that he enjoys the flexibility to accommodate his family and work in a more balanced way than working for an agency, where he was away from home or his own studio in the past. He described working for an agency as a more compartmentalized life.

Flexible Routine vs. Office Routine

Although valuing this porous routine as opposed to his work at the ad agency when he had to follow the agency's schedule, Gary pointed out the lack of synergy as a disadvantage of working from home or anywhere alone. For him, working in the same space together with other creators can be potentially synergetic and challenges him to generate new ideas. "This synergy is something that I miss terribly," he tells me.

But when I asked him about the distractions in the work done with others at an agency or office, he pointed out the difference between distractions related to work and distractions related to family matters:

But [in the agency] your distractions are your work. They are work oriented. If I'm working on an edit and I can't figure out how to get from point A to point B, then I walk over and discuss a creative solution for that. Then all of a sudden the graphic artist down the hall walks by and says: *Hey, you know what? I just saw that piece and had a great idea for a graphic treatment for that...* Wow! Now I have an idea. What if I change this to match that? It becomes a group effort of creating a project. So, the distraction here is work oriented. At home it is: *Honey, can you run down to the store for me and grab sugar?* It's not work oriented. At work you can go back to your bay and be back to work.

Trying to build this synergy, Gary is expanding Studio Can's space to accommodate more professionals working together at once. However, with the expansion comes the concern if growth – business wise – will sacrifice the perceived benefits of flexible work. Business growth in this case is perceived as something positive (to bring synergy), but at the same time it may represent an increase in managerial responsibility that is too similar to an office structure.

Although other participants also miss having synergy at times, the time spent in the commute and non-work related activities with people who are not family or not exactly friends when working at an external location were perceived to be more wasteful than beneficial. Mary tells me that

when working at somebody else's place you can waste time because once 6 o'clock rolls around, you kind of say: *Oh! This is the time I'm supposed to go home or maybe work an extra hour.* But you can blame management, whereas here, since I manage things, I'm responsible for everything.

When working at an office setting, participants feel it is not possible to follow their own rhythm and that they are expected to be working a straight duration of time. Yet at home or another location that they choose as their working space,

they can step away from their work as much as they want and do other unrelated things, or even other kinds of work to help ‘unlock the solutions’ for their main work at hand. Moreover, by working in a time-space flexible format participants feel they can create their own space and make themselves more comfortable, which was considered an extremely important component for creativity.

It is important to highlight that participants who have a spouse or kids expressed the need for a dedicated space exclusively for work – with a door – in order to feel more secluded when needed. This is a kind of space that Gary, for example, does not have at home and that he instead developed at Studio Can, located near his home. Although participants enjoy the comfort and freedom of being at home and blending work and personal life, there are circumstances that require a type of office moment to manage interference and find their balance.

Water or Honey? Defining the Consistency of Flexibility

Despite valuing this time-space flexibility, participants need to deal with the challenges of making decisions in order to structure their lives. The consistency of participants’ routines is not exactly solid, as if they were working at an office with a time and a space previously defined for work. When working from home, the consistency of their routines becomes more fluid. This fluidity, however, is not totally ‘liquid,’ as in an overflowing and chaotic lack of structure. Participants’ fluid routines bring a structure that adds some thickness, or what Tom O’dell calls “cultural viscosity” (personal communication, January 25, 2011), to its consistency.

In the study of fluids, “viscosity is a measure of the resistance against flowing when a force is applied” (Boyne 2010: 91). In measuring viscosity, it is possible to determine how resistant a fluid is or how much friction is present in a liquid. For instance, by filling up a container with water (liquid) and another container with honey (viscous), we can visualize resistance when we throw a similar object in each of the containers. As a result of the object’s impact, water will immediately spill all over uncontrollably, without showing much resistance. On the other hand, honey will cede much slower and not spill all over due to the force of resistance to fluidity that was applied.

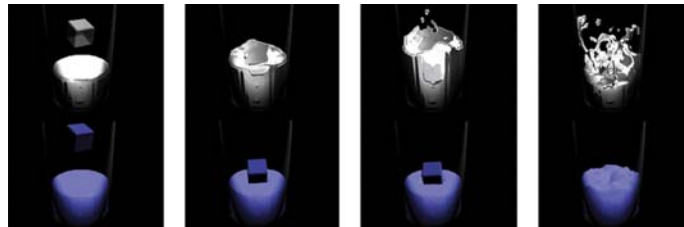


Figure 3. Viscosity demonstration – top container with water (more liquid) vs. bottom container with honey (more viscous)

(Wikimedia Commons, 2008, October 15)

To avoid trundling off uncontrollably, individuals create routines that work as friction, adhering their lives to a surface of activities and objects. During the fieldwork conducted for this research, participants structured their lives through cultural processes of routinization while coping with changes and negotiating priorities. Here, reading the news, running on the beach, consciously making sure to stop working for lunch, or pausing to drink a glass of wine may seem trivial, but these are essential elements to keep participants' lives structured.

Integrating and Stretching a Viscous Routine

At Studio Can, while interviewing Gary about his time-diary, he told me: "I don't have the mentality of '9 to 5.' I go to work and then I'm off... then I go back to work and then I'm off..." Gary defines his work and personal life as an interactive duo where each is in synch with one another, therefore he is constantly bridging these two worlds. Since he does not have a dedicated workplace that is off limits from his spouse or kids' interference at his house, as Jason does, Gary alternates locations by working both at Studio Can and at home, which are only one mile apart.

Taking a closer look at part of Gary's time-diary may help analyze how this synching relationship works in his routine. When Gary filled out his diary, both his wife and youngest son were at home on holiday vacations. Therefore, he did not have to worry about working from home on the days his wife would be at work as he normally does in order to take care of their child.

Time / When?	What I do?	Do I do anything else?	Where?	With Whom?	ICT Tools?	Comments
9:30 am	Edit "The Tribe" [product 1's name]		Studio	Solo workflow	Computer and hard drives	
11:00 am	"The Stories" [product 2's name] Direction		Studio / Martin [Associate] Design Los Angeles	Worked with Martin via phone call		Contacted Valentina [Associate] in MASS about "The Stories"
12:00 pm	Back to edit + Lunch		Studio	Solo		
3:30 pm	Break for Gym / Home to see family		Gym / Home		Text with Angie [participants' wife]	
6:00 pm	Edit "The Tribe"		Studio			
7:15 pm	Pick up business book at Barnes and Noble					
8:30 pm	Time with family		Home	Family	Turned off ICT tools	
10:30 pm – 1:00 am	Working on [client's name] Channel project		Home		Email & web on laptop	

Table 1. Time-diary

The diary sequence shows a day marked by alternating activities from one project to another, and from work to non-related work activities. Specifically from 3:30 to 6 P.M., in an interval of 2.5 hours, Gary transitioned from work, to gym, to home and back to work again. When explaining this transition to me, he emphasized: “I need to be outside. Gym, home and come back to work. Eating or showering goes in these hours.” In this transition between places and activities, Gary has to lock the door of the studio, set the alarm, open the door of his car, drive for five minutes or so, get out of the car, lock the car, change clothes to work out at the gym, take a shower, change clothes again, and head back to the studio or home.

These transitions involve an integral articulation between his body, the material surrounding, and events that together produce habits or “an incorporated capacity that is encountering different situations” (Frykman 2009: 2). These habits orient Gary to make sense of his everyday life and blend leisure/family time and work no matter how his schedule changes or even where he is. Gary explained to me that he had recently spent a week working in a project in another state in the US, where the environment was very different from the beach environment he is used to in Southern California. Nevertheless, he created a running route in the area where he was staying so that he could follow his exercise routine. It is as if doing so, he could maintain exercises as a stable activity and ritual to deal with the ever-changing nature of his work.

Following Gary’s time-diary, at the end of the day he transitioned back and forth again to working from home, a place where he was earlier enjoying his family. In his routine, playing with his son, putting him to bed and closing the door of the child’s bedroom was described as an important moment of his day. For Gary, enjoying routinized moments with his son, such as putting him in bed or playing with him on their living room rug in the middle of the afternoon, is something he values in comparison to the time when he worked fulltime at an agency and had to commute every day. Unable to alternate work and time off, that was a period of time where Gary said that he missed participating in his oldest daughter’s childhood and that now, with his youngest son, has been different.

Developing Habits

On a rare rainy morning in the Los Angeles area, I could hear the enchanting sound of the friction between car tires and the wet asphalt that was coming from the road through Studio Can’s open door. At a certain point Gary and Bettina told me where their main conference room was located: in a car’s enclosed space. “When we’re in traffic on the 405 [freeway], that’s the place for our thinking and talking, when we discuss projects,” they said. When asked why they chose that space, the need to being outside was emphasized, but not simply an “outside” as if one is going to the beach a few blocks away. Instead, the soothing journey of going somewhere and the compartmentalized space of a car were highlighted:

The long period of time becomes a time when we're able to adjust what we need to do for today but also what we need to do for next year. Maybe that's a very American thing because cruising in a car, just going for a ride, unlocks the potential in our minds. It's very stimulating and you're not looking at each other. We're looking forward, it's a safe zone. And what happens in the compartment of that car stays in that car. If she's upset with something I said [about the business], the minute we get out of the car, it stays there and we go to work on set and maybe we revisit the idea on our way home, or maybe not. (Gary)

Thinking of that feeling of being on the move in a compartmentalized space, like a home is, I am now taken to the road, imagining participants' conference rooms in a car on the 405 freeway. When Gary tells me about driving as being a way to unlock the potential of people's minds, I think of the amount of driving I encounter in the US in comparison to my lifestyle in Brazil. Then I start to ask myself what kinds of habits and routines are involved in the act of driving that could help unlock the potential of Americans' minds.

Returning to Gary's and Bettina's 'conference room,' driving allowed them to relax and let their minds work on ideas, as if they had turned on the automatic pilot, and was possibly facilitated by the culture they grew up in where driving is a routine that people become generally familiar with early in their lives. This automatic pilot, each step in driving my car for example, works as a kind of naturalization where what was once a conscious practice (*praxis*) moves into the *habitus* or an unconscious act through repetition (Wilk 2009). Habits and routines in this case liberate us from the stress of dealing with what is new.

Trying to understand how habits and routines work, as well as how they may free us to changes, I turned to my own experience again. With my portable digital recorder, I captured the sounds of daily habits I had. The result is a sequence that starts with my cell phone alarm beeping, hitting snooze, running cold water that I wash my face and brush my teeth with, followed by a succession of opening and closing of specific cabinets and drawers in the kitchen to have breakfast. At the end of my day, the habit sequence ends in the same places where it all started: in the bathroom, now for a shower, followed by my bedroom where I set the alarm on my cell phone and then turn the phone off until the next morning when the sequence will start again. For a minute I imagine myself doing this sequence in slow motion, thinking: "Ok. Where should I start? I am tying my hair now and opening the water faucet. What should I do next? Wet my face and press the bottle of liquid facial soap. Now I need to spread the soap on my face until suds are formed. Now I..."

Tense and tired of imagining the slow motion process of taking each of the steps of my habits consciously, I turn on the autopilot. In doing so, I experience the relaxing power of repetition, which "relieves us of the burden of making the thousands of micro-decisions which would otherwise overwhelm us" (Wilk 2009: 152). Similarly, not having to worry about the micro-decisions of driving, in their

“conference room,” Gary and Bettina opened up the possibilities to unlock the potential in their minds, as they said.

Creating Change and Balance Through Habits

However, the cultural phenomenon of routinization and habits is more complex than simply a sequence of repetition. This phenomenon brings some tension between repetition as a liberating force from constant worry, while at the same time it keeps us in “constant bondage” (Wilk 2009: 152). This tension characterizes routinization as something that we choose as agents, and something that at the same time we follow in the cultural structure of which we are part. In this case, it can be questioned if, through repetition, our habits may actually help us change routines.

Rather than being a polarized phenomenon, liberation and bondage are part of the same experience here, and together they can bring the possibility of transformation. Without having to deal with the stress of thinking about how to do an activity, we may open up space to think of different ways of doing things.

For Bettina, for instance, an important aspect of her routine became taking breaks. But it was not always like that:

I used to have a tendency to edit for hours straight. Sometimes the sun had set and I was so exhausted mentally that I had to lay down and watch a DVD. I fell asleep and the whole thing started again the next day until I had finished that editing. At a certain point, I did get a bit stir crazy and had to just break out! Breaking out can be something as absurdly simple as forcing myself to go for a walk. Or maybe to do some work at the coffee shop where I am forced to deal with new things... yeah, sometimes just doing that actually makes me refine my activities for the next few days or weeks even. Now breaks are sacred for me... (Bettina)

For Bettina, working straight through had become a habit. As a routine, she kept working without realizing that hours had passed and that she had not stopped for a break. She became used to it, repeating this routine until she had what she called her breakout moment. At this point Bettina initiated a new routine that was not as automatic as her habit of sitting and editing straight at first. She had to force herself to stop editing and take a break, which requires a conscious decision. After repeating this practice of taking breaks, stopping for pauses are now part of Bettina’s habits that she does without much effort, ‘automatically’ getting up from time to time.

If life without routines and habits, or some sort of regularity, would be chaotic, the issue becomes how one can maintain enough necessary predictability to keep life structured with the challenges of change. In this case, the ever changing nature of participants’ work and schedules may help them maintain a reasonably balanced attachment to routines. However, there is also a risk that the effect is the opposite of this, as described by Bettina in the quote above, and also that teleworkers turn work into their routine and become too immersed.

Although these participants' work is experienced as a creative calling, it still involves demands and deadlines. Therefore, when keeping professional and personal worlds close to each other, these teleworkers are also putting the demands from both realms in close proximity. This proximity poses the challenge of juggling such close demands through routines. At the same time, proximity also serves as an element to create stability here, as it allows for different combinations of routines.

In a dance between work as a creative calling, personal/family life and work demands, as well as the desire for autonomy, the teleworkers participating in this research project bring routinization to their everyday lives. Through routines, they exert the utmost skill in their lives.

Conclusion

In this applied cultural research, I aimed to uncover layers of cultural processes that help to enact boundaries and structure the lives of independent professionals working from home for the entertainment, new media, and arts sector. My findings bring about awareness of the prominent role that materiality and the processes of routinization play in building boundaries as well as stability. This article suggests that time-space flexibility is not a dichotomic phenomenon but instead a more complex and culturally woven web of everyday life practices.

As a result of this applied research, Studio Can and PalMarte gained awareness of their everyday flexible work life and the implications to reinforce work processes that benefit them specifically. Analysis regarding business growth and how to balance it with the perceived benefits of flexible work or how to deal with the challenges of synergetic team communication when teleworking were some of the concrete outcomes from this research that can help the organizations.

Filling out time-diaries, taking pictures, answering questions, and reflecting on their practices helped guide their understanding of what they do and how they do it. One of the participants, Gary, referred to my research by saying, "just this conversation is enlightening in terms of possibilities. It's inspiring because as we talk to you about what we do, it solidifies old processes and invites new ones." Through this research, practices and details that participants were not aware of were revealed, and can now become 'doors' of improvement for their organizations and work.

The main findings from this research suggests that for teleworkers who work as independent professionals in the entertainment, new media, and arts sector, work and leisure/family life at home are neither totally separated realms nor joined together, but instead they are linked. Although culturally different from each other, these realms are bridged through the material culture that surrounds them. As conveyors, objects such as a heating pad as well as certain activities, culturally transport teleworkers between leisure/family life and work at home.

Changing what they do with objects, participants adjust cultural categories through the material and social world that composes them.

For these participants, the advantages of working from home are autonomy, flexibility to accommodate both leisure/family life and work together, the coziness of a home environment, as well as saving time without needing to commute to work. On the other hand, the lack of synergy with other professionals was considered a disadvantage of working from home for some. For participants who have a spouse and children, the need for a separate space at home that is a dedicated workplace – off limits for family interference – was emphasized as necessary. This is a place that allows them to choose to be away when they need to.

Main findings from this research has also shown that the consistency of participants' flexible routines is more viscous than liquid, and that the habits, rituals, and evolving routines that they develop play a structuring role in their everyday lives. Routines may vary from exercising on the beach, going to the gym, or reading the newspaper in the morning. These activities create familiarity and save participants' energy from a series of daily micro-decisions, which helps them structure their lives. Through routines, these independent teleworker professionals cope with demands from both their personal lives and work.

Lastly, my findings point to stability as a possibility of change. If routines help create stability through repetition, it can also help the teleworkers in this study change their routines while maintaining their flexible schedules. This is a delicate point of balance between the necessary repetition that liberates us from spending energy on the micro-decisions of everyday life and the repetition that ties us in rigid routines that can create new routines. Overall, my research intends to understand the relation between leisure/family life and work, as well as stability and change. Focusing on telework practices can 'rethink' these realms and how they relate to each other, but also how they transform each other. Moreover, this research also helps to rethink the boundaries between academia and applied knowledge. As pointed out by Audrey Williams June, "academics informs practice and practice informs academics" (June 2010: 2). These realms are complementary in the context of the multifaceted nature of cultural research. On the one hand, academia develops the principles and intellectual preparation that we need to work in society. On the other hand, academia is part of the same society and is not isolated from it, but rather influenced by it. Here "the pure and applied distinction is unhelpful" (Sillitoe 2007: 161) and working outside academia helps expand our horizons of understanding.

If the present research, with an applied culturally analytical approach, suggests that time-space flexibility is not a dichotomic phenomenon, likewise, this research also suggests that theory and practice are not binary opposites. Instead, in the same way that work and leisure/family life – or predictability and change – are linked, academia and non-academia are seen here as bridged realms too.

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Notes

- ¹ The project “Domestic Transformer” and how its sliding walls work can be seen in this video: <http://planetgreen.discovery.com/videos/worlds-greenest-homes-hong-kong-space-saver.html>

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Invisible Lines Crossing the City: Ethnographic Strategies for Place-making

By Samantha Hyler

Abstract

Helsingborg, a coastal city in southern Sweden, initiated a long-term re-development project called H+ in 2009, aiming to convert industrial harbor space in the city's south into a new, livable urban neighborhood and city center. The project aims to create an open and 'tolerant city' in Helsingborg over the next twenty years. In 2010-2011, H+ used an open-source planning method as a strategy to incorporate multiple working methods and ideas into the planning process. As a cultural analyst, my role with the H+ project and the City of Helsingborg was to mediate social and cultural perspectives and development strategies between planners and citizens. Focusing the project's vision towards incorporating existing communities and their values, I applied an ethnographic method to culturally map Helsingborg's social cityscapes. Cultural mapping integrates social and physical places into one map. It is a useful methodological tool in accessing 'cultural' knowledge, translating ethnographic data into usable maps for city planners in the process of developing the H+ area. This article addresses how ethnographic methods and cultural mapping engages with and revitalizes city planning, essentially a process of place-making the H+ area. An applied cultural analytical approach provokes planning practices and questions how and if planning can be more open and inclusive through deeper understandings of unique places that emerge from the relationships between people and spaces. The 'invisible,' yet well-known, segregating line (a street called Trädgårdsgatan) in Helsingborg creates a particular condition that the city must contend with in order to achieve its vision of a 'tolerant city.'

Keywords: Applied cultural analysis, place-making, cultural mapping, sensory ethnography, urbanity, segregation, tolerance

Introduction

Helsingborg's H+ project is, according to their website, "Sweden's most exciting city renewal project" (The H+ Project). The project's vision is to redevelop the industrial harbor and surrounding neighborhoods structurally as well as socially, based on a 'Tolerant City' model and brand that was developed from an architectural competition in 2009. The project expected to employ new, innovative, and creative methods throughout the planning process. An example of city renewal comparable to the H+ plan is the nearby city of Malmö's Västra Hamnen (the Western Harbor), a purportedly 'sustainable' urban redevelopment project of the 2000s, which changed the local landscape and perception of the formerly industrial harbor and city, but which also receives critique for creating further gentrification in the city. With the developments of Västra Hamnen in mind, can H+ develop a 'Tolerant City' project that lives up to its name? And how? This question is perhaps somewhat rhetorical.

My own involvement with Helsingborg's H+ project began in March 2010 as a cooperative endeavor between my studies at Lund University and H+. The H+ project was presented as a long-term urban renewal and regeneration project tackling social questions of tolerance together with infrastructural change. Expertise was needed to provide perspectives and insights into these kinds of social questions, particularly regarding several neighborhoods adjacent to the developing H+ area in the south of Helsingborg (Söder, Planteringen, and Närlunda) that would also be affected by the development. Establishing a plan for citizenry dialog (medborgarråd) was one of the projects that my colleague, Paul Sherfey, and I were tasked with, though our research proposed additional foundational work before the dialogues began. During the year and a half that followed, we worked collaboratively with the H+ planning team on three social research projects. I took inspiration from current trends in cultural planning methods and worked with the urban sociologist and consultant Lia Ghilardi's cultural mapping method to translate the knowledge I gathered 'on the ground' as an ethnographer into 'cultural' maps, tangible representations of social worlds existing in Helsingborg.

What I learned from these projects is that the complexity of perspectives, experiences, and actors involved in urban transformation need to be understood in their own right in order to enact any form of social sustainability. Dempsey et al. (2011) note that social sustainability has been broadly defined but also not yet theoretically problematized. In short, they argue that the social sustainability of a neighborhood, region, or built environment inquires into such things as inclusion, safety, equality, high qualities of life, sense of community, and attachment to place (Dempsey et al. 2011: 290, 294). Culture, including emotions, behaviors, and values 'construct' places and likewise have an impact on urban spaces. Places are of ontological concern, as a form of embodied experience, which is important to understanding the experiences of the built environment from the citizens' per-

spectives (Feld & Basso 1996). Shifting the planners' view to that of individual lives and experiences of citizens' aims to plan spaces that respond to current everyday life and needs in the city.

Notions like 'cities for people,' 'social sustainability,' and 'human dimensions' are cropping up in urban planning discourses, placing an increasing focus in planning on social and cultural issues. In this case, the social sciences and humanities should logically have a large role to play in these discourses. Likewise, concepts from the social sciences and humanities are at times borrowed into architecture and urban planning, such as in Jan Gehl's lifetime work of transforming modernist planning into "cities for people" (Gehl 2010). Yet cultural and social specialists (applied cultural analysts and academics) often take a back seat in the process as 'consultants with special knowledge' rather than active participants.

As a cultural analyst, I see myself as a 'cultural mediator.' By this, I refer to the translation of cultural and social information between citizens; city planners such as architects, communications officers, politicians; and those from the social sciences and humanities disciplines, both within and outside of the academic sphere proper. The social sciences are often understood as 'soft sciences,' but as applied sciences they can be considered cultural 'hardeners,' making abstract theories and qualitative ethnographic insights into concrete and actionable strategies.¹

In a large renewal project like H+, which will be ongoing until 2035, accomplishing lofty goals like transforming Helsingborg into 'the Tolerant City' (where the city's current touristic brand is "The Pearl of the Sound") will be a difficult feat. There is always the risk that plans to create positive redevelopments have negative (unintended) consequences. An actor-network theory (ANT) approach might suggest that city transformation is a process of 'becoming' places, and that many realities are simultaneously performed. "From the standpoint of ANT, 'gentrification' is not an evident development, it is an assemblage that, like everything else, needs to be performed, enacted" (Forsemalm 2007: 23). Likewise, 'tolerance' can potentially be understood as assemblages to be performed through the construction of H+. I consider 'tolerance' to be a social and cultural concept with implications towards inclusion and diversity, presumably in opposition to gentrification of public life. In this view, it concerns more than a city re-branding strategy. The question becomes: in what capacity will tolerance be performed in Helsingborg, and how it will be enacted? Cultural analysis not only offers complex understandings of social and cultural phenomena, it also offers concrete strategies for thinking about tolerance and for planning the city. This can be a strengthening of more traditional city planning methods or a path towards new ones. My work left me with many questions, not least the question of whether social inequalities can be somehow 'solved' through adjusting or building infrastructure with the H+ project.

This article addresses ethnographic strategies used in cultural planning practices for Helsingborg's H+ project and the incorporation of ethnography and qualita-

tive social research into city planning processes.² The case of H+ serves as a basis for discussing applied cultural analysis in practice. I use the notion of Helsingborg's 'invisible' line of segregation (which I locate along the street Trädgårdsgatan) to discuss ontological concerns of places and 'othering,' and develop a phenomenological approach to place identity for the development of cultural centered planning. First, the article describes Helsingborg as a transforming city and questions how H+ and a cultural analytical approach could help to transform Helsingborg towards a more 'tolerant city.' Second, I develop a phenomenological and sensory view to places, as experiences of places are fundamental to understanding human relationships to the built environment. Third, I introduce the street Trädgårdsgatan as corresponding to the 'invisible line' of segregation as an empirical case and analytical tool to understanding 'othering,' segregation, and embodied spaces. Fourth, I argue that ethnographic analysis used to uncover the uniqueness of a place and the values and needs of existing communities can be used in making ethnographic maps that translate cultural and social phenomena into city planning processes. Finally, I return to my own position as a mediator, and position Helsingborg as two "cities" in order to make an analytical point about top down planning and the need for cultural analysis to achieve social goals in the H+ 'Tolerant City' vision.

Background: Transforming Helsingborg through H+

H + is not just a construction project. It will put Helsingborg on the map and change the city's identity. Through communication, you create a concrete picture of a reality that is not yet available.

(Sköldqvist, *Helsingborgs Dagblad*, 2011)

Cities, as complex spaces, layered with places, people, communities, rhythms, and routines, establish particular and constantly changing environments. While many post-industrial cities promote developments that attract outsiders for business and pleasure, their existing citizens also need appropriate spaces for their everyday lives and work. "The Tolerant City" has a lot to do with branding Helsingborg, but as a social notion it leads to philosophical contemplations about what tolerant places are, and how society envisions them to be. While Helsingborg's 'brand' concerns how it is perceived, or desires to be perceived, it is not necessarily a reflection of life in that city. Helsingborg has not been considered particularly 'tolerant,' indeed it has been considered quite the opposite. A report from 2010, based on a model from Richard Florida's work, shows Northwest Skåne, including the city of Helsingborg, as the most 'intolerant' area of the entire region of Skåne, suggesting unusually high segregation of ethnic and socio-economic groups to be the cause (Region Skåne, 2010). 'The Tolerant City' that H+ envisions for the future thus has an implicitly challenging social agenda. Cultural analytical per-

spectives are therefore incredibly important to this process of transforming the city as a physical and social place.

Re-development of places can have a huge impact on an individual's practices, rhythms, and experiences of their everyday lives. In this way, the H+ project is more than building new housing, public and business spaces, and infrastructure, it is also a social renewal process. In the initial planning stages, the 'tolerant city' vision of the project aimed to change Helsingborg socially while also redeveloping its physical infrastructure (Helsingborgs stad 2009). This redevelopment would be a production of spaces both physical and complexly social (Lefebvre 1991). In many ways, urban planners are tasked with the job of constantly (re-)constructing urban environments, and the resulting public life can be understood in relation to the possibilities that those spaces allow. Conversely, people also create places, bringing them into being, and these places can be understood as productions of social space (Heidegger 1971; Lefebvre 1991). The experience of places, and the relationship between people and places, is an important dynamic of urban everyday life.

Urban planning commonly focuses on physical details and concepts, producing maps and renders to convey the experiences of redevelopment. Though now commonly picturing 'potential users' in renderings and images of new buildings and spaces,³ urban planning that incorporates explicitly social aims (like the H+ project) would benefit from a stronger focus on problematizing what these potential spaces actually mean for individuals (and who those individuals are) through research. How can physical infrastructural planning respond to ethnographic research conducted about communities and everyday lives in urban environments? I suggest that ethnographically derived knowledge about local cultures within cities, and about the city-planning processes itself, can be mediated for more culturally derived, 'people-centered' planning.

My research has been an exercise in re-thinking what public planning means, by opening up the process and understanding the city culturally, from the ground up rather than from the top down. How can cultural mapping engage with and revitalize city planning to enable the development of a 'tolerant city,' essentially a process of constructing, producing, and place-making the H+ area? As a cultural analyst and mediator, I aimed to focus the project's visions towards existing communities and their values, and to contribute to the H+ project's open source method of strategic public planning with an ethnographic approach. My own work employed double ethnography or 'double cultural analysis,' which encompassed an understanding of both the citizens and planners of Helsingborg. I used double cultural analysis to gather insights regarding the citizens' experiences and the culture of urban planning in the planning office in order to develop specific tools that would be most useful in building a 'tolerant city' model (Damnholt 2011). The overall aim of my investigations was to respond to the question: 'How can Helsingborg become a tolerant city?' From this, I developed tools for mediating the

information between actors, and used spatial maps of cultural resources as a manner of initiating a cultural strategy in the H+ planning process.

Experiencing Place

Place is the most fundamental form of embodied experience.

(Feld & Basso 1996: 9)

The world comes bedecked in places; it is a place-world to begin with.

(Casey 1996: 43)

What is a cultural understanding of place? Places are intrinsically connected to human lives and experiences. They play a large role in the ontological formation of identities, whether explicitly or implicitly. How people experience and think about places are important in understanding not only their own self-perceived identity, but also that of the place itself. A place-making process factors in existing communities and their perceptions of places to the designing and planning process of new spaces. Essential to my anthropological understanding of Helsingborg's cityscapes is an understanding of the relationship between people and places, which can be applied to place-making processes of city planning like the H+ project.

Urban Identity: Learning from Place 2 gathers articles regarding urbanism and the uniqueness of places, aiming to discuss senses of local identities in places that are rapidly being replaced by homogenous city construction (Evans, McDonald & Rudlin 2011). In some regards, homogenous city construction can be seen as the creation of a type of large-scale non-place, whereby local urban flavors are replaced by more or less similar constructions of 'creative' or 'innovative' cities.⁴ Through initiating H+, Helsingborg faces challenges that must be balanced in the formation of a new urban place, and must be wary of the different ways in which an urban renewal project can develop. The diverse needs and concerns of citizens as well as those of politicians, planners, and other stakeholders are important considerations at all phases of the H+ development. These needs can be economic and social, concern affordable housing, the availability of green spaces, new business growth, and education, for example. Careful mediation of all values must be structured in order to achieve a symbiosis and to work towards the vision of the project.

Place, urban or otherwise, is a central concept to being in the world, a sensory experience unique to each individual. In other words, bodies and spaces are intertwined to create places as embodied experiences (de Certeau 1984). Urban environments are layered with places, made unique by the individuals and communities sustaining them. "The living-moving body is essential to the process of emplacement: live bodies belong to places and help to constitute them" (Casey 1996:

24). Local expressions are invaluable to understanding the social layers of a city, underpinning the greater ‘city identity.’

It is the relationships between people and other actors to their environments that ‘produce,’ or ‘make,’ a place, and determine how it ‘becomes’ a place. In deconstructing power structures in practices of city conversion in Göteborg, Sweden Forsemalm points out that, “objects, human or non-human, go places, and do places” (2007: 163). But, city planning processes globally are slow to incorporate the cultural and social perspectives to the development process. Vergunst and Vermehren locate sociality in action, as a process rather than context or structure. Long and Moore note that their approach to sociality begins with “its conceptualization as a dynamic relational matrix within which subjects are constantly interacting in ways that are co-productive, and continually plastic and malleable” (2013: 4). Therefore, one can argue that while city planners attempt to ‘create’ spaces, social communities are concurrently producing places through interactions. A tension arises between these ongoing productions and planning processes that attempt to constrain them.

Perhaps we, as people in places, know implicitly this notion of spatial creation and constitution. Indeed, we are often immediately aware when atmospheres change from one place to another, and many times recognize our own presence and activities in transforming a place. But, to what extent do city planning processes understand and use this knowledge explicitly, and to what extent is research and planning of places and landscapes being conducted based on a city’s particular identities, narratives, communities, and cultures?



Figure 1.5 *Car boot sale*: “Car boot sale, every Sunday 11-15.” Söder is characterized by a sense of local community and events, as felt with this hand-made sign.



Figure 2. *Outdoor market in Gustav Adolfs Torg*: The outdoor fresh produce market in Gustav Adolfs Torg in Söder, Helsingborg is an important and characteristic local place, selling fresh produce and other goods at affordable prices year-round.

The ‘placeness’ of the H+ area will be consummated by the addition of people to the planning process and in their presence – being there – as a place exists as a relationship comprised of (everyday) practices, behaviors, and multi-sensory experiences. The identity and sociality of H+ will be the result of not only the built environment and place-branding, but through place-making: the dialectical relationship between people and place and their being in places and being of places as a complex and endless development (Casey 1996: 19).

Urban practitioners should begin to ‘see’ their own cities anthropologically, and respond to them through more integrated and collaborative planning practices. This kind of ethnographic understanding of cities will see communities and spaces as organic wholes, wherein ‘place’ becomes the foremost concern in understanding place-identities and experiences. My research found Trädgårdsgatan to be a pivotal street in central Helsingborg, as it demonstrates the issues of segregation in the city, and sheds light on how embodied spaces are important to an ethnographic understanding of cities for planning.

The 'Invisible Line' and Embodied Spaces

This phenomenological fusion of personal identity and physical environment is, of course, not a product of contemplation but a byproduct of our everyday relationships – sensible, corporeal and imaginative – with and within the built environments we inhabit.

(Jackson 2005: 17)

A major consideration in the initial planning stages of the H+ area in 2010 – 2011 was how the project could strengthen the adjacent quarter known as Söder (literally 'the south'), building upon the values and potential of the area to serve local residents and not become a gentrification project singularly focused on potential new residents. Though bordering the old city center (Centrum), Söder has historically been segregated from its development as a working-class neighborhood, originally populated by labor migrants from rural Sweden and now notable for its largely immigrant population (Högdahl 2007). Söder is characterized by shops that are often owned and run 'by immigrants for immigrant' – primarily selling food and household products from their home countries – and is commonly perceived as being populated by lower income residents. In contrast, Centrum is characterized by several landmarks and historical buildings, a shopping street filled with chain stores and cafes, and beaches. It is perceived as being populated by an ethnically Swedish and economically wealthier majority. Despite the rich cultural diversity of Söder, its positive attributes have not always been emphasized, instead remaining separated and 'othered' in the city's south across an 'invisible line' of segregation corresponding to Trädgårdsgatan.

The question of how marginalized communities can be supported – without being co-opted into dominant local culture(s) – through strategic city planning, should be inherent in the Tolerant City model. Barriers of gentrification, accessibility to services, infrastructural isolation, and cultural unfamiliarity (i.e. 'ethnic others' and 'economic others') that occur across the two neighborhoods influence the segregation of the city.

Public space thus confronts one as an enemy might – foreign, forbidding and minatory – and people complain, 'I don't feel comfortable going there. It's not our place. I don't feel I belong.' Moreover, the space of the other is like the gaze of someone who has greater power than oneself; it fills one with a diffuse sense of shame.

(Jackson 2005: 20)

The cultural analytical approach used by my colleague and I in our work with the H+ project addressed diverse spaces and notions such as 'comfort' in spaces to demonstrate barriers that exist in the city. An analysis using the concepts of 'othering' and comfort demonstrate that residents of Söder and Centrum (mis)understood the neighborhoods differently. Cultures and individual habitus made people feel uncomfortable in certain areas primarily because it was not familiar to them.

Yeah. I don't want to increase the feeling against the south but of course those in the areas feel a little more... but I think it depends upon yourself. It's just like, if you walk into a pub, and if you don't... It's important how you act maybe... but it's the same in the north side. It's not a big difference. It's more like that the people said 'I don't feel safe here' during nights when they walk home if they are a woman or a young man or old lady. They don't feel so safe. It's more where 'I heard [it's dangerous]' than 'I feel [it's dangerous]'.

(Interview with David)

David, who enjoyed Söder, pointed to the perception of difference over personal experiences that he noticed in fellow citizens. On a greater scale, this perception leads to 'othering' and segregation of the neighborhoods. Deconstructing the current social city can help to reconstruct a different one. Understanding these kinds of intangible knowledge in Helsingborg is an important first step in making new places that do not reconstruct the same issues. Through my research, I have found Helsingborg's 'invisible line' to be integral to understanding the atmosphere of segregation dividing the city.



Figure 3. *Trädgårdsgatan, the 'Invisible Line' of segregation*: The division between Centrum (the northern side) and Söder (the southern side) in Helsingborg lies along Trädgårdsgatan. Centrum's historical facades are visible to the right in the image. The city park (Stadsparken) lies to the left, the entry point to Söder.

In the approximately six months that I spent researching and analyzing Helsingborg's central neighborhoods, I found Trädgårdsgatan to be a defining place for the city and understanding the North/South divide that residents experience in more or less similar ways. This particular embodied space represents the city's history and present, while H+ represents a future Helsingborg that could potential-

ly change the experience of stark segregation currently associated with the divide along Trädgårdsgatan.

In addition to my participant observation work within the planning office, central neighborhoods, and other ethnographic material, I interviewed six residents of Helsingborg as part of my research. With more than half of these individuals, I chose to conduct a walking interview. When I walked with people in Helsingborg, I asked them to lead the way and show me parts of their everyday routes, places they enjoyed or did not enjoy, or places they commonly spent time in. This method of walking afforded access into embodied experiences of informants in places. Their experiences of places were made evident by being there together, perceiving and describing particularities in their own terms. By being there, and walking with them, I was able to access how particular place-bound identities in Helsingborg take place as embodied experiences “grounded in an inherently sociable engagement between self and environment” (Lee & Ingold 2006: 68). In a way, we were mapping routes and places in their lives together ‘on the ground,’ accessing the dialectic of perception and place which constitutes Helsingborg’s identity.

While each of my informants had different experiences and lived in different areas, they all indicated some level of awareness or perception of the segregation. My participants explained that there is a tangible and immediate feeling of difference when one crosses Trädgårdsgatan and the city park (Stadsparken), as if the atmosphere somehow ‘changes.’ They expressed this to me as we would walk from Centrum to Söder across the line and through the city park together (or vice versa), pointing out how they could ‘feel’ they were ‘somewhere else’ now. My informants’ experiences and uses of the two adjacent neighborhoods, Söder and Centrum, were different based not only on the available activities or economic possibilities of the spaces, but the kinds of relationships they formed through their individual interactions with these places. For instance, Mia⁶ said that Helsingborg was ‘boring,’ because there were few events or ‘things going on,’ especially in Söder, while Navid considered Helsingborg to be a good place to live and he considered himself to be an ‘urban guy’ because he lived on Gustaf Adolfs Torg (central Söder) and spent his time in the center of the city (mainly in Centrum).

You walk past nice buildings everyday, but you don’t notice anything about them. Many times you are so stressed to go from A to B, so you don’t look around. So I’ve started to, when I’m walking in the city nowadays. I look at the whole building. And many buildings are very nice but you’ve never seen it because you are so bored of the, let’s say, bookshop at the first floor, because your eyes are always looking down. But you should look otherwise, then you will feel otherwise, and you appreciate it much, much more.

(Interview with Navid)

People inhabit places that reflect not only the kinds of activities they want in their lives, but also identities based from potential embodied relationships to places. The “multisensory experience of any physical and material environment ... is in-

extricable from the cultural knowledge and everyday practices through which place is constructed and experienced” (Pink 2008b: 96). Maria described part of Söder to be like entering another country, pointing towards particular streets which gave her this feeling most strongly, and David was similarly supportive of Söder and the developments there.

[Söder is] lively and foreign. But when I say foreign I mean it in a completely positive aspect. A totally positive aspect... Some people might read foreign as a negative thing [...] foreigners are better at meeting and standing out by the road and making the place more alive with people... I like that about this area.... There is just stuff going on.

(Interview with Maria)

I think that many cities with the same population (size) are very similar wherever you go. But there is a totally different life here depending where in the city you go.... That frightens a lot of people. People just want everybody to be the same. But I think it's really fun that it's so different. So, I enjoy that that you can buy almost anything from all over the world from the south side, from the immigrants. And that it's very Swedish if you go to the north side.

(Interview with David)

There is an expression of intangible difference (besides the very tangible and noticeable difference in building facades) occurring because of this dividing line between north and south and its accompanying perceptions and meanings. This atmosphere of difference concerns ‘place-boundedness’ in relation to individual experiences of a particular geographical place.

The built environment of a place is in direct interaction with one’s life-world, an understanding through one’s fully lived and bodily experiences whereby things become meaningful based on that which they have experienced (Frykman & Gilje 2003: 38). Understanding the different neighborhoods and residents of Helsingborg requires and understanding that one’s life-world is focused upon the everyday life and meanings that are created by the repetition of activity with that material environment, the life-world being primarily “something that you think with rather than think about” (Frykman & Gilje 2003: 36-37). Neighborhoods and specific places in Helsingborg must be understood through the multiple life-worlds that exist there, creating different meanings about the same objects, events, and spaces, together and apart from each other. It is evident that neighborhoods in Helsingborg are experienced very differently based upon those who constitute them through use.

It is precisely the understanding of places as experiences unique to each individual, and creating an ever-changing place-identity, which has been at the base of my work as a cultural analyst in Helsingborg. The mutual shaping of place constitutes its particular identity and the identity of those within it. As Casey puts it, “lived bodies belong to places and help to constitute them” (1996: 24). It is through an understanding of this emplacement that a picture of the distinct ‘urbanness’ of one’s lived experiences in Helsingborg is created. This approach is

the basis for locating unique identities of cities, and the culture, communities, and values therein, which in turn are useful for future planning possibilities such as those in H+.

Conducting a project in cultural mapping refers one to the question of how spaces are created. Urban identities are not singular, regardless of their cohabiting spatial relation (as all people living in and ‘using’ Helsingborg contribute to a ‘Helsingborg identity’ in some way), but rather realize the plethora of identities existing together in one space. The most important aspects emerging from my analysis on embodied spaces is the ‘othering’ perpetuated by the experiences connected to the invisible line of segregation, Trädgårdsgatan.

Ethnographic research accesses the cultural aspects of places, making the intangible ‘auras,’ dividing Helsingborg more tangible. What I call the ‘invisible line’ is a part of what Högdahl conceptualized as the mental landscape of Helsingborg.

Berättelsen om det ‘fina Norr’ och det ‘dåliga Söder’ som blivit ett problem – inte den fysiska ytan Trädgårdsgatan eller Stadsparken.

The story of the ‘nice North’ and the ‘bad South’ became a problem – not the physical space of Trädgårdsgatan or the City Park.

(Högdahl 2007: 97, author’s translation)

It is the resulting segregation that perpetuates the tensions between the north and south. Redevelopment of that space along with the H+ area could lead to new mental landscapes. Cultural maps are tools that offer a clear collection of this knowledge of cultural or mental landscapes, and they have the potential to show the social elements of the city and become a point of reference to initiate discussion around cultural aspects of urban life.

Mapping Unique Place Identities

Cultural maps inform cultural planning processes as a first step towards understanding the urban environment socially and culturally. De Certeau, on walking in the city, explains that human behavior is central to urban environments and their presence adds important elements to space that are impossible to administer (1984: 95). Urban planning can benefit greatly by incorporating ethnographic perspectives throughout the process of planning cities for this reason. As city planning processes frequently use maps and other images to discuss the physical structuring of places, cultural mapping develops how a social layer can be incorporated into the process for a better understanding of place and communities for public planning. The ability to translate ethnographic information into current working methods is essential in doing applied cultural analysis. Cultural maps become the ethnographers’ tools, mediating information about human behavior and social resources in ways already understood by planners.

I am aware that there are elements of urban life that might not necessarily be ‘map-able.’ However, cultural maps – in the various forms they can be produced – do provide a basis for understanding and exploring social and cultural aspects of the city in ways that are accessible to those not trained in social sciences and humanities. At the very least, mapping begins the process of understanding the cultural city through an ongoing conversation that begins with culture. Pink (2008a) argues that for ethnographers to be reflexive, they must consider how they are emplaced in fieldwork and how they constitute places. She argues that we cannot know other’s experiences, but that “by following their routes and attuning our bodies, rhythms, tastes, ways of seeing and more to theirs, begin to make places that are similar to theirs, and thus feel that we are similarly emplaced” (ibid. 2008a: 193). I combined Lee and Ingold’s (2006) method of walking interviews and a phenomenological approach with Lia Ghilardi’s method of culturally mapping the city’s ‘cultural DNA’ to develop my own cultural mapping practice. Mapping has the potential to take on many forms and lend itself to many uses that would further the possibility to document particular experiences from a new perspective, as information provided on maps produce different ways of understanding the city, socially or otherwise. The maps produced by my colleague and I responded to the needs of the H+ working group at the time, which called for knowledge on the social resources of three neighborhoods.

Mapping is a form of place-making, where anthropologically constructed maps aid the process of understanding, and also constructing, places. Maps are more than physical representations of places; maps and people are mutually constitutive, involving social and cultural perceptions of places that have transformative power regarding both the landscape of people’s relationships to it (Idvall 2000). Cultural mapping is not only a process of visualizing, but understanding the embodied city, as a tool for incorporating people and their values into planning processes. Ethnographic knowledge is transmitted both through the maps and process of using them in planning, but also reflected in development strategies.⁷ This opens up a different kind of understanding of places based from a human experience, which is not just about how spaces are produced but about how they are experienced and consummate identities.

‘Cultural mapping’ examines knowledge gathered from ethnographic fieldwork, finds points of applicability, and translates cultural information into maps. These maps can be designed and used in specific ways to convey specific information, as our maps concentrated on cultural resources in three neighborhoods. Ghilardi’s model of cultural planning with Noema Research aims to gather anthropological information about the particular identity of a city – which she calls the city’s ‘cultural DNA’ or ‘social fabric,’ – as a first step in the process of developing creative and people-centered cities. “Each city, furthermore, has its own idiosyncratic way of working and its own ‘cultural DNA.’” (Ghilardi 2009: 3).

Cultural mapping is a tool for organizing relevant social information in context and aids the process of planning work.

This method is based on the assumption that a precondition for identifying and exploiting local potential is to conduct a wide-ranging exploration of the distinctive cultural assets of a place. How a place is shaped (history, landscape), what it feels like (the urban fabric and the interaction between different cultures and communities), how it projects itself (the images it conjures up) – these are all based on its local culture. Such broad mapping of the local cultural assets can be an effective way of responding to local needs while providing opportunities for local development.

(Noema.co.uk)

Working from within the city planning office was a method of understanding Helsingborg from the side of the planners of Helsingborg, who hold a certain power dynamic in redevelopment processes. This was important to my understanding of how ethnological work can strengthen public planning, and to understanding and developing my role as a mediator working within public planning.

My colleague and I created five cultural resource maps – later documented as one larger map (Helsingborgs stad 2011) – for the H+ planning team. These maps covered the Planteringen, Närlunda, and Söder, neighborhoods in the southern region of Helsingborg. The maps tangibly located and detailed what were determined as important social ‘hot-spots,’ pathways, community groups, schools, sports areas, religious centers, meeting points, and so forth. This mapping practice visualized the social (ethnographic) city for the planning team and demonstrated a number of barriers and the overall availability (or lack there of) of cultural, event, and community spaces in the southern neighborhoods. The maps are a physical representation of ‘what’s there’ in relation to existing social values. Söder is residential and commercial, effectively a ‘center’ of the city – primarily serving the southern neighborhoods of Helsingborg. We were asked to create maps by the planning team of these neighborhoods, as they provided preliminary social knowledge about neighborhoods that would be affected by the development of the H+ area. These maps serve as an example of how ethnographic data can be compiled into visual data, though their content is an initial exploration into the city.



Figure 4. Cultural resource map of Söder

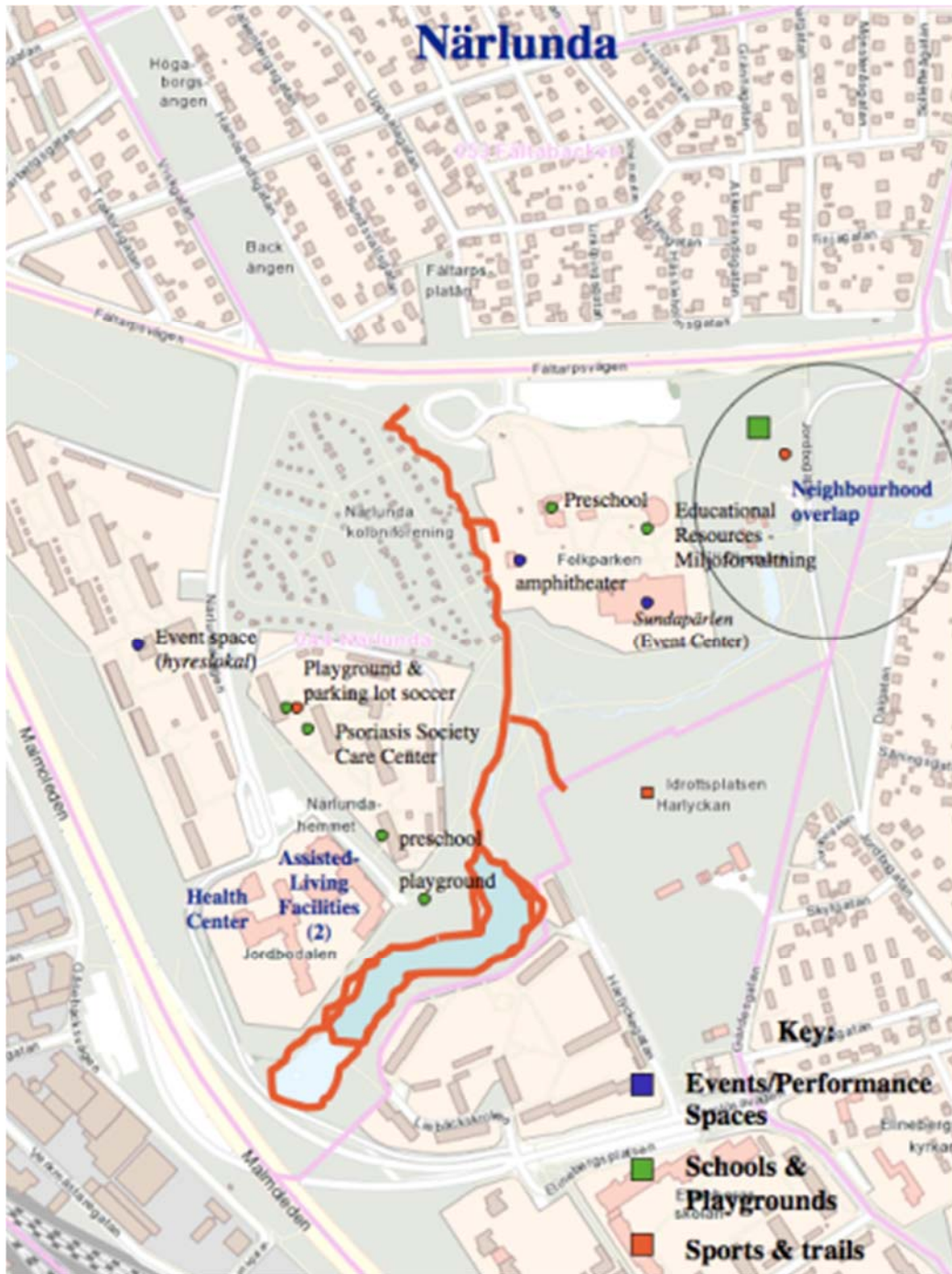


Figure 5. Cultural resource map of Närlunda

Examples of the cultural resource maps created by Samantha Hyler and Paul Sherfey, June 2010. Maps were compiled and reproduced under 'sociala konsekvenser' (social consequences) in: *Helsingborgs stad (2011) Utställningshandling fördjupning av översiktsplan för H+, inklusiv miljökonsekvensbeskrivning.*

The maps created for H+ were useful at the particular developmental stage of the H+ project in 2010-2011. The results of the cultural resource mapping found a lack of event spaces and gathering points in the southern neighborhoods (notably through the lack of venues typically found in arts and cultural institutions such as museums, or an indoor food market, or 'Saluhallen,' which is common in Swedish centers), as well as many barriers. Barriers were both between physical spaces and in the possibility for people to meet and connect in public spaces in a variety of settings. Both formal and informal groups become important in gathering a thick description (Geertz 1973) of Helsingborg's various communities, and served as a model of the city from which to discuss physical and social interactions. Informal groups can also give important clues to the social identity of the city, such as the weekly brunch meeting arranged between several of my informants at a café in Centrum. These individuals traveled out of Söder (where many lived) and other areas of the city and into Centrum for these weekly brunches, finding their place at the same café every week where they knew the staff and enjoyed the food and atmosphere. A stronger café culture and meeting opportunities in Centrum over those in Söder facilitated the sociability and interaction they were seeking in their everyday lives but did not find in their own neighborhoods. This indicates the need to strengthen the opportunity for social meeting points in Söder in order to create an atmosphere of open interaction. However, this example should definitely not be taken to indicate that cafés are the solution, but rather one example of the lack of opportunities in Söder for actionable sociability, to interact with others through the process of actions and shared meaning (Vergunst & Vermehren 2013). This should also note the economic segregation inherent in the location of businesses – and which types of businesses – between Söder and Centrum. 'Economic others' are strongly visible and divided between the neighborhoods in this way.

The cultural resource mapping was used during the later stages of planning a cultural strategy for redevelopment actions, which were intended to be implemented in the H+ plans in 2011. The maps and research were later summarized under 'sociala konsekvenser' (the social consequences) in the city's master planning document called, *Utställningshandling fördjupning av översiktsplan för H+, inklusiv miljökonsekvensbeskrivning* (Helsingborgs stad 2011). Further ways of documenting the social city could be developed from fieldwork and analysis, which could reflect for example, daily routes, experiences, auras, or nodes of activity by highlighting particular areas or adding pictures that reflect particular phenomena.

Cultural maps can be seen as a visual representation of social conditions, creating new kinds of maps that layer social information gathered through an ethnographic process over infrastructural maps used in city planning. However, maps must be understood as having 'reconstructive power' (Idvall 2000), where creating maps is in many ways a construction of social realities. For social researchers,

cultural mapping connects theoretical understandings of place and ethnographic field data to concrete problem solving in city planning. Cultural mapping is a product of my ethnographic practice and work within the City of Helsingborg, opening up urban planning practices and stimulating a more 'cultural,' people-focused vision. The practice of creating and using cultural maps became a mediation tool to connect our work with planners, and to involve ethnographic knowledge in planning processes.

Mediating Cityscapes

My work with Helsingborg has been a process of bringing in knowledge directly from ethnographic investigations, and translating this knowledge through cultural maps and project reports for the planning process. As an initial project, this research covers the results of a project intended as a starting point to a much larger project that was not entirely realized. My role as a cultural analyst was to mediate cultural understandings between three primary 'cityscapes,' landscapes of experience that form the physical and imagined atmosphere of spaces as a result of everyday lives (O'Dell 2005: 16). These areas are the north and south of Helsingborg (as segregated areas from each other), and the 'cityscape' from the perspective of the city planners.

In order to understand my role in this work, I developed an understanding of mediation between 'two cities': 'the city' as citizens and users of the city (in both the north and south), and 'the City' as the planners and stakeholders (politicians, steering groups, and so forth). While there is a communicative space between these, they remain largely separate actors. This is not intended to dichotomize, but rather to locate my precise role among the recognizable multiplicity of 'Helsingborgs' and their various cityscapes. Experiences of multiple individuals and groups, habitus, and world-views contribute to an already multicultural space that desires collaborative planning. This is also a simple way of understanding top down methods of planning which still take place, where much of the planning decisions lie firmly with 'the City.' The metaphor immediately and unfairly segregates people and discourses of cities between planners and citizens, though I am not unaware of the overlap where citizens are at times, also planners, and the discourses are not always starkly separated. For these purposes, however, 'two cities' serves as a metaphor for understanding my role in analyzing, synthesizing, and translating knowledge between the various stakeholders (planners and politicians, but also citizens in this case) in the city for better cooperative and more cultural planning practices where 'the city,' in all of its multiplicities, are taken into account. Part of my research was to find out how the two 'cities' can work collaboratively towards common goals of re-development. The answer can be found by developing the role of an intermediary cultural analyst, who uses ethnographic methods and develops tools to synthesize information between these cityscapes,

ultimately helping to connect cultural phenomena, communities, and people's daily needs to infrastructure and planning and vice versa.

Ethnographic knowledge informs a strong understanding of the social city (as opposed to the physical, economic, or political city, although they are also connected), including demographics, social behaviors, and seeks to understand rhythms, flows, networks, and everyday aspects of living in a city. In deconstructing embodied places through cultural analysis, cultural insights are reconstructed through visual maps for the purposes of city planning. My work has emphasized a method of city planning that uses cultural analytical approaches for collaborative culture-centered planning in the H+ project. In this way, the process aims to become more open by breaking down barriers that exist between the cityscapes in all forms, between city planners and citizens, and the cityscapes of the north and south in Helsingborg. Thus, my role as a cultural analyst and cultural planner has been to work as an intermediary between various 'cities' and cityscapes.

My role required me to understand whom I am researching for, and to develop the tools and materials that would be most effective for the tasks at hand. Applied ethnographic work derives knowledge from academic sources and is research intensive, but its results are used for different goals and audiences (often with normative positions like developing 'better' spaces and cities). Here, academic knowledge is being connecting outside of universities by using ethnographic methods to enable social change.

Conclusions

Whether a city square, plaza or piazza, or a public monument, building or landmark, or simply the landscape in which one makes one's livelihood, this is where we consummate our identity as something more than a random aggregate of individuals; this is where we objectify ourselves as a community, a civilization, a nation.

(Jackson 2005: 19)

Practitioners within applied cultural analysis often describe the use of theories, methods, and literature as 'tools' in the process of understanding and deconstructing culture and developing cultural understandings for businesses, organizations, public policy, and so forth.⁸ Cultural mapping is one of these tools, an instrument I have learned but also used in my own way to translate ethnographic knowledge into visual materials that follow the City of Helsingborg's own internal working models. Working within the structures already followed by the city planners has been an important venue for me to convey ethnographic information and perspectives, facilitating both discussions and further collaborative work with a cultural and social focus.

This article understands culture and places not of in terms of arts, museums and 'cultural events,' but rather anthropologically and sociologically; in terms of the everyday, and that which is distinctive, unique, and characteristic about it

(Bianchini & Ghilardi 1997). Simone Abram argues that city planners are also producing culture, and in order to bring culture into focus in planning, it is necessary to problematize the structures and categories surrounding it (2011). Likewise, my research has been about the planning process as much as it has been about everyday life in the city.

In a normative sense, urban planning benefits from a basic starting point of building upon existing identities and values in the city. Seeking to understand communities anthropologically provides certain information about the social particularities of place, experiences and perceptions, and everyday rhythms of life that can become the basis for developing projects around notions of openness, tolerance, and even facilitating social sustainability. As an applied cultural researcher, the aim of my work has been to encourage the incorporation of cultural perspectives into city redevelopment processes. One aim of this work was to bypass the creation of large-scale ‘non-place’ type urban development (Augé 1995, see Guwallius 2012 for discussion on similarities in waterfront developments) and to allow places to exist and transform in their own unique ways.

As public and private sectors turn increasingly towards social and cultural questions, applied cultural analysts respond by turning research and theoretical perspectives into actionable results as public intellectuals. O’Dell and Willim explore what it is to practice ethnography inside and outside academia, and put into question the use of ethnography as an “elusive buzzword, or be treated as a magical ingredient that might be added to all sorts of methodological potions, providing any research project (or almost any) with some form of ‘added value’” (2011: 6-7). In the end, this turn in ethnographic practice is a response to a growing need in various kinds of work (ibid. 2011:12).

The aim of this article has been twofold: to first develop phenomenological and sensory approaches to urban space, places, and communities in order to make the unique place identities and experiences formed from the relationship of people and spaces visible; and second to develop ways of translating this anthropological knowledge through cultural maps into strategic city planning processes as a mediation between city planners and citizens. This research has begun developing cultural approaches to the ongoing question: How can Helsingborg become a ‘Tolerant City’ through the strategic use of ethnographic perspectives? However, this research is just the beginning of a long process, and the effects are yet unknown and the question becomes a rhetorical one.

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Notes

- ¹ Notion of 'cultural hardener' derived from a discussion between Robert Willim and Joakim Forsemalm at a conference panel debate, ACSIS June, 2011.
- ² This article is based on the author's master's thesis *Mediating Cityscapes: Cultural Analysis and the Development of Urban Places* (Hyler 2011).
- ³ See images created for the H+ area by Schønherr Landscape / ADEPT Architects, for example. <http://www.adeptarchitects.com/> and <http://hplus.helsingborg.se/>. These types of images are increasingly common among architectural renders and aim to envision how a space could be used.
- ⁴ See Relph (1976) and Augé (1995) for deeper discussions regarding place, placelessness and non-place.
- ⁵ All photos by the author.
- ⁶ All names changed for anonymity.
- ⁷ See *Utställningshandling fördjupning av översiktsplan för H+, inklusiv miljökonsekvensbeskrivning* (2011), for the resulting incorporation of the cultural mapping project by Samantha Hyler and Paul Sherfey.
- ⁸ Fredriksson & Jönsson (2008) *ETN: JOB* and O'Dell & Willim (2011) provides useful perspectives to practicing cultural analysis.

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From Creep to Co-op: Research(er) Paying the Cost of Displacement?

By Joakim Forsemalm

Abstract

As discussed by planning researchers Jalakas & Larsson (2008), in Sweden, societal issues such as social sustainability, urban life and gender fails to travel from comprehensive documents in the urban planning system to the legislative ones (i.e. the “detailed development plans”). This might, as this essay argues, have to do with the absence of “cultural brokers”, i.e a kind of translator of the narratives told in a particular society. Can researchers act as such translators – increasing the presence of cultural and everyday-life experiences in legislative planning documents? This essay discusses problems and possibilities with an ethnography engaging with/in society.

Keywords: Urban planning, ethnography, cultural planning, cultural broker.

Introduction

In 1980, sociologist Carol Weiss published a study in *Science communication* where she interviewed 155 high-rank officials in federal, state, and local mental health organizations about their use of social science research. It became evident that only a very limited number of those officials (seven percent) used research knowledge in an explicit way, that is in a manner where sources and references could be identified (Weiss 1980). Another fifty percent claimed to have research as a general knowledge base, meaning that research knowledge, as Weiss defines it, *creeps* into policy deliberations. Since 1980 the use of research has become more evident in the field of urban planning and city development in a more broad sense – at least at a superficial level. Richard Florida’s theories of how tolerance, technology, and talent are important to attract the “creative class” (to increase the amount of good tax payers) are evident in visions for urban development around the world (Florida 2002). One example of this is the new comprehensive plan for Gothenburg city, in which Florida’s “3T”-model is explicitly used as “facts box” in a section of business development. However, to underline the findings of Weiss, no Floridian vocabularies are visible at the end of that section in the comprehensive plan where objectives for land use are stated (Översiktsplan för Göteborg 2009: 71f).

As discussed by planning researchers Anita Larsson and Anne Jalakas, this is a widespread problem in urban development and planning. It is one thing to have ambitions in policy-making and visionary documents such as comprehensive plans. It is another to actually apply these ambitions at the stages of urban development that determine the actual physical production (i.e. the *detailed development plan*, which is the only statutory document in the Swedish planning system, all other documents are merely advisory). In their research on how Swedish municipalities employ agendas of equality and gender in planning, Jalakas & Larsson have shown that these issues fail to reach the statutory levels of planning – thus having no real effect on how urban environments are being structured and re-structured (Jalakas & Larsson 2008). What, then, can an ethnologist do if not even a frequently touring “research star” like Florida, heavily cited in various newspapers, popular press and scientific articles, can make it to “last base” (i.e. the detailed development plans)? What possibilities do these perspectives offer? What particular skills come with the ethnological competence that might make people’s everyday lives more obvious in plans for urban development?

In this article, I discuss a case in which a particular method is used to map everyday life in a single-house commuter suburb in the Gothenburg region. It is about narratives being created, told, and used to produce a common baseline for development. After a brief introduction to the geographical location in focus, as well as the networks conducting community engagement and development, I will present excerpts of the process – including my own work – before concluding how being

not only there as a researcher, but right in the middle of everything, seems to increase the presence of everyday life aspects in urban planning.

The Case: Floda

In an on-going project in Floda, a handful of local stakeholders – real-estate and landowners, various associations, and the church – have joined together to develop this community around some key values. Instead of being regarded as a typical “bedroom community,” in which the nighttime population is significantly larger than the daytime population (cf. Olsson & Vilhelmsson 1997), the community wants to be associated with *health* and *sustainable food*. These were the baseline values expressed at a meeting kicking off the project in April 2012. The background was that two local entrepreneurs and real-estate owners in particular had obtained some key properties in the community center – the Floda Square and the abandoned tannery factory. By doing so, possibilities to turn Floda from a society of problems (drug dealing, violence, etc.) into one in tune with recent sustainability discourses were opened up. During approximately the last decade, a series of networks have been formed in Floda, all with the aim of joining forces around issues such as tourism and destination development, culture, and public health.¹

Floda is located at lake Sävelången, right at the mouth of river Sävån, being one of several streams connecting a greater northeastern part of the Gothenburg region with the Kattegatt Sea. The green woods and numerous lakes in the district, combined with good access to the Gothenburg labor region by both commuter train and car, make Floda a point of interest for many middle-income families with kids in search of a place to dwell.

The first network was formed in 2001. *Floda Nova*, an “association of associations”, was formed to co-ordinate the associations in the community, but also to save the bankrupt sports center, important for many young athletes. Some ten years later (2010), *Nääs & Co* saw the formation of a network of tourist destinations around Floda to increase awareness and develop new ideas to attract more visitors to the Nääs Castle, Nääs industries (being transformed into a hotel situated right at the edge of lake Sävlången), and other historical environments. Soon enough, as discussed above, some local entrepreneurs bought key properties in central Floda, and by March 2012 these entrepreneurs had acquired two thirds of the land stock in the central parts of the community (around the lake and river). Several businesses have started, the most important one being an accountancy firm. In the *Nääs & Co* network, the actors went overseas to benchmark development possibilities. Soon, there was a palette of ideas for community development. Yet, the municipality was scarcely present (although they had been conducting urban planning and also participatory workshops with the community) in a process that was due to have effects on the physical structure of the community. By the time I started to work within the process, this was about to change. The mu-

nicipality wanted to conduct an architect competition for central Floda to get in tune with the local entrepreneurs, and fulfill some of the municipality ambitions of a denser community, an increased population, and thus an increase in tax base. Furthermore, Lerum municipality (to which Floda belongs) has the ambition to become Sweden's leading environmental municipality by 2025. Obviously, this is a context with many high ambitions.

Naming and Framing in Floda

I was engaged in this project as a consultant with a theoretical and empirical knowledge of everyday life and narratives in urban development. During the first meeting with the entrepreneurs who were in need of my knowledge and experiences, one of the key entrepreneurs said, "we have hundreds of ideas, but with which should we commence? We don't know if ours match what the citizens need and want, we need your help."

After the meeting, we took a walk between the project facility (in the local bank office, actually in the vault) and the tannery, a distance of some three hundred meters. During this walk the most important sites and estates of the community were visited. All of the involved actors were introduced by the two leading entrepreneurs, who gathered the group to discuss ideas and organizational strategies for re-development. In my case, I was introduced as a "Doctor of Ethnology," "a specialist when it comes to urban life," as one of the actors put it. This walk was not a one-time occasion. As soon as a new actor (i.e. change agent) was enrolled into the process, or if a temporary guest was present, who might have been asked to join a meeting to contribute with certain knowledge, *the walk* was conducted to present significant sites and people to the participants. During my first twelve months in the process, there have been around ten such walks of "naming and framing" (cf. Czarniawska 2004). Naming refers to the sense that these walks were occasions to tell the "story" (of how the association of associations was formed to jointly manage the sport center; how the local square and the tannery was bought and so forth). I.e. of how and why this re-development had begun and what values might guide the process onwards. Naming the important actors in this way was a matter of trust and responsibility; being defined as in charge of some part of the greater whole made those involved feel valuable. Framing concerns how these walks were also occasions to test the story; how do different ideas come across to this group? How do others receive these ideas? What do they in turn add to this frame, to the narrative with which to demarcate a plausible trajectory for the Floda future?



Garveriet and Floda square, the two most important stops at the narrative walk
Photos by Linnea Carlsson

Of course, “doctor of ethnology” is not how I present myself very often (although I do use the title if the implied academic credentials appear to make people more attentive to what I will discuss). On one occasion, some months into the process, I was interviewed about how I professed myself and what I do in Floda. The local newspaper asked about the parts of the process that involved citizen participation, being my field of expertise and responsibility. In answer to one of the journalist’s questions about who was really responsible for the whole process, I declined responsibility. I said that, “I’m only a hired consultant in charge of Cultural Planning.” The following week, during yet another walk with a new actor to be enrolled into the process, one of the key persons made a humorous, yet correctional remark, introducing me to the newcomer. “You know, Joakim is very special. There are many consultants possible to hire, but he’s quite unique, being an ‘ethnological doctor.’ How many can say that?” This was not a point meant to amuse (although it did create laughs), but directed to me in particular: “don’t forget that you are important in this process, that you have your responsibility in it.” My academic background and affiliation was used in the walks, to give the process I was managing particular importance. Here, I was not only “a consultant,” but also someone that knew what he was doing. Of course, this meant that the process, in particular the part of it that concerned the participation of the public, generated certain expectations.

I was engaged in this case of sub-urban development because a particular method had been picked up by the entrepreneurs as suitable for a process of citizen participation. *Cultural planning*, developed some decades ago by urban sociologist Lia Ghilardi, has been in use around the world to locate the “soul” or “cultural DNA” of a place. This is a method of mapping cultural resources in a community: charting ideas, people, networks, buildings, places, and processes. It is a tool with which one can generate a big picture of the possibilities and problems of living of and in a place. Defined by tourist researcher Melanie Kay Smith, “cultural planning aims to transform physical space and is technically about the way in which governments or planners integrate cultural resources into the everyday lives of people” (2010: 12). Knowledge about citizens’ everyday lives and how these lives affect urban environments in terms of needs for housing, travel and leisure is seen by urban planners as “social sustainability” and is increasingly on politicians’ and various civil servants’ minds (cf. National Board of Housing, Building and Planning 2010). Reading Larsson & Jalakas, it is obvious that there is both a need for someone to *write culture* (Geertz 1973), i.e. to more tangibly account for the every-day lives of people in urban environments, and to structure and interpret these accounts. The every-day life of people living, working, and associating in Floda needs to be written and readable for the architects about to enter a competition concerning new constructions in the central parts of the town, as well as for the urban planners and the building committee politicians. Not least for the local entrepreneurs.

Planning with Culture

The work of writing the everyday life cultures in Floda began with a qualitative questionnaire, asking just short of one hundred persons how they experiences everyday life in the community. What places were people using and why? What were the significant qualities of life? What could they do themselves to make Floda a better community? How could they explicitly engage with the process of urban development (beyond being consulted about a more or less finished suggestion at the end of a design process)? The questionnaire was handed out during several public events, such as the Spring Festival (eg. a local festival to meet the spring) or during church meetings. Along with the questionnaire, local business and association representatives were gathered to express needs and ideas. Also, young people were competing with each other about the “best new idea” for Floda in an “innovation camp,” arranged in cooperation with Ung Företagsamhet (“young enterprising”). Another method used was the study circle, where 18 citizens explicitly *wrote culture* in assignments that required them to describe the every-day life in this society. Some of the participant expressed themselves through photography (see below). All these activities were later collected and the every-day life narratives of Floda gathered in a printed booklet. Primarily, this was targeted to the competing architects. In this competition, a distinct objective was included that concerned theses narratives. In the end, the winning competitors expressed the values collected in visual ideas for new places, indoors and outdoors, but also as an increased access to the highly appreciated – but inaccessible – Sävelången stream.



“Everyday-life in pictures” Photo by Alf Ronnby

After this part of the development process was completed, and as the local actors were waiting to see how the work should be organized in order to move from sketches to plans and then to a built environment, I organized a weekly seminar series. The idea was to keep the discussions going but also to increase the level of knowledge amongst the actors involved. These seminars gathered between 10 and 150 visitors, including various experts as researchers, benchmarking examples from other municipalities in the region but also well-renowned national examples of development projects characterized by cooperation.

At time of writing this article, the municipality and the local stakeholders are discussing how to organize the work of fulfilling these architectural ideas into actual buildings and environments. Through the explicit use of Jalakas and Larsson's research findings in these discussions, I have been stressing the importance of a long-term commitment to the ideas gathered from the citizens we have worked with. This includes the need for someone to recount the citizen's needs and wishes all the way to the *res judicata* of the detailed plans. This context is only one example of a knowledge void in a Swedish planning system, increasingly characterized by ambitions and objectives that have to do with quite different ontologies than those inherit by definition in *physical planning*. This is a space waiting to be claimed by ethnographers and others. As O'Dell & Willim point out when they discuss how to claim such places, "the ethnographer must combine interview and observation techniques [...] with managerial skills and competencies not usually associated with ethnographic work" (2011: 7). By a "switch in register" (O'Dell & Willim 2011b), i.e. by applying methodological skills as well as ontological and theoretical competence gained through research, I can make materials become "convincing." In both this example of doing applied ethnography, as well as in other cases where I work with knowledge of the everyday life of geography, using texts alongside images, photos, maps, and charts increase the possibility of setting a new frame for urban development. This is a frame in which peoples' lived experiences, rather than general urban development ideals such as "densification" or "mixed-use city," make the difference for lives in urban environments. Maybe this "switch in register" towards ethnographic juxtapositions might open up a "small change", paving the way for changing the bigger picture (cf. Hamdi 2004)?

Co-op: Doing Research with/IN the Community

As an ethnologist, one has the ability to, as sociologist Les Back puts it, record the life passed in living, to listen to complex experiences of people's lives (Back 2007). The longer I work in this field of urban development, both as a researcher and a consultant, the more I have moved from a typical urban studies-inspired critical reading of policy formulations, planning documents and public discourse around planning projects, to a position of using research knowledge to fill a

knowledge void, situated right in the middle of theory and practice. During the last couple of years, municipalities – having the planning monopoly as at least a potential policy instrument – have been paying more attention to the social aspects of the three sustainability dimensions (although, as discussed by Dempsey et al. (2011), conceptual confusion occurs and “social sustainability” is less frequent than for instance “social capital” or “sustainable community”). This has opened up a need for tools and approaches with which to record and analyze the everyday life experiences of citizens, associations, business and politics in cities, regions and municipalities. Having developed some such methods of my own (one being the “Everyday-life mapping”) and trying out others available in various geographical contexts and planning scales for some years (like Cultural Planning), I have become reflexive in regards to what competence *ethnology* contributes with in processes of urban transformation. To me, the critical perspective inherent in urban sociology (i.e. for instance the works of Zukin, Harvey and the likes) is difficult to translate into practical processes of urban transformation. The ethnologist wants to *be there*, and I find it almost impossible to be there and *distant* at the same time.

The appointed trust, as discussed earlier, made me think about the value of the profession and the theoretical toolboxes with which I could manage the *social dimension* in urban planning and development. As discussed by Hartmann:

researchers in construction management constantly refer to the applied nature of their discipline in scholarly publications by highlighting the benefits of their conducted research for the industry. Yet, practitioners often find it difficult to access the relevance of the generated knowledge for their every-day working practices (2013: 25).

This, Hartmann argues, is the result of construction management research being overtly positivistic and generalized – whilst the actual processes of construction is complex by nature. It is likely that researchers occupied with urban everyday life would claim a similar stance. And my experience after seven years of consulting is that urban planners need interpretation of research findings – i.e. someone making research findings *usable*, tangible. What they need is a *cultural broker* (cf. Mosse & Lewis 2006), someone with access to important knowledge (the everyday lives of people in the city, in this context) *and* skills of how to use that knowledge to direct the planners and politicians to certain decisions and methods. This gives ethnography an intrinsic possibility to:

bring fresh insights to the social processes of policy, offering ‘methodological deconstructionism’ that draws attention to the nature of policy language (or discourse) that reveals how particular policy ideas – governance, participation, civil society, fair trade or gender equality – work to enroll supporters (Mosse & Lewis 2006: 15).

Referring to Latour (2000), Mosse & Lewis actually pinpoint the ethnographic task of describing how complex realities of actors and actions, of needs and ideas, of desires and hopes intertwine in (urban) development processes.

Hartmann argues for the ethnographer becoming a “broker” in a particular process: “In other words [ethnographic researchers] become community members with defined roles.” (2013: 128). In the case discussed in this essay, I position myself – and am positioned by others – as the “tiny viewer” (cf. Simon 2010), the observer of the very localized processes *and* the narrator of the everyday-life in Floda. Is it a problem that I am schooled in the art of writing culture (cf. Marcus 1973), but also bred by a discussion concerned with research reflexivity that characterized Swedish ethnology during the 1990s and onwards (cf. O’Dell 1999)?

It might be, if your stance is that it is important for research to keep its distance from the object of study to maintain *objectivity*. But, if it is important that the knowledge produced within research becomes a part of society in a wider sense, it might instead be problematic to stay *too* detached from the object(s). The participation described in this essay could be discussed in terms of transgressing the formal linear planning process, it is a “boundary interaction” (Leino 2012), a social interface from which a community of practices arise to produce mutual learning (Wenger 1998).

In the introduction to the English translation of Michel Foucault’s perhaps less known work – *Death and the Labyrinth* – James Faubion describes Foucault’s writing style as mimicking that of Raymond Roussel. Roussel was a poet whose perception and descriptions of common artifacts such as a souvenir pen were expressed in a series of poems. These poems amazed Foucault so much that he wrote a book about him. As Faubion comments, Foucault liked Roussel’s work to the extent that he almost “seems to dissolve into Roussel” (Foucault 2004: xi). What if you, in your ambition to account for the everyday-life of a particular context and in using that very field’s own vocabularies in the attempt to “stay on the ground” and not jump to conclusions. (cf. Latour 2005), become part of that field or context? For Jane Simon, writing a commentary article on Foucault’s passion for Roussel, there is no problem if you really want to take part (in the lives affected by urban planning, in my case), because “what could be more proximate than dissolving into a subject” (Simon 2010: 10)? Is it possible to be close and yet critical?

Critical proximity is possible – in varying degrees of nearness – when seeing and reading, looking and writing are placed on the same level. (...) Proximity as a practice of looking is a form of scrutiny crucial for critical practice.

(Simon 2010: 19-20)

In my practice as a consultant, some problems have emerged more evidently than others. One thing is peoples’ distrust in public dialogues in general (cf. Strömberg & Forsemalm 2012). Since this is the primary procurement in my practice as a consultant, it is important to build a credible environment around public dialogues and stronger connection between these and the policy they set out to guide. The more I step away from academic objectivity and distance to engage in processes in which I am involved, the more trust I gain – and possibilities. One possibility

obvious to me is to stay in the processes for a longer period of time, making it possible for “social issues” to stick better to processes of urban physical planning.

I do not want to be a creep. I want to get in on the action and use my research competence – foremost the ability to create qualitative knowledge usable in and for policymaking and real urban planning. I want to be an agent in this community of practice. And if that means being less welcome in research communities, than that is, to paraphrase Bruno Latour, the full cost I am willing to pay (Latour 2005). However, I don’t think this move is particularly costly, after all there are research centers already, such as Mistra Urban Futures in Gothenburg, based on a *transdisciplinary* approach (cf. Doucet & Janssens 2011), where relations between research and practice is created. Discussions such as the ones addressed by O’Dell & Willim, as well as Graffman and Börjesson’s (2011) constructive considerations upon the use of ethnographic tools in business settings, point towards an interesting future for “creepy” ethnographers in search of a new relation.

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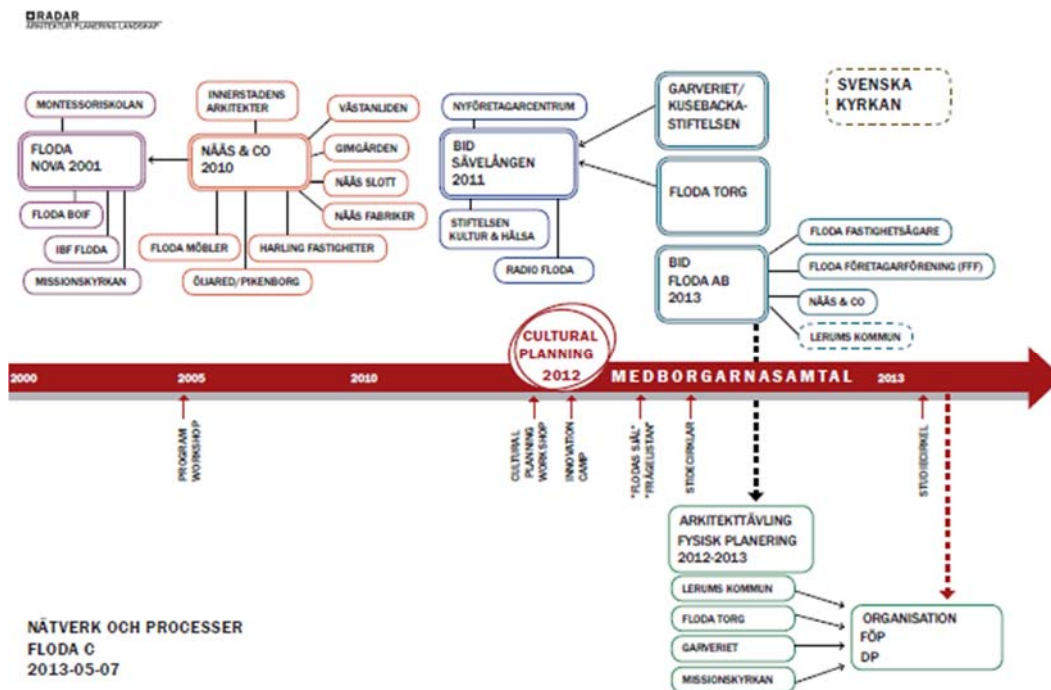
Notes

¹ See the appendix for an image overview.

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Appendix: Actors, networks and processes in Cultural Planning in Floda