

Artisans, Alcoholics and Artists: In Search of Descriptions of Experimental Ethnographic Realities

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Abstract

In this article we aim to present three kinds of artistic-ethnographic projects in a way to provoke reflection about creating experimental ethnographic realities and searching for new languages of their description. Starting from a very neutral project, this article passes through a provocative fake business and ends with an action that is quite controversial in ethical terms. First, we describe the „Work Culture” project in the town of Lublin, Southeast Poland which was realized by the „Field Collective”, a group of artists and anthropologists, and conducted in a place like railway station district. The Collective undertook attempt to learn the craft from the local artisans and to create meeting situations that were revealing the embodied, manual knowledge of the performed work. They used film as a visual tool but not as the point of coming up, but it has accompanied them from the beginning, influencing the encounter and bringing a new conditions for ethnography. Second, we present a description of the Tear Dealer, a project conducted by the artists Alicja Rogalska and Łukasz Surowiec, in the town of Lublin of Southeast Poland. In this case we show a kind of faked, new-business set in an impoverished urban district as a particular artistic-ethnographic trap designed for producing the moment of slowing down faced an unexpected emotional work. Third, we draw on the „Outpatient clinic” project that was at the same time an artistic and research project, a showcase and a prototype of action in which the artist, Łukasz Surowiec, created the situation of meeting of actively drinking alcoholics, anthropologists, artists and casual passerby. In these three cases we propose a new theoretical-descriptive framework to the experimental research situations that have been revealed, especially while facing an unexpected emotional work, the unplanned expressions, interventions and experiences. Through this, we also show how artistic experiments with visual and audio-visual methods influence ethnographic perception, and how the films, pictures and recordings used during the project have become an inseparable part of the situation.

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Keywords

Experimental collaboration, affective turn, socially engaged art, devices, traps.

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In this paper, we present three kinds of artistic-ethnographic projects that provoke reflections on the creation of experimental ethnographic realities and seek out new languages to describe them. Starting from a very neutral project, this article passes through a provocative fake business and ends with an action that is quite controversial in ethical terms. Through this, we would also like to show how artistic experiments with visual and audio-visual methods influence ethnographic perception and courses of events. The films, pictures and recordings used during the project have become an inseparable part of the situation, which in one project turned out to be almost transparent to the participants, while in others it generated new meanings. Continuing in this direction, we unfold these three cases of artistic-ethnographic endeavours in order to show how experimental research situations can be revealed while facing unexpected emotional work, unplanned expressions and social experiences.

Through these projects, our aim is to show our research experiences and examples of situations related to concepts of experimental collaboration (Estalella, Sánchez Criado 2018), ethnographic conceptualism (Ssorin - Chaikov 2013), and a sort of ethnographic "affective turn". From the very beginning, this scenario has been quite complex. The image of an artist entering any kind of peripheral zone, like an anthropologist in Hal Foster's vision (1995), is full of either ethical or conceptual contradictions, as well as methodological doubts. Likewise, the strategies for producing artistic work in such environments remain uncertain, and there is a strong attempt to criticise and rebuild the model for acting and working with a certain group or social environment often already described as unprivileged or silent. The important element of this image resembles the doubts cast on the vision of anthropologists coming into the singled, disconnected field and giving access to the worlds of the (subaltern) other, which has been extensively criticised within the field of anthropology (Marcus 1995, 1997; Gupta, Ferguson 1992). The loss of the objective of revealing a subaltern perspective and following global, interconnected spaces of interests, dependencies and connections was one of the main points in Marcus's development of multi-sited ethnography. Thus, to a significant degree, the social sciences themselves have at the same time moved away from the position of conventional observers of events and descriptors of subaltern environments, instead absorbing the tools of action and engagement with increasing intensity, including the tools of art-based practices in particular (Alexander 2005; Wright and Schneider 2006, 2010). In this way, a working knowledge is built up, akin to a "practiced philosophy" or phronesis (Carr 2006). To give one example, this has led to a situation in which the artist and the ethnographer have started to work together in the new paradigm of the ethnographic scenario, providing a chronotope for coming encounters (Calzadilla, Marcus 2006). They do not merely record any closed, ready-to-describe cultural experiences, but rather have started to actively co-produce them. In more concrete terms, this process is more about

co-producing the very specific ethnographic situation, which may be called “ethnographic devices”, as it was proposed recently by Adolfo Estalella and Tomás Sánchez Criado (2018), such as co-organised events, co-produced books, authorisation protocols, the circulation of repurposed data and possible others. First of all, they understand the term to refer to a variety of “creative interventions” in which “the traditional tropes of the fieldwork encounter (i.e. immersion and distance) give way to a narrative of intervention, where the aesthetics of collaboration in the production of knowledge substitutes or intermingles with the traditional trope of participant observation” (Estalella, Sánchez Criado 2018: 2).

Thus, “fieldwork is not what it used to be”, to repeat the phrase from James Faubion and George Marcus work (2009). However, on the side of social sciences and social anthropology, the move towards social engagement and close collaboration while doing research was established much earlier in an idealistic form by Sol Tax and Kurt Lewin, in the 1940s-1950s. Then, decades later, it was rapidly developed in the late 1980s, when the poststructuralist turn lost its energy and textual experiments begin to be conceived as no longer capable of providing real, profound social change. Radical engagement and an attempt to go beyond the rigidity of post-structural social theory (Fals Borda 2006; Reason, Torbert 2001) exploded when enacted within various communities: experimental social research was to be produced in order to create a new kind of knowledge emerging in contact with people (a form of knowledge redirected along the way of social projects). This knowledge, coined along with the actions and collaborations, began to be conceived as much more adequate for revealing any already existing and ready-to-access cultural content. Therefore, the most important moment in this consideration lies in the jointly artistic and anthropological quest for a new form of acting and narrating the story under the conditions of an emerging scene with social, economic and political tensions. This is precisely our point - the meeting of the other is no longer only a matter of initiating “qualified” or “intimate” contact with people first and foremost. It is rather a starting point for developing a new scene for future ethnographic (or artistic) events, conditions, and fields of knowledge. In this sense, the moment of encounter with the world of the other understood as the creation of a space for alternative, dynamic inter-cultural, inter-social contact was brought to the light by Holmes and Marcus (2005, 2008) when they constructed a slightly different sense of the ethnographic endeavour as “para-siting fieldwork”. The idea of a field that could be co-produced with the others forced them to leave behind the Malinowski’s vision of a dyad, typified by a detached community and an anthropological visitor-insider. In this regard, they were engaged in epistemic process while creating the field, and, together with the ethnographers, they opened up several new spheres within the ongoing cultural and structural processes.

We could also say that, in this sort of setting, it is primarily the ethnographer, who now acts as the artist-ethnographer, who intends to meet otherness and engage in something like real life-like activity, doubling its ontology and opening the real-life activities in a 1:1 scale, as posited by Stephen Wright (2013), who called for the reconfiguration of art practices in order to go beyond the enclosed, conceptual world of art-related practices (“conceptual edifices”). Therefore, what we intend to do in this work is to go further, towards possible, experimental meetings of the different fields of creation, together with the people addressed, the artists or the anthropologists. At the same time, we aim to move back in some way to the moment of experimental “replaying the field”, as it was in Richard Schechner's and Victor Turner's laboratories, by repeating Turner’s statement that perhaps “we should not merely comment on ethnographies but actually perform them”

(Turner 1979: 80). Thus, by exploring these experiences, we argue that using a certain approach in both artistic and ethnographic situations enables us to step beyond the fiction of achieved social intimacy, and beyond the image of an outsider easily getting inside any kind of the local life. Instead, we argue that a certain effort was made to initiate the very specific encounter, and also that ethnographic work, the artistic project, and the participation of the people addressed jointly opened up a certain common field of emotional work, and a series of mutual probes performed by the participants on each other and on their imaginaries.

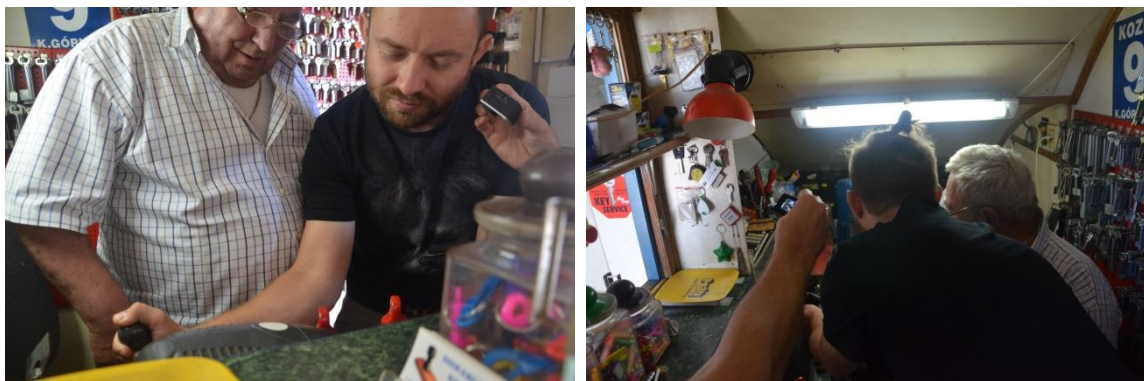
“Work Culture”

The first project analysed here is “Work Culture”, which was carried out in the town of Lublin, Southeast Poland, by the “Field Collective” group. Established by Tomasz, among others, it mainly consists of ethnographers and community artists who have been conducting field studies together since 2005. After several years, the work expanded into a kind of “experimental collaborations”, i.e. collaborative actions realised together with invited, usually critically-oriented artists, who are well-established in the Polish art scene. It is important to note here that their projects initially took place in a cluster of villages located in central Poland, in an area of unprofitable, small-scale agriculture with high rates of local unemployment, and it was only later, after a break period, that another project was undertaken in the town of Lublin, southeast Poland. Specifically, the area in question was a railway station district in which the Collective had not previously worked before, and it did not have enough time to get to know the field site thoroughly and ethnographically. The Collective only engaged in a short research period before starting the action, which required several days of preparation. Then, a week involving acting, performing and conducting various audio-visual experiments combined with community-art projects was launched in late August of 2016. As well as entering into venues characterised by urban facades and old tenement houses, the group of artists-ethnographers entered the neighborhood seen immediately after leaving the station. 1 Maja Street is full of old buildings with hidden courtyards and outbuildings home to offices where people can buy insurance for their family in case they “suddenly die or fall sick”. It is a place with a high turnover, where cheap flats are pawned for a monthly pension, and where many service-points are located together with shops trading in used mobile phones, “no-licence” guns, tobacco, e-liquids, e-cigarettes and – reportedly – designer drugs, too.

During the project, the Field Collective carried out several actions related to work and its mundane materiality. The services and shops were thoroughly counted, catalogued, and then printed together with photographs on long, carton strips. Conversations, interview excerpts and monologues by women working in the service-points and shops were then collected and transformed into a one-hour public performance held in the middle of the street. However, we are especially focussing on the third project, which was devoted to craftsmen and artisans who their businesses in ground floor offices and basements along the street. The idea of the project was to undertake one-day attempts to learn the craft from the local artisans, and thus to create meeting and something resembling “ethnographic situations”. Working in a team, Sebastian Świąder, Paweł Ogrodzki, and Tomasz decided to use film as a visual tool, not as the point of coming up, but as something that could accompany the situation from the beginning, as it is usually proposed in “action research” methodologies (Carr 2006; Fals Borda 2006; Reason,

Torbert 2001). It was intended as a tool for influencing the encounter, bringing about new conditions for ethnography, and provoking accents that differently unfolded. They started to film the physical, concrete work of the craftsmen, namely a carpenter, a shoemaker, a fortune-teller, a mobile phone e repairer, and a locksmith.

As it turned out, all of the encounters revealed the embodied, manual knowledge of the work carried out. This praxeological, embodied domain was broadly opened in that sense. During the filmmaking process, they paid special attention to filming the hands of the artisans, as well as their own hands (while acting as apprentices), from up close, while also listening to the craftsmen and conducting a conversation and an interview. The manual knowledge seemed to largely exceed the vocabulary and the words that both parties were using, especially when the artisans tried to explain the movements of their palms and fingers using words. "There's a guide down here," one locksmith said, "and, right here, you enter that guide...[...] Yeah, and you screw it in. And you screw it in. And now you take... the other one also into the guide too, because there is one here, too. And now into that... They have to be... [...] To be even. And you screw it in. You turn the machine on. You un..., like that, [...] Then it's... the spacing is such that if you place this here..." What is more, the situation was arranged in a very straightforward, provisional way, in which the filming was not preceded by any interviews, ethnographic talks, or biographical monologues. The interaction was usually led with the question "Would you like to be filmed while collaborating with us and teach us how to use our hands for that job?" After a while, when the filmmakers had received consent, they immediately started filming with a "Go-Pro" camera, focusing on the hand movements of the craftsman and the apprentice, with another one directed at the whole stage of workshop (recording the scenario of "apprenticeship learning"). Surprisingly, and contrary to some initial fieldwork experiences on 1-Maja street, in which establishing good relations with people as informants proved very difficult, the situation was quite different and comfortable for the whole team, including both the filmmakers and the artisans. Both parties felt quite confident in their roles, even when they were acting in front of camera. One could say that, thanks to the concrete goal underpinning the collaboration, i.e. the filmmaking, a certain frame was constructed in which the interaction could develop in a very effective and dynamic way. What is more, dense ethnographic data produced with each instance of filming ended up in the background, as the situation of filming and explaining the craft and movement led to wider stories about the place, biography and micro-level socio-economic condition. In particular, the talks with the locksmith collected during the film opened up especially broadly to include his accumulated memories about past times and setting up his business. "Before," he said, "I worked at the brickyard, in a car factory, doing various things. I've got regular customers here and not many new people. They replace frames on 1 Maja Street, so I've got business. They copy the keys. The housing cooperative does this and that, so I've got customers. I don't know - as long as I can walk and I can see something I'll be doing it..."



Work Culture, Lublin, 2016 Photo. Tomasz Rakowski

The “Tear Dealer”

The second project, “Tear Dealer”, was created by two artists, Alicja Rogalska and Łukasz Surowiec, and also took place in the town of Lublin, in the same urban area with relatively poor standards, full of various petty shops, service points, pawnshops, and loan sharks. The Tear Dealer was designed with the aim of discovering what would happen when people were offered money in exchange for their tears. According to the project description, the people took their tears there to sell them, as if they were selling some precious treasures in a pawn shop or a gold dealer’s. Just like in any proper business, there was an advertisement in the window that read “100 PLN for 3 ml of your tears*” - with the caveat: “exclusively cried on site.” The artists intended the project as a real, professional reality that provides employment, creates “some kind of a business” and pretends to be something typical and routine, such as a bank, a barber shop, or a beauty parlour. Indeed, it was treated just like venues in the neighborhood, like the mobile phone dealer or pizzeria.

The artist compared their venue to a waiting room, a chapel, and a para-religious space, where the social “bitter cry” can be bought. The project was supposed to make no sense, but at the same time be something very real and rooted in emotion, and, as such, make perfect sense. They created something that escapes definitions, a “shifted” space (they described it as a “mirage”). Tear Dealer was cheating – it was paying for something unreal and unbelievable with entirely real money. The lamentations, memories and even jokes were therefore also very much real. Still, the situation demanded completion and thus forced participants to enter the improbable and to face their emotions.

Tear Dealer was therefore created to bring about a fairly artificial situation, namely the fake business, but which was also very likely to be real; as in the notion of ethnographic conceptualism proposed by Nikolai Ssorin - Chaikov (2013: 8), through the concept of buying tears, the action generated “ethnographic situations” and in a sense set the scene for carrying out an ethnographic study. Tomasz, who accompanied the artists, was therefore able to follow the action and conduct some interviews. However, this was only possible thanks to the previously established environment, which was brought to life along with the concept. In that way, the anthropologist could study something that had not existed prior to the performed project. He stepped into a situation that, to cite Ssorin - Chaikov, “precisely manufactures the social reality that it studies” (ibid.). To put it in other words, this kind of action produces some sets of relations that only exist when there are people to participate in them, and this is the kind of art that, to use the words of Liam

Gillick (2000: 16) "is like the light in the fridge. It only works when there are people to open the fridge door". Yet, one may ask, what kind of "opening of the fridge door" occurred in the Tear Dealer project?

This is precisely the crucial point we want to make. The project somehow restored the tears to the people, in the sense that it opened and provoked a series of slowing down moments. Both the participants, the artists (and anthropologist) were suddenly stuck in a certain space and time. What is more, the tears - as the artists also said later on - made people unsure about how to behave, and in this way, they caused social forms to disintegrate, and also effaced a weird kind of community. Still, as it turned out after a while, the participants were the ones creating it, no less actively than the artists. They launched the business, got accustomed to it, and made it natural. They calculated the amount of money they can get for a given volume of tears, competed to cry as much as possible, and shared tips and tricks - rubbing onions, using camphor oil or nasal sticks, blowing into each other's eyes. Children from the tower blocks in the nearby Bronowice district pulled on their neck hairs and cried on cue. People laughed and joked in order to make themselves cry. Couples looked into each other's eyes. Some listened to music or called their long lost loves to feel the emotions, to provoke crying. In this way, the project created a situation that was artificial, but also filled with the activities associated with intimacy and weakness, as well as the participants' biographical perspective - and their individual actions - jobs, moving, renting a flat, providing for their families.

The new reality created by the project turned out thus to be unplanned and unexpected for the participants, artists, and ethnographers and thus seems to recreate a more effective field. For us, the anthropologists, this attempt to describe this whole situation opens up new opportunities of being humble to the new scope of data that can lead to redefining our field. In this way the experience brought about quasi-experimental research situation in which a certain dimension of socio-biographical reality suddenly unfolded. However, the problem is that long, unrushed conversations within the people from the Tear Dealer did not provide an opportunity for explaining or understanding the experience that the participants just had. Tomasz spent several days talking to a group of tear sellers, including both "the champions" and "the ordinary criers". Surprisingly, what happened there was something that was exactly hard to name or define, both for me and for the participants. Thus what they - or the anthropologist - were confronted with was the situation of crying and trying to answer the appropriate questions: why would we need a tear dealer? Is it about the money? Why did we cry? Was it for real? What to do with it? Even when the people arrived, they first wanted to make sure it was true that you could, in fact, cry here for money. They even showed up at the dealer for several days after it had closed. "Is it here?" they asked, in the closed shop. "Is it true? We've come from Krasnik, I'm such a wailer, that's just how I am. My husband drove me here today, and I found out about it on the internet. I wanted to check it out." "I arrived today, I think someone found it on the internet. I wanted to see if it's real..." The situation eventually stretched the boundaries of the participants' language, as it forced them to name their actions and feelings, and the affective work they did. This led to the effects of something we can call "language stretching" and "meeting the unbelievable", but everyday life in Lublin can be seen at the same time: the cheap flats on the way to the station, which house new tenants every week. In that sense, people were still bringing their problems into the Dealer's, and everyone tried to invent the dealership for themselves, to find a way to make it their own. One young man that Tomasz talked to wanted to challenge himself, to show that he was able to "go for gold". He was a strong man living in a village near Lublin, who

used to work as a guard and at a construction site. "If I don't have to hide from anyone in my village, then I can manage in Lublin, too," he said. After a while, it turned out that his family left its problems in the village and they now rent a flat on 1 Maja Street. At 20 years old, he is actually a breadwinner who takes care of his younger siblings. He has fixed up the apartment and is now pursuing a career in IT. Another participant, a young woman, was also trying to support her husband and kids with her internship at a candy factory. She got hired through a local public employment service. She has carried her tears within for a long time. "I needed to get it all out. I think I cried it all out the first time."

The situation that was created here could be considered by many to be awkward, a farce. Still, we would argue that this new experience also evoked the ability to be free, to create one's self beyond one's social-cultural role, following the theory of "Anyone" created by Nigel Rapport (2010). In other words, it made people do something that they might otherwise never have done before. They cashed in on their special time (emotional time) and did "something more" - they moved towards the possibility of making the "turn inward", as it is proposed in Rapports writings. It was the situation that made it possible (even if only momentarily) to extract an individual from cultural and social particularism and bring out their overall ability to "live a thousand lives". Still, as it is in Rapports theory, the cultural and social assignments, as well as social tensions, inequalities and entanglements, do not lose their presence nor the enormous impact on the individuals' lives. Thus, the entanglements in the Tear Dealer experience were a mixture of the biographical and the social, the criers' biographical perspective (individual action) and the perspective of social tensions (jobs, migrations, renting a flat, providing for a family). This path was full of focus, but at the same time it had no purpose and, as a matter of fact, it led to nowhere.. One might say it was a path no one was fully ready for.



Tear Dealer, Lublin, 2014, Photo Filip Chrobak



The "Outpatient Clinic"

The last project, "Outpatient Clinic" was created by Łukasz Surowiec, as artist known for his strong social involvement and projects made with homeless people. "Outpatient Clinic" was carried out in Poznań (one of the biggest cities in Poland), in Ratajski Square, a place known for the fact that homeless people and alcoholics can be found on the benches there. The artist created a situation that brought together actively drinking alcoholics (who do not wish or are not able to undergo treatment for their addiction), anthropologists, artists and casual passers-by. It was conceptualised as a place of work for excluded active alcoholics. In "Outpatient Clinic", the role of the patients undergoing

treatment was played by alcoholics (who were most often homeless), and the doctors were anthropologists, who conducted interviews with the “patients”. As we can read in the description, “Through the activation and involvement of active drinkers, the project is an example of a programme, in this case of research and art, that involves the people that most programmes exclude.”

The space of the “Outpatient Clinic” consisted of three rooms: the so-called waiting-room, reception and doctor’s office. After coming to the clinic and registering, each patient had the opportunity to wait in a warm waiting room¹ for an appointment with an anthropologist. “Patients” were paid PLN 21 (5 euro) for one conversation. At the beginning, the “patients” were not supposed to be informed that anthropologists were playing the roles of doctors. However, over the course of talks and consultations, the artist abandoned this concept and left the anthropologists in their own roles - as people conducting a conversation. During the five days of the project, everybody could come and talk with the participants and listen in on the conversation between anthropologist and patient, which could be heard through headphones, in front of the entrance to the “Outpatient Clinic”. This part (and also the issue of paying them) turned out to be the most ethically controversial. Local newspapers commented “The author of the project pays them PLN 21. He knows that they will spend the money on alcohol and he sees nothing wrong with it.”²

The project was at the same time an artistic and research project, a showcase and a prototype of a situation in which the artist, anthropologists, and alcoholics have the chance to meet, together with random passers-by, media representatives, friends, and acquaintances. During these days, everybody seemed to continually produce feelings, emotions and memories that became a part of a project. Albeit unplanned, each of these groups had an impact on the course of the situation, and the presence of each of them brought emotions that changed the course of much of the project, although sometimes this was done in almost imperceptible ways. In this project, we discover that this did not only concern the 21 PLN for the homeless people and alcoholics, but also relations. As one of my interlocutors said, “I only want to talk with somebody who doesn’t judge me.” The ephemeral situation that emerged during the project revealed not only the social trappings associated with the seemingly innocent, but also the language of “colonisation” that is used to describe homeless people, who are often also alcoholics.

However, even “Outpatient Clinic” was conceptualised to a certain extent before it was experienced. It was more based on an experimental collaboration between ethnographers and artists, and a large part of the project happened in an unpredictable and unexpected manner. “The project was not supposed to achieve any concrete goal,” as Łukasz Surowiec said, but at the same time was intended as something very real and rooted in the daily lives of alcoholics. The space of ethnographic-artistic experiments, assuming certain possible, conceptual ontologies, could therefore be preliminarily described as the work of producing the scenery of the ethnographic (hence the subtitle of “Outpatient Clinic” sounds right - as “the performance of Łukasz Surowiec”). In this manner, Surowiec created something that escapes definitions, a “shifted” space. In such activities, that which is

1 On the first day the artist decided to hire security firm for his own money, to allow “patients” to stay in “Outpatient Clinic” at night.

2 <http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/1.36001.20908285.placa-im-21-zl-na-alkohol-zeby-potem-ich-podgladac.html>

conceptual precedes the ethnographic. Only a certain evoked or produced reality is created behind the action, behind the initial script or scenario, as a transformed form of ethnographic conceptualism (Ssorin - Chaikov 2013). Here, this ethnographically constructed device evokes that which is social and which produces interactions, relations, connects various people and different environments - similar to conceptual art, which dematerializes and questions the frame of the world of art and non-art.

For us, it was fieldwork conducted at two different levels. At the first level, we were part of a group of anthropologists whose main task was to talk with alcoholics as a part of traditional research. The second level was based on these types of artistic activities - a kind of socially engaged art project - that produce a certain "thick reality", and thus seem to recreate a more effective field. Perhaps this kind of action refers even more to Bourriaud's "alternative production line", understood as "provisional and ephemeral structures, through which the artist models and makes present thought-provoking situations" (Bourriaud 2010: 23, 26). On the one hand, the anthropologist's attempt to describe this particular situation opens up new opportunities for interpretation, while on the other hand, it generates the need to be humble in relation to the new scope of the data, which can lead to a total redefinition of the acquirement of knowledge.

In a sense, these actions also resemble the mechanical form of a trap, which in many ways becomes a new metaphor in anthropology and the theory of art. Researchers from the borderland of art and anthropology, following Alfred Gell among others, point to devices that construct the ability to build social scenarios, building a "dramatic link" between the creator (artist) and the "users" of the created situation (spectator) (Gell 1996: 27).

The project turned out to be a kind of trap not only laid the participants, but also the artist himself, who was surprised by the course of the project, and what is important for anthropologists, who are faced with a completely new ethnographic reality, is accurate descriptions of this kind of artistic situation. All the participants were placed in situations in which their emotions were temporarily appropriated and then restored to them, but in a different way, by a form of meeting themselves.

Thus, "Outpatient clinic" was improbable, and as such had to be continuously upheld by action - both by the artists and the participants. What is more important for anthropologists, however, is that it resulted in the discovery of their role of in unexpected and quite a painful way. The project showed and embodied the role played by anthropologists whenever they do their work as being strongly and invisibly rooted in the anthropological goal, the overall reason for participation - and then described. To some extent, it could be conceived as a protective, "anthropological armour". What happened in "Outpatient Clinic" was not only the meeting, and a difficult form of participation, but the project also somehow disarmed the anthropologists and left them morally naked in relation to the venue, the people and the whole spectacle, as the situation was initially called by Surowiec, the artist. The stories we heard, and the situation we took part in, caused a certain inability to "shake off" the dirt from the work and go further. Rather, we needed to do something to deal with this discomfort, the affective (unbearable) load we both experienced simply. It was not only a question of psychological support, which we very much lacked, but moreover a deep crack in our previously held self-identity as "anthropologists 24-hours-a-day". Suddenly, we found ourselves stripped of a kind of "ethnographic armor" we were wearing, and, by entering that role, we simply became able to see its weight.



Outpatient clinic, 2016, Poznań, Photo Tomasz Rakowski

Conclusion

From the very moment in which “the artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of *situations*”, as Claire Bishop (2012: 2) has stated, but also “the audience, previously conceived as a “viewer” or “beholder”, is now repositioned as a co-producer or *participant*”, participatory and social art experiments also become examples of new areas of research for anthropologists, with great potential for new epistemic situations. In some sense, the situation put into place by the social artists works like a genie liberated from the bottle, not only re-mining the researched field, composed of lives and stories of the social, but also building the whole new world filled with life, emotions, biographies, and their rapid and ephemeral entanglements. However, that which can be seen in the case-studies described above and ethnographic studies conducted in this manner may bring dissonance and discomfort to established relationships between artists, people, and anthropologists. The talks and conversations provided an opportunity to expand our knowledge and experience, yet in this type of project anthropologists and artists seemed to go beyond the well-trodden and worn-out paths of their practices, opening them up to new, painful, ethical challenges.

It seems that the first project, “Work Culture”, approached human practices and skilled, manual activities in a surprisingly comfortable way. The goal of the project carried out with our informants-collaborators was clear and precise – and probably that gave all of us fairly well defined roles, with concrete expectations. This confidence in one’s role probably caused the situation in which the ethnographic knowledge could be vaguely opened to the good relations, talks, and also all of the tacit interaction during filmmaking. What is particularly important is that the artisans seemed to be much more likely to agree

to the collaboration during the filmmaking, more likely than it would be in the case of traditional fieldwork interviews, for example. However, the situation was radically different in the second case, the “Tear Dealer”. What happened there was really hard to name, but brought about and echoed a silent manipulation. It made people do something that they might otherwise never have done before they could realise it – they cashed in on their special time (emotional time) and this “something more” that appears when your life takes a turn. The magical transformation of the feelings into something calculable, the situation involving the social, almost public, revelation of one’s physiological reaction, in the room full of mirrors, could be considered as a form of trap, a stress put on the participants in order to achieve voluntary involuntary reactions. In the third case, the “Outpatient Clinic”, the scenario prepared by the artist created a venue in which certain borders were crossed, entering into the lives of permanent alcoholics, and also the lives and sensibilities of the anthropologists who were listening. Thus, the participants, passers-by and, above all, the anthropologists, were entangled in a situation where the security of the performance was no longer provided.

It could possibly be said that artistic-ethnographic projects conducted in this manner can affect interpersonal relationships between the anthropologist and the people, and provoke dissonance and discomfort. The conversations with the last group in particular provided us with an unexpected experience, exposing us to strong, uncontrolled emotions. Yet the problem is that, as anthropologists, we were probably working in fairly comfortable, safe conditions from the beginning, equipped with our invisible armours, our professional goals, and justifications. Starting from the second project, the “Tear Dealer”, and especially the third one, the “Outpatient Clinic”, the situation changed, and the meeting that occurred was an event linking different kinds of vulnerable subjects, who were pressured into opening up to emotional work, and the most unexpected affective challenges. At that time, this exchange can be enough in itself, but we had the impression that the hope that “we can change, improve or influence something” can no longer be an excuse when conducting research. It is precisely this that, in the end, probably also gave us the more human or even more anthropological experience of sharing the space and sharing the experiences with other people. Thus, this affects co-existing relationships in these situations, and at the same time the ability to individually and jointly shape the interpretation of the place and position in which we find ourselves. It represents neither a strictly personal experience, nor a dialogue between any two subjects. It is rather a situation – an ethnographic performance, so to speak – which constitutes a form of action or a one-off transformation of the field of attention, knowledge and power. We could describe this as a particular artistic-ethnographic creation, understood not only as a form of experimental co-creation, but also as an activity that alters the epistemic or ethical standpoints and positions, and thus engages in a fairly distinct type of cultural awareness.

* *This article is based on the research project The Challenges of Creative Ethnography granted by the Polish National Science Centre, no. 2012/05/D/HS2/03639.*

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