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# PROTOTYPING AND CONTEMPORARY ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXPERIMENTS WITH ETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD

**George Marcus**

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*This paper uses two senses of the concept and practice of 'prototype' in its usual industry and design contexts to explore several experimental strategies in the pursuit and production of ethnographic research in its anthropological tradition. It is argued that the latter tradition of research requires new forms that impinge not so much on its established modes of scholarly communication – the article, the monograph – but on how it establishes the conditions of fieldwork in contemporary multi-sited spaces of complex assemblages and big projects through which ethnography operates and defines its objects of study. These forms are conceived as 'third spaces', materialized as staged occasions, studios, labs, established alongside the traditional serendipitous path of fieldwork, and involve explicit intellectual partnerships with persons who might otherwise be viewed as facilitators or subjects of research. These third spaces produce prototypes as accessible alternative products of contemporary ethnographic experiments. The author's recent experiments with collaborative research at the World Trade Organization is explored in these terms.*

KEYWORDS: ethnography; fieldwork; design; prototype; World Trade Organization; experiment; museum

A prototype is a version of a product, or a set of concepts in material form, far advanced in development, but still open to revision, experiment, and some rethinking, based, in part, on engagement with 'others' (end users, research subjects, nonexperts, amateurs) as inside respondents, if not late-stage partners. Prototyping is thus not brainstorming or an early draft or casual version of an idea, but is a formal, yet experimental treatment of something already made and developed, but not yet authoritative or ready for unrestricted, public circulation. Something like a process of prototyping provides useful terms to think about where the prominent impulse or ethos to experiment has shifted over at least the past decade in anthropologists' pursuit of ethnographic research. The example of prototyping suggests how analogous forms might be created within or alongside the fieldwork process generating its conventional written forms – fieldnotes along the way and conventional ethnographic texts as scholarly communications.

In my view, the energy or impulse to experiment in ethnographic research has migrated from innovations in purely theoretical invention as a way of creating analytics in ethnographic writing or in strategies of ethnographic narration itself (e.g., critical reflexivity has long since become canonical in ethnographic writing) to the realm of fieldwork

practices themselves that must be established not so much in traditional sites such as villages or neighborhoods, but in complex organizational environments that demand collaborations and structure all forms of inquiry within them. 'Lone wolf', quirky aspects of ethnographic endeavor, prized by anthropologists, must somehow be fit into collective, yet parallel, forms of inquiry already occurring in sites and circuits of fieldwork. Even in the most classic situations of contemporary fieldwork, before the anthropologist enters the village today (and even after she does), she meets and negotiates with diverse NGOs and indigenous movements. Experiment today is thus less about writing strategies and more about creating forms that concentrate and make accessible the intermediate, sometimes staged, sometimes serendipitous occasions of distinctively anthropological thinking and concept work, analogous to prototyping in design and engineering disciplines, in their studios and labs, that occur within the recursive circuits of multi-sited fieldwork still guided by images of moving through natural settings of social action. In effect, I am interested in giving form to a middle range of knowledge-making in fieldwork that is not tethered to the expectation of an anticipated kind of text, but that is still accessible and legible to publics at various scales. While such forms are always performative, and derivative from classic tropes of doing fieldwork in anthropology (e.g., 'being there'), whether they must be textual in any conventional sense remains an important issue for development in an era of rapidly changing digital media options (e.g., Fortun et al., *n.d.*).

In thinking about the way that theory has been used and deployed in ethnographic writing, James Faubion makes this provocative point (2011, p. 269):

A perusal of my mental card file has yielded not a single instance of an ethnographic monograph that has succeeded through the deployment of its own substantive resources alone in establishing a generative programmatic – not just an analytical category or two, but a technology of disciplined question-formation.

I argue that such a technology does exist, at least rudimentarily in many projects of contemporary ethnographic fieldwork, and while it may be evoked in textual and analytic strategies of ethnographic writing, it requires its own forms that display and organize its existence as an experimental process. And here, the modality of prototyping – as interventions alongside or punctuating the still largely individualistic pursuit of fieldwork in social environments that demand collaborative effort and participation – suggests a third space of active collective thinking that exceeds the classic inscriptive frames that articulate the ethnographic research process – between the private archives of fieldnotes and authoritative accounts in monographs or articles.

To explore this analogy further, I distinguish two varieties of prototyping, which I label for my purposes, Type 1 and Type 2, with of, course, gradations and mixes between the two in reality. Type 1 is prototyping in which its experimental passions and associated commitments to collective effort are restrained by being located in a production process that pressures or channels it toward a final version that must be successful, or authoritative, that can be marketed competitively, or that can be effectively implemented to solve a problem. Type 1 prototyping thus experiments in a disciplined mode with the realization of a result in view that affects the parameters of experimental form, with constraints on who controls the process and on the extent to which outside participants or partners can change the course of the prototype's development. Type 2 is less restrained prototyping for its own sake, or for the pleasure of social experimentation itself with

awareness of, but studied disregard for, the need to end in an official or authoritative version, a marketable product, or an implementable solution. This is the prototyping done in media labs, studios in design schools, and in art collectives, among others. Intended users and others are more imaginatively and equitably incorporated into such endeavors (see, for example, Kester's case studies, 2011); the relation of such prototyping activity to natural social settings is more fully explored than in Type 1 prototyping; and the influence of a final version or a stable form of a prototype that can circulate as an 'immutable mobile' is much less of a constraint in Type 2 experiment.

There have been plenty of examples of analogies to both Type 1 and Type 2 prototyping submerged in the histories of fieldwork projects in anthropology. However, Type 1 is probably the most common because so much of the thinking about fieldwork experience is in anticipation of eventual writing within an authoritative textual genre; however, much of the latter itself was altered or opened by an ideology of experiment especially during the 1980s and 1990s (Clifford & Marcus 1986, and on the limits of that period of textual experimentation, see Marcus 2007), rather than a Type 2 indulgence of prototyping for itself, which has lacked (and very much now needs) defined forms in or alongside contemporary fieldwork. But experimentation in analogy with Type 1 prototyping in the process of ethnographic research has largely been solitary, contemplative, in the mode of thought experiments written into the private archives of fieldnotes that give trace and materiality to fieldwork experiences.<sup>1</sup>

Michael Taussig, who has recently been reflecting on fieldnotes and their relation to the eventual writing that produces ethnographic texts makes the following ironic comment (2012):

... How many notebook keepers go on to complete their projects without consulting their notebooks? A lot, that's for sure. So long as the notebook is there in its thereness, you don't have to open the cover. There is something absurdly comforting in the existence of the trinity consisting of You ... the Event ... and the Event Notated as a Notebook Entry ... for now you can, as it were, proceed to walk upright, and maybe even on water, without having to consult the entry. Simply knowing it is there provides the armature of truth, of the 'this happened,' that like a rock climber's crampons, allows you to scale great heights.

It is in the material 'third space' of the intimate fieldnote archive – 'the Event notated as a Notebook Entry' (and the further commentaries, reflections, and developments around it) that has a spectral and ironic relationship to the eventual writing process for the public that it anticipates – where something analogous to Type 1 prototyping occurs privately in the deeply personal culture of fieldwork method. This is the established space of intense personal and imaginative experimentation in ethnographic method that I want to develop alternatively as Type 2 prototyping committed rather to social experimentation that needs its own forms or means of production and performance. These forms should be no less accessible than the eventual writing of a text within and for the established genre tradition – but they should be more subject, in the first instance, as is the case with prototypes, to their own proximate constituencies and audiences, or granular publics, as I have termed them (Marcus 2012). Only later does the 'stuff' of these prototypes in fieldwork find a reception in the discipline or the academy when it is reported through writing in the established genre form – the ethnography. This is the kind of prototyping (Type 2) that makes forms of its processes and plays more easily back upon its

constituencies as co-producers of knowledge. This was indeed the ideal and imaginary of multi-authored ethnographies and polyphonic texts, promoted during the period of 'writing culture' experimentation, but that did not resolve into stable genre forms. These practices today are not a matter of writing them into the classic, once experimental ethnographic text, but are 'techniques of question-formation', of collective programmatic thinking, evoked by Faubion, in the course of fieldwork itself for which material forms or modes of experimentation are required – in other terms, prototypes.

The kind of methodological development that I have been evoking – the possibility of experimental practices and forms on the analogy with Type 2 prototyping – is most likely to emerge in contemporary projects of anthropological research that operate subordinately and collaboratively within environments of large, often global and visionary social projects of political economy allied with large philanthropies and public research agencies in the USA and Europe that invest hope and funding in new technologies and changing knowledge forms (expert systems). They are challenged to negotiate their own project spaces, to define classic conditions and problems of fieldwork research in entangled, bureaucratic spaces of collaboration. Though this predicament and opportunity of anthropological research has emerged in specific arenas of inquiry concerning complex organizations conceived as global assemblages (Ong & Collier 2005), such as sciences and technology studies, environmental studies, the social study of finance, the study of global regimes of governance, and the joining of humanitarian causes, in fact almost all ethnographic projects today define fieldwork by embedding themselves in such environments through real or putative collaborations. How to develop one's own discrete ethnographic research, which requires practically defining fieldwork amid imposed and found relationships of collaboration and partnerships that impinge upon the intimacies – individualistic, personal and closely held – on which ethnographic fieldwork thrives, is a major challenge for anthropological research generally and certainly defines the fertile ground for the development of new forms analogous to Type 2 prototyping, which meet the challenge of preserving and coordinating independent and experimental research agendas within the larger agendas of social engineering projects of global governance and philanthrocapitalism.

A striking case for me of the evolution of fieldwork projects out of the ethnographic tradition of anthropology and within the domain of big science collaborative projects is the recent and prolific research career of the anthropologist Paul Rabinow (Rabinow 2003; Rabinow & Bennett 2012; Rabinow & Stavrianakis 2013). While he has recrafted and reinvented the classic terms and orientations of the paradigm of ethnographic method for his own purposes (see Rabinow 2003), he has very much preserved the essential character of fieldwork research while not presuming that it produces outcomes within the genre of ethnographic writing, thus creating a niche for such research to produce a more open, experimental form, analogous to Type 2 prototyping. Although the expectation might be that he, an anthropologist doing fieldwork, would or should produce ethnography as a textual outcome, he, more than any other anthropologist whom I know, has specifically disrupted this deep assumption and expectation, and thus created other possibilities with implications for anthropological methods in the direction of creating standard forms and practices of research analogous to prototypes and prototyping. In his case, he with students continually process the experiences and data of ongoing fieldwork in studio lab events. One can follow the knowledge being created alongside the fieldwork as it unfolds. It is less clear what kinds of conventional texts it will eventually generate. Indeed, Marilyn

Strathern, ethnographer extraordinaire, opened a sympathetic review of an account by Rabinow and Bennett (2012) of their difficult and ultimately failed research relationships within the huge synthetic biology consortium, SynBERC, with this observation: 'This is not an ethnography. We do not yet know what it is' (quoted in Rabinow & Stavrianakis 2013). Precisely!

Rabinow and his students have established a multimedia, web-based studio to produce their work. They describe the work of the studio in the following way:

The Studio serves to give initial form to experiences, proto-narratives and render them capable of being worked on further as anthropological problems. We used the Studio equipment as an instantiation of [the philosopher John] Dewey's intellectual instrumentalities with pragmatic intent. (Rabinow & Stavrianakis 2013, p. 12)

Partly because of the circumstances of (formal though not substantive) failure of envisioned fieldwork research in the SynBERC project (recounted in Rabinow & Bennett 2012), and partly through the implementation of studio events of reflection, assessment, and concept work along the way, this experiment with form exemplifies a mode of research still within and derivative of the ethnographic tradition of inquiry for which the equivalent of Type 2 prototyping is both its sustained and sufficient form of knowledge production. Through conceptual work with the notion of emergent temporality to which inquiry orients itself and locates its objects, Rabinow provides the theoretical rationales for a mode of analysis that requires continuous formulation and revision – in other words, prototyping as a form of experimentation, accessible to audiences, but without the presumption of a final authoritative form for it.

Indeed, anthropological projects like Rabinow's that I argue are characteristic of the problems and challenges of establishing the classic tropes of ethnographic research within new terrains of operation especially prominent during the first decade of the new century have been the major concern of a Center for Ethnography that I established at the University of California, Irvine, in 2005 ([www.ethnography.uci.edu](http://www.ethnography.uci.edu)). The study of collaborations and collaborative environments in which still individually organized projects of ethnographic research take shape has been a core concern of the Center's activities, as has the changing forms of scholarly communication occasioned by constant innovations in information technology. Design methods, thinking, and projects in a number of fields where they are established as core modalities, and ethnography's participation in them and its potential assimilation of their techniques to its own methodological traditions have been key concerns in the broader thematic examination of collaborative forms, ideologies, and norms that the Center has pursued. Finally, experiments with form – para-sites, ethnocharrettes, studios – in the evolution of dissertation projects in pedagogy and in advanced projects like Rabinow's, among many others, especially those that have emerged since the turn of the century, have been the Center's stake in probing the sources of adaptation, innovation, and evolution in the ethnographic method. The practice of prototyping and the prototype as Type 1 (stable and constrained by genre outcome) or Type 2 (unstable and open-ended) are apposite and useful tropes for understanding the interests of the Center, and its developmental stakes in contemporary ethnography. Yet, we have not used these terms specifically. Perhaps less rigorous than its uses in design disciplines, and less dependent on the making of literal material 'things', prototyping nevertheless evokes where most cogent forms of ethnographic experimentation emerge

in research processes under pressure to define fieldwork's own stakes in imperatives to collaborate or to negotiate particular niches in larger, if not, global social projects today.

Just as the Center was being established after the mid-2000s, I became involved in an ambitious three-year project of collaborative ethnography centered in the headquarters of the World Trade Organization (WTO) at the Centre William Rappard in Geneva. I want to use my experience of this project and my reflections on it – including a still continuing and generative afterlife of personal imaginaries of experiments with ethnographic intervention that might yet come into being – to locate, by analogy with prototyping, where experimental forms or practices come into play. These then are design imaginaries stimulated by reflection on an experience of ambitious, but flawed collaborative ethnography in a difficult environment for fieldwork and with mixed results. It provides some relatively raw case material for illustrating how ethnographic interventions on the analogy of prototyping might be built alongside or in relation to ongoing or, in this case, recently concluded fieldwork processes.

### **Collaborative Ethnographic Research at the WTO, Geneva, 2008–2010**

From January 2008 through December 2010, an international team of anthropologists, under the direction of Professor Marc Abélès of the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, and funded by the French research organization, CNRS, conducted ethnographic fieldwork at the headquarters of the WTO in Geneva, Switzerland. This research was facilitated, and indeed inspired, by the personal invitation of Pascal Lamy, director-general of the WTO, who expressed curiosity about what insights anthropological ethnography might offer about the internal dynamics of this organization at a time of perceived mixed success (notably, difficulties in completing the longstanding Doha Round of major trade negotiations) as well as internal reflection on what should or could be the extent of its concerns beyond technical support, the adjudication of rule disputes among member nations, the regulation of agreements, and the negotiation of new memberships. Were there more subtle cultural processes (of the institution itself or the member nations) and value discourses woven into the formal and bureaucratic rationalities of the organization, knowledge of which might assist planning, administration, and policy in the highly constrained practices of governance of this profoundly consensus-based and functionally narrow organization composed with formal equality of the very powerful and the very weak? What more could anthropologists add to the voluminous literature by scholars from other fields, consultants, and former officials, who have written on the WTO? We were being asked to produce ethnography, in part by the invitation and expectation of the director-general of the WTO, but in the context of the concerns of this paper, need it have been in the conventional scholarly forms – another monograph or study for the shelves of the bookstore in the Centre William Rappard?

Well, an edited volume (Abélès 2011) has indeed appeared that includes contributions of each of the 10 ethnographers who worked on the project (including myself as the only American researcher). There were unusual elements to our research, that had to do with the coordination of the scale and nature of the collaboration, but the use of ethnographic methods was largely conventional – 10 individual ethnographers as 'participant observers' pursuing their own topics and interests in this very complex organization of global governance, yet with limited, strategic functions. Despite the degree of prospective access to the workings of the organization at its headquarters, we

encountered considerable challenges. By its nature the WTO is both very public – transparent, in the contemporary language of organizational ‘good practices’ – and very secretive, in its constant rounds of diplomacy and negotiation.

In essence, our work constituted a ‘textbook case’ of the current state of the application of ethnographic methods to complex, global-scale organizations, and the everyday life of visionary governance. Yet, it is also a case for experiment, rethinking, and innovations in the anthropological culture of method, so to speak, in which the ethnography of contemporary spaces and processes is conducted. Ethnography is perhaps the premier, and ever more popular mode, of close, reflexive self-examination of contemporary institutions, organizations, and projects (thus, its appeal, in part to Lamy), but as a method, is also undergoing experimentation in the way that the application of the analogy of prototyping has revealed.

Our edited volume of ethnographic reports has been praised for its insights by WTO personnel, and monographs by individual team members might yet emerge from it. Yet, while our collaboration during the research period was cordial, and mutually reinforcing, it was minimally organized and coordinated (e.g., we had no website, and no one in the role of coordinator; we had few collective meetings or workshops). This was both a flaw and a missed opportunity to achieve certain synergies, in aid of component projects, but this lack did demonstrate in abundance the contrast between the individualistic orientation to ethnographic research in anthropology against certain advantages of deeply implemented collective or collaborative fieldwork, and an ideologically dominant ideology today of collaboration as the expected mode of social research. There were no regular on-site forums either among ourselves or of the kind that might have evolved to include some of our subjects, along with us. The development of a prototyping technique and capacity, evoked earlier in this paper, would certainly have depended on the existence of such forums. Indeed, the function of coordinated, organized collaborations, beside maintaining better communication and information flow among the diverse projects, would have been to produce such contexts for developing the programmatic frame of the research (Faubion’s ‘technology of question formation’) while the research was occurring, built up from the ground and not imposed afterward.

For my own role in this project, which focused on the challenges to governance in the director-general’s suite by such a resolutely consensus-based organization, I did conceive of creating a studio or meta-forum structured around conversations with the director-general, including members of his staff, members of our team, and invited others, and developing it into a real continuing seminar on self-defined WTO issues, defined by questions of our research and distinguishable from the other, more customary and business-like genres of meeting at the WTO – interviews, consultations, committee meetings, reporting, etc. The plausibility and opportunity for doing this was the impulse that brought us to the WTO in the first place – Lamy’s informed position that anthropology and its mode of inquiry could provide something special for the WTO. Would he participate in a continuing set of meetings – cast as a seminar of fieldwork – that would first explore our mutual stakes and conceptions about what anthropology is and might contribute, and that might of course influence the course of research on which we had multiply set out, and then would develop on from there? For me, this would be an application of the concept of the ‘para-site’ as a studio-like intervention to be built into, or alongside, fieldwork research projects, that we were evolving as an experimental form in the Center for Ethnography.<sup>2</sup> This project within the conglomerate of projects that



composed the WTO research would have established the form for a knowledge-making process analogous to Type 2 prototyping.

In collaboration with Hadi Deeb and three others on the research team, I only had the opportunity to create one event – the inaugural one – that would have defined a series constituting a para-site or studio with the intent of experimenting with the production of knowledge on the analogy of prototyping.

Lamy and his staff were willing, and we believe, understood what was intended – to build in partnership concepts and questions for the research as we proceeded. It would have taken at least two or three more meetings to establish a *modus operandi* tailored for this forum. The first and only event was promising (see Deeb & Marcus 2011). It took place in ‘The Green Room’, the chamber in the director-general’s suite used for the more intensive negotiations needed to resolve difficult issues blocking agreements. (I would have preferred the more intimate and informal venue around the conference table in the director-general’s office, but the site was changed at the last minute.) We carefully prepared our intervention according to the standard practices of meeting at the WTO (e.g., we wrote and submitted a position paper with an executive summary prior to the meeting that dealt with cultural aspects and values in negotiation that to our surprise, Lamy had read with care and a critical sense) as a lead – into a discussion about what anthropology was according to Lamy and what it might afford at the WTO. This was a very interesting and promising opening, according to the feedback that we received, about what might have been sustained. But it was too late in the life of the project, and too expensive to support, to do more. So, by the end of 2010, our Green Room seminar was a promising – to me, tantalizing – but stillborn experimental artifact of our collaboration.

### Afterlife

It could have been left at that – satisfying as an indication of how para-sites might work in contemporary complex, collaborative ethnographic research environments – if not for a subsequent invitation that I received to contribute to a volume, entitled ‘Curatorial Dreams’. Art historical scholars, critics, those who have worked in the space between anthropology and art, as I have,<sup>3</sup> were invited to create a curatorial imaginary, an ideal exhibit or installation. I saw this as an opportunity to address through the imagination an intervention at the WTO that would create a detailed schema of a kind of forum that would have the same research value and significance as the stillborn Green Room para-site, but in a different genre than ‘the seminar.’ This was an opportunity for me to explore, at least imaginatively, what I was not able to accomplish in my part of our collaborative, team fieldwork during the research period.

To explain briefly ... the museum-like halls of the WTO headquarters, the Centre William Rappard, an Italianate villa, are empty of artwork or displays except for some striking murals from the previous period when the same building was ironically the headquarters of the International Labor Organization (ILO). These murals, depicting idealizations of the nobility of labor, were covered over when the building became the WTO headquarters. An assistant to Lamy in charge of the building had the historic murals uncovered as a sly, mild act of critique. This example gave me the idea of imagining in detail the design and rationale of a set of installations, to be situated in the halls of the villa (and maybe in relation to the uncovered murals) that would address critically certain key issues of our collaborative ethnographic research with the intent of stimulating and enhancing a level of elicitation and

communication beyond what we were able to achieve during our period of fieldwork. So ... advanced ethnography by other means, in this case by curatorial artifice.

During our fieldwork, we were continually fascinated by the norms of transparency that operated at the WTO and their limits and contradictions in practice, particularly as these shaped our multiple paths of inquiry (though it was the special topic of one of our team, Lynda DeMatteo, and brilliantly pursued by her). So in my 'curatorial dream' (Marcus [In press](#)), I created a design for an exhibit that would consist of a set of large panels situated at different locations in the villa. These clear plexiglass panels or screens would be of strategically variable transparency, carefully designed to make certain aspects of what was behind the screens transparent and others less so. The 'public' for the exhibit would be those who work in and pass through the WTO building on business. Using ethnographic knowledge, learned in previous fieldwork, the curators of the exhibit (members of the team plus WTO officials recruited) would design the installation to capture the notice of passersby precisely by a calculated patterning of visibility – graded transparency – of the screens. This patterning would be designed to capture the attention of passers-by and then their curiosity.

From day to day, the levels of transparency might be manipulated to 'play' with the viewer – shifting what she saw, and thought she saw, from one day to the next. In the interest of ethnographic inquiry, past and perhaps renewed, the purpose of the installation would be to create as much conversation, gossip, and response as possible, opening comments and reflections on topics and subjects that were otherwise very difficult to elicit in conversations, interviews, and fieldwork participations. The WTO is a very quiet, discrete place, but not without intellectual curiosity and reflection. The transparency installation would be an aid to, and enhancement of, further elicitation and ethnographic communication by a material medium that poses issues surrounding transparency and opaqueness across a range of issues and subjects.

What issues and subjects? This question raises the issue of what is the material behind the screens. In originally composing this design, I used the term 'scenarios'. I could just as well, if not more appropriately, have used the term prototypes, since based on the argument of this paper, the 'stuff' behind the screens – what would elicit attention and curiosity – would indeed be the result of prototyping sessions of the curatorial committee that would meet regularly and privately to prototype and regularly modify what is placed behind the screens, depending upon observed and overheard responses by viewers. These deliberative, creative meetings would of course be of immense ethnographic value themselves to the anthropologists drawing WTO personnel into a collaborative context of thinking and making things together that they never (or only approximately) could have achieved during the period of conventional fieldwork, even if more of the 'para-site' experiments like the Green Room seminar had been attempted.

There is no space here to elaborate the nature of the prototypes (scenarios) that were imagined for installation behind the screens. In my paper, for example, the most detailed discussion is of the reverse engineering of key documents in past and recent WTO negotiations (available in open record precisely as part of transparency policies) back to working drafts – with fictionalized underlinings, penciled inside commentaries, etc. that would signal to knowing viewers – insiders all in WTO affairs – important moments of the organization. Then, there would be carefully calibrated exposures of these documents designed to capture momentary passing attention of passers-by and then more focused curiosity. The work of the curatorial committee both in structuring this installation and in

creating its prototypes, based on intimate ethnographic and paraethnographic knowing, and constantly revised by the overheard and observed responses of viewers constitutes an ideal construction Type 2 prototyping as a modality of ethnographic method.

### **From the Weltkulturen Museum to the Centre William Rappard and Back: Work in Progress**

Though I have discussed the installation design for 'Transparency Made Visible' with members of the collaborative project and even with the WTO official who uncovered the ILO murals, there is really no chance that it will be produced (on the few occasions when I have presented my Curatorial Dream paper as an oral presentation, I would receive questions from the audience inquiring how long it would be on display and what WTO reactions to it have been, though I was always careful to make its imaginary status clear!). However, I am currently in the midst of another project design, which also has stakes, like my Curatorial Dreams piece, in creating a form that, like the 'stillborn' seminar, and the imagined transparency installation, would create a form for prototyping ethnographic knowledge in relation to the fieldwork in conventional terms that we undertook at the WTO. I will conclude this paper with a brief progress report on yet another episode and opportunity to experiment with a prototyping modality in an unexpected further afterlife to our fieldwork at the WTO (here the prized serendipity of fieldwork discovery is outside its conventional bounds!).

Recently, I have been drawn into largely European debates about the functions of ethnographic museums and to what degree they need or should have a relation to ongoing projects of contemporary ethnographic research (operating now within global assemblages rather than in classic postcolonial contexts of new nationalisms and Western development). Amid these debates, I happened to visit the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt and was impressed with its programs under the direction of its director, Clementine DeLiss. For example, she has created a Labor in the museum (a physical workshop space and dormitory in an adjoining building) to which she invites artists, scholars, and craftspeople of various kinds (e.g., fashion designers recently) and asks them to select objects from the collection and to spend some days together to prototype (my term) an eventual exhibit in the adjoining Museum. Additionally, she has recently outlined a multi-year program of events for the Museum, one of the major themes of which plays on the concept of trade (the historic collections of the Museum are associated with Frankfurt's past as a trading center as well as German colonial history in trading enterprises). Not letting go of the WTO research legacy, in the wake of the Curatorial Dreams imaginary, and in effect, putting together the pieces of past ideas for experimentation, I proposed to her and to the exhibition-minded official at the WTO (who uncovered the ILO murals) to undertake a recursive exhibition/installation project that would be prototyped in the Labor facility of the Weltkulturen Museum (in early 2013) with a small and temporary exhibit, then would move to the Centre William Rappard in Geneva (in mid-2013, before the end of Pascal Lamy's tenure as director-general), for a two-week exhibition, and finally, would return to the Weltkulturen Museum (with WTO 'value-added', so to speak), for a more formal and elaborate final exhibit (with associated workshops, seminar, and publication derived from art catalog and ethnographic genres).

This project is now under way. It is likely to address Lamy's concerns with anthropology (and our differences with them, only partially explored in the Green Room para-site) that

originated the ethnographic project in 2008, through the provocative use of artifacts from traditional trading systems, housed at the Weltkulturen Museum, to develop materially insights, ethnographically achieved, about the values, ideals, and mixed realities of contemporary free-trade aspirations responsible for the founding of the WTO as an institution of global governance. Quite a ride! ... in which analogies with prototyping have been a useful means of thinking about the nature of experiment and interventions all along the way.

## Envoi

Prototyping alongside, within, or after fieldwork in ethnographic research, according to its conventional visions and virtues that are at the very core of the ethos that defines professional anthropology, thus can have quite diverse contexts and take unexpected forms. This is what experimentation, and thinking of it in the trope of prototyping, entails and offers. Type 2 prototyping produces the forms appropriate to its imaginaries and designs, without regard for or anticipation of the form that an eventual ethnographic text in the classic genre might take.

There will indeed be an eventual scholarly text, but its character will be significantly shaped by earlier versions or forms woven within and made accessible in fieldwork under a range of creative challenges to its current undertaking.

## NOTES

1. The fascinating histories of large-scale, sustained, and collective ethnographic projects of the post-expeditionary (e.g., the Torres Strait expedition) late colonial, cold war periods (e.g., the Chiapas project of Harvard and the Rhodes-Livingston Institute in Africa) are an exception to this statement. They are well-worth mining (e.g., Gluckman 1945) and critiquing for a deep history of Type 1 prototyping and experimental strategies of intervention in such sites of continuous and collective occupation by anthropological research.
2. As conceived in Center plans for this experimental form, the development of 'para-sites', alongside, or within fieldwork processes, create 'theaters' of mutual thinking and concept work among researchers and subjects of ethnography. These feed directly into the results of research, or are the results of research in process when there are media to make them accessible. As such, these forums or studios are early and developing results along the way. Such ethnography goes beyond just the understanding of subjects' 'paraethnographic' thinking in context (e.g., in the case of the WTO project, Lamy's understanding of anthropology and its value) to enlisting it as a third or adjacent space of participation in the research.
3. The exploration of the interfaces between the methods of ethnography and the investigative research practices of conceptual, performance, and installation artists has been a long-term interest of mine. As the idea of 'public anthropology' gains ground, so does the incorporation of more designed interactive practices into ethnographic research methods. There is a vibrant history of such interfaces in recent years (Schneider & Wright 2006, 2010, and especially, the overview and synthetic volumes of Grant Kester 2004, 2011), and current predicaments of constituting ethnographic data beyond the conventional ones of basic access in fieldwork encourage further experiment in the

incorporation of exhibition and performance within strategies of ethnographic inquiry. The WTO project has begun to serve as just such a medium for experiment.

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