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PICTURING PRACTICES

Visual Anthropology and Media Ethnography

GRAHAM MURDOCK AND SARAH PINK

The industrial production and everyday consumption of visual imagery have long been major areas of interest in media studies, but it is only relatively recently that visual materials produced by researchers and participants have been integrated into the research process. In promoting this "visual turn," however, enthusiastic communications researchers have tended to ignore the rich tradition of relevant practice developed within anthropology (see, e.g., Gauntlett, 2004). This chapter addresses this gap by focusing on three key areas of work in visual anthropology:

1. The production of visual materials by the researcher as part of the research process
2. The analysis of visual material produced by participants both spontaneously (domestic photography, home Web pages, and cell phone pictures) and as part of the research process (asking participants to film and photograph some aspect of their environment or daily routines)
3. Using visual imagery, in combination with other materials, to represent the results of the research

We have singled these areas out for two reasons. First, they cover the three key "moments" in the research process: collection, analysis, and presentation. Second, they are particularly relevant to the project of developing research that seeks to understand both the multiple social uses of contemporary media and communications and the multilayered, imaginative and expressive environments generated by professional and vernacular practices.

Much of the work in visual anthropology that is most relevant to ethnographic work in media studies has been produced within the last two decades and has drawn on innovations in video technology and digital media to support more flexible and open-ended forms of research practice. At the same time, it has also been indelibly shaped by anthropological encounters with visual media that date back to the discipline's formation. These engagements have provided both exemplars to be drawn on and extended, as well as working assumptions and practices to be challenged and changed.

ENCOUNTERS: ANTHROPOLOGY, MEDIA, VISUALITY

The emergence of modern anthropology coincides almost exactly with the development of the

photographic and film technologies that dominated visual production and display until the advent of digital technologies in the last decade. In 1889, George Eastman introduced transparent roll film as an alternative to cumbersome glass plate technologies. Four years later, the Lumiere brothers' cinematographe show in Paris ushered in the age of cinema. Anthropologists were immediately drawn to these innovations, seeing the camera's mechanical eye as a guarantee that visual records would be "objective," uncontaminated by subjective bias. Franz Boas began using still photography in his fieldwork among the Kwakiutl Indians of the Northwest Coast in 1894, and when Alfred Haddon and his Cambridge team set off for the Torres Straits in 1898, he insisted on taking both photographic and film equipment. He was interested not only in making visual field notes but in integrating imagery into the presentation of the results. The film footage was never worked up into an ethnographic film, but photographs featured prominently in the six volumes that eventuated from the project.

As anthropology became more institutionalised within the academy, however, research increasingly centered on note taking and "writing up." In the process, "the active use of both the camera and the cinematographe was effectively banished from ethnographic practice" or relegated to a minor role (Grimshaw, 2001, p. 25). Bronislav Malinowski was instrumental in defining the core elements of the new fieldwork practice. He took a number of photos while working on his seminal ethnography of the Trobriand islanders between 1915 and 1918 but never integrated them into either his analysis or his presentation (see Young, 1998). Early ethnographic photographs also raise questions about the ideology underpinning fieldwork practice, Evans-Pritchard's (1940) classificatory photographs of near-naked Nuer having attracted particular attention (see Emmison & Smith, 2000; Hutnyk, 1990; Pink, 2003).

In contrast, in their research into character structure in Bali, Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead set out to use visual records in genuinely innovative and open-ended ways. In 2 years of fieldwork between 1936 and 1938, they produced 25,000 still photographs and shot 20,000 feet of 16 mm motion picture film. They saw this material as central to analysing and presenting their work. Rather than regarding images as illustrations of a theory constructed elsewhere, "they considered the connections, explanations, and interpretations the photographs suggested as hypotheses to be explored further" (Hagaman, 2004, p. 4). This openness was followed through into publication, with a text that juxtaposed exposition against imagery and allowed readers to develop their own comparisons and sequences. The result, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis* (Bateson & Mead, 1942), was genuinely path-breaking but included only 3% of the photos taken and excluded film footage. As we shall argue later, contemporary digital media have made their vision of dynamic and open texts "attainable in ways they did not foresee but probably would have appreciated" (Hagaman, 2004, p. 9).

Although innovative, Bateson and Mead's work remained firmly wedded to the idea that anthropologists specialised in the study of stable communities relatively untouched by capitalism and modern technologies. Not all ethnographers shared this romance with preindustrial life, however. In 1937, the British naturalist Tom Harrison and the poet and journalist Charles Madge teamed up to launch "Mass Observation," with the declared intention of producing an "anthropology of ourselves." Harrison had earlier embarked on an anthropological study in the New Hebrides, but it owed more to adventurism than to Malinowski, leading at one point to him leaving the island on the luxury yacht owned by the Hollywood film star Douglas Fairbanks. Harrison and Madge's first major British research site, Bolton, was far from glamorous, but in constructing a portrait of city life, they drew on a wider range of sources than most anthropologists of the time. They included photographs taken by the young cameraman, Humphrey Spender. Shooting in a wide range of settings, from christenings to pubs, he produced around 800 pictures in total, almost all them "candid" shots taken with a concealed camera, a technique the team felt would catch everyday

action in its unvarnished actuality and avoid the compositional clichés of professional press photography. The original group also included the documentary film maker Humphrey Jennings. There was no attempt to integrate film into the Bolton project, but after leaving Mass Observation, Jennings did return to the city to make one of his best known shorts, *Spare Time* (1939), a record of recreational activities. Mass Observation's most important departure from established fieldwork practice, however, was their recruitment of volunteer observers and the incorporation of their accounts as an integral element in the published reports of the various studies. Their contributions were confined to notes and diaries, however. They were not asked to submit photographs.

Anthropologists, too, were beginning to bring ethnography home. After early work in Melanesia, arranged by Malinowski, the American ethnographer Hortense Powerdermaker conducted fieldwork in Mississippi and went on to produce the first anthropological analysis of media production with a book on Hollywood (1950). This interest in industrialised image making was taken up again in the late 1960s when a new generation of sociologists and anthropologists turned their attention to the social organisation of television programme production (see, e.g., Elliot, 1972). Most ethnographic work of the time, however, followed Mass Observation in focusing on the ways mass-produced artefacts and images were deployed in consumption and leisure. This was a central thread in the work coming out of the newly emerging fields of Cultural and Media Studies. With some notable exceptions, such as Paul Willis's (1978) ethnographies of youth subcultures in a British Midlands city, however, most studies fell some way short of the prevailing anthropological definition of fieldwork as requiring sustained immersion in a single setting. Rather, they drew on personal observations, often made somewhat haphazardly, or employed qualitative methods, such as depth interviews and focus groups, that involved relatively fleeting encounters with participants, sometimes confined to one meeting. Nor, despite their fascination with popular media imagery and everyday visual environments, did they incorporate either photography or film into their methods of research or presentation.

Anthropology's traditional focus on preindustrial societies was widely accompanied by an assumption that participants had no knowledge of modern media technologies. Robert Flaherty's seminal 1922 dramatised documentary of Eskimo life, *Nanook of the North,* for example, shows Nanook clowning with a phonograph record, feigning amazement. The truth was that, far from being naïve, "the Inuit were technologically sophisticated enough to maintain Flaherty's equipment" (Winston, 1995, p. 20). This assumption of ignorance became increasingly difficult to maintain in the postwar period, as former colonial territories achieved independence and employed television as a major tool of nation building. It became unsustainable as commercial satellite channels proliferated across established field fieldwork sites, such as India and Southeast Asia. This new visual environment has encouraged ethnographers working in those areas to take up many of the questions concerning consumption, identity, and media that have developed within media and cultural studies. As the subtitle of a recent anthology of this work makes clear, this is "new terrain" for many anthropologists (see Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, & Larkin, 2002). Here again, however, the focus on popular imagery and visual experience has not been matched by a concerted effort to incorporate visual media into general anthropological practice. This effort has remained largely the preserve of ethnographic film making.

Much early activity in this area was devoted to recording ways of life on the point of extinction. As publicity for the long-running Granada television series *Disappearing World* put it, the aim was to produce portraits of peoples "whose way of life was under threat from the pace of change" (Off the Fence, 2004). This emphasis on explicating the unfamiliar and exotic often produced a didactic style of presentation typified by the trilogy of Granada films about the Mursi and Kwega of southern Ethiopia, which mobilised David Turton's anthropological expertise to provide authoritative

off-screen commentary on the scenes and events filmed. As Jean Lydall, another anthropologist working in Southern Ethiopia, complained, his insistent lecturing made it "difficult to view the films from any other point of view than that offered by Turton" (Lydall, 1996, p. 2). In response, she constructed her own films around participants' own accounts, with unexpected results. As she later recounted, "I had discussed many things with them before.... I thought the women would explain things as I had come to understand them, but again and again, I was taken by surprise" as informants responded to being filmed by formulating their ideas in a much more comprehensive way (Lydall, 1996, p. 4). This potential thickening of description is an obvious attraction of incorporating film into the fieldwork process but does nothing to decentre the researcher's control over the way participants' accounts are edited and contextualised in the final presentation.

Following Sol Wirth and John Adair's (1972) path-breaking film work with the Navaho, this problem was increasingly addressed by encouraging participants to make their own productions. The introduction of easy-to-use video cameras a few years later made this an inexpensive, feasible and attractive option. Some initiatives, such as Eric Michaels's work with aboriginal communities in Australia (see Michaels, 1994) originated within the anthropological research community. Others, such as the BBC's *Video Nation* and *Video Diaries* series, were responses to grassroots demands for more access and representation within public broadcasting. In both contexts, professionals acted as facilitators rather than producers. They trained and advised participants on how to use the equipment but left the final editing decisions to them. As we shall see, contemporary visual anthropology now frequently draws on participant-generated materials in developing research and presentational strategies.

To sum up: What marks contemporary visual anthropology out as a distinctive approach is not simply its central project of building an "anthropology of visual systems or more broadly visual cultural forms" (Morphy & Banks, 1997, p. 5), but its commitment to using the full range of available visual technologies and resources at each stage of the research process—fieldwork, analysis, and representation. Drawing on artefacts manufactured within the cultural industries, participants' own productions, and researcher-made materials, visual anthropology aims to develop visually thick and open-ended accounts of everyday visual practices and visual environments. This ambition now goes well beyond film and photography to encompass art, drawing, video, new digital and visual media, and multimedia technologies, including hypermedia (Pink, 2001; Pink, Kürti, & Afonso, 2004).

Despite a rearguard action from mainstream ethnographers who continue to deny a place for film in anthropological practice (see Taylor, 1996), recent years have seen visual anthropology's tripartite commitment to visual methodology, visual analysis, and visual representation becoming more generally accepted as a valid and productive approach, both substantively and methodologically. At the same time, visual anthropology has had to respond to more general shifts in anthropological practice, particularly the rise of multisited ethnography. Although "community study" involving the researcher living and interacting with a stable group of people for a sustained time still exists as valid anthropological exercise, with some changes to its original form (see Amit, 2002), it is not currently the dominant practice in contemporary urban settings. There are good reasons for this, particularly in studies of media.

Much popular media activity is centred around the home, but as Miller (2001) points out, short of living with different families for extended periods of time, the long-term close relations formed by constant interaction in traditional fieldwork settings are simply not practicable in this context (see Pink, 2004b). Home-based research is inevitably multisited, as the researcher moves between different fieldwork encounters, with different sets of informants, behind closed doors. This stretched definition of ethnography moves anthropological practice closer to the qualitative methodological strategies developed within cultural and media studies and has

prompted efforts to draw the disciplines together (see Crawford & Hafsteinsson, 1996). At the same time, media researchers interested in exploring how audiences actively reconstruct the meanings of media texts have started to go beyond the verbal accounts provided by depth interviews and focus group discussions and begun encouraging participants to make their own productions. David Gauntlett's (1997) study, in which children 7 to 11 years old were assisted in making videos about the environment as a way of gaining insights into how they processed media materials about environmental issues, is a case in point.

This convergence of interests and methods has been given additional momentum by visual anthropologists' increasing interest in developing academic and applied projects in the modern large-scale societies that have conventionally been the principle domain of researchers specialising in communications and cultural and media studies. This move has also prompted the development of sets of visual methods more adapted to these new field sites. These new visual methods both draw on and depart from methods used in earlier anthropological studies of media.

Productions: Picturing Media Practices

As we noted earlier, the idea that an ethnographer should photograph or film events and activities performed by the subjects of her or his research dates back to the formative years of professional anthropology. Visual sociologists, too, have long been active in photographing and filming the everyday lives they study. Since the initial development of these methods, however, both theory and practice have moved on considerably. The contemporary wisdom that guides the production of images as part of research (see, for example, Banks, 2001; Pink, 2001) insists that this process should be reflexive and collaborative and that the images themselves need to be understood in terms of the context in which they were produced rather than as unproblematic representations of a social reality. The examples that follow illustrate how these guiding principles have been applied in a range of recent studies that have used photography, video, and Web-based media.

No matter what medium is employed, however, the primary justification remains the same. Visual technologies, whether still photos or moving images, allow for the recording and analysis of aspects of individual communication and social practice that cannot be transcribed onto the written or printed page without substantial reduction or loss. By capturing emotional expression, facial and body language, and spatial relations, they foreground dimensions of representation that have escaped from the prison house of language and are missing from accounts constructed solely on the basis of interview transcriptions. This is not to argue that pictures speak louder than words or that their meanings are self-evident and self-sufficient. Rather, the challenge is to work toward multimedia methods and forms of representation that combine still and moving images with participants' commentaries and researchers' analyses in ways that allow for interpretations to become more open ended. As Marilyn Strathern (2002) has noted, in doing ethnography, "you do not have to tie up all the loose ends; on the contrary, there may be data that will become a resource only from some vantage point in the future" (p. 309).

Photography

As we have seen, there is a long-standing tradition of participant observation with a camera whereby the anthropologist takes photographs as she or he (or a collaborator) participates or observes within a particular cultural setting. In their Balinese fieldwork, for example, Gregory Bateson took photographs while Margaret Mead made field notes and their interpreter translated what was being said. Although this way of working requires the consent of participants, it does not usually entail their further collaboration. They become more involved when they are asked to comment on what the ethnographer has shot and when their responses and reservations are used as a starting point for rephotographing certain

Figure 15.1 Hand Phone Use for Photos

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scenes or settings. "Shared anthropology" can impose unexpected costs, however. The French ethnographic film maker Jean Roche was called back repeatedly to reshoot an annual lion hunt because his subjects "found the footage of their kills unsatisfactory" (Bickerton, 2004, p. 62). Participant input plays an even more central role in informant-directed photography (see Banks, 2001), during which informants prompt the researcher to photograph activities, objects, or persons that have particular significance for them. However, photography is, arguably perhaps, most productively and reflexively employed in research settings where informants are themselves also active photographers.

John Postill's (in press) current research on local new media and local governance in suburban Malaysia[1] is a case in point. His fieldwork is largely with middle class participants who have access to a range of advanced media and communications technologies. They create their own Web sites and are avid users of text messaging, e-mail, video cameras, and camera phones (see Figure 15.1).

Figure 15.1 depicts a frequent practice in Malaysia: Local people photograph a local event with their "hand phones" (the Malaysian English term for mobile phone). Their expertise produces an interesting reversal of the researcher's traditional, and largely taken for granted, command over image-making technologies. In this situation, one effective methodological option is to become a participant observer who is also a cultural producer within that context. A series of digital photographs taken to support Postill's research during local public functions fed into the research process in several ways. First, they provided a detailed record of the way media were deployed in these settings, not only by professionals recording the events for newspapers and broadcasting stations but also by participants using camera phones and still and video cameras. Second, informants in the study who expressed an interest in the research photos were given copies on CD that they could load onto their personal computers. This helped cement the reciprocities on which full cooperation with the study depended. Third, the images were available to be incorporated into future presentations of the research, both in print and using hypermedia forms such as CD-ROMs and Web pages.

In contrast to the rapidly accumulating body of work on vernacular image making, anthropological studies of professional image production are rare, but the research conducted by Donna Schwartz and her team on press photographers covering the Super Bowl, the pivotal game in the

American football season and a major articulation of the core values of the national culture, illustrates their potential (see Schwartz, 1993). The study was based on the idea that knowing how news photographs are put together at a practical level was likely to produce fuller and better informed analyses of how these images are made to promote specific meanings on the page. Adopting a visual anthropological approach, the team members participated in the production process, gaining press passes and doing their fieldwork as participant observers with the press pack as they set about constructing a particular vision of the event. As well as learning the process that the press photographers engaged in, Schwartz and her colleagues produced their own set of "critical" images that responded to the "official" version. By providing visual demonstrations of the selective attention and omissions that characterised reporting of the event, the team added a significant new element to the standard critique of news bias.

Video

Visual anthropologists have conventionally used video to produce a visual record of events and activities during fieldwork that can later be used as a resource for analysis or as a basis for the production of ethnographic documentaries. As the relatively stable communities addressed by traditional ethnographic techniques have been steadily eroded or dismantled, however, recent years have seen new uses of video develop as part of a more general effort to devise techniques of enquiry better suited to the study of everyday life in societies experiencing rapid social and cultural change and technological innovation. These methods are particularly appropriate for researching how people engage with established and emerging technologies and for exploring how they navigate their way through increasingly convergent technological arrays and visual environments.

Much of this work has been developed in the context of commercial marketing and audience research; most has focused on domestic space and shopping activity as the final links in the consumption chain. The problem of tracking increasingly nomadic audiences as they integrate media activity into their everyday routines has been of particular interest. The work of Peter Collett and his colleagues is prototypical of one main current of work in this area.

A video tape recorder was installed in the main television cabinet in 20 British homes. Whenever it was switched on, the apparatus produced continuous video footage of all activity in the viewing area directly in front of the set, together with a record of the date, time, and channel and a small inset showing the programme as it appeared on the screen. The resulting 350 hours of videotape showed that the participants in the study only focused on the screen for two thirds of the time. "For the rest of the time, they attend to kids, groom themselves, read the newspaper, doze off—the list of distractions is endless," and even when they are watching, "they frequently engage in activities that have nothing to do with television watching" (Collett, 1987, p. 246). Although the study was funded by the body then regulating British commercial television, the Independent Broadcasting Authority, it was of particular interest to advertisers concerned with the dynamics of audience attention.

This basic technique has since been extended to monitoring home computer use. Although it requires the prior consent of participants, using "hidden" or unobtrusive cameras and monitoring software bears a close similarity to the ubiquitous visual surveillance systems installed to monitor activity in public sites and, increasingly, in domestic interiors as a means of checking on children and child minders. This raises ethical problems, particularly in relation to the subsequent storage and display of the footage shot. Methodologically, too, the limitations outweigh the advantages. On the one hand, it allows a large quantity of visual data to be collected over an extended period of time and provides a way of checking what people actually do against what they claim to do. On the other hand, because the camera or monitoring software is installed in a fixed position, it can only record what is happening in one location. It cannot track participants as they move between different sites of action. Even

if multiple monitors were used, they would still only capture what is happening on the surface. Because there is no opportunity to probe participants' motivations or experiences by talking to them at the time, the resulting footage cannot be used in an exploratory way. It offers an extensive assemblage of "social facts" but rules out the development of interpretations that take full account of participants' own constructions of events.

The same stricture applies to recent work in product and marketing research, which has used hand-held digital video cameras to follow people as they move from one location to another. This has the added disadvantage of being very labour intensive. The less ambitious technique of the "video tour" offers one way of retaining the dynamism and mobility of tracking studies allowing the researcher to include a wider cross-section of case studies and providing spaces in which participants may offer their own accounts and interpretations. The method involves researchers and informants working together to show and explore an aspect of their everyday lives. In a series of projects designed to research people's relations to domestic space and household goods and routines, for example, informants were asked to show the researcher (and the video camera he or she was carrying) around their home, describing each room, the objects and artefacts it contained, the histories of how they had acquired them, and their feelings about them (Pink, 2004b). The idea of "home" as both a material space and a guiding narrative was used to prompt the particular features that respondents nominated for filming and to encourage open-ended commentary. Although this method has not so far been used extensively in communications research, it has the potential to make significant contributions to debates on current shifts in media use. First, in a situation in which new media technologies are increasingly promoted on the basis of style as well as utility, it offers a way of exploring how computers, mobile phones, video recorders, and digital television sets are incorporated into everyday settings as material artefacts and aesthetic objects. Second, the proliferation of communications devices in many homes, the expansion of mobile telephone use, and the migration of television viewing from the sitting room to the kitchen and the bedroom give added relevance to a method that tracks media installations and routines across the whole of domestic space. Third, conducting individual "video tours" with each member of the household offers a useful way of examining how media practices are structured by relations of power based in gender and generation.

As well as providing valuable material that can be analysed in its own right, collaboratively produced video recordings can also be reinserted into the research process by, for example, showing them to informants, eliciting their responses to both their own tapes and those produced by other participants, and using these as a basis for further explorations of their media maps and practices.

Digital Media

As we saw earlier, Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead's plans to open up multiple pathways to interpretation by presenting their visual material alongside their written exposition were radically curtailed by their reliance on print. The last decade, however, has seen the demarcation lines erected by analogue media technologies give way to the converging spaces produced by digital media. By translating all forms of human expression—speech, music, sound, writing, statistical data, and still and moving imagery—into the universal language of computing based on varying arrays of zeros and ones, digitalisation offers a range of new possibilities for the practice of visual anthropology. Three are particularly far reaching in their implications. First, for the first time, every kind of research material can be stored in a single archive, either on CD-ROM or on an Internet site. Second, these repositories can be searched and read in much more flexible ways, using key words and hyperlinks to create new juxtapositions, combinations, and sequences that may suggest new avenues for exploration. Third, the full interactivity offered by the Internet

(particularly the most widely accessible portion of it known as the World Wide Web) enables archives to become dynamic and open to continuous addition, commentary, and critique.

As yet, digital media are not widely used as part of the visual anthropology research process, although a number of ethnographers are now exploring their potential.. The visual anthropologist Jay Ruby, for example, provides a log of visual and written fieldwork updates on a Web site that documents his fieldwork in the Oak Park community in the United States.[2] Other researchers are combining the multimedia and interactive possibilities of the Web to create sites that contain a combination of researcher-produced and informant-supplied research materials in a range of media. A good example is Stephen Lyon's Social Organisation, Economy and Development site.[3] Here, in an experiment in "open ethnography," Lyon includes stories, essays, and music supplied or produced locally by informants; his own field notes and updates; and users' comments. Such initiatives can be seen as harbingers of new forms of reflexive and collaborative work that assist the anthropologist in producing multimedia knowledge in which informants' voices are truly embedded.

Incorporations: Using Vernacular Imagery

Incorporating informant-produced images into fieldwork accounts can never be undertaken innocently. On the contrary, it forces us to take the contexts within which they have been produced more fully into account.

Found Images

The anthropology of personal or family photography is now well established as an area of study. Some of these images will have been posed and taken by professional photographers, although, as Christopher Pinney's (1997) work on local studios in India demonstrates, this may still allow considerable scope for individual customisation through the choice of particular props and backdrops. Others will be prints of images taken by participants themselves. Both may be found mounted on living room walls or mantelpieces, printed on mugs and refrigerator magnets, or pasted in the family albums analysed in Chalfen's path-breaking (1987) work. Following developments in visual technologies, recent work in this field has expanded to embrace a range of other forms of individual and household image making, from home videos and videotaped letters to personal and family Web pages and computer files of images downloaded from digital cameras and mobile phones (see Chalfen, 2002, p. 143). These stocks of imagery can be used as both a basis for interpretation and a prompt for further exploration. They provide a corpus of texts that illuminate respondents' ways of thinking and looking at themselves and others and their concepts of evidence. They also offer a jumping-off point for interviews exploring the social dynamics and aesthetic criteria that underpin their visual practices.

Prompted Images

The exploration of everyday image making and the meanings it carries can also be useful when extended and tailored to the focus of particular projects by asking informants to produce photography, video, drawings, or computer imagery as part of the research process. Drawing on the model developed by the BBC *Video Diaries* programmes mentioned earlier, this might involve participants keeping a running video or photographic record of their media activities and encounters for a set period. This could combine the (audio) visual documentation of their everyday practices and the (possibly changing) context(s) of use with their reflective commentaries on their experiences recorded at the end of each day's shooting. Although video recording provides more information, it is not always practical in nondomestic settings. The alternative is to use digital cameras or camera phones. These provide a convenient and unobtrusive way of keeping visual records in public locations and can be easily combined with written logs or audio recordings. To understand how television is encountered and

Figure 15.2 Photograph of a Photograph

Source: Photo © 2004, John Postill. Used by permission.

experienced in public spaces, for example, one might ask an informant to photograph his or her immediate physical and social environment at the time they see a screen and to record their reactions on audio immediately afterwards. Camera phone and digital audio technologies are also well adapted to projects that ask media professionals to compile logs of their working day. Another alternative is to ask participants to develop a personal Internet Web log (or "blog") that combines a daily written diary with digital photographs uploaded from a digital camera or camera phone.

These developing digital media also have interesting applications in public contexts. John Postill's research in Malaysia demonstrates why, in a situation in which both researchers and participants have access to the same technologies, it is more important than ever to attend to the contexts and practices of image production and of representation as well as the content of the images produced.

Figure 15.2 shows the anthropologist in the field holding a photograph of himself and his informant, the local politician, Dato'-Lee Hwa Beng. It is a good example of the increasingly layered nature of photographic practice under conditions of equalised access. The photograph in the anthropologist's hands was taken a few minutes earlier by Lee, with his digital camera, and then immediately printed out on his portable printer. The photo reproduced here, taken by an associate of the researcher, not only records the researcher and the informant sharing a spontaneously produced informant image but shows both of them constructing that moment as a photo opportunity.

Representations: Communicating Research

As noted earlier, ethnographic film and video production has long been the "conventional" medium for visual anthropological representation. It still offers a useful way of representing research on visual media, because it both replicates many of the key characteristics of the media under study and simulates the experience of viewing them. A still image of a photograph held on video replicates the experience of viewing the material photograph, for example. Two good examples of the possibilities for representing an ethnography of photographic practices and images on film and video are Tobias Wendl and Nancy du Plessis's

(1998) *Future Remembrance,* a film about studio photography and sculpture in Ghana, and David and Judith MacDougall's (1991) *Photo Wallahs,* about photography in an Indian hill town. By leaving a video camera running in a public space, the MacDougalls' experiment with ways of combining footage shot by the researchers with filmic representations of participants' practices in relation to that material and the technologies and social relations that produce it.

Photographic exhibitions, especially in museum anthropology, are another well-established method of visually representing aspects of other cultures. With the arrival of multimedia technologies, however, anthropologists are beginning to consider an array of new display possibilities using installation art and other established art and design practices to represent multisensory ethnographic experiences and realities. As the highly successful multimedia installations at the British Film Institute's (now closed) Museum of the Moving Image suggested, these approaches are of particular value in representing research on media and communications.

The growth of the Internet and the shift to high-density broadband connectivity have breathed new life into Andre Malraux's vision of "museums without walls." Since the 1990s, anthropologists have been very much a part of this general movement and have begun to develop new ways of representing visual research in the emerging hypermedia environment. As we noted earlier, the main digital media currently used by anthropologists are both multimedia and multilinear. The increasing availability of digital video and stills cameras and of user-friendly multimedia and Web-based software is expanding both these potentialities in exciting ways. Digitalizing research materials means that a CD-ROM or Web site can hold not only a researcher's report of a study but all the materials on which the study's interpretations and analysis are based. Theoretically, these might include not only interviews and field notes but all the photographs, sound recordings, film and video footage, computer games, and Web sites that were the focus of the research, together with the written, recorded, or filmed responses to this material produced by both the researcher and the participants. In practice, however, the public reuse of much of the media material produced by the cultural industries is hedged around by intellectual property laws, although these are constantly under negotiation, particularly in relation to educational as opposed to commercial uses of material. Nor are respondent-generated materials without problems, as displaying them in public may raise difficult issues of "ownership, anonymity and consent" (Parry & Mauthner, 2004, p. 149).

The emerging digital archives are also multilinear. The researcher's account no longer enjoys privileged status. It stands as one possible interpretation among others. By navigating their way through the corpus of research materials using multiple pathways, users are free to produce new comparisons and connections and generate alternative interpretations. Research archives housed on Web sites extend open endedness in two additional ways. First, by providing hyperlinks to other relevant Web sites, they can connect the presentation of particular projects to the wider corpus of theory and debate on the areas the research focuses on (see Pink, 2004a, for discussion of the question of making multimedia hypermedia projects "conversant" with existing debates in written anthropology). Second, they can use the Internet's interactive capacities to encourage participants and other researchers to add new material of their own or to question interpretations offered by the research team and by other contributors.

Mobilising Convergence: Digital Media, Collaborative Inquiry

The digital image environment is still in the process of construction, with currently available technologies arguably at much the same stage of development as analogue photography and film were when Haddon embarked for the Torres Straits. It is already clear, however, that it poses far-reaching challenges to anyone interested in understanding how contemporary ways of looking, recording, and interacting are being reshaped by new technological possibilities. It is also clear

that this is not simply a question of adding new topics to the list of research areas. The progressive convergence of expressive forms made possible by digitalisation coincides with an increasing convergence between media studies and visual anthropology, both in the questions being asked about contemporary visual cultures and the methodologies employed to tackle them. These intersecting movements offer unprecedented opportunities for creative development in both disciplines.

Realising these opportunities will require three basic conditions to be met. First, we need to dismantle the intellectual checkpoints that have traditionally separated visual anthropology from media studies and look for ways of developing collaborative, cumulative, and comparative research on the production and consumption of mediated visuality across the full range of possible fieldwork sites. Second, we need to focus on "globalisation" as an unfinished project in which old orders are being displaced and the contours of new ones are still emerging (see Burawoy et al., 2000, p. 348) and as a cultural arena in which visual imagery operates as both a homogenising force and a key resource for differentiation and contestation. Third and (we have argued) most important, we need to build on recent innovations in visual anthropology's techniques of inquiry and integrate the full range of contemporary visual media into our practices of investigation, analysis, and representation in pursuit of more reflexive, open-ended and collaborative styles of inquiry.

Notes

1. John Postill's research with the University of Bremen is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. It is part of *Netcultures*, a comparative study of new media and local governance involving anthropologists from the Universities of Amsterdam, Bremen, and Manchester.

2. Ruby calls his site *Maintaining Diversity: An Ethnographic Study of Oak Park, Illinois—Progress Reports*, and much related information can be found there with the monthly log (http://astro.ocis.temple.edu/~ruby/opp/, last accessed 6 December 2004).

3. Retrievable from http://anthropology.ac.uk/Bhalot/ (last accessed 6 December 2004).

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