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Thoughts on the Development of Visual Research in Anthropology

Some Notes on A Personal Journey¹

Vprašanje v naslovu konference – »Kakšen je pomen vizualnih informacij v znanosti?« – me vodi do dveh nadaljnjih vprašanj. Prvo: »Je mogoče ali v pomoč ločiti znanost od umetnosti, ko obravnavamo vizualne informacije?« Drugo: »Ali je vizualna informacija 'očitna'?« V odvisnosti od konteksta na to vprašanje lahko odgovorimo pritrdilno ali nikalno. Moj odgovor, sloneč na lastni izkušnji, bo, upam, vodil k nadaljnji diskusiji.

The question implicit in the title of the conference – "What is the significance of visual information in science?" – leads me to two further questions. First: "Is it possible or helpful to separate science from art when we are dealing with visual information?" Second: "Is 'visual information' 'obvious'?" Depending upon the context, these questions can be given both positive and negative answers. My answers, based on my own experience, will, I hope, lead to discussion later.

INTRODUCTION

Anthropology sets out to identify regularities and patterns in human thought and action on the basis of empirical observations. For anthropologists working in the field, the views which we see with our own eyes, though primary, are, however, both ephemeral and personal. While some aspects of what we see with our own eyes can be communicated by verbal description, other aspects can best be dealt with numerically or cartographically. In addition, there is the possibility of using photography, film, and video. Each of these types of representation allows us to communicate to other people something about what we have seen. Mapping, photographing, and filming allow for fuller description than words alone and enable us to create basic data for visual analysis, as well as visual materials for later communication.

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Each of us, whether an anthropologist or not, has a mental model, or, as I like to call it, an "inner landscape", reflecting the external worlds within which our life's activities unfold. We are each so FAMILIAR with our own inner landscape, that we usually do not consciously separate it from what we are seeing or from the space wherein we are moving. Our "inner landscape" has been formed by interaction both with the various outer landscapes and other human we have encountered during our lives, and it mediates our further perceptions.

The experience of doing fieldwork in a foreign culture is meant to break into this familiarity, thereby bringing us face to face with the fact that, though we may be moving through a visible world that seems to be "objectively out there", what we "see" may be quite different from what another person "sees", even though we both may be looking from the same physical vantage point. Until a fieldworker has begun to learn the "inner landscape" that is shared by the people whose world he/she is studying, he/she will often "mis-see" the external landscape.

An amusing example of mis-seeing, or what I shall call "differential seeing", has been reported by Gabriele Sturzenhofecker. A German hiker, visiting Sturzenhofecker's field location in the New Guinea Highlands, looked out over the mountain landscape on his first morning and was alarmed to see the forest across the valley infected by a withering disease. Over the breakfast table, he questioned Sturzenhofecker as to what was happening. After some puzzlement on her part, she went out to look at the scene, which had long been familiar to her, and had never previously shown any sign of disease. To her amusement, she found that the "disease" was nothing more than an area of newly cleared swidden gardens drying in preparation for being burned (Sturzenhofecker 1994). Differential seeing applies whether we are looking at an actual geographical landscape or at images – filmed, videotaped, or photographed.

When doing visual research, one creates images that will be used as data (photographs, films, electronic images, etc.) or collects already existing images. The advantage of images, of course, is that they can be scrutinized in detail long after the events they represent have passed. The process of scrutiny, or analysis, and its results can be shared not only among colleagues, but also with the subjects of the research, thus enabling the various participants in a study to contribute their perceptions and understandings, as well as to calibrate their terminology – matching words to objects, situations, events, and perceived patterns, thereby controlling to some extent the problems arising when the same words are inadvertently used to refer to quite different phenomena. Though seeking at every step of the analysis the consistency and precision expected of quantitative analyses of data, we must also take qualitative matters into consideration. Pursuing visual research, we soon find ourselves in new conceptual territories.

FIRST STEPS

The foundation for visual research in anthropology in the second half of this century was laid by Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in their book, Balinese Character, published in 1942. This study specifically demonstrated a method for anchoring images to text and, just as crucial for the importance of research, anchoring text to images. This pioneering methodology developed from their desire...

"...to translate aspects of culture never successfully recorded by the scientist, although often caught by the artist, into some form of communication sufficiently

clear and sufficiently unequivocal to satisfy the requirements of scientific enquiry." (Bateson and Mead 1942:xi)

Thus, they articulated the challenge of working in a conceptual space that could pull together the diverse strengths of both art and science. The scientific aspect of their work lay in keeping exact records of how and why they made and selected each picture.

Photographs, in themselves nothing more than material artifacts recording light (either photo-chemically or electronically) on a physical base, only gain significance because they have been created by one or more human beings communicating within a community of meaning. Since Mead and Bateson's visual study in Bali, anthropologists working with visual means of description and analysis have gradually been developing just such a community (Blakely and Blakely 1989). It was only in the 1970's, however, that the umbrella term "visual anthropology" was introduced, thereby providing a unified identity to approaches ranging from the study of non-verbal communication to the making of ethnographic films (Hockings 1975). Visual research is one part of this larger, very loosely defined field. More recently, the umbrella term "anthropology of visual communication" has gained currency.

I entered the visual anthropology community in 1962, before the field had been clearly identified or named. As a student preparing for a field trip to New Guinea, I attended a two-week seminar given by Ray Birdwhistell. At that time, as at present, scholars interested in visual matters came from a variety of fields and met in interdisciplinary settings. Birdwhistell himself was an anthropologist who was collaborating closely with linguists and systems analysts (Birdwhistell 1970:xiff.). Others attending his seminar were photographers and medical doctors. We were all eager to learn more about Kinesics, Birdwhistell's approach to the study of human communication.

Birdwhistell had developed an analyser projector which allowed him to analyze in detail segments of conversation which he had recorded on 16mm. synchronous sound film. He used precise linguistic parameters together with equally precise movement parameters which he was deriving from the materials he was seeking to understand. He conclusively showed that meaning is not a linear matter nor is it carried by words alone. It is carried by all the visible movement, including facial expressions and gestures, in concert with the actual context of the interaction. The movements of any speaker, far from being the simple physiological or "natural" substrate for conversation that many researchers had previously assumed them to be, proved to be intricately involved in the communication of meaning in any human interaction. No single element is essentially meaningful in the absence of the whole multi-layered context within which it is embedded (Birdwhistell 1970:29ff).

FROM FIELDWORK TO ANALYSIS

With these ideas in mind, I joined the Columbia University Expedition to study the human ecology of a New Guinea rain forest. From March 1963 until February 1964, my husband and I took 62,000 feet of 16 mm. film and more than 10,000 B/W and color photographs, recording daily life and ritual among the Maring of the Simbai Valley. Other members of the team concentrated on more traditional methods of ethnographic fieldwork, creating a grammar, mapping gardens, observing rituals, collecting historical reports, and studying social organization (Rappaport 1968).

We had expected that our footage would prove useful to the other team members. As I wrote then, "...[the portion of the footage] dealing with ecology and ritual was for the use

of the other members for the description and illustration of points which they had recorded and demonstrated by other means" (Jablonko, A. 1967: 168). This expectation, however, was never fulfilled, though it was not until much later that I understood why. In as much as I was clearly aware of the gap between phenomena and data (Jablonko, A. 1967:169), I had not yet fully realized that the data, the information recorded in patterns of light and shadow by the silver chloride crystals on celluloid, would not simply jump off the celluloid into my mind or into anyone else's mind. It took me many years to accept the fact that images DO NOT speak up with a direct voice. In fact, they do not SPEAK at all: they trigger meanings in the minds of viewers, and these meanings must be verbally articulated. Since meanings are not 'naturally given', but are culturally constructed, layers of overlapping meanings – perhaps conflicting, perhaps congruent – come into being when one begins to question images. When images record culturally familiar scenes, we usually take their meanings for granted, and, unless we are professionally involved with visual research, we rarely bother to articulate or question any of the meanings. When images represent cultural worlds that are different from the viewer's own world, the wealth of meanings to be articulated is complex indeed, and articulation and questioning are crucial if misunderstandings and erroneous interpretations are to be avoided.

Returning from the field, then, I had to start from the beginning. How was I to access and transform some of the rich information lying latent in the images into the verbal form necessary for a dissertation – or, for that matter, any other anthropological statement? The images had to be given a voice, and that could be accomplished only by means of approaching them with one or more analytic methods.

Though wishing to base my approach on Birdwhistell's model of communication, I had not sufficiently mastered the Maring language to be able to apply his methodology directly. . . I therefore turned to Labananalysis as a way of working with moving, though silent, images. This system of movement notation and analysis had been developed by Rudolf Laban and was widely used in the field of modern dance and ballet. (Laban 1960; Hutchinson 1954) In 1964, Alan Lomax, the ethnomusicologist, was just beginning to explore its application to a comparative study of dance styles around the world (Lomax 1968). I decided to test its applicability to the detailed analysis of the movement style of a single society.

As I analyzed portions of our Maring 16 mm. research footage in terms of movement parameters, I found, among other things, that the very loose synchrony observable in the bodily movement among members of a family, a clan, or a larger gathering, in both dance events and work situations, echoed well with the ethnographic description of Maring society as egalitarian. I was able to compare in detail the way Maring men and women use their bodies, surrounding space, and time, in different settings of daily life, work, and dance.

In this way, I gave portions of our 16 mm. research footage an academic voice – a dissertation, which included detailed graphs and movement notations (Jablonko 1968a). The visual component of the dissertation was strengthened when I edited an accompanying short film (Jablonko, A. 1968b).

I worked with my husband on another portion of the footage to produce a document on the building of a traditional house (Jablonko, A. and M. 1966). Although we followed precisely the chronology of the original event, we began to learn about the ambiguities and intricacies of film editing.

Finally, we put all the 16mm. footage into archival order, carefully splicing the many 100 foot rolls of original film in strict chronological order and relating them to accompa-

nying information regarding place, time, people, and type of event (Gajdusek and Sorenson 1963, 1966; Sorenson 1976).

Concentrating on our Maring film footage we almost ignored our collection of 35mm. still photographs. We had catalogued these photographs before we left the field and I had used 35 of them in my dissertation to illustrate Maring use of space. It was not until 1990, however, that we began to turn our attention to the broader research and communication possibilities offered by these photographs. As with the moving images, we had to find ways of reaching into the 'still and silent' images in order to give voice to them. Our first inspiration came from Mead and Bateson and resulted in one paper on our photographic research among the Maring (Jablonko and Jablonko 1992) and another paper celebrating the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Balinese Character* (Jablonko and Jablonko 1993). We then went on to work with other methodologies that had been developing and shared among the growing community of people exploring the visual aspects of anthropology.

LESSONS FROM COLLIER JR.

From the 1950's into the 1980's John Collier, Jr. had used photography as a basic tool in researching Peruvian peasant life, Alaskan Eskimo education, Native American acculturation, etc. He developed a four-fold methodology that starts with photographing (or filming, or videotaping) in the field, goes on to the analysis of the visual data thus created, continues to the drawing out of conclusions, and is completed by the communication of these conclusions to colleagues and the wider public.

Each of these stages is of crucial importance. They are all dependent upon the interplay of precise observation, data collection and sensitivity to impressions one had both in the field and during all the subsequent stages of looking at the photographs. The impressions may, at first, barely be perceived, but, as the study proceeds, they develop and can be clearly articulated and documented. Like Mead and Bateson, Collier did not separate the scientific from the artistic mode, but combined their strengths (Collier and Collier 1986: 169).

The first stage of Collier's research methodology consists not only in taking the photographs, but, of equal importance, in diligently cataloguing them in terms of place, date, time, persons and activities. This practice of labeling the visual artifacts is indispensable if they are later to be used as visual data.

Once the initial labeling is complete, one can move in one or both of two directions:

- a) one can ask the people whose world and lives are represented to talk about what they see in the photographs/films;
- b) one can scrutinize the pictures oneself and articulate what one sees.

Asking the local people to tell about the pictures is a practice and skill emphasized by Collier to which he gave the name photo interviewing. I did not systematically use photographic interviewing in New Guinea, not knowing, at the time, how crucial it can be to understanding photographs. Upon the few occasions when we did sit down with some of our Maring friends to look at our photographs, they did exactly as one would hope: they looked at them and told us what they found important.

I will never forget the time that I wanted an explanation of the human interactions represented on a roll of film. The local viewers were only interested in talking about

who owned each banana tree visible in the photographs! That should have alerted me to the fact that social interactions and banana-tree ownership may be of equal relevance to the Maring, and therefore to my ethnographic study. Unfortunately, it did not. I was too new a student at the time to appreciate what was going on.

The second direction, i.e., looking at the photographs oneself and articulating what one understands, can be approached in a number of different ways. When Ray Birdwhistell articulated his methodology in the late 1950's, he emphasized the necessity of looking at the pictures dozens and dozens of times. He was analyzing the verbal and gestural movements in communication events recorded on 16 mm. sound film. He found that he had to look over and over again at very short segments of film in order to see consciously the fine details which, together, created communication between the participants. This is one form of what is called micro-analysis. Once he had seen the patterns, he had to repeat the viewing many more times in order to record graphically onto a multi-linear score the elements of the moving images that he had seen on the screen. He could then use the score for further perusal and to share the results with others (Birdwhistell 1970: 283 ff.). Whether or not we must create a score or diagram, it is good practice to do so, as it helps to structure our seeing.

And structure our seeing we must. Our "looking" must be disciplined, if we are to keep track of even some of the many levels of information lying untapped in a photograph or a film sequence. Collier emphasized the danger of dissipating our energies in the "overload of information" present in any photograph (Collier 1986: 13, 168, 171). To avoid this peril, we must structure our many encounters with our visual data, keeping track of both the original situation in which they were made, including the perspective from which the cameraperson was proceeding, as well as the disciplinary perspective being used for the analysis.

Looking at our 242 rolls of film, we can compare what we did while in the field with what we would have done had we been following Collier's suggestion that a fieldworker move through a series of stages of photographic recording. Collier started from an overview and worked down from there through a) a cultural inventory, to b) the recording of craft and industry, then c) social circumstance, and, finally, d) evidence of change. It is clear from our photographic record that we did not have such a conscious strategy. Upon the occasions when we did set off with an agenda in mind, we were constantly side-tracked by unexpected activities which seemed more important than our agenda. Our field method consisted of recording as fully as possible each event as it occurred as a unit, with the intention of using later analysis to tease apart the various conceptual categories which we might want to explore.

The difficulty of applying Collier's structure at our field location may testify to a different distribution of activities through time than we were culturally used to: in the Maring landscape there were no artisanal workshops with "hours of opening" posted. There were no signs such as "The Ritual Grove". What an area was used for only became plain during the activity that took place there. AFTERWARDS, of course, there was a memory trace of the "identity of the place", but it was scarcely visible – in stark contrast to the ritual identity of places in our own cultural landscape, such as churches, which are visually plain whether or not activity is going on at the time.

Even though we did not use Collier's well-defined series of stages to structure our fieldwork, we are now finding it very helpful to investigate and structure the resulting photographic collection as a reflection of ethnographic practice and Maring life in the 1960's.

LESSONS FROM EDWARD T. HALL

Another approach which we are finding helpful in understanding levels of meaning in our photographs is Proxemics, Edward T. Hall's insight that the use of space in personal interaction is culturally patterned (Hall 1969). Within each photograph the distances among Maring men, women, and children in various social settings are visible².

Example 1:

121:19 Guntis Grove: A male dance contingent.



Performing one of several dance steps, the dancers sing in place, facing the center of the group. They stand as close as possible to each other, with barely enough room to beat their drums.

² The photographs from our 1963-1964 collection are identified by roll number (the first 3 digits, in chronological order from 001 to 242) and frame number (the second two digits, also in chronological order from 00 to 36). A short caption identifies the place and activity. A brief comment follows, relating to the point being exemplified in this presentation.

Example 2:

024:31 *Gunts Yard*: Local women sit in the shade at the edge of a yard, in the midst of a heated discussion.



Most of the women are within arm's reach of each other. Having no common visual focus of attention or direction of movement, they each face a different direction.

Example 3:

050:27 *Ganegai*: Girls help prepare an evening meal.



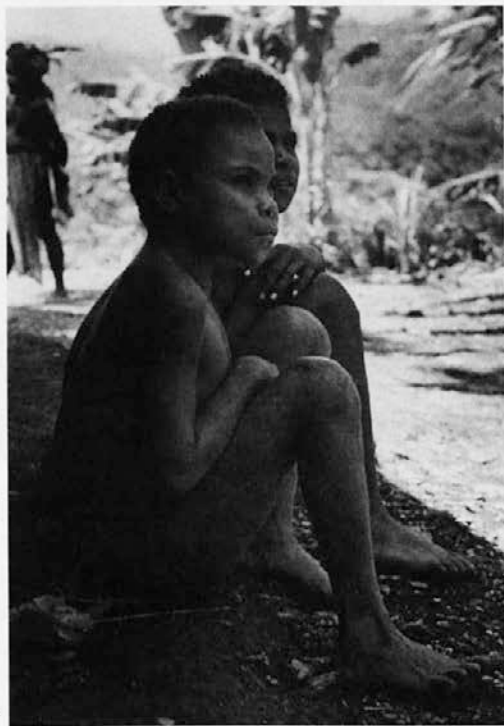
Outside their mother's house, two sisters and a visiting friend open their string bags, which are full of freshly harvested leaves which they will sort. They are within arm's reach of each other, and, focussed on their common task, they more or less face a common center.

These three examples are no more than an initial indication of the wealth of observable proxemic information which can be articulated from the photographs.

The proxemic relationship between the cameraperson and the subjects of any photograph, though not visible in the photograph, can be inferred from the distance and angle.

Example 4:

188:34 Gunt's Yard: Two girls, Gomb and Apogi, sit side-by-side in the shade of a house.



In this case, I was sitting next to them, in this oft-used side-by-side formation, close enough to touch and to speak quietly with one another. I had to move slightly away, in order to include them totally in the frame.

When one of us is included in a photograph, our own relationship to Maring proxemic patterns becomes visible.

Example 5:

016:21 Gunts Yard: Women bring food to sell to the anthropologists' household.



Marek, about to buy vegetables and bananas, found himself in the midst of this lively, though small, crowd. The women knelt to unload their string bags, while children crowded around to watch. Thus, each person had his or her own visual focus or activity focus. They all faced every which way, while still being in close physical proximity.

In addition to the proxemic patterns involved in social interaction, we can also examine what I will call "**optical proxemics**". Optical proxemics are based upon photographic rather than social criteria for being in a particular spatial relationship to the subjects. Three such optical criteria are a) the need to be able to see and record clearly the main activity; b) the need to include all participants; c) the need to fill the frame.

In order to be able to see and record clearly the main activity, one must place oneself at the right distance in relationship to the lens one is using. Depending upon the activity itself, or the aspect of the activity which one is defining as "main", one will need to be closer (for example, documenting a craft process of an individual person):

Example 6:

077:04 Gunts Yard: Ambia making arrow points



or further away (for instance, documenting a family group laying out pieces of pork for redistribution).

In some cases, either because of the steep slope of the land, or because of intervening people or foliage, it may be difficult to move far enough away to actually record the whole group at once. We could call these considerations matters of "visual accessibility".

In some cases, social proxemics and optical proxemics may contradict each other, e.g., in order to fill the frame and get as visually clear an image of a detail as possible, the cameraperson may wish to move closer to an object, activity, or interaction than is considered socially appropriate. Maring proxemic patterns, however, included a great deal more spatially close interaction than North American and Northern European proxemic patterns do, so this was not often a problem during our fieldwork. As the Maring were used to the presence of curious and observing children in their social settings, they did not find it strange to be observed by us. On the contrary, they were pleased at our interest in their ways and excused proxemic blunders on our part.

LESSONS FROM RICHARD CHALFEN

Visual information, of course, resides not only in photographs made by researchers. Anthropologists have been developing systematic ways of bringing meaning out of photographs made by the people among whom they are studying. In the 1980's, Richard Chalfen elaborated a methodology designed for the study of home mode photography. He alerted us to five kinds of events related to picture-taking and to the questions which may be asked of these events. (Chalfen 1987). In the case of our own fieldwork, we cannot apply Chalfen's methodology directly, since the Maring themselves did not take photographs at the time. Using a sort of reverse strategy, however, we are finding it helpful to apply Chalfen's questions to our own photographic collection.

To begin with, Chalfen directs our attention to what he calls "on-camera shooting events". About these he asks the following questions: What kinds of behavior occur in front of a loaded camera? Who or what is likely to be overlooked, neglected, or eliminated? Are conventions for posing recognized, criticized, or otherwise commented upon?

Looking at our own photographs, we notice that our focus was principally upon Maring activities and usually excluded our own presence. Only occasionally did we specifically decide to record our activities. Once in a while, one of us would appear in a photograph by accident.

Example 7:

227:18 Ganegai: Boys of three families play, the older ones good-naturedly teasing the younger ones by briefly tying them with bits of vine.



Marek was sitting on the fence at the edge of the yard, filming the boys' game. I was outside the range of his lenses, but, in making a record of the event, I could not avoid including him.

As for conventions of posing, local people who had never seen photographs before "presented themselves" to us in terms of their own conventions concerning face to face

interaction. Since they had no concept of creating a visual image to be recorded on film, they did not, technically, "pose" when we looked at them through our viewfinder, but went on about their activities while acknowledging us socially.

Example 8:

153:26 Tenegump: A young woman sits at the edge of her family's yard, making string for a fringed skirt while her baby plays in her lap.



We passed by the yard and greeted her. She cheerfully acknowledged us as we paused and photographed.

Example 9:

095:13 Guntis: A young man of a distant clan.



Though the stance taken by the young man may look like “posing” for the camera, it was a stance frequently used by men, especially when visiting other areas.

Occasionally, people who had had more contact with Europeans and had perhaps had some previous experience with cameras and photographs did present themselves more formally to our gaze through the lens:

Example 10:

Worenai was one of the young men who helped with our household. He had attended a nearby mission school for several years and had learned Tokpisin. Dressed in finery for a local celebration, he strikes what he takes to be a “proper pose” for our camera.

Second, Chalfen draws our attention to “planning events”. The questions to ask of them include: Who decides when pictures should be taken? Who is asked to take the photographs? Who purchases the equipment? Is some kind of script prepared?

We ourselves were the primary creators of this photographic collection. The equipment was ours and we were the ones who decided to take the pictures. At the begin-

ning, local people asked to look through the viewfinders to see what we were looking at, but nobody asked to use a camera, nor did we teach anyone to do so. Rereading our field notes and photo catalogue, we can work out to some extent which photographs were planned and which resulted from spontaneously following events as they occurred.

058:08 Koinambe: Worenai dressed in a new loincloth.



We can also do our best to identify what *was* going on in our own minds while we were photographing more than 30 years ago. We can now look for what could be called the “**visual trigger**” for each photo. Sometimes the visual trigger is clearly indicated in the field notes which were often written in tandem to the photographing. For other photographs, we can do no more than extrapolate from the image itself. For example:

Example 11:

What caught the photographer’s attention was the woman’s interaction with the piglet.

006:18 Gunts Yard: A woman sits in shade of banana trees with her piglet and hunting dog.



Example 12:

167:37 Gunts: A man carries his hunting dog.



Though dogs can be seen in many of the photographs, this is one of the few in which the dog itself was the visual trigger.

Third, Chalfen considers “behind-camera shooting events”: What kinds of “directing” are involved? What kinds of behavior are characteristic of the person using the camera?

We explicitly directed people as follows: “Ignore the camera, but don’t get in its way so you block its view.” Most of the photographs document the ease with which the people in whose village we stayed did ignore our presence when we were photographing. In fact, at the beginning, when people still were looking at us, we often did not take pictures.

As for ourselves, we tried to behave as if we were invisible when we were photographing. I imagined that I was slipping in and out among people without drawing unnecessary attention to myself. Fortunately, we have some pictures showing how this looked “outside our heads” (see Example 8, above).

Fourth, Chalfen identifies editing events: Are any specific images regarded as “bad” pictures? If so, what criteria are used for “badness” or “goodness”? Are “bad” images simply not used? Are they hidden? Are they just thrown away? Is the visual content manipulated in any way – cropping, painting, or scratching out? Is writing included on the photos or on the page?

As we learned during the process of archiving our films for the Gajdusek collection, it is not helpful to research to discard “bad” pictures. Every frame, unless there is no image whatsoever visible, may contain useful information for future study (Gajdusek and Sorenson 1963). We now reap the benefit of this practice, for we have the whole collection, in chronological order – the “aesthetic”, the “unaesthetic”, the out of focus, everything.

For research purposes, we also retain the original framing, for that indicates the distance the cameraperson was from the subject (see “optical proxemics” above) as well as the immediate spatial context of the activity or interaction. Cropping images would destroy such information. On the other hand, in order to bring out the salient points in communicating about some of the images, it may be helpful to crop images and enlarge key portions.

Fifth, and finally, Chalfen examines exhibition events: When are the images shown in a public context? How are these events organized? Who initiates, promotes, or restricts this activity? Where do these events take place? What other kinds of social activities are likely to accompany the showing of pictures? What are the social relationships between the people who plan the image, people who take them or appear in them, and the people who subsequently show or see the pictures?

We are only beginning to turn our attention to this last set of questions, which, though coming at the end of the project, direct attention squarely to the heart of the relationship between anthropologists and the subjects of the pictures they create or work with. The situation is particularly complex given the lapse of time between the taking of these photographs and our current work with them in the context of possibly sharing them over the Internet.

DIFFERENTIAL SEEING

I spoke above of some of the geographical features of the landscape and proxemic features of social interaction which can affect visual accessibility. Just as important,

visual accessibility is affected by cultural knowledge. Unless we are familiar with the culture, many optically visible items will have no meaning to us. Thus, visual accessibility is related to "differential seeing", which I mentioned at the beginning of this paper. The following images from a roll of film taken early in our stay can serve as an example:

Example 13:

006:15 Gunts Yard: A visitor from across the mountains.



In our initial days in the field we were fascinated by the headdresses and other decorations which people wore. This fascination is obvious not only in the photographs, but also in our notes. This photograph is one of a series (006:13-21) for which we noted the following details: headdress of cassowary feathers, 'hat', shells, etc. These items, visibly different from personal decorations in our home society, stood out in our minds at that time. What is now more interesting to us in this sequence is the mixture of ages and the lineage identities of the people visible in the gathering. The age mixture is visible to any viewer. The mixture of lineages (foreground: Bomagai; background: Fungai, right: Kanump-Kaur), unlike the age mix, is invisible to viewers unfamiliar with the local social organization. One might, in this case, speak of **cultural invisibility**.

Another variety of differential seeing could be called **asymmetrical perception**. This results from looking at images with meanings in mind that are unrelated to the original context, and it may lead to blatant misinterpretations, as in the following examples:

Example 14:

Looking at this photograph in 1997, I realized that many people looking at it today would see it as an image of the over-bearing colonial attitude expected on the part of Europeans. Then I discussed the image with Marek. When I heard his reminiscences about the situation, I become aware of the discrepancy between the original situation and this possible current interpretation of the photograph:

001:06 Simbai: Marek Jablonko and Maring men on the road by the airstrip.

Marek: The thing is...I guess...I was just overwhelmed by the number of the people who came to greet us and help us with our cargo. And I had difficulty understanding why they were so helpful, friendly, and out-going to someone they had just laid their eyes upon for the first time, and had no idea what kind of person I am and how I would treat them. Having lived for a number of years in an Anglo-Saxon country, I was surprised to see how much more body contact the Maring were using. It was the boy who took my hand, and I myself was surprised that I did not feel uncomfortable holding hands with someone whom I had only met a short while ago.

Allison: What I like about this picture is your body attitude – you are really striding out. Now, if I hadn't heard what you just said about being overcome, I would have interpreted your body attitude differently. It looks like a typical, European self-confident, activity-oriented, male posture. Not only do the stuck-out chest, the pulled-back shoulders and the upright head contrast to the posture of the Maring men seen on the same photo, but there is a sharp contrast in the way the legs are used in walking. You have a wide stride, in which the thighs separate and the lower-leg continues this diagonal direction. The legs of all the other people in the picture are used differently: the thighs remain virtually together, while the lower legs seem to move underneath, carrying the person along. This is perhaps the only picture we have of men walking along a flat open path. This was not the sort of surface they were used to moving over, while you, as a matter of course, had spent most of your life striding along such paths, sidewalks, and streets. No wonder you moved this way. It is only if the photograph is taken out of its environmental movement context that a viewer would construe this as the "White Bossman" stereotype. This "striding information" is not visible in the other photographs in the sequence (001:04 or 001:05) which are frontal shots.

Differential seeing applies not only across cultural divides, but between moments in history. We took the first roll of film (001:00-37) on that long ago day in February 1963,

when we first arrived at the air strip in Simbai, still a three day walk from our final destination. Looking at the images now, we come face-to-face with our "first encounter" again, and, no longer in the thick of immediate experience, we can step back and gain new perspectives on how we viewed that occasion.

We can see that our selection concentrated on what might be called "the thin thread of connection" between what we perceived as "the outside world," from which we were coming with all our baggage (both cultural and material), and the people whose lives we were to study – "the Maring world". The very terms, dated as they are, provide an obvious clue to our perspective.

What we ignored at the time was the visible context of this cross-cultural meeting, i.e., Simbai was not a "thin thread", but an extended space with mission post with hospital and school, government patrol post, police facilities and trade stores. There is not a photograph of any of these. Our visual triggers were, overwhelmingly, the Maring people present.

An alternate, and complementary, view would have concentrated on Simbai as a transition zone between "the outside world" and "our field location". Simbai was clearly a meeting point between two ways of life. Our photographic attention was, however, turned in one direction only, toward the Maring and our as-yet-unknown field location, to the virtual exclusion of the European world, in spite of the fact that it was actually the European world which both provided the context and support for our personal efforts and was a strong magnet of interest to the Maring themselves. Throughout our stay we concentrated upon Maring traditional life, only occasionally making a conscious recording of moments we considered to represent the new situation of culture contact.

Example 15 :

229:12/13 Gunts Yard: Local women peer into the sky to watch a Cessna plane on its way to Simbai.



These women had not travelled to Simbai, where they could have seen a small aircraft close-up, and it was unusual for an airplane to fly over their territory. Thus they peered at it as intently as they could while it was visible.

This attitude of excluding the European world from our attention continued throughout our stay. Though the contact between the European world and the situation at our field location could have been the main focus of our research, it was not. Given the anthropological climate of the early 1960's, we directed the bulk of our attention to the Maring culture that was already on the verge of radical change. Our current ability to look back at this photographic collection with our more recent focus of interest, and to ferret out the many evidences of the incorporation of European objects into Maring life, is simply one example of the value of visual documentation and research in anthropology.

Example 16:

108:16 Tenegump: Awar lights a cigarette.



A respected man is dressed to take part in a dance. He has combined traditional decorations with such Western additions as an arm band made of an empty tin can.

NEW "EXHIBITION EVENTS"

Before I conclude, I would like to give an example of an "exhibition event" (see Chalfen, above) which points in one of the directions visual research is now taking. This example concerns the work of Brenda Farnell, published in the form of both a book and a CD-ROM. It also turns our attention back to the original questions concerning art and science.

Pursuing visual research a half century after Mead and Bateson, Brenda Farnell reiterates even more strongly the necessity of dealing with the apparent split between scientific and artistic approaches:

"I [find myself] caught in the late-twentieth-century academic borderland between science and art. In this thought world that is dominated by words and the new hegemony of "text," I try to locate a theoretical space for a semiotics of the moving person, that is, for the embodiment of language and social action." (Farnell 1995:ix).

Her study of Plains Indian Sign Talk, as seen in Assiniboine tales, is based not only on intensive fieldwork and detailed video recording, but, equally important, on a radical re-examination of the epistemology of anthropology itself. Like Collier, she addresses the difficulties which Cartesian-minded Western scholars have in grasping what is going on in non-Cartesian cultures (Farnell 1995:8 ff.).

Collier, in his time, pointed out that as much as possible of the researcher's new understanding is eventually going to have to be articulated in the words of academia, in spite of the fact that there may be aspects that simply escape words. As Collier said:

"The analysis of photographs includes the decoding of visual components into verbal (usually written) forms and communication. No analysis of photographs can ignore this crucial translation process, although it may be that some research insight and knowledge cannot be fully transferred to verbal forms." (Collier and Collier 1986:169)

Farnell moves on from Collier's position, presenting one method to access some of the knowledge which "cannot be fully transferred to verbal forms." (Collier and Collier 1986:169) She insists that it is necessary to break the hegemony of the verbal/textual. To do this, she notates the gestures used by the story-tellers in parallel to the written transcription of the spoken text. For this purpose, she employs Labanotation, thus uniting visual images, the printed word and movement scores in her representation. As with all examples of visual research, the original visual materials themselves, in this case videotapes of the story-telling sessions, are only the starting point of the study.

Once we complete our current scrutiny and analysis of the 242 rolls of 35 mm. still film that we took among the Maring, our final step, as Collier suggested, will be to communicate our conclusions both to our colleagues and to a broader public. In 1942, when Mead and Bateson arrived at this stage, they had to rely upon a large book which was difficult to distribute widely. Now, at the end of the 20th century, we will be able to follow the lead of Farnell and several other colleagues have recently begun pioneering new technologies. CD-ROMs have been created to communicate detailed analyses of Yanomamö culture (Biella, Chagnon, and Seaman 1997) and Plains Indian Sign Talk (Farnell 1995).

These multi-medial forms lend themselves to the analysis and communication of the multi-layered phenomena encountered when visual data are used in anthropological research. As we have seen, though visual materials are "visible", the layers of information that can be drawn from them are by no means "obvious". Many methods for rendering them obvious and comprehensible have been elaborated over the past 50 years. Partly as a result of the difficulties of distributing large collections of visual material during the "print era", the intellectual sophistication of these visual methods has, until recently, been overlooked, and the methods themselves under-used. The technological tools offered by computers and CD-ROMs, should provide a strong impetus for extending visual studies.

CONCLUSION

And so we return to the three questions asked at the beginning of the paper. As to the first – "What is the significance of visual information in science?" – I would reply that a rigorous introduction of the visual aspect of phenomena we are studying will allow us to deepen and broaden our understanding in unforeseen ways. The second question – "Is it possible or helpful to separate science from art when we deal with visual information?" – can be answered with a resounding "No," especially when one takes the third question – "Is 'visual information' 'obvious?'" – into consideration. Visual information is 'obvious' only within a shared context. When we undertake a scientific study, we automatically create a new framework, over and above the implicit framework of the phenomenon as it appears in everyday life. To the extent that a visual artefact is embedded in a new framework, one which has been clearly articulated and defined, it may be treated as a datum in a scientifically rigorous inquiry. The process of definition and articulation, however, may have to include not only the objective, distanced and quantitative approaches customary to scientific practice, but also the intuitive, aesthetic and qualitative approaches developed in the artistic disciplines.

I hope that the above account of some of my own visual research has suggested, even if obliquely, the complexity involved in these questions and some fruitful ways of developing answers. Insofar as anthropology is based both on intuition and observation, I suggest that we will learn most by working together with both scientific and aesthetic approaches. When we have created precisely documented visual collections and have gone on to articulate the many layers of information that can be carefully drawn out of them, we will find that the use of visual information will greatly enhance our ability to learn and communicate about the many different forms of human society.

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Povzetek

Nekaj misli o razvoju vizualnih raziskav v antropologiji

Avtorica je pričujočo razpravo napisala na podlagi referata na mednarodni konferenci v čast 15. obletnice Avdiovizualnega laboratorija ZRC SAZU, ki je bila v Ljubljani, oktobra 1999.

UVOD

Vprašanje v naslovu konference – "Pomen vizualnih informacij v znanosti" – vodi do dveh nadaljnjih vprašanj. Prvo: "Je mogoče ali pomaga, če ločimo znanost od umetnosti, ko obravnavamo vizualne podatke?" Drugo: "Ali je vizualni podatek očiten?" Moj odgovor bo slonel na osebnih izkušnjah.

Vsak od nas, najsi bo antropolog ali ne, ima mentalni model ali, kot rada rečem, "notranjo pokrajino". Tako nam je domača, da je navadno ne ločimo zavestno od tistega, kar vidimo ali od prostora, v katerem se gibljemo. Naša "notranja pokrajina" je bila oblikovana z medsebojnim učinkovanjem različnih zunanjih pokrajin in drugih ljudi, ki smo jih srečali v življenju in se prenaša v naše bodoče percepcije.

Izkušnja s terenskim delom v tuji kulturi pomeni vdor v to domačnost, ki nas postavi iz oči v oči z dejstvom, da je lahko tisto kar "vidimo" (čeprav se gibljemo skozi vidni svet, ki izgleda kot nekaj "objektivnega tam zunaj"), nekaj popolnoma drugega od tistega, kar "vidi" neka druga oseba, čeprav vsi gledamo iz istega fizičnega položaja. Dokler se terenski delavec ne pouči o "notranji pokrajini" ljudi, ki jih preučuje, bo večkrat "zgrešeno videl" zunanjo pokrajino.

O zabavnem primeru zgrešenega gledanja ali čemur pravim "diferencirano videnje", je poročala Gabriele Sturzenhofecker. Nemški avtoštopar, ki je obiskal Sturzenhofeckerjevo na novogvinejskem višavju, je prvo jutro pogledal po gorski pokrajini in se vznemiril, videč na drugi strani doline odmirajoči gozd. Ob zajtrku je vprašal Sturzenhofeckerjevo, kaj se je zgodilo. Ta je zmedena odšla ven, da bi si ogledala prizor, ki ji je bil že dolgo domač in ki ni kazal nikakršnih znakov bolezni. Na svoje veselje je ugotovila, da "bolezen" ni bila nič drugega kot predel na novo očiščenega gozda, ki se je sušil v pripravi na požig.

Kdor vizualno raziskuje, ustvarja slike (fotografije, filme, elektronske slike itd.), ki jih bo uporabil kot podatke ali zbira obstoječe slike. Prednost slik je v tem, da jih lahko skrbno preučujemo še dolgo zatem, ko so fotografirani dogodki minili. Analitični proces in rezultate lahko delimo z drugimi, s kolegi ali s subjekti raziskave in tako omogočimo različnim udeležencem, da prispevajo svoj način percepcije in razumevanje, kot tudi uravnesijo svojo terminologijo, prilagodijo besede pojmom, situacijam in dogodkom. Čeprav na vseh stopnjah analize iščemo konsistentnost in natančnost, ki se pričakuje od kvantitativne analize, moramo vzeti v obzir tudi kvalitativne zadeve. Sledeč vizualni raziskavi se kmalu znajdemo v novih konceptualnih področjih.

PRVI KORAKI

Začetke vizualnih raziskav v antropologiji v drugi polovici 20. stoletja predstavljata Margaret Mead in Gregory Bateson v njuni knjigi *Balinese Character*, objavljeni leta 1942. Ta študija je

specifično pokazala metodo za sidranje slik v besedilo in, kar je enako ključno za pomembnost raziskave, za sidranje besedila v slike.

Tako sta izrekla izziv delu v konceptualnem prostoru, ki bi lahko pritegnil moči umetnosti in znanosti. Znanstveni vidik njunega dela leži v ohranjanju natančnih zapisov kako in kdaj sta naredila in izbrala vsako sliko.

Fotografije pridobijo pomen, ker jih je ustvarilo človeško bitje, ki je komuniciralo v neki pomenski skupnosti. Od vizualne študije Meadove in Batesona na Baliu, so antropologi, ki delajo z vizualnimi sredstvi za opis in analizo, sčasoma razvili prav tako skupnost. Šele v 70. letih so vpeljali krovni izraz "vizualna antropologija" in tako omogočili istovetenje z razponom pristopov od študij neverbalne komunikacije do izdelave etnografskih filmov. Vizualne raziskave so en del tega širokega, zelo rahlo definirane področja. V zadnjem času pridobiva na aktualnosti izraz "antropologija vizualnih komunikacij".

V vizualno antropološko skupnost sem vstopila leta 1962, preden je bilo področje jasno opredeljeno ali imenovano. Kot študentka, ki se je pripravljala na terenski izlet na Novo Gvinejo, sem prisostvovala dvotedenskem seminarju Raya Birdwhistella. Takrat, kot danes, so učenjaki, ki so jih zanimalo vizualne zadeve, prihajali z različnih področij in se srečevali na meddisciplinarnih srečanjih. Sam Birdwhistell je bil antropolog, tesno sodelujoč z lingvisti in sistemskimi analitiki. Vsi smo bili željni več zvedeti o "kineziki", Birdwhistellovem pristopu k študiju človeške komunikacije.

Odločilno je prikazal, da pomen ni linearna stvar, niti ga ne prinašajo samo besede. Prinaša ga vidno gibanje, vključno z izrazom obraza in gestami, usklajeno z aktualnim kontekstom interakcije. Gibanja vsakega govornika so zapleteno povezana v posredovanju pomenov v vsaki človeški interakciji in niso preprosto fiziološki "naravni" substrat konverzacije, kar so predpostavljali mnogi raziskovalci.

OD TERENSKEGA DELA DO ANALIZE

S temi idejami pred očmi sva se z možem, Marekom Jablonkom, posvetila filmskemu snemanju vsakdanjega življenja in ritualov med Maringi na Novi Gvineji od marca 1963 do februarja 1964.

Pričakovala sva, da bo najino gradivo koristno za druge raziskovalce. To se ni zgodilo in šele kasneje sem ugotovila zakaj. Nisem se še dovolj zavedala, da podatki s filmskega traku ne skočijo preprosto v naše glave. Mnogo let sem rabila do ugotovitve, da slike ne govorijo neposredno. Dejansko sploh ne govorijo: sprožijo pomene v gledalcu, ki jih mora šele artikulirati z besedami. Pomeni niso dani od narave, ampak so kulturne konstrukcije, zato zaživijo, ko začnemo slike spraševati. O pomenih slik našega družinskega okolja se navadno ne sprašujemo. Če pa slike predstavljajo kulturo, drugačno od naše, postane bogastvo pomenov, ki jih je treba artikulirati, seveda bolj kompleksno.

Čeprav sem želela utemeljiti svoj pristop na Birdwhistellovem modelu komunikacije, nisem zadovoljivo obvladala jezika Maringov, da bi lahko uporabila njegovo metodologijo. Zato sem se obrnila k Labanovi analizi kot načinu dela z gibajočimi, nemimi slikami. Sistem notacije in analize gibanja je razvil Rudolf Laban in je bil široko uporabljan na področju modernega plesa in baleta. Leta 1964 je Alan Lomax, etnomuzikolog, ravno začel raziskovati njegove aplikacije pri primerjalnem študiju svetovnih plesnih slogov. Odločila sem se, da ga bom preizkusila pri podrobni analizi gibalnega stila ene same kulture.

Ko sem analizirala dele gradiva, sem odkrila, med drugim, da v zelo sproščeni usklajenosti, ki jo opazimo v telesnem gibanju članov družine, klana ali širše združbe, odseva etnografski opis Maringov kot egalitarne družbe. Lahko sem primerjala do podrobnosti način, kako možje in žene uporabljajo svoja telesa, obdajajoči prostor in čas v različnih trenutkih dnevnega življenja, dela in plesa.

Ko sva se osredotočila na filmsko gradivo, bi kmalu pozabila na fotografije. Katalogizirala sva jih preden sva odšla s terena in uporabila sem jih v svoji doktorski nalogi za ilustracijo uporabe prostora pri Maringih. Šele po letu 1990 sva začela postajati pozorna na širše raziskovalne in komunikacijske možnosti teh fotografij. Podobno kot pri slikah v gibanju sva morala najti način kako "dati glas" nepremičnim in nemim slikam.

UČENJE JOHNA COLLIERJA MLAJŠEGA

Od leta 1950 do 1980 je John Collier uporabljal fotografijo kot temeljno orodje pri raziskovanju perujskega kmečkega življenja, eskimskega izobraževanja na Alaski, akulturacije ameriških Indijancev itd. Razvil je štiristransko metodologijo, ki se začne s fotografiranjem na terenu, nadaljuje z analizo tako pridobljenih vizualnih podatkov in izdelavo sklepov in zaključki s posredovanjem teh zaključkov kolegom in širšemu občinstvu.

Vsaka od teh faz je ključnega pomena. Vse so odvisne od prepletanja natančnega opazovanja, zbiranja podatkov in občutljivosti za vtise, na terenu in med vsemi fazami preučevanja fotografij. Vtisi so lahko sprva komaj zaznavni, kasneje, ko se preučevanje nadaljuje, pa jih razvijemo in razvidno artikuliramo ter dokumentiramo. Kot Meadova in Bateson, Collier ni ločeval znanstvenega in umetniškega načina, temveč upošteval kombiniranje njune moči.

Prve faze Collierjeve raziskovalne metodologije ne sestavlja samo fotografiranje, ampak tudi enako pomembno katalogiziranje kraja, časa, oseb in dejavnosti. Ta praksa označevanja vizualnih artefaktov je nepogrešljiva, če naj bodo kasneje uporabljeni kot vizualni podatki.

Ko je enkrat začetno označevanje zaključeno, se lahko premaknemo v dve smeri:

- lahko vprašamo ljudi, ki so na slikah, da spregovorijo, kaj oni vidijo na fotografijah;
- sami lahko temeljito pregledamo slike in spregovorimo, kaj vidimo.

Spraševanje ljudi o slikah je Collierjeva praksa, ki jo je imenoval foto intervjuvanje. Na Novi Gvineji nisem sistematično uporabljala foto intervjuvanja, ne vedoč v tistem času kako pomembno je to lahko za razumevanje fotografij. Ob nekaterih priložnostih, ko sva sedela s prijateljki Maringi ob fotografijah, so naredili natančno to, kar bi nekdo pričakoval: gledali so fotografije in povedali kaj so pomembnega odkrili.

Nikdar ne bom pozabila, kako sem nekoč želela pojasniti o človeških interakcijah na filmu. Domačini so govorili samo o tem, čigav je bananovec na fotografiji! To bi me moralo opozoriti na dejstvo, da so socialne interakcije in lastništvo bananovca enako pomembne za Maringe in torej za mojo etnografsko študijo. Na žalost se to ni zgodilo. Bila sem premlada študentka, da bi cenila, kar se je dogajalo.

Druge usmeritve, to je samostojnega opazovanja fotografij in izrekovanja, kaj nam pomenijo, se lahko lotimo na različne načine. Ko je Ray Birdwhistell opisal svojo metodologijo konec petdesetih let, je poudaril potrebo po mnogokratnem gledanju slik.

Analiziral je verbalne in gestikularne gibe v trenutkih komuniciranja, posnete na 16 mm zvočni film. Spoznal je, da jih mora gledati spet in spet, da bi zavestno spoznal podrobnosti, ki skupaj ustvarjajo komunikacijo med udeleženci. To je ena oblika tistega, kar je imenoval mikro analiza. Ko je enkrat videl vzorce, je še večkrat ponavljal gledanje, tako da je prvine gibajočih slik, ki jih je videl na platnu, grafično zapisal v večlinearno partituro. To je dobra praksa, pa če partituro ustvarimo ali ne, ker pomaga strukturirati naše gledanje.

UČENJE EDWARDA T. HALLA

Naslednji pristop, ki nama je bil v pomoč pri razumevanju pomenskih ravni v najini fotografiji, je "proksemija" E. T. Halla, pojmovanje, da je uporaba prostora v osebni interakciji kulturno "vzorčena". Na vsaki fotografiji je vidna razdalja med moškimi, ženami in otroki v različnih družbenih položajih.

(Avtorica v nadaljevanju navaja več primerov uporabe prostora na fotografijah, ki jih opisuje kot pokazatelj bogastva opazne proksemične informacije, ki jo lahko artikulirajo fotografije)...in nadaljuje:

Proksemični vzorci Maringov vsebujejo veliko več prostorsko bližnjih interakcij kot severnoameriški in severnoevropski proksemični vzorci. Ker so Maringe navajeni prisotnosti radosodnih in opazujočih otrok v družbenih položajih, se jim ni zdelo čudno, da jih opazujeva. Nasprotno, bili so zadovoljni z najinim zanimanjem za njihove poti in so nama oprostili najine proksemične blodnje.

UČENJE RICHARDA CHALFENA

Vizualne informacije pa ne domujejo samo v fotografijah, ki so jih naredili raziskovalci. Antropologi so razvili sistematični način zajemanja pomenov iz fotografij, ki jih naredijo ljudje, med katerimi raziskujejo. Leta 1980 je Richard Chalfen izdelal metodologijo za študij domače fotografije. Opozoril nas je na pet načinov dogajanja, povezanega s fotografiranjem in na vprašanja, ki jih lahko postavimo tem dogodkom.

V začetku je Chalfen usmeril našo pozornost na tisto, kar imenuje "dogajanje pred kamero v času fotografiranja". O tem postavi naslednja vprašanja: Kakšne vrste vedenje se pojavi pred naperjeno kamero? Kdo ali kaj je verjetno spregledan(o), zanemarjeno ali izločeno? Ali so konvencije za poziranje prepoznane, kritizirane ali kako drugače komentirane?

Maringi, ki niso nikdar prej videli fotografij, so se nama "predstavili" sledeč svojim lastnim konvencijam glede interakcije iz oči v oči. Ker niso imeli pojma o ustvarjanju lastne vizualne podobe, posnete na film, niso "pozirali" v tehničnem smislu, ko sva jih gledala skozi okular, ampak so nadaljevali s svojimi aktivnostmi, medtem ko so naju sprejemali na družbeni ravni.

(Avtorica navaja primere fotografij)...in nadaljuje:

Kot drugo nas je Chalfen opozoril na "načrtovane dogodke". Vprašanja, ki jim jih postavi, vsebujejo: Kdo odloča, kdaj naj se posname fotografija? Koga prosijo, da posname fotografijo? Kdo je lastnik opreme? Ali je pripravljen nekakšen scenarij?

Sama sva bila ustvarjalca fotografske zbirke. Zato lahko najbolje izpričava, kaj se je dogajalo v najinih mislih, ko sva fotografirala pred več kot 30 leti. Zdaj lahko poiščeva, kaj je bil "vizualni sprožilec" za vsako sliko. Včasih je vizualni sprožilec jasno označen v terenskih beležkah, ki so bile često pisane v tandemu. Za druge fotografije ga lahko razbereva iz same slike.

(Avtorica navaja primere fotografij)... in nadaljuje:

Kot tretje Chalfen upošteva "dogajanje za kamero": Kakšne vrste režija je vpletena? Kakšno vedenje je značilno za osebo, ki uporablja kamero?

Ljudi sva usmerjala, naj se ne menijo za kamero. Največ fotografij dokumentira lahkoto s katero so ljudje ignorirali najino prisotnost med fotografiranjem. Dejansko, na začetku, ko so ljudje še gledali v naju, sploh nisva snemala.

Midva pa sva se trudila, da bi se obnašala, kot da sva nevidna. K sreči imava nekaj fotografij, na katerih se vidi, kako je to izgledalo.

(Avtorica navaja primere fotografij)... in nadaljuje:

Kot četrto Chalfen označuje "upravljanje s fotografijami": Ali imajo določene slike za slabe? Če so, kakšni kriteriji so bili uporabljeni za slabo ali dobro? Ali slabih fotografij preprosto ne uporabijo? Ali jih skrivajo? Ali vržejo proč? Ali je vsebina kakorkoli popravljena, npr. z izrezi, barvanjem, praskanjem? Ali dodajajo napise na sliko ali na rob?

Kot peto in zadnje, Chalfen raziskuje "razstavljalne dogodke": Kdaj so slike javno predstavljene? Kako so ti dogodki pripravljeni? Kdo začne, spodbuja ali omejuje te aktivnosti? Kje se to dogaja? Kakšne druge družbene aktivnosti spremljajo prikazovanje slik? Kakšno je družbeno razmerje med ljudmi, ki načrtujejo sliko, ljudmi, ki jih posnamejo ali se pojavijo na sliki in ljudmi, ki slike kažejo oz. jih gledajo?

DIFERENCIRANO VIDENJE

Na vizualno dostopnost pomembno vpliva poznavanje kulture. Dokler nam kultura ni domača, mnoge optično vidne zadeve za nas nimajo pomena. Tako se vizualna dostopnost navezuje na "diferencirano gledanje", ki sem ga omenila na začetku.

V začetnih dneh sva se navduševala nad frizurami in drugimi dekoracijami ljudi. To navdušenje je razvidno iz fotografij in tudi iz zapiskov. Zdaj pa je v tej vrsti slik za naju zanimivo mešanje starosti in sorodstvenih linij ljudi, ki so vidni v skupini. Starostno mešanje je vidno vsakomur,

sorodstveno pa je opazovalcu nevidno, če mu ni domača lokalna družbena organizacija. V tem primeru lahko govorimo o "kulturni nevidnosti".

Diferenciranega gledanja ne privzamemo samo v primeru kulturnih delitev, temveč tudi med trenutki v zgodovini. Slike prvega prihoda na letalsko stezo v Simbai (1963) nama danes predstavljajo soočenje z najinim "prvim stikom". Najin izbor se je osredotočil na ljudi, katerih življenja bova preučevala – na Maringe.

V tistem času se nisva menila za vidni kontekst tega navzkrižno kulturnega srečanja. V Simbaisu je bil tudi misijon z bolnišnico in šolo, vladni urad, policijska služba in trgovine. Nobene fotografije ni o tem.

Drugačen in komplementarni pogled bi se osredotočil na Simbai kot tranzitno cono med zunanjim svetom in najino terensko lokacijo. Simbai je bil jasno srečevališče dveh oblik življenja. Najina fotografska pozornost je bila obrnjena samo v eno smer, proti Maringom in proti virtualni izključitvi evropskega sveta, navkljub dejstvu, da je bil dejansko evropski svet tisti, ki je omogočal kontekst in podporo najinim osebnim naporom in je bil močan magnet zanimanja za same Maringe. Ves čas najinega bivanja sva se osredotočala na tradicionalno življenje Maringov, le občasno sva naredila zavestni zapis trenutkov, za katere sva smatrala, da predstavljajo novo situacijo kulturnega stika.

To nagnjenje k izključitvi evropskega sveta iz najine pozornosti se je nadaljevalo ves čas bivanja. Stik med evropskim svetom in situacijo na terenu bi lahko bil glavni fokus najine raziskave, a ni bilo tako. Glede na antropološko klimo zgodnjih 60. let, ki nama je bila dana, sva usmerila pozornost na kulturo Maringov, ki je bila že na robu radikalne spremembe. Najina trenutna pripravljenost, da pogledava na najino fotografsko zbirko s stališča današnjega zanimanja in da izluščiva številne primere vključevanja evropskih predmetov v življenje Maringov, je eden od primerov vrednosti vizualne dokumentacije in raziskave v antropologiji.

NOVO "RAZSTAVLJALNO DOGAJANJE"

Preden končam, bi rada podala primer "razstavljalnega dogajanja", ki kaže na eno od usmeritev v vizualnih raziskavah. Ta primer zadeva delo Brende Farnell, objavljeno v knjigi in CD-ROM-u. Pozornost nam usmerja tudi k izvornemu vprašanju, ki zadeva umetnost in znanost.

Sledeč vizualnim raziskavam Meadove in Batesona, Brenda Farnell pol stoletja kasneje še močneje poudarja potrebo po obravnavanju navidezne ločitve znanstvenega in umetniškega pristopa.

Njeno preučevanje znakovnega govora prerijskih Indijancev Assiniboine sloni ne samo na okrepjenem terenskem delu in podrobnem video snemanju, pač pa, enako pomembno, na radikalnem preučevanju same antropološke epistemologije. Podobno kot Collier se sprašuje o težavah ki jih imajo kartezijansko usmerjeni zahodnjaški učenjaki, ko skušajo doumevati, za kaj gre v nekartezijanskih kulturah.

Svoječasno je Collier nakazoval, da naj bo čimveč raziskovalčevega razumevanja izrečenega z akademskim besednjakom, kljub dejstvu, da obstajajo morda vidiki, ki preprosto niso ubesedljivi.

Farnellova je šla dlje od Collierja v prikazu metode pridobivanja znanja, ki "ne more biti v celoti prenešeno v verbalno obliko". Vztraja, da je treba prelomiti prevlado verbalno/tekstualnega. Da bi to dosegla, zapisuje geste, ki jih uporabljajo pripovedovalci, paralelno z besedno transkripcijo govorjenega besedila. V ta namen rabi labanotacijo in tako združuje v svoji reprezentaciji vizualne podobe, tiskano besedo in zapis gibov. Kot pri vseh primerih vizualne raziskave je izvorno vizualno gradivo, v tem primeru videotrakovi s pripovedovalci zgodb, samo izhodiščna točka preučevanja.

Nekoč bova z možem končala pregledovanje in analiziranje fotografij z 242 svitkov filma. Najin zadnji korak bo, po Collierjevem nasvetu, sporočanje zaključkov kolegom in širši publiki. Ko sta leta 1942 Mead in Bateson prišla do te faze, sta se morala zanesti na obširno knjigo, ki jo je bilo težko na široko razpečevati. Zdaj, ob koncu 20. stol., bomo zmožni slediti Farnellovi in številnim drugim kolegom. Izdelane so že bile zgoščenke za sporočanje podrobnih analiz kulture Yanomamov (Biella, Chagnon in Seaman 1997) in prerijskih Indijancev (Farnell 1995).

Večpredstavitveni medij se prilagaja analizi in sporočanju večplastnih pojavov, ki jih srečamo pri uporabi vizualnih podatkov v antropološki raziskavi. Čeprav so vizualni podatki "vidni", plasti podatkov, ki jih lahko povlečemo iz njih, sploh niso "očitne".

Zadnjih 50 let je bilo izdelanih mnogo metod, s pomočjo katerih jih preoblikujemo v očitne in razumljive. Intelektualna zadovoljivost teh vizualnih metod je bila doslej spregledana, delno zaradi težav pri razpečevanju obširnih zbirk vizualnega gradiva v času "tiskanega obdobja". Nova tehnološka orodja (računalniki in CD-ROMi) naj bi oskrbela močan zagon za razširjene vizualne študije.

ZAKLJUČEK

In tako se vračamo k trem vprašanjem, zastavljenim na začetku. Na prvega – "Kakšen je pomen vizualnih informacij v znanosti?" – bi odgovorila, da nam resen vstop vizualnega vidika pojava, ki ga preučujemo, dovoljuje poglobiti in razširiti naše razumevanje na nepredvidljive načine. Na drugo vprašanje – "Ali je možno ali v pomoč, če ločimo znanost od umetnosti, ko obravnavamo vizualne informacije?" – lahko odgovorimo odmevno "Ne", posebno če upoštevamo tretje vprašanje – "Ali je vizualna informacija 'očitna?'" Vizualna informacija je očitna samo znotraj konteksta, ki ga delimo z drugimi. Ko se lotimo znanstvene študije, samodejno ustvarjamo nov okvir, preko in izza implicitnega okvira fenomena, kot se pojavlja v vsakdanjem življenju. Glede na to, da je vizualni izdelek utrjen v novem, jasno artikuliranem in definiranim okviru, ga imamo lahko za podatek v znanstveno resni raziskavi. Postopek definiranja in artikulacije lahko vsebuje ne samo objektivne, distancirane in kvantitativne pristope, običajne v znanstveni praksi, pač pa tudi intuitivne, estetske in kvalitativne pristope, ki so jih razvile umetniške discipline.

Prevedel in priredil Naško Križnar