



Drawing and Visualisation Research

DRAWING BELOW THE SURFACE – ELICITING TACIT KNOWLEDGE IN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Carlos Sapochnik ^a

^a Centre for Psycho-Social Studies, University of the West of England

The use of drawing in research has been limited to studies of visual representations produced by the culture observed or illustrations made by the ethnographer recording objects or scenes witnessed, akin to the use of photography. The paper first considers the model provided by the discipline of Infant Observation as developed in the Tavistock tradition and applied to observations in organizational settings. It then considers the production of drawings by the observer/researcher as a mean to access tacit knowledge and unconscious perceptions of which s/he has not been aware due to the work of internal censorship. Findings concerning the approach made in different settings are examined, and the hypothesis advanced by the paper is that drawings of an observation may function as a dream 'shared' by observed and observer. The records can then be explored by the observer with a peer group of researchers producing free associations to the (verbal, written and) drawn accounts produced by the researcher of and about the culture described, thus resulting in richer data.

Published in *TRACEY* | journal

Drawing Knowledge

August 2013

[www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/
sota/tracey/
tracey@lboro.ac.uk](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/sota/tracey/)

Special Edition developed from
selected papers at the
[2012 DRN conference](#)
at Loughborough University

CONTEXT

In order to do interdisciplinary work, it is not enough to take a 'subject' (a theme) and to arrange two or three sciences around it. Interdisciplinary study consist in creating a new subject, which belongs to no one. (Barthes 1986: 72)

While drawing from observation is traditionally considered an art form and therefore a practice within aesthetics, this paper foregrounds drawings as records made in a (visual) language. It explores the research potential of such representations towards making sense of a situation observed – where the observer is also, and inevitably, an active participant. However, such visual records are not neutral and, therefore, problematic.

The paper refers to the use of ethnography as its main tool, with the starting assumption that all utterances, texts or visual representations may be fruitfully explored for the data provided by their connotations rather than just as denotations (Barthes 1977: 42 ff, Potter 1996: 74), paying attention to the poetics of language, as well as to the prose of narratives.

Every metaphor-oriented activity is an attempt at some form of integration, whether organized or chaotic in content and appearance. The intention is to place drawing alongside the hermeneutics of dreaming, writing, interpreting and knowing. Like an aspect of dreams, the paper may also be an attempt at wish-fulfilment (Freud 1900: 122 ff) in the midst of an, alas, inevitably fragmented experience.

Methodological bases

The term ethnography (from *ethno*, 'culture' + *graphos*, 'writing'), refers to a qualitative research method based on the description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system through examining the group's observable and learned patterns (Creswell 1998: 58). The objective of ethnographic research is the exploration of a culture to understand it in its idiosyncrasies. This requires that the culture is engaged with in its own environment, through a prolonged observation of the subject(s) at their ordinary activities, when their culture can be best experienced.

Ethnography is both a science of the particular and a source for defining universal, human phenomena, connecting sequences of ethnographic observations by relating them to the cultural whole. This integration is distinct from statistical totalization or summation, and is

arrived at by the ethnographer's immersion in the field, developing an empathy for the subject observed. Clifford noted that the professional anthropologist is supposed to successfully 'infiltrate the expressional universe of the other' (1986: 100).

However, the *other* will not be conveyed in a total transparency that can be expressed in words, because of the limitations imposed by language as an arbitrary system of signs based on differences. Words do not derive their meaning by standing in for things in the world, connecting an object with a sign for the object. According to de Saussure (1974) terms derive their sense from sets of relationships and contrasts, and the concepts used by a culture are not determined by *facts*. Facts (from L. *facere*, make) are accounts of perceptions, and are not solely derived from observation. As Potter (1996) argues

The idea that facts are a product of observation (the doctrine of empiricism) is so taken for granted, and so fundamental to scientists' understanding of their current practice, that is difficult indeed to resist viewing it as self-evident. Indeed, both our scientific and everyday language of knowledge and understanding are permeated with visual metaphors: looking for the truth, seeing the point, viewing it as self-evident, and so on. Yet this idea of knowledge based on observation [...] is not something natural; it has been built over a long period.' (p. 20)

Although ethnographers make detailed written notes (Clifford & Marcus 1986, Hammersley 1990, 1992) during the event as field notes, and these are used to discover, connect and make sense of the data obtained through observation in writing ethnographic accounts, these accounts have to be problematized, as they are always caught in the invention rather than the (transparent) representation of culture. As Clifford (1986: 7) points out, 'even the best ethnographic texts – serious, true fictions – are systems or economies of truth.'

Systems psychodynamics as ethnographic practice

Informed by both systemic (Lewin 1947a, 1947b, Miller & Rice 1967) and psychoanalytic thinking – Wilfred Bion, Melanie Klein, and others – the organizational consultancy training developed at the Tavistock Clinic has incorporated the method of Infant Observation proposed by Bick (1964, 1968, 1986). This consists in the observer negotiating a weekly meeting of one hour at the same time of day over an extended period (30 weeks to two years), to observe the interaction between a baby with their mother (and the rest of the family if they are present), in whatever activity (or inactivity) they may be engaged during

that particular period, noticing anything that either of them appear to be doing, as well as any feelings experienced by the observer him/herself. The observer aims to register the emotional tone of their exchanges, their style of engagement, differentiating over time what seems to be internal and external physical and emotional facts. After each observation s/he writes a detailed untheorized account of anything and everything seen, not as a composed piece but as an immediate rough description. This report is then discussed at a weekly seminar with peers and a supervisor, exploring the emotional undertones of the experience, assisted by the other participants' contribution to explore the narrative, the feelings that it evokes in narrator and listeners, in order to develop (over time) hypotheses about the phenomenon (the baby, the mother, and their relationship) being observed.

The Infant Observation method fosters an analytical attitude by developing the practitioner's

- sensitivity to emotion;
- capacity for reverie and the ability to tolerate anxiety, uncertainty, discomfort, helplessness and bombardment;
- ability to test an hypothesis over time;

and the introduction of the concepts of transference (the subject's re-creation of their own inner world into the observer) and countertransference (the elements in the observer's feelings which seem determined by projections from the observed or from one's research participants, colleagues, etc. (Rustin 1989: 20).

This 'frame' plainly has some similarities with that of clinical psychoanalysis. The insistence on a reliable and consistent observational setting is intended to serve some of the same purposes [...], its constant features makes it possible [...] to identify significant variations in what [is observed], and to reflect upon the possible causes and implications of such variances.' (Rustin 1997: 95)

Similarly, organizational observation training requires the practitioner to notice not only what happens in the setting, that is, all the relationships as the actual connections amongst participants, including the observer, but also any perceived relatedness (i.e., the emotional impact of those relationships may have, with reference to unconscious and contextual determinants) that may be in evidence amongst members and the observer, paying particular attention to his/her countertransference. Notes are not taken during the

session in order to assist a free-floating attention as described by Freud, which 'consists simply in not directing one's notice to anything in particular and in maintaining the same 'evenly-suspended attention' ... in the face of all that one hears.' (Freud 1912: 111) or recommended by Bion as 'without memory or desire' (Bion 1970: 41 ff.). The unconscious, in fact, does its own thinking.

Building on the work of Hollway and Jefferson (2000a), Clarke (2002) suggests ways in which psychoanalytic tools and concepts may enhance traditional ethnographic research methods by addressing unconscious forces and motivations, adding another level of analysis to sociological research providing a deeper understanding of both individual and social experience. According to Clarke (2002: 177), key elements of the method are a minimum of intervention from the researcher, encouraging free association which allows unconscious ideas to come to the fore, and the awareness that the researcher is not a psychoanalyst, so that no psychoanalytic interpretations are entertained in the interface with respondents, but psychoanalytic understanding is applied to the analysis of the data. The ethnographic account is, in fact, a narrative constructed by the researcher from the consciously and unconsciously perceived data from the situation observed. Aspects are foregrounded or relegated, and it is not just its content, but also its form that constitute the ethnography.

The intention is not to avoid contaminating the narrative emerging from the observation of the subject by the researcher's choices in the narrative, but to suspect and make use of the 'contamination' as potentially significant, exposing the workings of projective identification. This is a psychological mechanism originally conceptualized by Klein (1946) who described it as one of the earliest defence mechanisms of the self, by which one transfers thoughts, feelings and emotions onto someone else. Because it involves expelling unwanted and disowned parts of the self into an other, making them feel the way we do, this impacts on the way one thinks and feels about others – as well as how others are made to feel. Bion (1962: 31) further developed the concept by considering it an intersubjective phenomenon for unburdening the psyche of accretion of stimuli, and the origin of thinking and communication. Ogden (1979) concluded that projective identification is a type of defence, a mode of communication, a primitive form of object relations, and a pathway for psychological change.

However, the predominant metaphors in anthropological research have presupposed a standpoint outside – looking at, objectifying or, somewhat closer, ‘reading’ a given reality. (Clifford & Marcus 1986: 11). What has been left out of the text to assure objectivity, whether in words or images, have been its poetics, that is, paying attention not only to its content but to its form. But even forms (as images) may be approached from the perspective of the analogon (the metonymic axis) as in the traditional use of images in ethnography.

Image-making in ethnography

There is a long tradition in the use of images in psychological evaluations, where the subject being investigated may be shown naturalistic yet ambiguous representations of a scene and encouraged to construct a narrative, such as in the Thematic Apperception Test (Cramer 2004), or the Rorschach test, consisting of a set of cards featuring irregular shaped inkblots and the subject is asked to describe the objects or scenes that the inkblots may suggest (Gleitman 1981: 677). These and several similar test have scoring guidelines to arrive at an evaluation or diagnosis.

Another use for drawings to generate data is regularly applied in forensic settings as a way to have access willingly or unwillingly guarded data. The well-known identikit test is another instance where a subject is shown alternative features of a face, either in drawing or photographic form, towards reconstructing the likeness of a person to be identified.

However, drawings, because of their affinity with play, have been used since early in child psychotherapy (Di Leo 1973 & 1983, Furth 1988, Meadows 1993), both as a diagnostic tool and as a tool for treatment. Art therapy with children and adults, while working with psychodynamic concepts, has tended to make emphasis on the creativity of the individual in respect of artefact-making and its potential to assist emotional healing in the patient.

In ethnographic research visual approaches have been largely confined to documenting a culture’s artefacts with illustrations done by the ethnographer, or research of visual material produced by the subjects (Pink et al 2004). Departing from this, Ramos (2004) has used his drawings of situations observed to check with the subjects the accuracy of his comprehension of their culture.

Within systems psychodynamic consultancy and coaching, the use of visual representations is a well-established practice where clients are asked to produce drawings of their organization (Mersky 2008, Nossal 2003) that allow client (whether an individual or a group) and consultant to consider and reflect on the client's tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1966) about the organization that thus becomes explicit and therefore available to thinking. Unlike propositional knowledge (knowing that such and such is the case), tacit knowledge is that which we are not aware we possess (e.g., knowing somebody's face) and, although we can apply it (recognize that face), we may find difficult or impossible to articulate how we know – we know more than we can tell.

While 'drawing' refers to two-dimensional representations, the term is used in this paper to allude to any visual representation that is immediate (unlike 'measured' drawing, printmaking or carving) that, once made, tends to be left uncorrected. Such images are spontaneous – and therefore connected with the capacity to play (Winnicott 1971) – and may allow a less self-censored and therefore more revealing description of a situation than what words can offer, providing a way into the unconscious of the client and of his/her organization. Some drawings, in the process of their making, may be worked over by further marks, but the initial marks are left either as they were made, or erased yet still visible, and these are known as *pentimenti* (from L. *paenitere*, repent), as earlier or underlying images that show through, as the unconscious may do when noticed in conscious life, through parapraxes, forgetfulness, or symptoms.

The use of image-making in ethnography proposes both activities as distinct if conjoined. They are (with exceptions, such as described by Ramos 2004) made by the subject, and the researcher, ethnographer, or organizational consultant may explore both their manifest and latent content. Yet the practice of 'ethnographic image-making', which will be described below, proposes the making and exploration of representations that are in themselves a form of ethnography, co-constructed in the space between the subject observed and the researcher, the latter operating as both observer and visual scribe.

ETHNOGRAPHIC IMAGE-MAKING

Narrative style must switch at this point, from the impersonal to the first singular pronoun, to be able to describe the use of myself as a tool. Though I am in professional practice as

an organizational consultant, I have been trained as a designer, and as such I am conversant with the use of drawing in sketching to record ideas or to develop graphic, product, or architectural solutions. However, the process described below made evident that, although drawing skill undoubtedly had an impact on form and therefore content of representations, it was not the mimetic accuracy of a drawing as ‘invariants’ (Bion 1965: 1) as an analogue or replica of the appearance of an object or scene that was of relevance, but the drawing’s potential to (at least, to some extent) circumvent the work of internal censorship and allow access to more elusive sources of meaning.

Using drawings in a research project

While engaged in a doctoral research project investigating the impact of group dynamics on the creativity of architectural design teams, I employed participant observation, informed by Bick’s approach to infant observation as described above. Ethnographic observation provided the best access to the design negotiations within teams of architects, which varied in number of individuals but were mostly constant for the same set of observations. Furthermore, their discussions were (by previous agreement) audio recorded, transcribed and explored through conversation analysis (Sacks *et al* 1974, ten Have 2007, Heritage 1997). A schedule of six sessions at regular intervals were negotiated with the architectural group being observed, and each observation was to last not longer than one hour. I arrived on time, took a seat at a pre-agreed position on the margins of the meeting but sufficiently close to be able to see and hear the group discussing and drawing on architectural plans. I took no notes and remained silent throughout the session, which I would write up later the same day, before listening to the recording of the session.

At one point, further to writing notes, making diagrams and transcribing audio recordings of the observations, I began to make a drawing after each session, neither avoiding nor aiming at description, trying to draw the observation without an intention in my conscious mind, trying to bracket memory (what I knew about the subject) and desire (for a pleasant drawing, for good research). While familiar with the process of sketching from life, I was confronted by uncertainties. Why make drawings? Was I depicting what I had observed, or illustrating the emotional undercurrent of the event, or making self-referential representations of the experience of observing? Was I pretending to be an artist? Was I drawing as an illustrator? Would (should?) the drawings be naturalistic, accurate, clever and/or beautiful? Would the drawings (i.e., myself) be liked?

After an initial uncomfortable self-awareness phase I felt more able to be less critical of the drawings as I became curious about the process. I noticed that I

- paid particular attention in the drawing to the spatial distribution of the group and myself in the room, as well as the placement of my digital recorder, and to the features of the room, lighting and furniture;
- allowed myself inconsistencies (e.g., of scale, or drawing style) amongst the elements of the drawing;
- left things out of the representation and emphasized others – unintentionally;
- avoided composing the drawing in my mind, and tried not to know what I was going to draw until I had actually drawn it;
- worked relatively fast to avoid making deliberate choices;
- did not erase or make corrections, allowing hesitations or changes of mind to appear in the drawing, striving for a result as uncensored as I could manage, even if aware that cultural- and self-censorship (my own unconscious) are always active;
- initially made a single drawing for each session because it seemed that by making more than one would take me to refine the subsequent ones into more deliberate (aesthetically-aware) and, therefore, more censored statements;
- allowed myself to make what I might have considered ugly or bad drawings for the sake of being more truthful to my experience;
- made the drawing immediately or soon after the event – like making notes of a dream on waking up. However, in the occasions in which I was unable to draw the observation for a couple of days I felt that the delay did not seem to affect the intensity of the drawing though I had to recall the event, bringing memory (and perhaps further distortion) into the drawing;
- would initially write the observation notes first, but then noticed that doing so somehow organized a brief for the drawing that would follow. Thereafter I drew before writing the notes and thus felt more able to avoid staging (and controlling) what my drawing would be about;
- postponed making transcripts of the audio recordings so that they played no part in the drawing process;
- preferred a large rather than small paper size to allow for greater expressive freedom and spontaneity;
- kept paper size constant (selecting A4 as both large and practicable for later photocopying and systematic filing), as well as paper type (rough cartridge, though this changed later) and medium (soft black pencil, although this also changed) in order to limit the number of variables;
- felt the need both to express (convey affect) and to record factual information, e.g., number of people, position in the room, their gender, preferred individual features, (e.g., spectacles, hair, style of dress, bare arms), etc. Details would allow me later

to recognize and differentiate the participants when looking at my drawing, for the same reason that we refer to group participants by name (actual or disguised) when we make written notes;

- allowed (i.e., did not censor) idiosyncratic points of interest, such as paying particular attention in one drawing to the shoes of the architects more than to any other feature;
- wondered about mimesis and drawing differently, i.e., less naturalistically, than I normally do as a designer, or even producing abstractions. However, I had to accept that I did have a limited representational range and, at last at this stage, would have to allow myself to work within it rather than aim at controlling it;
- decided that the drawings were not to be shown to the group observed, (reasons for this are discussed in section 6 below) which released me from the anxiety of capturing likeness or producing embarrassing or disturbing scenes. Whether I found that people had been represented as pleasant, ugly, comical, menacing or absurd became a point of interest rather than a failure of representation;
- pondered (as every/any text implies a conception of a reader) who was the hypothetical viewer of my drawing (my own 'viewer-in-the-mind' (cf. Armstrong 2005: 52) – whether the group observed, peer consultants, supervisors, the (eventual) external examiner of the doctorate, artists alive or dead, my teachers, parental imagos – i.e., myself(s);
- considered the position and relevant importance given to the representing of myself in the drawing (or even whether I should be represented at all), pondering whether I was not depicting a scene viewed from behind the screen of a systemic therapy room (Egan 2010).
- felt comfortable with my own choice of materials, which I kept consistent, though it seemed equally possible to use any drawing medium, wet or dry, monochrome or colour, or even plasticine or clay, providing that the selected medium would allow the speed of making the drawing to keep up with the pace of recalling the observation. However, all representations are contrived (i.e., constructed) and produced with the involvement of the unconscious, which censors but also proposes alternatives.

But how could I derive meaning from my own drawings?

A peer-supervision drawing seminar

Because the approach described above seemed natural and hence unquestionable to me, I lacked the necessary distance to make sense of the images. I hypothesized that sharing the experience with a group of similarly interested colleagues might highlight different practices and provide a setting for the interpretation of the material thus produced. The

intention was to explore tacit knowledge that may have been coded and remained under the surface which, however, had been unconsciously registered and represented. The group, as an Other to the observer, could attempt to translate it from the imaginary realm by turning it into the symbolic, i.e., into language. In 2009, I described the project to and was joined by a group of eight organizational consultants trained in the Tavistock model of organizational consultancy to form a peer discussion group of members' observations or consultations where, instead of bringing written notes made after sessions, the material for discussion would be exclusively drawings.

No drawing skills were required from the seminar participants, and the consultants' skills were, by accident rather than design, very diverse, ranging from rudimentary to highly developed. The representations were to be made in whatever style the consultant felt comfortable with. The only commitment was to produce representations as intently as possible – and as uncensored as possible – and to then engage in the discussion of their possible meanings. This would provide the necessary 'triangular space' (Britton 1989: 86) encompassing Self, Drawing, and Other, to make sense of the material, partially lacking when one works on one's own. The group members would operate as respectful and sensitive interlocutors who would aim at functioning in reverie, letting their imagination and free associations respond to the images shown 'without memory or desire', and to then conjecture – aloud – for the benefit of the draughtsperson, who might then make sense of what could be under the surface of the formal description offered by her/his drawing. The group would be looking for connotations – the ideas or feelings (affects) that the marks invoked – behind, beyond, and with the assistance of, denotations – the indicative, apparently literal meaning which, like words organized in systems of discourse, we are always forced to use and, in turn, are used by. Discourses, whether in language or in other symbolic forms such as images, are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972: 49).

The presenters would bring a series of 5–6 drawings, each made very soon after a consultation meeting. Size, medium (pencil, ink, paint), support (paper, canvas, corrugated cardboard) and style (naturalistic, schematic, diagrammatic, symbolic) were entirely left to the individual. Representations varied in medium and size, dexterity and intention, focus and mode of production, including one consultant working on electronic bricolage. The sessions were not ostensibly chaired and were audio recorded. The method agreed

required the presenter to briefly explain the context of the event recorded in the drawings (type of organization, roles of participants), display their set of drawings, and listen (in silence, for a set period) to whatever free associations the group would verbalize without knowing the narrative of the observation. Then the presenter discussed associations, provided data to confirm, disagree, ponder, question, or comment on the interventions offered by the seminar, followed by a discussion of the dynamics that might have been in operation in the consultation.

We noticed that

- representational technique was indeed immaterial. Drawings were produced in black & white and in colour, either in markers, ball-point pen, pencil and electronic media;
- all drawings, at least to some extent, provided a representation of the event (e.g., some reference to the number of or relationship amongst participants), but the language varied from the aerial view of a meeting where each participant was a different kind of doodle; scenes arranged as orthographic elevations with all the rooms of a building shown in a transversal section with their occupants; metaphoric representations (e.g., country flags indicating different nationalities, or objects floating within an undefined space); perspective drawings from a constant (e.g., slightly above the observer's position) or varying viewpoint, etc.;
- visual language was a personal trait and representation styles ranged through abstractions, diagrams, cartoons, match-stick people, naturalistic drawings, allegories and internet stock photographs.

During the discussions the peer group worked sensitively enhancing each others' production of associations – and also at times it colluded to bring thinking to a halt. Some questions emerged:

- Would some drawings or a particular consultant attract greater responses from the group?
- Would hypotheses about the organization result from the associations?
- Would hypotheses be of use to the consultant on continuing work with that particular client group?

The limited number of meetings that took place, though useful to help us pose these and other questions, were insufficient to address them in full. However, the tacit knowledge of the consultant about the client observed was at times brought to the fore, when the group called attention to conflicts and tensions absent from the verbal narrative yet suggested by

the drawings – i. e., the contrast between the organization as verbally described and visually represented either by content or form of representation in, for instance

- the relatedness (see p. 4 above) depicted amongst the persons observed (e.g., by proximity, or distance);
- issues of power and control – e.g., the repetition of time-keeping devices, the relative size and/or detail of persons depicted;
- the symbolic significance of the size and position of objects (such as the enormous or size of a meeting room table, room, or building, or the claustrophobia as shown by the tightness and proximity of the objects and people depicted;
- the inclusion of apparently irrelevant visual information by including (apparently) excessive detail and, conversely, the omissions that help to make explicit ambiguities in participants roles and feelings;
- situations and emotions unnoticed by the consultant before listening to the seminar's associations, such as competition, sexual attraction, confusion, etc.

It must be noted that such ethnographic drawings are made after the event by recalling it, without the possibility of checking the accuracy of the representation with the motif (the situation) represented. Because the motif has to be imagined (it is not present to the senses), tacit thinking can contribute in deviating the representation from what would have been a more conventional realistic analogue.

Assisting the development of observational skills

Since 2010 the method has been introduced to successive cohorts of postgraduate students undertaking an organizational observation module at the Tavistock Clinic. The students negotiate entry to an organization (fire stations, businesses, hospital departments, bus depots, care homes, etc.), and undertake ten observations within it, producing drawings and notes after each session. A tutor assists small seminars to make meaning from the experience of the individual's experience as observe, by the seminar group offering their free associations to the visual material, and reflections on and discussion of the experience reported by the presenter towards making an overall sense of each organization observed.

The students experience has confirmed that artistic merit or representational accuracy of the drawings is immaterial – in fact, the less schooled the draughtsperson, the lesser control (repression) on the content. Developed drawing skills may frame the representation within a particular visual schema and hence help to obscure meaning. The lower the

authority conferred to the drawing by naturalistic representational skills, the lesser the pressure on the group to attend to particular visual cues, allowing freer associations to the visual material as a whole.

Responses to questionnaires have indicated that

- the visualization of the observation gives the process greater depth and individualization and increase the observer's understanding of the organisation, including considering the uneasy process of making the drawing, which provides information about both observer and organization – the drawing functions as a representation of the situation observed but also of the internal space of the observer and the impact of one on the other;
- drawings add enrichment to the observational experience as a whole, and help to consider how the observer viewed, on an immediate 'unprocessed' level, the organization at work, and on the position s/he was 'placed in' by the organization and 'responded to' as an observer;
- rather than the draughtsperson's own reflections it is the other seminar member's' comments on the drawings which has the greatest impact in developing understanding of the organization observed;
- the process does not replace written notes, which are still essential for retaining the detail and memory of the experience.

A difficulty of the task seems to be the initial hesitation to work in a 'childish' medium ('but, I do not know how to draw!'), and also to draw without focus or explicit representational intention, which are eventually overcome by all students. However, the use they made of the drawings and associations from the group in their subsequent essays vary. The role of the tutor facilitates the process by both containing the distress of the group as it makes contact with the many unconscious at work (in the organization, the observer, the members of the seminar) and also keeps the group at its task, dispelling attachment to the imaginary aspect of the drawing by draining it (as if changing containers) into its symbolic dimension.

DRAWING AS PRACTICE AND LANGUAGE

As it occurs in language with phonemes (the smallest language particle that makes up a word), drawing is affected by the graphemes in use, hence drawing with a soft medium, such as charcoal or an 8B pencil will tend to lead the practitioner to bolder descriptions of volume by shading, while drawings made with a hard medium, such as an 9H pencil, or pen and ink, may emphasize outlines and surface detail. Drawing, because of its connection

with motor muscular impulses, is connected with primitive functioning. Hence the difference between drawing and photography because in the act of drawing one selects detail with greater intent than through taking a photograph.

All acts of drawing, and specially all acts of sketch drawing, entail a great deal of selection of features for inclusion and features for omission, and of features for direct representation and features for transmutation. All of this is achieved through rapid and sustained mental cycling between external reality (or imagined reality), cognitive model and external representation. (Archer 1997: 40)

Speech and writing are two of the many ways of producing descriptions of the world, and are dependent on language. The production of visual accounts of a situation observed is one other instance of language, with an apparently different semantics and grammar. The way in which we employ language in our discussions affects the connotative meanings of the words. Words are inscribed in a system of signification as language and discourses and, as such, they modify our view of the world and construct our perceptions.

Biggs (2002) has discussed the relationship of text and artefacts in respect of research within art and design practice, but his argument is apposite to the use of drawings in ethnography:

Art and design is advanced using both text and artefacts. Agrest calls these 'registers' (Agrest in Allen, 2000: 164). Each has the capability to represent some aspects of a concept but not others. These concepts are critically analysed by rewriting and remaking, etc. Agrest claims that neither of these registers is comprehensive, which is why art and design uses them both. Practice-based research also adopts this assumption. It assumes that neither writing alone, nor making alone, are sufficient to represent a whole concept. It would be easy to act as though theory is synonymous with text and practice is synonymous with artefacts. (Biggs 2002: 113)

Drawings from observation are not records of something observed. They are constructions. As Rawson (1969: 21) has pointed out, drawing is not seeing but making use of the lexicon(s) and discourse(s) available in the culture. Just as a culture speaks its language and writes its texts according to canons of speech or writing, practitioners draw and

perceive as determined by the vertex from where they are positioned. Current beliefs about how children draw emphasize the primacy of memory, rather than observation (Smith 1983). In fact,

All great drawing is drawn from memory. That is why it take so long to learn. If drawings were transcription, a kind of script writing, it could be taught in a few years. Even before a model, you draw from memory. The model is a reminder. Not of a stereotype that you know by heart. Not even of anything that you can consciously remember. The model is a reminder of experiences you can only formulate and therefore only remember by drawing. And those experiences add up to the sum total of your awareness of the tangible, three-dimensional, structural world. (Berger 1958: 56)

Drawing from a memory of the event is ideational thinking in the present though one draws the seen (experienced) in the past. It offers a hands-on experiential process of articulation of a representation that combines (shows) what was seen, remembered, forgotten, imagined, mythologized, and known.

What is unique to drawing, unlike in photography, is the immediacy with which it is sequentially produced in front of one's eyes by imagining (that is, creating mental images of what is not yet available to the senses). Thus, imagination and the object interact with each other. Drawings may allow the viewer to notice the sequence of the journey through the making of the drawing as decisions have to be made, and the sequence through the drawing is a part of its meaning.

...through the act of drawing we are not only left a trace of the physical act but the trace of the thinking process, as images or marks are made manifest, and evidently expose decisions, indecisions and indiscretions of this thinking 'out loud'. The 'touch' or imprint of a mark reveals whether it was made at speed, slowly, angrily, with love, with force, tentatively, 'stuttering-ly', gently, or as a notation [...] The materials used to make the marks, and the surface on which the marks are made also inform us, not just about the period and timescale in which a drawing was made but the intention at the outset (Taylor 2008: 10)

Just as speech acts are dependant on the system within which they acquire their meaning, ability in drawing is dependant on what does the particular visual language prioritize. Graffiti, which for many of us may be a vast repetitious mass of signatures, for the observer familiar with the codes they will reveal as a variety of skills and qualities.

As mentioned above, a common occurrence when first using this method is the draughtsperson's concern about their drawing ability. Atkinson (1999: 8) has argued that although assessing drawings from observation appears to be about judging an ability to represent views of the world, the assessment itself is in fact the product of 'a particular discourse of visuality'.

DRAWING FROM THE UNCONSCIOUS

What happens when I make a drawing from an observation? My hypothesis is that the meaning of the situation (in the observation) must of necessity be repressed and obscured by the group observed but, also and simultaneously, communicated to me in the form of transference and projections. It then may (and this is a possibility rather than a certainty) be 'articulated' unconsciously by me into/through the drawing because 'what is repressed insists: it keeps coming back.' (Fink 2005: 566).

The drawing offers a transitional space (Winnicott, belonging both to the draughtsperson and to the 'reality' (the subject of the observation) depicted as a representation.

*part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, is an intermediate area of **experiencing**, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated. (Winnicott [1971] 2005: 3, original emphasis)*

Desire is inscribed in the making of the representation, guiding the shapes, digging into the object, constructing it in the intangible space between object and observer. Hence observation is never innocent or objective, because it is libidinally charged, both drawing out (from the object) and drawing in (by the observer).

Barthes (1982: 26) describes two parallel elements that he perceived at work concerning his relationship to photographic representations. The *studium* is a kind of general (metonymic) extension of the field, manifest through a commitment or interest largely originating in culture through which the spectator participates, as the way that images are made in the language of the drawing, returning the learned expectations the viewer may have. The *punctum*, on the other hand, is a prick, a (metaphoric?) irruption that bruises or punctures the viewer, that is poignant to him/her. Applying these ideas to drawings, it is by opening to the *punctum*, acknowledging the discontinuity it introduces that the meaning of the observation and its drawing can be investigated. The viewer may be politely curious about the drawing (from the *studium*) but the *punctum* will dislodge the surface narrative, giving access to the drawing below the surface of the drawing, to the meaning below the surface of the representational text of the drawing.

The unconscious must not be considered exclusively from a psychoanalytic viewpoint as there are other perspectives that propose the existence of a 'cognitive unconscious',

a fundamentally adaptive system that automatically, effortlessly, and intuitively organizes experience and directs behavior. Unlike the thinking of Freud, who assumed that all information (other than that acquired during a preverbal period) would be conscious in the absence of repression, the new concept holds that most information processing occurs automatically and effortlessly outside of awareness because that is its natural mode of operation, a mode that is far more efficient than conscious, deliberative thinking. (Epstein 1994: 710)

ETHNOGRAPHIC DRAWINGS AS A SHARED DREAM

Freud's (1900) conception of the function of dreams as primarily energy discharging to satisfy wish-fulfilment has undergone limited modification, although there have been notable amplifications by Klein (1930), Bion (1962) and others. Freud's four fundamental rules guiding the formation of dreams are:

- **displacement** – an idea is invested with intense feelings which originally belonged elsewhere. This takes place because consciousness finds the original object of these feelings unacceptable. Thus they undergo repression and appear disguised, i.e., displaced to another object. Displacement corresponds to metonymy by establishing connections between words that bind incongruous phantasies;

- **condensation** – thoughts that are contradictory may persist side by side, disguised as a combination of two ideas, as in metaphor;
- **conditions of representability** – dreams represent ideas and feelings in images. Hence, in dreams, ideas can be representations of things, and objects or situations represent feelings;
- **secondary revision** – the dreamer attempts to organize the dream narrative to make it intelligible as an account in words, but also to further disguise its meaning.

‘The work that transforms latent thoughts into manifest dream content is called dream work. The work that operates in the opposite direction is the work of interpreting the dream. The manifest content is what the dreamer remembers. The latent content is what gives the dream its meaning.’ (Perelberg 2000: 9)

However, interpretation of the dream – by inference and construction through exploring its network of associations – even if fruitful, can never fully undo the dream work. As Freud (1900: 111) indicated, ‘There is at least one spot in every dream which it is unplumbable – a navel, as it were, that is its point of contact with the unknown.’

A characteristic of dreams is their lack of words, they operate entirely at the level of images. Symington (1986: 97) has described the dream-maker as ‘a painter who has a message – an idea or theme – to convey but no words, and his materials are paint brush and canvas.’

In effect, the drawings I made from the observations seemed to function as a dream, concealing, condensing and displacing but also registering and representing. I experienced the observation – and afterwards dreamt the drawing. Hence, it could not be drawn on site during the observation because I would have inevitably tried to maintain correlations between my visual field and my notation, correcting or censoring the elements I select or prioritize to notice in my visual field, whatever marks I made.

Hence drawings may play a processing role equivalent to dreaming (Bion 1962 & 1990, Flanders 1993, Ogden 2005) also because drawings may provide representability at a more primitive level of consciousness than words, that is, closer to the unconscious, by-passing censorship.

Freud holds the censorship to be a permanent function: it constitutes a selective barrier between the unconscious system on the one hand and the preconscious-conscious on the other, and thus it is placed at the point of origin or repression. [...]

Freud does not see the censorship as working only between the unconscious and the preconscious, but also between the preconscious and consciousness. He assumes 'that to every transition from one system to that immediately above it (that is, every advance to a higher stage of psychical organization) there corresponds a new censorship. (Laplanche & Pontalis 1973: 66)

Social dreaming has been presented as a discovery (Lawrence 1998) rather than as the development of a viewpoint. At every social dreaming meeting or matrix the convenor reminds the participants that the focus of the inquiry is 'the dream and not the dreamer'. While the intention is to move the investigation of the material from the individual dreamer to the group, the dream becomes thus objectified. Mersky (2008, 2012) has expanded the social dreaming matrix by proposing the potential for social dream-drawing. Social Dreaming is predicated on the belief of the existence of a 'collective unconscious' and social dream-drawing invites members of a group to draw their dreams to be explored by free association and amplification (connecting the dream to the context of the various systems that may be discerned) to make sense of emotions in the life of the group.

However, the use of ethnographic image-making intends to provide access to the Real of the group which remains outside symbolization (Fink 1997) through engaging the unconscious of the observer/researcher/consultant with the unconscious of the group observed. This co-production (if it can indeed be described in this way) functions as a jointly produced dream, available in manifest form, requiring the work of interpretation of the material to explore possible tacit and unconscious knowledge – without recurring to the group observed, in order to minimize the work of censorship. The observer is akin to the 'interpreter' of a musical piece, but the 'interpretation' itself (i.e., assigning possible meaning) is attempted within the peer supervision group to which the observer brings the drawings for discussion. However, the notion of assigning meaning must be considered problematic, as it seems to imply that the meaning is encrypted in the drawing when, in fact it is the process (drawing as action, rather than artefact) that assists tapping into unconscious and tacit knowledge. Rather than the artefact, it is the process of production and interpretation that facilitates greater understanding on the dynamics of the group observed.

ETHICAL CONCERNS

An area for further elaboration is the ethical dimension of working with drawings in respect of the 'use' of the observed. Who are drawings shown to, or imagined being seen by, requires consideration. Drawings of others and using those drawings for interpretation may be an intrusion, even if consensual. Stepping out of role, showing the drawings to the observed implies a belief in the drawing as evidence. This is paradoxical, because it may be useful as evidence, over time.

It is because of this that I decided that the drawings were not to be shown to the group observed because they were my private meditations, where I should feel enabled (i.e., allowed) to work without morality, by exploring my ruminations, unclear whether they were mine and/or the group's. Because of this, no images have been included in this essay, to avoid their dissemination through electronic media, where they could be seen by the subjects of my observations. The observed group must be protected from the observer's unfiltered representations, where what may be his/hers and what belongs to the situation observed has not yet been differentiated and conceptualized.

However, the protection applies not only to the observed but from the dissemination of any kind of unfiltered record of the states of mind of the observer. Having an eventual actual viewer in mind would limit the drawer's freedom to imagine uncensored. Censorship is at work even if we do not want it to be, by default, by excess. Protecting my mind from making its images explicit, protects those to whom I have a responsibility for their wellbeing, but also gives me a boundary and hence, potential for greater depth in the exploration.

CONCLUSION

At this stage, the working hypothesis is that if an organizational consultant, researcher or ethnographer (these roles have similarities) makes visual representations (trying to make explicit to minimize internal censorship) in response to an event, s/he may function as a sensitive instrument that notices and records what may be 'under the surface' of the observation, making tacit knowledge accessible to elaboration.

Time and continuity, as in infant observation, are a necessity to perceive and make sense. Any conclusions arrived at before the 'fullness of time' are in the realm of the imaginary, and drawings (same as gestures, words or writing) may be intriguing as produced by the

observer or inferred by the viewer rather than an elaboration and clarification of the situation observed.

One of the pitfalls of an emphasis on the discourse of art is the reification of creativity (Sapochnik 2010), where artefact-making is idealized and drawings become the embodiment of creativity. However, considering creativity as rooted in the practice of art restricts the perception of its occurrence across all other areas of human experience. Winnicott stated the necessity of separating the idea of creation from works of art, proposing that ‘creativity belongs not to the manufacture of artefacts but to the engagement of the individual with external reality’ (Winnicott 1971: 79). Creativity results from the innate capacity to translate (re-present) concepts into symbols and to articulate thoughts in language, manifested in every human endeavour – in art, science, education, industry and trade – towards improvement and transformation.

Careful and consistent use of visual image-making by the researcher, further amplified by discussion within a collegial seminar (from L. *seminarium*, breeding ground, nursery) has a contribution to make – and this seems sustained by the experience so far, although it still requires further and rigorous consideration.

REFERENCES

- Archer, L. B. (1997) Drawing as a tool for designers. In Moscovitch, T. (ed.) *Proceedings of the Future of Drawing in Design conference*. Huddersfield University, pp. 39–42
- Armstrong, D. (2005) *Organization in the mind: Psychoanalysis, group relations, and organizational consultancy*. London: Karnac
- Atkinson, D. (2001) Teachers, students and drawings: Extending discourses of visibility. *Discourse* 22 (1): 67–79
- Barthes, R. (1977) *Music – Image – Text*. London: Flamingo
- (1982) *Camera lucida: Reflections on photography*. London: Jonathan Cape
- (1986) *The rustle of language*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Berger, J. (1976) *A painter of our time*. London: Writers and Readers
- Bick, E. (1964) Notes on infant observation in psychoanalytic training. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 45: 558–566
- (1968) The experience of the skin in early object relations. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 49: 484–486

- (1986) Further considerations on the functioning of skin in early object relations: Findings from infant observation integrated into child and adult analysis. *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 2: 292–299
- Biggs, M. (2002) The Rhetoric of Research. In Durling D. & Shackleton J. (eds.) *Common Ground, Proceedings of the Design Research Society International Conference at Brunel University, Stoke-on Trent, UK*: Staffordshire University Press, 111–118
- Bion, W. R. (1962) *Learning from experience*. London: Heinemann
- (1965) *Transformations: Change from learning to growth*. London: Heinemann
- (1970) *Attention and interpretation: A scientific approach to insight in psychoanalysis and groups*. London: Tavistock
- (1990) *Cogitations*. London Karnac
- Britton, R. (1989) The missing link: parental sexuality in the Oedipus complex. In R. Britton, M. Feldman, & E. O'Shaughnessy (eds.) *The Oedipus complex today: Clinical implications*. London: Karnac, pp. 83–101
- Clarke, S. (2002) Learning from experience: psycho-social research methods in the social sciences. *Qualitative Research* 2 (2): 173–194
- Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. (eds.) (1986) *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Cramer, P. (2004) *Story telling, narrative and the Thematic Apperception Test*. New York: Guildford Press
- Creswell, J. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. London: SAGE
- Egan, J. (2010) Personal communication
- Epstein, S. (1994) Integration of the cognitive and the psychodynamic unconscious. *American Psychologist* 49 (8): 709–724
- Fink, B. (1997) *A clinical introduction to Lacanian psychoanalysis: Theory and technique*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- (2005) Lacanian clinical practice. *Psychoanalytic Review* 92 (4): 553–579
- Flanders, S. (1993) *The dream discourse today*. London: Karnac
- Foucault, M. (1972) *The archaeology of knowledge*. London: Tavistock
- Freud, S. (1900) The interpretation of dreams. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. IV and V. London: Hogarth
- (1912). Recommendations to physicians practising psycho-analysis. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XII (1911–1913). London: Hogarth
- Furth, G. (1988) *Secret world of drawings. Healing through art*. Boston: Sigo Press
- Garner, S. (ed.) (2008) *Writing on Drawing. Essays on drawing practice and research*. Bristol: Intellect
- Gleitman, H, Fridlund, A. J., & Reisberg, D. (1981) *Psychology*. 5th edition. London: W.W. Norton

- Hammersley, M. (1990) *Reading ethnographic research: A critical guide*. London: Longman
- (1992) *What's wrong with ethnography?* London: Routledge
- Have, P. ten (2007) *Doing conversation analysis: A practical guide*. 2nd edition. London: SAGE
- Heritage, J. (1997) Conversation analysis and institutional talk: Analysing data. In D. Silverman (ed.) *Introducing qualitative research*. London: SAGE, pp. 161–182
- Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2000). *Doing qualitative research differently: free association, narrative and the interview method*. London: SAGE
- Klein, M. (1930) The importance of symbol formation in the development of the ego. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 11:24-39
- Klein, M. ([1946] 1997) Notes on some schizoid mechanisms. *Envy and gratitude and other works 1946–1963*. London: Vintage
- Laplanche, J. & Pontalis J-B. (1973) *The language of psycho-analysis*. London: Hogarth Press
- Lawrence, Gordon W. (1998) *Social Dreaming @ Work*. London: Karnac Books
- Leo, J. H. di (1973) *Children's drawings as diagnostic aids*. New York: Brunner/Mazel
- (1983) *Interpreting children's drawings*. New York: Brunner/Mazel
- Lewin, K. (1947a) Frontiers in group dynamics, I. *Human Relations* 1 (1): 5–41
- (1947b) Frontiers in group dynamics, II. *Human Relations* 1 (2): 143–153
- Meadows, S. (1993) *Child as thinker: Development and acquisition of cognition in childhood*. London: Routledge
- Mersky, R. (2008) Social dream-drawing: A methodology in the making. *Socio-analysis* 10: 35–50
- (2012) Contemporary methodologies to surface and act on unconscious dynamics in organisations: An exploration of design, facilitation capacities, consultant paradigm and ultimate value. *Organisational & Social Dynamics* 12 (1): 19–43
- Miller, E J. & Rice, A. K. (1967) *Systems of organization: The control of task and sentient boundaries*. London: Tavistock Publications
- Nossal, B. (2003) The use of drawing in Socio-analytic exploration. Paper presented at the Scientific Meeting of the Australian Institute of Socio-Analysis
- Ogden, T. (1979) On projective identification. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 60: 357–373
- (2005) *This art of psychoanalysis: Dreaming undreamt dreams and interrupted cries*. London Karnac
- Perelberg, R (2000) Introduction. In R. Perelberg (ed.) *Dreaming and thinking*. London: Institute of Psychoanalysis, pp. 7–19
- Pink, S., Kürti, L., & Alfonso, A. (eds.) (2004) *Working images: Visual research and representation in ethnography*. London: Routledge

- Polanyi, M. (1966) *The tacit dimension*. University of Chicago Press (2009)
- Potter, J. (1996) *Representing reality: Discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. London: SAGE
- Ramos, M. J. (2004) Drawing the lines: The limitations of intercultural ekphrasis. In S. Pink, L. Kürti, & A. Alfonso (eds.) *Working images: Visual research and representation in ethnography*. London: Routledge, pp. 145–156
- Rawson, P. (1969) *Drawing*. London: Oxford University Press
- Rustin, M. E. (1989). Encountering primitive anxieties. In L. Miller, M. E. Rustin, M. J. Rustin & J. Shuttleworth (Eds.), *Closely observed infants*. London: Duckworth, pp. 7–21
- Rustin, M. J. (1997). What do we see in the nursery? Infant observation as laboratory work. *International Journal of Infant Observation and its Applications* 1 (1): 93–111
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E., & Jefferson, G. (1974) A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language* 50 (4): 696–735
- Sapochnik, C. (2010) The myth of creativity at work. Paper presented at the Annual Symposium of the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations (ISPSO). Elsinore, Denmark. http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/4757/1/Sapochnik_paper_ISPSO_10.pdf [accessed 10 August 2012]
- Saussure, F. de ([1916] 1974) *Course in General Linguistics*. London: Fontana/Collins
- Smith, N. R. (1983) Drawing conclusions: Do children draw from observation? *Art Education* 36 (5): 22–25
- Symington, N. (1986) *The analytic experience. Lectures from the Tavistock*. London: Free Association
- Taylor, A. (2008) Foreword – Re: positioning drawing. In Garner, S. (ed.) *Writing on Drawing. Essays on drawing practice and research*. Bristol: Intellect, pp. 9–11
- Winnicott, D. W. ([1971] 2005) *Playing and reality*. London: Penguin