Embed: Mapping the Future of Work and Play: A Case for "Embedding" Non-Ethnographers in the Field

ANDREW GREENMAN
Nottingham University Business School

SCOTT SMITH
Social Technologies, LLC

This paper reflects on an experiment to combine an "ethnographic walking tour" with futures and foresight methods, as a means of enhancing and validating foresight exercises through the addition of valuable first-hand observation. The project, entitled Embed, was created to familiarize senior strategists, product developers, foresight specialists and marketers with the potential of ethnographic research to inform decision making. We introduce the concept of "embedding" to describe the process of placing non-ethnographers into fieldwork situations. We then reflect on the opportunities and limitations of creating spaces for embedding non-experts in such settings. In the recommendations, we summarize the experience from a practical as well as theoretical perspective. The paper raises two questions related to the spatialization of commercial ethnographic knowledge; first, the value of using "embedding" to extend the territory of ethnography to a wider audience. Second, what this experience reveals about the conditions under which commercial ethnographic knowledge is produced.

Introduction

This paper describes a year-long discussion about the potential of combining an ethnographic approach with futurist consulting methods. The purpose of which was to generate foresight, by identifying, synthesizing and analyzing trends which may impact an organization, or marketplace in the future and to assist by developing more structured and supportable strategies for facing future dynamics proactively. In this case, the futures consultancy in question augments its "traditional" offerings (e.g., foresight methods, scenario development, briefings and group workshops), with selected experiential techniques. For its inaugural European event, the consultancy required a means of immersing clients in actual social settings, from which they could "witness" indicators and evidence of possible future trends.

The second motivation for this research was to explore how contemporary cultural innovations are translated into management and business knowledge. Whilst not the central focus of this paper, we argue an increased interest in ethnographic research, which aims to get closer to the user, reflects a rising demand for methods that re-map the space between

EPIC 2006, pp. 229-243, ISBN 1-931303-30-4.

business decision makers and business problems. This paper presents an experiment to create a tool designed to explore how ethnographic knowledge is translated into organizational learning. The project is offered as an ontological experiment in what might be possible with ethnographic research. It therefore contributes to exploring the re-spatialization of knowledge production in advanced capitalist societies, which aims to understand how business and management knowledge is evolving into a self-organizing 'cultural circuit of capital' (Thrift, 2005). In other words the flows and folds that occur as knowledge is assembled through the interaction of management consultants, business school, the business media and gurus.

Making Sense of an Ethnographic Approach without *Graphos*

Before setting out the details of this project, we must clarify our use of the term ethnography. Our intention was never to make epistemological claims justifying a 'full' or 'true' ethnography of the future of work and play. We recognize such an undertaking would require a rich textual representations of social reality, which can only emerge through extensive immersion, analysis, reflection and interplay between theoretical and empirical perspectives. Hence, we do not claim the embedding process will generate the same degree of epistemological productivity as full ethnography. Instead it is a reduction, or minimalist interpretation, of ethnography, designed to reproduce the complexities of conducting ethnographic research for business decision makers. The following is intended to prompt thinking about one way of assisting the translation of ethnographic research into the panoply of methods employed in organizational learning.

Our interpretation of ethnographic fieldwork is also tightly coupled to the consultancies aims of hosting a two-day multi-client introductory workshop to futurist consulting. We do however believe the process of placing non-experts into field research settings may warrant further investigation as a means of prompting understanding of the epistemological productiveness and challenges involved in commercial ethnographic enquiry. A detailed textual representation of this project, (i.e., a graphos) has been documented elsewhere (Greenman, forthcoming). In this paper we wish to explore the possibilities of how ethnographers might create spaces designed to encourage business decision makers to witness the sensemaking (Weick, 1995) that is produced during ethnography.

We introduce the term "embedding" to refer to a tool for expanding an ethnographer's 'realm of influence', (Jordan and Dalal, 2005) by physically placing non-experts into a social milieu, as a means of opening business decision makers to witness how ethnography can play a crucial role in creative problem framing.

This approach advocates bringing non-experts into situations in which they can experience the production of ethnographic knowledge and how it may assist in helping organizations adapt, through re-framing the accepted parameters of problem solving (Landry, 1985). In conceptualizing embedding as a tool to increase empathy towards ethnographic research, it is conceived as part of a wider shift towards promoting

understanding and acceptance of how humanities and arts traditions can contribute to assisting business decision makers understand the complexities of socio-cultural organization.

We proceed by making the following claims for embedding. First, as a technique to reduce the distance between the ethnographer and business decision maker, by inviting non-experts to witness the conditions under which how ethnographic knowledge is generated. Second, as an additional tool for the commercial ethnographer, who could develop epistemological productive spaces, perhaps within existing organizational training programs. Together these are combine to stimulate 'situated learning' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and build more effective 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1999), by placing non-experts in spaces in which they witness the 'collaboration, compromise and co-experiencing' (Jordan and Dalal, forthcoming) of commercial ethnography. Embedding aims to turn the gaze of commercial ethnography back on the existing knowledge production processes within an organization. Hence, providing a space to reveal and reflect upon the proximal relationships which exist between ethnographers and organizational decision makers.

EMBED: A Tool for Thinking With

Embed was the name given to a half-day walking tour, DVD and map devised to compliment a two day futures workshop in London. The event was held in June 2005 and focused on the future of work and play in Europe. Day one consisted of a workshop introduction to Futurist research. Participants were encouraged to conduct scenario planning. This involved synthesizing major trends and transitions which the Futurists expect will impact on work and play over the next 20 years in Europe. On the second day participants were invited to witness three "zones of change" in London to further explore, validate, or amend the views developed on the first day. The driving forces included the following; immigration, technology development, cultural values, economic policies and an aging population.

The tour was developed on the assumption the participants would be planners, strategists and marketers from non-European organizations and from roles that rarely put participants in contact with "street-level" illustrations of the trends under consideration. The rationale for appealing to ethnography was to place the delegates in an unfamiliar territory, utilizing their unfamiliarity with the environment to heighten the epistemological productivity of being an outsider. During the tour, participants were encouraged to conduct basic semi-structured observation and were invited to conduct an "informal interview" with a key informer.

The tour route was chosen for various reasons. First, the sites were selected for their physical proximity to central London, where participants had gathered. The entire tour had to be completed within four hours, which limited the distance we could cover. Second, the sites had to reflect some aspect of the driving forces discussed during the first day's

workshop. This required selecting sites as "ideal types", reflecting exaggerated effects such as immigration and clusters of knowledge workers.

After selecting a geographical area in east central London we began to build a narrative for the tour from the following sources. First, we consulted academic ethnographies of work conducted in the area. These included Young and Willmott (1957) who discussed the kinship networks and Hobbs' ethnography of entrepreneurship (1989). These studies were complimented by popular non-fiction writings about the area (Hall, 2005). Second, we turned to ethnographic methodology, especially phenomenology, to justify a walking tour. Walking was advocated on the basis that it would encourage non-experts to empathize with how a key technique in ethnography is the physical embodiment of the researcher in various social settings.

The three sites served as vignettes of broader social changes relating to work and play, which were sketched out during the workshop. Transporting non-experts into a field-setting was an invitation to witness, albeit temporarily, how ethnographic research is qualitatively different to other forms of research. The aim was to sensitize business decision makers to the production of ethnographic knowledge, by heightening awareness of the affects of ethnographic fieldwork, by creating a space which enabled participants to enter the field and witness, albeit temporally, the improvisatory nature of taking standpoints, "hanging-out," and glimpse the struggle of ascertaining an *emic*, or insider perspective. Clearly, we were not making claims here of participant observation or "becoming the phenomenon" (Jorgensen, 1990).

These limitations are why Embed is referred to as a "tool for thinking". The tour was devised to be fun, creative, unusual, risky and quirky. This is not to suggest it was indulgent or frivolous. Embed was not aspiring to be a Situationist drift around the city. It had a pragmatic aim of nurturing empathy between business decision makers and ethnographic researchers. It aimed therefore at assisting in the process of brokering a dialogue with non-experts. The aim is certainly not to discredit the work of professional ethnographers with relativist claims about the nature of social scientific knowledge. Instead we hoped to take steps towards developing a "meaningful vocabulary" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003) for experts and non-experts to discuss how ethnography contributes to business decision making.

Embedding

The term embedding is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as the "placing, or fixing into (something) firmly or deeply in surrounding matter; to make something an integral part of a whole; to implant (e.g., an idea) in the mind". In geometry, embedding refers to the insertion of one mathematical object into another instance; or the insertion of a homeomorphism, or topological isomorphism, a specific type of geometrical mapping between two points of reference. Embedding affects a topology by stretching, or folding and re-folding the surface, morphing an object into something new. The process is isomorphic

(*isos* meaning equal and *morphe* meaning shape) because the embedding must map together two complex structures into a corresponding relationship. Embedding is therefore a process of bringing together two structures, to form a new structure. A more in-depth account of the geometry and virtual philosophy can be read elsewhere (De Landa, 2003). Our interest in embedding is its potential as a process of insertion and creation of new possibilities.

Another use of the term "embedding" is the U.S. Department of Defense's (DOD) media strategy. During the Iraq war, the DOD adopted a strategy it referred to as "embedding" to refer to the placement of media representatives into Air, Ground and Naval forces. As the DOD stated; "these embedded media will live, work and travel as part of the units which they are embedded…to facilitate maximum, in-depth coverage" (2003). Media "embeds", were provided with direct access to the Area of Responsibility (AOR), to gain a "full understanding" through "extended participation". In return for their "investment of time", media embeds were said to have a "different level of access" to the "theatres" of war. Access to the situations was subordinate to "on scene commanders", who had the authority to issue travel plans, protective gear and ultimate responsibility for deciding the degree to which media embeds would compromise operational security (e.g, dates, times, locations, military units, casualties, code names, service members names). In addition to seeking permission from these commanders, media embeds also had to obtain "informed consent" from interviewees.

The above is interpreted as an operationalization of an isomorphic embedding process. It created a new typology of war correspondence, by aligning media representatives with military personnel. Similarly our small walking tour of London was designed adapt the notion of embedding non-experts into the field, promoting new forms dialogue and encouraging a re-mapping the proximity between ethnographers and business decision makers.

Similar approaches can be found in other commercial contexts. Anderson and McGonigal use the term "place storming" to explain how engineers, designers and marketers were situated into real world situations, so as to explore the interrelation between virtual and physical space (2004). Mariampolski also discussed the possibilities, both positive and potential negative, (e.g., interference from internal politics) of involving non-experts in ethnographic fieldwork (2005).

A final justification is taken from Wenger's pedagogical theory of "communities of practice" (1998) and Lave and Wenger's theory of "situated learning" (1991). Their central argument is that learning occurs through participation in communities, rather than solely through reification and formal instruction. Hence the challenge for management education is in designing "learning architectures" which place learning into the wider trajectory of an individual's life. Rather than focusing training solely on a classroom, learning designs should encourage various "modes of belonging". These include engagement, imagination and alignment which aim to open an individual to the potential of identity change. Wenger noted the particular importance of mapping, off-site visits and tours to extend imagination and

invite individuals to challenge the boundaries of their identity in relation to a community and/or organization.

We conceptualize embedding as a tool for increasing reflexivity towards the imagination mode of belonging. Our aim was to encourage individuals to consider how ethnographic knowledge could re-map the proximity between the organizational problems they face and the wider environment in which organizational adaptation occurs. By combining ethnography, futures consulting and theories of situated learning, we define embedding as follows: a tool for engaging business decision makers and non-ethnographers in the complexities of everyday situations, in order to heighten the reflexivity of embeds towards the boundaries of organizational problems and to assist in re-framing the imaginative frontiers of organizational learning.

Establishing a Rationale for Walking the City

After the initial conceptualization of embedding non-experts into a field setting, the second phase of development was to consult literature of researching urban milieu. The first step was linking the walking tour to the Chicago School, which placed a premium on understanding social reality as emerging out of the symbolic interaction between actor and urban setting As Deegan has suggested, the Chicago School acted as a catalyst for the "study of human behavior and its embeddedness in specific people and places" (2001, p22).

In keeping with the Chicago tradition we proposed treating the city as a laboratory from which to make observations of changes to work and play. Walking the city became an opportunity to experience the situated learning explorations ethnographers often make. The act of walking was critical for physically embodying participants in a milieu, rather than showing them a video or interpreting textual accounts. The rationale was to engage in contemplating what de Certeau termed the "ensemble of possibilities", from which, individuals evolve "ways of operating", as they navigate the constraints and opportunities of urban places (1984). Walking was presented as an opportunity to explore the city as an "archive" of culture (Donald, 1999, p7).

Operationalizing EMBED

This section expands on the process of devising a conceptual framework to align the futurists' drivers with social theory. This stage was necessary to create a narrative to emplot the "walking tour".

Driving forces and trends

The term 'driving force' is derived from scenario planning[1], where it is used to describe a macro-level change agent. The driving forces used to develop views of the future of work and play involved issues such as: immigration, an ageing population and the impact of networked technologies. Driving forces are combined to construct models of the future which invite strategic planners to change how they "see" and therefore react to particular future worldviews. Liberation from short-term problems is believed to encourage a "creative" response to a "continuously changing world" (van Heidjen, 2005: 3). Rather than producing "real" answers to "real" problems; or "ideal" solutions to "ideal" problems (Landry, 1985). These foresight exercises encourage a non-standard form of problem framing. They encourage a degree of risk taking by acknowledging the future is inherently unknowable. The value is to consider how an organization may react to emerging and converging challenges.

At the London workshop, the aim was to explore general trends such as how Europe can sustain a balance between work and leisure whilst facing increased economic pressure from globalization; rapidly changing technologies; an ageing population; increased immigration and the challenge of integrating distinct regional values.

Driving Forces to Social Theory

In order to provide an approximation of how ethnographers utilize social theory, we connected the driving forces to general theories of work and leisure in advanced capitalist societies. Our use of social theory was selective and presented a specific reading of the future of work and play. One that stressed increased internalization of risk (Beck, 2000); self-reflection (Giddens, 1991) and entrepreneurship (du Gay, 1996), required to cope with a contingent, temporal and portfolio careers (Sennett, 1998).

We also stressed the importance of two structural forces shaping work and play; these were technology and globalization. We focused on how capitalist economies are increasingly reliant upon aligning labor to the production of weightless "symbolic goods", such as software and cultural goods (Lash and Urry, 1994). A process driven by convergence of global digital network technologies; the emergence of highly networked firms (Castells, 1996); de-industrialization; post-Fordism; soft capitalism, and the rise of what has been termed a "cultural economy" (Amin and Thrift, 2003). Contrary to theories stressing the death of distance and place, we accepted the renewed importance of "cities", which Florida, amongst others, has argued are critical for explaining why key knowledge workers (e.g., scientists, technologists, cultural producers and engineers), cluster in "creative cities" (2002).

[1] Scenario planning is understood as having developed during the Second World War. The process involved "war gaming" to produce a series of possible scenarios, comprised of desirable and undesirable possibilities. A key pioneer was Pierre Wack, who later introduced scenario planning at Shell. It was Peter Schwartz, founder of the Global Business Network, who popularised the term with *The Art of the Long View* (1991).

The drivers were distributed to the participants prior to the London event in the form of short reports. The social theory was provided partly through an introductory briefing, on the day of the tour. But also through a written report and map which provided key quotes interwoven with images sampled from the three sites.

From Social Theory to Narrative

From the driving forces, trends and social theory of work we constructed a narrative for the tour. The central focus was a knowledge intensive economy, where the barriers between work and play were increasingly blurred. The narrative was selective and participants were made aware the tour was one amongst many possibilities for the future of work and play. We did not, for example, consider the future for low-paid service workers, instead we deliberately focused on mapping a highly flexible career trajectory, heavily reliant upon technology and creative labor.

We argued the future of work would rely heavily on the interaction between social and technological infrastructures of cities. Hence simply visiting a single site of work was ruled out in favor of witnessing three inter-related social milieux, each involved in the circulation of knowledge and capital.

The three sites were chapters in the above emplotment. The tour began at Canary Wharf, the power seat of Europe's "netocrats" (Bard and Soderqvist, 2002), to illustrate the shift in employment towards knowledge industries. Second, Brick Lane was selected to show first the blurring of work and play[2] and to provide a rich visual, aural and kinesthetic immersion into the effects of immigration[3]. Finally, Clerkenwell was selected as a cluster of small creative firms, which illustrated a place where work and play are aligned to produce values and perceptions that fuel communications, entertainment, and advertising. The tour culminated at a media communications agency, which provided an opportunity to conduct an informal interview with the creative director.

Once agreed upon, the three sites were visited a number of times prior to the event. Three full-day field research sessions were held before the event. During which a visual communications expert was employed to utilize various design research methods (Laurel, 2003), which include the use of still photography, digital video and audio recordings to "map" the social milieux. The sites were visited at different times of the day and various routes were considered for the walking tour.

---

[2] The area is a key site for Europe's 'after dark' economy and has been a hotbed of cultural development and regeneration

[3] The area of Shoreditch, Spitalfields and Tower Hamlets is a key historical site for the waves of immigration to the UK since the c17th

During these visits a number of informal conversations and interviews were held with local residents, business-people and existing contacts. This was not an attempt to conduct full ethnography of work and play. Instead their views contributed to a process of triangulation between social theories and the futurist's driving forces. The aim was to ensure the walking tour would be valid, in that the routes would still provide an experience that would be recognizable to a local inhabitant.

Limiting the Claims of Reproducing the Experience of Ethnography

In making the above choices, the space created for embedding non-experts impacted on the extent to which the experience can claim to have been ethnographic. First, it was an approximation of the embodied experience of being in physical sites and therefore omitted an exploration of how virtual environments can be explored ethnographically (Hine, 1999). Second, the opportunity to gain in-depth "first-hand experience of settings" (Hammersely and Atkinson, 1990) was severally curtailed. Participants could not have gained insight, for example, into what it means for an ethnographer to adopt a "learning role", or to conduct systematic analysis of the cultural meanings of a specific group or organization. Finally, the participants were freed from the challenge of crafting a textual representation of a social reality.

A further limitation must be set around the physical immersion of non-ethnographers into a field setting. Whilst the tour provided some exposure to the physical sensations (aural, olfactory, and kinesthetic) these should not be read as reproducing the demands which ethnographers place on themselves during fieldwork. It did not capture the "emotions of fieldwork", which Coffey (1999) describes as emerging from the subtle shifts in a researchers identity from prolonged periods of building rapport and reciprocity.

Given these limitations we might well ask whether "embedding" can be classed as ethnographic. Clearly many of the above affects of fieldwork, as a form of labor, derive from the passage of time and deepening of social bonds. One response, perhaps somewhat unsatisfactory, is that commercial ethnography works to shorter timescales and should not expect the same degree of immersion as an academic study (Mariampolski, 2005). In defense of embedding we return to the "media embeds", as defined by the US DOD, an approach which never aimed to turn media representatives into full combatants. Instead it aimed to place them in close proximity the battlefield to generate co-dependence.

As noted earlier our aim of placing non-experts into the field was to stimulate "situated learning" (Lave and Wenger, 1991), by encouraging the embed to "imagine" the spatialisation of ethnographic knowledge production. Embed was created as a space to stimulate a ludic response. That is play defined as a "temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own" (Huizinga, 1947, p27). A space which encourages a momentary withdrawal from everyday (organizational) life, which we hoped would generate further thinking about the futurists' driving forces and trends.

Laying the Ground Rules at the "Embedding"

A drawback with our embedding was the limited opportunity to familiarize participants with ethnographic methodology. At the start of the tour a brief introduction was given to the basic concept of semi-structured observation, by using Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor of social life as a presentation of self[4] (1959). The notion of "impression management" was selected to help participants engage with the idea of framing their observations by breaking down a social space into component parts and conceiving of it as a "performance".

Participants were encouraged to focus on observing the ways in which individuals work to fit in to a setting and achieve a competent performance. It was suggested there were three layers to performances, first the presence of "carriers" or "sign vehicles", such as general conduct and appearance. Second the use of verbal expressions, either overheard, or those used by the creative director during the office visit. Third, non-verbal expressions, such as facial expressions, gestures and hexis, which might help us understand the "theatre". These basic clues were proposed to partially frame their experience during the walking tour It was anticipated that the participants would use notebooks to record observations. However, as the tour progressed it became clear that participants preferred to use cameras and camera-phones to create their own visual records of the tour and PDAs for note taking.

The interview with a creative director was included to provide an opportunity to witness a shortened form of narrative interviewing. The director was presented as a key informer whose account would reveal much about the nature of creative labor. The participants were left to ask questions and a lively conversation ensued about work and play.

Evaluation

As this tour was conducted for a multi-client group gathered for only two days, it was not practical to follow-up with in-depth interviews of what the participants made of the tour. Anecdotally, during the post-tour lunch, it was possible to engage with some of the participants. One participant claimed the tour had been "cool" and "fun", but had also generated some useful insights into the use of transportation in urban centers in Europe. The individual worked for an automobile manufacturer and as the tour (largely) relied on underground tube and walking, the individual was surprised by the absence of cars in the three milieux we explored. A second participant said the tour was "interesting" and connected to the "thought provoking" ideas were generated during the exercises on the previous day. He said the tour, or just "getting out of the office more", could be useful as a means of searching out "new" ways of thinking about strategy.

[4] This is not to suggest that our understanding of observation is based on Goffman. We acknowledge, for example, criticisms, such as Jenkins, who suggested Goffman produced an ethnocentric and individualised theory of identity-work. In which agency is decoupled from wider social structures, especial power and the regulation of the ability to perform (1996).

Whilst the above is not intended to constitute a systematic evaluation, these comments are read as indicative that the tour aims were at least partially met. The process of embedding non-ethnographers into a field-setting was designed to provoke exactly this type of playful engagement. Subsequent screenings of video captured of the locations, and viewings of the map have also prompted people to comment that it must have been an "interesting" experience. Again we interpret this as indicative that embedding can be used to help warm business decision makers to the potential of ethnographic research.

Recommendations

Constructing an embedding situation, such as the above walking tour, requires careful consideration of the milieux into which participants will be embedded. As the above case showed, we drew upon a variety of sources including: a literature review of ethnographic and "popular" accounts of the area; informal conversations with pre-existing contacts in the area; first hand experience gained by living and working in the area; social theory and futurist driving forces. The "spontaneity" of the event was therefore closely managed. Embedding, as operationalized here, therefore requires considerable time investment and local knowledge.

A key challenge with proposing an embedding is the pre-embed investment required. Considerable resources are required to gain access to a social milieu, especially if it involves a private space (such as the media agency). Similarly public sites must be well mapped prior to the insertion of non-experts. A key question is the resource commitment required to construct an embedding experience which is valid and relevant to the research problem. With Embed we were lucky to be working with a consultancy that was keen to sponsor an embedding as part of its showcase of research offerings. The audience was multi-client and there was an underlying commercial agenda for the futurists to promote its consultancy services, especially the innovative use of ethnographic methods.

Practical considerations rest on the need to preserve spontaneity without either over determining what the "embeds" should observe, or leaving the tour so ambiguous that it serves no practical purposes. The above case was already de-limited by the theme of the event, (i.e., the future of work and play). However, the key point is that a strong narrative must be developed to justify the embedding and to make it a valuable knowledge creation exercise.

In order to assess the validity of embedding greater attention is required for the post-event evaluation. Whilst post-evaluation was included in the original brief, in practice it proved difficult to gain access to the participants to conduct follow-on in-depth interviews. Unlike internal research projects, this intervention was conceived within a multi-client environment. As we would expect there was a limit to which participants were willing to disclose how they could apply ethnography to their specific organizational problems they

were engaged with. Anderson and McGonigal (2004) provide a useful discussion of how, in a single-client study, in-depth interviews with employees can be utilized for evaluation purposes.

Whilst we concur that in-depth interviewing would be an appropriate method to gather participants' accounts for the value of this type of immersive experience. The limitation of this method is that the narratives would be generated according to the specificities of the interview situation. To understand how, if at all, an embedding provided "useful" insights for an organization, would require longer term immersion in an organization. Perhaps a more simple means of measuring the success of an embedding would simply be the extent to which it lead to further commissioning of ethnographic research. Whilst we are not claiming direct causality here, the futures firm, for example, has subsequently employed an experienced commercial ethnographer and now incorporates ethnographic research into this core offering based on client interest.

Conclusions

This project was initially conceptualized in response to the demands of a futures consultancy, which requires "new" methods to extend its core service offering (i.e. to build an ethnographic experience to support a scenario planning event). During the course of reflecting on the experience, it emerged that embedding non-ethnographers into field research settings, may itself be a tool to help communicate the advantages of ethnography to business decision makers.

In the case we have presented the audience were not product developers or software engineers, two groups often linked to ethnography (Mariampolski, 2005). Instead they comprised of strategists, planners and marketers. This case therefore presents a potential technique for addressing the specific issue of how to convey the benefits of ethnography to strategists who, it was presumed, may be less familiar with ethnographic research.

We conceived embedding as a tool for extending the reach of ethnographic research techniques into organizational hierarchies. By appealing to senior strategists, it is hoped the technique can help build confidence in the ability of ethnography to make valuable contributions to organizational learning. Hence, in addition to the valuable insights already being produced (e.g, product development and evaluation), ethnography may have a useful role to play in providing spaces for reflecting on organizational learning. Especially reflections of how problems are framed.

This returns us to the introductory comment that by embedding non-experts into the field, we hoped to explore the spatial relations between ethnography and business decision making. The challenge is to construct experiences to place business decision makers into situations which are epistemologically productive. These will provide some exposure to the conditions of ethnographic fieldwork. It is hoped embedding may therefore

help to create a basis from which to develop vocabularies which connect ethnography to concerns of organizational representatives. Embedding is not an attempt to undermine the professional ethnographer, but a contribution to demystifying the ways in which ethnographers work and the challenges they face in making a contribution.

Embedding is conceptualized as the creation of temporal spaces which promote a mutual exchange, by addressing the proximity between experts and non-experts. If successful it may help to deepen appreciation of the conditions under which commercial ethnographic knowledge is produced. Embedding is therefore proposed as a tool for facilitating the translation of ethnography, into the panoply of research methods available for organizational learning.

References

Amin, Ash and Thrift, Nigel
2004 *The Cultural Economy Reader*, London: Sage.

Anderson, Ken and McGonigal, Jane
2004 *Place Storming: Performing New Technologies in Context.*

Bard, Alexander and Soderqvist, Jan
2002 *Netocracy,* London: Reuters.

Beck, Ulrich
2000 *The Brave New World of Work*, Cambridge, Polity.

Castells, Manuel
1996 *The Rise of the Network Society*, Oxford: Blackwells.

Coffey, Amanda
1999 *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity,* London: Sage.

De Certeau, Michel
1984 *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

De Landa, Manuel
2003 *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy,* London: Continuum.

Deegan, Mary Jo
2001 "The Chicago School of Ethnography in Atkinson, Paul, Coffey, Amanda, Delamont, Sara, Loftland, Jon and Loftland, Lyn (eds.) *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Denzin, Norman, K and Lincoln, Yvonne, editors
2003 "The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research", in *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Department of Defense
2003 Embedding media during possible future operations/deployment in the U.S. Central Commands (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR). http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2003/d20030228pag.pdf, last accessed June 2006.

Du Gay, Paul
1996 *Consumption and Identity at Work*: Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Donald, James
1999 *Imagining the Modern City*, London: The Athlone Press

Florida, Richard
2002 *The Rise of the Creative Class*, New York: Basic Books.

Greenman, Andrew
2006 'Sensing and Selecting a Consulting Trend', *International Studies in Management and Organization, Special Issue: Management Fads and Fashions.*

Giddens, Anthony
1991 *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Cambridge: Polity.

Goffman, Irving
1959 *The Presentation of Self in Everyday life*: London: Penguin.

Hall, Tarquin
2005 *Salaam Brick Lane: A Year in the New East End*, London: John Murray.

Hammersely, Martyn and Atkinson, Paul
1990 *Ethnography: Principles in Practice,* Routledge: London.

Hine, Christine
2000 *Virtual Ethnography*, London: Sage.

Huizinga, Johan
1947 *Homo Ludens*, London: Penguin

Hobbs, Dick
1988 *Doing the business: Entrepreneurship, The Working Class, and Detectives in the East End of London*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jordan, Brigitte and Dalal, Brinda
2006 Persuasive Encounters: Ethnography in the Corporation. *Forthcoming Field Methods.*

Jorgensen, Danny
1990 *Participant Observation*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Lash, Scott and Urry, John
1994 *The Economy of Signs and Symbols*, London: Sage.

Laurel, Brenda
2004 *Design Research Methods and Perspectives*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Lave, Jean and Wenger, Etienne
1991 *Situated Learning. Legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.

Mariampolski, Hy
2005 *Ethnography for Marketers*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Ransome, Paul
2005 *Work, Consumption and culture: Affluence and Social Change in the Twenty-first Century*, London: Sage.

Sennett, Richard
1998 *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism,* New York; W.W. Norton and Company

Thrift, Nigel
2005 *Knowing Capital*. London: Sage.

Van Heijden, Kees
2005 *Scenarios: The Art of Strategic Conversation,* London, Wiley.

Van Maanen, John
1989 *Tales from the Field*: Chicago: University of Chicago.

Wenger, Etienne
1998 *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Young, Michael and Wilmot, Peter
1957 *Family and Kinship in East London,* London: Penguin.