

Editorial

# Spatial Bricolage: The Art of Poetically Making Do

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Received: 20 March 2018; Accepted: 22 March 2018; Published: 25 April 2018



**Abstract:** This paper provides an introductory overview to the *Humanities* special issue on ‘spatial bricolage’. The individual contributions that make up the special issue are outlined and salient themes pulled out that address and respond to some the wider discussion points raised throughout this introduction. These are closely focused around the central concept of bricolage and the idea of the researcher as bricoleur. Some background context on the anthropological underpinnings to bricolage is provided, alongside methodological reflections that relate the concept to ideas of ‘gleaning’ as a creative and performative engagement with everyday spaces as they are ‘found’ and rehearsed in practice. A core focus on questions of method, and of autoethnographic approaches in particular, is presented alongside questions of research ethics and the policing thereof by institutional structures of disciplining and audit in the neoliberal academy. It is argued that bricolage is, among other things, a practical response to a field of practice that at times constrains as much as it allows space to roam, unimpeded, across disciplinary boundaries. From the overarching purview of spatial humanities and spatial anthropology, it is shown that discussions of bricolage and the researcher as bricoleur can help make explicit the poetics and affects of space, as well as the ethical and procedural frameworks that are brought to bear on how space is put into practice.

**Keywords:** bricoleur; deep mapping; spatial anthropology; gleaning; interdisciplinary; non-representational; autoethnography; performance; research ethics; qualitative methods

## 1. Introduction

*Spatial Bricolage: Methodological Eclecticism and the Poetics of ‘Making Do’* is very much a companion volume to the collection of articles that were published in the earlier *Humanities* special issue, *Deep Mapping* (Roberts 2015–2016). Many of the conversations started in that publication are carried over into the present volume, extending and deepening critical reflections that are leaving their mark on the ever-expanding fields of spatial humanities and spatial anthropology (Roberts 2016, 2018). One of the guiding objectives of *Spatial Bricolage* has been to explore questions of method and methodology: the ‘how’ rather than the ‘what’ that variously informs the doing of deep mapping and spatial anthropology. Provisionally organized around the twin concepts of cultural bricolage and the researcher/practitioner as ‘bricoleur’, my interest as guest editor of this special issue has been to provoke discussion trained on spatial bricolage as an interdisciplinary (or ‘undisciplined’) nexus of practices and pick-and-mix methods. Claude Lévi-Strauss described bricolage as ‘[the making] do with “whatever is at hand” ... [to address oneself] to a collection of oddments left over from human endeavours’ (Lévi-Strauss 1966, pp. 17, 19). If eclecticism informs a deep mapping practice increasingly oriented around the embodied and embedded researcher, then it is one that correspondingly finds its creative expression in the art and poetics of ‘making do’. In the same way that calls for a ‘more artful and crafty’ sociology are underwritten by a push towards more ‘open methods’ in the social sciences (Back and Puwar 2012, p. 9), approaches in the interdisciplinary field of spatial and geo-humanities

strive to embrace a methodological eclecticism adaptable to the qualitative dynamics of experiential, performative or non-representational geographies of place and space.

Whether or not it is productive to consider deep mapping in terms of a ‘method’ of spatiocultural enquiry is a question that is difficult to reliably pin down without taking stock of the ‘openness’ and eclecticism that comes with the label. This openness is such as to undo deep mapping as a coherent and methodologically consistent set of practices and thus to throw into question the utility of the concept in the first place. The rationale for unpacking deep mapping—which bore its initial fruit in the previous *Humanities* special issue (Roberts 2015–2016)—has been to approach it from the vantage point of spatial anthropology: to pay some attention to the different ways in which the deep mapping impulse reflects a concerted attempt to inject humanistic and anthropological concerns at the core of cartographic thinking and practice. Iain Biggs (2010) notion of a *metaxy* of practice—a ‘space in-between’ in which to squat in a provocatively ‘undisciplined’ manner, shrugging off the settled weight of an institutional or disciplinary habitus—provides a useful way of thinking about how the wayfaring academic or artist/practitioner negotiates his or her passage through landscapes that s/he is variously mapping, surveying, creating, producing, inhabiting, invoking, embodying, sensing, imagining, collecting, tracing, gleaning, building, framing, cultivating, or simply *spacing* (see Crouch, this volume). To *make sense* of these landscapes—to harness or manufacture affective structures of feeling that fellow travellers/wayfarers may profitably plug in to—requires access to a correspondingly ‘undisciplined’ set of methods and toolkit. One way of approaching this is through recourse to ideas of bricolage and the researcher-as-bricoleur.

## 2. Researcher as Bricoleur

The concept of bricolage is well established in anthropological literature, principally through the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. It has also found a fruitful outlet in theoretical approaches in cultural studies, the visual arts, architecture, fashion, computing and many other areas of design aesthetics and do-it-yourself (DIY)-inflected praxis (cf. Hebdige 1979). The ideas that lie behind *spatial bricolage* are multi-stranded but chiefly take their starting point from the basic ‘ready-to-handedness’ and ‘making-do’ of approaches that pull tactically and expediently from the ‘taskscape’ (Ingold 2000) of everyday life. Michel de Certeau describes bricolage as ‘the poetic making do’ (De Certeau 1984, p. xv) and this lends itself perfectly to a poetics of space and place that fashions a contingent sense of selfhood from the givenness and flux of the world it both is and passes through. Spatial anthropology and spatial bricolage go hand-in-hand to the extent that space and self are dialectically woven from the world as it is experienced, conceived and practiced. The researcher or practitioner of spatial anthropology steps reflexively into this world in order to know it—to *make something* of it—as experientially manifested in movement and sensorial spacing. For Lévi-Strauss, the bricoleur ‘derives his [sic] poetry from the fact that he does not confine himself to accomplishment and execution: he “speaks” not only *with* things ... but also through the medium of things’. Moreover, ‘[he] may not ever complete his purpose but he always *puts something of himself into it*’ (Lévi-Strauss 1966, p. 21, emphasis added). If this were applied to the academic researcher, it is hard to think of a formula less compatible with the instrumentalist and impacts-driven logic that decrees what is or is not deemed ‘legitimate’ research-wise in the neoliberal academy. That the researcher may ‘put something of herself’ into whatever it is she is researching is not merely to draw attention to the subjective influence brought to bear on the object of study, it is also to acknowledge that the researcher is herself part of any outputs of that study. These ‘outputs’ might conceivably be limited just to what the researcher has made of *herself* (i.e., experience, knowledge, skills, insights, emotional rewards, sense of wellbeing and accomplishment, and so on) but not anything tangible in terms of a deliverable product that can be measured, quantified, evaluated and affirmed as part of a national research

assessment exercise<sup>1</sup>. If a research ‘performance’ takes place (not necessarily in a forest) and no one is around to ‘measure’ it does it make an impact? Perhaps, perhaps not, but then it depends on what is meant by ‘impact’ (cf. Stein 2018). The bricoleur—as compared to, say, the scientist or engineer—is arguably less governed by an overarching awareness that they are embarked on a ‘project’, and that, correspondingly, they are performing in compliance with a clearly defined set of ‘aims’ or ‘objectives’. The idea that research might be conducted under conditions of aimlessness and without a clear objective in mind does not necessarily mean that it lacks the rigours of ‘accomplishment and execution’ but that much of what is fashioned in the process is contingent on factors that cannot always be foreseen. In this sense, to borrow from Victor Turner, it entails stepping into a space and time of ‘anti-structure’ (Turner 1969). In the case of anthropologists and ethnographers carrying out their doctoral fieldwork then this is already something of a rite of passage akin to the liminal phase of a ritual process (Epstein 1979, p. xi; Gardner 1999, p. 49; Carsten 2012, p. 15). To deny the productivity and refinement of the *self* as part of what is ‘made’ in the space-time of the research performance is certainly disingenuous but by the same token is the expectation that spatial anthropology step up as an ‘objective science’ any less so? The open, out-of-the-closet subjectivity of the spatial bricoleur at least seems more honest in these respects. Space is being *made* but only from what is ready-to-hand and by putting to work only those methods that offer themselves up for strategically provisional means. Such means, as Lévi-Strauss suggests, might even extend to the ‘devious’ (Lévi-Strauss 1966, pp. 16–17), a quality that opens up thorny questions of field research ethics, a subject I will return to shortly.

Lévi-Straussian ideas of the bricoleur and of bricolage are, then, our starting point. But pushing these ideas towards consideration of the dispositional practices of the researcher and spatial anthropology practitioner is by no means a major leap. Norman Denzin and others have already breached this gap more than convincingly. As such, my work in this area has been steered by the many insights and innovations of figures like Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln who provide a useful shake-up of how we think about and implement qualitative research methods. In an article considering the future of qualitative research, they write:

The material practices of qualitative enquiry turn the researcher into a methodological (and epistemological) *bricoleur*. This person is an artist, a quilt maker, a skilled craftsperson, a maker of montages and collages. The interpretive *bricoleur* can interview; observe; study material culture; think within and beyond visual methods; write poetry, fiction, and autoethnography; construct narratives that tell explanatory stories; use qualitative computer software; do text-based inquiries; construct *testimonios* using focus group interviews; and even engage in applied ethnography and policy formulation. (Denzin and Lincoln 2011, pp. 681–82)

As an academic who has turned his hand to many of these activities and practices as part of, or in tandem with, routine research agendas, this makes perfect sense to me. As does corresponding awareness that siphoning off the constituent parts of a research project into a neatly contained section labelled ‘methodology’ can often work against the openness and eclecticism that are otherwise part and parcel of what that project actually entails in practice. Like the children’s cartoon character Bob the Builder (in France the programme title is *Bob le Bricoleur*), the researcher-as-bricoleur goes about his or her business equipped with a set of tools rather than a fit-for-purpose methodological strategy. The provision of a methodological toolkit simply means the ready-to-handedness of practical methods that can be quickly deployed as circumstances demand. The eclecticism of bricolage methods—the adaptability and portability of said toolkit—can (and does) invite accusations of superficiality and lack of rigour. In such a scenario the researcher-as-bricoleur comes across as a ‘jack-of-all-trades’

<sup>1</sup> In the UK, the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) is a U.K. Government audit undertaken on behalf of the four main higher education funding bodies. Its purpose, as with the REF (Research Excellence Framework) that succeeded the RAE in 2014, is to evaluate the quality and (increasingly) ‘impact’ of academic research produced by higher education institutions.

(and, by implication, master of none), someone who plays fast and loose with established research methods and paradigms. By way of illustration, Joe Kincheloe describes problems he and his students encountered at university committee meetings and job interviews when advancing the merits of bricolage (and by extension interdisciplinary) approaches to their work as academics. ‘Implicit in the critique of interdisciplinarity’, he writes, ‘and thus of bricolage as its manifestation in research is the assumption that interdisciplinarity is by nature superficial’ (Kincheloe 2001, p. 680–81). A commitment to research eclecticism—of ‘allowing circumstance to shape methods employed’ (Kincheloe et al. 2011, pp. 168–69)—can thus be seen, by some, as inherently problematic and something that should not really be encouraged. I have encountered similar resistance in this respect in attempting to reframe spatial humanities methods through the lens of bricolage. The suggestion of methodological eclecticism as a means by which to try and account for what ‘spatial humanities’ is in practice elicited one response in which the correspondent took issue with the implication, as he saw it, that spatial humanities researchers in some way ‘make it up as they go along’. That the idea of bricolage methods or the researcher-as-bricoleur should automatically be read as ‘no methods’ or ‘watered-down methods’ is instructive in itself. Factor into the equation the word ‘digital’ (digital methods, digital cultures, digital humanities, digital *geo*-humanities, digital ethnography, digital memory, digital geography, and so on) and already we are poised at the precipitous edge of an uncertain landscape that can no longer be as readily brought to heel using static methodological templates. The complexities attached to the question of what constitutes a ‘field’; the openness and pluridimensional fabric of our everyday spatial worlds; the obvious practical benefits that digital tools and methods bring to the research process; a more emphatic emergence of the researcher—bodily, reflexively, and as autoethnographic performance *artiste*—within the anthropological field of play; these are all grist to the mill of scholars grappling with the opportunities and challenges that come with the refashioned territory (Back and Puwar 2012).

But it would be naïve to discount the possibility that self-ascribing as ‘bricoleur’ *might* give license to research practices that skirt with superficiality and lack of rigour (much like opportunistically pinning the label of ‘autoethnography’ on to writing that stylistically is more suited to a blog journal or memoir than academic text is not without precedent—see Denzin 2014, pp. 69–70). In this respect, the caution expressed by my spatial humanities interlocutor is certainly understandable. However, that the mere coupling of ‘bricoleur’ and ‘researcher’ in the same sentence should immediately connote a negative response provides at least some indication that more work is needed to make the case louder and stronger. It is hoped that this special issue goes some way towards making such a stronger case, or at least establishing some of the ground work whereby this issue is afforded a greater degree of critical attention. But for current purposes it is necessary to sketch some provisional considerations as to the significance of bricolage to methodological understandings of and approaches to spatial anthropology.

One of these key touchpoints, as we have seen, is interdisciplinarity: ‘bricoleurs move beyond the blinders of particular disciplines and peer through a conceptual window to a new world of research and knowledge production’ (Kincheloe et al. 2011, p. 168). There are, in other words, *spaces in-between* disciplinary and epistemological encampments—‘the liminal zones where disciplines collide’ (Kincheloe 2001, p. 689; cf. Biggs 2010)—into and of which the spatial bricoleur *makes space*, or rather makes and enunciates *spacings*. In addition, the researcher-as-bricoleur is reflexively governed by a ‘respect for the complexity of the lived world’ (Kincheloe et al. 2011, p. 168) and a *care* towards that world (Heidegger 1962) that, in its ‘attempts to stay close to how people experience everyday life’ strives to shed itself of concepts (Denzin 2003, p. xi). The lived, everyday, and performative, therefore, is the ‘space’ within and from which the world—*our* world, *this* world, any given world we are speaking *towards*—erupts into being. Denzin remarks that ‘[w]riting creates the worlds we inhabit’ (ibid., p. xii), and while this is true it is an observation that can no less instructively be turned on its head without rupturing its essential meaning: *inhabiting creates the worlds we write*. The process of habitation does not necessarily presuppose that of the world being written into being. It is there anyway, as are we. A *cri de cœur*, such as Ingold’s dream-dredged ‘*Enough of words, Let’s meet the*

world' (Ingold 2015, p. vii), might now and again yank us back down to earth (back to the world), but however much the so-called 'non-representational' inflames our performative passions whether we like it or not we are stuck with the communicative and representational burden of writing up. We are stuck with *words*. Here I am writing them and there you are reading them.

But that is not strictly the case. This is where the incursion of all things *digital* begins to leave its mark. If the idea of a *digital deep map* is the seed of a performative desire to overcome the constraints of representational cartography (Roberts 2016) then words function as merely one part of a multi-media rhizomatic assemblage. At its most concrete level this need be nothing more than a desire to avail oneself of all that the digital humanist now has at his or her disposal. Whether this be video, audio soundscapes, GPS tracking data, locative media apps, GIS and digital mapping tools, social media, virtual and augmented reality devices, hyperlinks, geo-tagging, digital intangible heritage, archival and database resources, or whatever else might be on hand to feed a 'greedy' deep map (Ridge et al. 2013, p. 181), the basic point here is that the 'writing' of place in the digital age, where publications are just as likely to be read on a screen as on a printed page, is not just limited to the written word. That does not make it any less 'representational', of course. But it does make for a more malleable and open canvas on and from which the story of that place might potentially be told.

### 3. Bricolage as Gleaning

To specifically engage with ideas of spatial bricolage through the lens of digitality and digital methods would take us beyond the remit of this current special issue discussion, but for now it is sufficient to highlight the ready-to-handedness and making-do of digital 'stuff' as part of what gets thrown into the spatial anthropology mix. Crang (2000, p. 306) draws a useful parallel between Simmel's disoriented and frazzled urban *bricoleur*, who learns to make do by stitching together an identity from fragmented sources, and the type of bricolage that defines the wanderer in cyberspace who similarly *makes* her way through an over-abundance of information by making do with whatever is to hand. Because she cannot possibly trawl through everything, the web *flâneur* assembles a sense of self and world from the digital matter that she interacts with as she moves through and dwells within her everyday mediascapes. Home is where the cursor is; the 'home page' a habituated place that she makes her own (Moore 2015, p. 23). Bricolage, viewed thus, bears close comparison with *gleaning* inasmuch as what the bricoleur is doing in any given space or scenario is picking up and repurposing matter that is already 'out there' (see also Croft, this volume). Lévi-Strauss hints at this in *The Savage Mind* when suggesting that 'the "bricoleur" addresses himself to a collection of oddments left over from human endeavours, that is, only a sub-set of the culture' (Lévi-Strauss 1966, p. 19). Much of what is done under the banner of deep mapping and spatial anthropology is about picking up traces and fragments of what went before and working these back in to the ongoing production and crafting of spaces as living and breathing worlds that we inhabit. Gleaning as spatial praxis. Again, digital technology plays an important part in this ongoing process, not just in the provision of representational spaces through which to travel (the virtual spaces of online *flânerie*) but also as tools that help us in our travels through the fleshy and haptic spaces of material worlds. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in Agnès Varda's extraordinary documentary, *The Gleaners and I* (2000). The gleaning we are privy to in the film encompasses an array of material practices—from rummaging for discarded foodstuffs in supermarket dumpsters, to picking up crops left over from the harvest, to salvaging objects of neglected or disfigured beauty (such as a clock with no hands), to the act of filmmaking itself: the gleaning of images—Varda as cinematographic *glaneuse*. As with the on-screen gleaners combing through the discarded detritus of contemporary France, Varda too is intuitively aware of the shape, texture and provenance of the objects she gleans. Armed with a handheld digital camera, she moves through the landscape with the embodied vision—or 'vision in the flesh' (Sobchack 2004)—of a traveller for whom the camera is both a tool of engagement and 'collecting sack' in which to deposit the items gleaned. The idea of the researcher-as-bricoleur-as-filmmaker-as-gleaner is extraordinarily rich in its threshing of practice from the dry husk of representation. To re-envision the capture of digital video as a practice



of gleaning is to lend a palpable sense of materiality to the art of image-making. Hauling a bulging cache of image-objects back to her studio, the gleaner-bricoleur, like Denzin and Lincoln's quilt-maker, then arranges and assembles. Both quilt and film tell their story but not to the exclusion of all that flows into and out of their respective frames: the lives and criss-crossing pathways that knot together (Ingold 2007, p. 100) as the representational objects by which we know them as *topoi* or texts.

The poetics of gleaning are thus co-extensive with an idea of bricolage as the 'poetic making do' (De Certeau 1984, p. xv; Morrison 2015, p. 196): both thrive on opportunity, uncertainty and serendipity. Whatever is found in whatever landscape the gleaner-bricoleur happens to find herself at whatever time she happens to be there is potentially constituent matter of an assemblage-in-progress, the production of which may take a number of different forms (or none at all—the practice of gleaning-bricolage need not cede an 'output' for it to still count as gleaning and/or bricolage). 'But hang on', one might interject at this point, 'this is all well and good for the poet or artist who might be assumed to have more license or disposable freedom to embark on such speculative forays than, say, the academic. But what about the researcher-as-bricoleur? How does s/he negotiate the bureaucratic quagmire that is there as an impediment and counterweight to all that the practice of bricolage and gleaning otherwise holds in store?'

#### 4. Bricolage as 'Ethics in Practice'

The answer to the latter question is that he or she doesn't necessarily. The 'legitimacy' issue, like the official gateway to a space that might qualify as liminal or off-limits, is often skirted around rather than confronted head-on. This is a matter of pragmatics more than anything else. If the case warrants it, and in the full knowledge that access via official channels will in all likelihood prove futile, the spatial bricoleur just simply gets on with things. Risk is shouldered by the individual who, while necessarily cognisant of any and all potential pitfalls, balances this against the benefits that will potentially be prized from the experience. The rationale, however subjectively determined and/or dubious in intent, is nevertheless such as to hold its own (or not as the case may be) as an exercise in spatial anthropology. What all this points to, of course, are questions of research ethics. This is a topic that I am only able to scratch the surface of here, requiring, as it does, a far more expansive space in which to unpack all that needs unpacking. For now, I wish merely to flag up some key points for consideration from the vantage point of spatial bricolage and attendant questions of spatial method.

To question a space by the simple act of stepping into it is, by definition, already a breach of boundaries. We cannot roam wherever we like whenever we like but where lines are 'legitimately' drawn in any given scenario is fuzzy at best. However much truck a university ethics committee might have with the argument that researchers themselves should be at liberty to exercise some degree of ethical circumspection, the fact remains that, within the framework of what is deemed possible (if not necessarily defensible), the responsibility for action lies with the actor. For it to be otherwise would be to deny that there is any such thing as, for example, 'gonzo ethnography', defined by Tedlock (2011, p. 332; see also Sefcovic 1995; Fedorowicz 2013) as 'a postmodern documentary style that encourages a blend of observation with participation and rationality with altered states of consciousness' (the ghost of gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson looms large over this particular research method). It is not necessarily incumbent on the gonzo ethnographer to enter a space where their presence might be frowned upon or actively resisted, but it is, gonzo-style, to *provoke* action as much as observe it (an altered state of consciousness might help in this regard, but it is not essential). It is also, just as importantly, to engage in a cultural performance of some description. This is not, needless to say, a dance routine or carefully choreographed stage play, but performative in the sense of being 'constitutive of experience' (Denzin 2014, p. 41). As Denzin notes, performance ethnography can be strategically adapted so that the experience the performance is constitutive of is *performative* in terms of playing host to creatively interventionist or disruptive practices. Viewed thus, the ethnographer moves from a view of performance as 'imitation, or dramaturgical staging ... to an emphasis on performance as liminality and construction ... [and] to a view of performance as struggle, as intervention, as breaking and remaking, as kinesis, as a sociopolitical act' (Denzin 2003, p. 4). The idea of gonzo anthropology—or,

by way of a further example, the ‘place-hacking’ exploits of urban explorers who strive to ‘connect in a meaningful way to a world rendered increasingly mundane by commercial interests and an endless state of “heightened” security’ (Garrett 2013, p. 240)—is unlikely to be one that the average ethics review committee or institutional review board would look favourably upon. While not necessarily involving illegality or danger (although in the case of place-hacking both certainly apply) interventionist or provocative research methods such as these do bring with them the radical uncertainties that are their stock-in-trade. Calculations with regard to the autoethnographic strategy routinely deployed by the spatial bricoleur (see, for example, Roberts 2014, 2015), may well be premised on the need for ‘off-grid’ modes of site-specific intervention. As forms of spatial bricolage and deep mapping, such cases provide an illustration of in-between spaces whose liminal constitution extends to the uncertainties that mark out the testing terrain of field ethics and of institutional and disciplinary policing of normative frameworks of practice. Neither putting the ‘Performative-I on stage’ nor seeking to get recognition of autoethnography as a ‘disruptive practice’ (Denzin 2014, pp. 11, 23) are easy propositions to sell to the average institutional review board.

The IRB [institutional review board] framework assumes that one model of research fits all forms of inquiry, but that is not the case. This model requires that researchers fill out forms concerning subjects’ informed consent, the risks and benefits of the research for subjects, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. The model also presumes a static, monolithic view of the human subject. Performance autoethnography, for example, falls outside this model . . . Participation is entirely voluntary, hence there is no need for subjects to sign forms indicating that their consent is ‘informed.’ The activities that makes up the research are participatory; that is, they are *performative, collaborative, and action and praxis based*. (Denzin 2003, pp. 249–250, emphasis added)

In a similar vein, bringing a performative and autoethnographic sensibility to the sociocultural study of space is to take it as read that our understanding and experience of space is itself action and praxis based. Our task as bricoleurs, gleaners, deep mappers—whatever label we choose to attach—is to convince others of the same. Spatial bricolage is a practice that does not hover drone-like over a world it seeks to scan and territorialise. Its methodological instincts are to dissolve abstraction into the concrete fleshiness of a world that gives of itself in lived time and with all the jumble, chaos and clamour that maps (or *some* maps at least) iron out and expunge. If anything, bricolage-style spatial anthropology is more concerned with the creases and folds of the map, the topographic shapes and dispositional practices by which we order and structure our spatial worlds; the habitual songlines we intuit through practice; the ghosting of past journeys that filter through from the dark sump of memory; or the spatial rhythms that breath with us or which tighten around our chests. Yet what such a spatially immersive reading of the world is fundamentally not premised on is the reproducibility of a rigid methodological template that can be procedurally aligned with an equally rigid system of ethics review. As Guillemin and Gillan maintain, procedural ethics and ‘ethics in practice’ are not the same thing; the latter—the day-to-day ethical issues that arise during the course of research activity—are subject to the reflexive considerations that the researcher is faced with as s/he responds to events and experiences as they present themselves in practice. Reflexivity thus ‘comes into play in the field, where research ethics committees are not accessible’ (Guillemin and Gillan 2004, p. 274), making it, from a procedural point of view (i.e., that of a research ethics committee or institutional review board), a concept that is not even afforded any ethical significance (as if the ethical ‘work’ can be got out of the way at committee stage and any subsequent reflexivity on the part of the researcher restricted to matters solely practical, not ethical).

Reflexivity lies at the core of how and why the spatial bricoleur does what s/he does. Attention is thrown back on to the researcher in the field, not as an exercise in self-indulgence, but to recognise that the process of ‘making do’ requires the researcher to step in to any given space in ways that her *presence*—her creativity and performance; her intersubjectivity; her body; her spacing—becomes constitutive of that space. In this respect, the spatial bricoleur is as autoethnographically invested

in the space or spaces he immerses himself in as he is in any other that are routinely encountered in everyday life. 'In practice,' Bochner argues, 'autoethnography is not so much a methodology as a way of life. It is a way of life that acknowledges contingency, finitude, embeddedness in storied being, encounters with Otherness, an appraisal of ethical and moral commitments, and a desire to keep conversation going' (Bochner 2013, p. 53). For the spatial bricoleur or autoethnographer 'in the field' it is no more possible to maintain a non-dialogical distinction between procedural ethics and ethics in practice than it is in any other socio-spatial context. This does not mean that ethical considerations made 'in practice' automatically trump those made procedurally, or that they extend licence, by default, to the reflexively aware researcher. What it does point to is the pedagogic presumption of what Denzin calls a 'communitarian dialogical *ethic of care* and responsibility. It presumes that performances occur in sacred aesthetic spaces where *research* does not operate as a dirty word' (Denzin 2014, p. 80, emphasis in original). But be that as it may, when push comes to shove the spatial bricoleur is more than likely going to settle for the 'off-grid' option in those circumstances where the unforeseeability, liminality and sheer performativity of the task in hand makes the prospect of seeking institutional approval (of entering into formal dialogue with procedural ethics regimes) an exercise in futility. On the part of the institution, it may not be that the risks themselves are considered high or of any immediate concern in terms of the research outline being proposed. It may instead simply be that the very idea of academic research as 'bricolage' or that methods may be applied in an 'eclectic' fashion (or, indeed, that the merits of chance, provocation or performativity are being earnestly promoted) is enough to raise the alarm bells (not to mention the eyebrows of administrators and the legions of bureaucrats who have secured a well-established foothold in the neoliberal academy). On that basis alone, the case for making bricolage and the researcher-as-bricoleur a focus of critical discussion is certainly persuasive and cogent. The arguments I am presenting here, and which have provided the impetus for this *Humanities* special issue, are more specifically framing considerations of bricolage around questions of space and spatiality, and the ever-shifting interdisciplinary constellations that are informing how we think about, create and practice space across the arts and humanities.

## 5. Spatial Bricolage: Special Issue Contributions

In her article 'Assembling the Assemblage: Developing Schizocartography in Support of an Urban Semiology', psychogeographer Tina Richardson describes some of the difficulties faced as a doctoral student when seeking to employ psychogeographic 'methods' in ways that satisfied the demands for academic rigour:

Proposing to use psychogeography as a methodology posed a number of problems, for instance, psychogeography was outside of academia in terms of the written texts that appeared as its output (most of those who carried out what could be termed "psychogeography" were not academics). While it appeared to be fine to analyze psychogeographical texts as literature objects (objects of study), using them as tools for analysis (as theoretical tools) proved harder to justify ... [Moreover,] the practice of psychogeography itself is not recognized as being scientific in any way. Subjective, heterogeneous and un-repeatable experiences of space cannot be easily tested in any way that science would deem acceptable. (this volume, p. 4)

Here is a textbook case of a bricolage sensibility having to go through the mill of justifying itself within the academy, and of jumping through hoops that spatial humanists operating outside of academia (writers, artists, psychogeographers, *flâneurs*) are not routinely subjected to when pitching their ideas. Richardson's discussion therefore poses the questions as to whether academics can in fact be psychogeographers at all (and if so, on what terms?), or whether psychogeography can be considered a bona fide academic method. It does, of course, depend on how psychogeography is being defined. But if approached from other vantage points—as practices of 'deep mapping', 'spatial bricolage', 'spatial anthropology', or 'non-representational methodologies', for example—then it becomes clear



that the parameters that are defining, and re-defining, how we might interrogate space and spatiality in terms of arts and humanities research methods are already being more than fruitfully explored. For her part, Richardson proposes a set of methods or a toolbox based around a walking-based practice she refers to as ‘schizocartography’. As a mode of site-specific spatial intervention, schizocartography ‘brings together psychogeographical practice and urbanism with theories that examine subjectivity, heterogeneity and power in order to present an adaptable set of tools that assesses many of the components involved in being present in our towns and cities’ (Richardson, this volume, p. 1). But she is understandably cautious when it comes to describing the practice as a methodology or even as a set of methods, as this can work against the openness, fluidity and radical contingency that are otherwise part and parcel of what schizocartography is setting out to ‘map’ or make present as a form of critical spatial praxis.

Phil Smith’s ‘Two Walks with Objects’ is similarly drawn from a well-spring of ideas and practices that have their origins in Situationist psychogeography. Like Richardson, Smith is wary of identifying too closely with the ‘psychogeography’ label given that its popularity has spawned a vast array of different claims to the term, diluting its specificity in service of what tends to be a generalised description of a type of urban walking or a loose sense of an aesthetic or poetic response to space and the urban environment. Keen to remain at arm’s length from what has become a somewhat tainted brand, Smith too has set about coining his own concept, in this case ‘mythogeography’. As with Richardson’s schizocartography, mythogeography is premised on an openness and fluidity of performative practice, describing ‘a narrative geography, [that is] characterised by the multiplicity of its layerings, diffusions and displacements. There is never any single trajectory for its place narratives . . . it aims to dismantle and ease apart the layers of space, whirling around itself ideas about space in general and places in particular’ (Smith, this volume, p. 1). Featuring a large number of colour photographs of landscapes and objects (some of which are held aloft in the mythogeographer’s spare hand), ‘Two Walks with Objects’ documents the author’s autoethnographic engagement with landscapes and seascapes in the county of Devon in south west England. The first walk takes place in the seaside town of Paignton; on the second, which begins further along the coast near to the town of Dawlish, Smith is joined by his daughter. As written up in the article, the walks are not just bodies moving in and around a coastal landscape, but bodies that are entangled with the objects and non-human materialities that the walkers come into contact with; bodies that are performing and performative (dancing with sticks, shells and seaweed on the beach; a hand acting as a ‘player’, as if ‘independent and agentive in its right’ (p. 7), cupping pebbles, sand or soil in its palm). The ‘findings’ of the walks, the fruits of a methodological bricolage, are described as ‘an attempt to leave—in the descriptions of the remaining traces, both represented and remembered—a series of small voids, consistent with the general principles of mythogeography, as ‘holey spaces’ . . . for the agency of discrete objects and humans’ (p. 28). As performances, the walks become invocations as much as anything else, autoethnographically conjuring into view ‘potential spaces’ or spaces of becoming where the agency of nonhuman objects tumbles into play, giving colour and shape to a qualitatively different and more affectively charged sense of place.

No less playful and performative—and with a similar but at the same time strikingly different focus on the ‘beach’—is Jo Croft’s ‘Gleaning and Dreaming on Car Park Beach’. Like Smith’s article, this too consists of autoethnographic reflections on walking, drifting, haptic vision, and the materialities of landscapes that pull the author (and reader) in to the closely detailed textures and grain of the world underfoot. The beach in question is not in fact a beach at all, but a gravelly patch of land situated behind the Adelphi Hotel near to Lime Street Station in Liverpool. It is a space that Croft encounters regularly en route to and from her place of work. Drawing inspiration from the Situationist slogan ‘*sous les pavés, la plage*’ (‘beneath the paving stones, the beach’), Croft gives free reign to reverie as she drifts and daydreams her way across a makeshift and rather scraggy urban car park, her imagination transforming it into a beach—a ‘Car Park Beach’—upon which is cast an array of washed-up detritus and urban waste matter. As with ‘Two Walks with Objects’, ‘Car Park Beach’ features a rich abundance of imagery in the form of photographs gleaned from Croft’s beachcombing, both in the Liverpool field site (Adelphi

car park) and a beach at Hoylake on the Wirral peninsula, near to where she lives. Describing the spatial and creative praxis she performs as ‘gleaning’, for Croft the idea of bricolage is one that strikes obvious resonance with an approach in which, poetically making do, the researcher-as-bricoleur/gleaner scavenges and hoards, putting together fragments that hang together as an assemblage that speak to wider eco-political and environmental concerns. Acknowledging the pivotal and inspiring role played by filmmaker Agnès Varda in understandings of gleaning and the gleaner/glaneuse (see above), Croft embraces gleaning as ‘an “after-thought”, characterised by a refrain-like attention to traces and residues’. Gleaners, she continues, ‘follow in the material footsteps of others. Their mobility is shaped by the “afterwardness” of matter’ (this volume, p. 15). The work that the practice of gleaning and beachcombing is ultimately put to is a demonstration of the porosity and fragility of urban space, its material composition a fluid reminder of the residual trace matter that humans leave casually in their wake, and the spillage of social, economic and material practices that make spaces what they are, what they were, or what they could be. As demonstrated in the article, gleaning also helps furnish a space of the imagination whereby the glaneuse and those that follow her are ‘afforded an oneiric connection to the Anthropocene’ (p. 16). Car park beach is offered as a liminal zone that promises, for those attuned to where its affective materialities may potentially take them, a point of connection and transition: a space of becoming.

Wayne Medford’s article ‘A Year in the Life of a Public Park: Route-making, Vigilance and Sampling Time Whilst Walking’, is also centred on a designated urban space, although in this case one that plays host to a different set of social and cultural practices than the Adelphi car park. As with the special issue articles already cited, walking plays a key methodological role in Medford’s study, which provides an ethnographic mapping of a public park situated in Gateshead, a town in the north east of England. Saltwell Park, opened in the 1870s, is located in an area that has a socially and ethnically diverse local population, and is a lively and much-loved civic resource. Implementing what he describes as an experimental walking methodology, Medford sets out a systematic process of exploring Saltwell Park that encompasses pedestrian-based ethnography and documentation of the everyday life of the park, its diurnal and annual rhythms and patterns, as observed over the course of a year. In particular, it is as a ‘therapeutic landscape’ that the park is approached as an immersive space of representation, showing the way in which ‘individuals could find therapeutic dwellings through their own inhabitation’ (Medford, this volume, p. 5). As such, a methodological prerequisite is a sensitivity to the sensory and embodied fabric of the park, the way that the senses ‘would be differently engaged’ (p. 18) than those stimulated as part of habitations within, and movements through, other parts of the urban landscape. The ethnographic and autoethnographic remit of the project was aided by the use of digital recording equipment, thereby demanding the careful exercise of ‘ethics in practice’ (judgements that, depending on the institution and committee members concerned, might well be subject to whatever the officially sanctioned ‘procedural ethics’ deem permissible, as discussed earlier):

I found that using digital audio technologies was useful for unobtrusively recording my own vocal narrations and ambient recording, especially if it could be hidden among clothing. Nonetheless, I was sensitive to ethical considerations of recording other people’s actions and interactions in situations that were private, or where privacy has been anticipated. (p. 18)

‘Making do’ in the sense of utilising digital tools and methods in ways that would otherwise raise procedural ethical concerns hinges on the degrees of agency afforded to the reflexive judgements brought to bear of the research *in practice*; reflexivity, which, as we have seen, ‘comes into play in the field, where research ethics committees are not accessible’ (Guillemin and Gillan 2004, p. 274). To isolate the use of digital tools on ethical grounds as specific to the practice of the spatial bricoleur or anthropologist is to ignore the way digital technologies, such as CCTV cameras, also pose questions as to the relations of power that are invested in a disciplinary gaze that can intrude, unhindered and unchallenged, into everyday public spaces. The implicit instruction to those walking through the park, within the scopic range of the surveillance cameras, is that ‘the watched should keep calm, carry on

regardless, and let themselves be watched by the watchers' (p. 20). Medford's impromptu side-step dance in front of one of the CCTV cameras (to confirm whether, as he correctly suspected, the camera had been tracking him) represents a performative challenge to, and a conspicuous acknowledgement of, a gaze being trained on him as black researcher in a mainly white populated public park.

The use of recording devices as part of a walking methodology is the main focus of Andrew Brown's article 'Soundwalking: Deep Listening and Spatio-Temporal Montage'. Responding to Doreen Massey's suggestion that space should be thought of as 'a simultaneity of stories so far' (Massey 2005, p. 9), Brown's method—soundwalking—layers recordings made of walks through contemporary landscapes over field recordings made in the same location but at a different time: 'Soundwalks map the present,' Brown explains, 'but also juxtapose the recent and distant past, enabling us to navigate temporalities and to imaginatively and sonically travel through time' (this volume, p. 6). Walks were conducted in several locations in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire in the East Midlands region of England. These aimed to follow in the footsteps of those who took part in a more historically eventful walk some two centuries earlier. In 1817 a group of men set out from South Wingfield with the intention of marching on Nottingham to incite revolution and overthrow the government of the day. The uprising was quickly suppressed and the would-be revolutionaries variously imprisoned, executed and transported. The soundwalks were designed to coincide with the bicentennial commemorations of Pentrich uprising and were developed in collaboration with members of the organising committee. Against this political and historical backdrop, the walks constituted a collective socio-spatial activity, with Brown officiating as artist, guide, and curator of a shared embodied multi-sensory experience: 'in sharing the walk', he writes, 'I experience a sense of taking over the bodies of participants, hijacking them in order to offer what may or may not prove to be fruitful experiences' (p. 8). For Brown, the sites he works with as a sound artist become co-authors in the sense that they provide the content and context of his practice. As, indeed, do those he shares the walks with, the shared experience generating what Victor Turner refers to as *communitas*, but at the same time the experience can engender feelings of isolation and alienation as each walker is to a certain extent cut off from the others through the wearing of headphones. 'Participation involves the sharing of an experience, but also of encountering personal resistances, as power and decision-making are relinquished in engagement with the spirit of the artwork and the typical response of trust in the artist' (pp. 9–10). These contradictions, and the interplay between the embodied experiences of the individual walkers and those that frame a collective sense of spatial engagement, give productive voice to a wider set of questions that may be applied to soundwalking as a method of socio-spatial enquiry:

[Can a] soundwalk be utilised as a means of engendering understanding between contemporary communities through the creation of dialogic space? Can a soundwalk provide agency for people, in particular those who are currently marginalised, through which to explore their relationship with place and self-/shared identity?... [M]ight the soundwalk be applied in a deeper appreciation of our shared environment, and adoption of a more responsible position towards it? (p. 10)

Considered alongside the other walking methods showcased in this special issue, these are questions that contribute to broader critical debates around social space, affect, and the place of the imagination and creativity in the *making*—bricolage-style—of everyday spaces and their associated practices.

Another common thread that runs through the special issue contributions is how the idea of 'making do' informs practical decisions and tactics made in the field, responding to events as they reveal themselves (in the making). In Nick Wees's article, 'Improvised Performances: Urban Ethnography and the Creative Tactics of Montreal's Metro Buskers', improvisation speaks both to the tactics of those the article is ethnographically centred on (buskers in Montreal) as well as to those deployed by the researcher himself (Wees), responding creatively to the field environment as he finds it on any given day. In the article, busking is understood as a relational process of 'cobbling together' and as such is always in the making; a performance in one obvious sense, but also a

performance in terms of a practice of everyday space that is provisional, fluid, unbounded, open to the conditional factors that come with the territory: precarity, unpredictability of weather, qualities of the acoustic environment, security and personal safety, a sufficient supply of punters (amount of passing foot-traffic), competition (the difficulties of getting a timeslot in a popular busking location), and more. The busker, Wees suggests, constitutes ‘an assemblage-event, temporally and spatially localized at the convergence of multiple lines of flow (trains, commuters, sound waves, circulations of currency, changing regulations of space, etc.), not a fixed identity or subject-position’. Similarly, the practice of busking is understood as ‘an assemblage-act, involving multiple participants—human and material—that emerges through the practices and creative tactics of an individual performer, in an ongoing process of cobbling together, of *bricolage*’ (this volume, p. 15). For the researcher-as-bricoleur, on the other hand, his subjectivity and practice is no less constitutive of an assemblage and of a need to tactically cobble-together a performance that *makes space* for an embodied and situated understanding of the busker and of busking as an (auto)ethnographic narrative. Some insight into this can be usefully gleaned from Wees’s description of some of the different activities that went into his fieldwork practice:

I rode trains, lingered in stations, and wandered the extensive network of corridors connecting stations to office and commercial complexes, downtown university campuses, and exits at the surface that can be as far as several city blocks from the actual station. I stood, sat, observed, conversed, took notes, filmed and made recordings of buskers and of the spaces of the metro. Conversations ranged from short informal exchanges (over two dozen) to semi-structured interviews ranging from fifteen minutes to over an hour (most of these were audio-recorded). (p. 2)

As a participant–observer, and as a researcher who is able to bring his own past experience of busking to his ethnographic understanding of Montreal’s buskers, what Wees also spent time doing was performing as a busker himself, playing guitar and singing at three different metro stations. This helped him to cobble together insights that would otherwise be less accessible: how physically demanding and psychologically exhausting metro busking can be, but at the same time how deeply rewarding; the extent to which it is necessarily improvisational and tactically adaptive to a whole host of circumstances that might present themselves at any given moment.

The improvisational tactics that Wees draws our attention to would undoubtedly qualify as examples of what cultural geographer David Crouch refers to as ‘spacing’. For Crouch, drawing on ideas developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, ‘Space is activity, process, practice, performativites, stillness. In French, *l’espace*, spacing’ (this volume, p. 5). Buskers are as much in the business of making (performing) space as they are performing ‘in’ it. The creativity that is the life-blood of busking (to the extent that it reflects a desire to creatively express—or at least strive to—a resonant musical idea or emotion) is no less instrumental in giving form and colour to an expression of space that emerges in the ‘practical ontologies’ (p. 5) that bind the embodied subject to his or her material surroundings. It is in the doingness and performativity of busking as an urban spatial practice that its melding of performer, performance and environment is phenomenologically made flesh. Crouch’s special issue essay, ‘bricolage, poetics, spacing’, thus usefully sets out some of the theoretical underpinnings that speak directly to the ethnographic and autoethnographic case studies presented in the special issue as a whole. Most geographical knowledge, Crouch argues, ‘occurs in living, shaped, *even suppressed by* academic lines of thought’ (p. 2, emphasis added). Hinted at here is the extent to which over-intellectualizing space can be part of the problem insofar as it serves to hinder rather than *give space* to an understanding of space and spatiality that allows it room to breathe and to flex its corporeal muscle (I make a similar argument in the book *Spatial Anthropology: Excursions in Liminal Space*, where, borrowing from the writer, poet and Zen philosopher Eihei Dogen, I suggest that it is sometimes necessary to *kill space* in order to *give life to space*). It is ‘how space feels [that] matters’, Crouch stresses, ‘as it makes relations and opens potentialities’ (ibid.). The potentialities of space—its unpredictability, its promise, its openness, its becoming—are what the contributors to this special issue variously explore. The ways in which space might be suppressed (or ‘killed’) are

manifold, but those engineered through, for example, ethics review committees, or epistemological templates that cling tendentiously to a particular *idea* of space (what Lefebvre refers to as ‘conceived space’), can unquestionably play their part in constraining not just the range of possibilities by which space may be understood but also the spaces themselves inasmuch as their capacity to be felt and experienced is inhibited in terms of what permissibly counts as ‘geographical knowledge’. Bricolage, then, is a very practical response to a field of practice that at times constricts as much as it allows space to roam, unimpeded, across disciplinary boundaries. ‘Making do’ becomes an entirely appropriate statement of intent in that it is premised on, and values, the idea of a performative doingness that unfolds in a time and space of creative becoming:

Bricolage may be about ‘getting by’, but it may also be able to render tackling situations, in however much detail and nuance they may assert, require, or happen. In these actions of bricolage, there are moments of occurrence, of potentiality and affect; atmosphere and becoming. Creativity is vital in affecting becoming, in becoming that is affective ... The complexity of the character of bricolage emerges in our examination of spacing: atmosphere, becoming, affectivities, and more. (pp. 1, 5)

Bricolage should *count* to the extent that it makes explicit the poetics and affects of space, as well as the ethical and procedural frameworks that are brought to bear on how space is practised, or allowed to be.

Finally, my own contribution, *The Question of Space: a review essay*, is focused on and around the book, *The Question of Space: Interrogating the Spatial Turn Between Disciplines*, a collection of essays edited by Marijn Nieuwenhuis and David Crouch (Nieuwenhuis and Crouch 2017). As well as providing a detailed critical overview of *The Question of Space*, the article responds to some of the broader questions the book poses in terms of the radical interdisciplinary of space and spatiality, relating these firstly to ideas drawn from Henri Lefebvre’s discussion of ‘blind fields’. The review essay then goes on to question what we might understand by the so-called ‘spatial turn’ and whether this itself requires some rethinking to better take stock of developments in and around interdisciplinary scholarship on space and spatiality. Following this, the essay engages more directly with the individual chapter contributions in *The Question of Space*, before drawing together some concluding remarks that speak to the concept of ‘atmosphere’ as an affective and phenomenological quality of space as experiential and embodied ‘spacing’. The review and the wider discussion it helps prompt thus tie in closely with many of the arguments developed and explored across this *Spatial Bricolage* special issue, not least those put forward by Crouch in his own contribution.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

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