From Enskillment to Houses of Learning

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ABSTRACT: This article is an exploration of how the interdisciplinary relationship between art and anthropology can contribute to teaching anthropology in schools. The argument is made that through practical engagement with the environment – whether 'natural', social or built – one can develop important and complementary approaches to teaching and thinking about anthropology. Three specific areas of activity are examined: skill and practical work with materials, doing children's ethnographies and 'playing house'. The author draws upon her own experience of working both as an artist and an anthropologist.

KEYWORDS: anthropology, art, children's ethnographies, enskillment, 'playing house'

This article considers the value of an interdisciplinary and phenomenological approach to developing anthropological education with young people in schools. I adopt an auto-biographical perspective to this issue, drawing on personal experiences of developing arts projects with children and young people over the past 25 years and lecturing in social anthropology since 2000. In developing education in anthropology beyond the university, the anthropologist's background is important because many anthropologists who have an interest in conveying the subject to young people have unique histories which have been, each in their own way, useful in teaching the subject to a younger age group. There is also something special about the project-led, situated approach which several anthropologists have used in schools, which is worth examining to see what can be distilled for future practice.

My working life has incorporated both art and anthropological practices which have fed into each other in an almost 'mutually constitutive' way. I studied anthropology as an undergraduate, then worked as a textile artist, designer and environmental sculptor before returning to anthropology in my late thirties. I still practise community-based willow-sculpture work. From this experience, I would suggest that an interdisciplinary practice along the boundaries of art and anthropology is productive for developing anthropological education for several reasons, as follows.

The practice of both art and anthropology frequently employ qualitative and emergent methodologies which allow them to follow an 'intuition', or a 'foreshadowed problem', without necessarily beginning with a goal or hypothesis in mind. Both artists and anthropologists also gather and produce their data through observation *and* practical experience. Indeed, immersion in the artistic process or in the field is almost inseparable from their working practice. Both practices are also transformative, in that they involve a kind of 'letting go' of what is known in order to allow new understandings to arise, either through the alchemy of artistic creation, or through the multiple understandings and perspectives

achieved through 'culture shock' and attempting to grasp 'the native's point of view'.

One significant difference between the two disciplines is that artists generally neither find it easy to talk about their work nor even wish to articulate the processes and experiences involved in creating it, while anthropologists reflect upon and refine their material into an analysis, and try to make the theoretical issues attendant on their research explicit. Thus the artist's work should be able to 'stand for itself' while the anthropologist's role is 'interpretive'.

The liminal space between the two disciplines (if indeed there is such a space rather than simply an overlapping area of practice) is where our mutual ideas and experiences can most contribute to our understanding of each others' subjects, and it is this space which I would like to explore as a fertile ground for developing anthropological education in schools. It is, I suggest, following Jokela (2008), a location which brings us into the realm of phenomenological anthropology.

My anthropological research is focussed on the environment, material culture, textiles, learning, perception and inhabitation practices of Central Asia, and I have conducted much of my research through apprenticeship. My work as an artist and sculptor situates me in the environment, rather than purely observing it, and the community involvement which forms a significant element of my practice reflects a view that it can be limiting to work as a lone artist, in that one cannot separate the individual from society, nor community from environment. So there are clearly resonances between the theoretical and practical aims which I explore in both disciplines. Now that I lecture in anthropology, I make less art, but my arts practice still feeds into my anthropology at all levels, and is relevant to the discussion we are having in this special issue of *Anthropology in Action.* Themes from arts projects I have conducted with children may be transferable upwards even to university honours level,

while the anthropology also feeds into the arts and education. The point is that interdisciplinarity may be part of the toolkit we can use as a 'pathway' to anthropology for young people, in much the same way as I would suggest that it can be relevant for communicating anthropology at university level.

Anthropology Beyond the University

We may imagine that anthropology is a degree-level subject which has to be simplified 'downwards' for teaching in schools. I am not convinced about this, and suggest that if we want to develop anthropology Highers or A-Levels we might consider beginning at Primary or even Early Years level education. We often talk of anthropology as 'the study of what it is to be human', and this is an aspect of anthropology which is pertinent throughout a person's educational lifespan. School subjects such as citizenship or religious studies are clearly relevant here. On the one hand, it is our anthropological way of thinking about the world, our reflexivity, which is relevant to these subjects, and to education throughout the curriculum. But on the other hand, anthropological issues, themes and approaches are also raised in many other school subjects, from geography to languages to tourism, so an anthropology core module for training teachers could also be worth advocating for use in teaching across many subjects.

Methodologically, there are many teaching techniques used at Primary level which parallel how we 'do' anthropology in the field. For example, simple project work; writing about 'my favourite …'; children creating journey-maps of their day; writing diaries of events; making video diaries and self-portraits, and so on. These educational methods can be compared with the work of anthropologists such as Andrew Irving (2007) and Christina Toren (1999), along with artists whose work crosses disciplinary boundaries such as Dalziel and

Scullion, Anthony Gormley or sound artists such as Peter Cusack (Bunn 2009).

Irving's research in Kampala, Uganda, involved him accompanying HIV/Aids sufferers on journeys of personal significance around their neighbourhood. Informants recorded narratives of significant life events in their locality while Irving asked questions and took photographs (Irving 2007: 186–187). Toren's research among school children in Fiji involved her asking children to write stories about kinship (1999). Sound artist Peter Cusack's *Favourite Sounds of London* and *Favourite Sounds of Beijing* projects required informants to respond to the question 'What is your favourite sound of London (or Beijing) and why?' (www.favouritelondonsounds.org). Again, the project allowed respondents to reveal features of their life-worlds of ethnographic significance, from soundmarks of local soundscapes to the impact of globalization on their sound environments. Favoured sounds ranged from the harmonies of an electronic substation with the lapping waters of the River Thames to the sounds of a building site at night in Beijing. All these approaches were in some way interventions which allowed participants to draw on their life experiences to contribute to the ethnography or art work produced.

In education, this 'people-centred' approach was advocated by thinkers such as John Holt (1964, 1977) and William Labov (1972), and became characteristic of British educational practice in the 1960s and 1970s. These educationalists advocated a more child-centred and project-based approach to learning, allowing children to explore their interests through 'discovery learning'. This was much in contrast with schooling in many other European societies and also in the U.S. where many such thinkers were based, yet where mainstream education was usually more 'instructive'.

Anthropologically, such semi-structured activities could be interpreted as 'interventions', moving beyond pure participant-observation. Certainly, in conducting art, anthropology or schooling in this way, activities take place which are *provoked* by the researcher or teacher, and life does not simply carry on in its 'natural' way. But such activities also give both informants and young people the possibility to give voice to their own understandings of the world.

The Role of Interdisciplinarity in Teaching Anthropology to Young People

It was not until I began to try to distil the usefulness of my art educational work for teaching anthropology that I came to understand that the interdisciplinary aspect of my arts practice was as relevant for anthropology as it was for art. I suggest that an interdisciplinary standpoint provides a 'way in' to a phenomenological understanding of the world that is more difficult to access as mere observer or audience. In particular, a practical, 'hands-on' creative approach requires a specific way of thinking about and analyzing the world which provides an important complement to other kinds of academic thinking, and this is very relevant for anthropology. To explore the value of such an approach in anthropology teaching, I shall focus on three particular areas of practice. These are the use of skills and materials; children researching their own ethnographies; and building and inhabitation. Some projects I have led began as art projects pure and simple, some have very much interwoven anthropological themes with practical making, and many involve other useful anthropological tools such as the use of objects, stories and life-histories.

Skills and Materials

The environmental artist Timo Jokela argues that over the past 200 years, in the industrial west, the body's relation to the environment

in regard to the amount of physical work people do has changed dramatically (2008). In his art he aims to transform 'traditional' working methods and skills into ways of developing community art through skilfully and creatively engaging with the environment. I take a broadly similar approach in that I too have found that hands-on, skill-based practice, creating tangible artefacts, is engaging and appealing to young people in ways that can be both artistic and anthropological.

In the U.K., most school children follow a specific National Curriculum and rarely have the opportunity to encounter and learn from skilled practitioners (as opposed to multi-skilled teachers), or to learn through direct contact with the materials of their environments. To work as a skilled practitioner with children – as a weaver, knotter or felt-maker, for instance – provides children with access to a kind of knowledge and learning rarely catered for in the mainstream educational system (see, for example, Coy 1989; Lave 1990; Toren 1993; Dilley 1999; Rogoff 2003). Contrary to the 'attainment target approach', one strand of more recent educational theory promotes a notion of learning ability as having multiple facets (linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal) which suggests that different children would benefit from exposure to a range of learning methods (Honey and Mumford 1986; Handy 1994; Gardner 1996). Over the past two decades, this approach has been growing in favour, and supports the argument that a skill-based practical approach to anthropological teaching would provide a valuable, bodily-kinaesthetic balance to the more general focus on linguistic and logical-mathematical kinds of learning. Research in the anthropology of learning, of the body, of architecture and gesture, also confirm that such skill-based learning provides an important practical, bodily accompaniment and counterpoint to conceptual and mathematical thought (Wilson 1988; Goldin-Meadow 2003). Indeed, writers such

as Goldin-Meadow argue that it is through bodily movement and gesture that we first articulate complex theoretical concepts, rather than through speech.

Furthermore, in regard to teaching anthropology, just as apprenticeship in fieldwork enables anthropologists to learn not just skills but also the social and cultural practices attendant upon them, so skill-based learning with young people is also a way of teaching 'culture', since no skill is devoid of its associated social and cultural practices (Coy 1989). In my own experience of working with plant materials and textiles, I find that the very direct engagement with materials such as willow, rush or wool through skills such as weaving, twining or felt-making, is a very useful way of communicating an important phenomenological approach to learning and thinking about materials and the environment. At the same time it can act as a pathway to understanding the social and cultural practices of others.

For example, teaching weaving and twining skills in willow and rush work enables participants to explore their own social histories by providing information about these materials' embeddedness in cultural practices through access to a range of woven artefacts from rush toys to trout-fishing baskets, willow charcoal, shopping baskets, and so on. It links to the local social landscape by referring to a resource grown in both a more 'traditional' lived environment such as wetland areas and the contemporary urban environment where the emphasis is on 'winter colour' or disguising motorway embankments. Accompanied by relevant resources, this raises a range of possibilities for discussion (and project research), such as the different implications for shopping or the environment of the transition from the willow basket to the plastic bag, or more cultural historical aspects such as charcoal burning.

Resources required to convey this information in a textured way might include books on a range of themes from historical information to stories, visual material, web-resources, teach-

ing packs, photographs, films and objects or handling collections (Bunn 2003). I have found that providing three or four complementary activities and classroom areas enables children to develop their own study and discussion on related cultural aspects in parallel to practice. I have also found inviting local active or retired practitioners to demonstrate and talk about their work invaluable.

Introducing the more overtly anthropological aspects of these activities depends upon aim and age group. Talk that develops while working may often be obliquely related to the theme through children's personal stories, so that the skilful, practical aspect can act as a kind of catalyst for chat and discussion in a similar vein to the way that Jokela (2008) describes his community participants discussing their aesthetic experiences of working with him indirectly through stories of fishing, hunting or berry picking. What is particularly interesting in this work with young people is to witness them holding discussions on anthropological topics while continuing with their practical tasks, as if 'work aids thought'.

I have used feltmaking in a similar way, extending discussion to include the use of felt by Central Asian pastoralists and drawing on my field research. Made from raw sheep's fleece, felt immediately links people to the local agricultural and pastoral landscape. As a local material, the properties of felt as a shrunken, non-woven fabric locate it in the U.K. weaving and hatting industry, hardened and shaped for woollen textiles from Harris Tweed to bowler hats, and extending in contemporary use to pool table covers and laser printer accessories. But its insulating qualities and portable technology are also what have made felt fundamental to the daily lives of Central Asian pastoralists through its use for making tent covers, floor coverings and clothing. So work with materials such as felt can lead to all sorts of mutual cultural understandings, from the role of sheep in daily life, to how people store goods, to what gives texture and fabric to our lives.

Practical work in this case can be complemented by handling collections, which can become focal points for a whole range of activities, ideas and anthropological discussions. Handling Kyrgyz felt bags with school groups in London, for example, provoked discussions on practical matters such as the use of bags for storage and transport in Central Asia, for holding cups and clothes, for use in animal husbandry, and the practice of felt-bag-making from wool, through to more theoretical themes such as bags as store-houses of memory, and discussions of human-animal relations in regards to meat eating (Figure 1). In one project, this use of bags was later extended to the creation of new felt 'feely-bags' for sensory work with young children; the use of bags for housing anthropological educational materials and so on.

At a more advanced theoretical level, transforming rush to rope or fleece to fabric also explores the relationship between material and artefact (which I suggest is rarely finite, since one could argue that human intervention in the production of artefacts begins as soon as materials are harvested or collected, and does not cease when the material becomes a recognizable object [Bunn 1999]). Thus current anthropological concerns with materiality and agency can be explored through questions about whether and how we can consider objects as processes, as vehicles of social connection between the many people who have touched and owned them in different ways, and as ever changing, yet solid, phenomena. This approach to using objects is similar to Basu and Coleman's work with museum collections (this issue), but in this context it is possible to extend the activity beyond viewing to both handling and practically making.

I have found this approach to be equally relevant at university level and have used it to complement lectures on Material Culture Honours courses and as a core element of the second year Sustainable Development Programme at the University of St Andrews.

Figure 1: Kyrgyz bags with a school group at Surrey Docks Farm

Alongside lectures, Material Culture students follow practical sessions working with architects, netmakers, and participate in collective working such as knitting bees to draw attention to the different kinds of thinking that practical engagement and the social situatedness of skill can bring.

I have also used similar practical activities for sessions in Tim Ingold's *Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* seminars, working with knots, twining and rope making with anthropology undergraduates at Manchester and Aberdeen universities. Weaving baskets and working with willow outdoors has often involved bringing the weather into the students' work – especially on the North-East coast of Scotland (Figure 2). This might lead to later classroom discussions on how engage-

ment with the environment involves not just working with materials, animals and land, but also its more intangible aspects (Ingold 2007). This kind of work is particularly valuable to feed into students' academic work in related sessions about learning, enskillment, patterning, human-environment relationships and the body-mind relationship in human action.

Children Researching Their Own Ethnographies

A second approach draws on practices of empowering our subjects and informants through dialogue and facilitating their own ethnographic research. This might involve young people researching their own communities,

Figure 2: Working with the wind and the willow on the beach in Aberdeen

their daily lives, their own ethno-histories or collecting community life-histories. Research techniques involve interviews, using photography, constructing portraits of others and personal self-portraits, using objects as a starting-point for discussions of life-histories, and so on. Past research on 'child-centred learning' in Primary level education suggests that such an approach might be very effective.

While I am advocating child-led ethnographic research projects as a teaching method, it is remarkable that enabling our ethnographic subjects in general, including children, to participate in the construction and execution of our research projects is very unusual in anthropological practice. While there have been important developments in dialogic research methods (e.g. Feld 1990; Humphrey 1996; Irvine 2007), with the exception of Toren's (1993,

1999) involvement of young people contributing drawings and essays to her study, there have been few cases of children or young people contributing to or co-constructing an actual research project.

This omission is particularly surprising given that other disciplines such as Sociology and Social Geography do encourage this practice through the advocacy of 'participation' and 'children's geographies' for children's involvement in research. The advocacy of children's participation in these disciplines has been especially influenced by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which advocates children's rights to express their views and to contribute to decision-making in matters affecting them (UN 1989; Gallagher 2009). The focus on participation particularly addresses the unequal power relations between children

and adults, with a view to treating children as active social agents with equal competences to adults. Accepting this broad standpoint, the approach in Social Geography has been to allow young people to articulate their own views in research, often using multiple media such as drawing and photography to explore themes such as social space in the classroom or in playgrounds, and also to try to elicit children's points of view on research topics (van Blerk & Kesby 2009).

Within an educational rather than a research context, I suggest the aims are different. The aim here is one of both training and developing research from a child's point of view, and the outcomes of children's own ethnographic research projects are not subject to the kinds of academic judgements that might take place within the university. In school-based ethnographic projects, children learn to use anthropological and ethnographic methods while developing their own questions and ways of conveying their results. In this area of work, I have been fortunate to work with a community media group, Hyperaction, which specializes in developing creative IT projects through constructing websites or CD-Roms with young people on socio-cultural themes. That the process of creating the website or CD-Rom provides a useful framework for the young people involved to develop their analytical skills can be demonstrated in two Hyperaction projects in which I have been involved.

The 1998 Hyperaction project, *Roath Village Web*, involved children of primary and secondary ages in the Roath area of Cardiff building an intergenerational website contrasting their own life experiences and ethno-histories with those of village 'elders'. For example, for one section of the website, elders were asked by children from a local primary school to bring in objects of significance to their pasts (ration books, old wage packets, locks from a child's first haircut, etc.). The children then interviewed the elders about the significance of the objects and used them to build up portraits of the elders which

they photographed on disposable and digital cameras. Children also constructed their own self-portraits, bringing in their own objects (teddy bears, souvenirs, etc.), using pin-hole cameras made from Pringle tins. This practice enabled the children to reflect upon issues such as representation of self and others, and on the significance of memory. It also enabled them to develop a vocabulary of the different kinds of significances attendant on objects which they themselves and elders might have. The broader project explored a whole range of questions from changes in community practices through developing trades and consumer patterns, to changes in architectural details on local housing, to war memories and historical experiences of local inhabitants.

The *Coal Faces Pit Heads* project, led by Hyperaction director Sue Williams at Tower Colliery in the Rhondda Valley, was a long-term, intergenerational project which produced a CD-Rom in 2001 about the ethno-history of miners' working lives at Tower Colliery. Included on the CD-Rom were interviews that the children had conducted with retired miners; photographic and audio portraits of the miners and historical accounts of the changing mining practices at the colliery over the past 70 years. The children made soundscape recordings of the mining environment, and learned how almost all parts of the mine worked, from the canteen to the offices, from the coal-washery to the pithead. They also reflected on their own experiences of living in the area, on employment and unemployment, the local environment and wildlife, change and stability, and so on. This was particularly important in view of the mining history of the region, and Tower Colliery's role in local social history, in an area where it was the only remaining mine operating in the region, having been bought by the miners themselves following the Miners Strike in the 1980s.

In the Roath Village project in particular, the role of artefacts was an important additional tool used for drawing out explicit relationships

and connections between children's lives and those of their elders. The personalization of objects in this project transformed them into storehouses of memory for specific persons, eliciting resonance in children. I cannot stress too highly the value of using artefacts in 'doing ethnography' with young people. Objects are material and tangible, directly accessible to people of all ages, linking the past to the present and acting as touchstones as direct points of connection between the lives of different people (Thomas 2006). Working with artefacts may touch upon many anthropological concerns, from aspects of gift-giving; materials and skill; ways of classifying and categorizing things; how objects call up memories; how different activities add different kinds of value to objects, from sentiment, to a sense of ownership, to 'magic', to 'time equals money' (see, for example, Mauss 1970; Miller 1983; Appadurai 1986; Coleman 1988; Gell 1998). In such ethnographic projects, artefacts can be used educationally through the whole age-range from the Early Years and Primary age onwards to Honours Level.

Houses of Learning: Shelters, Houses, Homes and Tents

My interest in the use of the 'house' for education links to my own research interests in how houses act as 'sites of learning' and in the theme of 'playing house'. Work with the built and/or inhabited environment with young people – whether houses, tents, or domestic environments – can incorporate a whole range of anthropological themes, rather in the way that a focus on the domestic or home environment can incorporate many aspects of anthropology, from kinship, economics and enskillment to material culture and food (Bunn 2000).

The anthropology of homes and houses has been quite marginal to the discipline in general, but educationally, the house offers a wide range of both regional and theoretical areas of

study for young people in school. Theoretically, it provides an accessible framework for the exploration of questions about the relationship between building and dwelling (Bunn 1992, 2000; Ingold 2000; Pallasmaa 2009); about social space (Bourdieu 1971; Cunningham 1973; Littlejohn 1976; Helliwell 1996); about kinship (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995) as well as material culture (Miller 1987).

What is also interesting about developing an anthropological education with children through making houses and structures is that the house is very much bound up with children's own active and ongoing social development. Toren (1993) has shown how Fijian children both reconstitute and at times invert the ways that social relations are articulated through their playful re-organization and testing of ideas of Fijian social space. Similarly, Haste (1987), a social psychologist, challenges Bourdieu's work on the Kabyle house by illustrating how children continually work out, make sense of, and regenerate socially-agreed rules in relation to social space. Such studies of children playing and learning through houses, though few and far between, reveal the potential of both building and inhabitation as an educational tool.

In relation to anthropological education, in a basic shelter-building project young people might design, build and construct a shelter or tent (as a model or full-sized) from willow or other available local materials. In the process of building, they will reflect on how to work with these materials and the skills required; the relationship between the structure and the local environment; how to situate a dwelling; as well as planning and modelling.

In relation to skill, if (as outlined above) making provides an important practical, bodily accompaniment and counterpoint to conceptual and mathematical thought and a way in to a phenomenological understanding of the world, then constructing and building shelters and models develop this further by introducing the additional dimension of inhabitation

of three-dimensional form. Following Wilson (1988) and Pallasmaa (2009), my approach is that buildings are three-dimensional expressions of how people think, or learn to think, geometrically about the world, and that the process of building develops an understanding about the relationship between the body, materials and the environment.

Inseparable from this is the relationship between building and dwelling. When young people make structures, they are involved in building both with a concern for outer form and how this 'looks' in terms of its visual appearance and its location in a place. They also develop the understanding that a home is something experienced from the inside at the same time and in the same process. Thus young people learn how dwellings incorporate a range of human practices and needs linked to aesthetics, home-making and inhabitation. This includes how homes surround and protect a person, expressing the sensory experience of being inside an artefact, and of homeliness.

In simple structure-building projects, young people might work in groups of peers or in family groups (if adults are involved), drawing inspiration from vernacular architecture, the environment, local materials or even on the relationship between human and animal dwellings. At the same time, the whole project is collaborative and cooperative, and those involved will negotiate who takes what role, allotting tasks both intentionally and tacitly through processes of distributed cognition and also learning from one another. This highlights core anthropological themes of sociality, inter-subjectivity, learning and communities of practice (Lave 1990; Carrithers 1992; Palsson 1994; Tomasello 2009). Those involved will decide what is significant in a house. Chimneys, windows and doors are usually very important, linking inside to out, but also providing features for playful and poetic expression, resonating with bodily and environmental forms. When 'finished' and 'inhabited', rules and social space continue to be negotiated. Even very

young children will argue and position each other, saying who can and who cannot sit or sleep where; where one can eat; who can and cannot come in, and so on.

The final product is almost always left where it was built for future use, and often continues to be modified and adapted by both those who worked on the project and others in the neighbourhood. This raises further interesting questions about the relationship between process and product, in that such activities are both enjoyable in themselves and act as 'learning tools', but they also produce 'a result' which at some point people agree is 'finished', and which participants would almost never intentionally then dismantle. Perhaps the physical involvement with the materials and development of the dwelling imbues participants with a sense of ownership and negates any possibility of it being merely processual or temporal. Mitchell describes a very similar response at the Centre for Alternative Technology, when architecture students offered reduced fees to demolish their own temporary built structures unanimously refused to do so (Mitchell 1998).

The Yurt Project

I adopted this kind of approach – and developed it further – in a series of projects that I collectively refer to as the 'Yurt Project'. These projects involved creating a Central Asian tent (yurt) frame and its felt covers, as well as engaging with the whole process of 'making' home and exploring the local activities involved in dwelling in it. I came to study these topics at university following on from leading arts projects on the yurt, not the other way round. In this way, perhaps the nomadic tent itself provided my own pathway to anthropology. Indeed, working with felt is what first drew me to consider carrying out research in Central Asia, as if not only artefacts but also materials and buildings can have agency (Gell 1998).

The first of the yurt projects was the Helmshore Yurt, where I worked with the horse-

drawn theatre company 'Horse and Bamboo' and 90 school children at Helmshore Textile Museum in the Rossendale Valley to construct a nomadic felt tent which was then used for a series of story-telling events. At the same time as working with the artists, musicians and story-tellers, the children learned about their own ethno-histories in Rossendale (an industrial felt-making valley in Lancashire, where there was a local felt slipper factory), Masonic felt banner-making production, and ongoing related local animal husbandry and sheep-keeping practices. Thus children were continuously considering local practices in relation to similar practices in Central Asia.

From these activities was developed a vocabulary of stories to tell while the tent was being exhibited (Figure 3). The wood for the tent frame (hazel and willow) was sourced from a local charcoal burner, coppice-worker and traveller, Walter Lloyd. The project took place in an old fulling and cloth felting mill, the Helmshore Textile Museum, so that children were also able to work with the museum education officer, handle the museum collection, and learn about the industrial textile history of the region through access to the working machinery and archives in the museum.

Learning outcomes of the project included learning the skill of felt-making, its links to animal husbandry and its relevance in both the U.K. and in Central Asia. In learning about Central Asian patterning and its relationship with the Central Asian environment for felt-making, children also considered different cultural sources of ideas and inspirations for design. The children also explored the Central Asian domestic environment, including practices of hospitality, food and feasting, sleeping arrangements, social status, and the use of social space within the home, which provided a starting point for cross-cultural comparisons with their own notions of home. Stories were important both in terms of learning to sing and tell Central Asian stories, and also in terms of researching local history for story-making. The

Figure 3: The completed yurt on display at the Helmshore Textile Museum, 1990s

collective endeavour of all these experiences was invaluable for developing understandings of sociality through cooperative work. Thus, rather like 'playing house', the use of a home such as the yurt in an anthropological arts project was a particularly effective means of creating a special space where young people could work, focus and begin their journey into anthropology, developing cross-cultural understandings in multiple ways.

Several similar projects developed from this model. The most notable was the Surrey Docks City Farm Yurt in London's East End, where we drew inspiration from city farm animals for design and study. The farm teacher, Daphne Ferrigan, encouraged follow-up educational use of the tent over the following eight to ten years, which made the project particularly successful and provided an insight into how to construct such projects in a less person-specific way. We made a series of bags for education

sessions, including 'sensory bags' and 'work-card bags' which future children visiting the farm could use in my absence. I made a story-telling mat for the floor, which could be used instead of the tent to create a cultural space if there was less time available for the group. The class built up a library of books on Central Asia which the teacher could draw on and a handling collection of children's objects such as Kyrgyz dolls (Figure 4) and toys as a resource for future groups.

Over time, I led a series of specifically anthropological sessions with visiting school groups to the farm, drawing on the farm as a source of local knowledge about animal husbandry and a 'way in' to learning about pastoralism, animals and food across cultures with children from Early Years onwards. In one case, while trying to persuade a group of five-year-olds to think about human-animal relationships by talking about where meat comes

Figure 4: Looking at Kyrgyz dolls

from, the whole session was seemingly undermined by one child putting out their hand to touch the felt walls, saying, 'It feels so warm and smells so nice'. Going with the mood I replied, 'It's great to lie down on too …'. All twenty children spontaneously lay down, and the session became focussed on a sensory approach to Central Asian homes rather than on animal husbandry.

These kinds of conversations created a great sense of the positive value of cultural understanding, and the nomadic tent, as a 'cultural home', provided a safe space to do so. For example, following a discussion about the contrasting amount of meat eaten in a Central Asian and a British funeral, a young Kenyan boy talked of the sacrifice of cows at his grandfather's funeral in Kenya. Similarly, children from different religious backgrounds shared their experiences of representations of the human form in dolls. Thus, while the tent was a positive Kyrgyz environment in which to enable young people to learn about Kyrgyz cultural practices, it also provided a more neutral space in which children could confidently express their own cultural experiences. Through bringing children into one cultural home, they felt able to share and compare their own diverse cultural backgrounds.

The yurt project now has its own momentum, with similar initiatives taking place at museums and centres in Stockport, Macclesfield, London, the Orkney Islands and elsewhere. Visitors from Central Asia included the Kyrgyz ambassador, epic poets, NGOs and Kazakh musicians. It also led to the creation of an education centre and exhibition for children about Central Asian tents and pastoralism at the Earth Centre, near Doncaster. Here we worked with the Kyrgyzstan-based Central Asian Crafts Support Association and other Kyrgyz friends to supply the educational materials and objects, and housed the centre in a huge four-bay yurt built by tent architect Hal Wynne-Jones. This included a guest and reception area; a yurt 'classroom' with a whole range

of educational materials (including handling collection); a reading, research and study area; a child-focussed interactive exhibition containing smaller-scale exhibits with scenes created using children's objects, toys, dolls, tools and equipment (Figure 5); and a central activities area for felt-making and practical sessions. A full-sized Kyrgyz yurt with all fixtures and fittings imported from Kyrgyzstan was also on display at the Centre.

Thus the use of a culturally specific home through the whole process of constructing and inhabiting it within an educational context provided a unique and direct pathway to anthropology for young people. It provided a whole range of social and cultural practices which are directly relevant to children's own experiences.

Conclusions

I strongly advocate an approach that would enable anthropology to be used in education throughout the total school experience of a child, and not only in contexts where we might want to communicate our discipline to students and teachers more explicitly. Anthropology contributes its own unique way of thinking about the world through its methodology, its openness to other cultural perspectives, and its willingness to learn from and listen to others, valuing their traditions and practices. This way of thinking can be incorporated into a wide variety of educational activities and experiences.

I also advocate an approach which, in addition to texts and other media, draws on practical experience, promoting the value of access to skilled practitioners and local experts. This includes incorporating arts practice into teaching anthropology and working in an interdisciplinary way. In my own work, skill- and art-based sessions, self-generated ethnographic and dialogic research, and the home as a 'house of learning' have all provided impor-
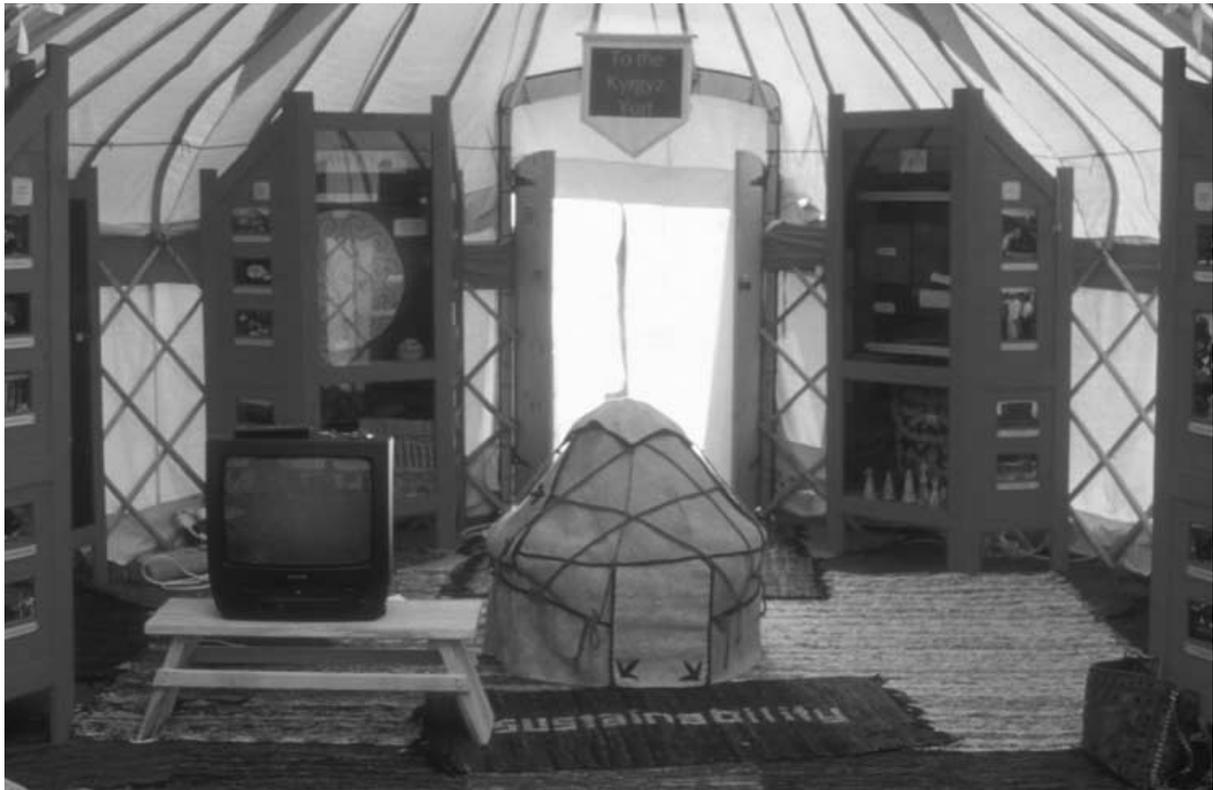
Figure 5: The interactive education room in the Earth Centre yurt, Doncaster, 1999

tant tools for accessing anthropology. There are many other parallel pathways too.

My work in anthropology with children has depended not just on my own interdisciplinarity, but also upon access to a range of experts on the rich periphery of the school education system. I therefore suggest that we draw on the range of educational experts who are already doing similar, project-based work within an ethnographic frame outwith the main educational system, because these people have real expertise. These include museum curators, educational organizations such as city farms, community education groups, story-tellers and so on. A dialogue between such practitioners and mainstream educators would be most fruitful for teaching anthropology.

Acknowledgements

I would not have done this sort of work without the help and support of more people than I will be able to mention, but these include Horse and Bamboo Theatre; Daphne Ferrigan, former farm teacher of Surrey Docks Farm; Sue Williams, coordinator of Hyperaction; Sarah Posey, formerly Curator at the British Museum; Ken Teague, formerly Deputy Keeper of the Horniman Musem; Damira Sartbaeva, Dinara Chochunbaeva, Kenje Toktosunova, Guljan Arakieva, Sabira Omurovna, CACSA, Hal Wynne Jones, Jane Revitt, Mary Burkett, Yevgeny Sorokin, Istvan Vidak, Mari Nagy and others. This varied array of people illustrates both the interdisciplinarity attendant on teaching anthropology, and also the need for anthropologists and teachers alike to ensure dialogue between disciplines, institutions and between social and cultural groups.

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