

# Capital at Work:

# Methodology in

# The Market

(a project in progress)

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In the evolutionary aftermath of the global economic collapse and in the absence of sustained audio-visual research engagement with the central locus of this event, this paper outlines the theoretical and ethnographically-informed methodological framework of a multi-sited, transnational, practice-led visual art research project addressing the functioning of the global stock and commodity markets. While framing the central research thematic and rationale for the methodology undertaken with reference to a specific research fieldsite, in its summation, the project seeks to instantiate the construction of an ethnography of power and finance.

*keywords: global capital, market, ethnography, visual art*

A photograph of a frantic trading pit on an epic scale is installed on a gallery wall, its origins in the largest and oldest commodity exchange in the world. Titled, *Chicago Board of Trade II* (1999) (Figure 1), the photograph is by German-born photographer, Andreas Gursky, who traverses the globe, making images that reflect upon the human condition, as he sees it, manifest in urban, rural, cultural and economic spaces. Although a former student of Bernd Becher<sup>1</sup> (who worked professionally as an artist with his wife, Hilla Becher) at the *Kunstakademie Düsseldorf* (Düsseldorf Art Academy), Gursky has not subscribed to the Becher's dogma of strict objectivity, having always cropped and manipulated negatives when necessary and later, incorporating digital manipulation into his practice.

Installed in a central passageway of London's *Tate Modern*, the cultural anthropologist, Caitlin Zaloom, first encountered the image while in the city as part of her long-term ethnographic research on financial traders. She observes:

*The Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) is an exemplary site of modernity...in this location, everyday relationships to the potential of money and the necessity of trade become extreme. Financial professionals bring together flow, speed and technology in the pursuit of profits, and when thousands of them gather everyday, they help create something larger – the market. (2012: 2)*

At first, it would appear the Gursky image embodies the representation of such a description of the market, however, Zaloom reflects further upon the circumstance of her encounter with Gursky's photograph and the aesthetic it proffers, in particular, the abstraction of capital. For Zaloom, the image invokes:

*a clear message about the velocity of money and its disordering effects in the global economy. The market takes in vast waves of capital and spews them out again in a logic all of its own. Yet for the crowd of spectators around the photograph, the commotion and disarray are entrancing. It is unsettling to examine the picture closely, especially because a literal understanding of the physical space, or of the traders' labor, is impossible. Instead it is easier to step back from the photograph and absorb the overall impression of the global financial beehive. (2010: 2)*

Her response to Gursky's photograph forms the introduction to her book, *Out of the Pits: Traders and Technology from Chicago to London* (2010) and pivotally informs her methodological approach. While understanding the functioning of such an aesthetic, Zaloom advocates as a priority to move beyond the abstraction of capital,

as visually embodied in the Gursky photograph. This is a function capital embraces as a strategy which impinges transparency (Ho, 2009; Harvey, 2010), further emphasised in the contemporary context of technological evolutions regarding the labour of the traders and the administrative structures surrounding these spheres and their possible future abstraction<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, Zaloom re-asserts a necessity to look closer and in greater detail at the apparatus of the global market:

*Markets are objects of inquiry into the culture and economy of contemporary capitalism... today, the world's powerful financial centers are the ones that need explanation. The mysteries of markets touch our lives, but few outside the financial profession understand them. (2010: 11)*

In the aftermath of the global economic collapse and the continuing evolutionary context of neoliberal capitalism, this paper will outline the theoretical and methodological rationale for my ongoing research project, *THE MARKET* (a working title), which addresses the functioning of the global stock and commodity markets and is to be presented as part of events marking the forthcoming centenary of the *1913 Dublin Lockout*, a pivotal moment in Irish labour history<sup>3</sup>. The critical assertion of Zaloom has been a central reference point for this project in its construction of an ethnography of power and finance. Therefore, the paper will frame my research practice, one informed by ethnographic understandings, and within such a critical research framework, outline the central thematics of the project and their relationship to research methods undertaken with reference to a specific research location.

### Methodology for The Market

Primarily informed through the application of photography and as a response to late-modern critique of photography's ideological role in the construction of representation<sup>4</sup>, my research practice has evolved to one informed by ethnography and the principles of a critically reflexive practice. Ethnography as an anthropological process of research acknowledges the researcher's role and subjectivity in the construction of cultural representation – reflexivity. As Michael Taussig states, 'because the anthropologist is inevitably part of the reality analysed' (2006)<sup>5</sup>. Critically, therefore, in the context of photography's functioning in the construction of representation, such understandings have a role in the self-conscious application of the photograph. Further, ethnography can also be viewed as an epistemological position or 'a commitment', as Zsuzsa Gille states, 'to study an issue at hand by understanding it from the perspectives of people whose lives are tied up with or affected by it' (2001: 321)<sup>6</sup>.



Figure 1: Chicago Board of Trade II (1999) ©  
Andreas Gursky, IVARO, VG Bild-Kunst, 2013



Figure 2: West of the City, M50, County Dublin, Ireland, June 2001 (1m x 1m, c-print, aluminium frame) from SOUTHERN CROSS by Mark Curran (Gallery of Photography/Cornerhouse Publications 2002)



Figure 3: Untitled, Gowning Room, Building 7, 11.02 a.m., Monday, November 11th 2003' (Leixlip, Ireland) (1m x 1m ultrachrome archival print, nails, bullclips) from the project The Breathing Factory by Mark Curran (Edition Braus/Belfast Exposed/Gallery of Photography 2006)

To date, the thematic concerns within my research practice have centrally addressed the predatory context resulting from the flows and migrations of global capital. As Allan Sekula observes, 'we are encouraged to believe we live in a post-industrial age, when in fact the industrial function has just been globalised' (2001: 27). Over the course of the last 15 years, I have undertaken long-term projects sited in Ireland, the former East Germany and where, in addition to this transnational multi-sited research project, as a cycle, they are intended to demonstrate a sustained critical engagement surveying the impact of global capital<sup>7</sup>.

Methodologically, the sociologist, Saskia Sassen, asserts the significance of the 'local' in the global framework as a means for describing globalising processes and thereby, invoking a 'counter-globality' (Waugh, 2008: 24). And in a similar register, Arjun Appadurai advocates an 'imaginative' research strategy in relation to the local to 'compare, describe and theorise "globalisation from below"' (2000: 19) perhaps affording the 'subversive micronarrative' (1996: 10). Such local sited-ness in the context of a study of power and finance regarding a globalised hegemony, instantiate the notion, as proffered by the anthropologist, Laura Nader, for 'studying up'.

Published in 1972, Nader appealed for a critical repatriated anthropology, through 'studying up', thereby, 'principally studying the most powerful strata of urban society...and instead of asking why some people are poor, we would ask why other people are so affluent' (1972: 289). Nader's rationale is framed by the assertion that by not doing so would limit the ability to form 'adequate theory and description' (ibid.: 290). While she further frames her argument in terms of 'citizen' and 'democracy', beyond the remit of this article, Nader's appeal has methodological implications, namely, concerning access: 'the powerful are out of reach on a number of different planes: they don't want to be studied; it is dangerous to study the powerful; they are busy people; they are not all in one place, and so on' (ibid.: 302). In such a potentially limiting context, the possibility for long-term engagement in the form of, for example, participant observation can be severely hampered. However, Nader argues that such limitations should not define the subject of research and advocates a more multivariant approach, including the use of personal documents, memoirs, chance encounters, discussion, interviews and public relations documents amongst others. In the context of power, I would assert such limitations regarding access embody significant critical meaning regarding the focus of study.

Over 20 years later, the anthropologist, Hugh Gusterson, revisited Nader's appeal, elaborating for what he defined as

a 'polymorphous engagement' (1997: 116):

*The ethnography of the powerful needs to consist of interacting with informants across a number of dispersed sites, not just local communities, and sometimes in virtual form; and it means collecting data eclectically from a disparate array of sources in many different ways such as... formal interviews...extensive reading of newspapers and official documents...careful attention to popular culture, as well as informal social events outside of the actual corporate office or laboratory. (ibid.: 116)*

Drawing on Gusterson, the cultural anthropologist, Karen Ho, incorporated such a methodological approach in her ethnographic study of Wall Street, published in 2009. Elaborating on her previous career in investment banking, Ho drew on her personal professional network and included encounters at business events, conferences, college reunions, interviews to simple 'rich, informal anecdotes gained from chatting' (2009: 21)<sup>8</sup>. Such a methodological engagement regarding an 'ethnography of the powerful', I would argue, could further critically benefit from representational strategies assembled according to the principle of 'montage' or 'multivocality' as asserted by the visual ethnographer, Sarah Pink – 'representations that incorporate the multilinearity of research and everyday lives' (2001: 117)<sup>9</sup>. Pink continues regarding such fragmented experience, 'reality is, in fact, continuous and subjectively experienced, at best, one can only reconstruct fragments of a subjective experience of reality, representations of knowledge are never complete (ibid.: 167)<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, to formulate representations of research which are open-ended and to paraphrase Taussig, which is not necessarily about reality but whose effects may be real<sup>11</sup>. Mindful of such methodological considerations and research outputs, I now wish to briefly outline the project thematic, research methods with specific reference to one research site.



Figure 4: Sightseeing, hotel room, Frankfurt, Germany, March 2012 (research photograph by author)

### Outline of The Market (in progress)

In the context of the forthcoming centenary of the 1913 *Dublin Lockout*<sup>12</sup>, and the global economic collapse, the implicit critical resonance of exclusion, omission and invisibility regarding labour and its defining relationship to capital remains ever pertinent. 'One way of thinking about globalisation today', asserts Sassen, 'is as unsettling – of economies, policies, cultures and imaginations' (Waugh 2008: 24). Such structural destabilisation, an overarching context for the cycle of projects, invokes a multi-layered, multi-dimensional theoretical image of globalisation – of interdependence, fixedness and fluidity, permanence matched with fragility, liquidity, underlining profound precarity and vulnerability<sup>13</sup> and where within such an ephemeral environment, the everyday of the individual. The condition of precarity and vulnerability as an outcome of the functioning of neoliberal capitalism continues to hold of central research significance as Arjun Appadurai states:

*Global capital in its contemporary form is characterised by strategies of predatory mobility (across both time and space) that have vastly compromised the capacities of actors in single locations even to understand, much less anticipate or resist, these strategies. Though states...vary in how and whether they are mere instruments of global capital, they have certainly been eroded as sites of political, economic and cultural sovereignty. (2000: 18)*

Critically, therefore, the research project has sought to access the sites of the global stock and commodity market, which hold a defining role regarding that relationship and by which all of the other research to date has been decisively framed. In this working space, where, for example, literally and metaphorically, futures are speculated upon, the project has sought to explore, survey and excavate these sites focusing upon the operating functioning of such

spaces, both materially and increasingly cyber-based, and how this is reflected centrally, upon the individuals who inhabit, dwell and labour within these globalised spheres. Conceptually pivotal, therefore, has also been a desire to make visible an understanding of such sites and to explore the theme of market interconnectedness. Therefore, multi-sited access has been sought to survey global locations, including Dublin, London, Frankfurt in addition to New York, Addis Ababa and Mumbai. Each location has been selected on critical grounds, for example, Addis Abeba is the location of the youngest commodity exchange in the world, Mumbai being site of the oldest stock exchange in Asia, Frankfurt as a central European location with one of the largest online exchanges in the world, while London embodies history, global scale and increasingly the future technology of non-human-based trading<sup>14</sup> and Dublin, as local site of the Lockout, with a stock exchange possessing a decommissioned trading floor having embraced an online framework to ensure a global future.

Access has played a defining role and concern in the project, with the process towards securement embodying meaning and insight, including when it has been denied as, for example, in the case of Frankfurt<sup>15</sup>. Beginning in early 2011, the average process of negotiation and engagement with each location has been over a year and a half, whether through direct contact, as result of, for example, my personal network and indirectly, through official representation by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Government of Ireland, and their ambassadors and staff at Irish Embassies in the selected locations. It should be noted that even with this level of official representation, and significantly, has not always resulted in successfully securing access. Where access has been secured, extended stays have occurred, to facilitate further research regarding the site, establishing contacts and developing relationships with individuals as key collaborators and informants of the project. As demonstrated in previous projects and framed in the described methodological approach, the research interventions have included, but not exclusively, an ethnographic understanding in the maintenance of research fieldnotes, the collaborative application of lens-based media in the form of photography, audio and digital video, the collation of artefactual material and the gathering of verbal testimony<sup>16</sup>. As the project has evolved through this 'polymorphous engagement', it has become apparent that each site brings a particular critical and culturally descriptive understanding in relation to the economic functioning of the global market. With this in mind, I wish to now briefly focus on one such location.

### Site of The Market: Addis Abeba, Ethiopiav

*...you are making me sound like a liberal...I am a capitalist... but yes we did write the word 'fairness' into our mission statement...it is different here to Wall Street and what is motivating us...as a model, yes it can be successful, however, would my former colleagues on Wall Street accept it...no* (from interview, Bemnet, Chief Strategy Officer, Ethiopian Commodity Exchange, September 2012)

Sitting behind a coffee warehouse storage facility in the middle of the Ethiopian Rift Valley, these words belong to Bemnet, a member of the country's diaspora, who returned to assist in the establishment of a commodity exchange. Years spent monitoring trading screens in the United States, he sought to return to his home country and employ what he had learnt. In August, 2012, I travelled to Ethiopia, site of the youngest exchange in the world, the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange (ECX) in Addis Abeba. With the support of the Embassy of Ireland, following over one year of negotiation, I had secured only two days of access.

Established in 2008, the same year as the 'official' global economic collapse began, the ECX is unique on the continent of Africa as a 'not for profit' trading framework and one of only a very small number of such markets, globally<sup>17</sup>. The exchange, trading primarily in coffee, sesame and peabeans, was founded by Dr. Eleni Gabre-Madhin, also a member of the Ethiopian diaspora. Dr. Eleni<sup>18</sup> studied in the United States, completing her doctorate in applied economics at Stanford University, and has stated her desire to use the traditional role of the market in Ethiopian society as the 'fair' means and method to end hunger. State owned, prices and membership are, to a greater degree, tightly regulated and those profits accumulated by the ECX, for services as a trading platform, are re-invested into the organisation. To encourage transparency, emanating from a stated responsibility to the individual small farmer, farming collective or investor, the complete process from production, selection, storage to the point of sale and subsequent delivery is closely supervised in a framework of 'open dialogue'. The exchange has grown from a permanent staff of 34 at the beginning to over 600 at present and is now quoted daily on commodity exchanges in New York, Mumbai and Dubai amongst others<sup>19</sup>.

Following my first meeting with my official contact from the ECX, I proposed to visit the exchange for one week without audio-visual equipment and merely to observe. This proposal was accepted and over the course of this first week, I gained insight regarding the functioning of the trading floor extending from the use of the space to the rhythms, structures and rituals surrounding the trading sessions. In addition, as the only non-Ethiopian present, individuals

seemed to gravitate towards me, initially enquiring to why I was there. The resulting conversations helped to establish both an understanding of my presence and critically, to build relationships with both ECX staff and the traders. Subsequently, I was given wider access and for one month, I spent the majority of my time in the Ethiopian capital on one floor of one building, the trading floor of the ECX.

By the end of this period, the sense was that I had undertaken as much as I could accomplish in what is a relatively confined architectural and social space and indeed, I was wearing out my welcome, which in ethnographic terms is understandable, regarding scale and meaning. However, while immersed in the working atmosphere of the traders and administrative staff, fortunately, I encountered a large number of people willing to collaborate on the project in terms of the contributing their testimony, the making of portraits and by the end of this period, facilitating and allowing my presence in the trading pit itself, to digitally film the trading sessions.

Trading in coffee, Bethlehem (Figure 6) holds an MA in Economics and is the youngest trader at the ECX. Following the making of her portrait, a few days later, she spoke passionately and at length, about the potential, through the activities at the exchange, to profoundly transform the economic context of her country:

*...if ECX were working for a profit, the whole situation would be different...the risk ECX take would be different... ECX wouldn't be taking the risks it takes now...it is good that this ethos continues ...ever since I was a little girl, I wanted to be part of some revolutionary moment or movement... so working here is unique in our country...becoming the new face of Ethiopia...* (from interview, Bethlehem, Trader, Ethiopian Commodity Exchange (ECX), September 2012)

Bethlehem's inclusion of the word, 'revolutionary' was striking in context of an apparatus of capital, and when I pressed her on the application of this term, she simply replied, 'but it is'. Such an encounter in relation to the functioning and ethos of this market framework, appear to allude to the complexities embodied in the term, 'The Market'. Central to the functioning of capitalism, the term inspires media descriptions, due to the present global economic circumstance, 'of fear' and/or 'to be at the mercy of', significantly, the framework presently installed at the ECX, appears to offer other possible descriptions.

However, the revolutionary optimism offered in Addis Abeba seems rare, as the narrative of exclusion and abstraction surrounding the functioning of capital, pervades. Recalling Caitlin Zaloom's encounter with the

Gursky photograph, she describes the viewers of the photograph as 'entranced' spectators to the aesthetic spectacle of that visual representation of the trading pits, where to look closely is 'unsettling' and further, through its abstraction, 'impossible' to find meaning regarding the functioning of the market. Therefore, a central theoretical and methodological tenet of this project has been to critically address up close and in as much detail as is afforded, the all-encompassing influence and at times, devastating impact, resulting from the economic activities of this site. While the final research installation and the re-representational strategies remain to be defined, such influence was forthrightly evidenced as part of efforts to secure access to locations in London's financial districts of The City and Canary Wharf. During the course of a telephone conversation with a trader in a dealing room and while continuing to work his screens, he observed:

*What people don't understand...is that what happens in the market is pivotal to their lives...not on the periphery...but, slap, bang in the middle...<sup>20</sup>*



Figure 5: Trading Pit, Ethiopian Commodity Exchange (ECX), Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, September 2012 (research photograph by author)

Figure 6 (below): Bethlehem, Trader, Ethiopian Commodity Exchange (ECX), Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, September 2012



# Footnotes:

**1** Bernd and Hilla Becher began making photographs in the Ruhrgebiet area of Western Germany in the early 1960s – a location of great industrialisation dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Many sites had been abandoned and in the context of post-war Europe and perhaps careful of the aesthetic applications of photography on the part of National Socialism, they returned to the philosophy of *Neue Sachlichkeit*/New Objectivity and sought to map this terrain through an empirical cartographic practice creating typologies where the strictest objectivity could be a powerful statement on social realities. The technique of the camera sought to reflect this empirical objectivity. Bernd Becher, a trained painter, later taught at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie (Art Academy), evolving a dogma that would become known as ‘the Becher School of Photography’ or ‘The Düsseldorf School’ and thereby, defining a generation of contemporary photographers.

**2** ‘Algorithmic Trading’ or ‘High Frequency Trading’ or ‘Black Box Trading’ according to a new report by the British Government’s Office for Science, Foresight, is set to replace ‘Human Trading’ in the global stock markets. This form of trading is undertaken through decisions made by computers, primarily based upon large volumes of information/data related to previous market behaviour. In 2007, 50% of all equity trading in the United States was undertaken via algorithms and by 2012, this was 75%, while in Europe, it was 40%. The report titled, *The Future of Computer Trading in Financial Markets* (published at the end of 2012), outlines the benefits and costs of such processes. The authors describes how in a decade, algorithms will be able to essentially self-evolve through their ability to ‘experience’ i.e. building upon their previous market experiences and therefore requiring no human intervention. However, they do warn, that within such a framework, there exists the potential for what they describe as ‘instability’ through the ‘Normalisation of Deviance’ which they identify as when ‘unexpected and risky events come to be seen as ever more normal (e.g. extremely rapid crashes), until a disaster occurs’. See Foresight (2012)

**3** This transnational multi-sited research project with the working title, *THE MARKET*, has been supported by the Arts Council of Ireland, Department of Foreign Affairs, Government of Ireland, Dublin City Council and partnered by Belfast Exposed Photography, Gallery of Photography, Dublin, CCA Derry-Londonderry and curated by Helen Carey, Director of the Limerick City Gallery of Art, as part of a series of projects to mark the forthcoming centenary of the 1913 Dublin Lockout. The Lockout was a defining and pivotal industrial dispute between workers and employers, which began on the 26th of August, 1913 and lasted until January 18th, 1914. Central events took place in Dublin and is viewed now as one of the most significant moments in Irish labour history as workers fought for their right to organise and unionise. The intention for *THE MARKET* is to afford process-led undertakings over the course of its construction, extending to site-specific interventions, web presence and forums incorporating interested parties thereby facilitating discursive spaces around the thematic and presentations of work in progress. The final format for presentation for 2013 is to be defined but should include but not exclusively – off-site and site-specific installations, website and in 2014, publication.

**4** In the context of capital and the representation of labour, the observations of Suren Lalvani holds specific reference in a research project engaging photography as a research method:

*The insertion of photography into the discursive field of management and the capitalist process of production, as a mechanism of objectification and as an instrument of subjection, is within the broader parameters of the desire of power of capital to know, realise, and control labour in its own image. (1996: 139)*

Central questions of representation through photography and the inclusion of photography as research methods, I have addressed in greater detail an article published by the *Journal of Media Practice*. See Curran (2008).

**5** Ethnography, as an anthropological process of qualitative research, has addressed Anthropology’s documented and problematic history in the construction of cultural representation through acknowledging and foregrounding the role of the subject position of the researcher in the construction of research – ‘reflexivity’. A central method of ethnographic documentation and manifestation of reflexivity is centred upon the rigorous and structured maintenance of fieldnotes in diaries. Darren Newbury, of the University of Central England, has provided a critical review of the application of the ‘field-diary’ in the context of research in the field of art and design practice. He advocates the inclusion of the diary as a central component of the visual research process ‘[Providing the researcher] with an ongoing, developmental dialogue’ (Quoted in Newbury 2001: 5) and can be ‘the vehicle for ordered creativity’ (ibid.: 3). I would argue ‘reflexivity’ has a significant role to play in the application of photography as a research method – making explicit that which is implicit. Therefore, the diaries incorporated began from the outset of the research process, following formulated headings and included all contact and communication related to the project and, ideally, are summarised every two to three weeks. This allowed for easier access to this information as such cases arose and it formalised a qualitative process. They extended through the production phases to the postproduction phases where, for example, the process of image editing was documented in and of itself. I addressed this in greater detail in my doctoral research.

**6** Beyond the remit of this paper but such an understanding as proffered by Gille, instantiates a critical position, and what could be further framed by Chantal Mouffes’ ‘artistic activism/critical art’ whereby, ‘critical artistic practices can contribute to questioning the dominant hegemony...addressing what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate’ (2007: 4).



7 The cycle began with SOUTHERN CROSS (Gallery of Photography/ Cornerhouse 2002) which surveyed the spaces of development and finance of the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' economy of the Irish Republic between 1999 and 2001 and subsequently, *The Breathing Factory* (Edition Braus/Belfast Exposed/Gallery of Photography 2006), the outcome of my doctoral research, sited in a multinational complex in Leixlip in the East of Ireland which addressed the role and representation of labour, global labour practices and the fragile nature of globalised industrial space and the relationship to curatorial practice. Continuing with the project, *Ausschnitte aus EDEN/Extracts from EDEN* (2011) located in a declining industrial and coalmining region in the former East Germany, an area which prophetically evidences the massive impact regarding the unevenness of development inherent through the functioning of neoliberal globalisation. These have been extensively presented as exhibition, installation and publication.

8 Ho's central argument is that Wall Street investment bankers reshape corporate America in their own image, and through the construction of the market, result in the manufacture of crises while simultaneously, 'assuring its rescue' (2009: 323). In this, as she defines, 'economy of appearances', Ho outlines operating structures, the significance regarding 'pedigree', citizen complicity and the critical role of fear in this 'culture of liquidity' (ibid.).

9 Pink also warns of the possible challenges of such a methodological proposal foregrounding the problematized role of media, and thus textual and visual practices designed to give subjects a voice may, in the end, 'only constitute a new textual construction in which the narrative of the ethnographer (and I would include researcher and photographer here) is just as dominant and those of the subjects subordinate' (2001: 118). Consequently, Pink, advocates a rigorous reflexive approach, acknowledging that the researcher's subjectivity as a central component to the conceptualisation and production of the research process (ibid.).

10 Such an approach is further underscored by the ethnographer Allen Feldman, who asserts, 'a full record is a myth, what one achieves is a fractured narrative', Feldman, A. (2004) from workshop on the thematic of Space, DIT, Dublin, March 18th, 2004.

11 Taussig's description that 'ethnography may not represent reality but its effects may be real' was included in a presentation by Dr. Allen Feldman, New York University, on 'Media and Global Ethnography', American University Paris (16 June – 5 July 2008).

12 See No.3.

13 My understanding is informed by the sociologist, Peadar Kirby's invocation of vulnerability as defined by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which holds resonance: *In essence, vulnerability can be seen as a state of high exposure to certain risks and uncertainties, in combination with a reduced ability to protect or defend oneself against those risks and uncertainties and cope with their negative consequences. It exists at all levels and dimensions of society and forms an integral part of the human condition, affecting both individuals and society as a whole.* (UN 2003 quoted in Kirby 2006: 5)

14 See No.2.

15 The anthropologist, Peter Redfield describes access as 'as not a thing but a state of relation' (2013). Further, I would argue that the process of access, whether successful or not, embodies critical meaning in relation to themes of transparency, abstraction, visibility and invisibility. Thus, within such a context, the intention is to include the process of negotiation as part of the final research versioning.

16 Further informed by ethnography, the research methods as outlined here incorporate collaboration in the reflexive sense, in response to questions regarding the politics of representation. These are addressed in greater detail both in a forthcoming article to be published in the journal, *Photographies* (Routledge, UK), edited by Liz Wells and Deborah Bright, framing the project, *Ausschnitte aus EDEN/Extracts from EDEN* and in relation to my doctoral research, published in the *Journal of Media Practice*. See Curran (2008).

17 According to Dr. Eleni Gabre-Madhin, founder of the ECX, the only other exchange that she is aware with a 'not for profit' framework is located in Buenos Aires, Argentina (notes from conversation, Addis Abeba, Friday, September 8, 2012).

18 In Ethiopian society, when being addressed, the first name of a person is always used, along with a title, as the surname generally comprises the first name of the person's father. Therefore, during my time at the ECX, I was always addressed as 'Mr. Mark'.

19 These figures were provided by my main contact at the ECX. (noted from conversation, Addis Abeba, Monday, September 3, 2012).

20 Notes from telephone conversation, Thursday, February 7, 2013.

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