ephemera | articles
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866
www.ephemeraweb.org
volume 11(3): 243-257

Grounded globalizations of transnational social movements: Ethnographic analysis on *Free Hugs Campaign* at the World Social Forum Belém 2009*

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abstract

This article shows one way to study radical social movements in transnational political meetings through bodily and emotionally grounded global ethnography. Using the *Free Hugs Campaign* and how it appeared in the World Social Forum Belém 2009 as an example, the writer shows how the use of one's own body, combined with the visual and digital methodologies when conducting global ethnographic research, may be a useful combination for the global social movement research. The article states that a (radical social) movement is understood when the body of the researcher has grasped it. The article also states that the global ethnographer would benefit from using his/her own video clips like quotations: to illuminate the situation to the reader, to support the arguments of the work in which it is being used, and to provide direct information about the field under study. Making the video available in the same media that the global social movement uses, the researcher will deepen his/her understanding of how the global social movement uses the global public sphere (here, the YouTube) to build a global movement.

This article aims to show how global ethnography is a useful approach to the investigation of global social movements. In this kind of an approach the researcher's own grounded knowledge from the field is combined with digital information on the transnational social movement: its actors and its actions. The focus of this paper is on methodology. By using the *Free Hugs Campaign* as an example of global social movement and grounding it in the World Social Forum (henceforth WSF) Belém 2009, the article shows why global ethnography needs to be done at multiple-sites, visually (including digital ethnography) and with emphasis upon the importance of emotion and embodiment.

* I am very thankful for the editors of the *ephemera* journal, especially Stephen Dunne as well as those two anonymous referees, who gave me thoughtful comments and encouraging support to develop the text further. Secondly, I would also like to thank Professor Tommi Hoikkala, Professor Marja-Liisa Honkasalo, Anu Gretschel, Veronika Honkasalo, Tiina-Maria Levamo and Giuseppe Caruso for their helpful comments on the earlier versions of this article.

In this paper my perspective on social movements is performative. As Ron Eyerman (2005: 43) argues, social movements can be seen as strategic political performances, which are presented in public to some addressed audience. Methodologically, when the social movement is analysed as a performance, the focus is on corporeality, presence and the pre-discursive (especially vision, embodiment and emotions). As Eyerman puts it:

> Performance theory gives central place to emotion and emotions, as both actors and audiences must be moved if a performance is successful. The adoption of performance theory allows us to better address questions concerning what happens when people enter a movement, how this affects their actions and the actions of others, and to ask how social movements move. (*ibid.*)

When thinking performatively one needs to focus on the data itself and on the personal experience from the field (Gergen and Jones, 2008: 14). My aim is to explore how to grasp those activists who employ distinctive bodily techniques and styles 'to occupy space while expressing political messages, visions, and identities', as the work of Jeffrey Juris (2008: 329) puts it. In addition to this, methodologically, the performative also refers to the researcher's different bodily techniques and styles as a means of understanding and gaining knowledge about global social movements. As Lis Engel (2008: 8) describes:

> This means that we, as embodied qualitative researchers, must attune ourselves to the event as openly and fluidly as possible, and then express the felt meaning in relation to human practices and possibilities through embodied scenic description, inviting a critical dialogue and embodied understanding in relation to human practices, possibilities and existential meaning.

The structure of this paper is as follows. I begin the journey from global ethnography by stating the importance of combining multi-sited, digital and visual methods within the researcher's own grounded experiences. After that I will take the reader into my 'field' and reconstruct the moment wherein I experienced the 'free huggers'. I then continue following 'the Thing' (i.e. *Free Hugs Campaign*) to YouTube and reflect upon my findings in the light of visual and digital ethnography. This will lead us to the methodological core of this article wherein I argue for the importance of analysing radical global social movements from an embodied and emotional perspective in order to capture *a local collective self-presentation* as well as from the social media sites such as YouTube where *a global collective self-presentation* of the movement is performed (cf. Eyerman, 2005: 50). As I will show, the key to the bodily knowledge lies in what is called *kinaesthetic empathy* (Gieser, 2008; Sklar, 1994; Ylönen, 2003) – an emphasis, which has not yet been made within the literature.

Global ethnography

What makes ethnography global for Michael Burawoy (2000a: 29) is its 'extension from micro to macro, from local to extralocal, from process to forces'. In research practices the situation in 'the field', at a specific time and place, acts as a key-event for the researcher to extend his/her perspective from the local to the global, by, for instance, taking the researcher to certain web sites, e.g. to YouTube, as was the case in my research. Global ethnography is therefore a multi-sited ethnography (*ibid*.: 30; on multi-sited ethnography see Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995). Although the single moment

analysed in this article took place in the Youth Camp in the WSF Belém (2009), my previous ethnographic field work in the WSF Bamako (2006) and the WSF Nairobi (2007) had already pre-shaped my knowledge of this kind of an event. Transnational political meetings are crucial spaces for global ethnographers since they frequently bypass the nation state, and their ideas adopt a worldly focus (see also Burawoy, 2000a: 33). The WSF is an interesting site for global ethnographical research, therefore, as it is the biggest worldwide autonomous regular platform for civic activism, gathering transnational activists and social movements together in the same space for a limited but crucial period.

Burawoy (2000b: 341) spurs global ethnographers on to construct perspectives on globalization from below, and he calls this kind of approach *grounded globalizations*, where the researcher sets out from real experiences in order to explore their global contexts. In this study I had returned from the WSF Belém to my quiet office with hours of video and interview recordings, fieldwork notes, photos, documents, brochures, newspapers and memories. Just a few minutes of the total trip and just 17 seconds out of 6 hours of video recordings made me open YouTube and start to explore the *Free Hugs Campaign*, as it was one of the strongest bodily experiences during the forum days. In the first place, I strongly just followed my intuition, when trying to make a sense of *the Thing*. While conducting multi-sited ethnography George E. Marcus (1995: 105-111) sees that the researcher may follow the people, *the Thing*, the metaphor, the plot or story, the life or biography – or the conflict. In this case I follow *the Thing* that is the *Free Hugs Campaign*. For Marcus *the Thing* mainly stands for material objects even though he also mentions world music and world beat mapping as potential would-be examples. The terms 'global civil society' and 'global social movements' started to appear at the time of Marcus' writing (Kaldor, 2003: 583). One of these movements, groups, networks and organisations that engage in a global or transnational public debate is the *Free Hugs Campaign*. This study weaves together these various compelling strands.

I hence agree with Burawoy (2001) and Gille and Ó Riain (2002) when they insist that global ethnography requires a multi-sited form of research. Relief from the local setting allows the researcher to more readily follow *the Thing* (Marcus, 1995: 106-108). Nevertheless, what I have found missing from these sorts of multi-sited settings is an effort to connect to issues within digital ethnography, on the one hand, and embodiment, on the other. This is all the more surprising since the movements themselves use such a 'dual politics', i.e. they develop new technological practices at the same time as challenging dominant cultural codes of neo-liberal globalization and political participation (Juris, 2008: 289-290). Secondly, it seems that global ethnography is strongly linked to the digital, especially virtual world. The new social media tools – that have also generated YouTube communities – link the people (here the 'free huggers') all around the world. The global ethnographer should therefore carefully research these virtual sites and other information related to the issue. The virtual world is not enough for the global ethnographer: the researcher needs to have grounded experience of *the Thing*, he/she needs to have the embodied experience of *the Thing* from some location at some certain time.

Visual ethnography becomes increasingly important in this kind of a global ethnographic setting as video clips and photos ground the study by showing the fieldwork site (i.e. where the embodiment and grounding took place) to the readers. They are samples of the location and time, of what the context was and what happened there – from one perspective.

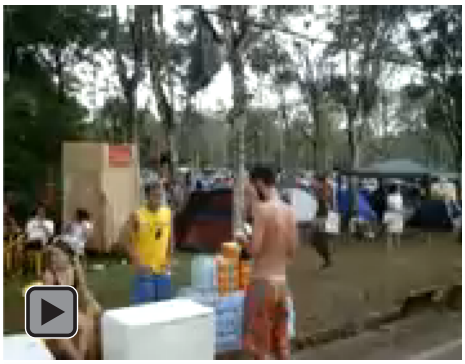
Free Hugs in the WSF Belém as a starting point for the study

The ninth World Social Forum (WSF) was held in Brazil in the city of Belém, located next to the Amazon region, between January 27 and February 1, 2009. It was my third experience of these huge mass events where tens of thousands of participants strongly believing that 'another world is possible' had organised hundreds of events – seminars, workshops, exhibitions, stands and performances – to show their work, to build networks for future actions and get visibility to their missions. From the beginning of my study, I have been focusing on the youth participation and intergenerational dynamics of the 'open meeting place' as the WSF is often named (see more e.g. WSF Charter of Principles; Caruso, 2007: 147-197). Although there is always in the WSF a special youth activism location called 'Youth Camp', not all the young participants stay in or visit the camp, and vice versa, not all the 'campers' are young. Still, almost all the previous studies focusing on the young people's participation in the WSF analyse the Youth Camp (mainly Juris, 2005, 2008; Juris and Pleyers, 2009; Morrison, 2006; Nunes, 2005; Pleyers, 2005, 2008; Wood, 2008). What is also common to these studies is the notion that the Youth Camp has traditionally been marginal, located in the periphery of the venue site but at the same time it has been the most creative in its practices. Most importantly there has been a plurality of the participatory forms of political exchange (Juris, 2005: 261) as well as alternative forms of political, social and cultural production taking place. Despite all its innovations the Youth Camp has remained marginal, nearly invisible to the main actors in the International Council – in the strong hands of the 'old political generation' (Nunes, 2005: 295).

Picture 1: Main street in the UFRA district, cutting the Youth Camp area, in the WSF Belém 2009. (Photo: Sofia Laine, compare also to Juris 2008: 237)

In Belém the forum site was located in two different university districts that clearly disconnected the grassroots activists from the cosmopolitan activists. The latter mostly had their sessions in the seminar rooms on the UFPA district, in an area evocatively entitled 'Professional Rooms'. Here the invited speakers, mostly middle-aged men, were giving their speeches for hours in front of the

closely listening audience, disturbed only by the sounds of the security helicopters. It was the 'other' university district UFRA[1] where environmental and indigenous issues, as well as the Youth Camp, were placed. In order to get to any of the activities (meeting rooms, stages, auditoriums, etc.) in the UFRA district, everyone needed to pass the Youth Camp or take a boat from the UFPA. Not only hundreds of young people but also whole families of the different tribes of indigenous people mostly coming from the Amazon region had carried tents and blankets to the camp site. As most of the WSF participants preferred to walk through the UFRA area, there was a steady stream of people walking on the main street crossing the Youth Camp (see Picture 1 and Video 1). This had an effect on the dynamics of the camp: in the daytime some of the young people were selling jewellery (most of it which they made themselves), whilst some of the indigenous people offered traditional skin paintings for a small fee (see Picture 1).



Video 1. Source: YouTube.

The division of UFPA's 'adult and other professionals' and UFRA's 'young and other radicals' goes hand-in-hand with Michal Osterweil's (2005: 23) definitions of the two different logics and ways of participating in the forum. The first group Osterweil (*ibid*.) calls 'universlizing globalist' – this is a figure who doesn't let go of the *form* of old political categories but simply renames them. What were visible in the UFRA were the actions of the 'Place-based globalist' who challenges the mono-cultural logics in all aspects of life by inventing new political forms and objectives that might be considered micro-political and that can quite literally only be addressed in-place (*ibid*.).

When I was in the UFRA observing the Youth Camp on a heavily-raining afternoon – looking after the actions of the 'place-based globalists' and shooting pictures under my umbrella – I was able to '*catch a Thing*' (Marcus, 1995). It was rush hour: when the last sessions had ended and hundreds of people were walking to the main entrance. When reaching the Youth Camp area the street was suddenly blocked and I recognised a big sign written in Portuguese but with a Spanish translation: 'Free Hugs'. The wet campers hugged everyone who tried to reach the entrance gates, in the spirit of the globally spread *Free Hugs Campaign*. At the same time the tropical wind carried a sweet aroma from the nearby canopy where a bunch of youngsters were cocooned. 'Welcome to the Woodstock of the 21st century!' was the first hilarious thought[2] after getting soaked under my umbrella. Without further reflections upon this situation I started to shoot a video of the huggers with my pocket digital camera.

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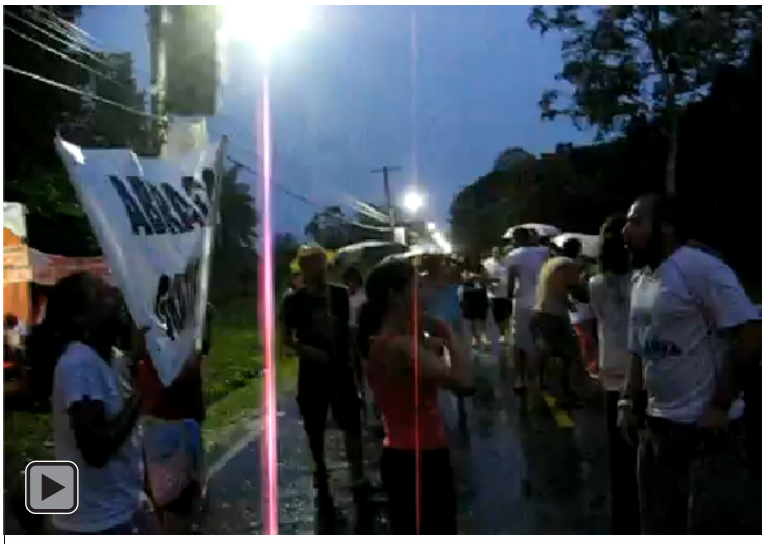
1 See UFRA and UFPA districts from Google map: http://maps.google.com.br/maps/ms?hl=pt-BR&gl=br&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=111999244558643048715.00045c60c73c39acba680 marked with lilac colour.

2 See also Conway (2008: 60).



Video 2: Free Hugs at the WSF Belém 2009. Author's own video.

As is evident from the video clip, I got my second hug while recording. In addition to the celebration and craziness of the moment I also realised there was something that touched me. The hugging felt like a support after the 'lonely' observation walk. The place was crowded of course, but I was walking by myself and didn't have any dialogue with anyone else. The action of hugging told me that we all are on the same side, all the participants of the WSF are together here, and no one is alone (see also Eyerman, 2005: 46). I had not experienced anything similar in the previous WSFs – and I had not faced the *Free Hugs Campaign* before, though I was aware of its existence. As everything happened so suddenly, and since the activists were in the middle of executing their action, I didn't interview them. It was precisely this seeming limitation, which served as an opportunity to re-direct the analysis and methodological innovations to the non-linguistic, i.e. visual, digital, motional and emotional, dimensions (see also Yazicioglu and Firat, 2008).

The importance of embodiment, rootedness to the location and time has been described by Paolo Freire (2005: 41-42) as a condition for radicalism. Here I use the term radicalism as a general term for those favouring or seeking political reform or revolution. In order for a researcher to understand radicalism, s/he needs to embody it. As will be demonstrated below, this need for embodiment in turn results in the need to use alternative (even radical) methodologies. Jefrey Juris (2008) captures a sense for this double-bind with recourse to his notion of 'militant ethnography':

> Militant ethnography thus refers to ethnographic research that is not only politically engaged but also collaborative, thus breaking down the divide between researcher and object [...] Furthermore, militant ethnography also generates embodied and affective understanding. As anyone who has participated in mass direct actions or demonstrations can attest, such events produce powerful emotions, involving alternating sensations of anticipation, tension, anxiety, fear, terror, solidarity, celebration and joy. (*ibid*.: 20-21)

What makes the Free Hugs episode in the WSF Belém more than a single social protest is that it unites with thousands of similar activities around the globe – and this way it lasts longer than a single protest and can be called as a social movement (Goodwin and Jasper, 2009: 3; Opp, 2009: 41). Social movements are often described as collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities, powerholders, or cultural beliefs and practices (Goodwin and Jasper, 2009: 4). Single actions of social movements promote solidarity among the activists, seek to reach broader publics for

their causes through the media and gain support from third parties (Owens and Palmer, 2003: 337). Sidney Tarrow defines transnational activists as

> people and groups who are rooted in specific national contexts, but who engage in contentious political activities that involve them in transnational networks of contacts and conflicts. What makes them different from their domestic counterparts is their ability to shift their activities among levels, taking advantage of the expanded nodes of opportunity of a complex international society. (2005: 29)

What is common to social movements is their aim to reach publicity – not necessarily in the mainstream media but in other public spheres as well, such as different internet sites. *Free Hugs Campaign* is a transnational social movement that uses the new social media, especially YouTube channel to sustain collective actions around the globe. In the case of the *Free Hugs Campaign* it becomes clear why it is necessary to look at social movements from three different angles: as collective social participation; as movements of the bodies and as emotional movements. First, and the most analysed dimension in the international relations, are *the social movements* and their collective political participation in the different events. The *Free Hugs Campaign* is a transnational social movement, a global phenomenon, spreading through the internet, especially through YouTube. Many participants in the WSF Belém were already familiar with the *Free Hugs Campaign* when they saw it on the venue site. The actors of this transnational social movement are identifiable as they carry a 'Free Hugs' sign with them – that is also visible from my video clip. The 'Free Hugs' sign is a collective action frame (Tarrow, 2005: 61) that the movement organisers have constructed to attract supporters, signal their intentions and gain media attention.

Researching free hugs at multiple sites

The *Free Hugs Campaign* started as a one-man-project in Australia, in the city of Sydney, in the year of 2004. The mission of 'Juan Mann', a young adult, was to 'reach out and hug a stranger to brighten up their lives' as explained on the official web page of the *Free Hugs Campaign.*[3] The story continues:

> In this age of social disconnectivity and lack of human contact, the effects of the *Free Hugs campaign* became phenomenal. As this symbol of human hope spread across the city, police and officials ordered the *Free Hugs campaign* BANNED. What we then witness is the true spirit of humanity come together in what can only be described as awe inspiring.

Such a local phenomenon went global because of YouTube – a video of Juan Mann and his *Free Hugs campaign* was posted in September 2006 and very quickly became very popular all around the world. In response, people in Asia, Europe, Australia, Africa, North and South America started to imitate the campaign, to shoot similar videos of their actions, and to upload them to YouTube. The movement travelled across the planet as far as the WSF Belém, where I experienced it. Now the original video has been viewed over 70 million times and there are thousands[4] of similar videos from Uganda,

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3 [www.freehugscampaign.org].

4 There are almost 6400 videos in YouTube tagged with 'freehugs' and most of these are videos from different Free Hugs demonstrations around the world.

San Francisco, Helsinki, Tokyo etc. including my own recording. My work then continued in Finland in the form of visual and digital ethnography (Murthy, 2008). Why I chose this particular video and the Free Hugs clip from my video data bank for further analysis was also an ethical choice. Videos are ethically complicated data, even when shot in a public district of some positively tuned action. The 'free huggers' were having their campaign in the WSF Belém to get some positive visibility for the campaign. But not all people like to get hugged. Within ethnographic work, it should be kept in mind that not everything can be literally translated into text (Holm, 2008). To bring the richness of the field in front of the reader's eyes, one should remember that the text can itself be a performance of the research process: a collage, a montage, with photographs, blank spaces, poems[5] and much more (Denzin, 2001: 29). Video is particularly malleable in this regard and should therefore be combined with other forms of text (Pink, 2007a). Film and photography is essentially no more subjective or objective than written texts (Pink, 2007a: 1) – viewers will always bring their own cultural perspective to the images presented to them (Heider, 2006 in Pink, 2007b: 251).

Technological development has profoundly effected the techniques used in social research. Dhijraj Murthy (2008: 837) encourages us to widen beyond personal and physical ethnography field work into digital ethnography. This can be done, for example, by analysing videos stored in YouTube, which have a connection to one's own research or even by uploading one's own videos to YouTube. This method has been used extensively within Kansas State University's 'Digital ethnography on YouTube project'[6] led by Michael Wesch. Adam Monroe[7] from Wesch's research group argues that YouTube has created a global forum where anyone with internet access can communicate with anyone else, across any distance. He sees the *Free Hugs Campaign* forming a global community by sharing and commenting upon its videos on YouTube. YouTube is the third most popular website on the internet[8] and therefore a strong actor in the global media. YouTube changes the power structures in the media world as its use is free of charge and it is free for the users to download videos to the site, comment others' videos with text or a video message. This way YouTube is also much more interactive media than the traditional mass media (i.e. newspapers and the TV programmes), creating new forms of self-consciousness and self-reflection (Wesch, 2008). The official Free Hugs video was for months the most watched video on YouTube. Last, what is also important to notice here is the fact that the young generations are the most active[9] users of YouTube – they are also the most active in

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5 Visit the biographical note where I reflect from the performative perspective my fieldwork experiences in the EU Presidency Youth Event in 2006 (see more Laine and Gretschel, 2009; Laine, 2009).

6 [http://mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/].

7 [http://mediatedcultures.net/youtube.htm].

8 [http://mostpopularwebsites.net/].

9 The 'active' refers here to multidimensional use of the YouTube site and I refer here to the statistics of the Sysomos' study that looked at the demographics of bloggers who embed YouTube videos on their own sites (i.e. blogs). In general, 20-to-35-year-old bloggers embed most of the videos (57%), followed by teenagers (20%) and bloggers over 35 (20%). [http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/whats_hot_on_youtube_and_who_is_embedding_those_vi.php].

organising the *Free Hugs Campaign*s around the world that is visible from the YouTube videos, which was also the case in the WSF Belém.

As YouTube is loaded with similar hugging episodes from all over the world, my act of uploading the short clip can be seen as 'a collaboration with social actors in the production of visual representations' (Banks, 1995). By using the video clips I give a voice and space for the movements once again: showing how politics is played, danced and acted out. 'Image is not the reality but at least it is its perfect *analogon*', as Roland Barthes (1977: 17) describes. By using photographs and videos my aim is to inform the reader, to paint the scene where the embodiment happened, to surprise the reader's emotions and to let the object (in the picture or in the video) speak to the viewers (Barthes, 2000). Photographs and videos can be performative as well. Performance in this context can be seen both as a form of investigation and as a form of representation (Holm, 2008: 2). By placing my video on YouTube, I became part of the social movement I research. The research process can therefore be even viewed as a sort of co-performance with participants. My video, and by extension this paper, are now part of the global performance of the *Free Hugs Campaign*.

Kinaesthetic analysis

In this article, I want to underline the fact that *the movements of bodies* is central to the strategies of certain social movements. Researchers must take issues of embodiment into account: changes of localizations of bodies, body parts and objects or changes in their extensions all become crucial in this regard (Parviainen, 2008: 5). Within this particular study, hugs are political actions, political communications that might be captured best on camera.

A hug is a form of physical intimacy, one of the most common human signs of love, affection and support, that is practiced without stigma around the globe. The origin of the word 'hug' is unknown but its early meaning in the sixteenth century was similar to German 'hegen, to foster or cherish' (Davis, 1983: 248). Hugging is also used as a form of healing (e.g. Davis, 1983; Weze, et al. 2005). And we shouldn't forget the tree huggers and the other forms of more political hugs, where the Hugs for Haiti campaigns are one of the newest forms. In the Hugs for Haiti campaign the hugs are given for the fundraising in the catastrophe aid, i.e. the immaterial good is used to increase material charity. As I have traced this kind of campaigns at least from Finland and the US, it's already evident that the political hugging is appearing in new forms around the world[10]. The analysis of a motion has also to do with the language question. Not all the participants in the transnational political meetings can express their thoughts fluently in English or other major languages used in the event. Therefore, the common body language can even have an increased significance in these kinds of spaces: participants can communicate using transnationally well-known body language.

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10 In addition to this, on YouTube it's possible to find a video where two young men are giving Free Hugs, Exclusive Hugs for $1 and Hugs for Haiti. [See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlNJNuxjJNM].

> The notion of movement can be used as both verb and noun, a performance perspective, however, calls attention to an experience of moving and being moved and to the centrality of ritual and the emotion fusing of identities. (Eyerman, 2005: 45)

I agree with Parviainen (2008: 7) that 'within our capabilities of moving and understanding movement, we are an inherent part of the moving world, moving and being moved'. Movements, especially when situated in the transnational political meetings, are strategic. These events are needed for the performers to question our embodied limits of morality (Parviainen, 2008: 3). They also give light to the vulnerability of the body as a political tool in activist work.

> There is a close etymological connection between the words 'motion' and 'emotion'. Movement relationships and interactions with other humans, animals, places or objects, even fleeting ones, are charged with affect and emotions. (Parviainen, 2008: 5)

A dancer, a dance therapist and a researcher Maarit Ylönen (2003: 60) has studied the memory of her own body as a methodology to handle the knowledge from the ethnographic field work: how to study intimacy, touch and motion and the understanding of these three. The knowledge that rises from the body memory is not logical or rational but marginal where the past and the present are simultaneously presence – strongly combined with emotions. The key to my kinaesthetic analysis was Ylönen's concept of *mirroring*, wherein one's own body not only imitates the movements of the others' but communicates with them: body tunes to the surrounding energy, to the movements of others by using a *kinaesthetic empathy*. Here the empathy is a specific way to recognize other people that becomes evident from the emphatic body stands – here by hugging a stranger who wants to hug me as part of his/her political mission. This kind of empathy is important in order to understand something that is strange to the researcher him/herself. Kinaesthetic empathy is a bodily attitude that enables identifying with the other (here the 'free huggers') and reaching the understanding of something unfamiliar that the researcher hasn't experienced before (Gieser, 2008: 299; Parviainen, 2002; Ylönen, 2003: 77).

The body is a site of both oppression and resistance (Parviainen, 2008: 3). My hugging act – as well as the recording – was signals of empathy and support for the 'free huggers' campaign. Their action healed the 'oppression of loneliness' that I felt just before facing their action. We communicated with our bodies to each other. The closeness and the supportive atmosphere around the action where joining in the common radical movements (here the hugs) raised a pleasure of being. Researchers' own body is a challenging research tool from the perspectives of credibility and transferability (Ylönen, 2003: 63). The video recording may be helpful while showing the moment of the analysed actions – at least from one angle. If the traditional mass demonstrations are left aside, the use of body as a core of the argumentation is a strategy mainly conducted by the youth and young adults (see also Laine, 2009). This has to do with the western tradition of the controlled bodies and how the civilization equals to self controlling your own body image. The older we get the better we have learned what the culturally accepted forms of moving our bodies are (Ylönen, 2003: 69). The actions of the social movements raise emotions both among the actors and the observers (Jasper, 2009: 182–183). Helena Flam (2005: 19) has argued that when social

movements wish to shock the onlookers out of their everyday routine, they offer at a same time a radically different emotional re-framing of reality. She continues:

> As challengers of the *status quo*, social movements re-interpret specific aspects of social reality, call for new, obligatory emotions and feeling rules and wish to draw on these to mobilize individuals for collective action whose aim it is achieve social change. (Flam, 2005: 19)

The moving body is strongly connected to emotions but also to mind. In the Free Hug Campaign the body movements have a clear message, a goal and a direction. While raising emotions it has also an intellectual and a strategic side: young participants of this social movement need to plan their action beforehand – and here they need a common spoken language and common understanding of how to carry out their action. And if they want to contribute to the global Free Hugs community they need to decide who will video record the action, edit the data and place the end product to YouTube.

Summary and conclusion

We might use the terms *expression*, *experience*, *recognise*, *deepen* and *communicate* (Engel, 2008: 26–28; Shreeves, 2006: 238–239) to illustrate the different phases of the research process outlined above, a research process which can be viewed as a progression along two full circles. First there was the *expression* in the WSF Belém of the Free Huggers that I *experienced* and shortly after *recognised* as meaningful. Back in my office I *deepened* my understanding of the global social movement and *communicated* my recording to the media that the Free Huggers use (i.e. YouTube). At the same time the same video recording in the YouTube is a new *expression*. To place the video in the YouTube was a new *experience* and by using the same methods as the actors of the global social movement I could *recognise* and *deepen* my understanding of how the global social movement use the global public sphere (here, the internet) to build a global movement. And here, in this research article my aim is to *communicate* the research process, to state that in order to understand the second circle, one needs the grounded experience of *the Thing's* expression – or performance – from the first circle.

> There is no original reality which casts its shadows across the reproduction. There are only interpretations and their performances. (Denzin, 2001: 30)

The *Free Hugs Campaign* was analysed here from the performance theory perspective that underlines the links between the mobilisation, emotions and embodiment and turns the attention to the choreography of protest (Eyerman, 2005: 49). As the *Free Hugs Campaign* is a global social movement, its strategy aims to support both the local and global presence: *a local collective self-presentation* was the single act I faced in the WSF Belém and it is visible from my recording and *a global collective self-presentation* that can be viewed by watching the Free Hugs videos from the YouTube. Both collective self-presentations are part of the process of collective identity formation (Eyerman, *ibid*.: 50). What I have been arguing in this article is that ethnography needs to use diverse methodologies (here body knowledge, video and YouTube) and different knowledge/s (kinaesthetic empathy) in order to capture 'the kinaesthetic intelligence' and 'bodily knowledge' that is inseparable from contemporary political argumentation. Body motions and emotions root the global social movements in the place and time

while the shared ideology and identity of the global social movement spreads and connects the members of the movement in YouTube videos. I have argued that global ethnography needs to be grounded (i.e. embodied emotional experience of *the Thing* from certain space and time), multi-sited (shows the similarities and differences), visual and digital (global virtual communities). The video recorded by the researcher of the activists' action adds up with the activists' own videos on YouTube and concretely shows to the readers the location and time, how *the Thing* appeared when the researcher faced it. The visual and digital ethnography (Murthy, 2008) convinced me of their importance when conducting global ethnographic research on the radical social movements. The Free Hug videos enlarge the audience of potential supporters and opponents, who may be moved – but the direction of the emotions of the viewer is not controllable by the social movement actors or the video maker. The experience and the expression both of the event and the picture/video are always unique (Engel, 2008: 6).

My main argument concerning the use of video is that the global ethnographers would benefit from using their own video clips like quotations: to illuminate the situation to the reader, to support the arguments of the work in which the video is used, and to provide direct information about the field under study. Also here, when using pictures and video clips in the research report, the researcher's embodiment and experience from the field is evident (Pink, 2007a). It should be carefully kept in mind that the readers and video watchers don't have the embodied experience from the field. The question of where the video data is maintained is also relevant: who has the access to the video and to the research report. Uploading the data clip to YouTube might offer a more accessible and engaging format for sharing research and reaching communities outside academia. In particular when doing research on the WSF, researchers find a lot of pictures and videos of the events from YouTube. It is especially popular among young people globally to share videos and to store their own recordings openly. In addition to the developed video technology, the decreased prices of the cameras as well as the user-friendly manuals combined with simpler compatibility with computers have made it possible for an increasing number of global citizens to use and distribute video footage.

But the visual and digital ethnography of the *Free Hugs Campaign* is not enough and neither is the visual and digital participation in this global social movement. In addition the researcher needs to place him/herself in the embodied and moving experience of the informant, i.e. the researcher needs kinaesthetic experience alongside the observation. The experienced relationship where the researcher is able to learn to understand the researched requires comprehensive use of oneself: the empathetically tuned reflexive body of the researcher faces the body of the activist in space and time. Kinaesthetic empathy as a bodily attitude is important in order to understand something that is strange to us, to learn something new. Global ethnography should be grounded within the deep somatic experience of the kinaesthetic empathy where the observer (researcher) follows the movements of the observed and this way gains new knowledge. The reason for the absence of this kind of an embodied method may lie in the relatively undeveloped capacity of researchers to reach this kind of embodied knowledge. Deidre Sklar argues (1994: 14) that the researcher can develop this capacity if he/she sees it as an important approach. Perhaps western culture teaches us to observe moving objects (e.g. TV, internet, films and theater) from a distance, thereby not allowing one's own body to move with the body of the observed. YouTube and other social media tools

might help break down this dichotomy (actor – observer) whereby the observer may become an actor, too, by adding his/her own story to the flow of actions[11] and by commenting upon actions of the others. Qualitative experience is dynamic and as such intertwined with our bodily sensitivity and kinaesthetic repertoires of being (Engel, 2008: 7). A (radical social) movement is understood when the body of the researcher has grasped it.

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11 For example the popular dance video Where the Hell is Matt? (2008) (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlfKdbWwruY&feature=related, accessed 23 June 2010 when the video was viewed almost 30 million times) has got 220 video responses where the people around the world imitate the original video by dancing themselves.

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the author

This summer I have learned what politics is.
That some are more important than others.
That two persons control the daily rhythm of 200 others.

The Minister arrives, gives the speech that someone else has written and leaves.
The Commissioner arrives, gives the speech that someone else has written, answers a few questions, places himself in the family portrait, sits in the room decorated with pink curtains.
The Commissioner demands the small flags of the EU and Finland to be placed on the table before the press event can start.

Personnel and secretaries run around the hotel in a mortal terror.

This is politics.

When the commissioner leaves, I drink the rest of his mineral water.
(July 2006)

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