



Painful, stinky & get you HIGH!

written by Guillaume Dumont
February, 2014



“When conducting ethnographic fieldwork among professional rock climbers, participant observation makes climbing shoes as essential as the digital recorder in the everyday field package. They smell terribly bad, are extremely tight, horribly painful, and progressively shape your toes and feet into visually disgusting warp tools. Yet, since I am used to putting my body at work by pulling on holds during fieldwork, my climbing shoes have become a daily companion in the field.”

“Shoe manufacturers target all tastes by producing a high variety of models through diverse colours, forms, components, specific use, etc. They are expensive, last nothing and climbers have multiple pairs for specific purposes. My fieldwork focuses on the niche of a few dozens athletes travelling around the world for climbing. They sometimes compete indoors but mostly climb on rocks, and along the way produce media, teach clinics, and give lectures to companies while representing their brands. In sum they juggle multiple tasks beyond purely climbing rocks. My research focuses on these “climbing micro-celebrity” through transnational ethnographic fieldwork in Europe and the USA. I am interested in the emergence of a category of professionalism that



brings together the media, globalization, the Internet, expertise and creativity in cultural production.”

More of Guillaume’s research soon via [‘Fieldnotes’](#).