NARRATIVE SPACES

DARIA AKIMENKO

On identity work and placeness through arts-based narrative practices

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Narrative Spaces: On identity work and placeness through arts-based narrative practices

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LAPIN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND

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СПАСИБО!

Daria
Bolzano, 1 October 2018

ABSTRACT

This article-based dissertation proposes a rethinking of artistic processes, of and with communities of place and practice by focusing on the narrative identities of all of the involved parties, including the artist-researcher herself. The researcher hypothesises that narrative-based artistic practices impact on the identity work of individuals and communities through bringing forward the unique relationship and interplay between stories, identities and places. This is enabled through the creation of ethical spaces for dialogue, empathy and participation.

This research answers the following question: *How can arts-based narrative practices impact on the identity work carried out by individuals, communities and places?* In doing so, this work looks at both academic thought and practice related to the following key themes: *identities, narratives, community, place and space,* and *artistic practice*. Building on this theoretical knowledge, the research analyses three case studies carried out by the researcher with six global communities of place and practice.

The first such case study, *Have you heard?*, engages with a community and the stories of shop owners and employees of a migrant background in the urban space of Edinburgh, UK. It works within a complex context where identities and narratives of belonging, otherness, nostalgia, and multiculturalism fluctuate in a timespace of "here" and "there". The second case study, *Shop around the corner,* was implemented in North and South Main Street of Cork, Ireland, the historical cornerstone of the city. The street is currently left out of the latest city planning endeavours, resulting in the neglect of the multi-generational family owned businesses of the neighbourhood. The local shop owners' stories served as inspiration and data for this second fieldwork. As with the first case study, this project aimed to create a framework for placing a collective narrative of site-specific memory within specific urban spaces through different methods of storytelling and artistic expression. The third, a two-year long case study *Margin to margin*, was carried out with a larger group of participants—two communities in South Australia, one in Finland and one in Russia—and aimed to explore the relationship between artistic practices, identity processes and the empowerment of predominantly female makers living and working "on the edges". This brought forward a deeper understanding of the researcher's own practice and her "self" as a part of narrative-based artistic collaborations.

Methodologically, this research bases itself on the intersection of two overarching approaches: arts-based research and reflexive research. Both approaches are emerging and rapidly developing and have to actively stand their ground in the scope of more mainstream methodologies, through personal, subjective and practice-based ways of knowing. Both accommodate well the key themes this research is occupied with: *identities, narrative, community, place/space* and *artistic practice*. The data collection methods of ethnographic

observation, narrative inquiry and documentation tie the two overarching approaches together, while narrative analysis is resorted to as the key analytical tool for the collected data.

The research concludes with the outline of three main findings: *1) a framework for reflexive arts-based research with communities; 2) a theoretical viewpoint on narrative identities of individuals and places;* and *3) an approach to the ethics of representation*. The avenues for further research are outlined in the end of the study.

LIST OF ARTICLES

1. Miettinen, S., Sarantou, M. & Akimenko, D. (2016a). Narrative-Based Art as Means of Dialogue and Empowerment. *Conference proceedings "Mediations. Art & Design Agency and Participation in Public Space"*. Royal College of Art, London, UK. ISBN 978-1-910642-18-4.

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5. Akimenko, D., Sarantou, M., Escudeiro, N. & Miettinen, S. (2017). iDoc: A Technology Tool as a Platform for Exploring Data. *Conference proceedings of OzCHI*. Brisbane, Australia. ISBN 978-1-4503 5379-3/17/11. doi.org/10.1145/3152771.3156173

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To Nuno, for my sense of place.

To streets and neighbourhoods, villages and towns, outbacks and reclaimed countries, universes and timespaces. To their people.

And to the memory of Zena Cox: there is black hole no more, only colours.

1. INTRODUCTION

> We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world.
>
> —bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics, 1989*

> This book is about a process of becoming—it implies movement, agency and continuity, rather than a striving to reach a state at which we have "become".
>
> —Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher, 2004*

"A Portuguese will always long for the sea. The sea is freedom, man. Absolute freedom,"—my friend Eugenio was lying down on the floor in front of the empty fireplace blowing smoke up the chimney and telling his tales. There he was, in the middle of a frosty Finnish "kaamos" (polar night), reminiscing about hot summer nights in Porto, comparing his people to the foam washed ashore by the mighty waters of the Atlantic, narrating his Lusitanic identity. There we all were, Russians, Germans, Swedes, Italians, Brazilians, Iranians; students, artists, teachers, nurses, mechanics, marginals, gathered in a big strange apartment we lovingly called "the Palace". We dined together, to played music and sang, attended to the magic of analogue photography revealed to us by the host, painted fantasies on the glass door between the kitchen and the living-room… Before we knew it, we became a community of strangers who shared stories from across the globe and made sense, collectively through narrative and creative acts, of that unlikely town on the Arctic Circle that for some reason became our temporary home. Was it there and then that the first seeds for my (re)search were planted?

Or was it much earlier, when, as a teenager, I was a part of a team of young nerds who invented structures, came up with scripts, created performances, built whimsical props, conceived safe spaces of creativity where all the uncertainties and fears related to school, family and adolescence would temporarily disappear?

Or maybe those seeds were planted even earlier than that, on some genetic level, when my father, a village boy who had to provide for himself from the age of sixteen, and who later on worked as a police investigator dealing with the terrors of the New Russia of the 1990s, intuitively resorted to drawing, photography and poetry as a coping mechanism, without having ever studied any of those skills?

Certain things are inherent to our human life worlds regardless of where we come from and whether we are aware of them or not. Among them are the aspirations to identify with people and places we inhabit, to narrate our life histories and to be heard. Creative expression, too, I believe, is inherent to every human life that strives to make sense of its complex events and circumstances.

In postmodern thinking, where the sense of self is fragmented and in flux, where “the grand narratives of the past” are due for deconstruction and counter-narration (Gergen, 1999), it is the critical and the social that we lean on for clarity and sense-making (e.g. Etherington, 2004). Through the worldview of social constructivism, one attempts to see the self and the world as collectively constructed and plural in meanings (e.g. Crotty, 1998). We ought to listen to the stories of the others “deconstructively” departing from “not-knowing”, rather than adhering to our preconceived ideas (Freedman & Combs, 2002).

What do such pluralities and uncertainties mean in the realm of qualitative research? How can one be a researcher with communities and oneself? How to find a common ground and language? How to incorporate everyone’s versatile backgrounds, contexts and personalities? How to be an artist, as well as a researcher, how to accommodate your own and the participants’ artistic aspirations into the inquiry?

The challenge brought to the forefront of inquiry in human contexts is to value and constantly re-examine the “relationship between the storyteller and the listener, and between the knower and what is known, and what each brings with them into the research relationship to create meaning and understanding of the topics under exploration” (Etherington, 2004, p. 21). This study attempts at mapping a research field where the complexity of identities, narratives, contexts, places, and practices is embraced rather than simplified. It employs arts-based and reflexive approaches to research, working in a landscape of six global communities of place and practice and aiming at academic, artistic and general public audiences. It treads gently and ethically, shaping itself every step of the way.

1.1. RESEARCH FOCUS AND CONTEXT

In this first part of my introduction chapter I aim to equip the reader with essential knowledge about the focus and the context of my study before going further into details. This section introduces the focus and the aim of the research through themes and research questions, as well as through an assumed epistemological stance. In a further subsection on communities and places the geographic and socio-cultural contexts of the study are outlined alongside the setup of the three case studies. And finally, the subsection on the five articles included in this dissertation completes the introduction of the focus and context of this research.

Research aim, questions and themes

This study aims to rethink research in human contexts, with communities of place, practice and those "in-between", from the position of arts-based, narrative and reflexive approaches. It seeks to understand the potential of arts-based and narrative practices to engage with *identity work*, a "range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities congruent with and supportive of the self-concept" (Snow & Anderson, 1987, p. 1348), which occurs on individual and community levels in relation to a place or absence thereof. The study hypothesises that arts-based narrative practices impact on identity work of individuals and communities by bringing forward the unique relationships and interplay between stories, identities and places.

The inquiry was structured through practical engagements carried out via three case studies with six different communities and the ensuing analysis of those research encounters. The three different case studies varied in scale, sample and geography. This and the fact that the six participating communities were rather diverse, though often sharing common practices and some life circumstances, allowed for rich data and varied viewpoints to emerge.

The case studies worked both as explorative and generative constructs, producing artistic outcomes alongside analytical outputs. Spending time with the communities of research participants and exchanging stories, my fellow artist-researchers and I would create spaces for them to make art pieces based on their narratives and stories, and/or we ourselves would create art pieces based on the research participants' narratives and stories. The former setup mostly manifested in the third case study where the participants groups were larger, while the latter type of art-making was more typical, though not exclusive to, the first two case studies. The art-making and narrative processes in the field were documented and further analysed. The artistic outcomes were later presented in public space, through exhibitions and by digitally giving voice to the participants' stories.

Table 1 introduces the articles through their respective research themes, questions and the case studies discussed in them. The way the five articles are organised allows the logic of the research questions to be followed from more

general to more narrow, towards the end of the study. The articles address the case studies and the research themes from different angles, usually inquiring about practical matters of "how", due to the hands-on practice-led nature of the study, but also taking on theoretical perspectives. Research questions in the articles serve as sub-questions for the study. They complement the main research question of the study that is formulated as follows: *How can arts-based narrative practices impact on the identity work carried out by individuals, communities and places?* The ways the articles address their respective research questions is introduced in Section 1.1.2.

Articles	Case study	Themes / keywords	Research question
1	*Case 2: Shop around the corner* (Cork, Ireland; Feb 2016)	*narratives, empowerment, participation, identity construction*	How can collaborative narrative-based art-making processes create a platform for dialogue and empowerment?
2	*Case 3: Margin to margin (MtM)* (Fowlers Bay & Port Augusta, AU; Oct 2016)	*empathy, art, storytelling, social design, service design, empowerment*	a) How to build empathy with communities through arts- and narrative-based processes? b) What are potential practical applications of empathy-building through arts- and narrative-based processes with communities?
3	*Case 1: Have you heard?* (Edinburgh, UK; Jul 2014)	*narrative identity, community, participation*	How can the focus on narrative identities of the involved parties contribute to engagement in community-based art and design projects?
4	*Case 3: MtM* (Rovaniemi, Finland; Murmansk, Russia; Dec 2016)	*narratives, identities, art-making*	a) How can creating temporal environments for collective making and storytelling contribute to knowledge dissemination and transfer from one remote community to another? b) How does documentation of personal narratives promote a better understanding of and between different contexts?
5	*Case 3: MtM* (Fowlers Bay & Port Augusta, AU; Rovaniemi, Finland; Murmansk, Russia; Oct-Dec 2016)	*art-based research, participation, community, iDoc*	How to utilise HCI solutions for approaches that draw on the experiences and outcomes of art-based research in marginalised communities?

Table 1. Articles, research themes, questions and case studies.

The articles were co-authored, with each writer having her or his own angle of interest and contribution, which resulted in a certain set of keywords/themes to emerge in each article. This is reflected in Table 1. Additionally, I found it useful for my own process to generate a "wordle" through the input of the texts of all the five articles. I choose to include this figure here, as I find it demonstrative of the themes this study is occupied with (Figure 1). When comparing this figure to Table 1, clear parallels can be found between the articles' keywords and the "most used" words in the bodies of the articles: *identity, space, narratives, art* seem to be the "fils rouges". These are the themes of the study, although they will be "distilled", refined and complemented by additional concepts further, in the beginning of the literature review chapter.

Figure 1. A "wordle" combined through the input of the text of the five articles included in the dissertation.

The findings article by article will be discussed in Chapter 5. Incorporating and developing further the findings of the five articles, the study results in three main findings: 1) *a framework for reflexive arts-based research with communities*; 2) *a theoretical viewpoint on narrative identities of individuals and places*; and 3) *an approach to ethics of representation*.

Epistemology of the study

In order to find out how arts-based narrative practices can impact on the identity work carried out by individuals, communities and places, adequate epistemological choices need to be made. I will name here several principles of knowing and knowledge generation that are close to my worldview and were applied in this research context.

In his speech at the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow, Tim Ingold (2018) provides a critique on the juxtaposition of ontology to epistemology in research. He argues for deconstruction of the contradiction between participation and observation, as "the only way of knowing about the world is by being in it, there is no distance or contradiction between the two" (Ingold, 2018). As it will become clear further from the chapter on research methodology, the study based itself on a research design where the processes of observation and participation on the researcher's side coincide, and through this confluence knowledge is generated. Thus, "knowing through being", or knowing through self-experience, is one of the epistemological premises of my study.

The second such premise comes from the social constructivist[1] worldview that I referred to in the beginning of this introductory chapter, namely the worldview where knowledge generation bases itself on tacit understandings of the themes by multiple actors through their personal experiences. This premise implies knowing through the experiences of the research participants.

The third crucial, and maybe principal, premise of this epistemology lies in the narrative, or "storied" ways of knowing (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997). This epistemology fits into this study alongside "arts-based ways of knowing", as will be established in Section 1.2. That is to say that knowledge is generated through tacit arts-based processes and revealed explicitly through narrative or dialogic processes, and not necessarily in this order.

Freire and Macedo (1995) summarise most of the epistemological principles I adhere to in my study, also putting learning to the forefront and thus emphasising the active and ongoing nature of these ways of knowing:

> *I engage in dialogue not necessarily because I like the other person. I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing. In this sense, dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing (p. 379).*

To conclude, I will say a few words on the audience of this dissertation. I hope for this study to find its reader among the students, researchers and practitioners of art in its "social" forms: community art, socially engaged art, artivism and so on. Curators and art mediators may find interest in reading it, too, as it touches upon the questions of ethical representation of "storied" art produced by individuals and groups. I also wish for this work to find an audience beyond the arts-related realm. In social work, for example, it may suggest inclusive strategies for entering communities of place, practice and difficult circumstance.

In the next two subsections, I will introduce the communities of research participants and the places in which our encounters occurred. I will also address the roles that the five published articles played in the overall argument. In further sections, arts-based and reflexive approaches applied in the study will be outlined. Through situating the self of the researcher, the motivation of the study will be additionally clarified. At the end of this chapter, the structure of the whole dissertation will be introduced.

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[1] Hereafter the dissertation will be assuming both social constructivist (McKinley, 2015) and social constructionist (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009) viewpoints. While the former focuses on an individual's sense-making that occurs because of her interactions in a group, the latter considers the artefacts created collectively through the social interactions of a group.

1.1.1. Communities and places

In the literature review in Chapter 2 I will discuss the different ways of seeing communities: those of place and practice, as well as those of interest and circumstance. In this study and for this researcher's curiosity, communities of place and practice and their stories and perspectives have been in put focus. The geography, the "placeness", of this study spreads from the British Isles, through Finland and the Russian Kola Peninsula all the way to South Australia. But beyond the locations of actual engagements, between all of the research participants, artists and my fellow researchers who contributed to the study, the overall community covers most of the European continent, Southeast Asia and Southern Africa (Figure 2).

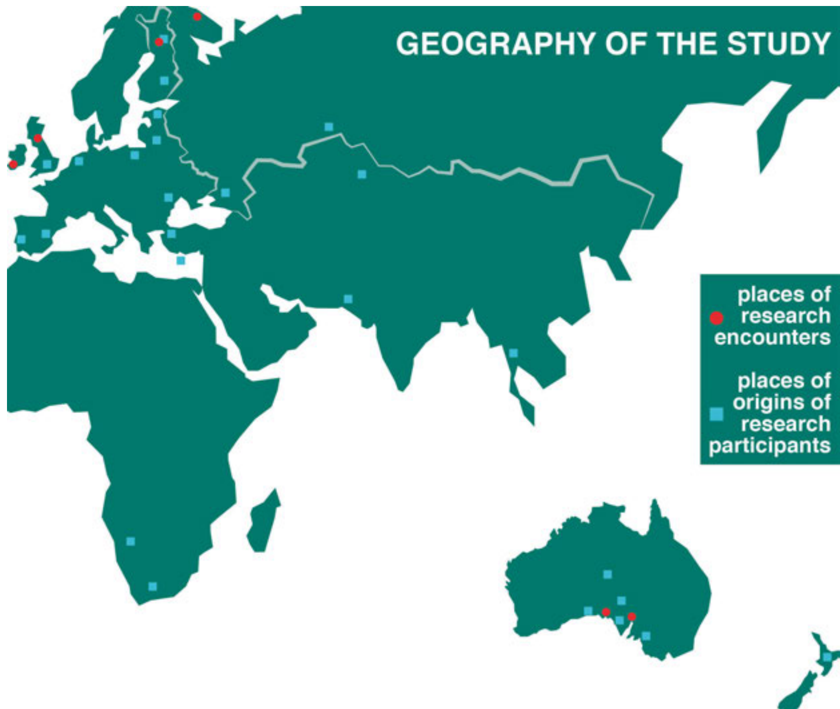

Figure 2. Map of locations of research encounters and places of origins of the research participants.

Placeness additionally manifested itself in a variety of units and scales: studio or university, shop or community centre, street or neighbourhood, town or rural area, land or country. It is crucial to acknowledge that at times place can be also manifested through “placelessness”, or misplacement, like in the situation of some of the Australian Aboriginal communities still struggling to reclaim and re-inhabit their historical territories, or the migrant research participants with varied experiences of navigating places. Digital space has been, naturally, an important tool in recreating and representing physical encounters, as well as in maintaining connections within this outgrown community of place.

In terms of practices, quite a few were represented among the communities involved in the study: the practice of trading and hospitality in Edinburgh and Cork; artistic practice and traditional craft in Australia, Finland and Russia; the practice of storytelling and migratory practices throughout the communities and places.

Table 2 introduces the communities of research participants and the places where our research encounters took place alongside their respective case studies and the articles they are discussed in.

The first case study *Have you heard?* was conducted in July 2014 in Edinburgh, UK, and engaged with the stories and places of eleven first or second-generation immigrants of Portuguese, Spanish, Lithuanian, Dutch, Pakistani and Polish origins. Seven of them were shop owners or employees in Leith Walk, which became the main area of operation for my colleagues and me. The choice of this first location of engagement was somewhat arbitrary and coincided with an artistic residency we attended. The presence of migrant communities, however, was a key factor for the case study.

The second case study *Shop around the corner* was carried out in February 2016 in Cork, Ireland, where I worked with six local family business owners in North and South Main Street, four local artists and one community activist. One can say that the previous case study led my research to this one. I was invited to meet this community as a commissioned artist by Quarter Block Party festival after having discussed *Have you heard?* with the festival organisers by chance.

The remaining four locations indicated in Table 2 were all part of the large case study *Margin to margin* conducted in South Australia, Finland and Russia. The locations and the communities were chosen through my colleagues and my networks and connections to artists and craftspeople who live and work in geographically remote areas. Thus, each of the researchers had some insight into and familiarity with at least one of the represented communities. In Fowlers Bay, South Australia, we worked with 32 female Aboriginal artists from four different communities, four Australian artists, one social worker of Maori origin and two invited Finnish artists. In the other South Australian location, Port Augusta, we encountered seventeen Australian artists of *Fibrespace Inc* art collective, fifteen women and two men. The group of research participants in Rovaniemi, Finland, was made up of thirteen art or design students, artists and researchers of the University of Lapland and elsewhere, of Finnish, Turkish, Moldovan, Cypriot,

Dutch, English, Estonian, Namibian and Australian origins, comprising ten women and three men. And finally, in Murmansk, Russia, we worked with fourteen art and design students of Murmansk Arctic State University, comprising twelve women and two men.

The case studies are discussed in greater detail throughout the dissertation and in Chapter 4.

#	Place	Date of the encounter	Community	Case study	Article
1	Edinburgh, UK	July 2014	11 first- or second-generation immigrants of Portuguese, Spanish, Lithuanian, Dutch, Pakistani and Polish origins (7 of them - shop owners or employees in Leith Walk)	1 Have you heard?	3
2	Cork, Ireland	February 2016	6 local family business owners in North and South Main Street; 4 local artists; 1 community activist	2 Shop around the corner	1
3	Fowlers Bay, South Australia	October 2016	32 female Aboriginal artists from 4 different communities: Oak Valley, Tjuntjuntjara, Yalata, Ceduna; 4 Australian artists; 1 social worker of Maori origin; 2 Finnish artists	3 Margin to margin	2, 5
4	Port Augusta, South Australia	October 2016	17 Australian artists of Fibrespace Inc art collective (15 women and 2 men)	3 Margin to margin	2, 5
5	Rovaniemi, Finland	December 2016	13 art and design students, artist and researchers of the University of Lapland and elsewhere, of Finnish, Turkish, Moldovan, Cypriot, Dutch, English, Estonian, Namibian and Australian origins (10 women and 3 men)	3 Margin to margin	4, 5
6	Murmansk, Russia	December 2016	14 art and design students of Murmansk Arctic State University (12 women and 2 men)	3 Margin to margin	4, 5

Table 2. Communities, places and case studies.

Throughout the dissertation, when giving examples of concrete field situations and shared stories, I will refer to my participants by their first names unless something prevents their identification. In the articles included in this dissertation, I mostly identified them with the word “participant” and their respective geographic locations for simplicity, while in public displays of the research and artistic outcomes shown in exhibition and digital space everyone’s full name was included for the purpose of rendering their voices audible through their work. Anonymity was never a pursuit in this study, quite the opposite—both my research participants and myself have been looking forward to the stories gaining a voice and presence when being told and retold across the globe.

1.1.2. Articles and their roles

In addition to the table of communities, case studies and articles presented in the previous section, I placed all the research encounters and articles on a timeline (Figure 3) to aid the reader in understanding better the process of this study. This timeline also includes the events of public display of the research and artistic outcomes, as they were significant to the narrative processes and representation of the study.

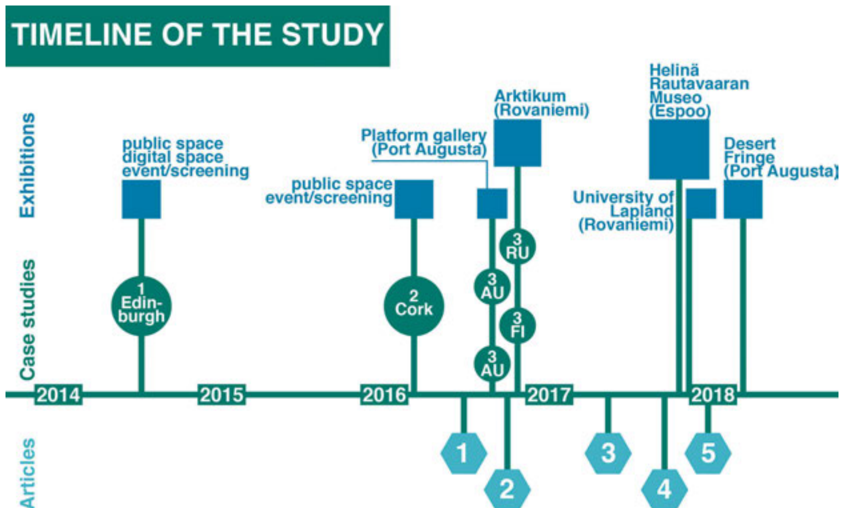

Figure 3. Timeline of the research encounters, published articles and exhibitions.

The order of the articles in the dissertation is based on the chronology of their publication, although the cases referred to in these articles have been implemented in a slightly different chronological order. Through the brief annotation of the articles in this section, I outline the development of the themes, thought and practice through the duration of the study, as well as each article's contribution to the bigger picture of the study. Throughout the further chapters, the articles are referred to repeatedly in order to exemplify phenomena and support the argument. The findings of each of them are discussed in Chapter 5 alongside the study's overall findings.

Article 1 that I co-wrote as the third author takes a general look at socially engaged art practice and its potential for facilitating empowerment, wellbeing and transformation for the involved communities. It does so through presenting three case studies where arts-based practices enabled identity work among the

involved artists and communities, which manifested through the narratives that were shared. The research question posed in the article is: *How can collaborative narrative-based art-making processes create a platform for dialogue and empowerment?* Only one of the case studies regarded in this article was carried out by me personally and constitutes a part of this study's data—the case study *Shop around the corner* in Cork, Ireland, with the community of local multigenerational family-owned businesses. The other two, *Wings to fly* and *Just*, were carried out by my colleagues and the supervisors of this study.

Having conducted the narrative analyses of our respective cases, we were able to build the argument together and demonstrate varied narrative and arts-based approaches to working with communities. The case study *Shop around the corner* applied arts-based methods to unite stories and places they relate to, as well as to prompt a dialogue around urban space.

Common themes between the case studies and the shared narratives included empowerment, participation and identity processes. Common methods across the cases were ethnographic observation, sensitising through narratives and storytelling, and probing. In conclusion to the article, a framework is presented for creating empowering art through narrative processes individually and with communities is presented.

Article 2 presents analysis of the two South Australian sub-cases of the third phase of this study's fieldwork, the case study *Margin to margin*. These sub-cases were carried out with mainly female Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists living and working in remote and rural areas. The article inquires about two matters: a) *How to build empathy with communities through arts- and narrative-based processes?* and b) *What are the potential practical applications of empathy-building through arts and narrative-based processes with communities?*

This article serves as the first important step in making sense of the encounters and data of the large case study that is *Margin to margin*. All the three of us, the authors, had participated in these research encounters and wrote from our own experiences. I contributed as the third author and created the visuals, photos and figures, to communicate our ideas. Arts-based methods were applied in a consistent manner between the two cases, alongside an ethnographic approach and audiovisual documentation.

The key themes that emerged in the article were empathy, art, storytelling, social design and empowerment. The article discusses the potential of arts-based practices not only in an arts-based research context itself, but also as a preparatory phase for service design projects in community contexts, namely through the functions of establishing researcher-participant empathy and gaining insight into participants' life worlds.

In the article, we formulated a framework for the said empathy, too, complimenting the framework from Article 1. Strong methodological emphasis in this article lies on the methods of audiovisual documentation. Though these methods had been used throughout the study from the first cases, it became

possible to look back and analyse their real impact and potential towards the third phase of the fieldwork.

Having compiled a body of theory regarding identities, communities and narrative inquiry through previous writing, I felt that analysis of the very first case study, *Have you heard?*, was due. The sense-making processes that had occurred in the writing of the previous two articles allowed for a viewing of the collected data from a more in-depth perspective of identities that come about through the narratives that participants communicate in participatory contexts, as opposed to the roles assumed for and by them.

Article 3, where I acted as the first author, presents a comparative analysis of two cases in the fields of community site-specific art and service design. Mine, *Have you heard?*, dealt with the themes of migration and belonging with a community of immigrant shop owners and employees in Edinburgh, UK. My co-author's case, *Good Life in Villages*, took place in rural Finnish Lapland with local communities and addressed population ageing and the challenges of centralism. The article asks *how the focus on narrative identities of the involved parties can contribute to engagement in community-based art and design projects.*

Through presenting theoretical backgrounds from our respective fields of art and design, and having conducted the narrative analyses of our respective cases, we compiled in this article a different approach to facilitating participant engagement and adding local meaning to cases through understanding and employing participants' narrative identities. This conclusion impacted on further analysis of narrative data and a more holistic understanding of identity work.

Article 4 presents an analysis of the two Arctic sub-cases of case study *Margin to margin* that took place in Rovaniemi, Finland, and Murmansk, Russia. The involved participants were young artists and designers. In Murmansk they were students of the local University, while in Rovaniemi many of them came from elsewhere and were united by migratory experiences. The two research questions posed here were: a) *How can creating temporal environments for collective making and storytelling contribute to knowledge dissemination and transfer from one remote community to another?* and b) *How does documentation of personal narratives promote a better understanding of and between different contexts?*

The article analyses the stories and narratives shared by the artists in relation to their art-making processes and respective contexts and applies the understanding of narrative identities that Article 3 concluded with. Again, my co-authors and I had been involved in both field encounters and wrote from our experiences. I contributed as the first author and was in charge of data transcription and translation for the Murmansk sub-case, as the stories were mainly communicated in Russian there.

Collective arts-based practices were carried out through the same methods as those described in Article 2 in order to ensure consistency of data. The examples of narrative identity constructing processes of artists living and working in specific

geographic, climatic and cultural environments are given here through citing group discussion and multiple individual artworks that the artists created during the two encounters. The fil rouge of audiovisual documentation continues here.

Article 5, where I also contributed as the first author, concludes the analysis of the four encounters that constituted the case study *Margin to margin*. In this article, the less familiar realm of HCI is explored as an avenue for further analysis and representation, through digital platforms and virtual spaces, of the outcomes of arts-based research with geographically marginalised communities, as well as a practical tool for keeping the established community of practice alive and growing. My co-authors and I inquire about *the ways to utilise HCI solutions for approaches that draw on the experiences and outcomes of art-based research in marginalised communities.*

Again, the role and implications of audiovisual documentation is emphasised here. This article was significant in terms of tying together most of the ethical considerations that were made throughout the research process.

1.2. ARTS-BASED APPROACH TO RESEARCH

In the telos of this study and similar studies, usually community-based in nature, art-making is inseparable from narrative processes, preceding, following or occurring alongside them and thus complementing narrative ways of knowing. It is argued in fact that art and art-making themselves can be a way of knowing (Allen, 1995; McNiff, 1998; Leavy, 2017a), which constitutes one of the fundamental premises of arts-based research (further referred to as ABR).

Patricia Leavy (2017a) describes arts-based practices as an ever-growing set of "methodological tools used by researchers across the disciplines during any or all phases of research, including problem generation, data or content generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation" (p. 4), where the researcher herself engages in art-making as a way of knowing. Leavy's understandings derive from the work of Shaun McNiff (1998) on art-based research, but have let go of the art therapy component of his theory (although acknowledging it as a strong precondition for the becoming of ABR). In the context of my study, I follow Leavy's (2017a) intention of using the term ABR as an "umbrella category that encompasses all artistic approaches to research" (p.4) that are represented in literature in vast plentitude, from *a/r/tography*[2] to *transformative inquiry through art* (Leavy, 2014, p. 406).

ABR is viewed by some as an emergent methodological genre within the qualitative paradigm, although more recent sources (e.g. Leavy, 2015; Leavy, 2017a) argue for it to be its own methodological approach. The beginning of this turn in academia towards arts-based methods is attributed to the work undertaken in the 1970s (Sinner et al., 2006; Leavy, 2017a). It is the researcher herself who becomes a unifying instrument in this context, with her own creative and intuitive approaches, in qualitative research as in artistic practice (Janesick, 2001, p. 533). In a certain way the arts-based viewpoint is in sync with that of reflexive research, as it appeals to the self, or multiple selves, of the researcher and aims "to bridge and not divide both the artist-self and researcher-self" (Leavy, 2015, p. 3).

The emergence of narrative research at the end of the twentieth century contributed to the development of arts-based approaches to research. Gerber and her colleagues (2012) elaborate in that respect on the opposite dynamic where artistic practices in the scope of ABR allow for "pre-verbal, human experiences to be brought into consciousness, shared amongst our group and transformed into meaning", thus fuelling narrative data (p. 44). This has occurred in many of the arts-based activities of this study's fieldwork, in which participants would first produce an art piece and further make sense of it verbally.

Leavy (2017a) discusses a number of contexts of use of ABR that made it a logical methodological choice for this study, namely the inclusion of marginalised

[2] A/r/tography is a type of arts-based inquiry that relies on both art making and writing (graphy) as essential components of inquiry (e.g. Bickel et al., 2010).

voices and perspectives, as well as the participatory aspect—equal collaboration with non academic stakeholders, nonhierarchical relationships and the inclusion of audiences that "consume or experience ABR" (p. 10). Melisa Cahnmann (2003) characterises more precisely the audiences for this research approach:

> *We must assume an audience for our work, an audience that longs for fresh language to describe the indescribable emotional and intellectual experiences in and beyond classrooms (p. 35).*

It is useful to take the audience into account from the early stages of arts-based research, as it can feed inquiry in meaningful ways. Specific applications of ABR methodology in this study are discussed in Chapter 3.

1.3. REFLEXIVITY IN RESEARCH

Reflexivity as a human quality or skill is discussed most of all, perhaps, in the context of psychological counselling, but has been increasingly central in other narrative-based and community-based research contexts. Kim Etherington (2004) defines a counsellor's reflexivity as an "ability to notice our responses to the world around us, other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform our actions, communications and understandings" (p. 19). Being reflexive, thus, implies not only a strong degree of self-awareness and awareness of "the personal, social and cultural contexts in which we live and work", but also an ability to use those in one's own interpretations of the world (Etherington, 2004, p. 19).

For over three decades, through the emergence of narrative, heuristic, ethnographic, and feminist methodologies, a more "involved" approach to researching in human contexts, as well as the use of the self, became prominent in qualitative research (e.g. Haraway, 1991; Griffiths, 1995; Kimpson, 2005; Griffiths, 2010). Upon this turn, the discussion of *researcher's reflexivity* started spreading across disciplines (e.g. Steier, 1991; Walsh, 1996; Hertz, 1997; Alvesson & Skolberg, 2000). Rosanna Hertz notes that this quality "permeates every aspect of the research process, challenging us to be more fully conscious of the ideology, culture, and politics of those we study and those we select as our audience" (Hertz 1997, p. viii). Although accurately noted, there is still a certain tone of hierarchy and distance in her observation. Etherington, as a practicing psychology counsellor and researcher, attempts to take researcher's reflexivity to the next level. She argues that the use of reflexivity in research allows to "close the illusory gap between researcher and researched and between the knower and what is known" (Etherington, 2004, p. 32).

Etherington (2004) understands researcher's reflexivity as "the capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of inquiry" (p.31). Morwenna Griffiths (2010) goes further and argues that the said fluidity and change are inevitable and it is through exercising reflexivity that one notices "the social/political, relational self becoming what it is not yet" (p. 184). Although reflexive research is not yet a mainstream qualitative approach and is referred to by a limited amount of authors (e.g. Parker, 1994; Mantzoukas, 2005; Herland, 2017), its emergence may rely on reflexive collaborative effort. The accumulation of such collective voices and narratives is facilitated, for example, by Etherington who, through presenting reflexive interviews with fellow "reflexive researchers", aims to show the value of this type of knowledge generation and transfer (Etherington, 2004).

Indeed, it is a collaborative process between the researcher and her research participants. It is an embedded perspective and an approach to the design of field situations and encounters, as well as the processes of data collection,

documentation, analysis and representation, with a special emphasis on transparency:

> *…although the content and process of the research might become seamlessly interwoven stories, affecting each other, it is important that the voices of researchers and researched are not merged and reported as one story – which is actually the researcher's interpretation (Etherington, 2004, p. 83).*

Much like Clandinin and Connelly (2004), who conceptualise narrative inquiry where "narrative threads coalesce out of a past and emerge in the specific three-dimensional space" (p.70), a reflexive researcher, too, must view her field of inquiry as a three-dimensional and dynamic space. That is, as a space influenced by the identities and contexts of everyone involved, including herself, as well as those resulting from the past and anticipating the future. While narrative methods allow for examination of "our responses to the data in terms of culture, gender, history and context", Etherington (2004) argues that reflexivity encourages us "to explore our own construction of identity in relation to the data, our participants and our selves" bridging our internal and external worlds (p. 126).

Etherington (2004) repeatedly emphasises the parallels between therapy and research in human contexts, specifically the importance of self-care and constant evaluation of the various encounters, their proximity, distance and personal space, for researchers and therapists alike (p. 227). That is not to say, of course, that this study was in any way akin to therapy in its intention, design or the kind of relationships that were built throughout its duration. I mean rather to emphasise the sensitivity of the contexts the study dealt with and the care assumed by the researcher from the early stages of planning, as well as the transformative effect it had on many of the involved parties.

Reflexivity and empathy in arts-based context are often fostered by the aesthetic experiences elicited through this type of inquiry and shared among the researcher, her research participants and their audiences (Dunlop, 2001; Leavy, 2017a). The avenue of taking reflexivity seriously allowed me to situate my researcher self in relation to the selves of the research participants, to find ways to approach the bias inherent to narrative-based research with communities and to conceptualise reflexive research as one of the key methodological choices. Specific applications of this methodology are elaborated on in Chapter 3.

1.3.1. The self of the researcher

The general recommendation for the inclusion of the researcher's self in a study is to only do it when relevant, when that self contributes significantly to the process or the outcomes of the research, the most obvious, but not exclusive example being an autoethnographic study. I do wonder, however, whether most qualitative studies in human contexts are affected by the self of the researcher to a significant noteworthy extent. Speaking from her own and her research participants' experiences, Etherington (2004) notes that often "research journey or inquiry can be partly motivated by one's own need" (p. 39). And, quite obviously to me, a researcher goes through processes of self-reflection and identity work while conducting her study, at the very least because "knowledge acquisition and identity development are inherently linked" (Hemphill & Leskowitz, 2013, p. 74). Griffiths (2010) argues that it is not just the researcher who acknowledges the role of the self, or multiple selves, but also that her audiences notice how the relationships she created "have influenced those selves in ways that make a difference to their research processes" (p.177). I chose to include my researcher's self in the equation of this study and write about it reflexively and in first person.

I was born in the latter half of the 1980s in the state that is no more, the Soviet Union, in an industrial city in the Ural Mountains, "the backbone of the state". My family is of Ukrainian and Russian descent. My maternal grandparents, both civil engineers, were and are until this day devoted communists. The fall of the USSR affected my family strongly due to a number of factors among which was my Grandfather's position in the Soviet government. I was only a small child at the time and have until now kept on processing those complex historical events I lived through. The "Soviet component" has always been a part of my identity, but the understanding of what it means exactly to be Soviet keeps changing and gaining substance and controversy throughout my becoming. It encompasses, for example, isolation from the outside world by the proverbial Iron Curtain, external exclusion, controversy and apprehension, but also the richness of culture within, multiculturalism, collectivity and solidarity.

Identity processes are complex and one can end up examining barely remembered pasts in an attempt to identify or conceptualise the self through a timespace that does not exist anymore. It often becomes a process of sense-making through doubt: what part of this is due to memory? Is this memory my own, narrated by those close to me or a part of a hegemonic narrative? How much of it did I dream up or imagine? Although, interpreting Paul Ricoeur's ideas, Hannoum (2005) notes that "imagination and memory are alike in one important aspect: they both contain the presence of something absent" (p. 125).

After high school, I went on to pursue higher education at an architectural academy 200 kilometres away from home, and six years later received a degree in spatial design. It was decided by my family that such formation would be a good compromise between my creative aspirations and something through which one can actually earn a living, as opposed to art and such. In the academy, I learnt to

design and transform, although in quite down-to-earth practical ways, public and private physical space: homes, offices, and outdoor spaces. Some years later, I also became interested in exhibition space and film sets. Upon the completion of my studies, I found myself part of a job market with tough competition, since interior and landscape designers were and are plenty in the Ural region and throughout Russia. This economic factor and other contributing cultural and personal factors resulted in my second big migratory event—relocation to Finnish Lapland.

> *Any of us can end up in a situation when it is time to leave. From my experience, no one leaves home without a good reason. There are usually two main motivations—the need and the curiosity. Both are sufficient and strong enough in themselves with no justification or excuse needed (Personal diary, 30 June 2017).*

Not only my personal circumstances and identities happened to be in flux as a result of this change of realities—my professional practices kept transforming, too. After moving to Finland, I realised there was a theoretical gap in my education and felt the need to support my practical knowledge with a theoretical base. This brought me to pursue a Doctor of Arts degree at the University of Lapland. Gradually, the focus of my work and research developed and embraced multidisciplinarity, including media, community-based and participatory art and design practices, thus moving from material culture into human contexts and seeing, and representation thereof through the camera lens.

The two-year arts-based research project *Margin to margin* provided a large body of data for this study (see Section 4.2.3. and the articles) and required me to manage cross-continental collaborations between remote communities, artists and researchers, and thus to engage further in migratory practices (Mamattah, 2005; Domingo, 2011), whether physically or through digital means. This experience became a challenge and a high point in the fragmentation and fluctuation of my professional roles: from researcher, artist and documentalist, to practical coordinator, as well as mediator and curator of complex creative and academic processes. Through the fieldwork and workshops organisation, I acquired valuable expertise in collaboration with communities of place and practice. This was transformative on a personal level, too: witnessing the active identity work of research participants put my own identity processes into perspective.

Alongside the fluid work scenarios, and often times due to them, as well as personal circumstances, my migratory practices persisted. I relocated once again, this time to the North of Italy, keeping up occasional temporary migrations for fieldwork and other areas unrelated to this study project. I had to make sense of places and make them “home”, often one or two months at a time. I encountered and attempted to belong to a community of place and practice, where both the place and the practice are constituted by being “on the road”. I welcomed a reality where most people are nomads.

This kind of reality, however, comes with a price of disclosing my personal information to the governments of the I would like to move through for a shorter or longer time, of paying high fees, of fearing and waiting, of being treated differently due to where I come from. I have been refused visas and residence permits and for the past seven years have taken more passport photographs per year than anyone I know. Now as I write this in April 2018, I have been waiting for paperwork in Finland for nearly two months, unsure of when it will be ready and unable to exercise my freedom of movement because of it. Another example goes back to 2016 when my colleagues and I were preparing for fieldwork in Australia and my visa application was rejected first time around (Akimenko, 2016). Sara Ahmed and her colleagues (2003) note quite precisely the complexities of human movements, within and without:

> *…the greatest movements often occur within the self, within the home or within the family, while the phantasm of limitless mobility often rests on the power of border controls and policing of who does and does not belong (p. 5).*

The migratory experiences do lead me to rethink my limitations and marginalities and engage with the themes of place and identity on many levels. The occasional fluid placelessness that I experience now and again, willingly or forcibly, makes me think a lot about people's relationships with places and how complex those are. Much like identity, one's placeness is often taken for granted unless threatened, contested or removed (Bauman & Vecchi, 2004). This has for a long time ignited my passionate interest, both in life and research, towards other people's tales of misplacement, losing and finding roots, ever-transforming perceptions of "home" and "the self". It also explains how the shifting focus of this dissertation arrived at this specific set of themes and questions. This is my tale, too, my story of (un)belonging, "practising" new places in the attempt to turn them into spaces of my own. My interest in these themes is deeply personal. It would have been untruthful to omit this fact in the dissertation.

I attempted to include in this section only the most relevant aspects of my researcher self: my origins and historical context of becoming, changing professional practice and research interest, and the migrant identity processes I undergo.

1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This *first introduction chapter* has painted in wide strokes the field of inquiry, its research themes and questions, alongside the epistemological stance. Further the socio-cultural and geographic context of the study has been outlined through an introduction of the communities of research participants. The questions, methods and roles of the five published articles have been situated in the scope of the study's argument. Arts-based and reflexive approaches to research have been introduced and followed by the motivation to carry out the research through situating the self of the researcher, myself, within the thematic field of the inquiry.

The following *Chapter 2*, through literature review, will map the theoretical landscape to which my research contributes. It will unravel some theoretical thought on identities, place and space and artistic practice. Theory on communities will be viewed from the identity point of view, as well as the perspective of forms of participation. The discussion of narratives will be omnipresent throughout the sections of Chapter 2. The section on artistic practice will flow into a discussion of critical spatial practice. The chapter will conclude by indicating an area of contribution, a research gap.

In *Chapter 3*, I will explain what methods were applied in order to acquire practical knowledge in the field, and how I know what I claim to have learnt. I will do so by discussing this study's research design: its two overarching methods of reflexive research and arts-based research and the applied research strategies. Ethical considerations play a significant role in the study as will be discussed in a separate section. Thereafter, the data collection and analysis methods will be explained alongside the respective data.

Chapter 4 will serve as a process chapter in order to transition from the research methodology of this study towards its findings. It will also finalise the portraits of the participating communities that will have been building up till that point through references to their places, narratives and the field processes carried out with them, together with the data they contributed. The chapter will draw together the varied field experiences and the ways in which I approached, explicitly or tacitly, mediation of complexities between the different actors, narratives, places/spaces and practices that were a part of this process of inquiry.

And, finally, *Chapter 5* will present the findings of the study starting from those that resulted from the articles and transitioning to the main three findings that came about through the analysis of the articles' outcomes. The logic behind the title of the study, too, will become clear through a formulation of the findings. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the whole study and an outline of the avenues for further research.

The five published articles are placed in the very end of this manuscript.

In order to conclude this introductory chapter, I will briefly outline some of the limitations that had to be assumed in this dissertation.

Firstly, as it has become clear by now, I chose to use exclusively first person writing in this dissertation bearing in mind that not all within academia will agree on the pertinence of such a tone in research writing. I justify this choice by the social constructivist worldview of my work, as well as by the epistemological approach of "knowing through being", referred to in Section 1.1. The strong reflexive stance and the impact of feminist thought and approach to subjectivity on my work also influenced this choice. The said feminist worldview also prompted the use of *she* as third-person singular pronoun, as opposed to *he* or *they*. When writing about the actual experiences my colleagues and I partook in, the use of *I* or *we* is prioritised. When describing more generic situations applicable to a wider range of contexts, I often use the words *researcher(s)* or *artist-researcher(s)*. I took on this more personal approach to writing while finishing the dissertation, the articles were written from a neutral third person position, largely because they were results of collaborative effort.

Secondly, as I will elaborate again in Chapter 2, certain limitations had to be put on the amount and depth of theoretical viewpoints to be included in the literature review. Hence, postcolonial scholarship is acknowledged there, but bearing in mind that not all of the involved communities lived in postcolonial realities, I aimed to focus more on the topics and theories that have a wider application to all of the participants of the study and possible future studies. Similarly, gender and race theories are not emphasised specifically in the study despite being relevant to the contexts of some of the participating communities. However, some of the scholarship referred to in the literature review can be situated in the intersection of several theories mentioned here, for example, that of bell hooks, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw and Sara Ahmed.

And finally, research bias is acknowledged with due criticality in the methodology of the study, in Chapter 3, as well as in the transferability of research results that can be limited by the methodological choices of reflexivity and ethnography.

2. MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE

The main research themes discussed in this chapter are *identities, narrative, community, place/space,* and *artistic practice*. They have been initially identified and then further refined through research encounters and grouping of the data, themes and keywords that emerged during fieldwork and were discussed in the articles. The further elaboration on these themes in this chapter expands and contextualises the theoretical discussions initiated in the articles. Due to the fluidity of research encounters in this study, the research themes, or concepts, were formed throughout the fieldwork, confirming each other and enabling new concepts to emerge. I will now explain briefly the transformation of this "cloud" of research themes throughout the case studies and consequent sense-making.

Starting loosely from the notions of *storytelling* and *collaborative artistic practices*, the chain of concepts assembled itself further as follows. In the case study *Have you heard?* the sharing of narratives with the participants was enabled by the themes of *migration* and *belonging*, but the interpretation and analysis unearthed strong presence of and reflections on the themes of *place* and *community*, as well as participants' *narrative identity* processes, which provided material for the discussion in Article 3.

Building on top of that experience, in the case study *Shop around the corner*, place and community persisted as concepts in dialogic processes, while adding a strong theme of *memory* (see Article 1) in the intersection of identities and timespaces (Hannoum, 2005, p. 126).

Themes of *marginality* and *empathy* were implicit throughout the first two case studies, but surfaced explicitly through the narrative and art-making processes in the third case study *Margin to margin*. In the process of describing this research, all of the themes have been "distilled" to the main ones pictured in Figure 4, while also kept as fils rouges in the narrative of this dissertation. Both the themes shaping the main theoretical premise and the "subthemes" are also synthesised into the findings discussed in Chapter 5.

Figure 4 demonstrates the main theoretical premise of the study. The concept of *community* is seen here in a close relationship with *place* and *space*, as well as *identities*. I imply that an *individual* is both embedded within the concept of community and, as it will be seen throughout the chapter, in talk about *identity work*. The themes of *narrative* and *artistic practice* impact on the themes located in the centre of the diagram.

Figure 4. Visualisation of the relationships between the research themes.

This literature review chapter opens with the relevant theory on identities, proceeding to the discussion of place and space, and concluding with artistic practice. Community and narratives are discussed from the identity perspective and are situated under the respective section. Additionally, the notion of *critical spatial practice* is outlined under the section of artistic practice, tying together all of the previously discussed themes. By the end of this chapter the research gap will be outlined.

2.1. IDENTITIES

Identities, their interrelation with narratives and identity work form the theoretical cornerstone of this study's hypothesis, data and findings. Due to the complexity of these themes, it was only possible to touch upon some of their aspects in the scope of the published articles. In this section, I will revise further and complement the identity scholarship and themes referred to in Articles 1, 3, 4 and 5: the relationships between identities and memories, gender identities, various external and inner processes that enable identity formations.

Referring to postcolonial scholarship's viewpoints on identity (e.g. Bhabha, 1983, 1994; Spivak, 1986, 1987), Chen (2009) argues that "the forgotten or erased true self should be recovered through cultural discourse, by which cultural differences of class, culture, gender, race and skin color can be recognized and deconstructed…" (p. 112). Thus, in order to achieve the "true self" one must refute the binaries of "the self" and "the other". Postcolonial discussion of identities is, perhaps, one of the most intense and poignant in contemporary scholarship due to the vulnerability of the contexts of the actors whose identities are discussed. The concepts in the focus of the study (narrative, identities, place/space, communities and artistic practice) are often related to and discussed in postcolonial discourse, which I bear in mind, citing some of the authors affiliated with the theory, while choosing not centre my study around it.

Alongside cultural turns and epistemic shifts, such as the development of post-structuralist thought, perspectives on identities shifted from binaries and stability towards being perceived as plural and fluid (Hall, 1988; Hall, Held, Hubert, & Thompson, 1996; Lawler, 2008), as well as interpretative and performative (Goffman, 1969; Butler, 2006). As summed up by Jay Rounds (2006), identity is "not so much an essence, or a state of being, as it is a pattern of behavior rendered meaningful through interpretation" (p. 141). Based on my own convictions and the relevance of such post-structuralist understandings of identities to this study, I will continue the discussion by looking at identities through the lenses of narratives, identity work and community.

In non-academic understanding, a "turn" implies "retrospection, a process of stopping in the road and glancing backwards at the way by which one has come" (Guldi, n.d.). The departure point for the discussion of the research themes in this study lies between two turns in thought and practice, *narrative* and *spatial*, that coincided in time and impacted the way we see the world. Etherington (2004) suggests that the narrative turn of the early 1980s is in fact a "return" to the way knowledge was passed traditionally between generations through storytelling and, thus, a (re)discovery of narration as the essential genre for conceptualisation of human lives occurred (MacIntyre, 1981). Jens Brockmeier and Rom Harré (2001) note that despite being first acknowledged in psychology and other human sciences, this paradigm shift was a part of "larger tectonic shifts in our cultural architecture of knowledge following the crisis of the modernist episteme" (p. 39). Narrative ways of knowing came to be through new approaches to discourse and

text, through situating the self within the text and overturning dominant discourses and assumptions about the world (Derrida, 1981). Etherington (2004) discusses the becoming of narrative research through "refusing to privilege one story over another, and by allowing new stories to emerge", as well as through gathering local stories and the inclusion of the researcher's own life history in the equation (p. 27). The uniqueness and value of narrative in research lies in the pluralities of interpretation, that is, in every storyteller's own account of and viewpoint on the past, rather than a precise reproduction thereof (Riessman, 2005, p. 6). This quality of narrative has been employed across the articles of this study in order to examine the various themes, phenomena and contexts in relation to the research participants' personal perceptions. For example, in Article 4 the assumptions on what may constitute Arctic ways of being were deconstructed through the life histories and experiences narrated by the participants.

> *Embedded in the lives of the ordinary, the marginalized, and the muted, personal narrative responds to the disintegration of master narratives as people make sense of experience, claim identities, and 'get a life' by telling and writing their stories (Langellier, 2001, p. 700).*

This quote by Kristin Langellier summarises well a lot of the key premises relevant to the following discussion. Firstly, the note on the "storied" nature of social lives stands out. Coined by Sarbin (1986), the term "storied lives" has been used across disciplines of psychology, anthropology, sociology and history (e.g. Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992; Somers, 1994; Rich, 2014). This became one of the key premises for the methodological stance of this study and the choice of narrative methods employed. As can be noted throughout the articles, the participants themselves tend to shape their life narratives into one or another storied genre, such as memoir, as exemplified in Article 1. Clinical psychologist Louis Sass (1992) noted even how "unstoried" lives, absence of temporal and narrative order, are typical of certain types of schizophrenia.

Indeed, narrative is in many ways an "ontological condition of social life" (Somers, 1994, p. 614), and ordering life events narratively can serve as a coping mechanism, a principle that, for example, psychological counselling is based upon (Etherington, 2004, p. 20). Which brings me to the second premise derived from the quote above, the *sense-making narrative function* (Ricoeur, 1992), in other words, the fact that the stories "we tell ourselves about ourselves and others organize our senses of who we are, who others are, and how we are to be related" (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001, p. 10). In relation to this, Margaret Somers (1994) notes how meaning-making through narrativity occurs only when a single event is analysed in spatiotemporal relationships to other events, and not as an isolated phenomenon (p. 616). I appreciate how throughout her writing Somers emphasises the dynamic, unstable and ongoing nature of narrativity, identities, relationships and sense-making. Her ideas are akin to my own understanding of these processes:

> *…the chief characteristic of narrative is that it renders understanding only by connecting (however unstably) parts to a constructed configuration or a social network of relationships (however incoherent or unrealizable) composed of symbolic, institutional, and material practices (Somers, 1994, p. 616).*

Narrative sense-making has a double function according to Ricoeur. On the one hand, a storied life becomes externally more comprehensible: "Do we not consider human lives to be more readable when they have been interpreted in terms of stories that people tell about them?"—Ricoeur asks (1992, p. 114). On the other hand, it is a complex internal process of self-understanding that relies on narrative, but also other signs and symbols, borrowing from "history, as well as from fiction making life-story a fictional history" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 114). Narrative sense-making has been an ongoing process for the research participants of this study. In Article 3 it is emphasised how the individuals explore narratively their positions in the communities, while Article 4 gives examples of making narrative sense of frustrating life circumstances and finding peace with them.

Thirdly, the *relationship between plural personal narratives* and *master narrative* is important to acknowledge here. Counter-narratives are defined by Molly Andrews and Michael Bamberg (2004) as "stories which people tell and lives which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives" (p. 1). They position themselves against master narratives, dominant cultural, political and national storylines that identify "what is assumed to be a normative experience" (Andrews, 2004, p. 2). The notion of counter-narratives and subjectivity are specifically relevant in the context of marginalised groups and their activisms and has been vastly elaborated on in the studies of gender, race and sexuality (e.g. hooks, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991; Massey, 1994; Mouffe, 2005; Butler, 2006). Somers (1994) argues that choosing narratives "to express multiple subjectivities is a deliberate way of rejecting the neutrality and appearance of objectivity typically embedded in master narratives" (p. 630). She further notes that the voicing of counter-narratives can be a crucial strategy to render audible one's identity that is "not expressed in the dominant public ones" (Somers, 1994, p. 630).

This finally brings my discussion to the close *interrelation of narratives and identities* that in Langellier's above quote is formulated through an active case where one's personal narratives bear a function in (re)claiming identities. The multifaceted interconnection between narratives and identities organically came into interdisciplinary discussion with the narrative turn (e.g. Ricoeur, 1992; Somers, 1994; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Freeman, 2001; Wood, 2011). As argued by Bruner (1990), storytelling is not only typical, but inseparable from the matters of identity and the autobiographical memory interwoven with identity processes.

Memory is a type of narrative that is a crucial influencing factor for identity processes. It both contributes to identity formation and renders identities fragile due to their relation to time (Hannoum, 2005, p. 126). Memories can feed

storytelling, but at the same time through storytelling new memories are created (e.g. Ingold, 2013). Many art-making processes in the case studies relied on this principle: the creation of collective artworks referred to in Articles 2 and 4 is fuelled through the remembering and recounting life histories, while seeing one's own memories in a visual and physical form joined with the memories of the others would place them in a new altered memory-scape. These cycles alter the self-perception of one's life story, as well as its performance and representation, contributing, perhaps, to what Ricoeur referred to as "fictional life history", as cited above. Webster, Bohlmeijer and Westerhof talk about the phenomenon of "social reminiscence", which an individual internalises at a certain point of her childhood, contributing to her sense of identity (2010, p. 538). This reinforces the idea of the fictionality of our self-image composition, as social memory does not necessarily reflect every individual's autobiographic memory experiences. Nonetheless, it is through memories and through telling those memories, social or autobiographical, with their dependence on time and space, with the Ricoeurian categories of fiction, imagination and forgetfulness, that an individual makes meaning of her identities.

2.1.1. Narrative and identity

Developed by Ricoeur (1992) and applied further across the disciplines of sociology and psychology (e.g. Somers, 1994; Crowley, 2003; John, Robins, & Pervin, 2010; McAdams, 2013), *narrative identity* theory explores exactly the kind of narrative sense-making that “embeds the actor within relationships and stories that shift over time and space” (Somers, 1994, p. 621). Narrative identity allows for balancing out and finding meanings between one’s stable and changing identities, her internalised selfhood (ipse) and “sameness” (idem) that is contextualised within external circumstances (Ricoeur, 1992). In relation to the latter, McAdams (2008), following Ricoeur, notes that contemporary theorists attempt to view narrative identity as “both an autobiographical project and a situated performance” (p. 243). Precisely this interplay of narrative identity function inspired the discussion in Article 3 where focusing on research participants’ narrative identities in arts-based and design research projects, as opposed to their formal roles, is argued to fuel narrative inquiry in meaningful ways, namely to enable the becoming of researcher-participant empathy and a deeper insight into each others’ life contexts.

The ongoing dialectic balancing between the internal and the external, the stable and the fluctuating, alongside the destabilising factor of time, is bound to be a somewhat messy process. Ricoeur (1992) warns about ethical considerations of narrative identity (in constant flux) conflicting with “self-constancy”, the practice of conducting ourselves in certain ways in order for others be able to rely on us. Thus, an individual feels the responsibility towards sustaining a stable identity, while also having to constantly stay engaged in narrative identity processes responding to her ongoing and unraveling life history.

Digital identity can serve as a curious example for both narrative identity and memory processes. On the one hand, it implies the selectivity and the conscious sense-making one undertakes, as it “emphasizes the conscious and active ways in which an individual constructs her or his image (constructivism and symbolic interactionism being here at work)” (Gradinaru, 2015, p.67). On the other hand, due to the seeming availability of all of the narrative, visual and coded data in “cloud” storage, the practice of remembering is at risk of being diverted away from conscious memory work towards forgetfulness. In any case, as noted by Rodogno (2012), access to “abundant stored autobiographical narratives may have an impact on our ongoing identity-forming processes of self reinterpretation” (p. 326). In Article 5 this idea of the “stored autobiographical narratives” of individuals is expanded further, into the creation of “digital biographies” of groups, places and encounters facilitated through an iDoc platform.

Somers (1994) sums up the key destabilising factors and “pitfalls” inherent to narrative identity processes, either analogue or digital:

Narrative identities are constituted by a person's temporally and spatially variable place in culturally constructed stories composed of (breakable) rules, (variable) practices, binding (and unbinding) institutions, and the multiple plots of family, nation, or economic life (p. 625).

All of the antagonistic processes of construction, claiming and negotiating identities by an individual referred to above fall under the category of identity work first introduced in Section 1.1. (Snow & Anderson, 1987). Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) identified a number of active processes embedded in identity work, namely "forming", "strengthening" and "revising". Naturally, identity work can be manifested through embodied, verbal, symbolic and other types of activities. For example, Creed and Scully (2011) talk about performativity of identity work, where not only a representational, but also an interactive component actively impacts on identity formation. In relation to narrative identity processes, the actions of "crafting" and "maintaining" narratives, or in certain situations, counter-narratives, are of interest. In the past decade such a set of activities has been referred to as "narrative identity work" (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Opsal, 2011; Case & Hunter, 2012). Steph Lawler argues that it is through identity work that an individual makes sense of her kinship, "a system for determining to whom we are related", even in life circumstances where kin ties happen to be in some way absent (Lawler, 2008, p. 40).

2.1.2. Collective identities and community

Indeed, in order to situate her "self" within one or another collective or cultural identity, to be able to identify with a community, an individual has to compare that "self" to one or another frame of reference, such as shared environments or narratives, for example, family storytelling (e.g. Martin, Hagestad & Diedrick, 1988; Rich, 2014). On the other hand, this relationship can work in reverse: identifying with a collective identity provides one with "scripts: narratives that people can use in shaping their projects and in telling their life stories" (Appiah, 2005, p. 22). Chen (2009) sees empowering qualities to such transformative "cultural discourse", as it allows for cultural identities to form "based on an authentic, unique and indigenous self, where a cultural space is claimed and the collective selfhood can be interplayed with in-group and out-group elements" (p. 112). This became apparent through the analysis of community-based art and design engagements in Article 3 where the participants' active sense-making of their collective identities and their relationship to the place meaningfully transformed both their collective selfhoods and the quality of the said art and design engagements. Namely this sense-making increased the participants' shared sense of ownership and authorship towards their places and life histories.

It is important, however, to keep mindful of the potential removal of an individual's agency, choice or responsibility from this formation of "collective dimensions of our individual identities" (Appiah, 2005, p. 21). Anthony Appiah (2005) warns against viewing collective identities as dependent on external circumstances, such as histories, in which case an individual is viewed as influenced by "capacities that are not under our control" (p. 21). Another danger resulting from a lack of criticality towards one's collective or cultural identities, especially those externally attributed to us, lies in potentially manipulative hegemonic political, religious or other narratives that are characteristic of traditional societies, but also very common for the urbanised world of today. Both Clifford Geertz (2000) and Appiah (2005) warn against such imposed nationalistic identity formation, while acknowledging that this type of collective identities can be empowering in a context of movements for resistance. Among other critical viewpoints on collective identities, mindfulness of generalisations entered into discussion in this study, especially in Article 4, where complex, different, highly individualised identity processes among the participants arose from two seemingly similar research contexts in the Arctic. An individual's conscious sense of self can fluctuate from one moment to another between her individual and collective identities, simultaneously enriching the collective through the multiplicity of the individual and avoiding a complete confluence of the self with the group.

Communities, groups with shared identities, geographies and histories, can be identified, often in the context of social work, from the perspective of forms of participation (e.g. Marsh, 1999; Fraser, 2005). Such are *communities of circumstance* that can relate to each other and form for longer or shorter periods of time as a result of a shared situation, usually beyond their control, such as a

natural disaster, as exemplified by Marsh (1999). There are also *communities of interest* that bring together identity groups, usually in a joint effort of challenging status quo (Kenny, 1999; Fraser, 2005). These can be formed based on shared gender, racial or sexual identities (e.g. LGBTQ groups), or economic interests (e.g. business lobby groups). First proposed by cognitive anthropologist Jean Lave in the early 1990s, the concept of *communities of practice* is especially relevant to this study, as it envelops several of its main research themes and is emphasised through the community encounters in Article 2 and 4. Lave (1996) talks about the kind of identity work that can only occur through a shared community practice:

> *Crafting identities in practice becomes the fundamental project subjects engage in; crafting identities is a social process, and becoming more knowledgeably skilled is an aspect of participation in social practice… Who you are becoming shapes crucially and fundamentally what you "know" … "Knowing" is a relation among communities of practice, participation in practice, and the generation of identities as part of becoming part of ongoing practice (p. 157).*

Any variety of practices can serve as a basis for forming such collective identities. Hemphill and Leskowitz (2013) regard a curious case of an activist community who conduct DIY practices as a form of "radical living, learning, and knowledge sharing alternatives to dominant, corporate-driven, consumer society" (p. 73). As community identities are not clean-cut or mutually exclusive, this kind of community of practice can also be considered a community of interest. Digital, or virtual, communities sit somewhere in between, or in all of the categories. On the one hand, they are united by a common space, though detached from physicality and temporality, and thus "collapse geography (and time)" (Mitra & Watts, 2002, p. 486). On the other hand, depending on the type of community, they often share a practice, a dialogic one at the very least. At the same time their sharing of those conditions can be either purely circumstantial, accidental, or based on a common interest or agenda transforming them into "groups that share a common voice and agency" (Mitra & Watts, 2002, p. 486). Throughout all of the articles of this dissertation, but more explicitly in Article 5, my co-authors and I interrogated the impact of digital connectivity between geographically remote communities on their sense of community and the overcoming of the said remoteness. The idea of connectivity in community-based setup, it was concluded, needs to be approached with care due to its potential "top down" imposed premises. The agency in the ongoing connectedness through digital platforms needs to remain with the participants themselves.

In this vein, it is particularly important to talk about the fourth type of communities, *community of place*. Through the emergence of the digital, depersonalisation and commodification of urban space alongside deterioration of rural localities, place-bound communitarian identities and perception of place have been transformed, if not impaired (Arefi, 1999). This renders communities of place

vulnerable, due to their relationship with place transforming from "feeling at home", belonging, being "rooted" (Tuan, 1980) to the loss of frame of reference and meaning referred to as *placelessness* (Relph, 1976; Houston, 1978; Jacobs & Appleyard, 1987; Hayden, 1997).

All of the communities involved in this study were one way or another communities of place and practice. Most of them were "communities of placelessness", too, being misplaced through voluntary or forced migratory practices, unfavourable city developments, historical injustices and other life circumstances (see Articles 1, 2 and 3). And while these circumstances require ongoing identity work in order to be processed and coped with, this identity work does not have to be a "site of deprivation", but a possibility, instead:

> *For me this space of radical openness is a margin—a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a 'safe' place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance (hooks, 1989, p. 206).*

2.2. PLACE AND SPACE

This section will sum up and formalise the understandings of the concepts of *place* and *space* introduced explicitly or implicitly in all of the five articles. Much like themes of identity and community, narratives of place became increasingly central from one research encounter to another. They "traveled" from the notion of home and belonging to a place, especially, in Articles 1, 2 and 3, towards the more abstract understandings of an artwork as a place/space and representation of places through narrative and artistic practices, in Articles 1, 4 and 5.

The spatial turn

The interplay between the understandings of place and space has been ongoing in interdisciplinary theory and practice for over two decades (e.g. Massey, 1994; Kaye, 2000; Kwon, 2002; Rendell, 2007). This has to do with the *spatial turn* of the early 1980s that coincided with the previously mentioned narrative turn and emphasised the "power relations implicit in landscape" (Guldi, n.d.), particularly in the works of Foucault, Lefebvre and de Certeau. Disciplines such as geography, anthropology, cultural studies, history, art and architectural theory have been drawn into debates on the city, which led to reformulation of "the ways in which space is understood and practised" (Rendell, 2007, p. 12). Lucy Lippard (1998) defines place "from within", putting emphasis on the human perspective, as "a portion of land/town/cityscape seen from the inside, the resonance of a specific location that is known and familiar . . . 'the external world mediated through human subjective experience'" (p. 7). Space is understood as "socially produced" (e.g. Lefebvre, 1991). De Certeau (1984) arrives in his work to the understanding of space as a "practised place" (p. 117), exemplifying further that a street, a place defined by a city planner, becomes transformed into a space by walkers. According to de Certeau (1984), space "occurs" through the practices that, among other attributes, "temporalise" a place, add the dimension of time through which spatiality is established (p. 117). The transformation of places into "socially practised" and "temporalised" spaces was central to my study. It is argued specifically in Articles 2 and 4 that narrative, art-making and documentary practices can mediate such transformations.

Through the course of the above-mentioned interdisciplinary spatial turn, "identity and place became central to discussions of space" (Rendell, 2007, p. 35). Spatiality and politics of space impact strongly on the identity formation of individuals and communities (Massey, 1994, p. 7). For example, as noted by Saskia Sassen (2006), certain urban spaces outside hegemonic city structures may contribute to the citizens's identity work and sense of belonging:

> *...cities contain a diversity of under-used spaces, often characterised more by memory than current meaning. These spaces are part of the interiority of a city, yet lie outside of its organising utility-driven logics and spatial frames. They*

> *are "terrains vagues" that allow many residents to connect to the rapidly transforming cities in which they live… (p. 1)*

The world's rapid change through migratory and globalising processes affected the understandings of placeness and spatiality leading to "intensifying conditions of spatial indifferentiation and departicularization—that is, the increasing instances of locational unspecificity—are seen to exacerbate the sense of alienation and fragmentation in contemporary life" (Kwon, 2002, p. 8). A good example of such spatiality is *digital space,* as defined by Mitra and Watts (2002) as a "discursive space produced by the creative work of people whose spatial locations are ambiguous and provisional" (p. 486). The digital spatiality can be criticised due to its many qualities, such as partial or perceived anonymity and depersonalisation, but also valued due to its vast potential for inclusivity and outreach, empathy building, and fostering lasting relationships and knowledge transfer beyond spatial boundaries in the context of community-based projects, as argued in Article 5.

2.2.1. Place and migrations

Attempts have been made to theorise the new transforming relationships between subject/object and location (e.g. Frampton, 1983; de Certeau, 1984; Jameson, 1990; Lefebvre, 1991; Lippard, 1998). A critical approach to space derives from the assumption that a collective identity, a collective narrative of an urban space, is constructed from a plentitude of personal narratives interwoven together. Doreen Massey (1994) notes about the parallels and likenesses between the nature of personal identities and that of place: “Just as personal identities are argued to be multiple, shifting, possibly unbounded, so… are the identities of place” (p. 7). From the point of view of human geography, Massey (2005) embraces the shift, the temporality and the “loss of meaning” in the old understandings of place. She questions the perceived stability of place-bound identities: “How long do you have to have been here to be local?” (Massey, 2005, p. 149).

This is a great question without an obvious answer, which implicitly touches upon the notions of memory and historical narratives, place, community and identity. Indeed, the forms and circumstances of movement and staying are highly divergent and impact both on an individual and her external life worlds (Ahmed, Castada, Fortier, & Sheller, 2003). Although some scholars question whether the contemporary situations of constant “ungrounded transience, of not being at home (or not having a home), of always traveling through elsewheres” may have a deteriorating effect on the constitution of the self (Kwon, 2002, p. 156). Ravetz and Webb (2009) argue that forms of migrations tend to be “intentionally sought after and prepared for, or unexpectedly encountered” (p. 15). Thus, an individual does to an extent have an agency in her construction of self even when undergoing situations of “ungrounded transience”. Throughout the study, and especially in Articles 2, 3 and 4, the processes of movement and staying were investigated with the research participants in relation to the way these processes impact on the identities of the “movers” and the places they relate to, newly inhabited or those left behind. Specifically, Article 2 addresses the narratives of forced migration that has impacted on the sense of place for many Aboriginal communities, while Article 4 draws conclusions on the fluctuating identities of urbanised Arctic environments that have been shaped through centuries of human movements.

Sara Ahmed and her colleagues (2003) refer to this constellation of movements away and towards places as “uprootings” and “regroundings”. I find a wider term *migratory practices* more fitting to my study contexts. It is used in literature (that is, however, quite limited at this point) to describe a variety of processes that go beyond mere physical or political movements, such as discursive processes between remote communities across space and time, as discussed by Domingo (2011, p. 224). Much as contemporary identity scholarship has been deconstructing the dichotomies of “self-otherness” and beyond, Ahmed and her co-authors (2003) conceptualise migratory processes in order to blur the

distinction between “here” and “there”: “Where or what is ‘there’? Is it necessarily not ‘here’? How long is ‘there’ a significant site of connection? And for whom? How far away is ‘there’?” (p. 4). This study, too, contributed to the understanding of a plurality and simultaneity of places acting in a complex landscape of interrelated spaces: from physical ones in the present, through mental spaces of the past, memories and the imaginary that manifested in the narratives analysed in all the five articles, to digital “timeless” spaces, which are more thoroughly discussed in Article 5.

2.3. ARTISTIC PRACTICE

It was hypothesised from early on in this study that artistic practices have a potential for knowledge generation and empathy building. This concept became one of the generative devices for the theory and practice employed throughout the fieldwork and in the subsequent articles. I will take a more theoretical look at the kinds of practices that were employed during the research encounters and elaborated on in Articles 1, 2 and 4. The artistic processes described there were inspired by the artists' or communities' own life histories, including deep transformative events, but also mundane and daily environments and situations. Moreover, it is repeatedly exemplified in the articles how through those artistic processes, the makers made sense of and coped with their life histories, deep transformative events and daily environments.

This section of the literature review is concerned particularly with the contextualisation of cross-disciplinary artistic practices that are narrative, community or place-oriented, that is, the practices that rely on personal and larger narratives, such as oral history and memory, non-artist contributors, physical places or all of the above as generative devices. Often, in fact, all of these components come together to fuel a critical artistic practice, one inseparable from the others. As noted by Furnée and Horton (2013):

> *…in making the oral histories concrete, the artwork can reconnect these accounts firmly to their place of origin. In the second instance, it is proposed that, in grouping fragments of oral histories, an artwork may establish a vital link to a discourse (p. 35).*

I will start by theoretically situating the notion of *practice* first, as inherent to human life as the notion of identities. Bernstein (1971) perceives all social life of a given individual as essentially practical (p.12). Hannah Arendt (1998) writes about human life, wherein "appearance and disappearance constitute worldly events" that "can be told as a story" (p. 97). According to her, it is this type of life that Aristotle referred to as a type of praxis (Arendt, 1998, p. 97). Adopting neo-Aristotelian and post-Hegelian/post-Marxist understandings of praxis, Stephen Kemmis and his colleagues (2014) argue for a practice that is both an "action that aims for the good of those involved and for the good for humankind" and an "action with moral, social and political consequences—good or bad—for those involved in and affected" (p. 26). Thus, practice is understood as formative and transformative towards those who practise and those who are affected, as well as towards external circumstances (Kemmis et al, 2014). This understanding of practice that takes in consideration multiple interrelated actors and the supposed changes they undergo brings into the picture the dimensions of power and solidarity, or "relatings" as Kemmis and his co-authors (2014, p. 30) dub them, in addition to the more obvious dimensions of "sayings and doings" pointed out earlier by Schatzki (2010, p. 51).

The dimensions of time and space are of the essence to the discussion of practice. Drawing on Schatzki's (2010) understandings of "activity timespace", Kemmis and his colleagues (2014) argue further that practices are not merely situated in a specific spatiotemporal context, but are also shaped by the particular "historically-given contents and conditions pertaining at a particular site at a particular moment" (p. 33).

How does the notion of art practice then fit in the equation of such transformative, relational, spatiotemporal sayings and doings? Ravetz and Webb (2009) note how in the latter half of the twentieth century visual arts, sociological and anthropological theory began to view mundane daily practices (such as walking) as "things of interest in their own right" (p. 6). Thus, in the ontologies of these disciplines practice came to be seen as an "independent principle, one distinguishable from, though connected to, the materiality of the world" (Ravetz & Webb, 2009, p. 7). Sullivan (2006) sees artistic practice as a) creative and critical; b) featuring complex forms of imagination and intellect; and c) making use of processes and procedures that draw from many traditions of inquiry (p. 32). Through these multiple forms of inquiry, art practice, too, came to see the daily and the mundane as a generative device and aesthetic practice (e.g. Lucas, 2008; Edensor, 2010; Pujol, 2018). Tim Edensor (2010) reflects on the artistic practice of walking, namely that of the artist Richard Long, outlining the spatial, temporal, reflexive and identity work components it encompasses. He speculates about the human walker who is located "as one element in a seething landscape, a presence that moves from self-consciousness and self-absorption to an awareness of the presence of other energies and lives" (Edensor, 2010, p. 75).

In the spirit of walking and mobility, I would like to go back to migratory practices as one of the fils rouges in the telos of my study. The understanding of such practices relevant to the study can be conceptualised through cross-disciplinary migrations, namely those between anthropology, art, design and craft, as discussed by Ravetz and Webb (2009). These two authors reflect on a historical transition in the practice of these disciplines that made such migrations possible. In the nineteenth century, the interrelation of human and material worlds were conceptualised through categories such as object, technology and skill. Later, in the twentieth century, these categories became blurred with "more processual perspectives on how non-human and human worlds interrelate" (Ravetz & Webb, 2009, p. 3). And finally the emergence of the notion of "skilled practice" across the four disciplines occurred in the current century (Ravetz & Webb, 2009, p. 3).

As discussed previously in relation to identities and place, cross-disciplinary migratory practices, too, do not adhere to dualities, such as staying or moving, but rather embrace the pluralities "in which makers' and academics' activities are developed and intertwined" (Ravetz & Webb, 2009, p. 4). The same plurality concerns the practitioners themselves and the audiences of their practices, the numerous ways and actors through which the practices are undertaken and their results are "consumed". Susan Ossman (2010) discusses this through an example

of an ethnographer acting as an artist or a craftswoman in the field alongside her research participants and further communicating their co-practiced experiences to an audience. She notes how artistic practice then becomes an empowering "method of working out and working with others in ways that can include those who cannot read, or cannot understand her academic language" (Ossman, 2010, p. 134). In Article 2 and 4, my colleagues and I emphasised the positive impact of such collaborative and peer-to-peer learning processes on building empathy "in the field" as well as rendering tacit skills and understandings explicit.

2.3.1. Critical spatial practice

> Spaces can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice.
>
> —bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics, 1989*

As outlined across the articles, the research encounters of this study occurred in a variety of places: streets and shops, campsites and churches, art studios, universities, galleries, virtual space, "margins", boundaries and crossings. Those were not mere backdrops for social and artistic processes, they were spaces of meaning that provided stimuli for identity work and making processes for everyone involved. The creation of spaces through shared processes is reflected upon in Articles 1, 2 and 4. Thus, in addition to other characteristics, our co-practices were inherently space-bound.

Due to the ongoing relationship between the social and the spatial (e.g. Soja, 1989; Lefebvre, 1991; Rendell, 2007; Pinder, 2008), the two can be approached simultaneously and one through the other. The social can be tackled through spatial practices. Space in participatory artistic contexts connects, enables and provides a platform for encounters, co-processes, knowledge transfer, and communication of meanings. It shapes identities and clashes them one against the other, puts actors and parties uncomfortably close to each other, or, in contrast, significantly far apart, creating a completely different climate and enabling different types of relationships. Communities become communities because of the unifying medium of common space. Even when a community does not share or belong to a permanent physical environment, they can do so through digital spaces that allow for knowledge exchange and transfer, or through temporary spaces and contexts that bring them together in order to address their common practices, interests or thinking. In the words of Chantal Mouffe (2005), space does not have to refer to a geographical location, it is rather an enabler, "a way to establish a form of communication among people" (p. 164).

Much like the practices of walking and dwelling, artistic processes, too, practise places, and in doing so "produce critical spaces" (Rendell, 2007, p. 38). Space, thus, can be understood as a place that at a moment in time and through the processes and practices it accommodates, acquires fluctuating identities and meanings.

Artistic spatial practices can offer the means, on formal and informal levels, to explore participation, criticality and engagement in micro-neighbourhood (e.g. Viña, 2013) and larger city scales (e.g. Costa & Lopes, 2013). Especially when performed in a disruptive manner, as interventions, such practices can engage with communities directly or indirectly "facilitating creative conversations, framing unexpected questions, and navigating the uncomfortable" (LaBarre, 2016). In this study, I only acknowledge public art as a form of spatial practice, but take a

stronger interest in more interventionist, transformative and transcendent practices. Although due to the ever-changing conceptualisations of spatiality and "siteness" in artistic practice, the understanding of public art itself is bound to transform. Miwon Kwon (2002), for instance, discusses how new genre public artists value temporality over permanence in their artwork created together with communities and audiences, producing events or programs situated in public space, rather than objects of art (p. 6). Suzanne Lacy (1994) wrote this about the deconstruction of the formality of the institution of public art in the 1990s and reinvention of the relationships it encompasses: "what exists in the space between the words public and art is an unknown relationship between artist and audience, a relationship that may itself be the artwork" (p. 20). These curatorial matters were touched upon in Articles 4 and 5 when talking about representation of the participants' artworks in gallery and digital space. The objective held for the display of art and stories was to create intimate timespaces of viewership where the audience would experience the encounters and undergo identity work of their own.

A spatial turn occurred in artistic thought and practice, alongside other disciplines. Rosalyn Deutsche (1996) refers to the spatial tactics that came to be employed in postmodern art, namely site-specificity and critiques of representation, in order to "reveal the social relations that constitute both aesthetic and urban spaces" (p. xvii). Sassen (2006) writes about the role of creative practices in public urban realm, arguing for "public-making work that can produce disruptive narratives, and make legible the local and the silenced" (p. 6). There is a wide scope of art and design activist disciplines that work on the intersection of social, (public) space and (counter-)narrative practices through a fusion of aesthetic and disruptive methods, among which are design activism (Thorpe, 2008; Fuad-Luke, 2009; Markussen, 2011), artivism (art+activism) (Sandoval & Latorre, 2008; Mekdjian, 2017), cultural activism (Lähdesmäki, 2011; Jurkiewicz, 2016). These disciplines are practically occupied with the Lefebvrian (1991) "social production" of spaces through a variety of arts-based and design methods. While their specific methodologies may differ as well as the degrees of the change they aim to achieve, the general principle and goals of such practices seem to overlap. For example, this statement by Thomas Markussen (2011) about design activism would still be valid if the term was substituted by another of the above-mentioned practices that are all:

> *…about introducing heterogeneous material objects and artefacts into the urban field of perception. In their direct intervention into urban space they invite active engagement, interaction or simply offer new ways of inhabiting urban space. In so doing, design activism alters the conditions for the urban experience. (p. 4)*

In her book *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (2007), Jane Rendell introduces the term *critical spatial practice* that aims to describe work that

"transgresses the limits of art and architecture and engages with both the social and the aesthetic, the public and the private" (p. 40). This may be a fitting umbrella term for the fields of practice outlined above, taking on a holistic, inclusive and fluid approach to interaction with space. Such an approach was proposed by Nikolaus Hirsch and Markus Miessen (2012) who understand spatial practice as based "on a complex variety of contributors to space" (p.2). They continue: "Space is a condition. A condition that is not stable" (Hirsch & Miessen, 2012, p. 2). Apart from being generative, provoking or stimulating change, in other words acting outwards, critical spatial practices bear generative, reflexive and ethical value for the practitioner herself, as they may be used by her as "a means of rethinking one's modes of practice, operation, and codes of conduct" (Hirsch & Miessen, 2012, p. 2). Several occasions of an artwork becoming a space by being located in a place of meaning are referred to in the articles. Through such re-spatialisation of their work, the makers have an opportunity to take a step back and reflect on their practices and the stories behind them. In Article 1 (the case study *Shop around the corner*) this idea is exemplified by the "memory tour" through the artworks located in public places that provided space for reflection for the participants, the audiences, and myself as an artist-researcher. In Article 2, an example of building a collaborative art installation in the very space the artworks were created is given. Through this process, it is concluded, further understandings between the participants and the researchers were derived.

The spatial turn in the arts concluded in itself a *site-specific turn* which involved a number of historical and cultural preconditions that fit, however, into the overall development of postmodernist thought and "decolonisation" of the arts with their classical forms and media and institutional settings, such as studios, museums and gallery spaces (e.g. Deutsche, 1996; Kaye, 2000; Kwon, 2002). The processes of disruption of the artwork's autonomy and relocation of its meanings from within, outwards, into its context, and further into the embodied experiences of and interactions with the viewer (Kaye, 2000; Kwon, 2002; Furnée & Horton, 2013), determined "art's new attachment to the actuality of the site" (Kwon, 2002, p.12). Although this turn is attributed by many authors to the 1960s-1970s, Kwon (2002) warns about the contemporary reinventions and (mis)conceptions of site-specificity.

Importantly, the site of a site-specific artwork is not a constant or strictly physical entity, it is co-generated through the given physical, temporal, social and other contextual conditions, the artwork's own impact on it and the further interactions with audiences, and, thus, calls for "the critical, not only physical presence of the viewer" (Furnée & Horton, 2013, p. 39). Through this understanding of a site a question about digitally-placed or reproduced artwork comes into the discussion somewhat naturally. How must we classify a site-specific artwork experience that is accurately recreated in a virtual space, be it an online map, an iDoc (e.g. Green, Bowen, Hook, & Wright, 2017) or even more immersive forms of new media, such as VR-spaces (e.g. Morie, 2007)? How do we categorise a site-specific artwork that is stumbled upon during a Google Street

View virtual walk? From the perspectives of early site-specificity of the late 1960s and early 1970s, an art object or event must be “experienced in the here and now through the bodily presence of each viewing subject, in a sensory immediacy of spatial extension and temporal duration” (Kwon, 2002, p. 11). This follows Nick Kaye’s conviction that to move the site-specific work is “to *re-place* it, to make it something else” (Kaye, 2000, p. 2). According to the artist Renzo Martens (2012), however, the space of more significant action, or impact, is not always the one where a site-specific practice occurs—sometimes what matters is where the practice is “consumed”, not the site of production, but “the sites of their public reception” (p.87). This idea partly fuelled the objective of connectivity between the communities and recreation of the research encounters elsewhere in digital, visual and spatial forms.

Throughout her work, Kwon (2002), problematises contemporary site-specificities that are inevitably transformed and reinterpreted alongside the digital, mobile, globalised and homogenised spaces of late capitalism. She attempts to imagine a new kind of “place-bound identity” and a new relationship between art and place:

> *Countering both the nostalgic desire for a retrieval of rooted, place-bound identities on the one hand, and the antinostalgic embrace of a nomadic fluidity of subjectivity, identity, and spatiality on the other, this book concludes with a theorization of the “wrong place,” a speculative and heuristic concept for imagining a new model of belonging-in-transience (Kwon, 2002, p. 8).*

I noted previously the development of artistic and academic interest towards the practice of walking as a form of movement and inquiry (e.g. Ingold & Vergunst, 2008; Markussen, 2011). When describing my own process of inquiry, I semi-consciously always include walking as the very first stage of interaction with the researched place, as discussed in Article 1. It puts an emphasis on mapping as a form of spatial exploration, documentation and knowing. Urban mappings are largely used in artistic and multi-disciplinary activist practices both in contemplative and political ways (e.g. Providência & Moniz, 2012; Montanari & Frattura, 2013). As noted by Hirsch and Miessen (2012), critical spatial practices may spread beyond physical intervention with spaces:

> *Critical spatial practice thinks “space” without the necessity to, by default, intervene in it physically; instead, it aims to sensitize, develop and foster a framework for considering contemporary forms of spatial production and spatiality (p. 5).*

Gilles Tiberghien understands a map as “based on an irreducible distance to its referent” and contemporary artists as appropriators of mapping practices in order “to bridge this gap but to circulate within it” (as cited in Mekdjian, 2017). Mapping allows for reinventing, reimagining of a place, turning it into multiple

possible spaces, as opposed to the one (mainstream) way it "is supposed to be". This approach is referred to as artivist, critical or counter-mapping. It aims at producing "alternative visual narratives of urban spaces" (Mekdjian, 2017, p. 3) and is believed to derive from the Deleuzian (1988) notion of "new cartography" that refuses to represent the existing geography as is.

Whether we talk about activist/artivist/critical cartographical approaches that generate "situations whose common feature is subversion, however transient, of the established [urban] order" (Mekdjian, 2017, p. 9) or more contemplative and learning-oriented aesthetic cartography (e.g. O'Rourke, 2013; Miles & Libersat, 2016; Letsiou, 2017), mapping is conceptualised as an imaginative spatial artistic tool that varies in methods and applications and explores place and space alongside their social component, while embracing migratory practices and transience. Whether implemented by an artist herself in order to document a living inquiry and her reflexive relationship with a place, familiar or new (e.g. Letsiou, 2017), or created by community members, not necessarily artists, as an aiding instrument of identity work, in order to make sense of their place-bound identities (e.g. Mekdjian, 2017), maps facilitate the creation of a common ground between the spatiotemporal and the social, the material and the imaginary, an individual and a group, artistic and critical practices. The notion of mapping, both in a figurative and literal sense, has been present throughout the case studies and articles. For instance, it is argued in Article 2 that narrating one's life story can function as a way to map it out, trace back the route of becoming from the present moment through important life events. Collective and individual artistic tools used in the case study *Margin to margin* aided such processes of sense-making through mapping. The collective felting (Articles 2 and 4) allowed for recreation of a kind of "collective landscape" of stories and identities present in the timespace of the encounter. And as cited in Article 4, one of the participants literally refers to her life as a map while explaining the life story painting she created.

In conclusion of this literature review chapter, a formulation of the research gap is due. Firstly, from the discussion of collective identities and the ways of seeing communities, and putting this discussion in the perspective of this specific study, it becomes clear that *community of place* may be a somewhat simplified category that is not always applicable, especially when working with "in-between" communities. It will become obvious from the participants' narratives that place-bound identities in the said communities are still strong, even if the place is removed or otherwise contested, for example, through forced migration. From this premise, *rethinking placeness in community-based context* would be one of the gaps to bridge.

The second consideration relates to the understanding of narrative identity and its impact on identity work of individuals and communities. Since place becomes not just a backdrop, but an important actor in arts-based and narrative-based community projects, it brings me to question whether a *place may undergo narrative identity processes*, too, and how identity work is carried out in that case.

Thirdly, this literature review brought up a number of complex, at times conflicting, questions regarding identities, narratives, place and artistic practice. A *common ground for narrative, spatial and arts-based processes with communities* may need to be clarified or proposed in order to accommodate all of the said complexities. This is especially challenging, since the study deals with six global communities, each with additional complexities of its own.

This literature review chapter introduced the theories on identities, including such relevant categories as narrative identity, identity work, the relationship between individual and collective identities, and a typology of communities. The discussion of place and space bridged the identity theories and artistic practice, focusing further on critical spatial practice. These themes will continue as fils rouges throughout the following chapters on methodology and process and all the way to the findings and conclusion.

3. METHODOLOGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

The choice of methodology for this study was informed by the community-based nature of its research encounters, the kind of research questions that were posed and the hypotheses that were made. In addition to that reasoning, this choice was also largely shaped by my previous and ongoing professional and personal experiences and engagements, the skills I possess and employ in my work and the system of beliefs and values I adhere to. In other words, although the process was not easy or straight-forward, I tailored my methodology in order to ensure "ways of working that fit with who I am" (Etherington, 2004, p.71). The ontological and epistemological premises of this research have already been elaborated upon in Section 1.1. *Research focus and context*. Among other convictions that prompted the following methodological design, I recognise: a) the employment of the self as a helpful research tool; b) the importance of considering both the personal and cultural backgrounds of researchers and research participants and comparing one against the other; and c) the generative potential of narrative and artistic practices, both individual and collective.

Many of these principles draw on epistemologies of feminist research, where, as summarised by Kimpson (2005), "subjectivity and personal experience are central principles" and the use of "methods that are not oppressive" is key (p. 74). Although feminist scholarship has not been principal or the only philosophical basis for this research, it strongly influenced my thinking and practice, especially during the final stage of the fieldwork and the reflections that followed.

In the next sections the rationale behind the use of this specific set of methods will be explained through the research design of the study. Reflexive research will be discussed alongside the self of the researcher and the way she interacts and empathises with the selves of the research participants. The section dedicated to arts-based research will reveal the role of artistic practices employed through the course of this study. Thereafter, research strategies and ethical considerations will be outlined. The second section of the chapter will address specific data collection methods, ethnographic observation, narrative inquiry and documentation, and conclude by introducing narrative analysis as the key analytical tool for the collected data.

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodologically, this research bases itself in a curious, bold and vulnerable place in the intersection of two overarching approaches, *arts-based research* (ABR) (McNiff, 1998; Barone & Eisner, 2011; Leavy, 2015; Leavy, 2017a; Leavy, 2017b) and *reflexive research* (Parker, 1994; Etherington, 2004; Mantzoukas, 2005; Herland, 2017). Both approaches are currently emerging and developing and have to actively stand their ground in the scope of more established qualitative methodologies through personal, subjective and practice-based ways of knowing. Both fit in and converse with the key themes this research is occupied with: identities, narrative, community, place and artistic practice. The relationship between the methods is represented in Figure 5 and becomes apparent through practical examples as the chapter unravels.

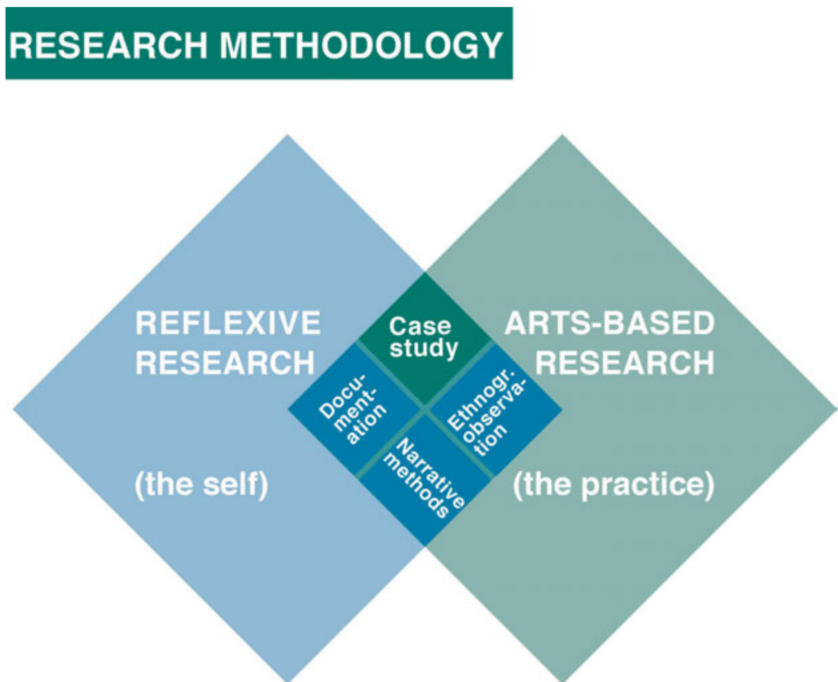

Figure 5. Visualisation of research methods.

The two overarching methodological approaches provide two different ways to address research process and data. ABR uses artistic practice both as the inquiry and the data source (Leavy, 2017b, p. 9), while reflexive research relies on human

interaction as the source of data and employs the self of the researcher as a lens. They are represented by two large overlapping diamonds. In the intersection of the diamonds the shared research strategy, *Case study*, and the data collection and analysis methods are introduced as smaller diamonds. The diamonds of *Ethnographic observation* and *Documentation* refer to data collection methods. The diamond of *Narrative methods* stands both for narrative/dialogic data collection methods of *narrative inquiry* and for the consequent *narrative analysis* the data underwent. The narrative methods are discussed separately in this chapter, as narrative inquiry on the stage of data collection in Section 3.2.2., and as narrative analysis of the data in Section 3.2.4.

Leavy (2017b) identifies five different approaches to research design: *quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based* and *community-based participatory*. Research design in this study is based on the principles of two of these approaches: ABR and community-based participatory research (CBPR). Although one of its key premises involves forming “research partnerships with nonacademic stakeholders” (Leavy, 2017b, p. 224) typical of CBPR, this research design is not necessarily problem-driven, but rather aims to explore certain themes together with the said stakeholders through arts-based methods and using artistic and narrative practices as a basis for inquiry (Leavy, 2017b, p. 191). This research design accounts for ABR practice being a “generative and emergent process, open to the unexpected”, as described by Leavy (2017b, p. 191). Thus, when planning the stages of the study, especially the fieldwork, it has been important to accommodate contingencies of time, place and human factor. This study was designed to remain flexible towards its own process and inclusive of all of the involved stakeholders and perspectives they bear.

3.1.1. Arts-based research

> Arts-based approaches are not an either-or proposition to traditional research paradigms. We do no service to ourselves as arts-based researchers to define ourselves in opposition to traditional practices. Rather, the literary and visual arts offer ways to stretch our capacities for creativity and knowing…
>
> —Melisa Cahnmann, *The Craft, Practice, and Possibility of Poetry in Educational Research, 2003*

In my research and life I value the understanding of contexts. I believe that such understanding allows me to situate myself and those I encounter in the wider world and enables more meaningful relationships. This was a part of my subjective motivation for adhering to ABR, as it "can be particularly useful in exploring, describing, or explaining (theorizing about) the connections between our individual lives and the larger contexts in which we live" (Leavy, 2017a, p.9). Ingold (2018), however, comments on the contemporary researchers' obsession with putting everything and everyone into their historical, cultural and social contexts, thus justifying the current situation through its contextualisation in an almost too simplistic manner. Instead, he urges researchers to bring their research focus and attention back to the present. Art, he supposes, does possess the power to not explain or contextualise all that we see or encounter, but "attend to it" (Ingold, 2018). Thus, ABR provides a kind of compromise between over-contextualisation and the presence with the "subject", focusing on the current moment through the processes of art-making and narrating. This provided an analytical angle for the data in all of the five articles of this dissertation. The theory behind arts-based approach was introduced in Chapter 1. Hereafter, I will elaborate on its concrete application in my study and the articles.

As an arts-based researcher I aimed to develop knowledge and ways for its dissemination that contribute to "the development of practices and skills of people in similar but not identical contexts" and my own further practices and skills (Griffiths, 2010, p. 181). The artistic objective held for each encounter with individuals and communities of place and practice in this study was to create temporary and, further on, more lasting digital spaces of empathy, dialogue, knowledge generation and practice exchange through narrative and arts-based methods. My colleagues and I aimed for those spaces to be dynamic, alive, polyvocal and inclusive. This comes from the ambition to act beyond the familiar realms of academic and gallery spaces, but rather to share the complexity of the research encounters as experienced by multiple actors, thus including their varied perspectives, identities, roles and understandings. This objective translated into the ongoing recreation of spaces of research encounters in "off-site" public spaces (see Article 1 and 3), exhibition spaces (Article 2 and 4) and digital spaces as mentioned in Articles 2 and 4, but especially in Article 5.

The ethical consideration for this practice was to document and represent the participants and their stories as they chose to represent themselves, narratively and artistically. This issue is regarded in detail in Article 5, where it is explained that although we as researchers were treating this matter with care on our side, the participants themselves took agency and responsibility towards the narratives they communicated, which directed “scenarios of personal story sharing”. As noted by Ossman (2010), art is akin to good ethical ethnographic writing, as it allows for an overcoming of the binary comparison between "their" and "our" realities and “to find ways to explore how we all move through the world differently together” (p. 134).

There was a duality to the narrative arts-based processes and outcomes throughout the fieldwork in this study. In two different scenarios artist-researchers would a) create space for the research participants to make art pieces based on their narratives and stories, or b) create art pieces based on the research participants’ narratives and stories. The former was a central process in the case study *Margin to margin*, as discussed in Articles 2, 4 and 5, and only partly in the case study *Shop around the corner* (Article 1), while the latter occurred throughout all of the cases resulting in transcendent interventions in public space (Articles 1 and 3), intimate physical artworks and representation of the projects in digital or exhibition spaces (Articles 2, 4 and 5), reimagining and reassembling both the stories and the art. In both scenarios learning processes transpired through the transfer of both skill and knowledge, spanning from peer-to-peer learning discussed, for example, in Article 2 to reflexive learning about the self and one’s own artistic practice as exemplified through many participants’ stories in Article 4.

The research participants brought in and practised their skills of traditional craft, visual and media arts, while also observing and learning each other’s methods and techniques through collaborative art-making or one on one. As an artist, I had the opportunity to apply and develop my still and moving image practice. The attention to different kinds of details and processes than I am used to equipped me with new skills in this area. I write more about my documentary practice in Section 3.2.3. *Documentation*. I had a chance to develop my spatial design practice, too, but through this experience my perception of space and place expanded from the habitual materiality towards the intangible and the marginal placeness, or even placelessness, and my approach to design took a form of curatorial and mediating practices that are elaborated on in Chapter 4.

3.1.2. Reflexive research

> …reflexivity occurs in the creative space between objectivity and subjectivity, allowing something unique and dynamic to unfold.
>
> —Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher, 2004*

Even prior to the beginning of this study, my fellow "doers" and I shared an artistic objective to work with communities in collaborative and empathic ways, to learn their stories and, through arts-based methods, find ways to give something back to them with an added meaning or value. The arts-based component of that ambition further found its methodological ground in ABR. The reciprocal and empathic objectives were achieved through reflexive research, as was the objective to include the self of the artist-researcher as a part of inquiry. Although reflexive research methods have not been named explicitly in the articles due to the multiple authors involved in the writing, the setup of the fieldwork always implied placement of the artist-researchers, my colleagues and myself, in the middle of the encounters and documenting our own data alongside that of the participants, be it our life histories, the art-making processes we implemented or learnt from the participants, or the reflexive responses the experiences evoked in us. This "researcher as participant" setup is explained more explicitly in Articles 2 and 4. Upon looking back at the fieldwork, it became possible to conceptualise one of the overarching research approaches of the study as reflexive research.

Researcher's quality of reflexivity was discussed previously in the introduction chapter. Hereafter, I outline possible pitfalls, turned advantages, of reflexive research and my specific study. The reflexive approach to research involves, among other aspects, acknowledgement of researcher's bias in the study. Mantzoukas (2005) proposes that such bias is inevitable and welcome, and that overlooking it leads to negation of "the basic argument and thesis of the non-positivistic paradigm and abrogate the process and benefits of reflection and reflexivity" (p. 291). Etherington (2004) notes how this bias tends to be a two-way street, present in the narratives and thinking of both the researcher and her research participants, and how acknowledging it may feed conversations in meaningful ways (p. 43). She refers to her research participant, Sue, who acknowledged such bias in their mutual dialogic process:

> *I am convinced that what I say to you now is very much influenced by who I think you are at this moment in time, and what you might want to hear from me. I'm not trying to please you hugely, but I'm making sure that my conversation will reach you… (Etherington, 2004, p. 43)*

In my study, even prior to getting to know them, I could empathise with or relate to most of the participating communities and groups I interacted with, being a woman, an artist, a researcher, a Russian, a migrant. And so could they. This

meant that we could make assumptions or educated guesses about each other's experiences and views on certain themes. These assumptions could have, consciously or subconsciously, led us to choose our words accordingly or, in other situations, to listen past some parts of the other's story due to its seeming familiarity. Although this may seem like a setback for researcher objectivity if not paid attention to, I argue that during the research encounters in Murmansk and Rovaniemi analysed in Article 4 it is precisely this closeness to and familiarity with both contexts on my part that allowed for more insightful engagements and ethical comparative analysis of the data.

In yet other situations, during dialogic processes where two or more of the involved parties had to respond to what the others had previously shared, their emotional, or empathic responses could not be predetermined or directed, yet needed to be accounted for and navigated by me and my colleagues. Again, Article 4 accounts for and cites some of the Rovaniemi participants' frustrations with the themes of identities and margin, as well as with some art-making practices they took part in, which reflects the complex identity processes these themes evoke in the narrators. The scholars who practice reflexive research regard this emotional complexity as a vantage point, especially when it is represented with care: "Overlooking complex feelings that could contribute to essential knowledge about discourses made personally 'active' might present readers with an incomplete picture" (Herland, 2017, p. 14).

Being able to empathise with research participants affected my research encounters on at least three levels: dialogic, documentary and representational. That is to say, that empathic narrative exchanges led to certain ways I documented and further communicated the encounters to audiences, which, in turn, led to new cycles of narrative exchange. I acknowledge this here as a part of an inevitable bias, but also as a reflection on my own research and artistic practices that were fuelled through these cycles of empathy. Through this ongoing empathic reflection, I argue, I had a more holistic understanding of the data and a grasp of "the distinction between communicable knowledge (informative) and kinds of knowledge only learned through tacit experience (formative)" (Mossière, 2007, p. 10). Transferability limitations on this study due to its methodological choices must be acknowledged, as reflexive research and ethnographic methods are inevitably influenced by the self of the researcher.

The three lenses

Leavy (2017a) points out the importance of establishing the "context of discovery" from a reflexive point of view, so to "account for our own role in the research process" (p. 48). As clarified by Etherington (2004) such context indicates not only "what we have discovered, but how we have discovered it" (p. 32). I have observed my own practice of discovery in the long term, throughout all of the fieldwork encounters and while writing the articles. Indeed, often times one needs to look long and closely in order to understand even her own ways of being and doing, not to mention those of others. I came to the realisation that the

context, or the “how”, of the discovery in this research relies on three figurative lenses, three ways of looking at the environments and encounters:

a) the reflexive lens, from the position of the experiences of the researcher’s self;
b) the method of ethnographic observation, from the worldview point of the research participants;
c) the actual camera lens, as an artist and a researcher.

This “system of lenses” is somewhat comparable to Brookfield’s (1995) four-lens approach to reflective teaching, especially the first two ways of looking he refers to, where a teacher views the process through a “self-lens” and through the lens or point of view of her student. Brookfield’s (1995) third and fourth lenses are that of the teacher’s colleagues/peers and that of theoretical literature (p. xvii). In my study, the “colleagues’ lens” would be merged with that of the participants, as we all became research participants in the field situations. The lens of theoretical literature is implicit in this practice-based method of looking.

Each of the layers adds criticality to the researcher’s gaze and opens up new facets to the research encounter and data. I approach the process of looking from the position of a documentary artist, mediator and a participant myself, sharing the narratives and doing conscious and subconscious identity work alongside the other participants.

3.1.3. Research strategies

The *ethnographic approach*, or rather *arts-based ethnographies*, as referred to by Lydia Degarrod (2013), was an important part of this research design. It was justified, among other rationales, by epistemological and ontological premises of the study where the knowledge generation bases itself on tacit understandings of the themes by multiple actors through their personal experiences. The data collection stages of the study were set up fully in the field with the researcher's immersion for a period of time in the participants' worlds, be it their shared public space, workplace, camp, art studio or university campus. Another reason in favour of using an arts-based ethnographic setup lies in the study's original interest in and focus on groups and audiences beyond academia. The detailed account of artefacts collected through such an ethnographic approach allowed for an expansion beyond merely text-based data to "include those elements and textures found in the experience of fieldwork that defy translation into written texts […] as a way of bringing ethnographies to communities outside the academic world" (Degarrod, 2013, p. 404).

The *case study* appeared to be a logical research strategy to follow in order to collect data. Firstly, it responds to the objective of investigating a "contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (Yin, 2009, p. 18), namely identity work carried out by individuals, communities and places and the way arts-based and narrative practices impact on it. The phenomenon, then, needs to be regarded as closely linked to its contextual conditions (Yin, 2009, p. 18), such as time, space, history and socio-cultural aspects. Additionally, the quality of case study strategy, resorting to multiple evidence sources and methods of evidence collection for objectivity and reliability, is referred to by Robert Yin (2009) as a challenge that calls for the researcher's "methodological versatility" (p. 124). For me, in fact, such versatility was a welcome and preferred way to collect and subsequently process data through audiovisual and textual documentation, interviews, participant and context observation and by acquiring physical artefacts, as it allowed for multiple shareable outcomes, including development of my own artistic practice. Three cases were designed (the third one constituted by four sub-cases) and respective fieldwork took place in 2014 for the first case and over the course of 2016 for the remaining two. The collected evidence was analysed through the methods discussed further in Section 3.2. *Data collection and analysis*, but the overall approach to analysis falls under the *logic model* principle discussed by Yin (2009) where "a complex chain of events over an extended period of time" is deliberately stipulated in order to identify cause-effect-cause-effect patterns (p. 149). In practice such patterns were identified throughout the case studies and replicated in the final sub-cases with a purpose of testing the findings. A framework for reflexive arts-based research with communities that resulted from this overall case study analysis is presented in Section 5.1.

3.1.4. Ethical considerations and inclusion

The community-based participatory approach to research design discussed in the beginning of this section calls for thorough planning of ethical procedures and their embedding in all of the research stages. Leavy (2017b) highlights the importance of bearing in mind the issues of inequality, social justice, the voices and perspectives that shape the research, as well as the real-world applications thereof (p. 228). On the practical level this implies planning a number of procedures ahead, explaining the nature of research activities to the research participants and signing consent forms with each of them. In the third stage of the fieldwork, for the case study *Margin to margin*, acquiring ethical clearance for working with Indigenous communities and individuals was essential. In Australia, my colleagues sought ethics approval from the Aboriginal Health Research Ethics Committee. In Finland, this clearance was acquired from the University of Lapland Research Ethics Committee.

The ethical framework for the study and further avenues for research were formulated in Article 5 relying on the examples from the third fieldwork. In this section, I will elaborate on specific ethical considerations taken throughout the study and the notion of inclusion applied in marginal contexts.

Even if during the preparatory stages the ethical issues are carefully dealt with, Leavy (2017b) warns against the clash of *procedural ethics* with *situational* and *relational ethics* that may occur and lead to "messiness of informed consent in practice" (p. 36). Situational ethics can be understood as "ethics in practice", while relational ethics imply "ethics of care" (Ellis, 2007, p. 4.). This means that the "messiness" of the process and that of interpersonal relationships between the researcher, her research participants and other stakeholders require ongoing checking-up with all of the involved parties in order to establish whether their perceptions and consent have changed, calling for further adjustments (Leavy, 2017b, p. 37).

In relation to ethical research procedures the notion of the *transformative paradigm*, previously called the *emancipatory paradigm*, was introduced by Donna Mertens (2008) in order to encourage frameworks where those commonly "on the margins" become active participants or partners during all of the research stages. The urgency of implementation of such frameworks has been advocated by thinkers and doers of critical theory, feminist theory, participatory, inclusive, and culturally responsive approaches (e.g. Oliver, 1997; Danieli & Woodhams, 2005; Mertens, 2008). Although situating a study within the transformative paradigm was and is particularly relevant when working with marginalised groups or those "confronting structural inequalities and exclusion" (Leavy, 2017b, p. 234), it has become a common paradigm to follow in many types of qualitative studies and participatory projects.

I will give a specific example of an adjustment that had to be made during a fieldwork event of this study, namely, during the six-day workshop with Aboriginal women groups in the camp at Fowlers Bay, South Australia, in October 2016.

Getting to know people and winning mutual trust takes time and reciprocal effort. The first meeting with the Aboriginal research participants had a touch of tension in it and resulted in some collateral damage within our research team. Despite prior discussions regarding who would be a part of the team, our principal video documentalist was kindly asked by the participants to stay away from all the main activities on the account of being a man. The Anangu people, members of several central Australian Aboriginal groups, follow closely the rules of "women business" (Rey, 2016) separating their activities based on gender. Men are discouraged from joining in with traditional crafts and sharing stories and dreams. This was a setback for our team spirit and data collection process, as I had to take on the role of video documentalist fully in addition to proceeding with research and management tasks. Informed by the literature and awareness of Aboriginal customs, this possibility had been hypothesised about before entering the field and our team had agreed to be flexible in its event. Our male colleague took the community's request with respect and went on capturing instead the unfamiliar landscapes of the South Australian outback, which further provided a spatial and temporal context to the edited video pieces. Despite the obvious discomfort on our end, this was a crucial adjustment to make in order to provide agency to the research participants, to understand the research context in greater detail and to ensure implementation of the approach of what I termed *radical inclusion* at that stage of fieldwork.

Radical inclusion is a term I came up with in order to encompass the key values of my research design and signify the way it is situated within the transformative paradigm. The wording and the sentiment behind it were inspired by bell hooks' essay *Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness* where she argues for finding value and strength while accounting for and building on top of one's experiences, both empowering and traumatic, in their entirety. Hooks (1989) writes:

> *Those of us who live, who 'make it': passionately holding on to aspects of that 'downhome' life we do not intend to lose while simultaneously seeking new knowledge and experience, invent spaces of radical openness. Without such spaces we would not survive. Our living depends on our ability to conceptualize alternatives, often improvised. Theorizing about this experience aesthetically, critically is an agenda for radical cultural practice. (p. 206)*

Being aware of the multiple terms used for naming the models of practice carried out on an equal footing or common ground, I did not find, however, one that fits completely and resorted to formulating my own. In particular, I chose not to use the terms *bottom up* (e.g. Sabatier, 1986) or *grassroots* practices (e.g. Mulwa, 1988), as those imply a juxtaposition of "up" and "down", a direction of power, a reversed hierarchy, which is something I avoided in my research design. I understand radical inclusion as a research design and a model of practice with research participants that aims to create a space and time for an open dialogue

through the multiplicity of voices and perspectives. It accounts for and is shaped through the unexpected and the potential situations of conflict. The research events are not dictated by the researchers, but unravel and shape themselves according to multiple variables. Thus, even an act of exclusion from the participants' side, like the one described above, has to be taken into the equation of radical inclusion and shape the further happenings accordingly. I believe that such approach allows for a "re-centring" of certain power structures often present in marginal contexts.

This reflexive approach is based on the practice referred to by Harding (1993) as *strong objectivity*, meaning the potential of multiple subjectivities to construct objective knowledge, that comes from a constructivist worldview which involves "actively acknowledging and accounting for one's biases, values and attitudes" (Leavy, 2017b, p. 38). The approach of radical inclusion also follows the values introduced by Soja (1996) in his theory of Thirdspace, namely critical spatial awareness maintained by different actors regulated through the balance of three dimensions: social, spatial and temporal in relation to history. This theory implies a variety of dynamic scenarios "radically open to additional otherness, to a continuing expansion of spatial knowledge" (Soja, 1996, p. 61). Soja (1996) based his theory on the spatio-geographic theories, namely Lefebvre's (1991) spatial trialectics and Foucault's (1994) heterotopia, combined with postcolonial thinking with the aim of moving away from dualities by introducing a third (fourth, fifth an infinity of) entity. My research design of radical inclusion, thus, was implemented by avoiding direct binaries, such as researcher and research participant, margin and centre, instead embracing the multiple meanings behind the discussed themes, plural roles taken on by each party and the identities they chose to narrate. In some research situations the participants themselves would insist on deconstruction of the said binaries in our shared dialogic processes, as exemplified through some quotes in Article 4. In fact, embracing the said plurality might be the only way to make sense of a study carried out in the context of six global communities.

Language

A note on language is due in order to better situate the involved communities and our interaction. Hooks (1989) says that language is "a place of struggle" (p. 203). She further elaborates that we are "wedded in language, have our being in words" (hooks, 1989, p. 204), yet we are often led by circumstances to choose, hide or change our words from context to context. Language has to do directly with identity work of individuals and groups, involving references or indicators of belonging (e.g. Joseph, 2013; Miller, Morgan, & Medina, 2017). And undoubtedly language relates to storytelling and narratives (e.g. Peck, 1989; Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lowrance, 2004). The linguistic landscape of this study did provide occasions for minor struggles due to its complexity.

The English language has obviously served as a common ground between my colleagues and myself, our research participants and our audiences. I do use

English every day in both formal and informal communication, but the reality of this use is a slightly distorted one. It is a mutating, ever-changing, alive "Eurenglish", as labeled by Collins (2013) in her *The New Yorker* piece, which we speak with our peers from elsewhere and in our international households, with occasional circumstantial shifts and slips towards other languages that are referred to in linguistics as code-switching (e.g. Poplack & Sankoff, 1984; Muysken, 1995). This way of speaking and narrating fits, of course, very well in the general postmodern paradigm of thought, communication and media, with its ubiquitous pluralism and "implosion of borders" (Rotaru, Nitulescu & Rudolf, 2010, p. 329). Thus, not being a native speaker of English in all of my research contexts renders me vulnerable and insecure to an extent. Some of the research participants were English native speakers or bilingual from early childhood, for example, those in Edinburgh in the UK, Cork in Ireland, and Port Augusta in Australia. On some occasions the participants would have to repeat what they had just said, as some accents or terminologies were unfamiliar to me. And vice versa, on a personal level I sometimes felt self-conscious about my pronunciation and vocabulary. My concern was initially whether this could create unease for the participants in some of the field situations, but as the familiarisation proceeded, all of the involved parties would get more comfortable with their words.

The use of English may also be considered problematic in certain sensitive contexts, such as with Aboriginal communities. The group of Aboriginal female artists who took part in this study (in the case study *Margin to margin*, Article 2) was mixed in age and geography, coming from different parts of South Australia and bearing the heritage of different peoples. The four main groups and languages present were: *Pitjantjatjara, Kokatha, Mirning* and *Wirangu*. The elders of the groups mainly spoke the Aboriginal tongues and relied on their younger relatives for translation, while the younger women would be fluent in both languages (or several, as usually they would speak more than one of the native languages). Some teenage girls who were studying in boarding schools in bigger cities would have English as their first language and partly understand the Aboriginal languages. During some of the encounters, I had to rely on translators. Interpretations of stories and practices by non-Aboriginal participants and mediators were also made available to my colleagues and me, but our preferred method was to document first-hand narratives that the participants themselves provided.

During the final field encounter of case *Margin to margin*, I had to serve as a "key" to a community, both linguistically and culturally. This encounter is elaborated on in Article 4. Mediating communication between my fellow researchers and the group of young artists and designers in Murmansk, Russia, was a fitting way to conclude fieldwork for this study. Having experienced all of the less familiar contexts and reflected on them, would I relate in any way differently to the context of my "home culture"? Would I acknowledge my bias and be a fair mediator? Language is a place of struggle, indeed, even, and especially, if it is your own.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Arts-based and reflexive research methods, being qualitative in nature, rely on a human observer as a key strategy and a tool for data collection. Therefore, the practice and skill of observation are the issues of emphasis for this specific research. It relies on ethnographic observation, as while engaging with the research participants, individuals and communities alike, their socio-cultural circumstances were of essence to the study. Two crucial methods to aid the practice of ethnographic observation were narrative inquiry and documentation. The use of these methods had to be carefully adjusted in a practice-based manner according to each field situation, which resulted in a specific framework that kept reflecting back on itself throughout the research process. Griffiths (2010) notes that such fluctuating and adjusting of focus are typical of arts-based and practice-based research:

> *…the focus may change continually and this change may itself become a new focus of enquiry. Similarly the method by which data is collected… may become a major focus of the research. (p. 170)*

Another major focus of the research, one of the key features of any research design that addresses the “who” of the study is sampling. In each case of this study, as is common in community-based and ethnographic settings, the sample size was not predetermined and depended largely on how many people would choose or agree to participate (Leavy, 2017b). Within each case the “population of interest” was rather homogenous in terms of their backgrounds and practices, but those backgrounds and practices varied strongly from case to case, which ensured a versatile selection of perspectives on and understandings of the research themes. The sampling procedures that took place fit under the category of purposeful sampling more typical for qualitative research, as opposed to probability sampling (Patton, 2015; Leavy, 2017b). I can identify snowball, or chain sampling that occurred, with one case organically leading to another (Babbie, 2012; Patton, 2014; Leavy, 2017b). For example, public communication of the outcomes of the first case led to discovery of the context for the second one, while in all of the cases participants would tend to suggest additional participants that they thought could contribute to the project.

In the third case study, *Margin to margin*, the research team, too, was “purposefully sampled” so that at least one of the researchers would be an “insider”, or culturally more familiar with the participant groups and contexts. This is explained in Article 4, along with my relationship to the Russian community in the study.

While artistic outcomes were always one type of the expected results, the study did not limit itself to working with professional artists, but took on a democratic approach to art-making including non-artist participants.

The tools used throughout fieldwork and data analysis varied from embodied and intangible, through to physical and digital. My own body served as a vehicle for walking and processing visual, audial, tactile and taste inputs from the varied research environments, as well as for experiencing invaluable tangible and mechanic processes of working with arts and crafts materials, exchanging and trying out applied skills as a part of research encounters. The unrecorded memories and emotions, as well as the previous and newly acquired knowledge, are, too, significant to this fieldwork toolbox inventory.

Notebooks of words and sketches were among the physical aids used in data collection, as were newspapers, found objects and produced artworks that resulted from narrative data or, on the contrary, prompted narrative exchanges. Digital photography, video and audio recordings were central to data collection processes also being the most high-fidelity documentation tools in the box. At the stage of data processing and analysis, transcribing software and word processors were used alongside a variety of photo and video-editing software. Due to working in a collaborative manner with fellow researchers who are often thousands of miles away, data processing, discussions and analysis had to sometimes rely on email, Skype, messengers and co-editing platforms, such as Google Docs. In further sections the use of these tools will be exemplified and put in the context of specific research situations. I will also relate the methods and data to the articles they were discussed in and, towards the end of this data collection section, summarise the information in a table.

3.2.1. Ethnographic observation

As was mentioned previously in the beginning of the *Research design* section, the ethnographic approach was fundamental to the research encounters in the field, which resulted in certain methodological choices. Ethnographic methodology is explicitly discussed in Articles 1 and 2 with the focus on “equal sharing of life situations and input into the art-making processes” (Article 1) and the wider potential of ethnographically collected data for other than arts-based contexts (Article 2). The method of ethnographic observation brings out the “who” of data collection in this study, in other words, this method puts research participants and their life worlds in the spotlight. It is the second of the three key ways of looking, or proverbial research lenses, as allegorised in Section 3.1.2. *Reflexive research*. While the reflexive lens, the one of the self and one’s own experiences, allows me to employ my own frame of reference and empathy in order to be able to relate to the selves and the experiences of research participants, this lens of ethnographic observation enables me to take a step back and allow for the research participants to take an active position in sharing their stories, places, processes and artworks. This approach contributed greatly to the building of trust and of the participants’ sense of ownership of the encounters. As exemplified in Articles 2 and 3, the Aboriginal artists in Fowlers Bay welcomed us to an improvised cultural event with traditional food and dancing, while the shop owners of Leith Walk in Edinburgh offered to host the concluding event of the project. The other communities, too, eagerly improvised in proposing both research-related and informal activities.

I use the adjective “ethnographic”, bearing in mind potential critique that may arise, in the meaning of “learning from people” (Spradley, 1980, p. 3). This observation and registering thereof inevitably leads in this study to writing about the encountered communities where writing may be expressed in textual, physical or audiovisual form and is further presented to audiences and given back to the communities to revisit. In my fieldwork, the said observation always goes along with art-making processes that help to frame or focus the observing gaze, as well as providing common ground between all of the participants and the means for communicating the acquired knowledge. Degarrod (2013) refers to such practices as arts-based ethnographies “in which art is used in both the acquisition and the transmission of ethnographic knowledge, and [which] are designed for transmitting ethnographic research to the general public” (p. 403). Additionally, my observation relies largely on images and the methods of producing them. These images capture the moments or processes of observing and experiencing and fuel the research in meaningful ways. In this sense, in it includes *visual ethnographic* observation. According to Sarah Pink (2013), this is an organic turn in ethnographic practices due to a number of factors, including the increasing role of sensory ways of knowing across disciplines and the direction for more public and applied scholarship (p. 32). The kind of ethnographic observation I talk about in

the scope of my research is the one where I "co-observe" with the research participants, use arts-based processes and rely on creation of images. The latter will be additionally elaborated on in Section 3.2.3. *Documentation*.

Through an example of a spongy ball and a surface that it is thrown against, both of them affecting each other and taking in each other's particles, Ingold (2018) talks about "mutual responsiveness", which represents the kind of relationship between a researcher and her research participants that should be a desired goal. He calls it "correspondence" and poetically refers to it as a "labour of love". Ingold (2018) notes further, referring to the Latin origins of the word "data/datum" which means "that is given", that correspondence leads the researcher to acknowledge that she not only takes, but also owes something in return to her research participants and environments, for example, commitment to the process through her time and practice, not studying her subjects, but learning with them.

Figure 6. Examples of different setups of art-making in Fowlers Bay, Australia. October 2016. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko, Satu Miettinen.

Borrowing from Freire's (1970) objective to "break down the roles of learner and teacher in order to build an egalitarian model of education", my fieldwork

setups, especially those in the third phase, were based on multiple models: group exchanges of skill, spontaneous master classes, free use of space, use of both studio setup and informal craft circles, such as those typical in Aboriginal craft-making (Figure 6).

The co-observation would happen both within research participants' own familiar environments and in purposefully created "neutral" places that were practiced into spaces of common ground through collaborative processes, as a part of the radical inclusion approach. The latter setup was especially successfully used throughout the third case study as described in Articles 2, 4 and 5, but also partly during case study 2 where it took the shape of a workshop with some of the research participants as reported in Article 1. This duality of ethnographic observation allowed me, on the one hand, to take on a holistic approach to understanding the research participants' life contexts and the way their identities were manifested in relation to their familiar places and practices. On the other hand, this approach allowed for observation of the kind of identity processes that can occur in-between, when participants draw on their different backgrounds, exchange their narratives and doings on a neutral territory, akin to the post-colonial understanding of "in-betweenness" that leads to hybridity, or a multiplicity of spaces for meanings and interpretation (see e.g. Ashcroft & Kadhim, 2002; Bakhtin, 2010).

3.2.2. Narrative inquiry

> As nations and governments construct preferred narratives about history, so do social movements, organisations, scientists, other professionals, ethnic/racial groups, and individuals in stories of experience. What makes such diverse texts 'narrative' is sequence and consequence: events are selected, organised, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience. Storytellers interpret the world and experience in it.
>
> —Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative, Memory & Everyday Life, 2005*

Riessman points out above how storytelling serves as a vehicle for sense-making through transforming detached life events and experiences into meaningful narrative sequences. It is not only a particular audience that this meaning-making is directed at, but also the storyteller herself who gains an insight into her own life or a life event through telling and contextualising them, as was repeatedly concluded based on the research encounters in Articles 1, 2 and 4. Acts of storytelling implemented through various means provided data for this study and were approached through the qualitative method of *narrative inquiry*.

Narrative inquiry, a set of methods "based upon collecting, analysing, and re-presenting people's stories as told by them" (Etherington, 2004, p. 75), reveals the "what" of this data collection process. In order for the narrative data to be reliable and easy to transcribe and analyse, it was captured with the help of both video and audio equipment. Although the narrative data is understood here in a broad sense and takes a variety of forms, such as dialogic, monologic, written, oral, supported by physical artefacts, its main unifying quality is that it was produced in collaboration and dialogue between research participants, or the researcher and research participants, as became most obvious through the third phase of the fieldwork and elaborated on in Articles 2 and 4.

Collection of narratives during fieldwork occurred, for the major part, through informal unstructured interviews with only provisory questions or topics in mind, where my colleagues and I would also share the narratives related to our experiences of the themes and situations in question, which would enable further cycles of exchange. This kind of interviewing was implemented intuitively and referred to in all of the articles. Further, through the angle of reflexive research, this process was conceptualised as *reflexive interviewing* characterised by situations where "the interviewer also notices and/or shares personal experience of the topic and comments on the unfolding communication between both parties" (Etherington, 2004, p. 77). Such a narrative method also lays the ground for narrative therapy where a counsellor and a patient co-construct their stories together with the former assisting the latter in order to notice elements and fragments she may take for granted (White & Epston, 1990; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Etherington, 2004).

Many of the narrative exchanges occurred in this manner between the researcher and a participant, one on one. Some situations of narrative sharing,

however, were designed and captured so that the researcher was less involved in narrative sharing. In some instances (e.g. in the *Have you heard?* and *Shop Around the Corner* case studies), research participants familiar with each other and sharing similar life circumstances would have an unstructured conversation related to a topic, such as a given place or their shared occupation, that would be video-documented. They would support, translate and "bounce off" each others' narratives talking directly to each other or, perhaps inadvertently, also the researcher behind the camera. That enabled a different level of narrative sharing, as both the involved storytellers would already be inside the topic of interest and have a history of mutual empathy, a position that a researcher, no matter how empathetic and reflexive, would require certain amount of time and sensitivity to achieve. Here is an example from Edinburgh (case study *Have you heard?*) where Pakistani food store employees Abdul and Hasan talk about the services they provide to the local Muslim community:

> *Hasan: (speaks Urdu)*
> *Abdul: My friend is saying that the person who works in the slaughterhouse, the Muslim man, only he is allowed to slaughter the animals. And he does not only provide for people in Scotland and England, but also all over Europe.*

Here is another example, this time from Cork (case study *Shop around the corner*), where Patrick and Rose, the owners of a menswear store and a pharmacy respectively, reminisce on the past of their family businesses and the neighbourhood:

> *Patrick: …I am the third generation [of the shop owners], there were two generations before myself.*
> *Rose: How many years is that?*
> *Patrick: It's going back to the 1890s until today. A lot of history there.*
> *Rose: Unbelievable. I have a shorter history than that. My family would have opened up a men's shop, in competition with Leader's [Patrick's family shop]. (laughing) I'm joking!*
> *Patrick: That's right. (smiling)*

The third type of setup for sharing involves a group exchange of narratives, where the participants and the researchers alike take turns to share their stories. As told in Articles 2, 4 and 5, this setup was mostly typical for the case study *Margin to margin* and had the objective of creating individual and collective artefacts and the use of particular arts-based tools for prompting narrative sharing. The use of reflexive tools for painting and verbalising *life story mandalas* is exemplified in Articles 2, 4 and 5. Through further reflection, this tool was conceptualised as a method of *life span mapping* that derives from life span psychology (e.g. Sugarman, 2005; Webster, Bohlmeijer & Westerhof, 2010). The participants in the groups would often refer to what their peers had said and

narrate understanding and care for each other. Here is Cheryl in Port Augusta concluding her story:

> *To not include it [a traumatic event in her life] would be untruthful. I don't want to say what it is, because there are other people at the table who have experienced events too, and we don't want to agitate them. But it does influence your life, doesn't it?*

While most of the narratives were acquired and captured in oral audio form, a part of them was represented through text—emails or pieces of hand-written texts that participants would share. As an example, working with participants of migrant background in Edinburgh, my colleagues and I got busy with the question of what situation we ourselves feel most "foreign" in. This led us to ask our participants to reflect on such occurrences in their lives in written form, both English and their native language. Manu, a poet from Spain, wrote:

> *Tengo que cambiar mis palabras y la forma de decir las cosas. / I have to change my words and the way of saying things.*

When researching for *Shop around the corner* in Cork, I initially contacted people who might have rare local memories, and received, among others, this email from a gentleman who will remain anonymous here, but whose memory fed new cycles of research, understanding of place and artistic production:

> *A shop called Myles existed at 109/110 North Main St. If you contact Ms Ryan [name changed], she and her brother have photographs and info about this shop, which used to belong to her great Grandparents. The shop no longer exists and now forms part of a paved area, which leads onto Adelaide St. There are a few stories to be told about this shop, which was a very busy premises that sold everything from an anchor to a needle.*

My colleagues' and my own field journals contributed to narrative data, too, as mentioned especially in Articles 1 and 2. Often times narratives captured there took forms other than textual ones, such as sketches, doodles or photographic notes, and bore a dual function of data and a potential artefact to be displayed for the audiences. The plurality of the data collection function is further discussed in the documentation section below and is not uncommon for arts-based research, as noted by Ossman (2010):

> *A sketch or a painting can be rather like a field note—it can focus attention on certain objects, regularities or connections. Once it is hung in public, it can stimulate exchanges about aesthetics, or politics. (p. 134)*

A very significant role in the collected narrative data was played by the artefacts, the artwork produced by research participants in response to their own stories and research themes, and by the researchers in response to the stories of research participants. Such artworks and the participants' reflections on the research themes that inspired them are captured especially well in Article 4 through the narrations from Rovaniemi and Murmansk. This data is rich and challenging to analyse, as it manifests through the combination of tacit narratives that the artefacts communicate and explicit narratives the authors choose to share through a "dynamic and dialectical process of socially creating knowledge" (Degarrod, 2013, p. 406). The thorough documentation of such artefact-based narratives ensured efficient subsequent analysis.

Case study 1: Have you heard? provided *1 hour 7 minutes* of reflexive interviews in audio and video formats with *seven participants* from Leith Walk. Additionally, *eight handwritten short narratives* were provided by *four research participants*.

During *Case study 2: Shop around the corner* I recorded *27 minutes* of reflexive interviews in audio and video formats, of which *21 minutes* were constituted by the conversation between the traders Patrick and Rose. The remaining *6 minutes* were the memories of *four traders* that they first emailed to me in a written form and then kindly agreed for me to record in audio.

Throughout the fieldwork for the *Case study 3: Margin to margin*, *5 hours 42 minutes* of reflexive interviews with *54 research participants* and *four artist-researchers* including myself from *four locations* were audio and video-recorded. Altogether the sampling of the third case was almost twice this size, but some participants only contributed artistic outcomes, others—narrative data. Additionally, audio-interviews with selected artists were conducted and recorded by Dr Melanie Sarantou. For the analysis in this study *40 minutes* of these interviews with *two participants* were used.

The visually documented arts-based narratives, the artworks, are quantified at the end of the next section. In the conclusion of this chapter, all the data are summarised in relation to the cases and the articles in Table 3.

3.2.3. Documentation

> If human knowledge is co-constructed, then any research project must involve some degree of mutual exploration and discovery. The unmet challenge for qualitative researchers is to document this process in an open and honest way.
>
> —Russel A. Walsh, *The problem of unconsciousness in qualitative research, 1996*

In a qualitative study it is a given that documentation of data and processes must play an important role. In this study, documentation methods were included in the methodological toolbox from the very beginning, as becomes apparent through all of the five articles. They were revisited and reflected upon continuously and acquired strong empathy-building value, especially in Article 2, as well as aesthetic functions.

Documentation reveals the "how" of the data collection processes in this study. Although the primary goal of documentation was to capture data for further analysis, it followed narrative and identity-centred approaches and aimed to capture, among other materials, the intangible and tacit elements of the research: the identity work, the emotional responses and the relationships that were built. Ingold (2013) refers to documentation, or recording of events in an ethnographic setting, as a "scrapbook of history":

> *At full scale and in three dimensions, these scrapbooks are our museums. Inside the museum, dated and cured, things grow older with every passing day, yet their ageing is artificially arrested. But out in the open, the mound keeps mounding, ageing all the while without, however, growing any older (p. 82).*

Documenting an event or an encounter is, indeed, a fascinating pursuit: recording a timespace that will never repeat itself, but will however be preserved exactly the way it happened with a possibility of being retold. The types of documentation I recognise and use the most in my life and work have these aims: a) capturing data for further analysis; b) development of research and artistic practice; c) preserving a process or an encounter. While the first aim is rather straightforward, I will elaborate on the other two.

There is a duality to the second purpose of my documentation. On the one hand, it allows for further reflection on the way my colleagues, research participants and I conduct our research and artistic practices in the field, making our creative processes "somewhat transparent by capturing each step the practitioner-researcher takes in the process, both consciously and unconsciously" (Nimkulrat, 2007, p. 4). On the other hand, creating images through photo and audiovisual means is my artistic practices as such, as I explained in Section 3.1.1.

Thus, the documentation process bears for me a function of practice in itself, or development thereof through practising.

Although the means of documentation varied from field journals to the recordings with higher fidelity, audiovisual and photographic documentation holds a special value in this methodological framework. Such documentation represents quite literally the third lens, the third way of looking, following the reflexive and the ethnographic observation lenses. This way of looking circles back to the researcher's self as, although the data capturing occurs in a direct and accurate manner, certain characteristics of each recording bear a signature of the one who records through, for example, framing, distance to the participant, aesthetics of the shot, additional captured details and spatiotemporal characteristics of the environment. This can raise understandable discussion in academic communities regarding the subjectivity of such data. For example, during the fieldwork events that involved art-making, I had an interest based on mere artistic taste and choice for capturing photographically the makers' hand gestures up-close using shallow depth of field in my camera settings (Figure 7). Following this artistic urge for certain type of documentation that further proved useful for representational purposes, I had to stay mindful in order to nonetheless document events in a holistic manner.

Figure 7. Examples of photo-documentation of hand gestures of the makers in Fowlers Bay, Australia, and Rovaniemi, Finland. October / December 2016. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko.

In Griffiths's essay *Research and the Self* (2010), the art educator Tony Gemmell raises a discussion on the complex relationship between research documentation and artistic interpretation of a researched situation by an artist-researcher:

> *At what stage does the video image become superfluous to the research? At the micro stage with the subject against a black curtain? At the macro stage*

> *with the subject and their art room as a background? Or in the edited video in which the respondent in the art room is prefixed by images of the front of the school, harbours and cliffs? (p. 172)*

As argued by Onsès and Hernández-Hernández (2017) in arts-based contexts visual documentation of an event becomes an event itself, the involved participants stop being subjects, but become events, too, inseparable from the spatiotemporal conditions of the moment (p. 63). Therefore, they co-construct the documentation of that moment together with the researcher who herself is inseparable from the situation in its entirety. Thus, I argue in response to Gemmell's question above that the video image is not superfluous, but complementary and even essential to the research.

Documentation with the aim of preserving a process or an encounter is especially relevant in the situation of a temporary engagement with communities of place(lessness). Whether it is an artistic engagement that produces a transcendent work of art, such as a performance or an installation, or a different type of community work that is only possible over a short period of time, it must be documented. Working with research participants and creating temporary shared spaces, it is important that the experience is further preserved and can be revisited by everyone involved as a space of empathy or empowerment. These objectives of documentation are discussed in Article 5 from an ethical perspective and in the spirit of giving back to communities of research participants. Additionally, such documentation gives an aesthetic value to the data and allows for the creation of an immersive experience for the viewer in a digital or physical exhibition space, who can reconstitute the span of the time and space of the encounter. Naturally, having this aim in mind alters the method of capturing data and the kind of details that are paid attention to. During fieldwork, my colleagues and I were pursuing two documentation goals: immediate documentation outputs, with the aim of sharing the process online for transparency; and long term outputs for further analysis, editing and dissemination. Blog texts and fast photos served as a means of immediate documentation of first impressions, capturing the moment and starting the first, partly subconscious, sense-making processes. So did the video field journals during the third phase of fieldwork, in South Australia, Rovaniemi and Murmansk.

The visual and photographic data collected during the case study *Have you heard?* were comprised by: *6 hours 19 minutes* of unedited video footage and *106 photographs* of the research encounters (portraits, places, processes); *258 photographs* of the art intervention (public space installation); and *one collaborative research journal* with notes and drawings by my colleagues, myself and the participants.

In the case study *Shop around the corner* the data were comprised of: *4 hours 55 minutes* of unedited video footage and *113 photographs* of the research

encounters (portraits and places), the making processes and artistic outcomes (*ten installations* in public spaces of North and South Main Street).

The data collected during the case study *Margin to margin* counts a) unedited video footage: *5 hours 56 minutes* of the making and arts-based processes, *13 hours 7 minutes* of contextual observation (traveling, walking, the “feeling of place”); b) photographs: *511 photographs* of the research encounters (portraits, places, processes including making and art-related processes), *107 photos* of the *60 artworks*/final artefacts including *56 individual artworks and four collaborative pieces*.

3.2.4. Narrative analysis

Narrative data allows a researcher to “access the world of the storyteller” (Etherington, 2004, p. 80). But, as understandably noted by Riessman (2005), narratives “do not speak for themselves or have unanalysed merit; they require interpretation when used as data” (p. 2). This section concludes the chapter on methodology by outlining the ways the data were analysed. Narrative analysis of the data took place upon every research encounter and underlays the methodologies in the articles. It is especially well presented in Article 4 in a comparative analytical vein. In order to be interpreted upon the collection, the data were grouped according to their types: visual material was watched through, textual data were digitalised, the audiovisual narrative data were transcribed and translated into English where it was necessary. All the data were stored in two copies on two hard drives.

What is to happen next, according to Donald Polkinghorne (1995), is the locating of “common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories collected as data” (p.13). He suggests looking for two kinds of clues during narrative analysis: a) concepts derived from previously known theories, which are applied to the data; b) concepts derived from the data. When interpreting the former, confirmation bias is to be paid attention to (Greenwald, Leippe, Pratkanis & Baumgardner, 1986). It was already explained in detail in the beginning of Chapter 2 that the cloud of themes kept transforming and how the previously known theories and themes were fuelled through the narrative data from one research encounter to another. Further in this section I will specify the analytical processes the data underwent after each fieldwork episode.

In case studies *Have you heard?* and *Shop around the corner* the fragments of the told stories were examined against spaces they related to, being often already very site-specific. It was asked how they could perform a meaningful and mutually enriching, even if temporary, relationship when paired up with the space. In Article 1, the artistic and spatial components of such a pairing are discussed more prominently, while Article 3 focuses rather on the stories themselves. In the *Margin to margin* sub-cases the narratives were also interpreted in the contexts of participants’ places and histories, but more globally, taking that site and situation-specific story and letting it travel the world with the objective of gaining a voice and audience and, in order to resonate, compare itself to and find similarities with other life stories from faraway (see Articles 2, 4 and 5). Making creative sense of the obtained data occurred through brainstorming, mind mapping, writing and other creative exercises. The data was dealt with from an ethical perspective, and personal narratives processed with respect and consideration of what to include and what to leave out of the further process, in other words making sure that the “discussions about ethics complement those on aesthetics” (Rendell, 2007, p. 152). The narratives shared by the communities bore both artistic and academic value in all cases.

Video-editing is a crucial part of narrative and visual data analysis and, perhaps, the most ethically sensitive, too. Onsès and Hernández-Hernández (2017) suggest to step away from understanding the video-editing process as stable and the video as truthful data for analysis, instead approaching it as a complex multifaceted process of knowing:

> *…an ontological (what reality is depicted), epistemological (which knowledge is generated), methodological (how entanglements are visualised), and ethical (how the actors' performances generate subjectivities) researching move (p. 67).*

During the third phase of fieldwork, initial narrative analysis through video-editing was carried out by our documentalist on the spot. I understand this editing as narrative analysis in two ways. Firstly, through editing, a storyline, a narrative is being built in order to communicate an event or encounter. Secondly, all of the explicit verbal narratives and tacit bodily narrations of that event, as well as implicit narratives captured visually from the environment come together as a complex set of data for analysis. In the case study *Margin to margin*, the objective was to produce short field journal videos "on the go" in order to ensure the transparency and active communication between the communities and wider audiences. The more thorough re-editing of the material for different contexts, such as exhibitions, was due later, upon the completion of fieldwork. This initial process of dealing with data rather urgently, with "wide brushstrokes" prompted fast transcription and analysis and allowed for initial sense-making. Editing of narratives in any form, visual or written, is a subject for ethical consideration, as it implies a degree of data manipulation and decisions on what to keep and what to leave out by one researcher or a small group of researchers. These choices are similar to what Ricoeur (1984) refers to as memory and forgetting. He warns against "a crafted form of forgetfulness" where social actors lose the power "to narrate themselves" (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 448-449). Mindful of this authorship issue, my colleagues and I resorted to the said fast narrative analysis through video editing in order to be able to consult with the research participants and ensure their ethical representation.

The video interviews conducted with the Leith Walk shop owners and employees in Edinburgh (four interviews with six participants) and visual notes of the shops and the street were compiled in a documentary film *Silk Road*, a *30-minute* reflection on transculturation phenomena taking place in contemporary Europe, with a focus on material culture (Figure 8).

A video-recorded dialogue, a sharing of memories, between two of the traders in Cork, alongside audio-recordings of the other participants' memories of the street and the visual notes of the shops and the neighbourhood were compiled in a documentary film homonymous to the name of the project *Shop around the*

corner, a *16-minute* essay on neighbourhood, site-specific art and storytelling (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Stills from the documentary films *Silk Road* (Edinburgh, UK) and *Shop around the corner* (Cork, Ireland).

The rich audiovisual data collected during the four research encounters of *Margin to margin* was edited in the following final videos:

a) *seven field journal videos* published in the project's video channel during the fieldwork: *29 minutes* in length, on average around *4 minutes each*;

b) *three videos* as a part of *Conversations with the edge* sub-project curated by Dr Sarantou, where the research participants sent video messages to their counterparts in other locations, also published in the project's video channel during the fieldwork: *14 minutes* in length altogether;

c) *three videos* for the final exhibition of the project: *Collaborative felting* video of *18 minutes*; *Conversations with the Edge* video of *38 minutes*; and *Life Story Mandalas* video of *1 hour 3 minutes* (Figure 9).

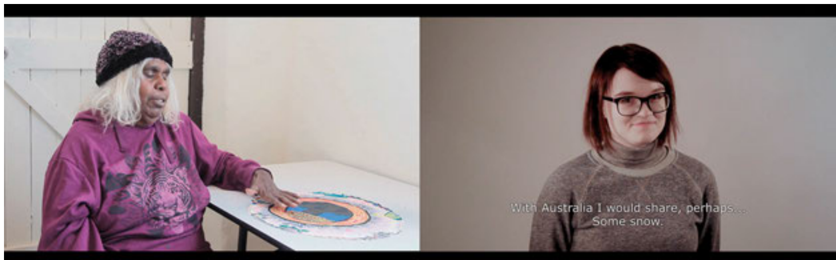

Figure 9. Stills from the exhibition videos *Life Story Mandalas* and *Conversations with the Edge* screened in Helinä Rautavaaran Museo, Espoo (Finland) and Yarta Purtli Gallery, Port Augusta (Australia).

The data reported on throughout Section 3.2. are summarised in Table 3 in relation to the respective articles and case studies.

Articles	Case study	Data collection methods	Data	Data analysis methods	Artistic outcomes
1	*Case 2: Shop around the corner* (Cork, Ireland; Feb 2016)	ethnographic observation; narrative inquiry; audiovisual and photo documentation.	NARRATIVES: 27 min: interviews with 4 participants (audio, video). UNEDITED VIDE: 4 h 55 min. PHOTOS: 113 photos: research encounters, making processes and artistic outcomes.	narrative analysis; video and photo editing.	FILM: documentary "Shop around the corner", 16 min. ART: a) public space intervention of 10 locations; b) 1 'memory tour' held for the audience.
2	*Case 3: Margin to margin (MtM)* (Fowlers Bay & Port Augusta, AU; Oct 2016)	ethnographic observation; narrative inquiry; audiovisual and photo documentation.	NARRATIVES: 3 h 40 min: interviews (audio, video). UNEDITED VIDEO: 5 h: making processes. PHOTOS: 356 photos: research encounters.	narrative analysis; video and photo editing.	VIDEO: 5 field journal videos, total length 22 min. ART: 38 artworks (30 individual, 3 collaborative.
3	*Case 1: Have you heard?* (Edinburgh, UK; Jul 2014)	ethnographic observation; narrative inquiry; audiovisual and photo documentation; research journal.	NARRATIVES: a) 1 h 7 min: interviews with 7 participants (audio, video); b) 8 handwritten stories by 4 participants. UNEDITED VIDEO: 6 h 19 min: research encounters. PHOTOS: a) 106 photos: research encounters; b) 258 photos: making processes and artistic outcomes. 1 RESEARCH JOURNAL.	narrative analysis; video and photo editing.	FILM: documentary "Silk Road", 30 min. ART: a) public space intervention of 86 locations; b) online map recreating the intervention and the research encounters.
4	*Case 3: MtM* (Rovaniemi, Finland; Murmansk, Russia; Dec 2016)	ethnographic observation; narrative inquiry; audiovisual and photo documentation.	NARRATIVES: 5 h 15 min: interviews (audio, video); UNEDITED VIDEO: 56 min: making processes; PHOTOS: 155 photos: research encounter.	narrative analysis; video and photo editing.	VIDEO: a) 2 field journal videos, total length 7 min; b) 3 videos as a part of Conversations with the edge, total length 14 min. ART: a) 22 artworks (20 individual, 2 collaborative); b) 1 exhibition.
5	*Case 3: MtM* (Fowlers Bay & Port Augusta, AU; Rovaniemi, Finland; Murmansk, Russia; Oct-Dec 2016)	ethnographic observation; narrative inquiry; audiovisual and photo documentation.	NARRATIVES: 6 h 22 min: interviews with 54 participants and 4 artist-researchers (audio, video). UNEDITED VIDEO: a) 5 h 56 min: making processes; b) 13 h 7 min: of contextual observation. PHOTOS: a) 511 photos: research encounters; b) 107 photos: 60 artworks.	narrative analysis; video and photo editing.	VIDEO: a) 7 field journal videos, total length 29 min; b) 3 videos as a part of Conversations with the edge, total length 14 min; c) 3 videos for the final exhibition: 18 min, 38 min, and 1 h 3 min. ART: a) 60 artworks (56 individual, 4 collaborative); b) 3 exhibitions; c) project website.

Table 3. Summary of research data, methods and outcomes.

In this chapter on research methodology, I explained my research design through the two overarching methods of ABR, reflexive research and the applied research strategies. Ethical considerations were also outlined with care, alongside formal ethical procedures and clearances. Further, the data collection and analysis methods were put into the context of the fieldwork and complemented by the numeric data.

Chapter 4 serves as a "process chapter" that will guide the reader through the more tacit and fluid processes that occurred in the field and thereafter.

4. MEDIATIONS

This chapter serves as a transition vehicle from the understanding of the methodology of the study towards the concrete findings the research resulted in. Here I attempt to reflect from a distance on the research processes and encounters in order to make sense of them in a more holistic way and with a perspective on representation and dissemination of research and artistic outcomes, placing my curatorial practice at the centre of this study. The chapter will explain the ways I approached, explicitly or tacitly, the mediation of complexities between the different actors, narratives, places/spaces and practices that were a part of this process of inquiry. This chapter will also introduce in depth all of the three case studies.

In his lecture at CCA Glasgow, Ingold (2018) points out a linguistic connection between the words *curiosity* and *curate* which both originate from the Latin *curare*, "to take care of". He builds a parallel between the common origin of the words and the phenomenon in art, research and curatorial practices that is based on care and attention to the subject and the world around. While Tony Fry (2011) sees care as an active element in quality, thoroughness and engagements with the world (p. 208), Ricoeur (1992) notes that "narrative also recounts care" (p. 163), especially in its reminiscent form, thus emphasising the emotional side of the concept of care. Picking up on Ricoeur's observations, Sarantou (2014) argues that stories serve as vehicles of care and "nurture the connections between people and their cultures" (p. 247).

As I followed my researcher curiosity and got to know my research participants better through narratives and art-making, "narratives of care" (Sarantou 2014, p. 194) would emerge more and more clearly through their stories. The storytellers in my study narrated and performed care towards their immediate places and communities and those far away, the timespaces of their memory worlds, the fellow storytellers, and even towards me and my colleagues as we came to join them for a short moment in time. This becomes clear in Article 3 through the narratives of care shared by the immigrant shop owners in relation to their local community, both their fellow migrants and the natives of Edinburgh, that further translates into mutual familiarity and sense of belonging. The participants also practised care through their art and craft, importantly recognising that they are "making the self in the act of making" (Fry, 2011, p. 208). In the processes described in Article 2 this manifested on two levels. The tangibility of familiar art materials—raffia for weaving, textiles and paint, wool for felting—ensured suitable environments for art-making where the participants comfortably recognised their makers' selves, while the actual processes of making enabled the explicit oral narration of those makers' selves and other stories.

Throughout the study I have been occupied with the challenges of curation and representation. Despite the pre-field planning, it was initially challenging to put

into words the intangible circumstances that were created in order for these narratives of care to emerge. And upon the completion of the fieldwork, how was I to further curate all of the experiences of my study in order to recount them in multiple contexts with due care? And, in fact, how do these experiences curate my own professional and personal life ahead?

Despite being intrigued by Ingold's poetic triangle of curiosity-care-curation, I choose to use the word *mediation* instead, due to possible "top-down" connotations of the term curation, as well as its association predominantly with the field of art history and the gallery space (e.g. see the critique in Oprea, 2017). The concept of mediation is likely to be used in the context of conflict resolution (e.g. Winslade, Monk, & Cotte, 1998). Art mediation, in its turn, implies the processes helping an artwork to enter the public gaze (e.g. Jefferies, 2013; Sitzia, 2016). In the context of this research, it can be understood as both of the above.

In marginal in-between contexts, where individuals, communities and places have to constantly negotiate their roles, identities and external relationships, a need for interpersonal mediation is to be anticipated. As a researcher steps into the field, she contributes an additional, though temporary, destabilising factor to the life worlds of her research participants (Kimpson, 2005). The processes they go through together during fieldwork are likely to unearth even more realities causing internal or external conflicts that the researcher is to foresee and meditate ethically, reflexively and empathically through the creation of safe spaces.

This fieldwork, apart from being carried out through arts-based methods, also produced artistic outcomes that further entered physical and digital spaces of public display. The transition of such outcomes from being conceived narratively, through production and becoming spaces, towards the encounter with audiences is also a process of dynamic mediation implemented by the researcher. This mediation fluctuates from navigating the storytelling in every encounter, through to collective creation and immediate presentation of artistic outcomes in public spaces described in Articles 1, 2 and 3, to further recreation of the encounters in physical and digital spaces as discussed Articles 4 and 5.

My field is the space where a story and a storyteller meet an "active listener", the researcher, through the medium of arts in a place in time, all of the elements are crucial, none of them more or less significant that the others. Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher is given inputs that are further transformed into outputs. Narratives, together with the narrated identities, are an input during data collection, both for the researcher and the narrators themselves. They become an output upon the analysis and representation. Identity work happens and the newly made sense of identities becomes an outcome not only when analysed by the researcher, but also while narrated by the research participant. Reflexivity aids these transformations of narratives and identities.

Place is an input, a starting point for the research encounter. Together we practise it into a shared space, which then becomes an output. Artistic practice is a vehicle to get us all through this journey resulting in artwork as an outcome.

Mediation is all the processes in between. Figure 10 visualises the relationships between the research inputs and outputs described here.

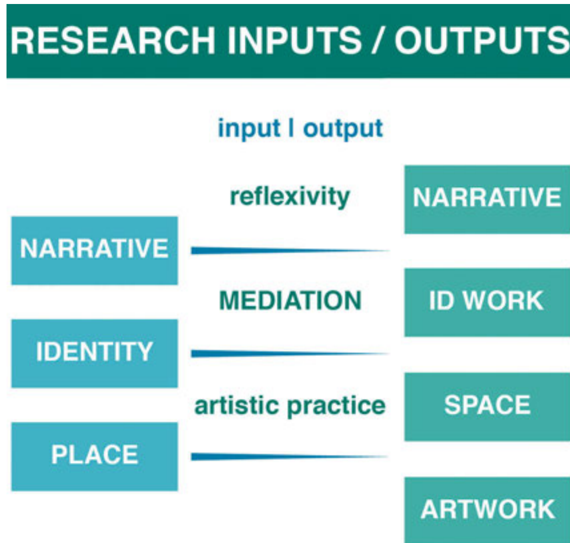

Figure 10. Visualisation of research inputs and outputs.

In Section 4.1. I will talk about the processes of mediation that took place throughout the different stages of my research journey: how the mediation of narratives, spaces and audiences was performed.

Section 4.2. will introduce the communities and cases in greater detail inviting the reader to view them now from the position of familiarity with the methods implemented with them and the data they contributed. In the description of the case studies more occurrences of mediation processes will be demonstrated.

4.1. MEDIATION OF NARRATIVES, AUDIENCES AND SPACES

After all the encounters, voices, events and insights of a fieldwork go quiet, a ringing silence prevails. When the phase of active involvement of any meaningful and intense relationship ends (and the relationship between a researcher and her research participants is both intense and meaningful), it is up to the researcher to make it last in a new form, to pay due respect to the experience through reflecting back on it, making sense of it, telling others about it, giving gratitude. All of the key processes were happening there, in the timespace of the fieldwork, all the mediations were initiated there, as were the processes of sense-making. But it is only from a distance that I start to truly know what the field was and to translate it into graspable shapes and forms for the communities to own and for the audiences to make use of.

4.1.1. Narratives

By *mediation of narratives* I imply the processes the stories undergo upon having been shared and the understandings that arise. This mediation is dynamic and can be undertaken by both the researcher and the research participants. This mediation of narratives is not to be confused with the notion of narrative mediation that was formulated in the 1980s as a part of family therapy development with the objective of problem-solving (e.g. Fludernik, 1996; Winslade & Monk, 2000; Alber, 2002). My processes, however, borrow some of its principles, for example, Monika Fludernik's (1996) understanding of narratives where the plot becomes a secondary characteristic, but "a human experiencer" of the narrative is key, that is, the emphasis is placed on the performative and sharing aspect of narratives. Mediation of narratives in this study happened in three main ways: *interpretation through fiction, mediation of memories* and *narrative as critical spatial practice*.

Interpretation of narratives through fiction borrows from the Ricoeurian understanding of life histories as fiction, due to them being shaped through the process of narration. He refers to this fictionalised narration as a "chiasm between history and fiction" (Ricouer, 1992, p. 114). Fictionalisation of a personal or a collective narrative can serve two purposes: to help the narrator to distance herself from a complex life history in order to make sense of it in a more detached manner; or to break down a complex narrative in order to make it more graspable for an audience. This can happen both consciously and subconsciously and proves useful when applied in arts-based context. For example, during the encounter with research participants in Murmansk, Russia, the artist Antonina Gorbacheva chose to express complex cultural narratives of gender roles in the form of a video. She mediated her own and her friends' stories into a short fiction film where they were performed by actors. This artwork is discussed in detail in

Article 4. Another example is illustrated in Section 4.2.1. *Case study 1: Have you heard?*, where my colleagues and I mediated the participants' narratives of migration and belonging into a fictional collective character's life history.

Memory is regarded by Ricoeur (2000) as a type of activism, a "unique resource to signify the past-character of what we claim to remember" (p. 26). This became a specifically relevant issue for the community of traders in Cork (see Article 1 and Section 4.2.2. *Case study 2: Shop around the corner*) who shared affectionate memories about the North Main Street of their past that has drastically changed since. The *mediation of memories* was in this case for the most part conducted by the research participants themselves, thanks to the extensive memory work that they had carried out. This became apparent every time a story was narrated. The traders situated themselves firmly within the place-bound identities, individually and collectively. They narrated the past and present timespaces, thus directing my attention to the physical spaces of today that are meaningful to them. In doing so, they inadvertently mediated the artistic processes that were to follow. Through those artistic processes, the local artists and I situated the traders' memories in the meaningful physical places they had indicated, practising them into spaces through narrative and artistic means and, thus igniting new cycles of memories. In the narration below, Rose from Murphy's Pharmacy reflects on her becoming through the place and its people:

> *As children we would have wandered off... If I'd be missing, I'd be over with one of the traders. And my mother, my father would come looking for me and I'd be there. And I made many friends and I still have many friends as a result of it. Everybody knows me because of that, which is nice. Yeah, I am very proud to be part of it.*

This reminiscence indirectly tells to the listener a lot not just about the place, but about the certain social structures and routines that existed in the timespace of Rose's childhood. And not only in the past—the fact that the relationships, the friendships, have been maintained by the narrator until now informs us, perhaps, about a kind of "social sustainability" present in this community of traders. This short excerpt above contains both the narratives of place and the narrator's shifting identities: a daughter, a child, a friend, and a proud community member.

The mediation of narrative processes in this study worked as *critical spatial practice* in two ways: a) based on content, in other words by making sense of a place through narratives and thus "appropriating" it into a space; b) through "re-telling" the stories in a place of significance and attaching new meanings to them. The former occurred throughout the cases, for example, as described in Article 3 where the shop owners would narrate the roles of their shops for the local immigrant community and thus make sense of both the space of the shop and the space of their faraway homes. The latter was omnipresent and one of the key

processes in the fieldwork, too. It is exemplified, for instance, in Article 1, where the traders' stories in Cork were not only retold in public space tacitly, through the artefacts of the spatial intervention, but also as a "tour of memories" presented to the audience and the passersby.

The research appealed to the personal narratives of the research participants, thus invoking a memory or a story that would be inevitably situated in a past or present place. Rendell (2007) notes that "an act of remembering the past can reconfigure a particular place as a critical space in the present", thus, the act of reconfiguring itself is viewed as a critical practice (p. 74). This made the research participants deeply involved in sense-making and critical practices already from the moment that the narrative sharing would start. Having the complex cloud of personal narratives as an input, it was my objective to make sense of them through the space, and of the space—through them, to render the social and the spatial aware of their own narratives through artistic methods. This sense-making, joined with the focus on narrative identity work in community-based projects first discussed in Article 3, aided the formulation of the second finding of the study, a viewpoint on narrative identities of individuals and places discussed in Section 5.2.

4.1.2. Audiences

By *audiences* in this section I imply all the stakeholders involved in the study through their specific relationships to narratives and artistic outcomes via the element of performativity. The research participants themselves acted as *immediate intentional audiences* for each other in the very context where the narratives were uttered and the artworks were made. The researchers, my colleagues and I, fall under this immediate audience category. *Potential hypothetical future audiences* are the other category I take into consideration. It can be constituted, for example, by "accidental" viewers that stumble upon the narratives or artworks in the cityscape, like in the first two case studies described in Articles 1 and 3, or by intentional viewership that happens outside of the context of narrative sharing or art-making, for example, in exhibition spaces miles and days away from the timespace of the encounter referred to in Articles 4 and 5.

Judith Butler (2006) notes interplay between "understanding performativity as linguistic and casting it as theatrical" (p. xxvi). It is a complex combination of what is being uttered and the way it is presented by the utterer. There was always a duality present in terms of performing narratives and identities in front of an audience throughout the research encounters. On the one hand, the participants shared their stories in temporary intimate environments with one or a few people, their fellow makers and storytellers and the researchers, thus performing for an immediate audience they were comfortable around. This comfort and intimacy comes through the choice of language and the nature of many narratives cited and analysed throughout the study, be it the sharing of multiple childhood and family memories as the traders in Cork did (see Article 1), or opening up about the painful collective pasts like the Aboriginal artists' histories of misplacement and bomb testing (see Article 2). On the other hand, it was always a mutual understanding that the documented narratives would be further communicated in public contexts, exhibitions or digital space, which allowed the narrators to imagine or address potential future audiences (Degarrod, 2013, p. 407). Ricoeur (1992) wrote that an utterance in itself equals a dialogue: "every advance made in the direction of the selfhood of the speaker or the agent has as its counterpart a comparable advance in the otherness of the partner" (p. 44). Thus, even an "invisible" audience may act as an interlocutor and influence the way we perform our stories, as well as our own self-reflection processes and even that of the said audience. Addressing the future audiences would occur for the major part in front of a video camera lens. The medium of video provided a platform for realising narrativity and performativity, as stated in Article 4. The camera and the documenting researcher behind it can then be seen not only as an immediate audience, but also as "surrogate audience" (Bill Nichols, 1987, p. 11), which potentially reinforces the duality in the way the narratives are performed.

Research participants' performativity and relationships with the audiences were manifested in multiple ways in their own video-based artworks. In the examples regarded in Article 4, the artists Antonina Gorbacheva from Russia and

Priska Falin from Finland narrate in a more detached and "safe" manner by removing themselves from the picture (in Priska's case even by removing human presence altogether), but communicating to the viewer nonetheless. Another Finnish artist, Marika Kavakka, who participated in the same case study, executed her performativity in a video by removing her own image, but keeping the voiceover narrating her intimate identity work in a poetic form. Through this method of artistic expression the participant finds a way to enter a dialogue both with herself and her audience, making sense of her own inner reality and at the same time seeking a point of connection, a common ground with the viewer:

…You let your sensitivity control you,
Just as I, too, let mine control me.

Bill Nichols (2017) argues that the mere presence of a video camera serves as a catalyst for narrative sharing reinforces "a sense of commitment or engagement with the immediate, intimate, and personal as it occurs" (p. 136). This proved accurate across the research encounters. As argued first in Article 2, this presence was one of the key elements in the creation of empathic timespaces. Often, complex identity work manifested itself in the captured performances through, for example, fluctuations between personal identities (of a spouse or a son) and public ones (of a shop owner) as discussed in Article 3. I believe such fluctuations were partly enabled by the fact that the narrators were communicating to the said multiple audiences, the immediate and the potential future ones. Thus, in addition to the comfort of sharing, they also felt a responsibility in speaking for their collective identities. This can be seen in Article 2 where the Aboriginal participants speak from the position of community activists. The migrant shop owners in Edinburgh perform the identities of "ambassadors" of their home cultures, as referred to in Article 3. The traders in Cork act as the "keepers" of local histories, as discussed in Article 1.

Rounds (2006) argues that in a public display of artefacts, such as a museum, a viewer, too, performs certain identities to perform based on the meanings communicated by the artefacts in the space (p. 142). He further adds that, in addition to the artefacts themselves, it is through certain behaviours linked to viewing of and interacting with the artefacts that the audience's identity work is prompted. In the process of representation of the communities and their voices, it was my ethical responsibility to recreate and reinterpret the encounters into spaces of curiosity, empathy and care. For instance, an ethical representation of the "life story mandalas" narrative process elaborated on in Articles 2, 4 and 5 was a challenge for my colleagues and me, as the shared narratives potentially rendered the storytellers vulnerable. The space of this intimate storytelling in Helinä Rautavaaran Museo in Espoo, Finland, was shaped by physical artefacts of the participants' life histories, diffuse light, comfortable seating and a large projection of a one hour video—it was decided not to omit or shorten the narration

(Figure 11). Against our expectations, some viewers reported having stayed in the space for the whole duration of the video, empathising with the storytellers and feeling unable to stop watching.

Figure 11*. Life story mandalas* space installation in Helinä Rautavaaran Museo, Espoo (Finland). September 2017. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko.

The study also mediated such “cycles of viewership” where the research participants themselves had an opportunity to revisit their own stories in a new form or location and re-identify with them both reflexively and from the perspective of audience. I mentioned in Article 1 how one of the traders in Cork, Rosarii, stumbled upon her own quote and became an empathic audience for her own creation (Figure 12). Similar processes occurred when the artists in Port Augusta viewed their painted life stories in a “spatialised” form in Platform Gallery (see Article 2), and when the shop owners in Edinburgh viewed their individual stories edited together into a documentary of the collective identity of their street (see Article 3).

Figure 12. Denim space installation in North Main Street based on Rosarii Comber’s memory, Cork (Ireland): “[I remember] looking in awe at all the men and women dressed in denim (well it was the 70s) going into the underwear factory where Mahers was, on my way to school”. February 2016. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko.

It was important to introduce the dimension of audience in a broad sense of the word and understand on yet another level the relationship between all of the

main actors in the study, the communities, the researcher and the different types of “public”. Regarding the exchange of narratives and artworks through the prism of performativity allows for a stronger emphasis on representational processes in this study. The ethics of (self-)representation and bearing the aspect of audiences in mind were inherent to a lot of the research participants' narrative and artistic expressions, while I also mediated the ethics and the audiences with care. This acknowledgement of audiences aided in the formulation of two of the study's findings, a framework for reflexive arts-based research with communities and an approach to ethics of representation, discussed in Section 5.1. and 5.3.

4.1.3. Spaces

Place, turned space, became an actor in all of the research encounters, in fact, an enabler of them and the narrative and artistic processes they encompassed. It was both a physical substance that can be transformed through critical spatial practice on the levels of meanings, and a “living body” that changes and evokes change on its own. This occurred due to its confluence with the social, which was emphasised in the literature review. In Section 2.3.1. of the literature review I quoted the architects Hirsch and Miessen who referred to space as a condition that is not stable. One of the understandings I arrived at through this study’s encounters involved the challenging of the perceived stability of space through social and cognitive processes.

All the spaces of research encounters were transformed through the different stages of the study. During the active engagement with the participants the space would be different from when it was first entered by the researchers, prior to meeting the community. It would be transformed once again the moment the research participants and I would exit the timespace of our engagement. Later on, when recounted after the engagement, through photo, video or narration, it would be yet a different, fourth, fifth modification of that same space. This is not to say that the representation of the space would distort its objective reality, but that the same timespace would be narrated in dozens of different ways, complemented by given meanings and the added value of the encounter itself, the perceptions of each narrator and further the perceptions of the audiences viewing the documentation or listening to the stories. Thus, not only the actual physical transformation of space is mediated through the processes and needs of the involved parties during the fieldwork. Its shaping keeps being mediated through the lenses of narratives, including memories, and audiences long after the detachment or physical removal from the space happens. I will exemplify these ideas through some types of spaces that can be considered actors in the study.

Public spaces, campsites, streets, and shops would enter the fieldwork, as much as the fieldwork would enter them, as a tabula rasa not loaded with meanings or preconceived ideas. But any space being constantly destabilised through a number of factors can change from one moment to another in the eyes of the one looking at it. In the context of arts and narrative based engagements with communities of place, looking through the eyes of the research participants can change the researcher’s perception of a given place. What a moment ago was just another shop, becomes a space of acceptance of newly arrived fellow country-people, as in the examples narrated by research participants in Article 3. Having attached such new meanings to a space, the researcher cannot “unknow” them and look at this environment in an uninvolved manner. For research participants, in their turn, narrating their familiar places to the researchers may result in a new found empathy and sense of ownership towards these places.

Even without being explicitly expressed, the meanings can transform spaces tacitly, even if for a moment in time. The shops, spaces of public use, in

Edinburgh and Cork would change into more private spaces when my colleagues and I were the only visitors there. The research participants would take off their “salesman mask” and behave and narrate their stories in a more reciprocal relaxed manner. Similar transformations would happen in Rovaniemi, when in a public use university studio the artist Bilge Aktas stayed one on one with her felted artwork and narrated her process in a more intimate way (see Article 4).

The intimate space between the maker and her work is mirrored when the work enters public display, be it a gallery space, digital space or a street. This public exhibition space can be full of people, but when the artefact of storytelling is discovered by its intentional or accidental audience, a new space of viewership transpires for the moment of their interaction. My colleagues and I observed this vividly during the intervention phase of case study *Have you heard?* in Edinburgh, where the artefacts of storytelling, short diary entries, were placed on the mundane surfaces of a public city space. More than once, we observed and documented how amidst the busy street a passerby would stumble upon one of the diary entries and be transported for a moment in time elsewhere, to the timespace of the fictional author of the diary (Figure 13).

Figure 13. A passerby reading one of the artefacts of the art intervention *Have you heard?* on a bridge in Edinburgh, UK. July 2014. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko.

In-person interaction of the audience with the artefacts of storytelling placed on public display can become a type of an analogue interactive documentary: the viewer accesses its fragments in a randomised order that highly depends on her navigation patterns through the city space and a whole number of other circumstances. Every person navigates the story in individualised sequence, which alters it in multiple ways: one story becomes many versions of itself. Additionally, each individual imagination “writes” the missing parts of the story, which creates an infinite amount of outcomes of the same story.

The spatial intervention *Have you heard?* was recreated in the form of an online map in digital space (Figure 14). This map represents virtually the work done in and with the city, transforming an ephemeral and temporary spatial artwork and personal encounters into a digital blueprint of the experience. This

experience gave my colleagues and me an idea for using digital space as a means of giving back to the communities of research participants by recreating the encounters in the form of interactive documentary that can be navigated by a viewer, just like a physical space, in a randomised manner. This avenue of research and practice was proposed in Article 5.

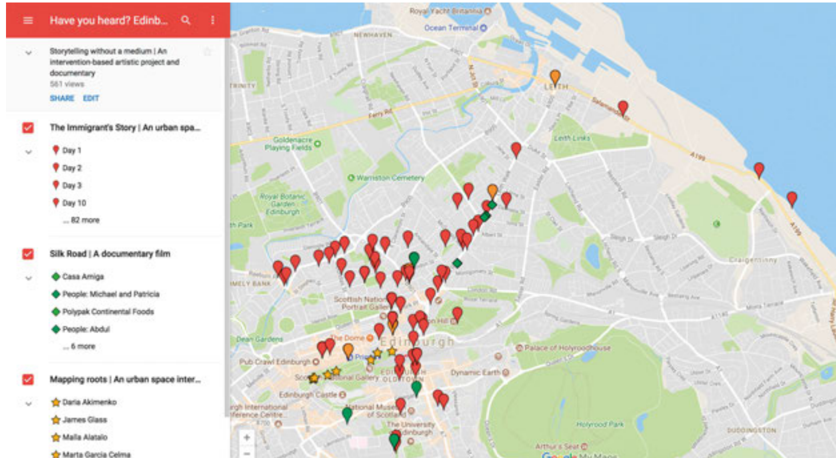

Figure 14. A screenshot of the online map recreating the encounters and art intervention of the case study *Have you heard?*.

In Article 4, an example of Priska Falin's work gives a good understanding of how a place can be transformed through an artwork (Figure 15). For her video piece, she filmed in-between places in the city of Rovaniemi, such as the gaps under the bridges, hidden pathways that do not communicate any explicit narratives being inherently liminal and transitional, even overlooked. Priska relocated them from their marginal contexts to "the centre": into the focus point of her video camera, and later as the big projection on the wall, in the public gaze. Thus, she reconfigured the whole nature of those spaces, turning them from marginal into central.

For a viewer like myself, familiar with those hidden passageways across Rovaniemi, the viewing of the artwork caused a type of cognitive dissonance and made me think of and perceive those spaces, as I never had before. A different type of viewer, unfamiliar with the city, might not even recognise those spaces as liminal in the context of a large exhibition display. Thus, the meanings behind and the ways of seeing the same space multiply through the artwork and its infinite displays to audiences.

Figure 15. Priska Falin's video artwork *In Between* projected in Katve gallery in Arktikum, Rovaniemi (Finland). December 2016. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko.

This subsection on spaces sends us back to the theoretical understanding first established in the literature review that "space-making"—practising places into spaces—can be an individual or a collective process. It can occur internally, on a cognitive level, or externally, in a physical environment. The processes outlined above also emphasise that the "space-making" can be mediated through artistic and narrative practices. The metaphoric spaces of empathy and sharing that were created during the study through arts-based methods and video documentation translate into an understanding of how an artefact of storytelling or an artwork can become a space, or form a timespace of engagement around themselves. Additionally, viewing places and spaces as independent actors whose identities can shift and fluctuate from one moment to another supported the thinking behind the concept of a narrative identity of place discussed in Section 5.2. as a part of the second finding of the study.

The cycles of "space-narrative-space-audience-narrative" (and so on and so forth in different order and combinations) are ongoing in arts-based narrative practices. Each link of the chain is mediated by a storyteller or an artist, but even when that storyteller or artist is removed and her story is let "out there", the cycles can still keep mediating themselves and each other. Understanding the flexible nature of these cycles contributed to the formulation of the framework for reflexive arts-based research discussed in Section 5.1.

This Section 4.1. presented the engagements that came out of fieldwork situations and the ways they were further mediated, communicated and represented. I summarised all the explicit and implicit processes of mediation from the perspectives of narratives, audiences and spaces, and anticipated the findings of the study that will be described in depth in Chapter 5.

4.2. COMMUNITIES AND CASE STUDIES

> During this study I have been moved, surprised, excited, curious, and transformed by what people have told me. This is what can happen, at best, in community with others. I have also been troubled, anxious, angry, doubtful and bored at times, and wondered why on earth I started down this road. But I have learned from all of this.
>
> —Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher, 2004*

I do not know how many researchers can relate to the research experience described by Etherington. I myself could not have described better my four years of encounters with communities of place and practice.

> *In my research and artistic practice I am obsessed with communities of place, site-specificity and more. At the same time, I myself am neurotically placeless tumbleweed of a person, barely belonging to any community or location (Personal diary, 6 January 2018).*

The situation of community-based research presents one with a unique opportunity of becoming a part of communities that are assembled for a moment in space and time from researchers, research participants, audiences, passersby, and other stakeholders. This becoming allows one to belong to not one, but many different social and spatiotemporal situations, even if in her personal life she pursues migratory ways of being for one or another reason. This becoming, I argue, does not have an expiration date. When a research encounter is over, it lingers and adds yet another set of perspectives from which to view oneself in the context of something bigger.

I will proceed now with describing the case studies that are organised here chronologically. This will help to trace the development of my thinking and practice, although in the timeline of the articles they appear in a slightly different order, as the articles are organised rather according to the logic of research themes and concepts that are discussed in them.

4.2.1. Case study 1: Have you heard?

In Edinburgh, I encountered the first community out of six. The case and its specific stories are discussed from the perspective of narrative identities in Article 3.

The art intervention *Have you heard?* was carried out in Edinburgh, UK, in July 2014 by a team of four artist-researchers: myself, together with two Finnish and one Portuguese colleagues. We asked ourselves what are the conversations and acts of participation that take place between the social and the spatial and how does one become a part of those? The main focal point of the research and the intervention resided in the migrant presence, and related narratives and identities that contribute to the social and the spatial of big cities, but are often taken for granted. Back in 2014 this theme seemed less poignant than it turned out to be later, the following year, and continues to be nowadays due to the ongoing refugee issues and the rise of extreme right movements throughout Europe and in the UK, which is undergoing Brexit. This is not to say that Edinburgh and Scotland were in an entirely peaceful state back then, in the time of the upcoming independence referendum.

The motivation of rendering audible the individual voices of the local community, while bringing to light wider contexts derived from "the personal is political" argument of the 1980s (e.g. Hanisch, 1969; Crenshaw, 1991) that further became central to a lot of filmmaking and art practices (e.g. De Lauretis, 1985; Seiter, 1985; Aristarkhova & Wilding, 2009; Tay, 2009). The narratives communicated by the research participants lay ground and provided inspiration for the subsequent art intervention. These narratives referred to in Article 3 grounded the focus of the research and artistic inquiry within the themes of migration and belonging, home culture, community and place. The plurality of identities in flux that were narrated by the research participants brought the discussion of narrative identity into focus as a central issue in Article 3 and further research. The abstract social and spatial spheres also became actors and contributors to the collection of stories indirectly, for example, through a newspaper advertisement, a conversation overheard from passersby, symbolisms in the shop windows and signboards. Noticing and employing artistically the narratives that place communicated led further to the reflection on the topic of narrative identity of places that is formulated as one of the findings in Section 5.2. The participants' narratives were documented audiovisually or in a written form during fluid loosely structured interviews. The narrative data was processed in two ways—immediately, in order to become a work of spatial fiction, and later on in the scope of the wider study.

The group of research participants was constituted by eleven first or second generation immigrants living in Edinburgh, seven of whom were approached by us directly, while the other four responded to an announcement we had published on social media. The participants were of Portuguese, Spanish, Lithuanian, Dutch, Pakistani and Polish origins. Seven of the participants were shop owners or

employees of four shops in Leith Walk, an old street of Edinburgh that was referred to by the famous nineteenth century novelist Robert Louis Stevenson (1881) in his letters as “dear mysterious Leith Walk”. Nowadays it is a multicultural street and neighbourhood with a strong presence of residents and businesses of foreign backgrounds. The participants were united by shared practices of trade and hospitality, as well as migratory practices they all underwent at least once in life. Besides, they were a community of place, although a less interconnected one in comparison to those in further research encounters. The Portuguese pastry shop owner Michael regretfully admitted how they did not really know their immediate neighbours despite navigating the same spaces on a daily basis.

For many research participants their respective shops held a sentimental value and references to different timespaces, such as a memory of what felt good about their place of origin. This can be seen in the narration of Patricia, a shop owner of Portuguese descent who emigrated with her family at a young age and finally settled in Edinburgh, but holds the memories of her homeland close to heart:

Obviously, we could not be just another coffee shop, because there are 500 more on the same street. So we thought, why don’t we do a Portuguese pastry shop, where we can give all our customers what we once enjoyed?

Often it is simple things, such as traditional food, that tend to instigate cycles of memories, narrations and related identity work among people involved in migratory practices. The feelings of safety and familiarity, too, are fundamental for a displaced person in a situation where her identities are rendered vulnerable due to being away from that place, as exemplified by Shanzay from Pakistan:

I’ve seen ladies who cannot really speak English properly, but they come here with their children to find company, get some advice. It is a kind of community centre, more than just a shop. I think there are more facets to the shop than it might look from outside.

This narration touches upon the notion of identities in flux, which are equally relevant for people and places. The shops run by migrants in Edinburgh would always fluctuate between at least two identities: a place that provides services and a safe space of community support.

As a result of immediate engagement with the participants’ stories, my colleagues and I came up with a fictional character, a collective personage compiled from the variety of personal narratives heard, overheard, written, photographed, filmed and hand-drawn. This personage was someone who inhabits and navigates the same spaces as the people of Edinburgh, someone they might have seen or heard of. The character’s origin was kept ambiguous due to the variety of cultural inputs included in her portrait.

The character's story was written according to the basic structure of storytelling: divided into three principal acts, introduction, development and resolution, and incorporating an inciting moment, a mid-point and a climax (McKey, 1997). After defining key events, storylines and supporting characters, the final story was developed in the form of a personal diary that covered a period of five years, from the day of the character's arrival to Edinburgh, through her struggle to belong and relate to the unfamiliar, heartbreaks, new friendships, challenges of unemployment and fluctuation between decisions to stay or to leave. The story is a collection of both negative and positive experiences narrated by research participants, as well as several observations made by us, the researchers, in Edinburgh. The aim to make the story personal and first-hand prompted the choice of the style of a diary, which, in its turn, helped to determine a unit of intervention–a diary entry. The entries varied in subjects and mood:

> *Day 11. Everyday I overhear people talking languages from all over the world. It fascinates me. I try to guess the meaning of those phrases before they fade away.*

> *Day 150. I sit in a group interview in a restaurant. I am surrounded by high school students and young people looking for a job. A voice in my head keeps repeating that I do not belong here. I look at everyone's faces, and ask myself why I put myself through this. I want to leave. Instead, I will wait.*

Creative choices regarding physical representation of the determined artefacts led to the manufacturing of 86 rectangular cardboard placards, sixteen by ten centimetres each. The placards were wrapped in newspaper jackets, the choice based on the availability of the material, as well as, on the objective of highlighting the temporal dimension of the artefacts. The diary entries were all formatted in the same manner, printed out and glued to the newspaper-covered placards. The inspiration behind the form came partly from the city of Edinburgh where benches in public places are often marked with thoughtful placards of affection for loved ones who have passed away, for example: "For Léan Scully who made a festival of this city" (Ross, 2012).

The story was told by placing the placards throughout the city on the surfaces of mundane features, such as phone booths, bus stops, mailboxes, pub windows (Figure 16). The entries were placed in portions over the course of one week. We aimed to cover multiple areas of the city, not just the neighbourhood where the stories surfaced—the intervention spread mainly through central parts of Edinburgh, as well as popular districts, such as, Portobello beach and Stockbridge. However, there was an element of spontaneity to the process of intervening: occasionally the site-led nature of the project would manifest itself and the discovery of a fitting location through walking would lead to placing an artefact in it.

Figure 16. Examples of photo documentation of the intervention *Have you heard?*, Edinburgh, UK. July 2014. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko.

An important stage of every act of the intervention was observation and embracing of its transience the moment after placing each artefact. That is, the moment when a story fragment had been told and started its independent journey. During implementation of the final acts of the intervention, a stronger public response was being observed, such as passersby slowing down and verbally recognising the artefacts as similar to the ones they had seen previously in a different location.

Every placed artefact was documented in an identical manner—photographed from three different viewpoints. The first point was a close-up allowing viewers to read the entry and to establish a relationship with it. The second shot opened up the space allowing the viewer to understand the kind of context the artefact was placed in. The third image was a very open shot almost inviting the viewer for a walk in the neighbourhood where the artefact was placed. This last shot pictured passersby, traffic and other indications of life in this specific cityscape. Some images managed to capture the response of the space to the intervention through human presence.

This case study led me to reflect on the methods that mediate empathic narrative sharing and on the immediate and future audiences that can potentially encounter these stories. Through colliding together the narrative identities and life histories of the research participants into the transient spatial intervention and more lasting outcomes, the documentary film and online map, I explored methods for expanding the spatial boundaries of local audiences.

4.2.2. Case study 2: Shop around the corner

I met my second community of research participants in Cork, Ireland. The case study and its specific arts-based processes are discussed from the position of collaborative artistic practices in Article 1.

On a rainy Irish morning in February 2016 I got to know the street. I had been invited to join Quarter Block Party festival in Cork, Ireland, with my arts-based research project, and every commissioned artist of the festival had to "meet" the street. They are in fact two streets—North and South Main Street. When the city of Cork came to be, they came to be, too, and have been around ever since. They covered themselves with homes, churches, shops, pharmacies and other small businesses. Families lived there and maintained those shops and businesses and, with them, the unique identity of the neighbourhood. Now, seven centuries later, the street is still there, so are some of the shops and families. But lately, left out of the latest city planning endeavours, the neighbourhood has turned into a margin in the very centre of Cork. Local artists and activists came up with an idea of Quarter Block Party festival to support and honour the heritage of North and South Main Street, which I joined. The local shop owners and their stories inspired the site-specific intervention *Shop around the corner* and, much like in the case study *Have you heard?*, served both as an artistic input and research data. Storytelling intervention, thus, became a recurring artistic and research activity in my practice. The artistic objective of the process in Cork was to render the traders' stories audible in the neighbourhood and to create a dialogue about the current state of urban planning in Cork. Article 1 uses this case study as an example and situates it within a larger discussion of the potential of narrative-based art with communities as a means of dialogue and empowerment.

Six traders, four local artists and one community activist participated in the project and contributed their stories, artefacts and skill towards building a transcendent collaborative art piece in North and South Main Street. This community is united by shared practices of trading and hospitality and to a strong extent is a community of place. The narratives communicated by the research participants were centred, mostly in the timespaces of the past. This can be partly explained by the context of the festival that addresses the histories of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants, partly by the special storytelling talent I encountered in many Irish people. As Rosarii reminisces on the street of her childhood, her short narrations provide at once personal, social and spatiotemporal contexts for her life world:

> *[I remember] as a very small child being lulled to sleep by the chinking of the bottles stored in the wine wholesaler at number 13… [I remember] my six-year old brother protecting me from the local bully who was also six, when he tried to take one of my teddies that I had taken out on to the street to have a picnic in front of my mother's shop one Sunday morning, I was five.*

The narrator guides the listener through her shifting identities as a child, a young girl, a daughter, a sister, and a neighbour. We get an idea about the routines and the mundane life of North Main Street thirty years ago. Identity work can be observed in the way Rosarii made sense of and can now look from a distance at the incident with the bully that must have been significant as a young child.

Although a lot of memories and identities narrated by the traders were picturesque stories that were yet to be analysed and "decoded", some of them already encompassed rather deep mediation and analysis. Towards the end of their dialogue that I attended to, Patrick and Rose formulated a simple insight into the history of North Main Street that concluded in itself a reflection on identities in flux, identity of place and the capacity of that place to reinvent itself, as if a place, indeed, has a "self", much like a person:

Patrick: You had a school down the street.
Rose: That's right.
Patrick: Between our shop and Bradley's there was St Francis School. And a lot of people were going to that school and you had plenty of activity all throughout the day. Then it became nothing, it became an empty building for some years, and now it's a school again… It's almost like the wheel keeps going around, the street keeps reinventing itself.
Rose: It does, and it will change obviously again. Do you know?

This conversation encompassed a great deal of care and empathy from the traders towards their place and community, the street of their past, present and future. The encounter with the research participants in Cork contributed greatly to my understanding of the place-bound and the collective dimensions of individual identities that Arefi (1999) and Appiah (2005) wrote about, as quoted in Chapter 2. These understandings contributed further to the development of the concept of narrative identity of place.

4.2.3. Case study 3: Margin to margin

The four communities of *Margin to margin* concluded the fieldwork for my study. The case study and its four sub-cases are discussed in detail from the perspectives of collaborative artistic practices, identity work and ethical frameworks in Articles 2, 4 and 5.

This part of the fieldwork was carried out from early October to mid-December 2016 by my four fellow artist-researchers and me. Each of us joined the project with her own research focus, artistic objective or both. We carried out short-term in situ engagements with communities in two locations of South Australia, in Rovaniemi, Finland, and in Murmansk, Russia, and later maintained relationships with them through digital media and collaborative group exhibitions. The project primarily focused on female artists from "the edges of the world", although male artists were not excluded and joined in most of the sub-cases, except for the one in Fowlers Bay with the Aboriginal artists. All of the four workshops were based on an approach where the artists developed their individual art pieces freely interpreting research themes, while also participating in collective processes, thereby contributing material, visual and narrative data to the research. The unifying narrative processes in the four locations were constituted by group discussions and individual interviews. The artists were invited to participate in collaborative art-making processes. The approach during the workshops aimed to enable art-making activities around the themes of roles and identities, margin and artistic practice as a coping mechanism. After the introduction of the themes, the participants would engage in the processes of creation, resorting to various media and techniques, such as painting, textile art and installation. Once an art piece was produced, the maker would share the stories and reflections behind its creation.

Additionally, interactions between the four locations were initiated, having the participants share artefacts and messages that would be sent from one margin to another. The processes and interactions were well documented in diverse media, as accounted for in detail in Article 5 and Section 3.2.3. of this dissertation. The narratives and artwork of 93 participants, 86 women and seven men, were collected during this case study.

The two Arctic sub-cases, in Rovaniemi and Murmansk, are analysed in great detail in Article 4. The comparative analysis between them allowed to deepen the understanding of narrative identity approach in community-based contexts, as well as expand the understanding of the concept of the margin from objective to subjective viewpoint. In order to avoid repetitions, I will focus on two South Australian sub-cases of *Margin to margin* in this section.

Fowlers Bay, Australia

The art camp in Fowlers Bay, South Australia, took place in October 2016 and was the very first field activity for *Margin to margin*. More than forty artists and researchers came together for one week: Aboriginal, Australian, Finnish and

international ones. Making and storytelling were shared in moments that were rich and layered much like the collaborative felts that were created. This meeting encompassed the feeling of community, togetherness, and co-creation with makers from different cultural backgrounds. Many stories about the place, materialities and cultural symbolisms were both orally narrated and captured in physical artworks. The narratives of misplacement referred to in Article 2 were poignant and present in the stories of the Aboriginal artists, which were expressed in painting alongside traditional symbols of their land. The camp had a strong learning component to it. The Anangu Aboriginal artists shared their knowledge on weaving with raffia palm and similar materials, while the Finnish shared their expertise in wet felting, in this case from Australian Merino wool. One of the artists, Sherrie, reflected on the experience weaving into her narrative family and community histories, as well as her multiple identities as a daughter, a student, an artist, a community member:

> *I know where I come from thanks to my stepmother, family and elders. I'm so proud for being an Aboriginal artist, to share my culture with you and your good friends that have come a long way from their homes across the sea. What a great time it was–best!–to learn something new.*

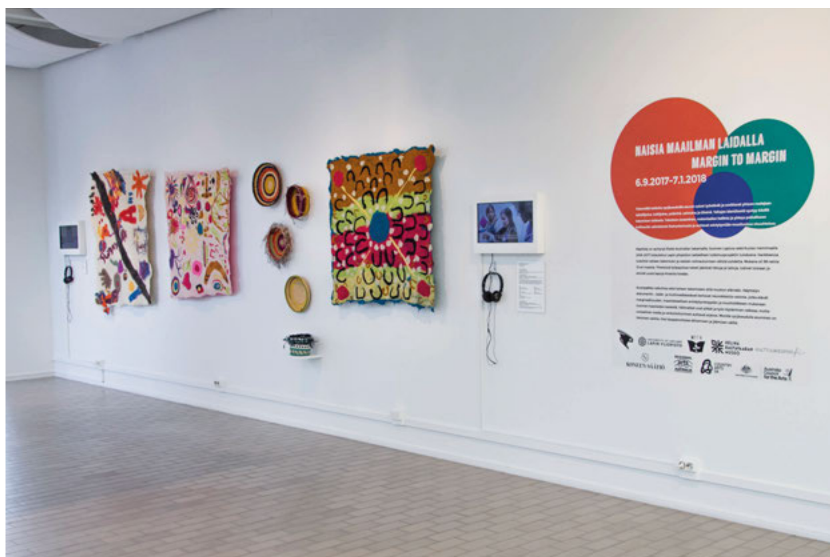

Figure 17. The woven and felted artworks on display in Helinä Rautavaaran Museo, Espoo (Finland). September 2017. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko.

The nine woven baskets by four Aboriginal and one Finnish artist represent the individual artistic processes that took place during the workshop, alongside group making activities. Each object of the woven artworks display manifests an individual interpretation of a very traditional weaving technique and brings this craft form to a new artistic level. Behind the two felting pieces there are narratives and stories, the creation of which was captured on camera (Figure 17): community activist Mima Smart talked about the idea behind her design, which depicts the Aboriginal women of South Australia come together to make art. The Fowlers Bay sub-case is analysed alongside the Port Augusta sub-case in Article 2 with the focus on methods of establishing researcher-participant empathy.

Port Augusta, Australia

Platform Gallery is based in a 100-year old building at Pichi Richi railway station. An old steam train runs past the gallery every Saturday and Sunday. The gallery space is full of light. Artworks from local makers are elegantly placed all around the halls. This became the setting for the second Australian workshop, with Fibrespace Inc, a collective of textile and mixed media artists living and working in South Australia's outback. The skill set and experience of the collective, as well as their enthusiasm, energy and willingness to share their stories, was both striking and humbling. One of the group's distinct features proved to be a strong and generous storytelling tradition and the continuity of skill and knowledge. Here is 83-year old Melva recounting craft and knowledge transfer in her family:

> *[My great-granddaughter] came to me when she was seven and I taught her to sew. And she entered into a quilting exhibition, she won three sewing machines, one each year, and by the time she was fourteen she didn't need me anymore, she surpassed me.*

The first virtual contact between the Fibrespace artists and the researchers of the project happened months before the meeting in Port Augusta. The artists' initiative to reach out to their Finnish counterparts resulted in *Conversations with Lapland*, a set of stories and artefacts recounting the collective's work. The participants in the North, in Rovaniemi and Murmansk, responded eagerly. This later became a starting point for *Conversations with the Edge,* one of the collaborative pieces of the project curated by Dr Sarantou into an installation. Their joined artefacts and videos provided material for a separate installation in the project's concluding exhibition in Finland. Such pro-activity of the communities called for the objective of expanding and maintaining connectivity between remote communities of practice.

The two workshops in Australia were very different from one another in terms of setting, artists' backgrounds, available resources and other aspects. It is interesting to note, however, the similarities that the artists living on the edges of

the world share in their work, life and shifting roles and identities, and the way that sharing is enabled through the creation of empathic environments.

I would like to conclude this chapter with Figure 18 and the story it tells. Zena Cox was one of the oldest members of the Fibrespace group. Many of her fellow artists used to be her students and learnt their craft from her. Her story narrated over the painted mandala of her life reveals how even after a traumatic event that involves partial memory loss or, perhaps, even due to it, one seeks to make sense of one's life, narratively and through visual mapping. Zena's story encompasses powerful self-reflection and poetry:

> *When I was born, as far I am concerned I was in a black hole, from there I guess I came out, I was able to see and hear and do things. It has been a long time and that black hole has been in the back of my head for many years. Recently I started thinking about it because I was in another black hole about 12-18 months ago when I fell and hit my head and was unconscious for weeks. So, that is the story but it was not meant to be just that, it was meant to be a whole heap of other things. But as far as I am concerned that white is the blank of the rest of my life… I am happy, don't have to worry anymore about anything. But still there is that black hole. Nothing more and that is the most important part.*

Figure 18. A still of Zena Cox's video-interview telling about the mandala that she painted in Port Augusta (Australia). October 2016.

Zena Cox is no longer with us. She passed away in August 2017, less than a year after our encounter in Port Augusta. It was an honour to attend to her story. Her powerful words, her painting, the memories of everyone to whom she taught her craft in that small community of place and practice in the outback of South Australia will live on in our film, on these pages and in our hearts.

The large case study of *Margin to margin* allowed me to draw conclusions on the methodologies of community engagement and, thus, to complete the formulation of the first methodological finding of the study, *a framework for reflexive arts-based research with communities*. The vast geography of the case study complemented the perspectives on the theoretical concepts of place/space and margin, while the variety of artistic expertise present among the participants allowed for implementation of different arts-based methods. The vast artistic output, joined with very personal sensitive content the art narrated, allowed me to reflect more on the ethics of representation and develop the third finding of the study.

This chapter talked about processes of mediation, care, curation, representation carried out towards narratives, spaces and audiences, both generalising my mediative practices and exemplifying them through the case studies. I sought to demonstrate how explicit and implicit processes of mediation underlie every stage of research in human contexts from the first encounter all the way to the representation of the results.

I have told everything I know about my research encounters now and everything I reflected upon during the study's different stages. I attempted to envelop its complexities, giving them a form and a rhythm, while carefully avoiding over-simplification. The final chapter remains, in which I will talk about what has been learnt.

5. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

> …what matters is not the enclosure of the work within a harmonious figure, but the centrifugal force produced by it—a plurality of language as a guarantee of a truth that is not merely partial.
>
> —Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium, 1988*

This concluding chapter of the dissertation will present the findings of the study. Due to the hands-on nature of this research, the achieved findings have both theoretical and practical applications. As was mentioned previously in the introduction, the key findings of the study are composed from the findings of the articles and my further reflections on them. In order to introduce the key findings, I will first discuss the results article by article. Figure 19 visualises the relationships between the findings and how they interconnect and allow for the bigger picture to emerge. In Sections 5.1.-5.3., I will introduce the three key findings of the study in detail outlining the value and application of each one of them. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the whole study and an outline of the avenues for further research.

Article 1 analyses three independent case studies in the field of socially engaged art and brings forward the similarities in the methods of community engagement used there. Upon the analysis, the article concludes by formulating *a framework for wellbeing and empowerment through artistic practices*. This framework derives from Päivi-Maria Jaatinen's (2015) discussion of wellbeing through visual art practices and is composed of an ethnographic approach, sensitising through narratives and storytelling, cultural probing and triangular research design. Its formulation served as a basis for further exploration of methodologies for community engagement for my co-authors and me in Article 2, as well as providing the initial basis for the first main finding of the study presented in detail in Section 5.1. The case study *Shop around the corner* reviewed in Article 1 is of interest for this study. There, the dialogue enabled through narrative and site-specific art practices contributed to empowering identity work for both the participants and myself as the artist-researcher. The said process of empowerment was facilitated in the case study through the creation of temporary platforms for the community members to share their memories and the problems their neighbourhood faces. The process was further observed through the positive, even warm, responses of the research participants to having seen their memories implemented in a physical form in the public spaces of the neighbourhood.

Article 2 looks into the potential of arts-based processes as an entry point into different communities, as the forefront of further co-processes, such as service design with communities. Having analysed arts-based engagements with two South Australian communities, the article, thus, formulates two findings: a) *a*

framework for researcher-participant empathy that can be applied in various community-based contexts including service design; and b) *the use of audiovisual documentation as a point of connection with research participants*. The latter (b), joined with one of the findings of Article 4, forms the third of the key findings of the study, as explained below and in Section 5.3. The former (a) was built on similar methodological principles as the framework from Article 1 and elaborated through the use of the stages of empathy that derive from psychological concepts. The two frameworks for community engagement from Articles 1 and 2, combined with further reflection on my research process, allowed me to formulate the first of the main findings of this study, *a framework for reflexive arts-based research with communities*.

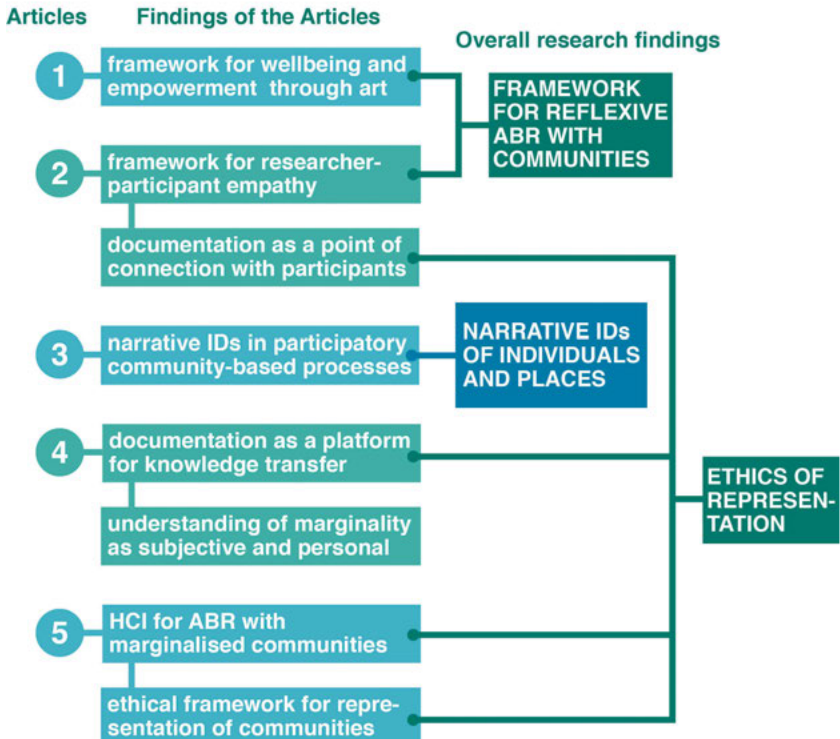

Figure 19. Visualisation of the research findings of the articles and overall study.

Article 3 argues for shifting the focus away from stakeholders' roles and, instead, towards their *narrative identities in participatory community-based art and design processes,* which benefits both the quality of engagement and narrative identity work of every party involved. This on its own is a valuable finding that impacted on further fieldwork and analysis in meaningful ways. Upon evaluating the role of place in the study, I built on top of this finding and attempted to conceptualise narrative identity of place. This combined theoretical viewpoint on *narrative identities of individuals and places* constitutes the second key finding of the study.

Article 4 employs the narrative identity approach from Article 3 in analysis of the narrative processes in two Arctic cases. The narrative analysis here takes a strong comparative stance and presents an understanding of each of the two cases in relation to the other, as well as to the larger context of urban Arctic communities of practice. Thus, two findings emerge and are constituted by theoretical and practical understandings respectively: a) *a deeper understanding of marginality as subjective and personal*, as opposed to objective and externally imposed; b) *the use of audiovisual documentation as a platform for rendering implicit knowledge explicit.* The former (a) responded to one of the main inquiries raised in the project *Margin to margin* regarding the concept of margin and the ways remote communities relate to it. The latter finding (b), together with one of the findings of Article 2 and further reflection, form the third key finding of this study, an approach to *ethics of representation.* This third finding of the study came about through the process of dynamic mediation of standard ethical procedures for research in human contexts throughout fieldwork.

Article 5 addresses the timely issues of digital connectivity and representation that are relevant both for the researchers and the research participants when working in situ and remotely with distant global communities. It concludes with a practical understanding of the *application of digital technology and new media (iDoc) in arts-based research with marginalised communities*, as an important avenue for digital participation, representation and further research. This article also presented *an ethical framework* for developing such representation and dissemination tools. Both these findings contributed to the third main finding of the study mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Based on the analysis and grouping of the findings article by article, three key findings of the study will be elaborated upon over the next three sections:

1) a framework for reflexive arts-based research with communities;
2) a theoretical viewpoint on narrative identities of individuals and places;
3) an approach to ethics of representation.

The first and third findings address the research gap outlined in the end of Chapter 2 that called for a common ground for narrative, spatial and arts-based processes with communities, while the second finding sheds light on the other two research gaps: rethinking of placeness in community-based context and reflection of narrative identity of place.

5.1. FRAMEWORK FOR REFLEXIVE ARTS-BASED RESEARCH

In Griffiths' chapter on the self in research, the artist Simon Jones talks about a "mood of together-aloneness in contemporary experience of self" that is enabled by the media, which facilitates both "apparently increased intimacy and exposure and exacerbated feelings of disassociation and isolation" (Griffiths, 2010, p.176). This is a valuable observation on both reflexivity and empathy that, despite being considered virtues in qualitative research in human contexts, are not necessarily inherent qualities for every qualitative researcher. Degarrod (2013) defines empathy as a type of emotional reasoning, both cognitive and imaginative, in which one "emotionally resonates with the experience of another while simultaneously attempting to imaginatively view a situation from that person's perspective" (p. 406). The narratives and occurrences of empathy and care have surfaced implicitly and explicitly throughout the planning, fieldwork and writing up of this study. I explain here how specific arts-based and reflexive processes facilitated the forming of empathy and shaped the framework for reflexive ABR with communities.

Building researcher-participant empathy has been an underlying objective and one of the enablers of meaningful research encounters throughout this study, although a framework for empathy was put into words only during the third stage of fieldwork and discussed in detail in Article 2. I am including here the visualisation of that first framework for the convenience of the reader, even though this figure is presented in Article 2 (Figure 20). The formulation of this revised framework was preceded in Article 1 through presenting a framework for wellbeing and empowerment via artistic practices that relied on a similar methodological setup with an ethnographic approach, with sensitising through narratives and storytelling at its core. Empowerment can be regarded as an important step in gaining control of circumstances that communities and individuals have to live with (Rappaport, 1984). The practice of storytelling has been identified as one of the key mechanisms for empowerment (Rappaport, 1995; Michlin, 2006; Garretson, 2015).

The framework for researcher-participant empathy in Article 2 is related to research and collaborative processes in human contexts and relies on an established psychological framework for empathy with four principal phases: discovery, immersion, connection and detachment (Kouprie & Visser, 2009). In the article, my colleagues and I included planning as a crucial phase preceding the said four stages and acknowledged the complexity of the final phase of detachment during research with communities, namely the need for sensitive and ethical "exit strategies" both for the sake of the communities and the researchers. Translating these phases further into the context of reflexive research implies also detachment from the self of the researcher in order to process the data, which is even more complex (read: nearly impossible) for obvious reasons.

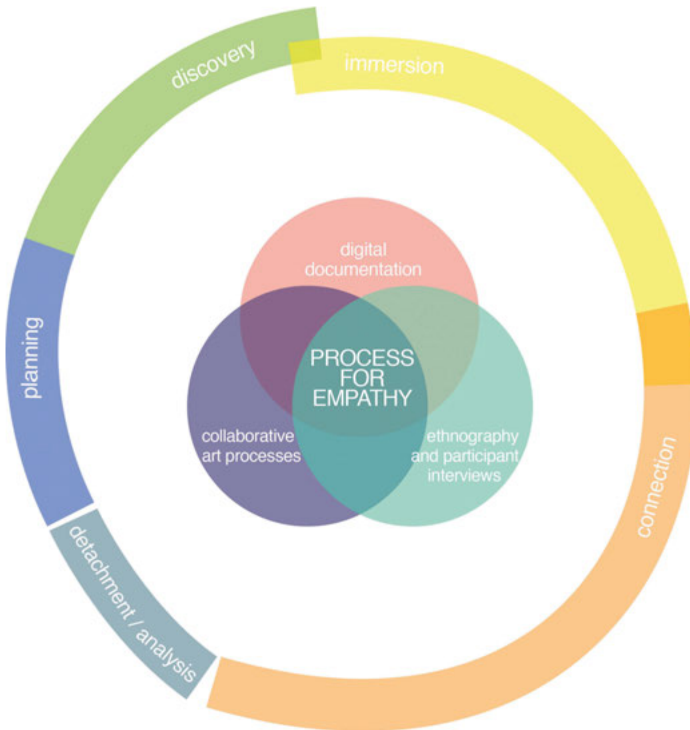

Figure 20. Visualisation of the process for researcher-participant empathy.

Taking the findings of the two articles further and comparing the way every research encounter eventuated, I altered the framework with an objective to make it scalable and applicable in a variety of contexts. The framework is envisaged and represented graphically in Figure 21 as an open-ended and self-shaping system where any number of components and actors can be included at any stage. The phases of planning, discovery, connection, immersion and detachment remain the same. Below I will explain the steps each phase encompasses. I will attempt to write this finding in a neutral third person case, as opposed to the majority of the dissertation written in first person, so that the reader can view this framework as applicable to other contexts than my own research experience. I will, however, give examples from my own study in-between. The figure is titled *Research framework*, because it depicts accurately the stages and process of the fieldwork encounters in this study. However, by formulating this finding I aim to contextualise it in a more general way for the sake of its applicability in other contexts that will be outlined in the end of the section.

The stage of *planning* here implies two or more artist-researchers conceiving a research project together, as often happens in participatory community-based setups. In all the case studies comprising my research I collaborated with other artist-researchers from the moment of ideation, except for the case study *Shop around the corner*, where I was a commissioned artist-researcher and was joined by collaborators, local artists, already during the stage of connection, whereupon empathy building process had to occur nonetheless.

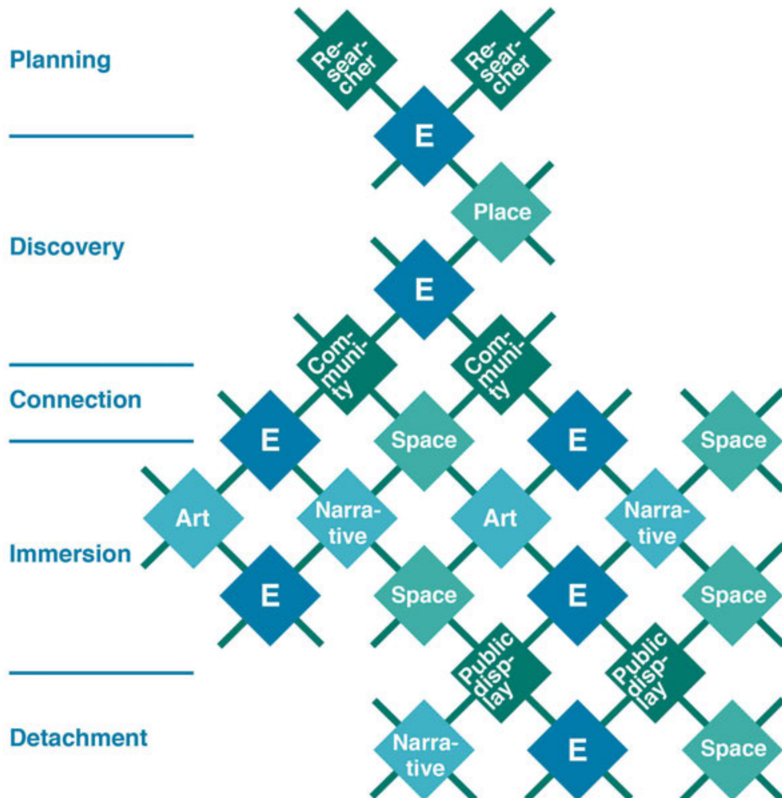

Figure 21. Visualisation of the framework for reflexive ABR (E=Empathy).

In the process of familiarisation with each other, identifying common research interests, themes and strategies, the first cycle of empathy is expected to happen between the researchers as pictured by a diamond with the letter *E* in the diagram. Due to empathy being a fragile and unguaranteed category, there is not really a criterion to measure whether the empathy, indeed, has formed and to what extent. In my subjective experiences, previously established connections with colleagues, acquaintances or friends allowed for the pathways into research/project groups, but even then empathy between us was not a given.

The same methods for empathy building that are used with research participants are valid during the planning phase, among the researchers, namely narrative sharing and arts-based practices, for example, visualising research themes and design through mind maps or graphic representation. In a situation where a researcher works on her own, the planning phase happens nonetheless, but may be merged with that of discovery.

From that place of empathy and shared understanding of the inquiry, the researchers enter the phase of *discovery*, which in many cases coincides with the beginning of the fieldwork. The fieldwork starts with in situ research, familiarising oneself with the chosen place through walking, observing, taking notes, photographing. This was usually the case for me, although I started "Google-walking" through North Main Street prior to entering the field for the case study *Shop around the corner* due to time constraints placed on the in situ discovery. Getting to know the place before getting to know its people is important. While it is still a "no man's land", an uncharted territory, before the researcher starts relating to it through the gaze of her research participants and practise it into shared spaces together with them, she has this one opportunity at looking through the "reflexive lens" of her own perceptions, through a stranger's gaze. The place itself soon starts sharing narratives. For example, in Leith Walk in Edinburgh where my colleagues and I ended up working most of the time, we could not help but acknowledge the ubiquitous visuals that narrated—through symbols, image and text, such as signboards, advertisements and other elements—less familiar places and cultures.

This type of exploration where stimuli are absorbed from the environment through tacit ways of knowing activates the mechanisms of improvisation, an "ongoing process of learning and inquiry" (Montuori, 2003) that can lead to creative solutions later on in the process (e.g. Nachmanovitch, 1991; Montuori, 2003; Sarantou, 2014). In the same example of the Edinburgh case study the curious visual culture of the street and the shops encouraged us to approach the shop owners as our research participants, and later on those same visual narratives prompted some of the storylines in the spatial intervention.

This type of exploration also prepares the researcher to the encounter with her research participants, as the explored place in many ways bears indirect inputs and artefacts of their life worlds. This process launches a new cycle of empathy—

between the researcher and the place—and it is then when she proceeds to the next phase.

The *connection* phase is usually a brief one in comparison to the rest of them. It encompasses getting to know the community of participants by introducing oneself and inviting them to introduce themselves. The act of opening up about herself and her research process is crucial for the researcher, as trust and consequent empathy are not a given during this sensitive phase. It is then and there where the ethical procedures come into play: being transparent with the community regarding shared activities and their further implications, ensuring informed consent from every research participant and implementing the approach of radical inclusion I wrote about in Section 3.1.4. All of this involves being open to the unexpected, even to a possibility of “disconnection” in this connection phase.

In most of the cases in this study, the groups of research participants were invited to join through previously established connections that came about through professional and informal networks, except for the case study *Have you heard?*, where approaching the participants relied largely on improvisation. This enabled faster understanding of the contexts as at least one of my colleagues or myself was more familiar with them from the start. This impacted on the dynamics of empathy mostly positively, although a degree of bias needed to be accounted for, as was established in Section 3.1.2. *Reflexive research*.

Empathy does not come about to stay, it is fragile and ephemeral and requires continuous work, almost reaffirmation. Thus, having achieved a degree of empathy during one of the phases does not mean it cannot be withdrawn by one of the parties at a later stage. This is to say that the researcher must bear in mind a possibility of an overlap between the different phases of this framework, for example, due to the need to go back to the connection phase and reaffirm the empathy that has faded away for one or another reason.

When the researcher-participant empathy comes about in the connection phase, the place of their encounter starts to be practised into a shared space.

This third cycle of empathy and establishing of a shared space enables the beginning of narrative and artistic processes in the phase of *immersion*. Those processes enable the next cycle of empathy between the research participants including the researcher herself, as has been exemplified throughout fieldwork situations. The same shared narrative and artistic processes enable creation or transformation of spaces. These vary from creating intimate spaces for interviews to transforming studios, old churches, and former train station spaces to accommodate both collective and individual art-making. Video-documentation of the place and the processes in it, too, reinvents and recreates the observed space through a documentalist gaze.

The processes pictured by the first three rows of diamonds in the phase of immersion in the diagram can repeat themselves any number of times, as every utterance of a narrative can enable a new cycle of empathy that, in its turn,

prompts the next cycle of narration. (Or destroy the mere possibility of that new cycle if empathy does not come about.) During the very engaged immersion phase, the ethical inclusive procedures must be upheld even more thoroughly than in the phase of connection.

In the same way creating an art piece, collectively or on one's own, can evoke empathy in the viewer or fellow maker and facilitate new space for art-making. In other words, narratives, art, empathy and space of their occurrences are generative of one another, and "to the extent that art can generate empathy, and empathy can bridge the differences between us, art is implicitly 'mediative'" (Cypis, Oetgen, & Vander Giessen, 2013, p. 1).

The phase of immersion usually corresponds with data collection in the field, although the researcher can start collecting data already during the stages of discovery and connection.

The phase of *detachment* implies in simple terms a transition towards analysis of the data, as has been explained in Article 2 in relation to the framework for researcher-participant empathy. Detachment, if implemented with care, does not result in broken links and the "undoing" of empathy. It serves rather for processing of the lived and shared experiences, thoughts, and life that happened and goes on. It may also hold a promise of return and continuity, an objective elaborated on in Article 5.

In the setup of reflexive arts-based research this phase also implies representation, or entering of the created artefacts into a public display. The stories and artworks are created with an audience and a space in mind, be it a digital space of storytelling, an exhibition or a public space. Therefore, the detachment phase means for the researcher mostly exiting a field situation, the physical detachment from the research participants and the shared spaces of encounter. The generative processes, however, do not cease at this stage. Placed in public display, narratives and artworks generate new spaces of viewership, as well as new narratives: curatorial and mediative. The mere presence of a viewer transforms the said space yet again. The viewer's engagement with the narratives and artworks generates yet another cycle of empathy and yet another narrative process, a dialogic one to be more precise—a dialogue happens between the communities and their audiences.

I attempted to illustrate the framework as a living responsive diagram that shapes itself throughout the process of fieldwork. As the diamonds can be added, they can also be taken away. As new narrative, spaces, audiences, occurrences of empathy are welcome, it can also happen so that a link is removed, or even has to be removed in order to narrow down the focus of the study. In this case the framework does not fall apart. It only means that one might have to navigate the diagram in a flexible adjustable manner, for example, to revert to earlier steps in previous rows, to reshape or reorder the diamonds of previous phases of the framework and repeat.

The value of this framework lies in its applicability as a practical tool guiding a researcher's or practitioner's action in the field, including any participatory practices, be they project planning, project implementation or dissemination, as it guides emphatic processes. If the art component is removed from the equation, the disciplinary field of its application can spread towards social work, participatory policy making, and social and service design. As the framework is living and flexible, showing dynamic relationships and processes, it may not only guide planning and project design, but also adapt through change and ongoing processes.

5.2. NARRATIVE IDENTITIES OF INDIVIDUALS AND PLACES

By taking further the findings of Article 3, I propose a theoretical viewpoint on narrative identity and its role in approaching individuals and places in arts-based and community-based contexts in order to gain a deeper insight into their life worlds.

Narrative identity has been understood as a psychological process (Ricoeur, 2005; McAdams, 2013) of sense-making and defined in detail in Section 2.1. of this dissertation. Ricoeur (1992) explains narrative identity as a kind of constant balancing between an individual's flexible and stable identities. He refers to this balance as "the pole of self-maintenance", like the one that holds a playground swing in balance (p. 119). In the process of this self-balance and self-maintenance, flexible identities do not necessarily disappear irreversibly, as this process is cyclic: "the self returns just when the same slips away" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 128). The effort behind this balancing and figuring oneself out is what has been referred to as narrative identity work in Section 2.1.

The use of narrative identities in narrative and community-based art and design practices was conceptualised in Article 3 and applied further in Article 4 as a participatory arts-based research tool, data collection approach, and an analytical tool later on. Specifically, the artistic practice implemented as a part of the case study *Have you heard?* operated as critical spatial practice by engaging with personal narratives and those of the space and collating them together. The project facilitated the sharing of spoken, written, visual and otherwise performed stories that were place-specific and identity-specific. Narrative identities, those stable and shifting identities, that are negotiated through internal narratives, revealed by the research participants through this sharing provided a frame of reference for looking at their life worlds, as well as the urban space the project took place in, thus enriching the research outcomes and artistic data. Making narrative sense of the identities related to their places of origin and their current environments allowed the research participants to be in charge of and guide the way their stories were represented artistically.

Four aspects of narrative identity work were identified on the way to this finding in Article 3: *contextuality, intersectionality, authorship* and *power*. That is to say that an individual doing narrative identity work makes sense, consciously or subconsciously, of the changing contexts of her self-identification and the multiplicity of identities she may assume for herself simultaneously. She also finds a balance, again consciously or subconsciously, between the narrative of her own making and socially constructed ones. The aspect of power becomes especially relevant in a participatory project setup and it is a responsibility of the researcher to ensure the sharing of narrative identities on an equal footing, for example, through the sharing of the researcher's own perspectives and life experiences. Acknowledging one's own identity processes internally as well as explicitly to the

participants may act as a common denominator and help to "flatten" potential power structures and hierarchies.

The perspective of narrative identities applied for narrative analysis provided deeper understanding and opened up new meaningful ways for dialogue and participation. Storytelling and narrativity are inherent and determinant to social practices (Somers, 1994, p. 621). Making sense of the participants' own sense-making of the shifting nature of their identities through storytelling was an empathic process for the researcher. At the same time, the stories that participants told assisted their processes of self-discovery, reminiscing and making connections between reality, memories and emotions.

When communicated in a place by its people, personal and collective narratives and narrative identities become embedded into this practised place, transforming it into a space.

Narrative identity of place

Personal identity (internal) and identity of place (external) are both dependent on signs and symbols (semiotics) and the latter can stimulate transformations of the former. In light of this, I propose to look at narrative identity applications in regards to places/spaces. Places themselves have narrative identities that can be examined and brought about through artistic practice. The narrative identity of place is manifested through symbolisms that narrate the multiple individual narrative identities present through visual culture, text, utterances, stories, and material culture. These symbolisms render the space "identified"—identity work is done to places by their social component, narratively or through symbolisms, thus practising them into spaces.

Then, of course, there are places in-between, marginal, "unidentified" ones. To this category I do not automatically attribute abandoned or under-used places. In fact, those often undergo active narrative identity processes, for example, through the groups of "urban explorers" that frequent them and leave their marks. The said in-betweenness relates mainly to the kind of places where a link between them and their community is missing, where individuals or communities struggle to belong, or where either the community or the place itself is "part of the whole but outside the main body" (hooks, 1989, p. 206). Examples would be places of involuntary exile, newly inhabited places or those that recently underwent reconstruction beyond their community's recognition. Artistic practice and storytelling can help to make sense of such unidentified places, or any places for that matter, or to reclaim the "lost" narrative identities that used to be perceived as stable, but ended up being flexible and changeable. These practices can facilitate the said sense-making and reclaiming of personal narrative identities, too. This has been an ongoing process throughout the research encounters of this study linking together places, stories and identities.

The same way bell hooks (1989) looks back at her childhood, where the symbolic line of the railroad tracks created a tangible divide between the people

who lived on its both sides, the divide between the margin and the centre was perpetuated visually, physically and narratively for generations of people identifying with these stable identities imposed on them. Artistic and narrative practices offer means to deconstruct such imposed dividing narratives.

Narrative identity of place is not a psychological process conducted by places, since the self is not there, at least not in the same way as it is for people. As Daniel Miller (2008) inquired: “Objects surely don’t talk. Or do they?” (p. 2). In his later work, Miller (2010) reflects on material culture’s “unspoken form of communication that could actually speak volumes” through its symbolisms (p. 12). In this study narrative identity of place refers to the role of tacit and explicit narratives and symbols of semiotics within places that contribute to psychological narrative identity processes in individuals, as the places contribute to the construction of individuals’ and communities’ fixed and fluctuating identities. People weave stories of places into their own sense-making, simultaneously shaping those places into spaces by narrating them alongside their own identities. This complex two-way process is how I understand narrative identity of place.

My research participant Shanzay from Edinburgh shared this insight about contemporary Indian culture in the city:

> *Here at the local cinema they usually play at least one Indian film. That just tells you how much community there is here. It’s very popular.*

Cinema, she explained, is very important for the Indian community, regardless of their age and occupation, not to mention that it is on its own a medium full of symbolisms. Having access to it in the place they inhabit facilitates the sense of familiarity and belonging there, as well as sustaining the connection to their faraway homeland.

Another participant whom we already met in Chapter 4, Rosarii from Cork, manifests a wide range of symbolisms in reminiscing of the past she and her neighbourhood shared. From her stories, I cannot help but perceiving the neighbourhood as an active contributor to the construction of her memories and identities. Rosarii’s memory narratives are situated within physical spaces, existing or long gone, symbolisms of the popular culture of her childhood, and embodied memories, such as dancing and doing sports:

> *[I remember] playing tennis in the car park that is now the building on 101, as a teenager with my cousin during the summer holidays…*
> *[I remember] wanting to dance as the chimney sweepers did in “Mary Poppins” on the domed roofs that were Brooks Haughton…*
> *[I remember] being in love with the “Lassie” dog figurine in the antique store where Murphy’s pharmacy is and feeling delighted when I got it for Christmas…*

As exemplified through participants' narratives above, narrative identities of place can inform cognitive and psychological processes, such as memory, recognition, and belonging, in individuals and communities. In practice this perspective can be applied in arts-based and community-based contexts, for example, in order to achieve a deeper insight into participants' life worlds, implementing place-making initiatives, bridging different stakeholders in a public space, although further exploration in this direction will be needed, as is suggested in the avenues for further research in the end of this chapter.

This section of findings allows me to finally unravel the thinking behind the title of the dissertation. I am grateful to the reader for patiently bearing with me. Narrating about places and weaving place-bound narratives into individuals' and communities' own sense-making is a special kind of place-bound identity work. In doing it, individuals and communities practise places into spaces and contribute to the processes of narrative identity of place. Reflecting on these processes expands understanding of and relationships towards placeness and placelessness.

On the other hand, spaces of temporal empathic narrative sharing can be created purposefully, as has been exemplified throughout this study. Through those spaces and the sharing that occurs in them, narrative identity work is facilitated, too.

Thus, placeness and spatiality can be both realised through narrative practices, as well as identity work of individuals and communities. Arts-based practices added to the equation enhance the narrative expression and support identity work tacitly, beyond verbalisation. These hypotheses, turned statements through practical engagements and analysis, led to the formulation of this dissertation's title: *Narrative Spaces: On identity work and placeness through arts-based narrative practices*.

5.3. ETHICS OF REPRESENTATION

Ethics of representation are often talked about in the field of qualitative research in human and digital contexts (see e.g. Marshall & Batten, 2004; Green, Bowen, Hook & Wright, 2017), but they are not a given. Time and again, when encountering research and artistic projects implemented with communities, I pay attention to some of the ethical principles overlooked by the artist or researcher. Such ethical mistakes may include representation of research participants as “the other” in an old-fashioned ethnographic manner or overlooking the change in their consent for documentation and dissemination of their image and stories throughout the process of encounter. Bad research ethics implemented knowingly or unknowingly can be traumatic for research participants and undermine a researcher’s practice and the reliability of her study.

Perhaps, “good ethics” is something that is best learnt in a practice-based manner in the field, but some crucial pitfalls and mistakes can be avoided. In this finding, I summarise the learnings from working with six global communities. The range of this study’s sample is beneficial in this respect, as it ensures broader and more “tried out” ideas reinforced in six different contexts.

Audiovisual and photo documentation constitute a considerable part of this learning, as they incorporate the sensitivity of both capturing a human image or story and its further dissemination to audiences. Four of the findings that emerged throughout the articles pointed towards the need for formulation of this finding, as demonstrated in Figure 19 in the beginning of the chapter. The research design model of radical inclusion introduced in Section 3.1.4. and the researcher’s way of looking through three metaphoric lenses formulated as a part of reflexive research approach in Section 3.1.2. were leading towards this finding from the beginning of the study, while other elements became clear through analysis formulated in Article 5 in relation to digital connectivity and representation. This is a practical finding on how to document and sustain research encounters ethically all the way from conception to dissemination of the results, not just for the sake of accurate data capturing and analysis, but through ethics, reflexivity and care towards everyone involved.

The objective of a researcher or an artist involved in a community project is to create conditions—spatial, temporal, empathic—for a shared meaning-making through narratives and artistic practice. This approach requires a comfortable timeframe (long enough, but not overstaying the welcome) in order to create mutual trust and empathy between the artist-researcher and her research participants. It is important to approach communities or individuals allowing for errors and failures, maintaining flexibility and openness and trusting that the narrative sharing will happen. When working with communities, particularly the ones “in-between”, and their narratives, a researcher can only hypothesise about the kind of contexts and stories that might get unleashed. Historical, geo-political, socio-cultural contexts layer heavily upon each and every personal story. Once they are chosen to be shared, the researcher cannot choose what she hears,

documents, knows and reflects upon, what will affect her on a personal level. She has to perceive and make sense of this sensitive data in its entirety, as well as represent it accurately, with due respect, not "speaking on behalf", but rendering the actual participants' voices audible, and taking into the account future audiences.

I will list below a summary of guidelines that result from the overall ethics-related learnings and conclusions my colleagues and I drew from the research encounters of this study.

1. The first group of guidelines relates in general to *conducting research in small and marginalised art communities*, or those united temporarily through arts-based activities. These guidelines arose mainly from the third phase of fieldwork, the case study *Margin to margin*, where one of the objectives was to connect remote communities into a global community of practice. Connectedness, however, needs to be approached empathically through the expressions of art-making, discussions and activities with participants and only if and when the participants themselves express the need for ongoing creative and cultural exchange.

Ethical considerations should be based on the concepts of data analysis that bring to light the nuances and lived experiences within these communities, while respecting their individual characteristics and circumstances. In other words, representation of artist-participants should be tailored and nuanced, not generalised and allow for their art to highlight those nuances, rather than offer informed interpretation of their contexts.

The role of artefacts must not be underestimated, as they have the potential to reveal the identities of their authors, on the one hand, but can also start journeys of their own, once removed from their authors, undergoing a variety of interpretations by the audiences that encounter them. Thus, ethics of care must be demonstrated towards the makers and the artefacts alike in order to avoid devaluation and "objectification" of the latter (Bal & Janssen, 1996).

2. The second group of guidelines concerns *ethical conduct of video making, editing and sharing*. The main danger of a careless approach to video documentation lies in the loss of empathy or the impossibility of establishing thereof through superficial story-grabbing that is likely to results in a disingenuous utterances of narratives and further desensitising of audiences to real human challenges and complex historical, cultural and geopolitical contexts.

Aspects of video documentation have been discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 4, including the sensitivity of intimate spaces of storytelling facilitated (or impaired when done without care) through the presence of a video camera. Informed consent and privacy protection constitute another set of considerations that accompanies this process.

3. The central issue with *informed consent* in research in human contexts is that once it is given, it can also be withdrawn by any research participant at any time, which needs to be both understood by the researcher and made clear for her participants. In order to overcome ethical issues with ongoing informed consent, researchers should plan for the sharing of results and data ownership with participants, which is a highly achievable objective in the ABR context, where the data and outcomes tend to take tangible and visual forms.

Privacy protection concerns around making participant data public and potentially identifiable should address the questions of who is representing whom, to whom and in what way. In the research situations I participated in, the documented participants' narrations were those they felt comfortable to share, thus, private information was withheld in the documentary processes as participants understood the responsibilities they held towards their communities and potential future audiences. This aspect is worth noting, as the role of modesty, or not sharing more than is necessary, often directs scenarios of personal storytelling (Barkhuus, 2012).

The practical value of these ethical guidelines lies in their complementary function to the framework for reflexive ABR introduced in Section 5.1. Having both in her figurative toolbox, a researcher acquires instruments to ensure more meaningful research encounters for her participants, her audiences and herself.

The three main findings of the study formulated in this chapter, *a framework for reflexive arts-based research with communities, a theoretical viewpoint on narrative identities of individuals and places* and *an approach to ethics of representation*, provide theoretical understandings and practical tools applicable in circumstances similar to my research setup, but also a variety of community-based contexts. I attempted to formulate them in such a way that they are flexible and scalable and provide space for further exploration.

5.4. CONCLUSION

What does a researcher learn from four years of planning towards, discovery of, connection with, immersion into and detachment (though never completely) from the encounters with six global communities of practice, place and placelessness?

How can arts-based narrative practices impact on the identity work carried out by individuals, communities and places, if at all? It has been gathered through the different chapters of the thesis, and most of all in Chapters 4 and 5, as well as the articles, that academic, artistic and personal value can be generated through such practices. For individuals, narrative identity work can be enabled through engagements in arts-based narrative practices that also allow one to map her life, put it into perspective. Thus, cognitive and psychological processes of individuals, such as memory and recognition, can be informed through arts-based narrative practices.

Both individuals and communities are given the tools for making sense of their place and placelessness, alongside other difficult life circumstances, through assigning new meanings and practising places into spaces, which in itself enables the processes that have been referred to as a narrative identity of place. These place-bound identity processes, alongside the empathy cycles coming about in collaborative setups, can inform cognition of belonging.

Throughout the fieldwork and the process of writing I practised the theoretical landscape mapped out in Chapter 2 into a familiar space where the research themes co-exist. The contribution of this research to arts-based inquiry in general is constituted by a combination of reflexive, arts-based and narrative ways of knowing that render tacit knowledge explicit. The study fulfilled its initial artistic objective to create short and medium-term spaces of empathy, dialogue, knowledge generation and practice exchange with communities of place, practice and placelessness through narrative and arts-based methods. These forms of engagement have been formulated into frameworks and research tools that allow for its replicability and scalability. The data acquired through arts-based narrative practices with communities can provide deeper understandings of the participants' contexts, as well as any of the research themes being explored. The additional dimension of a researcher's reflexivity in this context can bear a transformative impact on the researcher's professional practice as well as her own identity processes.

I will now look back at the key flag-posts encountered on this journey of writing and reading from Chapter 1 to 5.

In Chapter 1 *Introduction*, I equipped the reader with the key notions required to be able to navigate the dissertation. I posed the research questions article-by-article and overall, pointed out how the research themes were established, explaining the ways of knowing that this study relied on. The other elements brought together in the chapter were the communities' places and respective case

studies, the roles each article played in the argument, arts-based and reflexive approaches to research and my researcher's self as a point of motivation.

I titled Chapter 2 *Mapping the landscape*. There, through literature review, I explored and situated in a shared theoretical space the concepts of identities, place and space, artistic and critical spatial practice. The theory in the chapter was simultaneously linked back to that of the articles in order to present a more holistic take on the themes. Among the important concepts that would flow into the further argument, were the understandings of narrative identity work, collective and individual identities, and relationship between place and space.

Chapter 3 on *Methodologies of engagement* provided a framework for rethinking some of the qualitative research methods in ways that made them a good fit for the specific established field of inquiry. ABR and reflexive research accommodated in tailored ways ethnographic, narrative and documentation methods, as well as expanding the application of narrative analysis into video-editing. The data were presented in numbers, images, qualitative descriptions and a table. I supplied this discussion on methodology with specific examples of narratives and activities that occurred throughout the fieldwork to link in closely with the communities and individual participants.

Chapter 4 *Mediations* allowed the reader to complete the image of research participants and case studies that had been unraveling throughout the chapters. In a more fluid analysis of the research encounters in this chapter I attempted to highlight aspects of the mediation of narratives, audiences and spaces that present the research encounters in a more holistic way and prepare the reader to learn about the findings of the study.

And lastly, this Chapter 5 *Findings and conclusion*, yet again, brought many aspects of the study together through a formulation of its findings that the reader was ready to approach having all the information regarding all of the stages, theory and practice, which were central to my research.

Throughout the dissertation, I have used some self-constructed terms for a variety of concepts and processes. In the end of the dissertation, after having reinforced the theoretical concepts through practice, I feel a responsibility to briefly revise those terms here.

The term *timespaces* was conceptualised in Chapter 2 drawing on Schatzki's (2010) notion of "activity timespace" further developed by Kemmis and his colleagues (2014). I used the term frequently when referring to spaces of happenings and encounters significant to the study or the life worlds of the research participants (including myself). As those timespaces were usually narrated from a temporal distance and were deeply embedded in the storytelling as holistic experiences, I found it impossible to take out either the "time" or "space" component when recounting them.

Again, in the literature review chapter, I arrived at the notion of *community of placelessness* drawing on the concept of placelessness that implies a loss of frame of reference and place-bound meaning (Relph, 1976; Houston, 1978;

Jacobs & Appleyard, 1987; Hayden, 1997). Taking into the account not only the objective external circumstances of my research participants, but also the way they narrated those, I suggested that in many ways some of them belonged to communities of placelessness (and in a way a lot of us do in the contemporary postmodern condition). I also used this phrase in order to challenge the existing classification of communities based on their forms of participation: communities of place, practice, interest and circumstance.

The term *migratory practices*, too, came about in Chapter 2, building on Ahmed's and her colleagues' (2003) discussion of alternative ways of staying, leaving and navigating places. I further discussed it again in relation to migratory disciplinary practices.

And finally, the term of *radical inclusion* is the one I came up with in Section 3.1.4. in order to explain this study's research design and my colleagues' and my own beliefs and principles for working in human contexts.

5.4.1. Avenues for further research

In this dissertation, I attempted to map a wide research field open for further multi-disciplinary exploration. Here, I will outline possible questions and avenues for further research.

The first such avenue might take a deeper look into the use of arts-based methods at various stages of social design, service design process and other possible fields. The first attempt at discussing this was made in Article 2 where the potential of arts-based methods for the initial stages of service design projects was outlined.

Secondly, following the discussions of Article 5 and those in Section 5.3. of the findings, information privacy and ethical aspects related to digital arts-based participation would benefit from ongoing research. This could be achieved, perhaps, in a cross-disciplinary manner with researchers and practitioners of HCI. This avenue of research is worth pursuing due to ongoing changes and development of technology that ABR would have to keep up with.

Thirdly, a new cross-disciplinary study could be undertaken in relation to psychological aspects of narrative identity of place. What might be the methods most useful for guiding narrative identity work in an arts-based research context? The role and value of psychological research and aspects of narrative identity and how they can bring value to and impact on this field of ABR could build on the discussion started in Article 3 and Section 5.2. of the findings.

The fourth direction for further exploration could concern curatorial and mediative/representational avenues. This would build on the discussion of relationships between narratives, audiences and spaces in public display started in Chapter 4 and would have to be argued in close relation with the ethical aspects of Article 5 and Section 5.3.

And eventually, I see a potential for further conceptualisation and deeper understanding of the concepts *communities of placelessness* and *migratory practices.*

***

What does a person learn from four years of encounters with six global communities of practice, place and placelessness? What does she learn from more than seven years of becoming through migratory practices? To listen closely and to narrate her own ever-unraveling story. To search for common grounds, to "radically include" and celebrate complexities and the unfamiliar…

Let me transport you once again into the timespace of "the Palace" on the Arctic Circle where you and I first met on the initial pages of this tale of (un)belonging. Over the years, the apartment has reinvented itself, as alive and complex spaces often do. It is full of young children now. The dinner parties have become quieter and less frequent. Today, as I write these concluding words in the beginning of June 2018, the season of Midnight Sun is upon Finnish Lapland, and the rays of amber-caramel evening sunlight are oozing through the gaps between the heavy curtains all night long.

The Palace was one of the first informal "narrative spaces" whose becoming I witnessed unknowingly, alongside the many collective and individual becomings of its inhabitants and guests. I have been fortunate to partake in the creation of quite a number of such spaces since, both in my research and personal life. And surely, many more are yet to come, each radically creative and "storied" in its own unique way.

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ARTICLES

Article 1
NARRATIVE-BASED ART AS MEANS OF DIALOGUE AND EMPOWERMENT

Satu Miettinen, Melanie Sarantou and Daria Akimenko

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Abstract

Art has the capacity to facilitate empowerment and wellbeing and serve as means for transformation of the community. This paper presents three case studies in which art processes enable identity construction while overcoming personal challenges and working through memories. Narratives are used to demonstrate how an artistic process creates a dialogue between individuals and communities. All three case studies happen in the context of socially engaged art and related disciplines. They present different ways of using narrative as means for facilitating artwork creation and empowerment. At the same time, the artefacts produced through these processes gain narrative power through the symbolisms they reveal. Instead of objectifying communities, art has the potential to be a strong tool for communities to create narratives. In all three cases, art empowers local communities and individuals to share their stories. The common themes between the cases were identified using content driven analysis of the collected materials. In conclusion, the authors present a framework for creating empowering art through narrative processes.

Keywords: narratives, empowerment, healing, participation, identity construction

Introduction

Art can facilitate empowerment and wellbeing in healing processes. It also serves as means for empowerment and transformation of the community (Kay, 2000). This paper presents three case studies in which art processes enable identity expressions in the course of overcoming personal challenges by working through memories. Artistic production is a way to process significant personal histories, experiences and decisions. Art processes facilitate identity construction, permitting the reconciling of multiple identities, fractured selves and personal stories to guide individuals and groups in coping with life's realities. The three case studies demonstrate how narratives can be used as a tool to process and overcome challenges for individuals and communities. Narratives are used in the cases to demonstrate how an artistic process creates a dialogue between individuals and communities.

All three case studies happen in the context of socially engaged art and related disciplines, such as community-based, dialogic, participatory,

interventionist, research based and collaborative art. For all these approaches the aesthetic experience is relative to the collaborative creative action. As referred by Bishop (2012) an artist working between these disciplines, aesthetic values become secondary to the experiences of “the creative rewards of participation” while engaging with broader communities (p.2).

One of the case studies discussed in this article, *Wings to Fly*, explores how young people collaboratively work through their personal histories and experiences using artistic tools, namely storytelling. In the second case study, the exhibition *Just* serves as a platform for a group of artists to discuss marginality caused by geographical and political realities. At the same time this platform is used as a therapeutic tool for reflecting on the artists’ own marginal positions. In the last case study, the intervention *Shop around the corner* gives voice to the memories of a small community within a larger urban space. Through placing the artwork in the locations where the contributing community can access it, such as a shop window or a town square, this new kind of spectatorship empowers the audience to challenge traditional power structures through art. Bishop (2012) refers to this type of participation as “discovering the binary of active and passive spectatorship and locating art outside the gallery system” (p.104).

The case studies present different ways of using narrative as means for facilitating artwork creation and empowerment. At the same time, the artefacts produced from these processes gain narrative power through the symbolisms they reveal. Instead of objectifying communities, art has the potential to be a powerful tool for communities to create their own narratives (Thomas & Rappaport, 1996). In all three cases art empowers local communities and individuals to tell their stories. Documentation through multiple methods, such as interviews, self-documented stories, photography and video allowed the identification of themes using content driven analysis of the collected materials. In conclusion, the authors present a framework for creating empowering art through narrative processes.

Wings to Fly: a Collaborative Process for Youth Empowerment

In April 2016 one of the authors spent a week in Hancock, Michigan, working with students from the International School of Art and Design at Finlandia University. The goal of the design process was to give the participants artistic, visual and verbal tools for processing their life histories and finding empowering elements in their stories. Paulo Freire’s (2000) discussion of education as intervention and social action where art functions as a means to strengthen self-expression, creative ability and learning experience was one of the major underpinnings of the project. As Freire (2000) points out art and artistic process gives means to participate, “to do with”, rather than “for”. Art enables one to see outside traditional norms, while education facilitates learning and reaching out for important themes in individuals’ everyday life.

Secondly, the idea of art as a method for empowerment and wellbeing was central to the workshop. Jaatinen (2015, p.6) presented a framework that enables the production of new knowledge using art as a tool for wellbeing and

empowerment through 1) studio; 2) facilitation; 3) participation in artistic production; 4) art activity; 5) artistic process and 6) artwork. All these concepts were strongly present in the *Wings to Fly* workshop.

The researcher worked with the students in a three-day workshop on storytelling and building the *Wings to Fly* textile installation using mixed media and techniques, such as sewing, painting, textiles, paper, wire and acrylic paint. The design and artistic process included the use of a cultural probe before the workshop, followed by collaborative storytelling, which was used as an input into the textile installation. Design probes (Mattelmäki, 2008) or cultural probes (Gaver et al., 1999) is a method used to increase contextual and in-depth understanding of the participants. There were seven participants in the workshop, six of whom returned their storytelling probes before the workshop.

The design process started with sending storytelling probes to the participating youth. The youth self-documented and shared their life histories before the workshop by writing narratives. They were asked the following questions beforehand: “Who is the storyteller of the family? Think about your memories of the moments when these family histories are shared. What kind of feelings and emotions are related to your family memories? Some of the stories may be happy and some sad, think about the ones that made you feel good and empowered. Write down a short family history and share a story about coping or overcoming difficulties or struggles within your family”. These stories sensitised the youth to the workshop theme and created a connection between the facilitators and the participants prior to the workshop.

The youth shared their fragile and innermost feelings in their stories. One of the participants writes about her life experiences:

> *My dad passed away two years ago on the 31st of March. This is by far the hardest thing that I have ever had to endure. This hurt more than my first heartbreak, more than the betrayal by my best friend, more than my stepdad abusing me while growing up, more than my mom staying, more than nearly being raped by my step grandfather, more than my car accident almost taking my life, more than anything. My dad, he was a brave man, a strong man, a loving man, and my best friend.*

Another participant sharing a story:

> *My name is NN, and ever since I was a kid dreams were just a fantasy land. Where I grew up dreams were just another word for lost hope. You talk about dreams, and people laughed as if you were a joke or high on drugs. I knew I wasn’t on any drugs but one thing I did know; my dreams would become reality with hard work. Grown up on the South side of NNN, Michigan in a neighbourhood where your own neighbour might be the next one to break into your house. Gunshots ringing in the air, sirens in the distant and long nights god must have been watching over me. With no father figure in my life I never*

really understood how to be a young man with so much corruption around I felt like I was a victim to my own town.

In their narratives the young people shared stories about abuse, family tragedies and challenges they had to overcome. The empowering elements were connected with family, friends and the support network they provided. The value of friendships was notable, because many of the young people lived away from their families. The storytelling probe proved efficient in creating a connection and getting to know the youth. It also created trust between the group and the researcher.

The workshop started with coming up with and writing down single words on pieces of paper related to eight different themes: family, community, experience, incident, empowerment, challenge, feeling and opportunity. Participants had one minute per theme to write down as many words as they could associate with the theme. After writing down the words for each theme, they selected eight random words. These eight words were used to tell and create a story that was shared, explaining their life histories and enabling the participants to learn about each other.

After sharing the stories, the participants started painting oval shaped textile and paper cutouts that resembled feathers using the chosen words as inspiration for their paintings. The feather-like cutouts were painted with colours, symbols and ornaments that described the empowering stories the participants shared. The feathers were sewn together to create the shape of a wing. The sewing process was collaborative as strings of the feather-like cutouts were sewn together in pairs. The strings of feathers were attached on top of chicken wire, row after row. This construction was then set up in a gallery space. Setting up the installation was also collaborative. The *Wings to Fly* installation became a centrepiece of the exhibition at the Reflection gallery at Finlandia University. The youth continued the project with a video workshop and production in two groups around their storytelling workshop experience.

Working with storytelling and making the textile installation provided a forum for the young people to share their stories. Starting off with single words made it easier to share a story about their life. Additionally, the process of making the feathers and sewing a wing provided a collaborative opportunity where everyone's contribution was valued. It exemplifies the capacity of art to enable the coping with and contemplation of life experiences, while sharing them within a community.

When analysing the making of the *Wings to Fly* installation (Figure 1) process through Jaatinen's (2015) framework, elements of empowerment and wellbeing become apparent in the installation. The workshop was conducted in an art college studio, a space conducive for artistic process. Professional artists and designers facilitated the process, enabling the participants to produce an artwork. The process aimed at empowering the participants on two different levels. On the one hand, the participants used narrative and storytelling to process their life stories and recognise their strengths. On the second level, the participants used

the artistic process to enable personal wellbeing and empowerment through a collaborative and physical activity of sharing stories and making the installation.

Article 1. Figure 1. *Wings to Fly* textile installation. Photo credits: Satu Miettinen.

Just: Engagements with Materials as Active Voices in Healing

Four Namibian artists, including one of the researchers, explored themes of marginalisation, stratification and narrativity in a group exhibition titled *Just*. The exhibition was hosted from 28 April to 4 June 2016 at the National Art Gallery of Namibia, where audiences interacted with the artists' different interpretations of the theme. *Just* is an exploration of the artists' experiences with marginality through narrative and artistic approaches. The methods used by the artists to communicate with their audiences and initiate participatory processes include the use of the public space, symbolisms and narratives expressed in their materials. The artists sensitised Namibian communities by raising awareness of underlying themes connected to marginalisation, such as stratification caused by poverty, race, age, sexual preferences and education.

The exhibition was initiated through email and teleconference discussions between three artists living in Namibia and the artist-researcher living in Australia. Although the artists worked in isolation, the common theme, marginalisation, served as a motivator, connector and thread between the artists and their different artistic interpretations. The exhibition theme allowed the artists, who all have

different cultural backgrounds and life histories, to explore the margins and divides between them in spite of their unconnectedness.

The author's approach as a participating artist and researcher was to plan and conceptualise her work in Australia, but during the making of the installation she immersed herself into the Namibian environment. During her four-week artist residency in Namibia she interviewed the artists about their art processes and approaches to materials. She diarised and recorded her own making processes and motivations for implementing the project as a way of working through her feelings of marginalisation resulting from immigrating to Australia where she now lives remotely on the Far West Coast of South Australia. The researcher did not intrude into or observe the art-making of the other three artists at their places of work.

Some of the artists shared photos of their processes and outcomes with the researcher electronically. Another point of connection during the researcher's residency in Namibia was a one-hour group discussion during which the artists explained their concepts and approaches to one another. All interviews and discussions were documented in audio. The analysis of the data included identifying common themes by grouping and coding the interviews, group discussion, exhibition outcomes, artefacts and short artist talks. Data was recorded through digital images, video and audio recording.

This case study focuses on Namibian artist who participated in the artist collaboration. Sonene is a pseudonym used to protect the artist's identity. She is a fashion and textile designer, but she recently decided to give up her fashion design practices to focus on her textiles.

Sonene finds creating textiles therapeutic, especially "in the way the process takes over", she explains. During her making she continuously transforms her textiles until she is satisfied with the outcome, which is "usually a compromise", she says. Over the years her textile making developed into an intimate relationship between herself, her hands and the material. She is content with her outcomes once the textiles evoke in her feelings of serenity and treasury. At that point it becomes impossible for her to cut up her textiles to make a garment.

Her usual way of work over the years has been to use a textile, transform it with colour, print, embellishment and, perhaps, adding texture. Recently she found herself deeply reflecting on her creations, what she makes with her hands, and the value she connects to her work. A frustration she encountered recently is that she feels her audiences do not see or value her textiles when they are used in her fashion. As a result, Sonene questioned perceptions of beauty. She engaged in a slow process of destroying her perceived beauty, deconstructing or taking apart her garments and textiles. She says:

> *This process was challenging as I found myself trying to control the destruction. I often felt detached from the textile in my hands. Usually the textures and what I feel excite me as I start working, but in the recent processes of destruction it was as if I did not want to feel. Perhaps, the fear of*

having nothing left from my textiles and garments scared me, because I didn't want to end up empty-handed.

In Sonene's work for the exhibition *Just*, titled *My margins: to be black, a woman and young* (Figure 2), she explores, through her textiles, personal experiences with, and feelings about, marginality. She physically attempts to undo and make sense of her margins such as age, race and gender. Her textiles reflect negotiations of her identities associated with dealing with her margins as spaces for resistance and creativity (hooks, 1990). Although Sonene resides in a creative space when she deconstructs her textiles, she simultaneously is in a space of resistance where she does not want to give up, but needs a way to work through her decisions. Sonene actively shapes her identities in these making processes. Identities are informed by complex dynamics and negotiations of precarious in-between realities within margins and Sonene's unmaking and remaking of her textiles allow to inform her identity processes and express her difficult experiences with peripheries in a physical way.

Sonene touches her audience with her delicate yet strange deconstructions of her previously exhibited catwalk garments. She engaged in a process of healing through her materials. Her processes did not flow easily, because often she found herself feeling "nothing", she says. "I somehow disengage from my textiles while I'm remaking or actually destroying them". Sonene's intentions went beyond the aesthetic. She explored making through sensing and feeling her materials, approaches and techniques. Her aim was to make and remake; to work through process of continuation and endurance in a limited time frame. Sonene allowed the materials to lead and show her the way in spite of feeling somewhat detached or "nothing". Her processes "opted for sensuality" (Adamson 2007, p.51), sensing and exploring materialities without an overemphasis on skill overshadowing her processes (ibid, pp.39-51). Sonene's identities are expressed through her "presence" in her work and engagement between maker, artefact and materials (Sennett 2008, p.120; pp.119-135).

This approach empowered the artist Sonene, because she used her materials as actors with voices. The symbolisms embedded in her materials shaped the narratives that guided the interaction of audiences with her art. The researcher's diary noted: "I was moved by the strangeness of her textile installations that were delicately de- and reconstructed". Sonene's installations, in which the remnants of her previous catwalk garments are re-represented as torn and tortured clusters of layered fibres, symbolise anxieties and traumatic events in her life. "I realised now that I always did that—I turned to my textiles when I worked through difficult things", says Sonene. Her textiles became her multivocal devices, revealing narratives of working through life's complexities as part of healing processes in which elements of psychological wellbeing are detected, including self-realisation, meaning-making, awareness, competence, self-acceptance and effort (Jaatinen 2015, pp.210-211).

Article 1. Figure 2. Artwork *That was that* from *My margins: to be black, a woman and young* by Sonene. Photo credits: Kirsten Wechslberger.

Shop Around the Corner: Intervention in Public Space for Prompting Dialogue and Participation

Site-specific storytelling intervention *Shop Around the corner* was conceived and implemented by one of the researchers during the Quarter Block Party festival in Cork, Ireland. This initiative commemorates North and South Main Street, which form the historical cornerstone of the city. The street is currently left out of the latest city planning endeavours, resulting in the neglect of the multi-generational family-owned businesses of the neighbourhood. The local shop owners' stories served as inspiration and data for *Shop around the corner*.

The project aimed to create a framework for placing a narrative within specific urban spaces through different methods of storytelling and artistic expression. The objective of such practices is to approach a public space as a platform for dialogue and participation. Intervention itself becomes more than an event, but rather "a temporal space for interaction and dialogue", as referred by Viña (2013, p.6). In this case, the dialogue does not happen directly, but is enabled through the previously untold and unheard stories. The stories are interpreted and reintroduced to the environment in the shape of physical artefacts, or artworks, thus adding new meanings to the public space.

The objective of the artistic process was to empower the traders through making their stories heard and known to the neighbourhood and to create a dialogue about the current state of the street in the scale of larger Cork. The process was designed, facilitated, photo and video documented by the author with the help of local artists. The main phase of the project, collecting data, processing and transforming it into artistic outcomes and bringing them back to the street, was planned and implemented over five days, with a presentation following on day six. The materials and means were not defined from the start, but were to be determined through engagement with the collected stories and the physical space they referred to.

Preparation for the research stage started two months prior to the researcher's arrival in Cork. Three sources of information proved to be the most helpful in terms of understanding the place from afar: 1) reading historical records that reference the street back to the 12th century; 2) "Google-walking" through the street; 3) having an "agent" on site with an insight into the families and shops of the street. Initially the project was conceived in a workshop format to facilitate engagement of local artists and activists with the "primary storytellers", the traders of the street. However, engagement and participation can take a variety of forms and exhibit a spontaneous nature (Bishop, 2012). *Shop around the corner* ended up not having a permanent working group, apart from the researcher herself and a local artist, but instead a larger number of occasional collaborators who would contribute in spontaneous and fitting ways on different stages.

On-site research and initial data collection spread over three days consisting of walking and observation, photo- and video-notes of the street, documented and undocumented interviews with the traders. Two activities of this stage deserve a mention due to their particular importance for the outcomes and contribution to the

understanding of the process. One of them was a two-hour workshop open to the public. Its objective was to introduce the artistic process, make it open and transparent and engage more participants. Three participants attended: a menswear shop owner and representative of the traders; a member of Cork artistic community; and a concerned citizen and activist of a grassroots place-making group.

During the workshop the participants shared their memories supported by an artefact, an arbitrary object they happened to have on them. They later reflected upon each other's stories and transformed them into provisional "artworks": a performance, an installation, a drawing and a poem. This process is comparable to the methodology used in the storytelling intervention *Wings to Fly*. During the exercise an important discussion enabled the problematic aspects of the neglected street to be illuminated. The participants all contributed to the final artistic outcomes.

The second important process of initial data collection was video-documentation of a conversation between the aforementioned shop owner and the owner of a local pharmacy. They both grew up on the street and happen to be brilliant storytellers. The narrative created during their conversation served as a basis for a documentary film, one of the outcomes of the project.

Upon the collection of images, videos, stories and material artefacts, the researcher was joined by two local artists. The brainstorming phase was brief, as the collected data appeared to be quite straightforward, prompting rather literal interpretation of the stories. The data revealed sentimental and nostalgic aspects, a common theme connecting most of the stories. Certain artefacts and materials were donated by the primary storytellers and other supporters to contribute to the intervention.

Nine stories were chosen to be recreated in the final intervention. Four of the stories were childhood memories resulted from spontaneous probing, an email the researcher had received prior to her arrival in Cork from a pharmacist who grew up above the pharmacy she later inherited from her mother. Others were discovered during the first three days of the project. Most of the memories were interpreted through spatial installations integrated into meaningful locations in the street. One of the stories was told through a performance. The individual installations represented the memories of the participants, thus resembling a tour of memories that could be attended in the street during the final day of the festival. The tenth element of the intervention was a triple video projection in one of the shop windows (Figure 3). The first screen showed photos in a loop taken in the street during the research phase. The second displayed the making process, while the third screened a rough cut of the documentary based on a conversation between the two traders. Some of the stories remained in the street long after the actual tour, without being rejected by the space, community or the authorities.

The tour was attended by a varied audience that included representatives of the town hall. Discussions about maintaining North and South Main Street as a meaningful city landmark were enabled as a result of the tour. The most valuable

personal response came from the pharmacist whose memories prompted some of the installations. She referred to her experience of discovering the artefacts as inspiring and something that made her feel important.

Article 1. Figure 3. Shop window screening, final artefact of the intervention *Shop around the corner*. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko.

The contribution of brief individual actions carried out by an outsider has to be regarded critically, as their effects may often end up being short-term, if visible at all. The ongoing monitoring of social media shows that the bonds between the traders and local activists formed during the project keep developing, endeavours towards revitalisation of meaningful locations of the street are being made. The contributors of the project look forward to seeing the final cut of the documentary they took part in. At the very least, *Shop around the corner* can be regarded as a link in the chain of interconnected actions for stimulating dialogue and participation in this specific public space of Cork.

Artistic and methodological frameworks

One of the goals of the paper was to explore artist-researchers' endeavours in developing empowering artistic methods and community engagement. This motivation is to seek, through artistic means, the tools that promote wellbeing or positive change (Jaatinen, 2015). This ethos informs the framework for planning and identifying elements needed for this type of artistic production. This

framework is composed of an ethnographic approach, sensitising through narratives and storytelling, probing and triangular research design.

Ethnographic approach

In the three case studies the sensitising process was an important aspect of the ethnographic approach of participant observation, diarising and interviewing. Typical of ethnography, the researchers aimed to learn from the participants, while bringing their own personal cultural background and life experiences to the research activities. Ethnography as method focuses on studying the real life settings of participants in personalised, inductive, dialogic and holistic ways.

The sensitising of participants to the probes and themes the researchers used gave participants an opportunity for input into the processes. This democratisation of the process empowers participants to share on an equal footing through a bottom-up approach without preconceived procedures and expectations. In the three case studies the researchers equally participated in making and storytelling through textile and media art. Connectedness is encouraged through equal sharing of life situations and input into the art-making processes.

Sensitising through narratives and storytelling

Sensitising, a function enabled through narratives, allows for the creation of bonds and familiarisation between participants and facilitators, stimulating collaborative or participatory processes. *Shop around the corner* exemplifies participatory art processes as the artist invited the community to participate and create materials. The process included sensitising where the artist used modern digital tools, such as Google Maps, traditional literature sources and the collection of storytelling probes via email to connect with the environment and the community. In the *Wings to Fly* process sensitising came about through sending storytelling probes to youth participants, while the *Just* exhibition drew on the exhibition design to stimulate participation via emails and Skype. In *Just* the artist has a long personal history that connects her to the Namibian field and community. Sensitising was stimulated through discussion, reflection on memories and experiences from working with the local communities, utilising narratives to stimulate and express artistic processes.

Probing

Collaborative or participatory processes require probing to stimulate interaction between the facilitator and participants. The core to probing is in creating contextual understanding. The *Shop around the corner*'s probing phase included storytelling facilitated through email (Gaver et al., 1999; Mattelmäki, 2008). This method of using a probe is present in the *Wings to Fly* process that was initiated by sending storytelling probes to youth participants. The *Just* exhibition used a connecting theme throughout the exhibition design process. The use of email and text messages as a probing methodology assisted the artistic group in their planning and contextual understanding.

Triangular research design

Mixed method research approaches and cyclical structures of research design (Creswell, 2013) are present in all three cases. Triangulation is achieved through theorisation, documentation of artistic processes and the qualitative analysis of research materials collected through various methods, such as participant stories, emails, group discussions and interviews. *Wings to Fly* illustrates the triangular structure of research from theorisation, documentation throughout the probing phase, workshop, making of the art work, setting up the installation, and analysis of collected materials. Similar structures are applied in *Shop around the corner* through the documentation of artistic processes, stories of the environment, participants, the construction and exhibition of the artworks that encourages bonding between traders and local activists. Theorisation, interviews, documentation and production of artwork, the collaborative exhibition design and planning of *Just* are all underpinned by the triangular methodological approach.

Conclusion

The three cases presented in previous chapters contribute to the composition of a framework that enables wellbeing and identity reformations through artistic production. All the case studies form part of an ongoing research project that will continue to test and apply Jaatinen's framework in relation to marginalities. This framework, informed by the formations of psychological wellbeing discussed by Jaatinen (2015, pp.208-219), enables both empowerment and wellbeing. The *Wings to Fly* case study closely follows Jaatinen's framework, but the artistic and participatory processes of the two remaining cases, aimed at wellbeing and empowerment of the participants, required a reinterpretation. The methods in these case studies were tailored to the needs of the communities. *Shop around the corner* enabling dialogue empowers both the artist and community, while *Wings to Fly*, through storytelling and artistic production, share and process youth participants' life histories and marginalised experiences. *Just*'s production of artwork, especially illustrated in Sonene's stories, becomes an act and representation of healing.

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Article 2
ART AND STORYTELLING AS AN EMPOWERING TOOL FOR SERVICE DESIGN: SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CASE STUDY

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Miettinen, S., Sarantou, M. & Akimenko, D. (2016b). Art and Storytelling as an Empowerment Tool for Service Design: South Australian Case Study. In P. Rytilahti & S. Miettinen (eds.) *For Profit, for Good. Developing Organizations through Service Design*. University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland. ISBN 978-952-484-951-4.

Keywords: empathy, art, storytelling, social design, service design, empowerment

Introduction

In October 2016 the *Margin to Margin* research group carried out two art and storytelling workshops with the Anangu Aboriginal communities of South and Western Australia and the Fibrespace Incorporated textile artist group of South Australia. Predominantly women artists and craft-makers of the various communities participated in two intensive art-making and data collection workshops of less than one week each with an emphasis on narrative processes as service design tools.

Challenging roles, such as being single mothers, primary household income generators, family carers, became apparent in both the groups, be they remote or regionally based, resorting to art and craft-making as a means of coping with hardship, empowerment and self-realisation. The remotely based Anangu Aboriginal communities face additional challenges as a legacy of Australia's colonial past, resulting in complex political entanglements. The workshops aimed to build empathy with the participants by presenting a platform for dialogue to render audible the stories and artistic processes from outback Australia.

"Empathy refers to the capacity of understanding the situation of another person – that is, understanding his or her definition of the situation and the symbolic universe in which elements of the situation become meaningful and shape actions" (Rughiniş & Humă, 2014). The capacity for empathy can be cultivated through daily social and educational interactions (ibid), and as a key concept in the workshops' methodology, empathy is associated with understanding and contextualising the user's needs and experiences in service design.

Empathic design recognises users as a rich design resource, while it encourages designers to immerse themselves and appreciate the user's experience, perspectives and emotional responses to products and services (McDonagh et. al. 2002). There are several design tools developed to create empathy and user insights. Gaver (1999) employed cultural probes that create empathy and help to contextualise the user experience. Mattelmäki et al. (2014) revisited the concept of empathy that was deployed in design research during the 1990s. Experiences, emotions and meaningful everyday practices were studied to

stimulate innovation and human-centred solutions. Empathic design is based on design practice as it is an interpretative approach in creating new solutions in users' lives.

This paper explores the front-end, or the initial stage, of service design processes in using artistic and narrative tools to build empathy, capture the participants' experiences and create understanding of the local context of the workshop participants, the Anangu Aboriginal women in the workshop location of Fowlers Bay, Far West Coast of South Australia, and the Fibrespace artists in the workshop location of Port Augusta, South Australia. Three different methodological approaches were utilised to create understanding and empathy:

1) Life story mandalas, a collaborative artistic process that enabled women to share their life stories with participants using textile art as an enabling medium;
2) Participant interviews to learn, document and analyse the marginalities and experiences of participants from these diverse communities;
3) Video and audio documentation to share and digitally document participants' life stories.

Meeting women from the edges of the world was an empowering process for the group of researchers. After one year of intense planning sessions facilitated through Skype meetings over several continents, the anticipation and waiting came to an end when the researchers met the remote and regional communities in South Australia. A commonality that was soon revealed was that hands-on art and craft-making connected these women from diverse backgrounds and locations. Working together and using the artistic tools for sharing life stories was an empowering narrative mechanism as it incorporated the empathic design approach that the researchers adopted.

Life story mandalas as a tool for self-reflection and sharing of life histories

In the preparatory phase discussions centred around the importance of cultural exchange with the local Australian groups. Thus, the concept of life story mandalas emerged as a means to share life histories and meaningful experiences. This tool was priorly employed in a workshop context in Inari, Finnish Lapland, with a local women's group that included indigenous representatives (Briñon, 2014). The use of this tool proved successful in that situation enabling the group to share their life stories and histories in a meaningful and effective way. This was the rationale in employing this artistic method in South Australia.

The women's life stories were captured through visualising important periods in their lives using different colours, symbols, drawings and text on cotton textile circles with acrylic paint (Figure 1). Visualisations signified important periods or single years in the women's lives. Most of the visualisations started in the middle of the cotton circle, typically from birth to the present moment, not dissimilar to the rings visible in a cut tree trunk. Each participant's life mandala was stitched together in a continuous line. The line of mandalas was then installed in a three-

dimensional spiral that represented the women's life stories, creating an interconnected web of narratives (Figure 2).

Article 2. Figure 1. Process of making life mandalas on cotton textile circles with acrylic paint. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko.

The mandala-making enabled women to process their life stories in two significant phases. The first was to use the visual tool of painting while conceptualising and representing significant events in their life stories. The second was verbal sharing which concentrated the participants' thinking in what to share. Some groups painted their mandalas while listening to other's stories, while some participants worked more individually and shared their stories either with the facilitating researcher or with the videographer-researcher of the group. This enabled two processes, one the painting and sharing in a group facilitated peer to peer learning, whereas individual self-reflective work enabled the processing of personal stories. The video or audio recording of the individual mandala stories shared with others was an important tool in rendering audible the voices of individuals.

The empowering effect of sharing life histories and events rendered audible the stories of participating women. Sharing stories facilitated learning from one another, while visualising a life story is a self-reflective tool in understanding personal histories and circumstances. As an example, one of the Aboriginal artists discussed her personal growth since the birth of her child, transforming her life

from long-term drug addiction towards becoming a successful artist and a responsible mother. Another artist discussed the tragedy of the Maralinga nuclear testing that harshly affected the lives of many Anangu Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal communities living in and around the Maralinga area in the 1950s were displaced from their Country to facilitate British nuclear testing. Listening to these stories created both empathy and understanding of the marginalised position of these communities. The mandalas were a medium to share difficult life histories and the shared empathic responses of workshop participants facilitated creation of a safe environment for the women who shared, listened and empathised with these life stories.

Article 2. Figure 2. Installation of the three-dimensional spiral made of the life mandalas stitched together. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko.

Life story mandala is a participatory and expressive artistic tool used for creating empathy and understanding the historical, political and geographical context of individual participants. The Fibrespace artists and researcher-artist group from Finland created the life circle mandala installation in Port Augusta at the Platform Gallery, which also helped building empathic understanding amongst group participants.

Participant interviews, storytelling and digital documentation as a point of connection

A problem commonly encountered when stepping into communities is how to understand them and their activities in the field. By adopting an ethnographic methodology angle, the behaviour of participating individuals can be observed within their own environments and this is achieved through maintaining diaries, understanding relationships, and recording narratives, among other activities. In this case study the activities of art, craft and making practices, and the textilities of materials, such as raffia, cotton, wool fibres, yarns and textiles, created a familiar environment that stimulated shared participation.

Ethnographic approach focuses on studying the real-life settings of participants in personalised, inductive, dialogic and holistic ways. Following the ethnographic methodology, the researchers aimed to learn from the participants with the objective of understanding their cultural and contextual environments through mapping frameworks, while bringing their own personal cultural backgrounds, life experiences and narratives to the research and art activities. The ethnographic practice is essential to service design processes as it enables a holistic understanding of the research contexts.

By giving the participants an opportunity for input into the art-making processes, both the participants and the researchers are empowered to share on an equal footing through narratives. Through equal participation in art-making and shared storytelling, connectedness is enabled. In this way participants had the power to shape ongoing mapping processes through their narratives that were captured during the interviews conducted within familiar physical work environments.

Sixteen women were interviewed during two South Australian workshops. All interviewed participants were makers. Some of the women identified as artists, while others identified as craftspeople or makers. The duration of the interviews, between ten and thirty-seven minutes, depended on the individual's narratives and their activities. Some participants found it easier to share their narratives while making processes continued, drawing on these processes to instigate storytelling. Many participants were confident in their art-making environments, which allowed storytelling to occur effortlessly. Additionally, the research team envisaged accomplishing empathic design processes and connectedness amongst participants through the textilic and tactile environments that were familiar to workshop participants.

In addition to the above-mentioned interviews, video and audio documentation supported all the processes of making and storytelling throughout the two workshops. The importance of documentation of personal stories is manifold. On the one hand, it allows for the expansion of time, space and audience of each individual story, that is, for its preservation in time, ability to travel and reach out through space and to wider audiences, with the help of digital technology. The idea of having a conversation with other makers living on other edges of the world empowered a lot of the participants for sharing their stories and messages. The

moment of capturing of a story enables meaningful sharing, as it "draws on the intimacy of the small camera and one person crew" (Kalow, 2011). And, finally, the mere action of dedication of certain time and space for documenting the story contributes greatly to the creation of a platform for empathy.

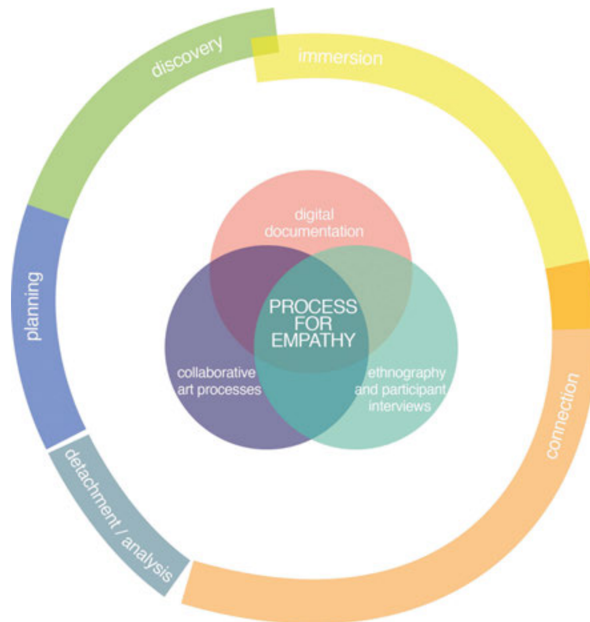
Apart from the sixteen above-mentioned interviews, twenty-two stories describing the life cycles depicted in life mandalas were video and audio-recorded. Nine additional stories were documented and supported by physical artefact as a part of a storytelling intervention carried out by one of the researchers. The number of episodes of art and craft-making captured on video and audio exceeds one hundred. Part of the material was processed immediately resulting in a series of "visual journal" entries. The bigger part of the documentation is yet to be engaged with, both artistically and in the context of broader research.

Framework for creating empathy

The process of building researcher-participant empathy in the case studies are similar to the framework for empathy in design practice introduced by Kouprie and Visser (2009) who discuss the changing relationships between designers and users in different phases. In their paper, these scholars compare empathic design practices against established psychological frameworks for empathy in four phases: discovery, immersion, connection and detachment (Kouprie & Visser, 2009).

This useful framework is parallel to the *Margin to Margin* researchers' experiences (Figure 3), however, the researchers focused on the front-end of service design in which empathy and understanding assists in identifying challenges that need addressing. The first three phases of Kouprie and Visser's framework are important, but in the South Australian workshops these phases were not distinct and separate, rather overlapping and merging one into the next. The group's involvement through an ethnographic approach led to an empathetic understanding, reflection, analysis and deeper involvement with the workshop participants as opposed to a diametrical detachment, the final phase proposed by Kouprie and Visser.

During the discovery phase the first encounters with the groups included informal introductions between the facilitating researchers and the participants. In this phase the researchers inhibited their roles as facilitators to allow the emergence of a bottom-up approach. This resulted in the Anangu Aboriginal women introducing the researchers to a significant location and a cultural ritual, while the Fibrespace artist group introduced the researchers to their annual brainstorming process. With both initial introductions, traditional food and various forms of textile art played significant roles in forging links within the groups, enabling the immersion phase. This phase occurred by introducing participants to cultural probes in the form of the life mandalas that facilitated learning.



Article 2. Figure 3. Visualisation of the process of creating empathy.

Individual and collaborative art-making processes, where mutual observing and sharing artistic processes and techniques enabled deeper familiarisation between the researchers and the participants, were guided through the narrative function and thus facilitated immersion. This took place through weaving baskets and felting. Learning these techniques enabled the group to work together and create personal relationships with each other, while it also facilitated learning from one another. Making activities stimulated discussion and sharing of skills and knowledge. The cultural probes, craft making, storytelling processes and participant interviews, where the participants elaborated on their work and life challenges from the perspective of both artists and women, revealed personal narratives. Clearly, the immersion and connection phases of the framework merge in this case study.

In various ways, the detachment phase in the South Australian case studies was experienced differently from the psychological framework for empathy proposed by Kouprie and Visser. Detachment phases are complex, needing sensitive exiting strategies to promote sustainability and avoid negative impacts on the intervention. Facilitating researchers often find themselves in positions of withdrawal for the purposes of reflection, analysis and monitoring purposes. This was borne out in these case studies as the researchers distanced themselves

from the intense empathic experience, processing the body of research and artistic data, sharing the outcomes with broader academia and artistic communities through research papers and exhibitions. Follow-up workshops, artefact making and representation in Finnish and Russian communities will mirror and complement the data and outcomes of the South Australian interventions.

Conclusion

The narrative function, in meeting, introducing, explaining, sharing, exchanging of practical ideas through art-making, making life story mandalas and the documenting process, spans the total framework of the case studies. During processes of sharing the researchers positioned themselves as storytellers by sharing their own experiences, thus finding common ground with the participants. Storytelling occurred through multi-dimensional forms such as video, audio, photo, field notes and physical artefacts. The narrative function is a crucial tool to facilitate empathic processes at the front-end phase of service design.

In these case studies, empathy, supported by the narrative function, facilitated the planning for service design interventions. Empathic design stimulated connections, creating a safe environment where participants felt comfortable to share their stories, while enhancing the capacity to understand the situations of the participants. Empathy influenced how the facilitating researchers and participants communicated, learning about each other's challenges, thus shaping contextual understanding and preparing the ground work and mapping frameworks for potential service design interventions.

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Article 3
NARRATIVE IDENTITIES IN PARTICIPATORY ART AND DESIGN CASES

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Abstract

This paper explores identities that come about through the narratives different actors communicate in participatory art and design projects, as opposed to the roles assumed for and by them. This contributes to the discussion of equal engagement in participatory practices. The paper focuses on the notion of narrative identity in the context of two case studies, *Good Life in Villages*, a design competition held in rural Finnish Lapland with local communities, and *Have you heard?*, an art intervention working with migrant businesses in Edinburgh, UK. Both cases follow the methodology of design research through practice and artistic research and address current social issues, the former—population ageing and challenges of centralism, and the latter—migration and belonging, through design and art, respectively. The aim of the paper is to propose a different point of view on facilitating participant engagement and adding local meaning to cases through understanding and utilising narrative identities.

Introduction

Process description is the prevailing way of discussing complex participatory art and design cases, with previous research having often focused on the roles actors play in them. This approach often restricts in-depth understanding, especially in what concerns the people involved in the process. When applied in the two case studies presented in this paper, the role analysis angle proved to be rather limiting and depersonalising.

When interacting during a dedicated timeframe, that is a participatory project duration, be it in a group or one on one, two processes are inherent to this activity: sharing narratives and creating a relationship. Using an example of oral history creation, Portelli (2005) refers to the dynamics between a narrator and a narratee as to a "listening art and an art based on a set of relationships". Narratives provide a frame of reference to the life circumstances of the one who shares them, both for themselves and for the one listening. Through this sharing of narratives, participants' identities become apparent and allow more complex relationships to build.

In order to better understand the agency of people involved in art and design projects, this paper explores the identities that come about through the narratives actors choose to communicate, as opposed to the roles assumed for and by them during participatory processes. Despite the long and successful effort of

democratisation and shifting power structures in participatory design projects, the position of "role-giving" still seems to be authoritative and limiting for the true involvement of all the actors in such processes.

In the following two sections, the paper focuses on theoretical understanding and previous research of the concepts of roles and identities. The aim is to expand roles perspective and propose narrative identities as an alternative way of looking at art and design cases. Further, the paper describes two case studies, *Good Life in Villages* and *Have you heard?*, and the involved participants from narrative identity perspective. The paper concludes with reflections on how the focus on narrative identities can contribute to engagement in participatory art and design projects.

Roles in art and design practices

Art and design practices act together in public space to create social impact. This is often done through co-design approach where multiple actors with different backgrounds, knowledge and aims come together. In order to effectively progress with the project, the participating persons typically take on different roles. Ilgen and Hollenbeck (1991) argue that roles exist in the minds of people. When at least one person acts out behaviors as a holder of a role, others linked in various ways to the role holder have expectations about the pattern of behavior that should be displayed to perform the focal person's role.

Biddle (1979, pp.4-6), one of the early scholars to present and define Role Theory, described role at its most basic level as an expected pattern or set of behaviors. In design research, progressive interest has been directed to the role of the designer and artist as well as to the way it changes through time. For instance, Valtonen (2005) studied the development of the industrial designer's role during six different decades. Through those decades the role of a designer has been that of a creator, whose work was likened to that of an artist, a team member working with mechanics and marketing specialists, then an end-user expert, later a coordinator, manager and enabler of innovation inside and outside companies.

Participatory tools and techniques have become part of standard practice for many design and art fields. "Participation" in Participatory Design intends investigation, reflection upon, understanding, establishing, developing and support of mutual learning processes as they unfold between participants in collective "reflection-in-action" during the design process (Robertson & Simonsen 2012, p.5). Many researchers from art and design fields have studied the changing role of designer and artist in participatory processes. Tan (2012), for instance, identified seven different roles of designers in participatory cases: co-creator, researcher, facilitator, capacity builder, social entrepreneur, provocateur and strategist.

Gaztambide-Fernández (2015) defined societal roles of an artist through three theoretical conceptions of cultural worker: cultural civiliser, border crosser and representer. Artists as cultural workers, thus, challenge definitions of representation as they work with meanings and discursive constructs that have rhetorical boundaries. In order to achieve user participation in design, a designer

is expected to practice multiple roles of design developer, facilitator and generator following the tactics of Design Participation (Lee 2008). User's role, too, may vary from proactive participation, where they contribute to solving and framing challenges, to an inactive role where user data are interpreted without direct engagement with the user community (Keinonen, 2009).

Relying on roles in order to organize and make sense of a diverse group of users can be an adequate and helpful tool in participatory projects that aim for a concrete quantifiable or otherwise tangible result. However, when tackling complex and multifaceted social situations affected by many subjective variables there may be a need for a more fluid category. As noted by Somers (1994):

> *There is no reason to assume a priori that people with similar attributes will share common experiences of social life, let alone be moved to common forms and meanings of social action, unless they share similar narrative identities and relational settings (p.635).*

Noticing narrative identities

Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001, p.1) comment on the genre of language that is typically used when discussing “construction of self and life worlds”, that is narration. Somers (1994), in turn, proposes to introduce to the discussion of identity the “categorically destabilising dimensions of time, space, and relationality”. It becomes apparent that both narrative and identity share the above-mentioned dimensions and, therefore, narrative becomes an appropriate means for exploration of “the construction of selves in cultural contexts of time and space” (Brockmeier & Carbaugh 2001, p.15).

It is further noted by Somers (1994, p.606), however, that the subject of such exploration is not always a conscious maker of their identity narratives. She writes: “...all of us come to be who we are (however ephemeral, multiple, and changing) by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives rarely of our own making”. In this statement Somers brings up at once three important aspects inherent to both identity and narrative: contextuality, intersectionality, and authorship. These categories are surely not definitive or exclusive for framing the notion of identity, but the authors of this paper find them fitting in the context of their participatory art and design processes.

Contextuality here refers to general relationship of the concept of identity with time, space and other indicators of context. For example, an individual can identify as a Russian-born female for all of their life, while transitioning from a student identity towards identifying as a middle-class professional over a shorter period of time and changing their whereabouts. They may further temporarily fluctuate again to student identity going “back to school” later in life. Contextuality may also indicate transitory and fragile nature of identity. Bauman and Vecchi (2004, p.11) wrote in this regard that “'belonging' and 'identity' are not cut in rock,... they are not secured by a lifelong guarantee... they are eminently negotiable and revocable”. Identity, therefore, is regarded as a changing, and not static category, a process

where an individual balances between multiple “belongings”. Hogg, Terry and White (1995, p.255) brought up in this respect “dynamic mediation of the socially constructed self between individual behavior and social structure”.

The category of intersectionality first introduced by Crenshaw (1989) proposed a new analytical view on complex intersections of multiple identities (based on race, gender, sexuality and other), mainly the ones marginalised at the times. In this analysis, it intends multiple identities an individual may simultaneously assume for himself, which can be either complementary or conflicting to one another. For example, being both colleagues and romantic partners can become conflicting identity levels in a relationship. Intersectionality may also intend plural ways of viewing identity function. In *Youth, Identity and Digital Media* Buckingham (2008, p.1) points out one of the dualities in the ways that identities tend to act. On the one hand, it is “what distinguishes us from other people”. However, in the context of nationality, culture, sexuality or gender, identity may become about “identification with others whom we assume are similar to us” (Buckingham 2008, p.1). Much like identity, narratives are often referred to from a pluralistic perspective. For example, Lyotard (1979) wrote how competing plural narratives should and do become an alternative to a prevailing grand narrative in postmodern society.

Authorship is another highly relevant parameter of identity. Baxter Magolda (1999; 2009) introduced the concept of self-authorship as an individual’s internalised identity construction closely linked with the notion of empowerment. As pointed out before by Somers (1994), authorship is a sensitive subject, as an individual might take for granted an identity narrative imposed on them by others. This may impact both individual identity representation and cultural or collective identity. Escudeiro and Valente (2012, p.1141) note that an individual might “use cultural artifacts to describe themselves, resorting to describe their collective identity into a stereotypical image, accepting some elements of this identity, but never necessarily living up to it”. Through the prism of narrative Freeman (2001, p.289) claims for one’s identity, or story, to never truly be their own due to being articulated “with and among others”.

Finally, through reflecting on the aspect of authorship the question of power in relation to identity, or the self, comes forward (Foucault, 2011; Rose, 1999). Namely, power relationships and dynamics within a group involved in a process together, which is the exact context of participatory art and design. Bishop (2004, p.66) argues, though in rather extreme terms, about identity-related dynamics: “the presence of what is not me renders my identity precarious and vulnerable, and the threat that the other represents transforms my own sense of self into something questionable”. This idea is consonant to Bauman’s and Vecchi’s (2004) argument that identity only becomes significant when threatened or contested and, therefore, needs to be defended. Even though in the case studies regarded in this paper participants’ identities were neither contested nor questioned, they joined the case studies in the first place due to one or another component of their

identities (being a village community member or a migrant). Those were the identities that informed their initial narratives and engagement in the projects.

Rather than interpreting participatory processes only based on “functions” and “expected behaviours” of participants, identity perspective in the cases focuses on their more holistic portraits and, therefore, a holistic experience of the projects. It helps to understand and describe projects through the concepts of contextuality, intersectionality and authorship, as well as to reflect on power relationships that form. When narrative identities are brought to the table, it renders all the parties involved equally vulnerable, including the facilitating designer or artist. As noted by Kwon (2002, p.137): “the uncertainty of identity experienced by the artist is symptomatic of identities of all parties involved in the complex network of activities”. In the following two sections the two case studies and the involved parties are discussed from perspective of narrative identities and respective categories.

Two participatory cases

Both case studies were conducted according to the principles of design research through practice (e.g. Koskinen et al., 2011) and artistic research (e.g. Borgdorff, 2011; Mäkelä & Nimkulrat, 2011; Berg, 2014) and addressed current societal challenges. New ideas and solutions in remote villages of Finnish Lapland are needed in order to address ageing population, current centralisation politics and long distances, which all have a strong impact on villagers’ everyday life. In design research and practice, a lot of case studies and projects have been carried out with local communities (e.g. Lee, 2008; Winschiers-Theophilus et al., 2012) and elderly residents (e.g. Vähälä et al., 2012; Lindsay et al., 2012). *Good Life in Villages* case addressed these challenges as well as the issue of empty and quiet villages. The unemployment rate is higher in Lapland compared to other regions in Finland, which often drives young people away in search for their future work and living environments elsewhere. *Good Life in Villages* contest sought new ideas and concepts for raising life quality of the ageing population in Lapland and Arctic areas in general with a concrete local goal to enable four different rural communities of the Kemijoki riverside together with their residents. This paper focuses on the case held in Autti village.

Have you heard? project focused in a more reflective manner on migrant image and discourse in contemporary Europe, namely, the contraposition and “otherness” through which migrants are often viewed and referred to in media and informal communication. The urgent topic of migration has been addressed with increasing interest both in academia (e.g. Traganou, 2011; Barrett & Cipolla, 2016; Swoboda, 2016; Hiltunen & Kraft, 2016) and multidisciplinary art practice (e.g. Hiltunen & Kraft, 2016; O’Byrne, 2016). *Have you heard?* was a story-based art project, which aimed to place a narrative within specific public space through on-site research, multiple means of storytelling, artistic methods and physical artefacts. The objective of such practice is to approach a space as a site for story sharing, dialogue and engagement (Figure 1). The dialogue occurs on several

levels - directly, on a micro level, and indirectly, through communicating the collected narratives in an alternative storytelling form. The space acquires new meanings, as the stories get introduced back in it. Together, they form a counter-narrative to a "negative" grand narrative (in this specific case, a "negative" image of a migrant).

Article 3. Figure 1. Storytelling in public space: artistic process documentation, project *Have you heard?*, Edinburgh, UK. Photo credits: Malla Alatalo.

In both case studies (see Table 4) narratives proved to be significant for the project implementation and further analysis. In *Good Life in Villages* the stories told by the community members helped to identify the community needs as well as design opportunities. The stories were used during the competition to introduce, ideate and share information in informal situations as well as during workshops and meetings. After the competition, stories were collected from different participant groups (stakeholders) in the form of interviews in order to study their perspectives on what had occurred. In art intervention *Have you heard?* the stories shared by representatives of migrant community served as a starting point that inspired the artistic outcomes and the data for critical reflection on migrant narratives and discourse.

The team of *Good Life in Villages* competition consisted of five students from different disciplinary backgrounds studying at University of Lapland or Lapland University of Applied Sciences, the residents of Autti village, as well as two professional designers from a design company who were invited to spar the students during the last two days of the competition (Figure 2). The initial setup proposed that the students would be facilitators and concept developers, the villagers would be given an opportunity to participate in the development of solutions that could improve their life quality in Autti, and the professional designers would be team leaders with the task to direct design process towards a concrete solution. The competition was also a part of the University curriculum, the participating teachers' task was to support and aid the students along the way. Other secondary roles included a company representative from the sponsor company, the organiser of the competition from a local design firm, a visiting lecturer, journalists who visited the village during the competition, and the competition jury members. The students and the villagers were the main "characters" in realising the collaboration and the final concept.

Have you heard? project was enabled through an artistic residency granted to the group of artist-researchers in the city of Edinburgh, UK. The participants, who were first approached by the artist-researchers as storytellers in the project, were all of migrant backgrounds (first or second generation immigrants to the UK). Much like in the case of *Good Life in Villages*, they got involved in the project due to their specific background (villagers, migrants etc.), because the project teams approached them as such. In the context of further collaboration and interaction, other facets of their identities emerged and became more relevant. Design researchers must be able to develop a particular sensitivity to their own bias and to the change of roles from meta-participants (e.g. facilitator) to participants in order to respond to local values and make adequate participation possible (Winschiers-Theophilus et al., 2012). The artist-researcher team consisted of three people: a Russian spatial designer who is also a researcher, a Portuguese filmmaker, and a Finnish art manager. Occasional passersby also contributed to storytelling processes and better understanding of the discussed issues. The project was originally conceived as follows: the team members were to shift roles between researchers and facilitators. Whether or not the team would be involved in the "art-making" of the final intervention was an open question. The participants were regarded in two groups: (a) migrants who would play the role of storytellers (and provide data for research and art process); (b) possible local artists and/or activists who would engage in collaborative art-making processes.

	Good Life in Villages Northern Finland	Have You Heard Edinburgh, UK
	A competition aimed at creating concepts that would enhance aspects of good life in each involved village.	An art intervention aimed to discuss multiculturalism and belonging as well as to place counter-narrative in public space.
DURATION	Preparations started in the end of 2014, competition took place in January-February 2015, collaboration and research continued after the competition.	Preparation in Autumn 2013, on-site research and the intervention itself took place in July 2014. Data processing and research continued after the intervention.
PEOPLE	Students, villagers, design professionals as well as teachers, sponsoring company representative, organizer, visiting lecturers and journalists, jury of the competition.	Immigrants living in Edinburgh, UK; the group preliminarily assumed as 'facilitators': a spatial designer who is also a researcher, a filmmaker, an art manager; occasional passersby.
DATA	Data consist, for example, of concept ideas, student reports and fieldwork diaries. This article focuses on Autti case and three interviews done to different participant groups after the competition.	Data consist of interviews, visual data (still & moving images), material artefacts and process documentation of the intervention. This article focuses on the interviews with five shop owners of Leith Walk, Edinburgh, UK.
NARRATIVES	Narratives were present during the case as well as in the reflections after it. They were used to explain contexts and experiences, share ideas, empathize and test concepts as well as reflect the results.	Informal storytelling alongside semi-structured interviews provided the background of the participants identities, enabled trust and empathy, formed rich research data and strong motivation for the artistic work.

Table 4. Details of the case studies.

Article 3. Figure 2. The co-design team of Autti during a workshop and the final presentations. Photo credits: Kemijoki Oy, photographer Antti Raatikainen.

Upon the completion of both projects and having gone back to the data, it became apparent to the researchers in their respective projects that the above-mentioned approach to people's involvement through roles and functions does not fully apply or contribute to sense-making, as their participation had gone beyond the preconceived project planning. This transition beyond the initial "role-giving" happened due to inevitable contingencies, but also largely due to the flexible nature of the process of establishing relationships. Preconceived project planning had certain hierarchy of relationships in mind, which proved to be often transformed over time into a rather flat structure.

Transforming identities

In *Good Life in Villages* case, the qualitative interviews were held after the competition and with different stakeholders: (1) student group, (2) villagers and (3) design professionals. In addition, the author-researcher's own experiences and field notes served as data for this paper. The interviews provided a chance to look back and discuss what had happened and how different participants saw the value of the co-design experience. From *Have you heard?* project data, five participants were chosen to look at more closely in this paper. All of them have a foreign background and are salespeople: (1) a Portuguese couple who had lived in South Africa and the UK; (2) a British-Pakistani young man at a Pakistani food store; (3) a Polish man recently relocated to the UK for economic reasons; (4) a British-Pakistani young woman at an Indian clothes and jewellery shop. Semi-structured interviews, informal discussions and participant observation with them formed one of the artistic outcomes of the project, a documentary film (Figure 3). The narratives the participants communicated refer to their identities as traders, or shop owners; community members, both of the city of Edinburgh and their national communities; parents, spouses, sons; students, people with higher education; people brought up on Polish children's books or Bollywood films, and so on. Their narrative identities incorporate life experiences, dreams, aspirations and much more. It is important to notice that the questions of the interviews were focusing on the shops and their contribution to the local community, therefore, on a narrow side of the storytellers' identities. However, this did not limit the narratives and the facets of the identities they chose to communicate.

Contextuality dimension was largely part of both cases. The villagers connected their identities to geographical locations, landscapes and historical happenings of Autti, but also to hunting stories and being parents. Many of the villagers told how they missed their children as well as friends and relatives who did not live in the village anymore. In the students' narratives the fragile nature of identities was more present. They were in a transitory phase of their professional identities during the competition, learning professional skills and using them in a real life setting. The design professionals, though being outsiders to Autti village, could contribute a different type of narratives and viewpoints at the process.

The participants in Edinburgh also referred differently to their identities depending on the context. For example, the Portuguese pastry shop owners had just started their business at the time of the interviews and were at the phase of learning to identify as traders, hospitality representatives, their home culture ambassadors in a foreign land. At the same time, they had been married for many years, which clearly influenced their co-working experience, and the identity narratives they communicated instantly fluctuating between private and public contexts of their lives.

The researchers of *Have you heard?* were staying in the neighbourhood of Leith Walk, the traders' street. And while acting as interviewers and facilitators in the context of the project, they often stopped by the shops as customers. The Polish food store had Russian products that one of the researchers had missed

from home, which appealed to her national identity and instigated nostalgic narrative sharing. Interaction in a different quality, out of the interview context, as friendly neighbours, enabled a deeper mutual narrative sharing processes. Empathising with one another on multiple levels increases the degree of involvement and care for the themes and the outcomes of a participatory project. Such empathy becomes possible through learning and sharing personal narratives over time.

Article 3. Figure 3. Members of Leith Walk trading community, Edinburgh, UK. Stills from documentary film *Silk Road*.

During the interviews the participants in Autti were asked to describe what they did during the case and give themselves and each other a title. This was a challenging task for many of the participants. It turned out to be easier for them to use the names of the fellow-participants. Using a person's name bears in mind their multiple and complex identity, unlike "labelling" them with a title or a role. The communication and connection between participants evolved during the case—one of the students said: "As we got to know the villagers, they started to feel more like our pals." This changed the aim of "directing" and "helping" towards more flexible platform for doing together.

Intersectionality of the identities became apparent through the different groups that worked together in Autti village. Every individual has complex and multiple identities and in a participatory project it is possible to put everyone's identities in contact with the others in a productive way. The case can help to identify and acknowledge, add to or otherwise transform participants' identities. In *Good Life in Villages* case, the different stakeholders expressed the feeling that the different identities and viewpoints supported each other and contributed towards better outcomes of the project. For example, a student who is normally an urban citizen had a chance to add to her identity by becoming at once a project facilitator, a listener and even a "temporary villager" through empathising with the experiences narrated by the local participants.

Another example of transforming identities is constituted by the fact that, once given space and time to employ their own experiences and expertise, the villagers of Autti themselves expressed a wish to continue concept development after the competition. This way the case contributed to the authorship and power element of identity formation, as the villagers felt empowered to further their new "regional developer" identities. Initially, the villagers thought that they would like to focus on developing an elderly home service, but through co-design, it transformed first to unexpected directions, like building a casino in Autti, to finally a tourism concept that could contribute to actually bringing more people to Autti. Villagers also felt that the competition contributed to their collective identity as people coming from and living in Autti. One of the villagers shared: "…we noticed that there is actually a lot of potential in Autti… and that we can really contribute to that".

In the Edinburgh case authorship and power components manifested themselves when the participants took initiative to influence the course of the project (and their environments). For example, the participants from Pakistani food store went from being mere storytellers to taking charge and serving as guides for the team of the researchers. The Portuguese pastry shop owners volunteered to host in their space the final event of the project - the film screening and group discussion.

Observation of Edinburgh participants at their work places revealed intersectionalities, too. It became apparent how the participants simultaneously ended up being service providers, friends, neighbours and social workers for their national communities away from homeland. Especially the Indian shop acts as a community centre where people come to ask for advice, discuss most recent

Indian films, get their beauty procedures done, fix their clothes and so on. The same search for the familiar lead the young British-Pakistani woman, a former journalist for Financial Times, to seek for job here: "...I walked into this shop, because I felt the sense of familiarity… This shop was my first step to getting to know people." This was a significant insight for the project focus, which lay in reflection on the complexity of belonging through analysing shared narratives. In fact, the participants themselves had done the work of constructing their identities around this complexity, like this young woman who chose belonging and familiarity over a "lonely" career path

Conclusion

While working on this paper, an ad from Denmark (TV2 2017) kept popping up at the authors' Facebook feeds. It tells in a compact way that, as humans, we tend to label and group others, and ourselves attributing fixed roles. In the ad, people are in a big room standing in smaller homogenous groups inside squares that are taped to the floor. They are asked to move to the front of the room when they hear a description that fits them. The host starts by asking: "Who in this room was the class clown? Who are stepparents? Corresponding persons move to the front and form new groups momentarily. The ad continues: "And then suddenly there's us. We, who believe in life after death. We, who have seen a UFO. And all of us who love to dance…" People laugh, even hug each other and are surprised by the people standing next to them. Ad concludes: "…And then there's all of us who just love Denmark. So maybe there's more that brings us together than we think." The ad aims to create an inclusive counter-narrative among today's discourse of intolerance in Europe, but it is doing so through the questionable in itself nationalist unification angle. Disregarding this problematic aspect, the piece is a fitting illustration of the overlapping complexity of individuals' identities versus the restricting boxes of their social roles and positions.

The authors noticed that even though a "role-giving" process may often be a good starting point, it soon becomes more productive to allow for the tasks and collaborations to form in a way that is suitable and organic for all the participants. This takes time. Some of the struggles artists and designers might feel in the process can be a result of them trying to direct or speed up the course of the project. When cases are fit for ever-developing participants' identities, a more equal learning, discussion, creation and decision-making can happen.

In *Good Life in Villages* case study choosing the research angle of narrative identities over the role perspective allowed all the participants to equally "step out of their comfort zones" by assuming the positions of decision-makers and bringing in deeply personal experiences. In *Have you heard?* case study the narrative identities perspective not only enriched the research and artistic data, but also allowed the participant community to be an active maker of their own artistic representation in the project by hosting, taking initiatives and bringing in stories and artefacts meaningful for them.

The approach through narrative identity can challenge power structures in at least two ways. Firstly, it can facilitate and enhance participation, and through that empower individuals to make decisions about their surroundings, enabling their transition from being passive participants to having an active agency in and an impact on the participatory process. Secondly, through narratives people make sense of their own life situations and explore their positions in the community. If participatory processes consider the plurality of identities, social empowerment can also emerge from the deeper understanding of individual identities in relation to others.

Both authors note about their respective cases that the informal storytelling and sharing of personal narratives (even the ones unrelated to the themes of the project) in a dedicated time and space often provides more profound and meaningful insights than the outcomes of structured or semi-structured interviews. One of the participants in Edinburgh shared in such way a simple, but poignant observation on identity and belonging: “Sometimes when I talk to someone, they ask me where I come from. When I answer, the conversation often ends. Then it’s awkward”.

When art and design cases are conducted in urban settings or with communities, different ways of looking at the complexity are called for. The perspective of identity can provide means for focusing on context, intersectionality as well as authorship and power within every given group. Mere numeric measures prove to be insufficient, as does the angle of participants’ roles that restricts looking at participation from a more holistic perspective. The authors suggest that the concept of identity, especially narrative identities, could not only provide deeper understanding, but also open up new meaningful ways for participation.

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Article 4
NARRATING IDENTITIES THROUGH ART-MAKING ON THE MARGINS: THE CASE OF TWO WORKSHOPS IN THE ARCTIC

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Abstract

Artists and makers who live and conduct their creative practices in the geographical margins tend to face social, economic, environmental and historical challenges conditioned by the location of such regions. The condition of relative isolation may impact on the quality of artistic processes and such subjective criteria as motivation, inspiration and self-reflection of the maker. When artist communities and individuals come together in collective making processes and share knowledge through narrative practices, it may enable connectivity that spreads beyond geographical limitations and contributes to knowledge transfer and dissemination. In this case study, artistic practices such as collaborative textile art and individual making processes are used to discuss life histories and personal positions towards living and working in the Arctic. Artistic practices serve as a means to discuss and share this positioning in narrative and visual formats.

This paper considers the processes and outcomes of two workshops that took place in the cities of Rovaniemi, Finland, and Murmansk, Russia, in December 2016 with local and international artists. The paper analyses the stories and narratives shared by the artists in relation to their making processes and respective contexts. These narratives reveal how the qualities of life and work environments impact on art practices and identity construction and how creating temporal contexts for collective making and sharing may contribute to knowledge dissemination and transfer from one remote community to another. Even though the margins may be objectively defined through quantifiable means, there are also subjective, personal ways of viewing margins or the absence thereof. The research discusses and provides examples of how the creation of collaborative and individual art pieces in the localities in question communicates personal reflections on the margin as a concept, and how the capturing of personal narratives promotes a better understanding of and between different contexts.

Introduction

> How strange to feel the line that is spun from us lengthening its fine filament across the misty spaces of the intervening world.
>
> –Virginia Woolf, *The Waves, 1978*

The paper discusses relative remoteness, proximity and exchange between artist communities in the Arctic exemplified through two case studies: workshops with artist groups (mainly represented by women) in Rovaniemi, Finland, and Murmansk, Russia. The workshops took place in December 2016 and concluded the first year of fieldwork and data collection for the international art and research project *Margin to Margin: Women Living on the Edges of the World* (MarginToMargin, 2016). The project involved artists and communities in outback South Australia, Finnish Lapland and the Russian Kola Peninsula, with the objective to explore the relationship between art- and craft-making practices, identity processes and empowerment of female makers living and working "on the edges". The project was carried out through the methods of practice-led artistic research by two Finnish, one Russian, one Namibian-Australian and one Portuguese artists and researchers (further, the researchers). Although the research team carried out several other workshops and activities globally, this paper focuses on the two Arctic contexts.

Both workshops were based on a framework where the artists developed their individual art pieces freely interpreting the theme "the margin" and other associated themes, while also participating in collective processes, thereby contributing material, visual and narrative data for the research. The unifying narrative processes in both locations were constituted by group discussions and individual interviews. In both locations the artists were invited to participate in collaborative art-making processes: in Rovaniemi it encompassed making a collective felt, while in Murmansk a life story mandala process was facilitated through acrylic painting on textiles (Miettinen, Sarantou & Akimenko 2016: 75).

The exploration of the project themes through art and research opened up complexities and sensitivities. Marginality is, perhaps, the most challenging theme to discuss. While a body of research on the topic exists in feminist and postcolonial studies, healthcare, pedagogy and other disciplines (e.g. hooks, 2000; Ferguson et al., 1992; Hall, Stevens & Meleis, 1994; Mücke, 1992), when put in concrete interpersonal or community contexts, it becomes an increasingly complicated matter. The word margin is commonly used in the meaning of a space "outside the main body" of something (margin, 2017). When translated into Russian, предел, this term acquires the meaning of an unsurpassable limit or point. The established semantic contraposition between the edge and the centre (e.g. Jacobs, 1996; Gibson, 2015) places strain on those on the edge, rendering them the vulnerable party. This complex relationship has been problematised throughout the research, raising critical discussions in the two different contexts,

while some participants acknowledged the lack of understanding of another Arctic edge:

> *I am originally from the South of Finland, but I have lived in Rovaniemi now for four years. What I like about Finland is working together and creating great things together. That is what I want to take to Murmansk, but it is a hard question, because I know nothing about Murmansk (Participant, Rovaniemi, 2016).*

In quantifiable terms, scholars have cited certain constraints on different aspects of life in the peripheral Arctic. Petrov (2014: 152) referred to "limited evidence of the creative class's transformative role in the periphery". This may be a result of limitations in resources and opportunities on the one hand, but also a lack of research and documentation that occurs in the peripheries. These limitations, fuelled by environmental limits, contribute to Hardt's notion that Arctic art and design are not favoured with "total artistic freedom" (2012: 57). Coutts advises that a focus on the social and cultural will widen perspectives of the obvious climatic and geographic aspects of the Arctic (2012: 49). Both authors refer to the complex socio-cultural landscapes reinforced by identity formations and mobilities of people in the region.

Through a discussion of the case of two workshops, this paper addresses the social and cultural aspects of the two Arctic locations, alongside environmental factors. Art, craft and design practices discussed in this paper, despite being underpinned by challenging circumstances in the Arctic, contribute to the body of practice-led artistic knowledge supported by narrative functions and identity work. The research paper analyses concrete artefacts, narratives and identity processes that came about in the two workshops. The discussion on how knowledge is generated through artistic and narrative practices is followed by comparisons of the two contexts and related identity formations. The paper concludes by discussion of the findings and analysis of how the social and cultural aspects of the case study contribute to the understanding of Arctic identities.

Generating Knowledge through Artistic and Narrative Practices

As noted by Exner-Pirot, there is a regional component to the issues of knowledge transfer: "the biggest challenge to Arctic innovation is that the accumulated knowledge often remains tacit knowledge, not explicit knowledge" (2015: 4). The processes outlined below allow for a more efficient transition between these two forms of knowledge.

Nimkulrat et al. note how professional design practitioners tend to depart from "their experiences and 'specialist tacit knowing' during design processes" (Nimkulrat, Niedderer & Evans 2015: 5). Art-making processes also bear strong potential for generating knowledge that may be used and applied by the makers

and researchers of artistic practice, thus transitioning from tacit to explicit. This premise is the basis of practice-based (or practice-led) and artistic research (e.g. Mäkelä & Routarinne, 2006; Koskinen, 2009). Practice serves as knowledge generating in all its stages–from ideation, through prototyping and making, to the final artefact, leaving the artist-researcher not only in the position to create artefacts, "but also [to] document, contextualise and interpret the artefacts, as well as the process of making" (Mäkelä & Nimkulrat, 2011: 1). Thus, skill itself can be regarded as a method, as noted by Mäkelä and Latva-Somppi in relation to craft-making where "craft skill is used to narrate" as the "application of traditional techniques and materials places the work in a historical context" (2011: 57).

Personal stories lie in the core of this study's data and knowledge generation. While they start off as elements of tacit and subjective knowledge, stories further become explicit knowledge when put into words and artefacts, documented, critically and empathically reflected upon and disseminated. Personal experiences, especially those that are narrated and documented, may contribute, much like traditional making, to the understanding of historical and geopolitical contexts, mapping socio-geographic formations and the realities communities face. Derived from the discussion raised by Mills about understanding of the larger context in terms of its meaning for the inner and external lives of a variety of individuals (1959), this idea further developed into a political argument referring to the connection between personal experience and larger social and political structures: "the personal is political" (e.g. Crenshaw, 1991). An alternative approach to modernist objectivity is viewing the knowing individual "as a subject who is conscious of her situatedness, history and discursive nature", as opposed to being an external observer (Haraway, 1991, as cited in Mäkelä & Latva-Somppi, 2011: 38).

The narrative function, when attributed a space and time for sharing, empowers art- and craft-making. Narratives allow for knowledge transfer that enables the understanding of multiple contexts and backgrounds of art and craft makers and their communities. This function is aptly referred to by Somers: "it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities" (1994: 606). Somers (1994) refers to the notion of narrative identities, a concept also addressed by Paul Ricoeur (1992: 114-116), that come about when individuals negotiate their stable and changing identities through narratives which are internalised or expressed by using personal stories and communication. Narrative identities are intrinsically connected to temporality, as "narratives are constellations of relationships embedded in time and space,"– Somers explains, which means that identities are shaped during connecting events within a "social network of relationships" (1994: 616). Taking note of these gives focus and depth to narrative-based research, as it may not be taken for granted "that people with similar attributes will share common experiences of social life, let alone be moved to common forms and meanings of social action" (Somers, 1994: 635).

It is often emphasised how building of a discursive space enables narrative and sharing processes, such as “interaction, polyphony, letting-go and the progressive unfolding of thoughts are supported, benefiting ways of knowing, narrative (re)construction, sensory perception and capacities to act” (Eaves, 2014: 147). The project described in the paper created a variety of discursive spaces for artists to share identity and art-making processes, including face-to-face processes, web-based platforms, seminars and exhibitions. The use of video recordings was another platform for realising performativity and narrativity, as well as data collection. Creation of digital spaces increased the transition between tacit and explicit knowledge. Additionally, digitalization facilitated connections between the communities through web-based sharing platforms, such as video channels, social media, blogs and publications. Connections were also established in physical spaces through exhibitions. These methods encouraged cycles of knowledge transfer, creating spaces for making and sharing, documentation, enabling conversation and collating feedback. Face-to-face meetings and direct knowledge and practice exchange often depends on the availability of resources, but virtual exchange offers ways to overcome these challenges.

Case Murmansk

> One must not focus only on the margins. The centre and the edge are inseparable from one another. Their connection is very strong and noticeable, but it is complex and not always obvious… [In our work] the edge is treated not as something negative, but as something welcome and celebrated, as a determinant of quality. In my opinion, the limit is always where it is. One cannot move it, only cross it.
>
> –Participant, Murmansk, *2016*

The four-day workshop *Повести о Пределах* (a Russian analogy to the title Narrating the Marginal), was hosted by the Art and Service Department of Murmansk Arctic State University (MASU) with a group of students and graduates of the department, two young men and fourteen women.

The participants explored personal interpretations of the concept of margin. During the first day of the workshop the participants and some researchers painted life story mandalas as an introductory activity to the workshop (Figure 1). This process provided space for the participants to share personal life stories. The narrative ability of making processes and the painted mandalas themselves created new connections and empathy for the research process. The Murmansk students then presented their ideas for the personal projects they planned to complete during that week.

In terms of narrative sharing, the workshop process presented some limitations to the researchers themselves, who had to rely on their Russian-born colleague for translation and facilitation during the activities. Three MASU

students communicated in English, although most students had a fair to good understanding of the language.

Article 4. Figure 1. Visualising personal life histories through life story mandala artistic tool, Murmansk, December 2016. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko.

The artists' interpretations of the themes were often subjectively approached with a focus on personal limits, while exemplary objective limits were linked to their frustrations with obtaining visas for travelling internationally as well as climatic and environmental challenges. One participant noted, for example: "In my art piece I would like to reflect on inner limits, on how they influence one's perception of the world around," while another added: "I wouldn't want to sound banal, but it is obvious that living in Murmansk, one is faced with climatic and geographic limitations, such as cold temperatures and darkness… Through my abstract painting I would like to express the feelings of a person living in such conditions and still thriving to find inspiration, despite everything" (Participants, Murmansk, 2016).

Narratives' rationality is about explaining, expressing, understanding and constituting human life as a whole, and this is the value and role of story in human life (Ricoeur, 2004: 243). The value of storytelling towards building social connections is widely appreciated as it brings different people and their values together. Narrative allows people to cross cultural boundaries, because stories emerge from and journey through all cultures, encouraging encounter and mutual understanding among different people, hospitality, sharing, as well as the interest we share in each other (Petrilli & Ponzio, 2000: 47).

The artist Oxana Loginova commented on the importance of the narrative ability of artefacts that continues, acceding to different journeys, once the artefacts are removed from their makers (Sarantou, 2014):

> *[The bookmark I made] is not just something written, like "Hello" and "How are you", because you can do that on Facebook. If people receive something material that you made with your hands it is different, because you send your warmth to another person, and maybe your love or the mood you were in*

while you made it. From this bookmark I made, the person who receives it will remember me while reading (Loginova, interview, December 13, 2016).

The approach to narrative in this project was followed with the purpose to discover the value of stories in identity creating contexts and as means of speaking of the lives they are interwoven with. Judith Butler (1990) contributed significantly to an understanding of the performative aspects of identities. Narratives, as identity performances (Butler, 1990), have a significant role in this project as they are able to communicate ontological aspects associated with identity formation, including the tensions that are associated with notions of “self” and “other”. Identity performances, some bearing strong relations to the Arctic environments, were also concretised in this project through artistic outcomes and artefacts. In the narration above the participant explains how her personal stories are woven into and embedded in her artefact. However, her artefact making is a performative expression of identities and the concretisation of the process is the making, turning materiality into an artefact that “speaks”.

The artist Antonina Gorbacheva adopted a social approach by creating a video that discusses the role of a woman in facing limits and overcoming daily obstacles. She says:

Women [in the North] often face obstacles. For example, they may not get a job where “male force” is more valued. There is an obvious discrimination. At the same time we know that our women have been to space, can educate six children as a single parent and so on… I want to show the limits they face and the way they break through those limits due to their inner strength (Gorbacheva, interview, December 13, 2016).

Article 4. Figure 2. Making process and the installation “I’m Strong”, Murmansk/Rovaniemi, December 2016. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko; a still frame from the video “I’m Strong” by Antonina Gorbacheva.

Antonina proposed her video to be a part of an installation, alongside posters and a textile t-shirt citing “I’m Strong”, the title of the work (see Figure 2). This piece became more than an artwork, a political action of rendering audible gender issues in her region. In the reality where feminist actions are often frowned upon

and gender roles are still very strictly defined, Antonina's work is an artistic step towards "recognizing as social and systemic what was formerly perceived as isolated and individual" (Crenshaw, 1991: 1241). In the film she visualises the real stories of her female friends and placed herself as a collective character symbolically "breaking through," reaching the top of a snow-covered fell in the end of the video.

Participants in Murmansk employed narrative to express their emotions, experiences, hopes and frustrations with their circumstances on the one hand, while making sense of their situations on the other. One stated: "[I experience] never-ending fluctuation from the negative to the expressive, from the empty to the replete", while another mentioned: "I view my life as a map with checkpoints I grew through. And there are points and bonuses I gained by helping people. And there are paths of other 'heroes', people" (Participants, Murmansk, 2016).

I wanted to study in a completely different place. But as I finished high school quite early, and places like St. Petersburg and Kazan are very far from here, I was not ready psychologically. That's why I entered here, in Murmansk, started studying and have no regrets. I think that if you want to study, you will always achieve it regardless of the conditions. As for the teachers, you can always find a person who would lead and support you. We find opportunities for self-realisation, also thanks to collaboration with other Universities (Participant, Murmansk, 2016).

This reference bears in itself indirect insights into the reality of life and education in this place, for instance, young people's mobility away from Murmansk, social pressure for starting university immediately after high school (common throughout Russia), struggle to find your artistic self and a suitable studying/working context "regardless of the conditions." A variety of reflections and personal relationships with margins were documented during the study. Artists' stories present a wider, complex and informal understanding of living in the margins, revealing the tensions presented by their life circumstances. This narration illustrates that some are even drawn to and find inspiration in the tensions presented by margins:

When we first started working on this project, I thought that probably I have no margins or limits and that the whole thing is not about me, but I tried to find a topic about the others. But it is hard to make art when it is not about you. Everything we do is about ourselves. By the third day of the workshop I realised fully that everything I work on is a stimulus to my creativity and movement ahead. That all the time I come across obstacles, margins and limits that I have to overcome. And when I don't feel those margins and the need to struggle, I get too relaxed. Therefore, any discomfort, all the minuses and pluses of studying here, of living, working and creating in this city formed

me the way I am. My whole creativity is based on overcoming (Participant, Murmansk, 2016).

The artists' stories deliver evidence that the term margin is too wide to define, as it is often disconnected from the determinism of only geographical, climatic or economic factors due to margins also being shaped by cultural, social and political variables. The tensions that margins present not only shape identities, but also the underpinning narratives of lives reflected in artistic practices and outcomes.

Case Rovaniemi

I don't believe that the world has edges. There is no centre either, namely.
–Participant, Rovaniemi, *2016*

Narrating the Marginal was the title of the other Arctic workshop that was hosted by the Faculty of Art and Design of the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi. The group of fourteen participants, three men and eleven women, included local artists and international students of the University as well as practitioners from Moldova, Estonia, Turkey, Australia, Namibia and the UK. The themes connecting the artists on professional and personal levels included migration, belonging and exploration of marginality in various contexts.

The objectives and questions the artists chose to explore varied in scale, direction and focus. Some would inquire and aim to stimulate a discussion about global topics, such as "stereotyping, uninformed value judgments and the role of ego" (Participant from Namibia, 2016), while others asked questions that participants could relate to on a personal level. A Finnish participant, for example, sought to understand and cope with the transformation between different roles that have challenged her perception of self by asking "who or what exists in between these roles". Some artists had more introverted, practice- and material-oriented objectives that contributed unique data through "creating a series of forms that present the characteristics of the material such as rawness, and characteristics of myself, such as being woman and designer, while showing different levels of simplicity and complexity" (Participant from Turkey, 2016).

The artists reflected upon the discussed themes from very different viewpoints: referring to cityscapes, daily practices, inner processes and tangible textures. The produced artworks included two performances, a group game, two video art pieces, two textile works (felt and weaving) and two mix-media artefacts.

In collective sharing the narratives varied from general inquiries to reflections on personal position within identity systems. One way or another identities remained an important theme that was widely explored by several participants in Rovaniemi. The understanding of how people combine multiple identities as they remain relatively transcendent, fluid, overlapping and context sensitive (Appiah, 2007: 100), was central to many discussions. One of the participants noted that

"identity is how other people see you", while another added: "we talk so much about identity, as if there is one and it relates to the other one, but I think it's so much more fluid and so much more noisy and chaotic" (Participants, Rovaniemi, 2016). Another artist mentioned:

> *I just don't think that I have one [identity]. I definitely have characteristics and things that I like and so on, but I never feel that any of them is essential… In what concerns "identity markers", I am always on the easy side. So maybe I am just oblivious to the problems that other people are facing (Participant, Rovaniemi, 2016).*

These expressions illustrate that individuals have to negotiate and perform their plural identities often trying to make sense of them through identity processing, such as combining identities (Lawler, 2008: 3-5). Another participant shared an insight into her own identity work: "I have a process now where I am trying to accept myself as I am, because I noticed that I look at myself through the eyes of the others" (Participant, Rovaniemi, 2016).

Identities are formed between, rather than within, persons due to individuals being immersed in environments and societies, living their lives as they unfold into the myriad pathways of their textured worlds (Lawler, 2008: 3). Identity processes are not necessarily clear-cut and smooth, thus, individuals have to manage their contradicting identities that are often driven by affect, such as feelings of belonging and unbelonging, to be different from or the same as the "other" or by being part of a selected group that is "different" or the "same" (ibid). One of the participants shared a fitting personal observation that supports this point: "I am two different people–when I talk Estonian I am one person, when I speak English I am somebody else. And I can choose which one to be depending on a situation" (Participant, Rovaniemi, 2016).

A Finnish artist Priska Falin chose to reflect upon identity formation and its margins from a spatial point of view through the means of video:

> *Sometimes the perception of identity is built on clearly definable roles. Can identities be defined by the hidden, unnoticed or unrecognisable? Eight different localities in the city of Rovaniemi are presented in the video In Between. These localities are in between the central, familiar or promoted locations that tourists or local people of Rovaniemi visit. These localities are the unnoticed in between spaces that people may pass through regularly as they seem mundane. This artistic representation explores the relationships between identities and roles through these marginal locations (Falin, interview, December 5, 2016).*

Artists also reflected on how they relate to identities that come about through materialities and art-making processes and how these shape notions of belonging and unbelonging. The artist-researcher Bilge Aktas conducts a study of felting as

a craft form in rural Turkey and Finland. Through her felted installation (see Figure 3) she reflected on materiality:

> *I chose working with felt since it is a significantly vibrant material. I perceive the practice of felting more as manipulating the material rather than making an artefact. Due to the strong characteristics of the material, each piece becomes unique within a shared sameness… These pieces can stand on their own individually, but they can make a statement when they create a community, too (Aktas, interview, December 5, 2016).*

The same material evoked polar associations and reflections in different makers giving an insight into their artistic practices, personalities and identities. The Estonian-Australian artist shared in a group discussion referring to working with wool while making a collective felt: "As I was making this thing, I realised that I really hate fibre… it's so unpleasant… there's something so vague about it. I work a lot with metal and wood and I much prefer it, it's so concrete".

Article 4. Figure 3. Making process and the artwork by Bilge Merve Aktas, Rovaniemi, December 2016. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko.

A Finnish artist Mirjam Yeboah brought to the workshop her project of vulva-shaped jewellery, each piece unique in shape and colour, both a work of craft and a political statement (see Figure 4). The series was created before, outside of the workshop context, as an artistic exploration of the subject. But as the artist went on showing her work, she found the subject increasingly sensitive and difficult to talk about. Mirjam shared: "I don't think we talk enough about vaginas and gender and different kinds of intersecting personalities and identities. [We don't] show it in

the way that is true, maybe shocking for some, but also beautiful" (Yeboah, interview, December 6, 2016). In the workshop she wanted to collect reflections and stories, anonymous or open, regarding the subject and see if her work could gain weight and value through the discussion of gender issues and both social and personal boundaries. The artist wondered: "…what kind of people can talk freely about this topic and what reactions it causes in others. It's very interesting to see and use it in some way" (Yeboah, interview, December 6, 2016).

Discussions on the politics of the margins and on how marginalities are produced were enabled in the group context and provided additional research data. In the Rovaniemi case, more than in Murmansk, the notion of margin was extrapolated and used in its multiple meanings, including such specific ones, as a margin of a book or textile. One of the big questions raised during the workshop was about how margins, or states of marginality, are defined and by whom.

Article 4. Figure 4. Group discussion and "GENI", vulva-shaped jewellery by Mirjam Yeboah, Rovaniemi, December 2016. Photo credits: Mirjam Yeboah; still frame from the footage of a group discussion.

Plural Arctic Identities

Through physical artefacts, recordings and the exhibition (see Figure 5), the stories of the Arctic participants became powerful as they were concrete representations of their individual and collective identities. Although the meanings surrounding the artefacts transformed, as the works from two Arctic locations entered a conversation with one another in the exhibition space of Arktikum, Rovaniemi, the pieces retained their unique identities and site-specificities.

The interaction between the two Arctic edges discussed here has obviously not been the first of its kind. Rovaniemi often initiates, receives and hosts international art and research forums and students from Murmansk and the rest of the world. Murmansk gave the researchers a feeling of a "cosmopolitan" city, rather well connected to Central Russia and the rest of the Arctic (through a major seaport). Nonetheless, at least in the field of artistic and educational

collaborations, there is a tendency of Murmansk community looking up to Rovaniemi as "the centre" that is hard to reach due to limited transport infrastructure, scarce funding opportunities and strict immigration policies. This implies that the "centre-margin" equation exists even within geographical margins themselves, which fuels further questions, for example, whether the notion of an "iron curtain" continues to place strain on mobility and transfer between these two Arctic locations that are, in fact, not so geographically distant.

Article 4. Figure 5. Exhibition "Every Margin Tells a Story", Rovaniemi, December 2016. Artistic outcomes of the Rovaniemi and Murmansk workshops formed the exhibition that was hosted at Arktikum in Rovaniemi from December 2016 to February 2017. Photo credits: Daria Akimenko; Satu Miettinen.

The comparison between the two presented contexts can be problematised: the Rovaniemi group was diversified, with participants not necessarily representing Arctic locations, while the group in Murmansk was more homogenous in terms of their places of birth and residence. In this respect, a clarification of the Russian context is required. While most of the Murmansk participants were "ethnically" Russian, at least five of them cited being born and having spent their childhood elsewhere. They referred to themselves as being "from the South". The southern regions of Russia can be as far as 3000 km away from Murmansk, which is as far as South European countries are from Rovaniemi. This supports the idea that migration and mobility remain, as they did historically, narratives of the Arctic, enriching in various ways socio-cultural landscapes of its many locations. The relativity of the notions of centre and margin comes into the picture: Rovaniemi may be perceived as an artistic, educational, touristic centre to the people of the Kola Peninsula, while Murmansk is central to many economic and trade processes in the Russian Arctic. centre and margin remain in continuous interplay and are contextual depending on many socio-cultural variables.

Several of the participants in Rovaniemi were doctoral candidates (between the ages of 25 and 50) who were able to process themes related to marginality on epistemological levels, thus discussing the themes in depth. This group represented random identities with limited relation to the Arctic region. The participants from MASU were undergraduate students and graduates between the ages of 20 and 28 and therefore they approached the topics of marginality and identity in more personal and direct ways. However, one of the authors of this paper, who has lived and worked in Finnish Lapland, but was born and raised in a peripheral Russian region, notes that a rather insightful image of the two groups from the different locations can be grasped.

Some Arctic communities with very versatile demographics focus on overcoming at least some aspects of marginality, like the University of Lapland community that stands strong against being externally marginalised. Other communities, like the Murmansk group that is composed of different people sharing histories, strong and unifying pasts, educational approaches and other factors such as the divide between the West and the East, have different obstacles in overcoming marginalisation. The researchers experienced very physical and tangible peripheries while traveling between Rovaniemi and Murmansk on dilapidated roads and crossing stringent visa check points. Arctic realities are not homogenous. The striking differences between the two communities reinforced the importance of sharing and exchange between Arctic artists and other global communities.

While the two Arctic groups differed from one another in terms of skill sets and backgrounds, the researchers noted strong contrasts in their approaches to theory and practice. The artists in Rovaniemi initiated an informed and inquisitive discussion challenging some of the key themes and concepts of the project, such as empowerment, identity construction and marginality. The group of Murmansk artists and designers, in contrast, focused on personal narratives and delivered modest and intuitive sharing processes.

During both the workshops artists' narratives illustrated the importance of location, place and space in their identity processes. One participant commented: "I am from Istanbul, currently I am living in Helsinki. I like how Istanbul has lots of stories and Helsinki allows me to focus on my personal story." Another said: "If we talk about Russia, I like straightforwardness and the tragedy here most of all. Especially, I appreciate those in the creative fields" (Participants, Rovaniemi and Murmansk, 2016).

Stronger divisions in gender roles were noted amongst the Murmansk group although participants from both locations commented that they do not perceive any differences in their approach to art-making and artistic practices due to their gender. Two Murmansk artists noted: "Chasing after equality with men many women burn out, lose their inner fire. When trying to cope with heavy tasks she is not meant to cope with, a woman, the keeper of the family hearth, loses her special qualities," and "I pictured myself in pink, because I'm a girl" (Participants, Murmansk, 2016).

The differences in the two groups' artistic and academic approaches shaped the workshop experiences of the researchers. The Rovaniemi group proved to have a more conceptual and explorative approach to making and understanding art and craft. The Murmansk group demonstrated thorough and advanced technique as well as a more "classical" academic approach despite working with contemporary artistic means. The identities expressed through art-making were diverse, illustrating the complexities of Arctic identity processes.

Conclusion

The assumption that similarities between the two Arctic contexts exist may prove to be incorrect. Despite superficial similarities, the participants' individual and collective identities (based on geography, personal backgrounds, working methods, education) vary greatly, thus revealing context-specific realities, strengths and vulnerabilities. Not only the narrative identities of individuals, but also collective Arctic identities should be considered and approached minding preconceptions and generalisations.

The careful documentation of the activities through film, photo and sound was not only a successful method for the representation of the research, but also became a powerful tool for all the researchers to process and disseminate data after fieldwork. The use of video documentation offered a platform for expressing implicit knowledge, thus rendering it explicit through narratives and identity performances. Working with people and their communities, transferring knowledge through art-making and narrative processes, stimulates an appreciation for the role of both mind and heart in fieldwork. While tangible and quantifiable data are conclusive and comprehensive, it is the intangible data deriving from the intersection of the individual and collective, concurrent and conflicting, intuitive and rational that challenges and fuels research in meaningful ways.

The project achieved the intended documentation of artefact creation underpinned by marginal circumstances. The two artist communities discussed in this paper meet the definition of marginality–the condition of being peripheralised, mainly due to the geographical component (Hall, Stevens & Meleis, 1994: 25). It becomes apparent, however, that even though the margin may be often objectively defined through quantifiable means, there are also subjective, very personal ways of viewing margins or the absence thereof. The research discusses and provides concrete examples of how the creation of different collaborative and individual art pieces in the localities in question sums up personal reflections on the margin as a concept, and how the capturing of personal narratives promotes a better understanding of and between the different contexts.

The documented narratives were related to living, shifting roles and identities related to "making it as an artist" in remote areas. The narratives revealed that artists and makers who live and conduct their creative practices in the geographical margins, specifically in the Far North, face socio-economic, climatic,

historical and other challenges conditioned by the remoteness of these regions. The condition of relative isolation may impact, both positively and negatively, on the quality and productivity of artistic processes, but it may also impact on subjective realities of art-makers. The use of multimedia narrative offers ways to work through and cope with the identity tensions related to displacement, marginality and isolation allowing to put forward, as poetically noted by bell hooks, “a message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity” (hooks, 1990: 209).

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Article 5
iDOC AS A TOOL FOR MEDIATING CONTINUATION AND DISSEMINATION OF ART-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROJECTS

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Abstract

The aim of this work in progress presents a technology tool as a platform for exploring data from an art-based research project in geographically marginalised communities. The perspectives of the research participants on their identity processes and art-making inspired the pursuit of an HCI (Human Computer Interaction) platform for the purpose of giving life to the collected data and art outcomes. Vital ethical considerations for the creation of such a platform and the roles communities and researchers will play in the process, are considered in this paper.

Keywords: art-based research, participation, community, iDoc

Introduction

Margin to Margin: Women Living on the Edges of the World was an artistic research project that involved artist communities from the South Australian outback, Finnish Lapland and the Russian Kola peninsula through the course of 2016-2017. One of the challenges the project took on was to connect these communities who experience marginalised geographical realities and varied cultural backgrounds. Communication avenues included the sharing of physical artefacts, social media participation, video messaging, workshops and exhibitions that were mediated by the researchers [1]. These activities, which were accessible and readily mastered, offered means for sharing and self-expression, which meant giving voice to communities [2]. The use of technology offered the communities ways to construct, manage and convey their identities [2]. With multiple beneficial visual and publication outcomes and global connections, the researchers had a large amount of rich, partially unanalysed audio-visual, textual, physical and photographic data. An obvious solution is to collate and store processed data in accessible and inclusive spaces with the potential to benefit marginal communities through giving them voice and broader connectivity. Creating a technological platform that allows for the exploration of the data will offer a solution to overcome the gap between scientific and public communication, whilst the researchers will have access to organised data via the platform. The researchers' responsibility to render audible the voices of participating communities lead to the sharing of

findings with their communities of practice and their audiences. However, key ethical considerations need to be addressed such as participant permission, informed consent, privacy concerns around making the data public and narrative appropriation via video [3]. This current work in progress led the researchers to ask the following question: *How to utilise HCI solutions for approaches that draw on the experiences and outcomes of art-based research in marginalised communities?*

Ethical considerations

The required ethical protocols were followed before, during and after the research processes of the project. However, several and complex ethical considerations, such as conducting research in small and marginalised art communities, ethical conduct of video making, editing and sharing, as well as participant permissions, informed consent and privacy, are necessary for the implementation of the technological platform. The ethical complexities in the implementation of the technological platform include the representation of the artefacts and other art outcomes. Artefacts have the potential to reveal the identities of their authors, but artefacts also find their own journeys once they are removed from their authors. Brownlow and O'Dell's outline for ethical conduct in HCI communities asks how results will be used, who will benefit from the results, will the data be shared with the participants, will these representations be beneficial, sensitive and respectful to the communities and individuals they refer to. Additionally, the power differentials need to be rendered transparent in terms of roles, identities, purpose and intent [3]. First, the objective of interconnecting communities should be investigated as this notion is often imposed, arising from the premise that connectedness promotes development [4]. Individuals and communities are active agents capable of achieving outcomes they themselves consider valuable and holistic community outcomes are not achieved through solely capitalist and economic-centred approaches [5]. Digital connectivity and access should be key considerations for communities despite the complexities associated with digital inclusion [6]. This project approached connectedness empathically due to the manifestations of art-making, discussions and activities with participants who expressed the need for ongoing creative and cultural exchange.

Secondly, ethical approaches to research in marginalised and small communities that practice art is relevant to the envisaged platform. Ethical considerations should be based on the concepts of data analysis that brings to light the nuances and lived experiences within these communities by actively enabling the co-construction of stories that illustrate the communities' multiple complexities and diversities, whilst respecting their characteristics and representations [7]. The ethical implications of video making are the third important consideration due to the large amount of data that was captured and processed. McKay provides a thorough outline of ethical considerations for video use prior and after recording, editing, presentation and distribution [8]. Lancaster

warns against the loss of empathy through superficial story-grabbing recording that result in desensitising audiences to real human problems, thus, character-centred stories that make audiences more socially aware and politically conscious, are needed [9].

Privacy concerns around making participant data public (and potentially identifiable) in an interactive polyvocal digital space should address: “who is representing who – to whom – to what end, and how?” [10]. Ackerman advises that privacy is “individually subjective and socially situated” [11]. Privacy concerns should go beyond universal notions of participant’s privacy needs as it depends on interpretive information that is perceived differently amongst various communities and individuals [12]. Finally, the onus is placed on researchers to ensure that participants “do not give their permission for something without understanding the consequences” [8]. To overcome ethical issues with ongoing informed consent, researchers should consider the sharing of results and data ownership with participants from marginalised groups [13]. Participants’ narrations were those they felt most comfortable to share, thus, private information was withheld in the documentary processes as participants understood the social considerations they upheld in the their closely related groups. This aspect should not be underestimated as the role of modesty (not sharing more than necessary) often directs scenarios of personal story sharing [12].

Implementation

Approaching the end of the two-year project, the researchers find themselves left with a wide variety of raw data. The collated data includes: (a) physical works of art and craft produced in the context of the workshops; (b) video documentation of the processes of creation, as well as thoughts and feelings behind the work; (c) audiovisual documentation of the locations and people taking part in the workshops; (d) video and sound recordings, translated and transcribed, partly compiled in the video work titled *Life Story Mandalas*; (e) video messages, translated and transcribed, that participants from different locations exchanged from one group to another; (f) texts, both academic and popular; (g) audio recordings of the team discussions throughout planning and fieldwork stages; (h) twelve audio recordings and transcribed interviews with women artists from all three locations; (i) a network of real people and communities that continues to expand due to ongoing collaborations and sub-projects. Steps have been made to process, curate and present the data in meaningful ways, such as writing and exhibitions. These outcomes contributed to the representation and connectedness of participants and their communities. During the technical implementation of the project, the researchers addressed the problem of compiling a variety of materials into one virtual space that can be accessed, shared and used by researchers, participants and the general community.

The presentation of the data, both digital (videos, sound, texts) and analog (people, artworks, communities), led to the iDoc platform as a tool for new media journalism and data processing solutions. The researchers investigated four

applications: Klynt, Eko Studio, Racontr and Korsakow, as these are considered to be the most common solutions used for the implementation of digital products. Originally intended for the creation of web documentaries, these applications expanded to other solutions focusing on narratives, data representation and corporate presentation tools [14]. Potentially, these applications are powerful tools for the presentation of research data.

The researchers aim for a digital platform that will enable: (a) a variety of structures for flexible navigation, thus offering users options for exploration; (b) a variety of options for the organisation of materials through metadata, google maps marking, tagging and menus; (c) the integration of various media into one sole web application, with a strong focus on video; (d) a simple structure for implementation, avoiding unnecessary, impractical and time consuming reinvention; (e) open source accessibility, thus allowing simple modifications tailored to the needs of the projects; (f) collaborations between researchers, filmmakers, designers, coders and communities; (g) affordable solutions to suit the context of the projects.

Conclusions and future work

The researchers concluded that the software solution Klynt satisfies the project's criteria for the implementation of the platform. The sole act of organising and transforming the project into an interactive web application will, in itself, require analysis of the resulting data. Upon implementation of the project's various issues, such as the structuring of navigation, access of multiple "moderators" with different levels of new media skillsets, continuity and maintenance of the platform, will be addressed. The inclusion of new remote community "storytellers" wishing to contribute their narratives craft to the platform, remains a challenge that will be addressed in the next phase of the project. New technology often requires a certain level of computer literacy. One of the challenges the project will face is the mentoring of community members who will upload to the platform the documentation of art-making and storytelling. It is envisaged that the further roll out of the platform will be accessible to a wide variety of communities that wish to participate as a result of inspiration drawn from the initial participants' networks.

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