Contemporary cabinets of curiosities

Capturing environment and experiences into digital collections

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Abstract

This thesis looks into the phenomenon of capturing environment and experiences into digital collections. Digital collecting can be seen as a cross-section of today's situation where physical and digital are intertwined and where the fast life pace makes many people capture the current moments to be remembered later. With digital equipment it's more possible to collect things in various ways and also to describe unseen things such as memories, smells and feelings. Many things that we used to have as concrete, tangible objects have become digital. For example a butterfly collection can be done without taking the lives of butterflies but instead by capturing virtual butterflies or displaying representations of them online. Collecting is a multidimensional activity and there is a fine line between collecting and hoarding, for instance. Collecting has a long tradition and now it has stepped into an era where it gets new forms by using new media possibilities such as digital devices, applications, platforms and social communities.

In this thesis I am exploring the individual level collecting done by today's capturing possibilities, especially turning the physical environment and experiences into digital forms. I am using my own digital photography collections and other cases as examples along with the related literature and a survey I implemented. After realizing that I had collections in the first place, I wanted to know why I had been creating them and what digital collecting was about. That was the starting point for this thesis topic.

My research questions are:
What is digital collecting about?
Why people digitally collect things?

According to my research, digitally collecting one's environment and experiences relates to wide range of phenomena such as self-expression, comprehension and memory. Digital collections reflect collector's thinking and identity and the contemporary culture. The results suggest that the motives for digitally collecting derive more from the collector's inner life than from the actual things collected. The findings help to understand better the contemporary collecting and its links to our modern lives and it also offers viewpoints for further research.

Keywords collecting, digital collecting, digital capturing, psychology of collecting, web art, memory, self-expression, digital photography, visual culture		

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*"When everything else from that time is lost
and people feel they are living in a whole new era,
all that remains are keepsakes, precious possessions
that capture the essence of their memories."*

- Stefana -
(www.freedomcolours.net)

*"Collecting, like most passions, has the capacity
to let (the collector) live in another world for a while.
If I could tell you why passion allows us to
inhabit another world, I would stop collecting."*

- Kim A. Herzinger -
(www.horizonlines.org)

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

I am interested in the reasons why people collect, the stories behind the things collected and the idea of small pieces creating something bigger when they come together. Technology has a strong impact on our thinking and lifestyle. With the contemporary digital equipment it is possible to collect objects in more various and new ways, also to capture unseen things such as feelings or taste sensations. Many of the concrete, tangible things have become bits, also in the collecting activity. For example a butterfly collection used to be made mainly by running in the fields, catching the butterflies with a net, taking their lives and attaching their bodies inside of a glass frame or equivalent and displaying them on the wall or in a drawer. Nowadays a collector can have a mesmerizing collection of butterflies entirely in a virtual form or do part of the phases digitally.

In this thesis I am having a dialogue between these so-called traditional collecting (meaning mainly collecting done mainly by tangible means) and the contemporary collecting (meaning mainly collecting done by the digital means). I will be looking into the world of digitally collecting especially in the context of capturing the environment and experiments – digitally picking up physical things around us into online collections – and the motives for doing so.

1.1. Background

In the beginning of 2013 I realized that I had digital collections in the first place and that I might be called as a collector. This was the starting point of this specific topic as I wanted to find out what is this activity about and why I had been creating these collections. While trying to expose some motives and means behind digital collecting, I also hope that the hobby can reveal some interesting aspects about the current times.

Creating digital photo collections has been my spare time activity that has been influenced by my other hobbies such as blogging and photography. I started digital photo collecting when I went to do part of my studies to Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, in 2011. These studies as well as the many inspiring courses in Aalto University, especially those that related to interactive storytelling and environmental arts, have been affecting to my collections. For instance on the course *Interactive and Generative Narratives* I was looking into online storytelling done by interwoven pieces, and in Melbourne, on the *Design in context* course we made lots of visual representations from environment for iteration that led the design process to undefined

directions. I see similarities between this approach and digital collecting: one is stapling together pieces not knowing precisely what the end result will be (if there even will be an end).

In addition to new media, arts and design I am interested in psychology and social psychology which I have been studying in the Open University of Helsinki. I have a background as a concept and content designer in marketing, creating online services and campaigns for customers in various industries. I enjoy exploring the versatile projects and doing tasks all the way from the research to the actual outcomes. As my interests and experiences are varied, I think this multilayered and sometimes mysterious activity of creating collections suits me well.

1.2. Context and objectives

Digital collecting is a broad phenomenon that can be framed in various ways. In this thesis I will be especially looking into digital collections of individuals who have been capturing their environment and experiences into digital collections, "digitally collecting the physical". These collections have been implemented mainly by using self-created representations such as digital photographs or sounds. So this will not be a pervasive research of all the possible forms of digital collecting and their means and motives but rather one way to look at digital collecting, a viewpoint that reflects the current times. The creative part of my thesis includes my own collections and experiences relating to them.

People are increasingly living their lives through digital representations such as online identities or digital photos. For example when I told on a social media platform that my then four-year-old son was playing guitar on the street (I was with him at the location) to possibly earn some money to his piggy bank and to try it out, immediately a comment was uploaded: *"Pic or it didn't happen!"*. Many people, like I, are almost desperately capturing the fading and rapidly changing moments and that way outsourcing them to be enjoyed some other, more tranquil time, as people might feel too restless or busy to immerse themselves into those moments when they are actually happening. Visuals can be an important part of self-expression but another question is that will there ever be time to go through all those representations, such as 100 000 images or hundreds hours of videos.

For the research, it is essential to address some related technologies which enable digital collecting. However, the technological perspective is not in the scope of this research. I will go deep into the definitions of collecting and my attempt is to show how collecting differs, for example, from hoarding. I investigate the motives, reasons and feelings of the collectors. I am looking into the multilayered creative actions of individuals, collecting executed by institutions such as museums or machines does not bring insights into my research aims. As the focus is on digital collectables produced or influenced by the collector oneself (so-called user-created content or self-initiated art), commercial and mass-produced digital material (such as mp3s, eBooks and digital games) are not part of this study.

Collaborative pinboarding and bookmarking services such as Pinterest (*"a tool for collecting and organizing things you love"*, according to their web site www.pinterest.com) will be discussed as examples of possible platforms. I planned, implemented and analysed an interview and explored Pinterest, Etsy and Polyvore web services. The use of these platforms seemed to be about dreaming and hunting online, rather escaping the reality than capturing it and one's own experiences into collections. Pinterest, for instance, is used like a bulletin board decorated with inspirational images found from the web. These investigations confirmed my decision to keep the focus on individual and personal, self-created collections that could exist without the online community.

My research questions of this thesis are:
What is digital collecting about?
Why people digitally collect things?

These research questions will be dealt in more detail in the chapters *3. Digital collecting, 4. Means and motives for digital collecting* and *5. Conclusions and further thoughts*.

1.3. Research methods

The literature review consisted of topics related on collecting, such as the book *Interpreting Objects and Collections* edited by Susan Pearce. Pearce is a professor of Museum Studies and has been researching particularly human relationships with objects and the nature and process of collecting. This book brings together multiple papers relating to objects and collections from various angles, providing valuable information and interpretation. Another important source has been sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard's book *The System of Objects* which discusses for example the psychology of collecting. These books were complementing each other alongside with other resources. Overall there is plenitude of writings on collecting hobby and its motives.

To bring collecting to the contemporary times I investigated new media related literature like a collection of articles in the book called *Save As... Digital Memories*, edited by Garde-Hansen, Hoskins and Reading (2009). Jamie Gray's research paper *Digital Collecting. Designing Conceptual Tools for Online Collecting Behaviors* focuses on interface design for collecting digital objects like URLs or image files that have no physical counterparts. Gray's work was a background that helped the scoping of my research because she tackled the issues from different perspective than this thesis. I used scientific publications for theory and knowledge of previous researches. However I complemented my research with articles and case examples from various online media publications to get insight about collecting as an everyday hobby of individuals and about the changes and possibilities within digital collecting.

As case studies of the creative part of the thesis work I explain and describe five of my digital photo collections alongside with related other work and phenomena. The digital collections are presented in the chapter *3.3. My digital collections as case examples.* These provide a concrete view into what digital collecting can be in practice and how versatile the contents and connections to other issues are.

I planned, implemented and analysed a qualitative survey to get deeper and first hand knowledge for the research questions, having the emphasis on finding means and motives for digital collection making. There is scant research about digitally collecting in particular, thus this survey is serving as one. My research of the phenomenon of digital collecting provides needed broadening to the previous studies on collecting. I chose to do a qualitative survey because it offers good methods for "how" and "why" questions. The survey was arranged through email because the varying locations and schedules the participants had. By replying by email, the respondents were free to find a peaceful time slot to write for answering. Another benefit of an email interview is that I was not influencing or leading the answers to certain directions which can happen when interviewing people in a face to face situation. In addition, for some people writing feels as a better form of expression than verbal communication.

The semi-structured questionnaire had 32 questions (see Appendix). By having also questions that were not tightly structured, I was hoping that respondents might bring up matters that I possibly have not thought about, matters that having strictly limited questions would not allow to appear. I chose collectors who (as I) were capturing pieces of their surroundings into digital series. I decided that four persons was a suitable sample to get insight in the context of a Master degree thesis alongside with my other theoretic investigations and own collection cases. The four participants, one woman and three men, ages between 26-65 were representing four different nationalities: Finnish, German, Italian and French (and were living at the times of the survey in Finland, Estonia and France), so the selection leads to a European point of view. The respondents are presented as anonymous.

Three of the participants had digital photo collections and one had a sound collection. One respondent collected architectural details as digital photos, one sounds of the city locations (such as streets and estate), another one (edited) images and fictional (text) stories about plants he spotted and the fourth one collected digital pictures on his bike tours. For the sound collector, collecting was both a profession and a hobby. Respondents had been collecting from 5 months up to 7 years and the amount of collectables in their collections varied from few tens up to hundreds. Even if all the respondents seemed to be quite technology savvy, they were collecting in a ways that would be possible for anyone with basic new media equipment such as mobile phone or laptop. The interview questions were made so that it would allow the respondent a chance to write more or less about the topics and it worked well, I got plenty of data to look into.

For analysing the data I used the techniques of *Grounded theory* which aims to generate theoretical ideas from the data rather than having these specified beforehand (Strauss and Corbin, 23, as cited in Gibbs, 2010a). The key focus is on the reflective reading of text and discovering or labelling variables (categories, concepts and properties) and their interrelationships (Borgatti; Gibbs, 2010a). First I went through the text answers line by line (see Figure 1.), marking conceptual or otherwise relevant properties and concepts (so-called open coding phase). Also words like "always" may have some valuable meaning behind them so I tried carefully see what meaning or information each word or sentence could give. The line-by-line coding is a good approach because it "breaks the backlog", forcing the attention to few words in each line and tries to get "what it is about". (Gibbs, 2010b).

Figure 1. Jalanka, H. (2013). *A slice of the table I used for data coding.* The table can be requested from me.

Then I looked for similarities, connections and repetitive themes and grouped the findings in categories. For example the following parts where labelled under the category of *Exploring surroundings*: *"I walked along the street…", " I was biking around Helsinki last summer…", " I am a flaneur, endlessly walking the streets…", "I mostly find them when I travel." , "It is part of exploring the outskirts…".* Another example can be the theme of *Storytelling* in various answers such as: *"So it is a story I'm telling to the public…", "it is the sounds themselves that speak and tell their own story.", "but the back-story behind the collection…", "These photos for me (almost) all tell a story.", "It's very much about creating a fictional story…"* and *"They tell about the people living…".*

After getting the categories I started to pull the storylines together, combining pre-existing theory and occasionally using my own experiences and observations related to the topics. The main categories formed the sections in chapters *3.2. Defining digital collection and collector and 4. Means and motives for digital collecting,* in which the analysed survey data has more emphasis as they are about digital collecting in particular. In the chapter *2. Collecting,* the emphasis is on the literary review, explaining how traditional collecting has been discussed by others.

1.4. Challenges and terms

One challenge has been to define and crop digital collecting in a sharp and compact yet comprehensive way. There can be significant differences between collecting digital files on the laptop and collecting some concrete or physical things into being something digital. I chose the latter perspective, still trying to show some of the diversity and various possibilities of digital collecting.

Collecting and its motives can be seen through various fields such as from a biological, social, communicational, financial, anthropological or philosophical angles, and so many phenomena relate to collecting that sometimes it has felt rather overwhelming. As this thesis is multidisciplinary, combining mainly media and social psychology, one challenge has been keeping a balance between them. There were many publications about collecting so choosing few as the main sources has naturally affected to the discussion in this thesis. Then the lack of prior scientific work about contemporary collecting in particular can be seen as a challenge but I was also looking it as an interesting opportunity.

My own role as a collector, and in that way myself being part of this research, can influence to the objectivity of the research and at the same time it can be a benefit giving valuable contribution. It was not easy to choose how many and which of my own collections to display and in what way. I wanted to show them as case examples and as my input in this activity but not to have too much weight on them. Every collection and collector is so different that it may be impossible to find universal answers to my questions and that is why I tried to display a plate of possibilities, a collection of answers.

I will be using various terms relating to collecting and new media, but the main concept terms in this thesis are the following.

Traditional collecting is used when talking about the collecting hobby done with the tools that were available before digitalization. It refers to collecting mainly tangible things (such as paintings, vintage toys, glossy images or wine bottles) or it can be collecting intangible things (such as picking up unusual names or travelling to countries that start with the letter A) but the main difference is the means: traditional collecting (in this thesis) is done without the help of digital tools.

Digital collecting can be any collecting activity that includes some form of digitalization, whether it is the collectables, the publishing platform or using digital tools at some phase of the collecting process. There will be examples of digital collections on the chapters *3. Digital collecting* and *4. Means and motives for digital collecting*.

An object can be defined in various ways, for example as "something perceptible by one or more of the senses, especially by vision or touch (TheFreeDictionary a) or as "anything that is visible or tangible and is relatively stable in form" (Dictionary.com). The origin of the word "object" is from medieval Latin "objectum", "thing presented to the mind" (Ofxord Dictionaries). In this thesis, the word object can refer both to tangible and intangible and *digital objects* are things in a digital form that can be sensed through some interface (for example digital images, videos and sound files) or digitalized tangible objects (such as objects attached with sensors for interaction).

A digital tool in this thesis refers to *digital devices* (such as a computers, mobile phones, tablets, digital cameras, watches, set-top boxes and head-mounted displays) or to *digital platforms* (such as applications, games, software, web sites, eLearning environments and social media services). In more general level, a tool has been defined for instance as "device or implement, especially one held in the hand, used to carry out a particular function." (Ofxord Dictionaries).

2. COLLECTING

Poet and professor Susan Stewart has said that *"One cannot know everything about the world, but one can at least approach closed knowledge through the collection."* (Stewart 1993, 161) and Baudrillard that *"Through collecting, the passionate pursuit of possession finds fulfilment and the everyday prose of objects is transformed into poetry, into a triumphant unconscious discourse."* (2006, 92). These thoughts may lead us to find out more about the phenomenon of collecting.

2.1. The nature of collecting

Collections are universal and they are present in all societies, also in so-called primitive societies (Pomian 2003, 173). Clifford (2003, 259) reminds that still the notion that collecting involves the accumulation of possessions, that identity would be a kind of wealth, is not universal. He gives as example that in Melanesia people collect and hold object to give them away, whereas in the West collecting has been about deployment of a possessive self, culture and authenticity (2003, 260).

Collections such as the churinga (sacred stone or wooden objects) of Aborigines in Australia, the vaygu'a (special valuables like shell necklaces) of the Trobriand Islanders, tools conserved in Bambara villages or the various items like statuettes, blankets and copperware belonging of to the peoples in America's northwest coast. These objects act as intermediaries between those who can see them and an invisible world of myths and stories (Pomian, 173). Belk, Wallendorf, Sherry and Holbrook write that collecting, at its best, creates a valuable, unique and lasting contribution to the world (Belk et al. 1991).

One common feature of any collectable is that in a collection these objects gain a new context. A collectable has been taken out of its natural or original frame and the new context is of the collector's own life space and in a relation with other objects of that collection (Danet and Katriel 2003, 226). Baudrillard (2006, 91) points out that after joining the family of collection, an object is no longer specified by its function but in the abstractness of possession. Stewart (2003, 256) writes that collector replaces production with consumption, for example butterflies are made cultural by classification and stamps are naturalized by the erasure of labour and production. However it should be taken into account that some objects have been made for collecting purposes in the first place, such as the trading cards or specific collection set of coins so they do not get much new connotations. In digital collections objects gain again new representations and

aspects depending on which capturing, editing and publishing tools are used and in what ways.

Art should also be mentioned when talking about new context, as just as in arts, when the objects start serve as collectables, they might get various meanings in the minds of creator and other people who experience the collection. New associations and dimensions that can not be labelled only as scientific or possessive. Danet and Katriel (2003, 225) point out that the object can be perceived for its own sake and not in order to pursue some goal and the cognitive knowledge about the object can be distinct from sensory experience of it. One experiences a portrait not as a picture resembling someone one knows but in terms of its formal characteristics. She adds that to relate to an object or an experience as a collectable is many times to experience it aesthetically. As one of my survey respondents summarised: "*It's always nice to look at it.*" The collection can work as an eye candy or ear candy (or why not nose or some other sense organ candy), to feed the hunger of beauty and to fulfil the feeling of "I did this".

Unlike many forms of art, the collection is not representational and it presents a hermetic world, Stewart (2003, 254) says. On the contrary, mainly because of the means used, digital collections are often representational and this is one difference between traditional and digital collecting. In collections where physical objects end up to digital collections, people tweak more or less the original objects and add representational layers on them.

Baudrillard (2006, 1) asks that how we can hope to classify a world of objects that changes before our eyes and arrive at an adequate system of description. Still people keep on hoping. Collecting tells about people's propensity to sort and label all things around them, looking for similarities and connections in everything. This might be even in a bigger role in times when the life pace accelerates and things rapidly change. Bowker and Star came to the conclusion that classifying is human and that all cultures at all times have produced classification systems (Bowker and Star 2000). They say that the modern western culture has produced them more than most and often without realizing it. Pullum (1991, as cited in Bowker and Star 2000, 131) gives an example that the Arctic explorers have hundreds terms to describe snow, scientifically laid out in their manuals (actually more than often asserted Eskimos that have only a handful of such terms on closer examination).

Classifying is just one trait in collecting activity. Collections combine the logic and control with mystery and creativity and they move between the sectors of scientific and artistic, structured and unstructured, quantitative and qualitative, public and private. Collectors regulate how much they show or hide. While the entire collection can be seen, each of its elements cannot, Stewart (2003, 255) argues. Using digital collection spaces such as responsive online platforms can help us to concretely see more about each collectable for example by zooming in to each object and by offering extra information or features about collectables. Danet and Katriel (2003, 228) compare collections to pets, as objects of affection, domination and control.

Is it possible to say if there is more pros or cons in the collecting activity? That should be asked from each collector but I assume that an average answer lies somewhere in the middle. Also Belk et al. (1991) say that they do not prejudge collecting to be either a positive or negative phenomenon. In between science and art collections can work as examples of human beings being systematic unsystematic at the same time. For me the essence of collecting feels like a bar soap. It may look solid and clear shaped and smell nice but when you take it to your hands, to closer examination, it keeps slipping, deforming and spreading small bubbles around. Despite this, I will next try to define more specifically what is collecting.

2.2. Defining collection

As described before, collecting is a multidimensional phenomenon that is challenging to squeeze into any tight frames. Subkowski has defined collecting to be for example seeking, selecting, gathering and storing of objects that have a subjective value for the collector. Collecting tends to

have an affective grasp on the person engaged in it and is a relatively constant behaviour over time (Subkowski 2006, as cited in Nordsletten and Mataix-Cols 2012, 167). My survey results are in the same line with Pearce who reminds that the collection exists if its owner thinks it does (Pearce 1998a,b as cited in Nordsletten and Mataix-Cols 2012, 168).

The word collection is based in Latin "colligere" meaning to choose and gather together (Latdict). The term collection also refers to grouping things. A group is seen as two or more figures that make up a unit or design, an assemblage of persons or objects together or things considered together because of similarities (TheFreeDictionary). Baudrillard (2006) says that collecting is a limited and repetitive process in which one object is not enough as the fulfilment of the collection project always means a series of objects. Pomian (2003, 173) adds that still the amount is not usually the relevant attribute to distinguish a collection from a heap of objects, more important factor is the function of collections. In collection, the items should have some similarity and interrelationship. *"To collect is to gather objects belonging to a particular category the collector happens to fancy… and a collection is what has been gathered"* defined journalist, art connoisseur and collector Joseph Alsop (1982, 70, as cited in Pearce 2003a, 157). Nicholai Aristides then again encapsulated collection being "an obsession organized" (1988, 330, as cited in Belk et al. 1991).

Belk and his colleagues (1991) have a longer definition that collecting is *"selective, active, and longitudinal acquisition, possession, and disposition of an inter-related set of differentiated objects that contribute to and derive extraordinary meaning from the entity that this set is perceived to constitute."* . The basis for the collection can be defined by naming the set as "a collection of ___" and some systematic pattern should be displayed in adding items to a collection (Belk et al. 1991). The picked objects become non-(or new) utilitarian and somehow special, sacred (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry 1989, according to Belk et al. 1991). As adopted members of the new family of collection, the collectables can tell a new story, to start a new life.

Durost (1932, as cited in Belk et al. 1991) defines the collections through indicated value for the objects. If the dominant value of an object is representational, for example if object is valued because of the relation to some other object (such as being one of a series) then it is a subject of a collection. But if the dominant value for the person having the object or idea is inherent, for example valued primarily for use or aesthetically pleasing quality, it is not a collection (Durost 1932, 10, as cited in Belk et al. 1991). Ownership or at least a proprietary feeling is central to collecting. Stamp collector interviewed by Danet and Katriel (1989, 263 according to Belk et al. 1991) described this by saying: *"It's mine (the collection). I can do with it what I want. I can arrange it in the album the way I want. I can display it in exhibits."*

Overall, my perspective about collecting has got wider during the thesis process and after discovering my own collections. If someone would have asked few years ago about my associations about collecting, I would have most likely been seeing and image of a dusty stamp collector at the antique desk or a pigtail girl holding her sticker collection album. Nowadays I see more options and think that many of us have some sort of collections but based on the research I outline that *it is a collection* if:
...it has objects (tangible or intangible) that form a group or set
...the objects collected have some similarity and interrelationship
...the objects have been selected with some criteria, they can be named as "a collection of ___"
...it brings a new context or location for those objects
...it has a tendency to extend, to grow at least until some point and
...it has even a tiny sense of ownership, a feeling of possession.

These attributes will be the definition from which I will be looking at the collecting activity in this thesis.

2.3. Accumulating and hoarding compared to collecting

"Collecting is inherently acquisitive because its primary focus is on gathering more of something." (Brown 1988, as cited in Belk et al. 1991). I see acquiring like the dough in collecting, the work and basis you need to do in order to obtain a collection but the collectables create the actual taste and sensation. Belk et al. (1991) argue that to acquire a number of potentially related objects without keeping them in some form is to be acquisitive without collecting. The ingredient missing in this case is the possessive construction of a set. For instance they interviewed world travellers who did not think their destinations as a set, as well as other travellers who consciously collected an expanding set of travel destinations within a specified area (Belk et al. 1991).

The line between storing, hoarding and collecting is a fine one and in everyday talk they can be used interchangeably. Groups of material (or immaterial) can cross in each direction, depending on the owner's view, motive is all-important and motives change, writes Pearce (2003a, 158). Belk defines an accumulator as a non-collector who is acquisitive, but lacks selectivity and the hoarder as non-collector who is possessive, but views the possessions primarily as utilitarian commodities rather than sacred items (Belk 2003, 317 and 318). Also Baudrillard (2006, 94) concludes that collecting is qualitative in its essence and quantitative in its practice. Even if collectors are often interested in quantity too, they sort more carefully which items can enter the collection. Such categorising comes from the general rules of collecting game and of individuals' evolving personal tastes (Danet and Katriel 2003, 224 and 225). Compared to possessing, collecting is more about order and system and the intrinsic worth of the objects is not main focuses (Aristides 1988, 330, Belk et al. 1991). Pearce writes that an exaggerated desire to have control over possession can sometimes lead to hoarding that can be for example gathering material like old papers or tins of food, sometimes taken to exaggerated excess (2003a, 158). *"With hoarding, we look at three main behaviours: one acquiring too many possessions, second having great difficulty discarding something and three difficulty organizing"*, specifies a clinical psychologist Julie Pike (Donaldson James 2011). The acquisitive activities of both collectors and hoarders can become obsessive and compulsive (Jensen 1963, ala Stewart 2003, 254).

Figure 2. Laman, T. (2010). *Satin Bowerbird male at the bower.*
Retrieved from http://timlaman.photoshelter.com/

Figure 3. Untitled photo of a Bowerbird's bower. (2013).
Retrieved from
http://hbt-lako.blogspot.com/2013/12/lugasepito-madar.html

Human beings are not only species who collect. Somewhere between hoarding and collecting are for example the *Bower Birds* (see Figures 2. & 3.) who decorate their nest surroundings with sticks and brightly coloured same colour objects as an attempt to attract a mate. Some people living in the Bower bird regions try to avoid using blue clothespins as some of the bowerbirds are attracted to that colour. There are many other accumulating animals in addition, but usually they collect food or things to build their nest. The beautiful assemblages of Bowerbirds meet many of the conditions of collecting presented earlier but the difference may lie in meanings and motives: the collecting behaviour of animals is usually explained by the biology but humans many times give collectables special sacred values and our motives seem to be more multifarious and complex.

2.4. Who is a collector?

One way to find some answers to the question "who is a collector?" is to first continue comparing collecting to accumulating. Baekeland (2003, 205) writes that while the accumulator passively and uncritically gathers a mixed repertoire of things, the collector seeks out certain kinds of objects in which he is interested, although in digital collecting people seem to be looking for also surprises that may or may not fit to their assemblages. Accumulator thinks that the objects he accumulates may come in handy some day, hides them away, and finds them a source of displeasure and mild shame. Collectors either cannot explain why they collect or rationalize the collecting somehow, for example as an investment Baekeland 2003, 206). He has studied that collectors usually like to exhibit the collection and Pike adds that collectors are proud, not ashamed, of their possessions (Baekeland 2003; Donaldson James 2011). These findings go in line with my survey results from which I write more in the chapter *4.2. Process of creating digital collections.* Unlike hoarders, collectors are usually well-organized and know exactly where each item is and what they have (Donaldson James 2011).

It also seems that an individual can belong to both selective collectors and more obsessive hoarders, for example on a video of the ABCNews.com article, a woman presents her shoe related memorabilia which she has 15 000 (Donaldson James 2011). Baekeland (2003, 206) also says that some collectors acquire uncritically and such large quantities that they resemble accumulators and can not be seen as connoisseurs. Baudrillard (2006, 94) continues that whereas connoisseurs love objects because of their unique charm, collectors love them on the basis of their membership in a series. It seems that each collectable gets added value from being part of a series. The new display, context that the set provides, can give collectable more meaning than it would have had as a separate piece. The collected items may have utilitarian or aesthetic appeals but they also must have significance to the collector through their contribution to the set. Things do not have clear symbolic value to the accumulator (Phillips 1962, as cited in Baekeland 2003, 206) but for collectors they do and the collecting is used to improve one's self-definition.

Baudrillard (2006, 114) asserts that collectors are not "hopeless fanatics", because the collectables prevent them from regressing into the ultimate abstraction of a delusional state and can never get beyond a certain poverty and infantilism. He writes also that collectors have something impoverished and inhuman about them (2006, 114). My survey and experiences do not agree with these arguments. Collectors are such a grand group having all kinds of personalities, traits and behaviours that they are difficult to generalize. Danet and Katriel (1986, as cited in Belk 2003, 320) created another kind of approach as they categorised collectors into two groups. They investigated that a Type A collector uses effective criteria to choose objects and they try to improve their collections but do not need the series to be completed. Then the Type B collectors have a cognitive criteria to choose collectables and to help improving their knowledge, they invest in search and acquisition and for them this raises collecting to art or even science. (Belk 2003, 320). Nordsletten and Mataix-Cols (2012) have identified groups of Typical collectors (vast majority of collectors), Hoarders and Extreme (excessive, obsessive) collectors (see Figure 4.). There could be many more types of possible clusters already within digital collectors although classifying them could be challenging for the diversity of the collections.

Baudrillard (2006, 93) claims that collectors are saying that they are "crazy about" some objects. He adds that the passionate attitude causes sublimity and some nobility to the collecting which create the view that a person who is not a collector is *"nothing but a moron, a pathetic human wreck"* (2006, 93 and 94). I find these arguments inspiring, but I do not share them as on the contrary ,my findings told that (digital) collectors are quite humble people and not fanatic. I as a collector almost applaud people who do not collect (or notice that they collect) as they are then free from the possible obsessive effects of collecting and maybe more present in the moments as they are not looking for new collectables or nurturing their existing assemblages. Collector is not better (or worse) than so-called non-collector.
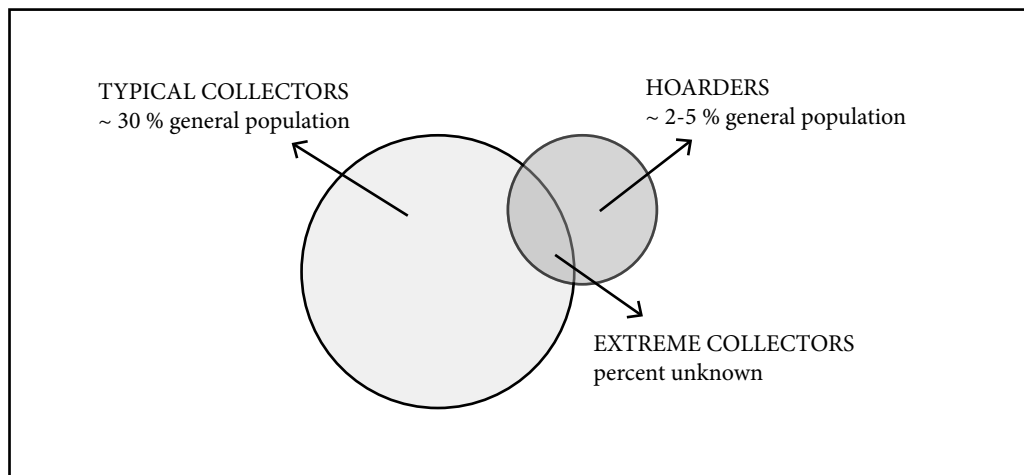
Figure 4. Illustration of collecting and hoarding construct overlap. After Nordsletten and Mataix-Cols 2012, 174.

Another question then is, what is a good collector. Clifford (2003, 260) has written that a good collector, as opposed to the obsessive (the miser), is at least tasteful and reflective. According to Baudrillard (2006, 111), the proper collecting has a door open onto culture, being concerned with objects which may have exchange value or they can be used for preservation, social ritual, exhibition or for profit. He has examined that collectables interplay involves the social and embraces human relationships (2006, 111). I would insert that a good collector is excited enough (to find authentic joy from the activity) but not too obsessive. I also see that a good collector is respectful towards others, takes people account in addition to one's collectables.

Aristides (1988, 330 as cited in Belk et al. 1991) has written that a pure collector must have the desired objects whatever they cost, he must have them. According to my studies, the collectors were not passionately seeking the objects neither did they see any of the objects more special than others. The passion seemed to relate more to the whole creation of collection and also to the element of surprise. For me also collecting is more about joy of finding things coincidentally (within the frames of my collections) and since I became aware of my collecting behaviour, I, have tried wittingly to not to let the collecting take too much control of my thinking so that it would stay as a relaxed spare time activity. Also the survey respondents of my survey seemed to have similar, laid back attitude for their assembling activities.

2.5. What can be collected?

A simple answer to this question would be: basically what ever. The classic saying *"one's trash is another man's treasure"* works particularly well with collectables. Especially in these days it is possible to collect almost anything, if not in a concrete form, at least as digital recordings and representations such as image, text, videos and sounds, even as feelings and other sensations. Also when collecting material objects, senses besides sight and touch can be used too. For example when kids collecting smelling erasers or stickers. Danet and Katriel (2003, 224) give an example of a 9 year-old Israeli boy who proudly displayed his soap collection from which one smells like chocolate and he keeps it in aluminium foil to maintain the smell.

Collectables can be for example self-created or borrowed, material or immaterial, animate or inanimate. Danet and Katriel (2003, 228) point out an obvious issue that most collectables are inanimate objects because they are easier to control and keep alive. A zoo is a good example of an animate collection rather hard to maintain, at least in an ethically acceptable way. Inanimate collections can have objects straight from the nature such as shells or manufactured objects such as sculptures. Dannefer (1980, as cited in Danet and Katriel 2003, 224) has written that the conservation of material objects is a concern of all types of collectors. This is also concern in

non-material collectables, according to my survey. The respondents worried about the damage and destruction of their digital files which seemed fragile.

Some people collect real, concrete objects while others collect imaginary or virtual representations of them. For example jokes, proverbs or tales may be recorded and that way also kept them from being forgotten (Danet and Katriel 2003, 223). Collection can also be about experiences such as cities, cafes, concerts, mountains or swimming pools. Belk (2003, 322) recalls that some intangible travel experiences can take turn into tangible with collections of T-shirts or glassware from each place visited. On digital platforms people collect places too by marking and sharing their visits on services such as Foursquare. This way the social media spaces can work as new version of shirts showing: "I was here."

Wine collection gives a good example of a versatile collecting activity. It can combine seeking information, hunting for specific bottles, restoring bottles properly, getting aesthetic pleasure of bottles, their labels and other wine culture related things and finally tasting them usually in a social context, perhaps with a suitable food too. Wine tasting (or other gastronomic experiences) uses multiple senses: the sound of the cork popping and the pouring of wine, the smell of the aromas, the taste of the composition and the feel of the structure as well as the sight of the colour intensity and tone. There may also be a virtual community for the wine collectors as well as charts and other tools for supporting the activity such as recording, and reviewing. There will be more examples of especially digital collections, in the chapter *3. Digital collecting* but one more important consideration here is by Baudrillard (2006, 97), that even if all collections comprise a selection of items, the last in the set is the person of the collector. The series and the collection serve the mastering of the object, they ease the integration between an object and person.

2.6. The tradition of collecting

The history of collecting speaks about how people have been living and what they have chosen to preserve and value at different times. Our relationship with technology and material culture is the critical point of distinction between us and animals (Tailor 2010, 7). Until about 12,000 years ago all peoples lived in a hunter and gathering culture, collecting for example seafood, insects, fruits, vegetables, tubers, seeds, and nuts (Encyclopædia Britannica 2013).

The collecting tradition can be tracked all the way to a cave in France where a collection of interesting pebbles were found approximately 80 000 year ago (Neal 1980, as cited in Belk 1995, 2). The paintings, sculptures and grave goods from around 30 000 BC suggest some creative explosion in human evolution that may mark first extra-utilitarian symbolic meanings given to human-created objects (Halverson 1987; Pfeiffer 1982, as cited in Belk 1995, 2). The emergence of collections may have appeared with the growth of civilizations supporting art and science (Belk et al. 1991). The history that I found about collecting was written from a European point of view and mainly about collaboratively gathered collections in caves, museums or equivalent, not so much about the more recent type of collecting that is done by any individual in the society. This might also be because of the conservation preferences of each time period. The most known written history seems to be a history of those with power or wealth, or both. Still the collective picture of various collections through times can be useful for understanding some things about the phenomenon of collecting. I will present examples of earlier times to describe various moments in collecting and then move to contemporary time when collecting appears to be quotidian spare time activity.

ANCIENT ASSEMBLAGES

Ancient collections such as Mesopotamian royal collections had for example gems, writings on clay tablets and birds (Taylor 1948, 7, as cited in Belk et al. 1991) and in the ancient

Greece people collected things such as vases, gold and silver vessels, furniture and weapons and statues (Taylor 1948, 11, as cited in Belk et al. 1991). Another example of an old and monumental collaborative collection is by Tutankhamen around 1300s BC.

The ancient temples were repositories for great collections of wealth, art and literature and eventually, these temple collections grew to include the rare and exotic such as ivory, barbarian costumes, Indian jewellery, snake skins, whale skeletons, distorting mirrors, musical instruments and vessels of all sorts (Rigby and Rigby 1944, 115, as cited in Belk et al. 1991). The art and antiquity collections began to be used to declare power after 300 BC and about the same time, the individual collecting emerged in Greece and by the second century BC the collecting was widespread (Rheims 1961, 8-9, as cited in Belk et al. 1991).

Foreign treasures came to Rome mainly through plunder (Belk et al. 1991). Royal collecting spread from China to Japan in the first century AD and not until after 1600th collecting beyond royalty, aristocrats and temples among some social traditions (Belk 1995, 24 and 25). For example wearable art in the form of kosodes (robes) became one significant collection used in displaying wealth in Japan (Belk 1995, 25). In the third century in China manuscripts from various fields, silk paintings, bronze vessels, and other relics were collected in the Imperial Library (Rigby and Rigby 1944, 114 as cited in Belk et al. 1991). One example of a personal collection from those times is collection of 10 000 pounds of cobwebs gathered by slaves for Heliogabaluses amusement (Tuan 1986, as cited in Belk et al. 1991). Then during the fifth century AD, the centre of collecting was in Constantinople where Byzantine art, manuscripts, jewels, and religious treasures were assembled by the court (Rheims 1961, 9-10, as cited in Belk et al. 1991).

In the Middle Ages in Europe collecting was rare even among the upper classes, security was the main motivation for the collecting that did occur (Rigby and Rigby 1944, 138, as cited in Belk et al. 1991). The Church became the leading repository of art and other collections. Only in the twelfth century the individual collecting began to come prominence. With the Fourth Crusade's sacking of Constantinople in 1204, treasures and relics started to appear again in European collections and in the thirteenth century more exotic collectables were provided for example by Marco Polo (Belk et al. 1991).

AGES OF WONDER IN AND AFTER THE RENAISSANCE

The power of the church decreased by the beginning of the fourteenth century and wealthy merchants were collecting luxury Items such as stained glass, antiquities, coins and heraldic signs (Rigby and Rigby 1944, 154-155, as cited in Belk et al. 1991). Christopher Columbus returned to Lisbon with various curios of the New World along with native Americans who were exhibited around Europe (Hodgen 1964, as cited in Belk et al. 1991), this is not in line with current moral standards but it is an example that collecting was not limited to material objects (Belk et al. 1991). Collecting as individuals hobby is traditionally taken to originate in the middle of the fifteenth century. Then, as a result of the Humanist concept that "man could be understood through his creations and nature through the systematic study of her manifestations", the collections of the Medicis and the first *Cabinets of curiosities* were compiled (Cannon-Brookes 1992:500, 1, as cited in Bounia 2004, 1). The bourgeoisie were also becoming collectors and then collecting activity began to emerge enormously in Europe (Pomian 1990, as cited in Belk 1995, 29).

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the major periods for thousands of European wonder cabinets such as German *Wunderkammern* and *Kunstkammern* (Belk 1995, 31). It was a period of substantial economic growth and rising consumer expectations, European population growth, the interest in amassing the world, discoveries of foreign lands and new inventions such as the clock and the printing press (Major 1970, as cited in Belk 1995, 29 and 30). One exception to the lack of middle class collectors were broad range of people in the Netherlands collecting tulip bulbs, engravings, etchings, books and paintings (Belk 1995, 35 and 36).

London adventurer Walter Cope's collections for instance were described by a visitor to include shoes from many strange lands, an embalmed child or "Mumia", a unicorn's tail, a flying rhinoceros, glowing flies and a sea mouse (mus marinus) among other things (Mullaney 1982, 40, as cited in Belk 1995, 30). Another example of "collections of wonderful things" is an ever-expanding "musaeum" by a botanist and gardener John Tradescant the elder who built a collection of rarities from his visits to the European mainland and the Barbary coast. The collection was later passed to his son, John Tradescant the younger (Hall 1997, 155 and 156). It included for instance mythical creatures such as Phoenix and Griffin, Kingfisher from West-India, stone where Hellen of Greece was born and Edward the Confessors knit gloves (Hall 1997, 156 and 157). This kind of cabinets of curiosities (see Figure 5. as an example) may sound as a rather random repertoire of imaginative hoarders but Pomian explains that these collections had encyclopaedic ambition and they presented a microcosm visualizing the totality of the universe (Pomian 1990, 69, as cited in Hall 1997, 158). The Tradescant's museum represented the puzzling quality of the natural and artificial world (Belk 1995, 158). Collecting's purpose was to go beyond the obvious and the ordinary, to uncover the hidden knowledge (Pomian 1990, 57, as cited in Belk 1995, 158).

Figure 5. Leiden (1655). *Ole Worm's Museum Wormianum as an example of Cabinet of Curiosity.* Retrieved from http://www.zymoglyphic.org/exhibits/baroquemuseums/oleworm.jpg

Also zoos, botanical gardens, fountains of dancing waters, exotic pets, "monsters" and midgets were sources of delight at those times (George 1985; Hunt 1985; Tuan 1984; see also Connell 1974; Davies 1991; Foucault 1988; as cited in Belk 1995, 31). Cabinets of curiosities continued far into eighteenth century, especially in the Nordic countries and in Russia, and since people have not stopped to collect exceptional things (Kenseth 1991c, 98, as cited in Belk 1995, 34).

FROM "NATURALIA" AND "ARTIFICILIA" IN THE MID MODERN PERIODS TOWARDS THE CONTEMPORARY TIMES

By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the collections were separated to groups of art and science and royal and private collections were often transformed into first public museums. The scientific pursuit reduced the more strange collectables, although the fascination for them remained longer in the United States (Belk et al. 1991). After the turn to 19th century objects

collected from non-western sources have been classified in two major categories: as cultural artefacts or as works of art (Clifford 2003, 261). In the nineteenth century the objects were not only exotic curiosities but also informative pieces testifying the reality of past human culture (Dias 1985, 378-9, as cited in Clifford 2003, 265).

In the twentieth century more and more people have been collecting. It has been made possible because of rising incomes, broadened conceptualisation of collectibles, the accelerated production of serial objects and the reduced age at which old things are seen as worth preserving (Belk et al. 1991). Various other fields and inventions have had impact on collecting hobby, such as film, records and photography, which for example offered sort of immortality for also other people than wealthy. Garde-Hansen et al. (2009, 130) mentions that later, nineteenth century scrapbooks (collage) and early twentieth century avant-garde film (montage) achieved a level of interactivity which reasserted them in the early 21st century. All the shifts change the perceptions in addition to possibilities. In analogue world of the 1970-1990s creating long-term memories (such as photos) was still rather expensive and limited but with Internet and digital cameras it has been easier and cheaper to capture things. The Internet opened up many more possibilities, creating a fertile environment for the development of innovative forms of self-representation with potentially global audiences (Zuern, 2003, p. vi, as cited in Paul Longley 2009, 48). First online diary appeared in 1994 and weblogs (a term first used in 1997) and blogs, dating from 1999, were extensions of online journaling (Paul Longley 2009, 48).

Through digital revolution the passive viewers and listeners became active creators and contributors. Blogs for example created spaces for personal expression and discussion and people began also to record their lives visually and stream the material live such as Ringley on *JenniCam* 1996-2003 (Paul Longley 2009, 48). Before 2000 the Internet was more about accessing information and then it became increasingly as a tool to share information (Mayer-Schönberger 2011, 83-85). Online mementos, digital photographs, digital shrines, text messages, digital archives, online museums, virtual candles, souvenirs and memorabilia traded on eBay, social networking, digital TV, blogs, digital storytelling, passwords, computer games based on past wars, fan sites and digital scrapbooks are on the list by Broderick and Gibson (2005, 207, as cited in Garde-Hansen et al. 2009, 4) presenting examples of new media at the beginning of the 21st century that are fulfilling old functions to control time, recollection and grief and trauma.

All forms of digital media culture can speed up the digital collecting hobby too. For example Pinterest, which is used for making collections of all sorts, has nowadays 70 million users (Semiocast SAS 2013) which is around same as the whole population of Democratic Republic of the Congo. Collecting has entered to a new era, where collectables can be virtual or tangible objects can be digitized or 3D-printed by individuals and almost anything can be collected.

2.7. Summary

Collecting is a universal phenomenon that illustrates for the times lived. A collection has somehow selected objects that have similarities and as being part of a group gain new context and meaning. Collections tend to extend and have a feeling of possession. Collecting differs from hoarding and accumulating mainly by focusing quality over quantity. Collectors are proud, not ashamed, of their possessions and they have a passion more than an obsession towards collecting. There is no singular type of collector or collection, they can be almost anything. A good collector can be seen as tasteful, reflective and respectful.

People have been collecting things for centuries. Collectors began with the collection of food and wealth and later art, antiques and all sorts of curiosities. The activity has moved from temple and church riches to the treasures of elite such as curious royalty and wealthy adventure.
In the Medieval times collecting was quite rare, church ruled most of the collections. In 13th century collectables, also exotic rarities, started to appear again in Europe. Later the Cabinet of curiosities blended all together, each individual object standing for a whole region or population.

The collection was a "summary of the universe". After collecting had reached among bourgeoisie, it quite rapidly spread to middle class too. The first public museums were born and collections were divided into two: "naturalia" and "artificilia". In the twentieth century collecting became more popular for example because of rising incomes and consumerism. Pearce's illustration (see Figure 6.) summarises the historical phases of European collecting.
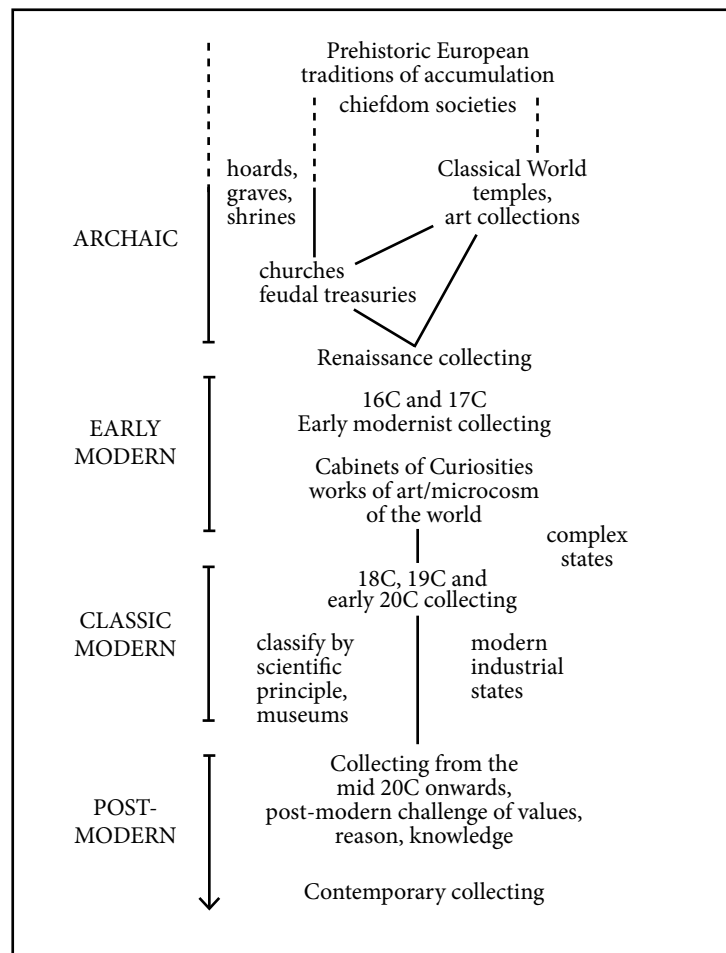
Figure 6. The European historical sequence of collecting. After Pearce
(1995:55, as cited in Bounia 2004, 8).

Now collecting has again stepped into an era of digitalization that has changed our daily lives. Virtual and concrete are more and more melting together and all this has affected all forms of the arts, also collecting. New media has brought renewed and additional possibilities for collecting alongside with its more traditional forms and the collecting activity can also reach wider group of people and gain forms and contents that have not been yet experienced. It seems that humans have come a long way from hoarding berries, gathering specific silver vases or sorting out stamps to these days when almost anything can be collected by digital means and when almost anyone can be a collector. The next chapter will be diving deeper into the phenomenon of digital collecting.

3. DIGITAL COLLECTING

In this chapter I will be writing about the digital era and contemporary collecting, its features and opportunities and then presenting some examples of mine and others. I will be using here more my survey results about digital collecting alongside with other existing research.

3.1. Digital era and its impact on creating

Digital media have offered for example cheap and fast capturing and retrieval, global reach and increasing accessibility, capacity and connections. Storing and sharing the data are superior to pre-existing media. At the same time people seem to be worried how all this use of technological devices and content affects our inner and outer lives, how one thinks and acts.

Digital technology influences many fields that this might have become taken for granted. Lister et al. (2009, 93) point out that *"all human actions take place in a technologically saturated environment that has become the natural world, never rising above the threshold of perception."* Modern technology has altered what information can be remembered and how it is remembered, people now have the technical means to create rather precise external visual memories (Mayer-Schönberger 2011, 45 and 52). Lev Manovich (2001, 30, as cited in Garde-Hansen et al. 2009, 14) has argued that new media differs from old media already because of its numerical representation, the media objects made of digital code, a mathematical product that can be manipulated. Then there are overwhelming amount of other differences. Already one small digital gadget can make an enormous impact on our daily activities, for example ABI Research (2013) estimated that by the end of year 2013 there were 1.4 billion smartphones in this world. Those devices would make a line going approximately four times around this planet. With smartphones constantly on hands (or smart-watches on wrists or smart-glasses on eyes), almost as implanted on our skin, we people already are sort of cyborgs.

We seem to live in the conflict with the devices and the cultures that they have brought along. Many people claim they hate technology, saying how terrible it is that people are no more communicating with each others in live situations and still these same people may be using multiple gadgets like never before. Similarly James Gleick points out that *"We complain about our oversupply of information. We treasure it nonetheless. We aren't shutting down our email addresses. On the contrary, we're buying pocket computers and cellular modems and mobile phones with tiny message screens to make sure we can log in from the beaches*

and mountaintops" (Gleick 1999, 90–91, as cited in Garde-Hansen et al. 2009, 4 and 5). This complain and fear is not without any real reasons. One of the most extreme and sad example of obsession related to digital world and loosing the touch to reality is when parents became obsessed with raising virtual baby and meanwhile their three-month-old baby starved to death (BBC 2010).

New technologies determine partly what kind of information can and is remembered. As economic constraints have disappeared, people have increased the amount of information on their digital external memories and most of the files are stored in digital format, possibly also shared in digital networks. Remembering has become the norm and forgetting the exception. (Mayer-Schönberger 2011, 52). In the Internet every participant can be a sender and receiver. Anyone's lives can be recorded and displayed, whereas before the digitalization and Internet, so-called ordinary people did not normally leave much marks. Marshall McLuhan says that web *"is simultaneously a place for production, distribution and exhibition in a way that no previous media form has ever permitted"* (Marshall, 2004, 51, as cited in Garde-Hansen et al. 2009, 132). Mayer-Schönberger (2011, 62) notes that digital culture emphasizes recombining and sharing over owning and people are utilizing the power that digitalization offers them. The web environment corresponds with the collective structure of lives – intertwining, meeting and diverging (Paul Longley 2009, 52).

Both old and new media have the desire to externalise the mind and to make private (personal memories for example) public (collective memories). Manovic concluded that *"private became public, unique became mass-produced and what was hidden in an individual's mind became shared."* (2001, 60–61, as cited in Garde-Hansen et al. 2009, 13). A simple example could be photo albums that used to be kept in a shelf and browsed within the family and that now can be shared to all online. Digital technology, such as social media, can feed the desire to produce and share something. People creating and using the virtual content are sometimes called prosumers, combinations of producers and consumers. Enormous amounts of digital content is generated every minute of the day (see Figure 7.). The data keeps growing, showing no signs of slowing.

EVERY MINUTE OF THE DAY*:

Tumblr blog owners publish **27,778 new posts**.
Wordpress users publish **347 new posts**.
Instagram users share **3,600 new photos**.
Facebook users share **684,478 pieces of content**.
Flickr users add **3,125 new photos.**
Foursquare users perform **2,083 check-ins**.
Youtube users upload **48 hours of new video**.
Email users send **204,166,667 messages**.
Twitter users send over **100,000 tweets**.
571 new websites are created.

**data is from 2012 so the
current numbers are likely higher.*

Figure 7. Examples of data produced every minute. After Domo (2012), from
http://www.domo.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/DatainOneMinute.jpg

The fact that almost anyone can create and publish digital content can empower the forms of self-expression and give birth to unpredictable phenomena such as memes, for example making parodic versions of some image or teens becoming web celebrities through vlogs recorded at corner of their homes. The unpredictability is part of the absorbing nature of digital media. Especially the young generations are more used to live and share their lives online, although

selectively supporting their identities and imagoes. Already by late 2007, Pew Research, an American organization surveying trends, found that two out of three teens have participated in one or more content creating activities on the Internet, with more girls creating (and sharing) content than boys (Mayer-Schönberger 2011, 3). Revealing one's information, such as Facebook entries, personal diaries and commentaries, photos and relationships (like links or friends), content preferences and identification (like online photos or tags), location (through geotagging) or just short text updates (tweets) has become deeply embedded into youth culture around the world (Mayer-Schönberger 2011, 3 and 4).

Partly via the rapid emergence of digital media, our world – the way people live in it and look at it – have become more fragmented and it can be challenging to build some whole, integrated experiences. Through seeing connections and similarities in our environments can help to assemble more coherent experiences by moulding shapes and meaning from rapid, short-term and abundantly stimulating moments and spaces. If there is not time to concentrate and immerse to a moment, at least by documenting pieces of it one can build some sort of schema and map. Just like can be done by collecting.

3.2. Defining digital collection and collector

On a broad concept, digital collecting can be capturing that has some digitalization used in some part of the process. One could say that anyone who has stored multiple digital files or uses some digital recorded is digitally collecting. Digital collecting carries the legacy from the previous times and traditions of collecting (that were introduced in the previous chapter) and also the histories and inventions from other fields that are involved in each particular digitally produced collection.

In the context of this thesis I narrow down the digital collection to have the same features that were described in the chapter *2.2. Defining collection* (i.e. having selected, somehow similar objects forming a set) and in addition to that the collection is made by using digital tools or platforms or both. Digital collections are more rarely tangible but they can have concrete interfaces such as screens or other (digitized) objects. Some parallel words that the digital collectors in my survey were using to describe their capturing hobby were documenting and exploring. The collection was also called as archive, library, diary and project. All these descriptions already hint about the motives of collecting, for what they are used for and what part of the lives they are supplementing. Interestingly one respondent came to the conclusion that he wouldn't call the plant series he was generating as a collection. He said: "*Not really a collection, more as a continuous art project. Sort of a diary.*" Then again another one thought the opposite when writing: *"Definitely collection is the word I'm using."*

The survey participants admitted to be collectors but they highlighted that they are not collectors in a traditional sense. For example, one of them wrote, that "*I don't see myself as a collector if that has the same meaning as in collecting stamps. I don't collect things for the sake of it.*" Another one noted that he is a collector but he needs to qualify that by saying that he finds collector a rather limited definition. Maybe this relates to the urge to be unique and possess something special that is not too easily defined. *"If I had to sum up what I do, I would say that I am a flaneur[...]"*, defined one of the participants who added that *"[...]whether it's a collection, an archive or anything else, is not the real issue."*

I agree that how the activity of capturing pieces of experiences into sets is named, is not as important as the ideas, stories and motives it holds. Even if the terms collector or collection can be seen limiting especially in digital context, as they might not always successfully refer to all the dimensions existing in our modern times (side by side with so-called traditional ways of collecting), I am using those terms to be able to pull together the capturing and assembling behaviour somehow and to keep things more clear. I have not seen myself as a collector before the thesis process, and I too find categorizing many times distorting, but here the terms are used to be able to talk about the issues at hand, not to put people or projects into strict silos.

Digital collections move on a versatile axis of the digital–physical, intangible–tangible. For instance a digital collection can consist digitalized objects that for example use sensors to react in various ways such as communicate with each others or interact with the audience. An example could be a collection of antique items which tell their stories by sound if someone touches them. Or it can be collection of some uniquely identifiable objects, tagged with a code, connected and monitored through Internet or similar (so-called Internet of Things). Then there are all the possibilities of using augmented reality in collecting, such as capturing virtual flying butterflies on a mobile device or having a collection of virtually presented planets and starts in one's room. Of course the collectables (such as some virtual characters) could be also created completely by the collector. A digital collection can also be formed by using only digital objects and means, for example to have a collection on Pinterest of pictures found online. In this thesis the focus is somewhere in between all these possibilities: digitally recording the physical objects and presenting the captured representations (the digital counterparts) on digital platforms. Some random examples of these could be someone's collection of video clips of various laughs or a collection of sounds of domestic appliances.

It is possible to digitally capture or replicate collectables at least of any of the traditional senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell or touch. The surroundings are mostly recorded in visuals such as images or videos or in audio, but capturing for other senses such as smell could not only be a possible but a powerful way to trigger memories. This is because how the nerve carrying the smell information is located and linked to brain areas that connect to emotion and memory. One device for sharing smells, kind of like odour messaging, is *oPhone* that attaches to a phone and the smells are generated by an accessory (Boxall 2014). Another examples are *Scentee* that uses smartphone's earphone jack and sprays aromas and *Scent-ography*, an object that can systematically capture scents and turn them into olfactory photographs (Stinson 2013). *Digital lollipop* (by researchers in National University of Singapore) then again records and reconstructs taste experiences, by using a digital lollipop, which is made of a silver electrode. When it touches someone's tongue, it reproduces tastes of salty, sweet, sour or bitter (Bilton 2013). It is often said how important the touch, the way collected objects feel, is to the whole collecting experience. For instance project *Haptography* uses a pen tool to enable quickly recording the haptic feel of a real object and reproducing it later for others to interact with in a variety of contexts (University of Pennsylvania and Kuchenbecker 2013).

Whole moments which consist of various sensory experiences such as feelings could most likely be collected by tracking and stimulating brains but I will now move on to displaying some more common and popular forms of contemporary collection making. One simple example of a digital collection can be a digital representation of a collection in a form of a photograph. In a work called *A collection a day* (see http://collectionaday2010.blogspot.com) artist Lisa Congdon posted online daily a photo of one tangible collection for one year, 365 collection photos altogether. The photos were for example collections of vintage matchbooks, Christmas ornaments, advertising pencils, Japanese notebooks, scissors and blue feathers. Another example of sorting things out online is a blog called *Things Organized Neatly* (see http://thingsorganizedneatly.tumblr.com/) curated by Austin Radcliffe. It is showing photos where various objects (such as tools, computer parts or insides of a bag) have been arranged in a new and neat way.

Walker (2011) writes that these kind of popular projects tell that in our virtualised times, people still really like stuff. He says that *"Best of all, we don't even have to deal with these collections as physical things; we can simply enjoy them as digital presentations. It is everything we love about stuff — but without the stuff. In a reversal of the desire to have your cake and eat it too, we can consume these lovely objects and not have them, too."* Walker (2011) notices that these collection projects recontextualise things most people ignore. This is what collections are much about: showing things in a different light and playing with context. Even a small twist can make a big impact. Walker adds, that as the stuff is not arranged in a naturalistic way, they show that someone is in charge. *"After too many years when stuff seemed to rule many lives, these things have been culled, sorted and mastered."* (2011).

A more abstract digital compilation example here can be a generative online project *We feel fine* (see http://www.wefeelfine.org/index.html) by Jonathan Harris. The piece harvests phrases like "I feel" from the new blog posts, saves them in a database and displays them in an interactive Java applet on the web as colour dots which correspond to the type of feeling it represents. One can find visual digital collections about almost any topic that comes to your mind: neon signs, ocean waves, kids drawings, bird feathers... It is possible legally to collect people too, as their digital identities - through services such as LinkedIn or now ten-year-old Facebook. There seems to be a huge amount of digital photos used as representations of objects to make digital collections or photo series, for instance on Flickr and Pinterest. The representations of collectables are many times easier to collect than the concrete collectables, already within time, money, space and ecological aspect. Next I will be display five of my own collections along with related other cases as deeper insight what digital collections can hold in them.

3.3. My digital collections as case examples

I started to collect things digitally in 2011 after moving to Australia where I stayed nearly two years. Later continued capturing in my current location Singapore and few of the collectables are taken during my visits in Finland. I have been capturing curiosities I have encountered in my environment. The collectables have been mainly digital photos and videos, for example about junk, plants, objects, various water surfaces and number threes. Most of the collections have been made of digital photos and they might be named as photo series or web art but I prefer the term digital photo collection because that is how I see them and the word "collection" refers more to a regular hobby including the whole collecting process.

The collections have been published on the platforms Tumblr (by Yahoo) and Blogger (by Google). These tools made collections sharing smooth but they have been also limiting some parts of the collections design. I might have for example changed interface details (the size and style of elements, fonts, placing) and add interactions (such as submitting an object or zooming in and out). I know that all these affect how the collections are experienced. Occasionally there have been problems with Tumblr, to see all the photos that I have uploaded to the collection. Still by using these platforms I could get the most important: storing and presenting the collectables. These online platforms are also easy to access, free to use and they have large data capacity. They were anyway on my daily use through my other blogs, so using them saved time and effort too. As collections usually, my assemblages are work in progress, some of them might die and some survive, expand and improve.

Even if the following collection presentation has image examples, the actual collections locate online and should be visited through the links provided. In addition to images, from each collection I will show a description and related cases and phenomena. Instead of just presenting my collections, I think it is relevant to show connections and what kind of related and interesting work is out there. The amount of the content depends on the type and status of each collection. As written in the chapter *2.6. The tradition of collecting*, in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the collections were commonly divided into "naturalia" and "artificialia" and my digital photo collections are presented within this partition (even if natural and artificial things can occur parallel in our environment). At the same time, the presentation can be seen as moving from fact based stories towards fiction and imagination and leaving at the dreamy landscapes.

ARTIFICIALIA
1. Collecting object stories: *OuMaiGuud!*
2. Collecting found things: *Street drop*

NATURALIA
3. Collecting look-alikes: *Natures creatures*
4. Collecting pieces of nature: *Pixel tree*
5. Collecting moments of nature: *Cloudy howdy!*

3.3.1. Collecting object stories: OuMaiGuud!

www.oumaiguud.blogspot.com

Collection of people's meaningful items and their stories.
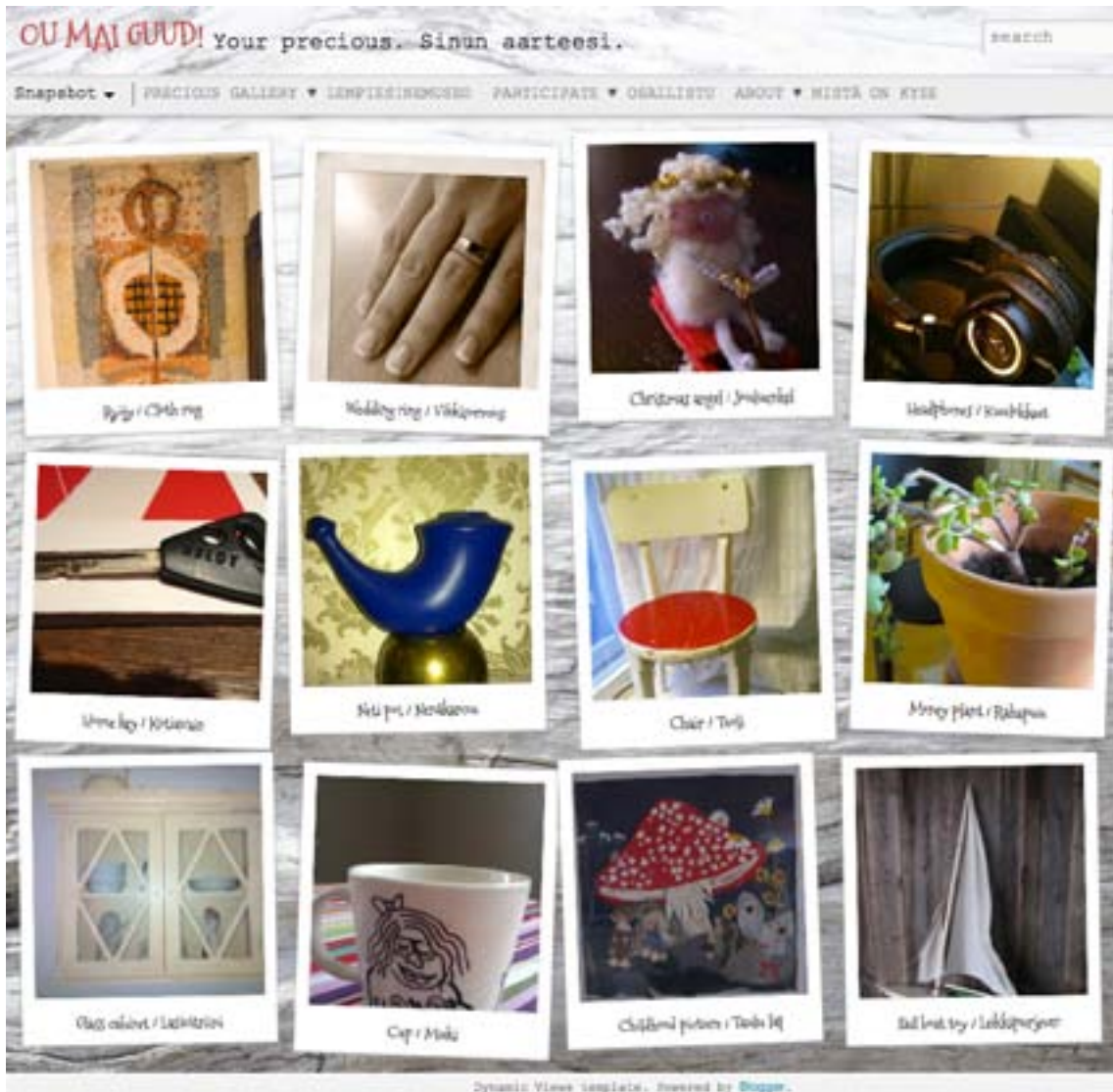
Figure 8. Screenshot from the main page of OuMaiGuud! collection. (Jalanka, H. 2014). Retrieved from http://www.oumaiguud.blogspot.com

OCT
29

Childhood picture / Taulu lapsuudesta ✎

Taulu on muisto lapsuudesta. Saimme sen siskoni kanssa äidiltä, kun olimme noin viisivuotiaita.
Taulu on tehty kangastilkuista ja langanpätkistä. Tekijästä on tiedossa vain tauluun liimatut
kankaiset nimikirjaimet MT. Aiheena on tyttö- ja poikapeikko sekä perhonen, jotka istuvat
kukkakedolla kärpässienen alla. Kuvassa on jännittävä ja veikeä tunnelma. Taulu oli
lastenhuoneen seinällä ja katselimme sitä nukkumaan mennessämme. Se oli pitkään siskollani,
joka antoi sen minulle kun omat lapseni syntyivät. Nyt taulu on lomapaikassamme.
(nainen, 60 vuotta)

. . . .
The picture is a memory from my childhood. We got it with my sister from our mother, when we
were about five years old. The picture is made of strips of fabric and thread. The only thing
that is known about the creator are the initials MT which are glued on the board. The subject
is a girl and a boy troll and a butterfly, who sit on a flower field below a amanita mushroom.
The picture has an exciting and cheerful atmosphere. It was on the wall of the kid's room and
we watched it when going to sleep. For a long time my sister had it and she gave it to me when
my own children were born. Now the picture locates in our leisure house.

(woman, 60 years)

Figure 9. Screenshot of one of the objects stories in OuMaiGuud! collection. (Jalanka, H. 2014).
Retrieved from http://www.oumaiguud.blogspot.com

PURPOSE AND STARTING POINT

OuMaiGuud! (see Figure 8. & 9. and www.oumaiguud.blogspot.com) is the only one of my collections which I have started deliberately. The purpose was to create an expanding digital museum of favourite everyday items alongside with their stories. Personal items can step into public via online space dedicated for them. Stories were meant to keep short so that they remain interesting and possible to go through even if there would be lots of these object stories. This kind of collection of everyday objects could interestingly map what people still keep important and why as our relationship towards physical items constantly changes. Many people, mainly in so-called developed countries, have a problem with physical stuff. There is too much of it. Many tangible items have lost some of their power to the digital versions, such as calendars and clocks. Philosopher Yann Dall'Aglio (2012) says that modern people wish to be desirable and they respond to this anxiety by hysterically collecting symbols of desirability as various objects. He says it's not materialism but more sentimentality because people accumulate objects to make them love us back (2012).

I was first thinking to do my thesis around this project in particular, to explore more our relationship to physical items and how to create a participatory online museum. I was thinking for restricting the topic to be only about childhood related things such as toys as old toys can keep many memories and they could make visually appealing and nostalgic collection. After all the topic got more wider, to cover any meaningful item of the person mainly as through free choice the items could tell more about the owner's personality, thoughts or activities and about current time more generally. The idea was to create a critical mass, some tens of object stories, so that there would be a good basis for other people, anyone, to take part. I did not either end up developing this project to be as massive as the first plans, mainly because of the lack of time and other resources, but I created a space for the museum on Blogspot and got altogether 12 object stories. The participants of the collection were 30-85 years old men and women, all from Finland except one, and all who were familiar to me in a way or another.

PROCESS

I asked participants to choose one meaningful tangible item of their, take a photo of it and write a short background story about it and then send them to me by email. I also added a possibility for anyone to send their own objects via email. The more precise instructions were on the web site in the following way: "*What is your precious item? Share it! Choose an item that has some meaning to you. Something from your home (or other surroundings) or something that you carry with you. A human made artifact that you cherish. It can have the value in use or sentimental value, it can be beautiful or ugly, tiny or huge. Anything from ring to tractor, pen to phone, hat to hammock, whisk to lights... Write a rather brief description / a small story about that object in your own words. For example what the item is, how it has come to you and why it's meaningful for you. Take a photo of that item and send it + the story[...] and soon you can find it happily online, as part of the collection! Stories will be published without the name of its creator (=anonymously). Thank you for your participation. It's precious.*"

Even if I thought that the task was quite simple, I well understand people who did not deliver these contents. The most critical step was choosing one item. Some said that there were so many meaningful items to choose from and the pick depended how you think the concept of meaningful. Meaningful as useful or meaningful as an item with emotional value. There might be other reasons for not sending a personal object story, for example my role as a curator (as they were not anonymous people to me) as well as the effort of taking the photo, attaching and sending it and especially writing a summarized story which would capture the essential of what the object is and why it has some meaning. Those who participated seemed to be glad they did. For example one of them said that it felt therapeutic as she went through items room by room, recalling their meanings and memories when trying to make the decision.

After getting the photos with stories, I translated the text in English if needed and posted the object depiction on the web site www.oumaiguud.blogspot.com. I then sent a link of that specific story page for the participant to see the outcome, and asked her/him to let me know if there were something wished to change for example with the translation. This was the only one of the collections in which the contents of the collectables (images and text) were not created by me. As a result of various people making the content, the quality of the photos is not consistent and I think that adds the personality of that specific object and its owner, showing that they are all unique. As are the text stories alongside. Only from one of the object stories (the cloth rug) I took the photo and recorded a video clip where the owner tells the story as she did not have a camera or other equipment for sending any digital content about the item by herself. For me it was really interesting to hear the object's story directly from the owner and realise how many memories that rug actually seals in and how many things it has seen during the decades.

I gave some labels to the items, according to the type and use of the item and things mentioned in the text description. Labels were for example about size, owner's features such as age and gender, the type of value and use (emotional, functional), material and colour. I added some more abstract attributes like home, love, memory, family and childhood. Baudrillard (2006, 1) writes that there are almost as many criteria of classification as there are objects themselves: the size of the objects, it's degree of functionality, the gestures associated with it, its form, its duration, the time of day at which it appears, the material that it transforms, the degree of exclusiveness or sociability attendant upon its use and so on. Various labels in online collection's serve better if the amount of objects is high, then it could be possible to see for example what kind of items people from various countries, gender or age have chosen and to analyse why that could be. A wider mass of object stories could reveal something interesting about our time.

Participants were mainly choosing items that relate to emotions that the object triggers. The items that were represented were a cloth rug, a ring, a handcrafted angel, headphones, a key, a neti pot, a chair, a cabinet, a cup, a painting and a toy sailing boat. In addition one participant chose a plant to be her favourite object even if it is not an inanimate object. This might be because for the owner it still felt as one of the items at home and for her that object triggered a story too. Even if an object is usually defined as any human-made lifeless object, drawing the line between lifeless and living or human-made and nature-made is sometimes challenging. I was also thinking that would anyone have chosen some virtual objects as the most meaningful one, if the instructions would have been different.

DEVELOPMENT IDEAS

Related to the *OuMaiGuud!* collection, I got interested in the issue of giving a new (media) life to something that used to be static physical thing, such as an antique item which capture a story in it. One could have an item collection both online as digital representations and on site as actual tangible but digitalized items. For example a person could walk on an old rug and by touching it with our feet, the rug would reveal its story via the voice of its owner. The physical installation could be interesting in a form digitized miniature space where all the items would be tiny but traceable. I did some tests with adding QR codes to objects, for example to a decorative toy elk I had. First I recorded an audio story about the object and then got a tag from one of the free online QR generators (I used for example http://qrcode.kaywa.com/) to work as a link to the created content. After printing out and attaching the code to that particular item I could hear the clip by the QR code scanner application that I had downloaded to my mobile earlier. The QR tags do not look too sophisticated but as I was just testing it was not so much about the looks yet. In this case the tag would fit best to elk's ear so it looks like the elk would be a tagged animal. This would be something that I would wish to further try, first to a selection of personal items at home and see how people react to the overall function and stories.

At this stage of the collection, it is more like my personal collection as I know the people behind the objects but it can still be interesting for others. For this kind of collection I see two possible development directions: either towards more massive, collectively made platform or then towards

more precisely produced content for the collection to maintain certain tune and a more intimate atmosphere by for example a skilled production team. Generally there is much potential in collecting and telling the stories behind the objects. For example many would appreciate to know the stories of grandparents' old items and capture them before they have passed away. Most likely some things that for others seem ordinary, were valuable keepsakes of some beautiful stories of their lives.

RELATED CASES

There are similar or closely related projects available and I will present some of them. For example after forming *OuMaiGuud!* collection I was told about project *Tales of Things and Electronic Memory* (see http://www.talesofthings.com/) which is described as a simple way of adding memories to physical objects to share with others. It exists online at offering a social space where people can attach stories to objects. The project, led by Chris Speed from University of Edinburgh explores social memory in the emerging culture of the Internet of Things. They have done experiments of tagging objects that were sold in a flea market so that before buying people could hear or see the background story of the item. It seems that stories can add value to the items. At the moment (April 2014) in the online gallery there is over 4000 objects from which some part seems to be test content, lacking real stories. Another case that I came across is called *Significant objects* (see Figure 10.) by Rob Walker and Josh Glenn, where they have creative writers inventing stories about objects. They assume stories to acquire objective value which they are testing via eBay.

Figure 10. Screenshot from www.significantobjects.com. (Significant Objects 2010).
Retrieved from http://significantobjects.com/

Some museums have digital collections of individuals' items and stories. For example in 2010 the Portland Art Museum in US invited persons, who did not think themselves as museum people, to contribute stories about their own belongings to the museum's collection (see Figure 11. & 12.). They had a studio for recording stories with an exhibition that displayed them with a tagline such as "If you had a museum about your own life, what would be on display?"

A related, fascinating photography project case that I find inspiring is *Toy stories* by Photographer Gabriele Galimberti (see Figure 13.). It has portraits of children from around the world posing with their toys. Photo series speaks not only about individuals but societal issues. One more example about object collections can be Timo Wright's installation *Self-Portrait* (see Figure 14.), which presents photos of over 3000 objects he possessed, illustrating the madness of our consumption habits and revealing something about the individual too.

Figure 11. Recording Booth of personal object stories in the Portland Art Museum. (Ziba 2012). Retrieved from http://www.ziba.com/work/object-stories/#/work/objectstories/

Figure 12. Portland Art Museum, Object Stories. Screenshot. (Portland Art Museum 2013). Retrieved from http://objectstories.org/stories/

Figure 13. Galimberti, G. (2012). *Toy Stories.* Screenshot. Retrieved from http://www.gabrielegalimberti.com/projects/toys-2/#

Figure 14. Wright, T. (2012). *Self-Portrait.* Retrieved from http://www.timowright.com/selfportrait/

3.3.2. Collecting found things: Street drop

www.streetdrop.blogspot.com

Street drop collection is about picking up things I find on the ground by using camera.

Figure 15. Screenshot of the main page of Street drop collection. (Jalanka, H. 2014) Retrieved from http://www.
streetdrop.blogspot.com

Figure 16. Image examples from Street drop collection. (Jalanka, H. 2014) Retrieved from http://www.streetdrop. blogspot.com

COLLECTION

When I had moved to Melbourne and walked the streets curiously, I started to notice things on the ground. One of the first ones was a kid's drawing that left me wonder, who had created and dropped it, and what was the picture about. I took a photo and posted it on the Blogspot, alongside with a fictional story that I wrote about that object from the point of view of its owner. As my *Street drop* collection (see Figures 15. & 16. and www.streetdrop.blogspot.com) of found things rapidly grew, I left writing the stories and just posted the photos of the objects. Now (April 2014) this collection of found things has 160 object photos mainly from Australia and Singapore, and few from Finland. The collection includes for example pacifiers, vampire teeth globe, sea horse toy, frying pan, a fork, a plastic alligator, dia-slide, a soft reindeer horn, a toy sword and a trophy, to mentions some. Collectables tell about the lifestyle of people. For example on Sundays one can find shoes and bow ties on the sides of the streets as the tired celebrants have walked back home. The collection shows differences between living cultures of countries: in Finland one can find gloves and hats, in Australia sunglasses and sandals and in Singapore umbrellas and tools.

The contents of the collection are a mixture of luck, coincidence, location and observation. They have a practice in Australia to leave things (furniture, books and other items) on the front of your house so people who need them can take them before the recycling track comes to pick them. Some of the images taken are found from those gatherings. Many dropped objects are toys, which can have great value to their users, children, but they drop or left them often as they are more care and responsibility free than adults and children might not yet internalized the material values of our societies.

I believe that the more you explore and spot things, the more better you get in it, the eye finds things more easily. Just yesterday I found a shiny new one dollar coin which no one else noticed even if they walked pass it. Although this collection is not about finding valuables, actually this was the first time I found money to my collection. It is more the opposite as it looks that people mainly drop things that are not so valuable to them: keychains, umbrellas, gloves and various odds and ends. People do not tend to lose too many diamonds or equivalent but one never knows what will come on the way. One reason for not finding valuables, such as money, is that there is someone who has exercised even more observation than me and collects them before others notice them. As the tagline of this project goes: *"Keep your head down and enjoy the finding!"* On the contrary to the *OuMaiGuud!* collection, this collection has objects without the stories of their owner, you can just imagine them. Maybe the worker got bored with his work, left the work gumboots on the grass and left home. Maybe a lady forgot her umbrella as the rain had stopped and she started to admire the rainbow. Maybe the wind blew the kite of one family so far that they could not locate it. The empty wallet can be a sign of a theft, a spoon in the bush may have been used for narcotics and a CD disc could have contained some secrets.

THE RULES

The rules of this "collection game" are that the items have to be found by chance and one should not touch or move them from where they are. They are picked up by the lens of the camera and left where they are. The mobile phone's camera is good enough for this project as the image quality is not the core of this collection, the main focus is on the joy of surprises found. As I publish photos of objects I try to make it so that the owner or possible attached person is not identified. For example if I find a photo or a postcard, I make the faces or personal text blurry so that the people or their names or not recognizable. From all of my collections, this is the one I update most often as finding objects on the ground is quite easy, I use the camera of my smartphone for taking the images and that phone is usually with me and there is no editing done before posting so the process is quick and smooth. Before uploading I add some labels about that specific object for instance related to its size, material, way of use and the place it was found.

DEVELOPMENT IDEAS

As mentioned before, I was first writing short stories alongside with the object photos and I think that could add an interesting element to the pictures. The text could be written so that it tries to be the owner's voice or it could be written from the point of view of the object, what kind of experiences it has gone through and how it ended up to where it was found.

I have noticed that if I do not take a photo of the object right at that time, in the next minute it might be gone to someone's pocket or to the rubbish bin. The items could be geotagged more precisely and the site could serve as a database for lost and found objects, assuming that there would be a place to keep the found items or if they would stay where they were found. For example when I lost my favourite hat, I wish I would have tagged it so that I could have known its location. The hat had more emotional value for me than any other kind of value and given that this is a common case, there could be a need for an online lost and find service for things that can be valuable in many ways. The service would be more effective if it would be done collectively so there would be many finders and found items and an awareness that this service exists. Like the *OuMaiGuud!* collection, *Street drop* collection as well would benefit from more exact labelling so that it would be possible to filter only certain types of items to be shown, whether according to their location, way of use, size, colour or other attributes. However this function would benefit from a bigger amount of objects in the database.

RELATED CASES

There is some similar collections of items found on the streets, either individually or collectively created. One that I found quite recently is *Sad stuff on the street* collaborative blog (see Figure 17.), that collectively collects many times things found on the streets, things that many times look sorrowful when been left there.

Busted.
Found in Hanoi, Vietnam by dzunglephotographs

: MONTH AGO · ● :25

Figure 17. Post on *Sad stuff on the street*. Screenshot. (Sad stuff on the street 2013). Retrieved from http://sadstuffonthestreet.com/

I think the handwritten notes, such as to-do lists, letters, doodles that people have dropped are some of the most interesting things found, a single receipt can reveal a lot. This appears to be a common curiosity feature in humans as there are many notes collected on *The Found Magazine*,

website (see www.foundmagazine.com and Figure 18.) and the printed magazine, starting from 2001. They say they collect *"anything that gives a glimpse into someone else's life"*.

Figure 18. Post on Foundmagazine.com. Screenshot. *(Foundmagazine 2014).*
Retrieved from *http://foundmagazine.com/*

Figure 19. Screenshot from Finavia's post on Facebook.
Retrieved from: https://www.facebook.com/finavia/posts/670921496261498

For lost and found purposes, there are online places like Okoban and Lost And Found but there does not seem to be popular and well-designed digital services for this purpose. People tend to use more popular and inhabited social media and trading sites such as Craiglist and Facebook for finding lost things, sometimes successfully (see Figure 19.).

Tracking personal items is offered by products such as Tile, SquareTag, Stick-N-Find and FindMyStuff. They sell trackers to be attached and applications to be downloaded to track inanimate or animate things such as pets. It looks that many of the traceable tags are still quite big for more discreet use although there could be some challenges with more invisible tags that could be attached unnoticed.

When walking, one can spot and collect various topics such as street art, signs, doors, sounds, stickers, lamps (see Figure 21.), shadows, certain forms... Almost anything can be found from anywhere. I for example have been collecting junk from the beaches and making meal looking photos from them (see Figure 20.). This collection combined for example moving outdoors, cleaning the environment, digital photography and art.

Figure 20. Jalanka, H. (2013). *Saltwater junkfood, meal nro 1.*
Retrieved from http://saltwaterjunkfood.blogspot.com/

Figure 21. My Modern Met (2011). Photographer unkown. *Streetlampforest. A collection of 30 european streetlamps by Vordermaier, S.* Retrieved from http://www.mymodernmet.com/profiles/blogs/streetlampforest

3.3.3. Collecting look-alikes: Natures creatures

www.naturescreatures.tumblr.com

Natures creatures is a collection of spotted and captured look-alikes in the nature.

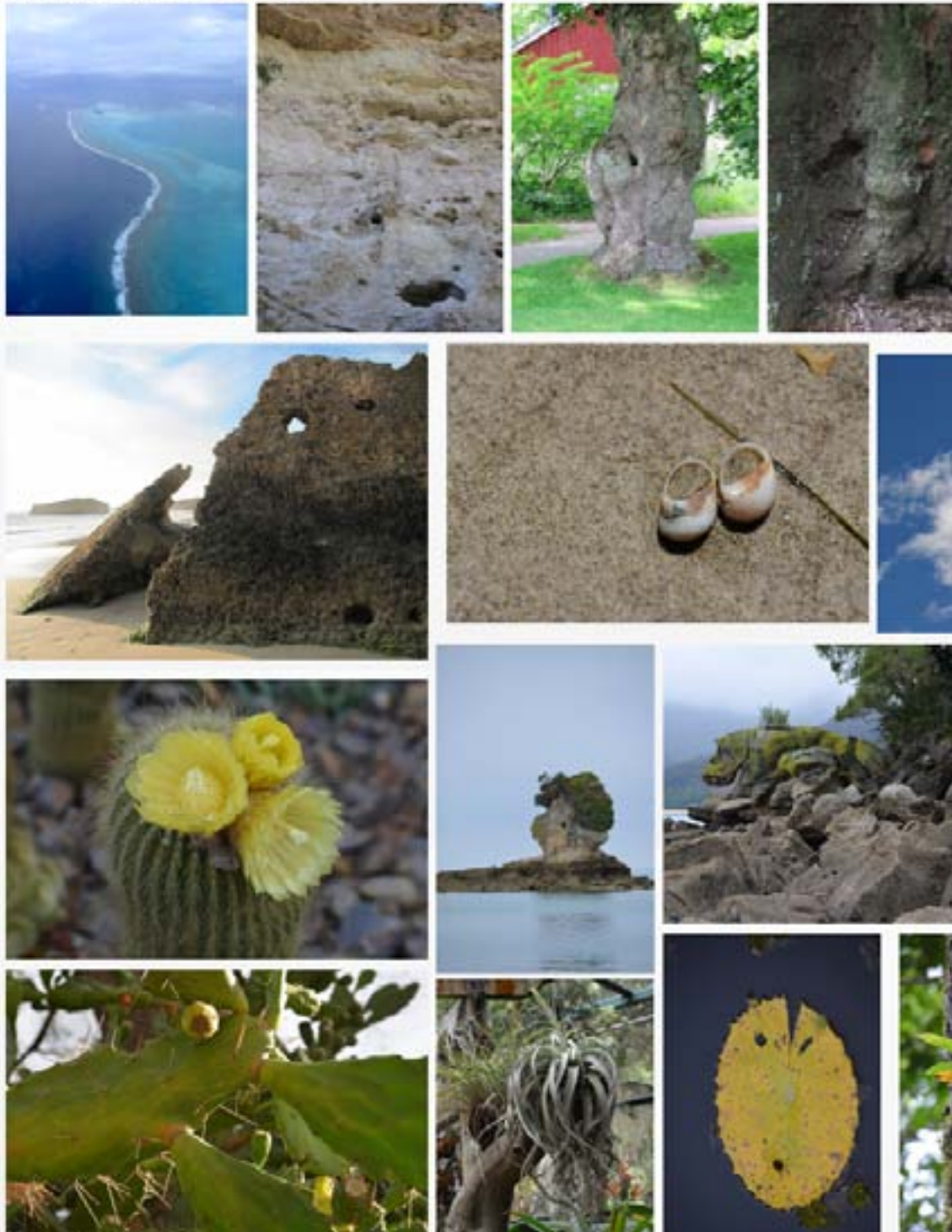*Figure 22. Main page of Natures Creatures collection.* (Jalanka, H. 2014). Retrieved from http://www.naturescreatures.
tumblr.com

Figure 23. Image collectable examples from Natures Creatures collection. (Jalanka, H. 2014).
Retrieved from http://www.naturescreatures.tumblr.com

THE COLLECTION

The *Natures Creatures* collection (see Figures 22. & 23. and www.naturescreatures.tumblr.com) begun unintentionally and unconsciously. When I was exploring the nature I started to notice faces or other look-alikes like creatures or body parts on the plants, rocks, shells, clouds, waters and other naturally formed things. At some point I started to capture them by camera, usually DSLR (Digital single-lens reflex camera). After I had multiple photos of the look-alikes, I compiled them to a Tumblr page that presents them all on the same page as a photo collage. It is one of my smallest ones in quantity as has currently 33 images plus some waiting to be uploaded. I caught these photos some months and then wanted to quit because it started to be annoying manner for me, instead of seeing faces everywhere I just want to enjoy the nature and relax.

This collection not only shows the variety of the art of the nature but most of all it is about our tendency and ability to connect dots to form something meaningful and familiar. Scientist Carl Sagan hypothesized that human beings are hard-wired from birth to identify the human face, as a survival technique (Rosen 2012). The phenomenon of seeing faces or something similar in things where they do not actually exist is called *Pareidolia*, a psychological phenomenon involving a vague and random stimulus being perceived as significant. It has been diagnosed as a form of *Apophenia* which can be a symptom of obsessive-compulsive disorder (Zimmermann 2012 and Everitt 2013). Pareidolia used to be seen as a symptom of psychosis, but is now recognized as a normal tendency (Rosen 2012). There are stories related to this phenomenon, for example a cinnamon bun like Mother Teresa or people hearing the words *"Paul is dead"* if the Beatles song *Strawberry Fields Forever* was played backwards. So I am not alone with this tendency, which makes it easier to face.

Sometimes it is individual whether or not face or equivalent is seen in something, as everyone carries personal and unique memories and connections that make one sense things in a certain way. Still from many of the Pareidolia photos taken by others it is possible to see what the catcher saw in there. I could have added other than nature-made look-alikes to the collection too but for some reason I spotted them only in the nature. This made me think that am I so citified and estranged from the nature that I had to find something familiar and safe (like faces of the people) when I was in more natural surroundings. Computers have trained to see faces too, and they (for example iPhoto) also can recognise faces elsewhere than in humans. One could use these facial recognition applications to filter all the images that might include a face for the collection purposes for instance.

RELATED CASES

This kind of collection can be done together with others like they have done in an online community called *Faces in places* (http://facesinplaces.blogspot.com/). The look-alikes that people have sent, are seen in places such as everyday items (like cans, chairs and gadgets), buildings, food, clouds, clothes and pieces of wood – basically in anywhere. In addition to their own site, their photographic collections are on Flickr and Twitter and printed out as a book. Also social networking service Reddit has a group called Pareidolia (http://www.reddit.com/r/Pareidolia) that has rather funny stories. There are many similar collections created by individuals, for example on Flickr. Swiss graphic designer Jean Robert and his photographer brother Francois Robert have been doing fine art photography of faces in things (see Figure 24.).

One related social phenomenon is *Monkey tree* that was worshipped in Singapore 2007 after the discovery of monkey heads forms on the tree bark (see Figure 25.). Some people believed that a monkey god lives in that tree as there were car accidents by the tree and no one was hurt. Many left offerings such as bananas and peanuts to please the monkey god and some were asking lottery numbers from it (Murdoch 2007). It seems that humans tend to bring life inanimate things, such as some objects in animations like Pixar movies or plants, like the trees in good old Doctor Snuggles TV series (see Figure 26.).

Figure 24. Robert, F. (2000). *Faces.* Screenshots. Retrieved from http://www.francoisrobertphotography.com/#/portfolio/fine_art/faces

Figure 25. API. (2007). *Monkey tree in Singapore.* Retrieved from: http://api.sg/main/images/stories/cases/monkeynews12.JPG

Figure 26. Trees have faces in Doctor Snuggles. Retrieved from http://static.telkku.com/telkku/programimages/venetsia/303930395456544f4a5f30313438393433.jpg

3.3.4. Collecting pieces of nature: Pixel tree

www.pikselipuu.tumblr.com

Pixel tree collection is a growing digital tree made of various tree bark photos.

Figure 27. Jalanka, H. (2014).
Pixel tree. Pikselipuu.

Figure 28. Jalanka,
H. (2014). *Images
from Pixeltree.*

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

When I was studying in a university exchange in Melbourne, I designed a mobile application concept for a local park (see Figure 29.). The park was known of its wide variety of tree species and with the application people could explore them more deeply, for example to see the detailed images of the tree's leaves, fruits, cones and bark which is tree's protection from the outside world. Through the project I got interested in the aesthetics and feel of the barks.
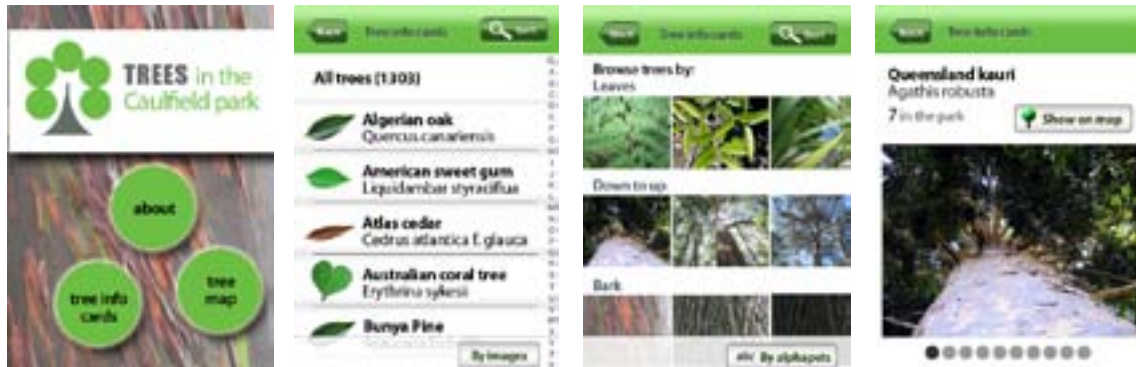
Figure 29. Jalanka H. (2011). *Prototype images of the tree application I designed.*

Figure 30. Jalanka H. (2012). *Exploring trees in Tasmania.*

Trees, like people are all individuals - nature's art at its best. As people, they all look the different, even the trees of same species. Barks can be compared to people's faces which work as masks between inner and outer world. Much like human skin, the bark is renewed from within. It helps the tree keep out moisture in the rain, prevents losing moisture when the air is dry and insulates against cold and heat and wards off insect enemies (Arbor Day Foundation). Trees keep still and rooted, whereas people tend to run around and be more and more rootless. Some estimates that there are 100 000 different tree species, most of them in tropical forests. In Australia there are for example over 1,200 species of acacia and over 700 species of eucalypts (ANPSA). Many tree species are threatened with extinction. There are various reasons to appreciate trees as they provide oxygen, absorb CO2 and pollutants, cool the air, give shade and shelter, can be used for medicinal properties and work as noise barriers. Not to mention that they look and smell good. Collecting the barks has opened my eyes to see better the beauty, richness and importance of trees. For me, almost every bark photo triggers a memory of that nature moment and that adds value and meaning of the collection.

As I kept on going to the nature – places such as botanic gardens and rainforests – I suddenly had many tree trunk photos in my gallery. In Australia there were many good places for a tree collector, I for example visited the world's biggest hardwoods in Tasmania where I also explored the Botanic gardens of Hobart (see Figure 30.). At the moment (in April 2014) the *Pixel tree* collection (see Figures 27. & 28. and www.pikselipuu.tumblr.com) has about 120 tree photos from Australia, Asia and Europe and there are some in the queue to be uploaded. The basic blog page supports the simple idea really well: tree parts are piled up so that by scrolling up or down the page the viewer is like climbing and descending the tree. The photos are showing a part of the tree and the rest can be imagined. Occasional happenings on the photos can create a narrative on top of the aesthetic experience. As for me this is still mainly about the appearance of the barks and the idea of growing a tree, for starters I have been focusing only on the photos and not for example on extra information like the name of the tree species.

Most of the photos are taken with DSLR camera if it just was at hand, as I wanted to capture the structure of each bark as it is in an important role when sensing the shell of any plant. The widths of the tree trunks in the photos are not exactly even and that has been done intentionally as I think it looks more interesting, separates each bark and can show better the actual proportions of each tree. They are all from different species, except if accidently some trees have appeared different to me but have been same species after all. Some tree trunks in the collection are not officially accepted as trees such as banana trees and bamboo. In the photos one can see barks' interesting patterns, colours and the textures which vary from smooth to bumpy and spiky. Some of them have fruits, flowers or cones. On one of the bark photos there is a boy climbing and few has some animal, such as a squirrel, lizard, cuckoo or koala on them. Humans have left their marks on some barks, for example as engravings and knitwear. Many of the tropical tree trunks have some other plants growing on their surface too.

DEVELOPMENT IDEAS

The plan is to concentrate capturing the most interesting looking tree barks in the future now that I already have some quantity in the collection base. It would be great to be able to add the feeling of touching (the tactile sensation) of each bark for example by using some haptic tool.

Adding the location or the species information is one possibility, especially of the trees captured in Botanic gardens as they often have some information beside of them. Those signs would again be good spots to add some digitalized content such as seeing through one's mobile a time lapse video how the tree has grown from a tiny to a huge (assuming that such material would exist) or how that tree looks in different seasons. Or the attached digital content could be for example people's own stories or greetings, instead of engraving on the trunk. I like the idea of planting a tree and presenting its life and point of view online or doing something around the idea of adopting, having or protecting an own tree in a way that could create more interest towards environmental issues.

One rather simple thing to add online, could be a calculated, growing number of the estimated height of the tree. An option for displaying the *Pixel tree* collection somewhere else than on its current location could be as projected on a high wall, tower or a pipe of a factory. Actually having the tree trunks on a pipe of a paper factory or printing them on a paper roll would be interesting and ironic. The collected images could work on an indoor climbing wall so one could be physically climbing the digital tree.

RELATED CASES

In connection to the starting point of the *Pixel tree*, there are plenty of plant related applications, for example for identifying the plants (like Leafsnap) or using augmented reality for planting design (like Prelimb). Nature is an endless source and inspiration for many arts and sciences, also for collections and series.

Photographer Andy Bell has created collages of abstract nature photographs (see Figure 31.) and Sharon Beals has made a beautiful and rousing photo collection of bird nests (see Figure 32.). I came across with photos of comedian and cabaret artist Ursus Wehrli who has been "tidying up" paintings and photos such as the photo of softwood (see Figure 33.) and I find similarities of my earlier (2012) photographic project called Botanical buddies (see Figure 34.) in which I collected fallen flora on the ground and organized the ingredients to form shapes.

Figure 31. Bell, A. (2013). *Forest.* Retrieved from http://www.deceptivemedia.co.uk/category/photoblog/forest

Figure 32. Beals, S. (2007-2012). *Golden-winged Warbler, Tree Swallow Nest, Oven Bird, MacGillivray's Warbler, Barn Swallow, American Dipper.* Screenshot. Retrieved from http://www.flickr.com/photos/planetcitizen/sets/72157604732862637/

Figure 33. Wehrli, U. (2012). [Untitled photo]. Retrieved from
http://www.visualnews.com/2012/01/29/organizing-everyday-
disarray/

Figure 34. Jalanka H. (2013). *Botanic buddies. Example images.* Retrieved from *http://www.botanicbuddies.tumblr.com/*

3.3.5. Collecting moments of nature: Cloudy howdy!

www.cloudyhowdy.tumblr.com

Collection made from pieces of the sky.

Figure 35. Jalanka H. (2013). *Main page of Cloudy howdy! collection.* Retrieved from http://www.cloudyhowdy.tumblr.com

Figure 36. Jalanka H. (2014). Images from Cloudy howdy! collection. Retrieved from http://www.cloudyhowdy.tumblr.com

Contemporary cabinets of curiosities

THE CONCEPT OF THE COLLECTION

Cloudy Howdy! (see Figures 35. & 36. and www.cloudyhowdy.tumblr.com) differs from my other collections because it was formed after the photos were taken. As I was browsing through my photos I spotted many touching pictures of the skies and I wanted to put them together and share. I chose over hundred photos to the collection, many of them are captured from the home balcony but there are many from other locations too. The photos are evidence of the upper air happenings such as sunsets, rainbows, people, birds, cranes on the horizon, moonlight, smoke, various types of clouds, sky writings (for example once there was someone proposing on the sky) and airplanes. Most of them have been taken with DSLR. As in other collections, for me this is a canvas of memories as I recall the places and feelings behind each one of these recordings. People have been commenting this collection a bit more than the other ones and I think this is because the images may look beautiful, evoke soothing emotions and people can relate to them more easily.

DEVELOPMENT IDEAS

This kind of photographic collage could work beautifully in a physical space such as in a walk through tunnel of a subway or in a lift to bring some light, vastness and calmness. It could be displayed as a projection or on screens. For example by tracking people's movements, the viewers could see on a video some of the image starting to gently live for a while, such as few clouds passing by. Quotes, poems, wishes or dreams of people could be added behind each photo to be flipped around. For many there is the connotation of heaven as afterlife, so one possibility would be use this kind of collection for a memorial wall. If the photos would be materialized, it could simply be done as a large photo book. Another approach that could be interesting is to narrow the focus on that single frame, as to "the view from my balcony", to see in it and capture thousand different views and events in the constantly changing sky. Someday there can be a thunder storm, another day an escaped balloon and so on. In connection with the Natures Creatures collection, this collection could be limited to include only pictures that have clouds forming some recognizable shapes.

RELATED CASES

Sunsets and rises are often recorded as people wish to maintain these magical moments. Clouds seem to inspire many, there are for example cloud spotting applications (see Figure 37.) and online communities like *Skywatch Friday* ("a place to enjoy skies from all around the globe" according to their web site www.skyley.blogspot.com) or *The Cloud Appreciation Society* (www.cloudappreciationsociety.org). Besides the appearance and the imaginary essence of clouds part of the appeal might the momentary of them. The same is with the storms, waterfalls and raindrops – all phenomena of the nature that is unique and rapidly changing. To have changing scenery as the sky, one possibility is to make a hole in the ceiling (or in the wall or floor, depending on what the focus is on) like on James Turrell's *Skyspace* installation.

Artist Berndnaut Smilde, who creates clouds in the physical spaces (see Figure 38.) by moisturizing the air and using a smoke machine says: *"[...]for me what it interesting about it is that it is very temporary[...] Like a collective memory you have for very short moment people in that space, connected to that space and this (photo) is more like a document of something that happened there and is now gone*." (Patel 2013). Also Leandro Erlich, has been creating concrete clouds for a piece called *Single Cloud Collection* (see Figure 39.). More sky related examples are by photographer Rüdiger Nehmzow's *Cloud Collection* that has shots from different clouds compositions and by airline pilot Karim Nafatni who has been capturing images from slightly different angle (see image 40). He says: "*No matter how beautiful those (all the amazing places of the world) were it cannot be compared to the beauty we witness from the flight deck up above. So definitely I would say that my favourite destination is my office no matter where it takes me.*" (Nikon Europe BV 2013).

Figure 37. Screenshot from Cloudspotting.co. (2014). Retrieved from
http://cloudspotting.co/

Figure 38. Schattenkerk C. E. (2012). *Nimbus II, 2012. By Berndnaut Smilde.* Retrieved
from http://www.demilked.com/real-indoor-clouds-berndnaut-smilde/

Figure 39. Iasparra, I. (2012). *Single Cloud Collection, 2012. By Leandro Erlich.* Retrieved
from http://www.leandroerlich.com.ar/works.php?id=49

Figure 40. Nafatni, K. (2013). *The White Invader.* Retrieved from *http://ppcdn.500px.org /55233462/15c3880f0dd85b22a1d3af2b9f47beaff62a16ac/2048.jpg*

There are other work related to catching the transitory nature, but to keep the cases within the scope of the thesis, I mention only two photographic pieces which are waves by David Orias (see Figure 41.) and snowflakes by Alexey Kljatov (see Figure 42.).

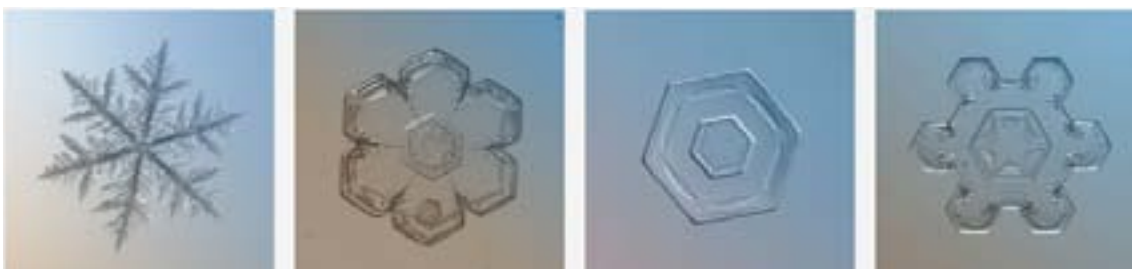*Figure 41.* Orias, D. (2010). *Waves.* Retrieved from http://500px.com/davidorias/sets/waves

Figure 42. Kljatov, A. (2013). Silverware, Blueprint, Cloud wheel and Snow flower. Retrieved from http://500px.com/ chaoticmind75

3.4. Summary

Digital technology influences everything, also to collecting. People use increasingly digital gadgets such as smartphones and produce content on various online places such as on social media platforms and a massive amount of digital data is made and stored constantly. New media has power to remember and forget information. Digital tools and media can feed the desire to create and share things, such as collectables which can to fit to our fragmented and effective modern lives and experiences.

Digital collecting holds and continues the legacy from the history and it has various forms, embodiments and definitions. My own collectables and the ones of my survey respondents were about "digitally collecting physical", mainly through the means of digital photography. My collections were born after I moved into new environment to Australia. The topics of my collections can be divided to man-made things and nature-made things. They show how multidimensional each collection can be, depending on the interpretations. They can tell about the wider context and approach behind collections and about individual's interests, taste, values and inspirations.

OuMaiGuud! collection was the only one that I started on purpose which was to create a digital museum of favourite everyday items alongside with their stories, reflecting our relationships to concrete everyday objects which then again reflect our own personalities and desires. Objects may capture fascinating stories in them and they can and should be digitally presented too. *Street drop* collection is about discovering objects on the ground, curiosities that people have either accidently or wittingly dropped on their way. I find these items inspiring and part of the fun is that you never know what you will find for your collection. One can only guess what is the background and story of these objects. They too tell something about their owners but also about the times we live in.

Natures creatures collection is made of photos of faces, creatures or body parts seen and imagined in the nature. This collection I find most disturbing and it has been the only one that I wanted to quit. This is partly because of the psychological phenomenon called Pareidolia, in which a rather random stimulus as an image is perceived as significant, and can become obsessive. *Pixel tree* collection begun from an application I designed about trees in one park in Melbourne. I got interested in the beauty and variety of tree barks and started piling them on an online page, to be an ever-growing digital tree which the viewer can climb by scrolling. For me each photo triggers the serene and sensuous moments spent in the parks and forests. The last collection displayed, *Cloudy Howdy!,* is a scattered scenery of the skies, formed from the views I have witnessed and wished to store. It is inspiring how many views one can sense inside one frame such as balcony and how humans try to capture the transient phenomena in nature.

As said, after the majority of these collections had been in progress for quite a while already I realized that the activity I had been practicing could be called as collecting and I wanted to know why I – or anyone else – is collecting. This is the starting point for the next chapter where I will write about my survey results alongside with other research I found about why and how people collect things in digital means.

4. MEANS AND MOTIVES FOR DIGITAL COLLECTING

The tools and process of digital collecting varies depending on what type of digital collecting is been done. As in this thesis the focus is on digitally collecting the physical environment and experiences I will be writing about the collecting process from this aspect.

4.1. Means do matter

The main difference between traditional and digital collecting are the means such as devices and platforms used for collecting. They affect to whole process of collecting, what is collected and how the collectables look and are displayed. In more general level the tools can encourage or discourage collecting behaviour. Creating collections by using digital means can have many benefits. It can for example helpful for this planet's environment and to human mind if people do not accumulate so much concrete objects but instead use the digital representations of them, like in many of the cases of digital collections. Not being able to touch the collectables appears to be reasonable for not needing to buy, carry and physically store them. One can still get the beauty of the objects and the joy of the collecting process. Digital collectors can get some peace of mind by knowing that they do not need to consume and possible pollute for having a collection.

Collections might be seen to add the "virtual junk" but at least there is a chance to delete it more easily and ecologically than concrete objects. Personally I find it disturbing that once a tangible item has been done, it is many times hard and sometimes even impossible to undo without causing harm to the environment. There are more aspects to the environmental impact of various objects but overall the digital landfill does not at the moment stink as much as the physical, concrete one.

According to my research survey, the various tools are in a highly important role in digital collecting. They can save a lot of effort and time and they help with storing, sharing, accessing and maintaining. Devices and platforms can work as starting points for the online collections and they can push to keep on collecting. It's evident that most of the digital collections wouldn't exist only in a physical form even if that would be possible in theory. In the survey, the gadgets

and services were mentioned to be fundamental. *"I think I wouldn't have started this without Instagram. The collection was born from the way I take Instagram photos."*, said one of the participant for instance.

Some devices for collecting that were mentioned in the survey were digital camera such as DSLR, hard drive, notebook and pen, iPod, laptop, recorder, microphone, headphones and smart phones. One respondent used a rule that all tools for collecting must fit in his shoulder bag or otherwise they are not taken with. *"In my experience, we can get overwhelmed with tools, equipment, gadgets and so on. My philosophy is that memorable sound recordings are limited only by one's imagination not by the tools one uses."* he reminded. The survey participants collections located and were edited on platforms such as Tumbrl, Facebook, Instagram, Wordpress, Adobe Audition and Hindenburg Journalist Pro, Soundcloud, Twitter, Dropbox and personal archives. Naturally there could be many more platforms to be used for collecting purposes.

Having the collection on a blog platform was described as quick, easy, free and temporary solution but more features for customization was desired. Two respondents were using various platforms for displaying the collection. For example one platform could then work more for socialising and creating discussion and the other one could focus on visual presentation. Online platforms such as Instagram, Facebook or Pinterest can encourage sorting and controlling. They offer us a place where things can be neatly displayed, nicely in order. Various social media services and all sorts of applications allow us to control the enormous masses of data, to keep that chaos somehow in our hands.

I and three of the collectors I interviewed had collections in a form of digital photos. The camera is an extension of the sight and memory and it changes our relationship to the environment. Constantly equipped with a camera people are performing the identity of an observer (Rubinstein 2005 and Gye 2007a, as cited in Reading 2009, 86). A study by Daisuke Okabe (2004, 3 as cited in Reading 2009, 86) about social practices of camera phone use, found that from those who used the camera in their phone, sixty-nine per cent used it for commemorate "interesting or unusual things in everyday life". Digital cameras store automatically metadata like date and time of the shot and some information can be added such as the geological location or persons appearing in the photo. Geotagging was mentioned by two respondent collectors as a function of collectables. It is one more link between the physical place and the digital outcome. One respondent had already an evolving, interactive map for the collectables which pinpoints where they were recorded. Reading (2009, 88) writes that the technical gadgets can feel very personal and important, for example when 180 media students at London South Bank University in 2007 were asked to give one-word responses to how they felt without their mobile phones they used words as uncomfortable, isolated, lost, lonely, disconnected, unsafe, insecure, naked and without time. These describe a feeling of loss a part of the "me", part of themselves, however some of them said that without their phones, they felt free, more private and peaceful (Reading 2009, 88).

4.2. Process of creating digital collections

According to my survey, it is common that digital collections start unintentionally and without some specific goal or purpose. It answers to some needs that are often hidden or unconscious. As one of the respondents said: *"(collecting) started almost accidently."* and another one: *"Unintentional. It started as a joke that kept continuing. It just grew quite organically picture by picture. There was no real purpose."* Maybe one has developed somewhere in the subconscious a frame ready for the collectables.

The topic of the collection evolves around the collectables by time as the choosing can be unintentionally driven. As one of the respondents described: *"I don't feel like I chose it (the collection topic)."* According to psychologist Nicholas Humphrey objects (collectables) may rhyme just as a poem rhymes, for example in stamp collection the stamps are divided into species of

which the distinctive feature is the country of origin and the collector classifies them and the stamps on each page to rhyme with each other (Humphrey 1984, 132, as cited in Danet and Katriel 2003, 227). The process of one collectable for the collection usually follows the steps of (1) finding and capturing, (2) sorting and editing, (3) storing and maintaining, (4) sharing and then the (5) possible completion and afterlife. For most collectors, the whole collecting process altogether does not take too much time. Exception in my survey was the sound collector who was doing it for work as well and was editing after recording. He said that capturing good soundscapes, even if enjoyable, can be intense and exhausting. It may be that respondents did not realize how much the hobby takes their time if all the steps would be counted more carefully.

4.2.1. Searching, finding and capturing

According to the survey I did, the hunting is many times unintentional too. It mainly occurs through exploring environment in general and then spotting something interesting that triggers the need to capture that certain thing. Digital collectors, me included, went mainly outdoors when discovering collectables. They were spotting things when walking or biking around their surroundings or as they were travelling. Mostly coincidentally they then discover an architectural detail, an item, city sound or something else interesting that fits to their collections.

The searching and capturing tools are different from traditional collecting. As a butterfly collector could go hunting with a net, a digital collector could either do the whole hunting on the (inter)net or when collecting in the physical environment, as the digital collectors who I interviewed, capture the collectables with their gadgets such as mobile phone, camera or sound recorded.

"I suffer from a grave affliction which will surely oblige me to abandon all thought of prints till the end of my days: I have all of Callot except for one – and one which, to be frank, is not among his best works. Indeed, it is one of his worst, yet it would round out Callot for me. I have searched high and low for this print for twenty years, and I now despair of ever finding it.", were passionate words of philosopher, collector La Bruyére (Baudrillard 2006, 98). Digital collectors that I was interviewing were be more liberated with their collections, as they mainly just capture what comes on their ways (and quite literally so). The collected outcomes can then be quite coincidental and that can be part of the fun of the activity. Compared to traditional collecting, the digital collectors did not use any money to get their collectables.

4.2.2. Sorting and editing

My survey showed that if some sorting and editing is executed, it attempts to uphold the core essence of that particular collection. For example one respondent said he processes the photos through Instagram filter to convey a wished feeling and to have more contrast and better colours. Some sorting can happen when going through the images and picking the most suitable ones, but not all respondent wanted to be too perfectionist with selecting. As three of the collectors said, it is more about the concept than the each individual collectable that seem to matter most. These digital collectors were not too deep into categorising but a certain theme, time or place holds their collectables under the same, recognizable umbrella. Tagging, for example according to the place where the collectable was recorded, was something that was done before storing or uploading. It depends on the nature of the collection if tagging is even wanted. For example, like I wrote before that in my tree bark collection, I could have added a country and species (at least for many) but I chose not to as I wanted to keep to focus on the aesthetics and the concept of collection for me was not scientific.

4.2.3. Storing and maintaining

Storing the collections somewhere can be more important than sharing and publishing it, according to my survey and personal experiences. The platforms such as Instagram and Tumblr

are mainly used for storing and managing the collections. It varied how often the respondents uploaded their collectables to their platforms, it could be done in a regular rhythm, even daily, or more rarely for example uploading tens of collectables at the same time. Still for most digital collectors collecting activity could be compared to keeping a diary that one fills quite frequently, depending on the present situation. Part of the process is maintaining and cherishing the collection such as eyeing the collection and fine tuning it.

Two respondents used the platforms like Tumbrl also as extra storages, keeping the collection in many locations so that if one of the storages would be destroyed at least some of them would be safe. One respondent said: *"I'm more worried about other digital data like personal photos, work files. Collection is online 3 places plus backed up in phone, 2 computers via Dropbox so I feel pretty safe with collection."* Another one was worried that people take digital technology for granted these days, probably too much so and one respondent added that: *"One could say it's more a collection in my mind than in reality in some sense."*

4.2.4. Sharing and possible social interaction

For the respondents, sharing their digital collection was a nice addition of the hobby but their collections could well be alive without spreading them to other people. People make the collections mainly for themselves. The self is the audience number one and after that comes others. Baudrillard (2006, 111) writes that even when a collection transforms itself into a discourse addressed to others, it continues to be first and foremost a discourse addressed to oneself. Baekeland (2003, 216) has studied that most collectors are eager to have everyone and anyone examine and praise their collections but some will only admit those who they feel are qualified and in rare cases they may let no one see them as the collector knows (or believes) he has something others covet. Then again in the digital era, the whole culture of sharing has most likely changed and affected to sharing collections too. People are more willing to share what they have and what they know, not just to keep things for themselves, like for instance the various wikis prove.

Respondent collectors were mainly sharing the collections with their friends for example on Facebook or other people who were for some reason interested in the collections. One of the survey participants said that he has to force himself sometimes to share his collectables. *"I somehow see this collection as very personal."* said one of the respondents and another one had a similar opinion: *"Well…I don't want everybody to see my collection."* Collectors were limiting who they want to see their collections. This may be typical trait in collecting, for example in Danet and Katriel's (2003, 229) studies nearly every child who they interviewed specified some limitation for their collection audiences and one said *"Only my parents, not my brother, because he's little and might break things"* or *"Anyone can look at them, but only I can take them out of the drawer".*

Another example of limiting the audience is a grown-up who collected spice-boxes, kept them locked in a special room in his home, and even his wife was not allowed to enter that space (Danet and Katriel 2003, 229). In digital collecting this could be compared to having a collection on an own hard drive but never publishing it anywhere. Most likely there is many digitally collected things that would be interesting but do not end up being anywhere online to be found. In contemporary collecting, the hard drive cab be seen as the new drawer and an online space such as a blog can be seen as the new wall or cabinet.

The survey told that getting feedback about the collection was not important to the digital collectors but getting some encouraging comments gave some extra energy for continuing the activity. The participants said that the feedback they have been getting has been only positive. This might be because of the composition of the audience as it included mainly friends or like-minded people. One participant was guessing that the reason for feedback being so positive was the uniqueness of the collection, that he was the only one doing this kind of collection in the city. He found feedback useful: *"Although feedback doesn't define what I do it is helpful. It's always*

interesting to hear other people's views about one's work and it's always helpful to know that I'm on the right track – or not." Belk (2003, 320) has written that for the collector, the recognition of the collection by others as being "worthwhile" can legitimize what is otherwise seen as abnormal acquisitiveness. This can give the collector a sense of purpose (e.g. Goldberg and Lewis 1978, as cited in Belk 2003, 320) and a sense of noble purpose in supposedly generating knowledge, preserving fragile art, or providing those who see it with a richer sense of history (Belk 2003, 320). Another respondent wrote that *"feedback is encouraging me to add collectables more often, even if it is mainly for myself."* She told that for her to be asked to participate to my survey was the final push to have her collection online – the interest from another person increased the motivation. Overall, the respondent collectors were not looking for fame, but they felt glad and encouraged if someone noticed and appreciated their effort and especially the concept idea behind the collection.

4.2.5. Possible completion and afterlife

Participants were planning to continue creating their collections as long as it feels interesting or as long as it is possible. *"I shall continue so long as I'm able to walk the streets[...] hunting for sounds."* said for example one of my survey respondents. They had some plans for improving their online collections, such as having more customized theme or more features like the geotagging. They had no plans for quitting collecting and maybe it relates to the mentions of how many of the respondents felt that they have always been collecting something. It appears as a way of life that gains new forms along the way. In my own experience, easier than completely quitting is to freeze the collection so that the possibility of continuation still exists. Danet and Katriel (2003, 229) claim that collectors tend to pursue and aspire and sometimes actually manage to get a sense of completion, perfection. Baudrillard (2006, 99) then again wonders whether collections are in fact meant to be completed, whether lack does not play an essential part here. He adds that the final object of the collection would signify the death of the subject, whereas its absence would enable the collector only to rehearse collector's death by having an object represent it. Baudrillard (2006, 99) claims that madness begins once a collection is deemed complete and thus ceases to centre around its absent term.

Digital collector respondents would want to outspread their collections (back) to physical formats as well. They had plans about exhibitions and installations and creating books and other prints out of their collections. Is it so that digital form is not enough? People seem to be still very much attached to material and dependent on it, objects are part of the humanity. For digital collections, maybe the physical presence would be one more storage place for it to be safer. The concreteness can add the feeling that something has really been done here, collector could see hers or his handprint somehow more clear. The tangible outcomes could let collectors to experiment with collection and the audience that is not so much online could find and experience the collections too.

Collectors have gathered their items (consciously or not) as a means of creating a legacy, of passing something on to the next generation (Belk 1991; Frost and Steketee 2010, as cited in Nordsletten and Mataix-Cols 2012, 169). Many collectors hoped that their collections remain in some venue that will preserve them and enable continuation of the collections and to some degree the collectors lives, however the majority of individual collections has not been suitable for museum display. Collector then tries to find a trusted person to guard and possibly continue the collection (Belk et al. 1991; McIntosh and Schmeichel 2004, as cited in Nordsletten and Mataix-Cols 2012, 169). These arrangements are believed to be evidence of the collector's distress at accepting an end or loss of their collection (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004, as cited in Nordsletten and Mataix-Cols 2012, 169). According to my survey the digital collectors did not think too much about the afterlife of their collections, they were thinking mainly the present time. Only one collector was thing the next generations, people who would be interested in the recordings of these times. Collectors were more worried about how they will save the collection for themselves. Here can lie another difference between traditional and digital collections: whereas traditional collections can be inherited and part of the focus can be on the coming times,

the contemporary digital collections are more temporary and maybe even self-centred. The digital platforms offer an afterlife (or at least a possibility of it) for all kinds of digital collections.

James (1892, 178, as cited in Formanek 2003, 329) studied that people feel personally annihilated if a life-long construction such as collections were suddenly swept away. I asked my participant how would they feel if they wake up one morning and see that their digital collections were completely gone. Quite presumably the respondents answered that they would feel sad if that would happen. "*I'd definitely miss it. It somehow feels like I've done something here and it is of value to me personally*" wrote for example one respondent. Still they would not be devastated of the possible loss. One was referring the collection to be mainly just data so it is alright if he loses it. Another participant crystallized that "*Somehow the process of collecting them is more important than the actual collection.*" Still, as one of the respondents commented, it would be impossible to do the same collection again as the collectables in it were bound to a certain time and occasion. They are irreplaceable. After all there could be a possibility to continue, as the sound collector respondent narrated: *"I hope though, in the face of the apocalyptic event[...] I could take inspiration from Lawrence of Arabia[...] his account of his time in the desert. On the way to hand the finished hand written manuscript to his publisher he realized that he had left it on the back seat of a London taxi. It was never seen again. Lawrence had the fortitude and strength of character to begin writing it all over again. I hope I shall have the fortitude and strength of character to do the same."*

In my survey the collections were seen as investments (time, effort, memories) that had value to the collectors personally. Altogether the relationship to collecting by digital means, like the process, appeared rather relaxed and open compared to so-called traditional collecting. Digitalization has influenced and enhanced the collecting process and that way it might have released the collector to focus on exploring and fine-tuning, and as I, to think about the motives of collecting, from which I will be writing about next.

4.3. Why people digitally collect?

The existence of digital collections already proves that there is much more about collecting than owning, acquiring and touching physical objects. As collecting is multidimensional phenomenon and all the collectors and collections differ from each other it can be impossible to find some simple reason behind this activity. Instead there are a large number of responses to be looked through various viewpoints. Baudrillard (2006, 92) writes that for children, collecting is a primitive way of mastering the outside world, of arranging, classifying and manipulating. Between the ages of seven and twelve (during the latency period between early childhood and puberty) is seemingly the most active time for childhood collecting and the urge to collect tends to wane as the puberty start and re-emerges again after that stage (2006, 92). Three of the respondents in my survey had past experiences about collecting, mainly from the time that they were 7-14 years. One of the survey participants used to collect Kinder egg's plastic surprises with her brother, until their mother threw them away. Another participant was collecting beer and soda cans, bottle caps and Donald duck books as 8-14 year old and vinyl records later. In addition one respondent said: *"in 50's England as a boy I collected that most young boys did: cigarette cards, bird's eggs, railway steam train numbers and comics."* Apparently in childhood the collected things seemed to be easier to acquire, things such as stones, candy packages and toy figures. The collection topic can be same than others that can help socialising and belonging to a group. Later in life collection topics and collecting motives change.

Collecting relates for example to memory, identity and time. It can be seen as a form of regression and obsession, at least as a passion that can take over in many levels of intensities. Collections speak about collectors' personality, interests and past moments. They often include things that represent somebody's recollection of certain situations, scenes, places or people. Professor Pearce (2003a, 158) writes that the collections can be seen as personalia or memorabilia. Two respondents felt that the assessment about collecting motives was

challenging. It was not easy to say why they do what they collect by digital means. They said things like *"It (collection) makes me smile."* and *"(Collecting gives) endless satisfaction, I think it's as simple as that."* but I wanted to know why is it so. I would say there is also a lot of intuition and something primitive in the collecting behaviour and all will be not explained through upcoming attempts, but maybe they can bring some clarification about the motives of collecting.

4.3.1. To express oneself and develop one's identity

Many of the motives for collecting that came out in my survey related to self-expression and it was also directly pointed out by one of the participants as: *"It's a form of self-expression."* Collectors are being creative. In these days there are more and more ways for people to express themselves via digital means that was not possible before and I believe it can be self-reinforcing phenomena. It feels overwhelming to even start naming examples because it can be about writing, acting, creating images, videos, art – almost anything. Through digitalization have come various reasonably inexpensive software, applications and gadgets for creating things, spaces for keeping and distributing them and societies to support all this. For example TNS' Digital Life survey (2011, 5) with over 72,000 people in 60 countries found out that 42% of people globally feel that the Internet helps them express themselves better. Digital self-expression is universal but the distribution takes many forms and the motivations, for example it can be purely private or for all to experience (TNS 2011,10). Social media and other virtual tools at people's hands can increase digital self-expression.

Belk (2003, 319) claims that collectors are unlikely to be as altruistic. The collection is especially implicated in the extended self because it is often visible and undeniably represents the collector's judgements and taste (Stewart 1984, as cited in Belk 2003, 321).In addition the time and effort spent in assembling a collection means that the collector has literally put a part of self into the collection.(Belk 2003, 321). Related to this one respondent wrote that the pictures of his collection tell about change of himself and that was the major motive for him to keep on collecting. Similarly another participant concluded: *"It tells about my sense of humor and the way I look at the world."* He had been writing stories besides the collected photos that together formed the collection and said directly that the text was about him. The various ways of expression, such as taking photos and writing, not only add the dimensions to the collection but reflect the past experiences of the collector. For example a photographer and environmentalist Ansel Adams stated that: *"You don't make a photograph just with a camera. You bring to the act of photography all the pictures you have seen, the books you have read, the music you have heard, the people you have loved."* (Goodreads Inc.).

Many times the things displayed or hidden in the collections are not seen by every viewer. This is revealed for example in one respondent's commentary about her collections: *"they are often very personal, but the personal meanings are usually only apparent to me."* She told that *"often when I tell about it (collection), people don't seem to understand why I'm doing it and what would be special about them (collectables)."* There is something rewarding in the creativity process of digitally collecting. *"I guess also as an artist there is this constant need to create something new. I like this project since it came to being very organically. No need for the stress about grant applications or deadlines."* wrote one of the respondents. One of the participants said that for her it was important that others see the collection as part of her creative work, part of herself.

Belk (2003, 322) writes that collections are used not only to express of one's experiences but to express fantasies about the self. For instance, one collector in his studies said that he collects Mickey Mouse items because he is "an overgrown kid". Online one builds (intentionally or not) an identity which many times is the ideal, the way one would like to be seen by others. In spite of that many people would be more interested in the whole truth, all sides of a person. *"I'm private person but this is more performative, another persona[...]"*, wrote one respondent revealing that collecting really can be about playing with identities. A digital collection is one part of one's online identity, amongst others such as those built on blogs, Twitter, Facebook or other accounts. Digital identities can be plural: many people have multiple online personas to which they

devote as much time as the physical self. But much of these alternative identities is hidden and inaccessible to an outsider. (Paul Longley 2009, 55). In traditional collecting, organized collectors support their mutual identity by trading with each other, showing their new acquisitions to each other and in such groups a collector finds knowledgeable others with sufficient understanding to feel appreciative (Belk 2003, 322). A digital world's example of this could be Pinterest service where people do not trade but share and borrow collectables with each other's and can gain respect if the collection seems to be high quality from some aspect. Besides personalities and personal opinions, digital collections reflect the state of the current times and societies. Beyond, as a personal collection serves to shape the self-definition of a collector, museum collections serve to define the identity of a places and periods (Belk 2003, 322). Especially after the recent revelations about the magnitude of Internet surveillance, people can become more cautious about their online data and how they express themselves and that way it can have a ripple effect on digital collecting. Fear and shame are enemies of creativity.

4.3.2. To tell stories

Storytelling is central to our lives and is the means by which a person shapes the identity and gives meaning to one's life and relationships (Paul Longley 2009, 52). We need to be able to tell coherent stories about lives even though they may be available to us only in fragments and scraps of information, Paul Longley (2009, 52) supplements. Through the collections and collectables, the respondents too wanted to tell stories. They said that if many objects are presented in a form of a collection, it's easier to see the connections between those objects. Few of the respondents directly referred to storytelling when they were writing about their collecting activity, such as *"These photos for me almost all tell a story."* and *"I'm creating a fictional story based partly in reality."*

For one respondent, her collection was in her words about people, an interface between private and public, showing uniqueness of collectables, people and buildings – all. She added that not always other people get all aspects of the stories in collection. Peer group, people who are interested in the field of the collection topic might get the idea better but still, as the respondent said, they might get only certain part of it: *"The architects do get the point easier than other people, but still they only understand the architectural dimension of it."*, she claimed. The digital collections are much about the concepts behind them as one of the respondents, quoted earlier as well, remarked: *"What matters is not only the collection, the objects themselves, but the back-story behind the collection and what the collection means and what it can tell us about aspects of our existence."* A collection can crystallize what the collector wants to tell to others and to oneself. Bal describes that narrative memories are *"affectively coloured, surrounded by an emotional aura that, precisely makes them memorable"* (Bal 1999, p. viii, as cited in Kidd 2009, 169). Kidd adds that such memories are often accompanied by physical responses and apparently tangible feelings makes them ongoing personal investment and relevance (2009 169).

By telling stories one can evoke emotions, and narratives are part of the appeal collection making. One of the survey participants told about his experience regarding to this matter: *"[...]I sent it (a sound collectable) to a friend of mine who used to be a dancer with the Royal Ballet[...] She told me that listening to the sounds had made her cry[...] It captured class exactly and listening to the sounds brought to life her countless memories of the enormous hard work and extreme pain involved in rehearsal but the sheer joy and exaltation of the applause at the end of a successful performance."* Naturally the emotional response depends enormously on the character of collectables, how they appear in the collection and who is experiencing them. Anyway through digital collections people leave some stories to others to react if received.

4.3.3. To possess something personal

According to Belk's (1987b, as cited in Belk 2003, 321) explorations, our self-definition is often highly reliant upon our possessions. James (1892:177, as cited in Formanek 2003, 329) studied

the concept of the self applied to collecting and concluded that *"A man's Self is the sum-total of all that he can call his, not only his body, and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his land and horse and fact and bank account."* My survey suggests that the digital property, such as collectors, could be included to this list now. They were seen as crucial part of the self. In digital collections, the feeling of ownership remains. The digital collections are collectors playground where the owner sets the rules and which cannot be thrown away by the parents anymore. *"I rather like to think that the collection shows the uniqueness of all these (collectables)[...] and ultimately of everything. I feel this gives me a strong relationship to the images."* wrote one respondent adding that she sees her collection as personal.

Half of the collectors in my survey wanted to have only collectables that are created or influenced by them. One said that he could take for example a rare, historical recording to the collection and one had already some suitable collectables by others too. Another respondent had refused to add collectables that were offered by his friends, as for him the collection was also a photo project that he wanted to limit to self-captured pictures. It seemed that having only self-initiated collectables in the collection, it feels more personal and more in one's control. Respondent collectors were fine to have their collectables to be used in other people's collections or work – naturally depending on the context and if they would be credited.

Some participants pointed out that if they would take collectables created by other people to their gatherings, they would mention the names of those original creators. Most likely they could maintain the feeling of ownership of the collection because they would still be possessing the idea behind the collection and those borrowed collectables would be part of their creation in collection's context. The concept idea of the collection seemed to be the thing worth of protecting. Not so much the separate collectables but the storyline that keeps those together. Also for me, even if I do not consciously think about it, I think I would feel offended if someone would copy and use my collectables without asking, as I have been investing from myself and my moments in each one of them.

Baudrillard (2006, 94) states that if the feeling of possession is based on a confusion of the senses and an intimacy with the specific object, it is based on searching, ordering, playing and assembling. *"Man never comes so close being the master of a secret seraglio as when he is surrounded by his objects."*, he adds. Danet and Katriel (2003, 228-229) gave an example of a woman collector of Judaica saying that *"the most important thing is that you are able to handle it, because once it's in the museum you can't— this way you can take it and feel it and look at it."* . In digital collections, the handling, touching, playing and caring for the collection is still there, it is just not made without an interface between the collector and collectables. Collector can fiddle and adjust the digital collections in many ways through digital tools and services. The access to the online collections is wide and free compared to the traditional museum space where one might have to pay to get in, that has limited amount of items which many times cannot be played with. Digitally collecting can give the feeling of possession through being part of creating and curating the kind of collecting that the respondents and I have been practising – making the own representations and versions of things collected.

4.3.4. To combine one's passions and interests

The collection mixes and combines the passions of the collector. For one it was a certain city and its sounds, for other it was urban spaces in general, architecture, colours, forms and materials. Another one mentioned his interests for photography, art, fictional personas and stories. For one it was her professional research topics about motives and changes, to name a few. Respondents said that collecting gives them enjoyment that keeps them doing it. The inspiration sources for the sound collector were street photographers. He was interested in the history and the future and he wanted his collections to serve next generations too. He told that our sonic heritage has passed by unrecorded and he wanted the coming generations to have sounds to explore, study and enjoy. In general, the respondent collectors were conscious and passionate quite wide range

of topics. *" I think the project combines many of my interests in an interesting way. That's why I'm doing it, essentially. I don't know which was first and which other followed[…]"*, summed one of my survey's participants.

As most of the collections were based on visual material, aesthetics were mentioned. One was talking about how she has plans to develop her collection to correspond better with her wishes how the collection should look and the collectables were chosen by their aesthetics and architecture attributes. Another one said he is using a certain photographic style to create a feeling to his collectables which is then one more thing that unites the objects of the collection. Sociologist Rochberg-Halton (1986, 188, as cited in Danet and Katriel 2003, 236) claims that collecting can be seen as an aesthetic activity that gives expression to the universal experience of the brevity of existence. He has written: *"We are mysterious creatures who mark our time on earth through tangible remembrances. We transform time itself, as it were, into tangible space through our makings and doings, personalizing our environment while objectifying ourselves…"* People are doing the same still with digital mementos.

Baudrillard has written that the environment of private objects and their possession (such as a collection) is absolutely essential dimension of our life, just as essential as dreams. He points out that it has been said that if dreams could be experimentally suppressed it would quickly cause serious mental disorder. Same thing would happen if people would be prevented from the regressive escape offered by the play of possession, if this controlled and self-addressed discourse of using objects as self-expression would have been taken away (Baudrillard 2006, 103). Baekeland (2003, 210) adds that the collector's life is full of expectation of potential pleasure and excitement which may afford more stimulation and gratification than the work or home life. According to Danet and Katriel (2003, 229) studies, when asked about the satisfactions of collecting a woman coin-collector replied: *"There is an aspiration to reach shlemut (completion, perfection), enrichment, interests, and very much the aesthetic aspect."* All the aspects of combined interest in collectors include many issues that another study would be needed to look into them more thoroughly. In summary a digital collection is a clever way to get diverse level pleasure via one's many passions.

4.3.5. To practise curiosity, to explore

The people in my survey were recording mainly when they walking or biking, on their travels or in their neighbourhoods. They went out to be able to get their collectables to be online later. Through the collections they were reflecting not only the changes in the surroundings but mainly themselves, the personal evolving and the shifts in the mood, moments and situations. Three of the respondents had moved to a new place before starting their specific collection. When one is in a new place or situation, one can see more clearly the things around. One may notice things that the local people will not, as they are so used to them or take them for granted. It may be that collecting evidences from the everyday environment or on the travels makes people be part of that landscape faster as they can somehow make more sense of it by seeing and sorting. For example, one respondent said that he was exploring outskirts and it was a process to make Helsinki feel more like home. Another one started to see the architectural details after moving to that city. Different places and situations can trigger to collect different things, like in urban environment you notice most likely different things compared to countryside, or Asian culture compared to Scandinavian way of living.

"Why? I enjoy exploring different places", answered one for why he is making the collections of photos and text. *"Trying to find (objects) to photograph is a good motivation for exploring",* he added. Collecting can encourage people to go outdoors if the collectables are somewhere there. In addition to that photography provides the same so it adds the odds to leave the house and go out to explore. One respondent was using the verb flaneuring besides collecting and I think it can have something essential when it comes to collectors. Collector as fleneurs are constantly curious, if not consciously then unconsciously, because one never know when one will find something interesting, even if she or he is not intentionally searching. Collectors keep their eyes

and minds and that way expanding and making their collections, and lives, richer. Steve Jobs has been said to have stated: *"I'm a big believer in boredom. Boredom allows one to indulge in curiosity and out of curiosity comes everything. All the (technology) stuff is wonderful, but having nothing to do can be wonderful, too."* (Allaboutstevejobs.com).

4.3.6. To control and make sense

"Like art, we believe collecting is a sheltered way of confronting chaos and the ephemerality of human existence.", wrote Danet and Katriel (2003, 235). My survey respondent collectors were collecting for mastering and making more sense out of things around them. By capturing pieces of the surroundings and moments, the digital collectors not only find interesting things but they can find connections and patterns that help them to absorb and control ongoing changes. At the same time they get more familiar to places and conditions they are in.

Three respondents had moved to a new city or country where they started to collect by digital means. It can tell that a new environment increases the need and the likelihood for collecting. In addition to recording things to maintain them in memories, sorting things out into series may help people to keep themselves better together, to cope with all the new and overwhelming. Related to this, Baudrillard (2006, 100) studied that between the world's evolution and people, objects interpose a part of the world which belongs to us, responds to our hands and minds and that way prevents anxiety. Objects help people to master the world and time by their integration into series (2006, 101). Digital collectables of one's environment and experiences can be seen as souvenirs too. Pearce (2003b, 196) describes souvenirs as lost youth, lost friends, lost past happiness – the tears of things. Souvenirs try to make sense of our personal past, to create a unique life story. Steward (1984, 132–50, as cited in Pearce 2003b, 196) adds to this that they help to simplify a complex experience to smaller scale which may be easier to comprehend. This goes with collectables too, they can help one to see and understand things better.

4.3.7. To record and remember

Inside the whirl of changes one wishes to capture moments so she or he can remember them better and have the possibility to salute them later. Recording digital collectables relate to the memory. A respondent referred the collectables to be moments captured and the collection to work as a memory aid for self. Martin Conway in his study of autobiographical memory said that our idea of self *"refers to a set of memory structures which represent specific self-knowledge"*. (Conway 1990, 90, as cited in Kidd 2009, 174). Kidd sumps up that the self and memory are complexly intertwined and both have personal importance to the individual and people can know our selves better through narrative remembering (Kidd 2009, 174). My survey's collectors were recording their lives and changes through collections. *"So I was clearly in a situation where I wanted to document as much as possible"* and *"I am bad at throwing away"*, *they* explained.

The survey answers supported the finding, that we seem to be living times of memory-mania and information is one of our great fears. Projects related to recording and sharing one's life moments online as 365 days, childhood or even lifetime videos are popular. For example Cesar Kuriyama shoots one second of video every day the rest of his life. On his Ted talk he says *"I hate not remembering the things that I have done in the past[...] Now I never forget again[...] If I live to 80 years of age I'm going to have five hour video that encapsulates 50 years of my life[...] As the days and weeks and months go by times just seems to start blurring and blending into each other's and I hated that and visualisation is a way to trigger memory[...] Even just this one second I remember everything else I did in that one day."* (Kuriyama 2012). This kind of moment collection can work as a periodic piece too: how so-called ordinary people used to live in 2010s, what they were doing and keeping as somehow meaningful to keep for themselves and for others.

Another rather ambitious example of recording existence is Finnish designer and artist Erkki Kurenniemi. He has been carefully documenting his life and by doing so it has ended up as a work of art. The wide archive includes for example photographs, videos, diaries and drawings, personal objects and other material such as old computers. In 2006 Kurenniemi's archives were donated to the Central Art Archives of the Finnish National Gallery. In general, this level recording is made more possible by digitalization. In the 2000s when engineer Gordon Bell was in his seventies, he had a mission to remember all the bits of his life. *"I believe this is the quest for what a personal computer really is... to capture one's entire life."* he said (Mayer-Schönberger 2011, 50). I think the general rage for remembering is still not only because of the digital means available but some sort of a panic to record something out of our fast-paced and full-packed modern lives. The storing of recording is no longer troublesome, for example Google offers users 15 Gt storage without costs, for data such as documents and emails. As they started to increase the data capacity for user, they announced "*free storage so you'll never need to delete another message*", another thing then is that Google may also scan and exploit the contents and queries.

Mayer-Schönberger (2011, 11) reminds that as much of what one says and does is stored and accessible through digital memory, the words and deeds may be judged not only by the present peers, but by the future ones. Related to this, a futurist Juan Enriquez (2013) concluded that instead of 15 minutes of fame people nowadays are anonymous for that long. In these days, through the digitalization, things can be remembered much better than they were before. Another issue is that should we people even remember everything, maybe there is a reason why we forget some things. T. S. Eliot wrote: *"If all time is eternally present, all time is unredeemable."* and AJ, a woman with exceptional memory (Hyperthymesia), writes that "*though people tend to think of forgetting as an affliction and are disturbed by the loss of so much memory as they age, I've come to understand that there is a real value to being able to forget a good deal about our lives."* (Mayer-Schönberger 2011, 118).

4.3.8. Other possible reasons for collecting

As the previous paragraphs show, there are various reasons behind the collecting behaviour. These ones that were presented, were those that came up in my survey and I can identify with all of them. There are still other interesting possibilities for motivations left. For example in the Interpreting Objects and Collections book came up motives such as enjoying objects more than people, preservation, historical satisfaction, excitement of the hunt and actual acquisition, having something no one else has and to accumulate wealth and to satisfy yearnings for the good old days (Formanek 2003, 331). I will now shortly present those additional motives that I found relevant for the topic.

Filling the space and picking up missing pieces can be one of the collecting causes. Baudrillard (2006, 113) has written that a collection can differ itself from accumulation by virtue of what is missing from it, by virtue of its incompleteness. He continues that a lack is a specific demand, an appeal for specific absent object and this demand can plunge collector into a state of fascination. Danet and Katriel (2003, 234) write that an empty stamp album stares one in the face, and in digital collecting, some web blog or other digital space can call to be filled. I remember writer and lecturer Tove Idström quoting that a feeling of *"without this there would be a hole in this world"* can already be a reason for creating something. She also reminded that it is perfectly fine to make something just because it is fun too.

According to Formanek (2003, 332 and 333), the sensations of excitement and elation can be reasons for collecting as well as the communication with like-minded people which boosts one's sense of wellbeing. Wolf (1980, as cited in Formanek 2003, 327) has charted the lifespan development of the self and discovered that in adulthood the need for a close relationship to another human being may be transferred onto abstractions such as collecting.
Sometimes escapism can be a motive for collecting. According to Baudrillard (2006, 102) an auctioneer and historian Maurice Rheims has stated that the loss of any sense of the present time is part of collecting and Baudrillard reminds that even if collecting abolishes time, it should

remain as a pastime hobby (2006, 102). The collection can truly take over the collector's life, as seems to have happened to Marilyn Mansfield who collects real looking dolls which she nurses and takes for a walk in public. She says: *"Sometimes people say that I'm crazy because I spent this amount for a doll, but for me it is not a doll, it's something that adds to my life. If I would not have my dolls around me, I would not feel like me."* One may have many opinions about this kind of collecting, often diagnosed as OCD (Obsessive-compulsive disorder), but on the video, psychotherapist, doctor Paul Hokemeyer says that through the objects these persons are able to control their emotional state: *"We all try to manage our emotions in different ways. It's looking something outside of ourselves to manage our emotions."* He adds that *"it's healthier way of coping than drugs or alcohol."* (Donaldson James 2011).

Some people may collect pathologically whereas some can collect just for the sake of doing so, without any real interest (Formanek 2003, 334). One person in my survey concluded his motives by replying: *"Because I can".* He felt that because he has an opportunity to do it so he does. This hints again that the tools and possibilities of digital collection making are already a good reason to make them. There could be a thesis done just about the older psychoanalytic explanations for collecting behaviour. According to Freud's theories, collecting motives can relate for example to the fear of loss (Formanek 2003, 327 and 328) and newer psychoanalytic theories sees connections to relationships (Formanek 2003, 329). Self-psychology theory suggest (largely as my survey) that collecting represents a need of exploring, be in contact with others and search for personal stability (Formanek 2003, 327). Collections may have something to do with the fear or thought of death. In addition to the wish of leaving collectables to the future people, one can wish to gain some sort of immortality or continuity through them.

4.4. Summary

The tools and platforms give new possibilities for recording, storing and sharing related to collecting activity and they affect to collection themes, each collectables, the style and presentation of the collection. Digital collectors use various tools and platforms simultaneously.

The means between digital and traditional collecting are different but the process is the same: (1) searching, finding and capturing and finding, (2) sorting and editing, (3) storing and maintaining, (4) sharing and possible social interaction and (5) possible completion and afterlife. Digital collections start many times unintentionally and the activity is much about exploring. Sharing collections was seen as a good thing but it was not too big factor for collectors in my survey. Digital collectors were planning to continue collecting as long as they can or as long as it feels interesting and they were not thinking much about the completion or afterlife of the collection. Still the collectors wished to make physical prints or exhibitions from their digital assemblages.

Compared to collecting activity as a child, the collections of grown-ups seem to have different nature and causes. There are various motives for digitally collecting but according to my research creating digital collections answers to our needs of expressing ourselves, telling stories, possessing, controlling, combining one's passions, exploring and remembering.

Next, in the final chapter, I will wrap up the key findings of my research about digital collecting and the motives it contains.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER THOUGHTS

WHAT IS DIGITAL COLLECTING ABOUT?

Collections that I have created using digital means differ from the ones created in childhood, for example the stamp collection that I used to accumulate with my grandfather. It could have been interesting to be a collector in the times of cabinets of curiosities, travelling around the world picking up imaginative items that were unseen before, but the contemporary times can be even better for collecting. The creative means of new media give many fascinating possibilities for collecting such as the large data capacity and various tools for recording, sorting, editing, publishing and interacting. Digital collecting is not a hobby of the elite, it is for everyone. It can be done completely digitally, using digital devices, collecting digital files for instance, or it can be a combination of digital and physical things, which I have been doing and focusing on this thesis. The multidimensional phenomenon of collecting goes well together with our fragmented, fast and rapacious world in which pieces of places, people, objects and events are gathered to build something real and lasting. There is a frenzy to produce, store and publish all these experiences on our multiple devices and platforms, as there is finally a chance for that.

Digital Collecting can start and continue without the collector even realizing. There is a purpose for the activity but it can be hidden. The process of digitally collecting is quite same than traditional collecting, but the means used along the way differ. The digital tools have an impact for what people collect and how they collect and sometimes even for if they collect at all. Many digital collections, mine included, would not exist in another, tangible form. Already one gadget as digital camera affects the way the surroundings are viewed and captured, and by using smartphone it is even easier to share the findings.

WHY PEOPLE DIGITALLY COLLECT THINGS?

What each collection stands for (the concept of the collection) and the processes of collecting are some reasons why collecting activity has continued without people having tangible objects in their collections. According to my research the main motives to digitally collect relate to self-expression, storytelling, possessing, combining one's passions, exploring and remembering.

The purposes can change over time and depending on one's life situation. Overall the digital collections help us to perceive our physical world and ourselves better.

Various digital means and the whole culture of new media encourage people to be creative and digital collections are one way to express oneself. Collections can show collector's values, taste, moods, opinions – the movements in one's mind and the way one looks at the world. Collector places parts of self into collection and the collection becomes part of one self too. Through digital collections person not only indicates one's present identity but fantasies of how one would wish to be seen. Digital collection can be one's private creative performance where the self is the audience number one and other people come secondary.

Digital collections have meanings and stories hidden in them. People tell about our lives in collections, even if the stories would be as scattered scraps and even if they would not be understood by all viewers. Collectables work as a narrative memories that capture emotions in addition to events. The back-story, the general concept of what the collection wants to tell, is in an important role in digitally collecting. Digital collections are possessions, which again are tied to our self-definition. Collector can feel ownership over the collection and be the one who sets the rules for the game of that collection. The captured objects can feel personal to the collector and the collection can feel like an investment. The sense of ownership can get stronger if collector is partly creating the collectables and that way making more effort to the collection, like in the digital collections which I was looking into. The digital collection mixes the passions and interests of the collector. This is an effective way to keep busy and get pleasure in many levels that might not be possible to get elsewhere. Moving to a new place increases uncertainty and opens the senses and because of these, it may raise the likelihood to collect by digital means.

Collectables were found when collectors were scanning their surroundings. Recording the curiosities can help collectors make more sense out of situations and environments and to adapt oneself easier to them. Capturing the environment by digital means seems to encourage people to go outdoors, like flaneurs, digital collectors were often on the move and constantly curious. One never knows what can be found behind the next corner, whether or not one is intentionally searching something. By keeping their eyes and minds open collectors not only expand their collections but their lives in general.

Memory is another thing that relates to motives of collecting by digital means. Slices of our surroundings and other experiences are captured as moments to be remembered. Collection works as a memory aid for self. Collectables have personal importance to the individual who can know oneself better through these narrative keepsakes. We do not want to forget things even if it might sometimes be for our own benefit. Our current times of "memory-mania" combined with modern recording possibilities can empower the collecting behaviour. At the same time however, as one's digital property and online content has a possibility to remain on web eternally, it can be lost and forgot for good in a flash.

Collecting is an instrument of control. A digital collection can be person's own playground in between the outside world and oneself, a place that can be handled and mastered with one's own hands. This can ease the turbulence. If one cannot control the circumstances or people, one can control the collection. By cutting complex experiences into pieces as form of collectables, collections can help us to comprehend these experiences better. Connections, patterns and classifications of collectables can help us to make sense of the environments and changes. People wish to control the objects, not the other way around and by putting objects into categories, energy may be released to other matters. The need to classify and control can be increased on the Internet where there is an overwhelming amount of floating content to be sorted out. The Internet, digital devices and many applications can be addictive for their users, so maybe there is a change that them, combined with collecting hobby can become obsessive and that addiction overrides the other motives to continue collecting. After all this seems as a minor risk and digitally collecting is most likely a better dependence compared to many others.
One of my objectives in this thesis was to find out why I, amongst others, have been collecting by digital means. I can relate my motives to the main ones presented previously. As mentioned,

I started to capture things around me when I was in a new city and circumstances. By collecting I felt more in control of all the changes I was going through, I was at least controlling my assemblages. Capturing was a good reason to explore the environment, inhabitants and the local life style. Collecting might have offered me a channel to fill uncertainty with awareness and perhaps this capturing game was replacing some of the missing human relationships and contacts, helping me to cope better with the feeling of being disconnected. Through small pieces as collectables I was connecting and adjusting myself to the new place.

For me collecting by digital means is not so much about escapisms but on the contrary, it is one more reason to go outdoors, face so-called real things, people and situations. Using digital means for collecting feels more effective, inexpensive and ecological than collecting tangible things and that way I can justify it to myself more easily. Through my assemblages I express things I care about and find curious. Things such as everyday items with tales to tell, consumerism, personal histories, nature, lifestyles, surprises, environmental issues, walking, forests, beaches, gardens, details, hidden meanings, photography, visual and digital culture, writing, designing... I wish to document memories of people and the beauty of the nature before they are gone. I might have been seeking some balance between the urban and natural environments, indoors and outdoors. In the collecting process I enjoy most the moments when I notice a curiosity to capture and when I see it as part of the collection. Collecting has also given me aesthetic pleasure as browsing the current compilation and reliving the moments that are capsulated in the collectables.

FUTURE ASPECTS

The whole world of collecting and many things related to it seems to be an inexhaustible fountain of future studies. For instance, the various personalities of contemporary collectors and digital collections as part of the identities could be investigated further. As well as it would be interesting to see more comparison and variety of the forms of digital collections. The topic of digital collecting as a social phenomenon could bring out some significant aspects that are missing from this thesis. Could digital collection making work as a therapeutic tool, like photography is used for self-healing and expressing, is an inspiring question. There would be lot of studying amongst collecting related to other senses than sight. Especially collecting by the sense of smell is interesting, as odours are so strongly connected to memory. How fascinating it would be to be able to have a collection of one's childhood scents like the bun, home, mittens, sun lotion, grandmother's garment and so forth.

My personal plans include for example more experiments in combining the nature and new media (even if some people say they are not separate things), environmental and digital arts. To explore in what ways the nature could be brought closer to people and how to get people to appreciate, notice or improve their surroundings.

It is sure that the times and trends will change and affect to the tools and contents of collection creation, but the core of the collecting, the "rapture of capture", will last. If digital tools are seen as our extensions, a symbol for digital collection could be a mirror that is made from the (old and new) pieces – collectables – reflecting creator's thoughts, values and experiences. In the background one can see the flow and go of the times when the pieces of mirror were collected. Each viewer sees the image in the mirror differently, based on one's own thinking and situation. Still the reflection is most precious to its maker, to the collector, as it seems that when we are collecting our environment and experiences into digital collections, we are mainly collecting ourselves. Baudrillard (2006) came to the same conclusion that *"For what you really collect is always yourself".*

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APPENDIX

Survey questionnaire

EMAIL FOR RESPONDENTS

Dear participant,

I am doing a Master's degree thesis about collecting by digital means for the Media Lab in Aalto University, school of art and design Helsinki. This survey is part of the research and it tries to find out what, how and why we digitally collect things. You can find more information about the thesis plan from the attached document. Hopefully you will find a peaceful time slot to think and write your answers for these questions. I wish to have the answers sent to me (helena.jalanka@aalto.com) by Tuesday 12th of November 2013. Your participation is highly precious and it will be anonymous. If you prefer talking instead of writing, let me know so we can set up a call.

With kind regards,
Helena Jalanka

QUESTIONS ATTACHED

These questions can take approximately 30-45 minutes to be answered. Do not worry about making typos, repeating things or anything else - just write freely what comes to your mind from the questions. Your answers can be informal - as having a chat in a cafe with a friend - and the text can also include so called emoticons such as :-)

Let's get started. First some questions about you and your digital collection:

1) Do you see yourself as a collector?

2) What is your age?

3) Tell about your digital collection. For example what you collect, when and how the collection started and what could be the core message of the collection?

4) Where does your digital collection exist? If it's online, where in there?

5) Is your digital collection public or private?

6) How important issue the privacy or publicity is to you?

7 A) Are the collectables made by you or someone else? Who?

7 B) If your collectables are made by you, would you add a collectable made by someone else to your digital collection? Why?

7 C) If your collectables are made by you, how do you feel if other people use them as part of their collections or other work?

8) Did you start your digital collection on some purpose or was it unintentional? If it was intentional, for what purpose you started to collect?

9) What kind of life situation you had when this digital collection was started? For example, was the situation stable or were you going through some changes?

10) Does your collection link up with another of yours hobby or interest? If yes, what?

11) Would you describe your collection as a collection? If not, what would you call it?

12) Have you been collecting something in your past as well? If yes, what and when?

Almost half way through! Next questions are about the reasons of collecting:

13) Why you have been making this collection? What could have been your motives?

14) Is it easy to say why you have been collecting?

15) How would you feel if you would wake up one morning and see that your digital collection was totally gone? Why?

16) Do you see any risks in collecting by digital means? If yes, what?

17) What your digital collection has given to you?

18) Why did you choose this particular topic for your collection?

19) What do you think your collection's topic tells about you?

Then five questions about the process and tools:

20) Tell about the process of one (for example the latest) collectable of your digital collection. For example how did you find the collectable and what happened then?

21) How much time does this (one colletables) process take from you?

22) What tools you use in your collecting process overall? For example devices (such as mobile phone, pen and paper, laptop, camera...), software (such as photo or video editing, writing software...) and web platforms (such as Blogger, Tumblr, Pinterest, Flickr, Facebook...).

23) How crucial the digital tools and technology are for your collection?

24) How often you have added a collectable for your collection?

25) Is any of the collectables a special one? Why?

26) How long you have been, and how long you will be making this collection?

27) Have you thought about the afterlife of the collection? Do you know what happens to it in the future?

28) Have you done or are you planning to create something concrete, tangible from your digital collection? If yes, what?

Finally last ones relating to other people around the collection:

29) For who you are making or have been making this digital collection?

30) Have you got any feedback about your digital collection? If yes, what kind of feedback?

31) How important the possible feedback of your digital collection is for you?

32) How interested you are in other people's digital collections?

Thank you for answering the questions! When you are ready, just send the answers to me (helena.jalanka@aalto.com).

Best regards,
Helena Jalanka