MY DEAR KITCHEN IN HELSINKI

*EXPLORATIONS ON A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
USING FOOD, COOKING AND BLOGGING*

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All the photos are taken by the author, except for those stated otherwise.
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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on explorations on working with a community of practice, to gain a better understanding of interactions that result in learning between members of the community. The designer is a part of that community; therefore, explorations on the designer's role are also investigated. Since the designer's personal interest and skill is on food and cooking / baking, the community gathers around a food blog, which primarily aims to encourage people cooking more. Food is used and investigated as a communication tool enriching the interactions between members. Apart from the blog, offline eating together, cooking together events were organized; each cooking session is documented by photographs, personal notes and voice recording and reported on the blog. A survey is conducted through the blog to learn more about the members and to receive feedback from them about blog activities and content; interviews were conducted during offline cooking together sessions.

As a result of this study, a learning network is developed by a blog as a community of practice. Members of this community affect the design and content of the blog. The social and cultural values of the members are transferred to each other through food and a new meaning is developed mutually. When the designer is part of this community, s/he gets a deeper understanding of that community, develops personal relationships and transfers his/her skills to other people. Therefore, this study can be an example to other designers that aim to work with communities towards social innovation.

KEYWORDS

community, community of practice, designer's role, learning, social theory of learning, food, social innovation.

Photo on the left page, by Hesam Pakbeen.

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INTRODUCTION

This Master's thesis is about experimenting a new way of working for a designer with community. Acting as part of the community in question, the study provides an example for designers who want to know work on community-related cases which aim for social innovation.

The case study in this thesis creates a community of practice around a food blog, where designer is the blogger and therefore, is part of the community. Throughout the first two stages of the case, with both online and offline interactions, a learning experience is investigated in detail. In the third stage of the case, through offline interactions of mainly practice of cooking together, delicate issues related to living in Helsinki as a foreigner or as a multicultural society are dealt with. In these sessions, food and the practice of cooking together are explored as a communication tool. The results are added to the blog to increase knowledge within the main community. Apart from a blog, online surveys, offline events and one-to-one interviews are used as methods during the course of the case. The literature review provides a theoretical framework and gives a deeper insight to elements of case study.

As a result, it is seen that being part of the community provides a deep knowledge related to community and emerging needs are noticed easily. Food itself acts as social glue that connects people and transfers cultural values. It also makes people more open for social interactions. By using a blog, a larger virtual community can be formed and a well-designed and detailed content for a blog can help people gain new skills, such as the practice of cooking or baking. The blog proves to take the fear of cooking and baking out of people.
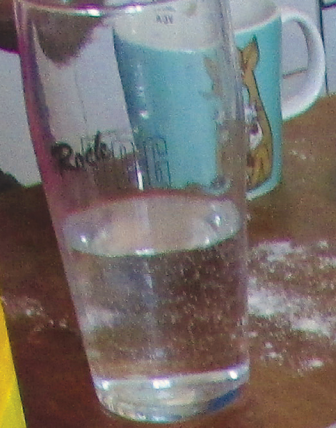
1 BACKGROUND

When I first came to Finland in August 2010, I stayed with a Finnish family (my friend's family) for about a month. They were all very friendly people and even though it was August, the weather was as I expected it to be. I went to Istanbul Ataturk Airport sweating, but going out of Helsinki Vantaa Airport, even the jacket I had with me was not enough.

About 3 hours into my new life in Finland, I had first contact with real Finnish cuisine: one Karelian Pie (Karjalanpiirakka) and egg and butter spread on top of it. This was interesting for me because I had seen the photo of this pie in the Wikipedia article about Finnish cuisine and it was a significant realization to see how accurate that article was. I did not know it at that time, but the first bite from this pie was the start of my journey with food and with how I see people define themselves, their memories and eventually their culture with it.

During the following few weeks, and still after 3 years in Finland, I have tasted samples of Finnish food, as well as some vegetables and meat, which were not necessarily "Finnish" but were nonetheless new to me, since I had not seen them in my country because of a different climate.

Stories Behind Food and Recipes

The Finnish family that I stayed with had never been in Turkey, had never eaten any Turkish food and I was the first Turkish person that they had ever met. Following their curiosity about my country's culture, they asked me to cook Turkish food for them one evening. This was the first challenge I had, concerning where I could find familiar ingredients in Helsinki. With this challenge, I realized that looking for ingredients was a good way of getting to know a new city.

For the Finnish family, I cooked an eggplant dish called "Imam Bayildi". The name of the dish is literally translated as "Imam fainted". Since the word "Bayildi" has double meaning in Turkish, it might also mean "Imam Loved It (the dish)". The name of this traditional Turkish vegetarian dish, which is made with eggplant, onions and tomatoes, had not aroused too much interest in me until I had to explain the story behind it to the Finnish family. This was probably because the original Turkish name suggests a tale already and there is not much of a need to think about it thoroughly. However, when I had cooked it for the first time in another culture, I was expected to explain the story behind the name and eventually behind the dish itself.

I came across with another food story incident a few months later. It was January 2011 and I was served a Runeberg's Torte (In Finnish: Runebergintorttu) in a social gathering with friends. This Finnish pastry made with almonds and rum or arrack holds the name of Finnish poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg. According to the legend, the poet's wife, Fredrika, created the pastry's recipe. It is also believed that the recipe is actually a variation of another pastry that was created earlier by confectioner Lars Astenius in Porvoo (a city in Finland). In any case, being in some kind of relation with the poet, the pastry can be found in cafes and stores around Finland only from the beginning of January until February 5th, which is Runeberg's birthday.

However, in Porvoo, where the pastry is created and the poet himself lived, you can find Runeberg's Torte all year round.

These incidents showed me that the dishes eventually became a tool for cultural exchange through the stories behind them and through their place in the country's folklore. Therefore, I began to believe that I could use Turkish food and recipes to introduce Turkish culture to Finnish society, and in return I could use Finnish food and recipes to learn more about Finnish culture.

Gathering Around A Table – Food as a tool for socialization

In daily life with family and friends in Turkey, food is always an important tool for socialization. Organizing food events is an essential part of the culture. Within family, it is important to eat at least one meal together, which is, in today's daily routines, usually the dinner.

In these gatherings around a table, food does not only act functionally, but it is something to enjoy and it is a tool to create a vibrant community. What is eaten changes according to the region. The drinks that are served change according to religious beliefs and traditions of that community.

Food and gathering around a table is also a tool for cultural exchange and socialization between students. In my years as an exchange student in Paris and in my degree years in Helsinki since 2010, events where people came together around a table to share a traditional dish from their culture's cuisine have always been popular.

Even though personal observations resulting from private interactions with some Finnish people, such as friends and acquaintances, gave me the impression that food had a rather functional existence in Finnish culture, it also showed that there was a great potential in food related interactions to foster the community in Finland. Hence, my attention turned more

towards the creation of such interactions, keeping food always at the center of it.

As I organized more and more gatherings around a table, and shared the food that I cooked with friends, my closest friends who were also the regular participants of these gatherings urged me to start a blog and to share the recipes of those dishes with other people. Hence, with a personal motivation, My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki blog was established. What started as a personal adventure turned into a virtual community with readers from all around the world, and they engaged with the blog in various ways.

When I realized that a community was emerging around the blog, I started exploring the characteristics of this community. The understanding and identification of this community as a "virtual community of practice" helped me give better meanings to the interactions happening around it, and this resulted in the ongoing development of the blog and its community.

Thus, this study focuses on understanding the community of practice that emerged from a personal food blog and on how the interactions occurring in this community resulted in a complex network of several learning processes. Since there is always food at the center of all the interactions, the study also focuses, to a certain extent, on how food is used as a tool for communication transferring values from one community member to another.

Chapter II is where I talk about the formulation of research questions.

Chapter III provides a theoretical framework. The first part of the chapter offers a better understanding of communities. Through theories and previous research, it provides definitions of concept of community and elaborates on types of community, with a deeper look at the traditional communities of practice and virtual communities of practice. The second part of the chapter offers a deeper understanding of blogging as it was the main tool that the community in the case study emerged around. Blogging is discussed from several perspectives, motivations behind blogging and readers' effects on blogs are also discussed and a special focus is given on theories about learning in a community of practice with a blog. The third part of the chapter provides a deeper understanding of learning. Mostly focusing on Wenger's social theory of learning, the concept of learning is discussed within various contexts. The final part of the chapter provides theories on food with a special focus on the place of food in communication studies. This part ends with exploring food in the locality of Helsinki through food related events and groups, since the location of the blog shaped the content to a great extent.

Chapter IV explains the case study. The case is described in three parts: first, the online part of the study, i.e. the blog; second, the first offline part of the study, i.e. recipes evenings (events); third, the other offline part of the study, i.e. kitchen talks.

Chapter V is the part that I discuss the relationship between theoretical framework and the learning outcomes of the case study. In this chapter I revisit the theories explained in Chapter II and I also provide an evaluation of the research questions. I also elaborate on the future of the blog and its community, as the blog community continues to live even after the completion of this thesis. There is also the reference list at the end this chapter.

2 RESEARCH QUESTION

The design profession is changing. Along with design, the designer's role is changing. We are no longer only designing tangible products using results received from human centered and ethnographic research, for a certain group of people, but we are working "with" those people. The process has fuzzy stages where we do not know what the end result would be, and sometimes we only provide material for further research in other cases.

The question of my role as a designer in today's world was puzzling me for a long time. In time, I realized that I was more interested in contributing a social change for a better world than the material world. But how was I supposed to work for a social change while still keeping my designer role? This question initiated my journey for this thesis study.

While issues such as "climate change, environmental and financial crises", as well as "social activism" are emerging all around the world, designers, among other professionals, have started to address these challenges in their works, shifting from

the "design of objects to the design of services and experiences" (Yee, Jefferies and Tan 2013, p. 8). However, the traditional education and understanding of design profession is not enough to tackle with these complex challenges. Designers need to acquire a series of new skills, such as facilitating collaborations among diverse social actors (local communities and companies, institutions and research centres) in a society where "everybody designs" and every designer is a "social actor" (Manzini 2007, p. 14). They need to "consider themselves part of the community" they are collaborating with and they should participate together with other actors of the community (Manzini 2007, p. 15).

So, if I am part of the community that I am working with, then what should be my method? Margolin and Margolin offer a social model for designers working in such cases, which states, designers could work like "social workers" (Margolin and Margolin 2002, p. 25). This means evaluating:

> (...) the transaction that occurs between their client system (a person, a family, a group, organization, or community) and the domains within the environment with which the client system interacts (Margolin and Margolin 2002, p. 25).

Designers may also be the observers in such social settings, documenting "social needs that can be satisfied with design interventions" (Margolin and Margolin 2002, p. 28).

Based on this view, I decided to search for ways to experiment with the role of a community member. As my personal blog, which actually was created by the urging of friends, started forming a community around it, I decided to investigate this community. I decided to use food as a tool for communication in my interactions with other community members since it was already the topic of the blog. I also thought about what kind of learning outcomes these interactions could produce.

Therefore, I formulated the following research questions:

How does community form around a blog? What kind of community could that be? What kind of learning processes happen between the members of this community?

As the social and cultural aspect of food was always at the center of the social interactions between community members in all the explorations, secondly I asked the following research question:

What does food mean socially and culturally? How can it be used as a means of communication? How does it affect the community interactions?

The answers to these questions and the experience gained from these explorations would also help me look at a wider question of:

What is my role as a designer in a community-related case study? What happens when I am part of this community? How does this work contribute to the design field?

In the following chapter I will give the theoretical framework that I established in search of these questions. The research questions are evaluated at the end of the last chapter.
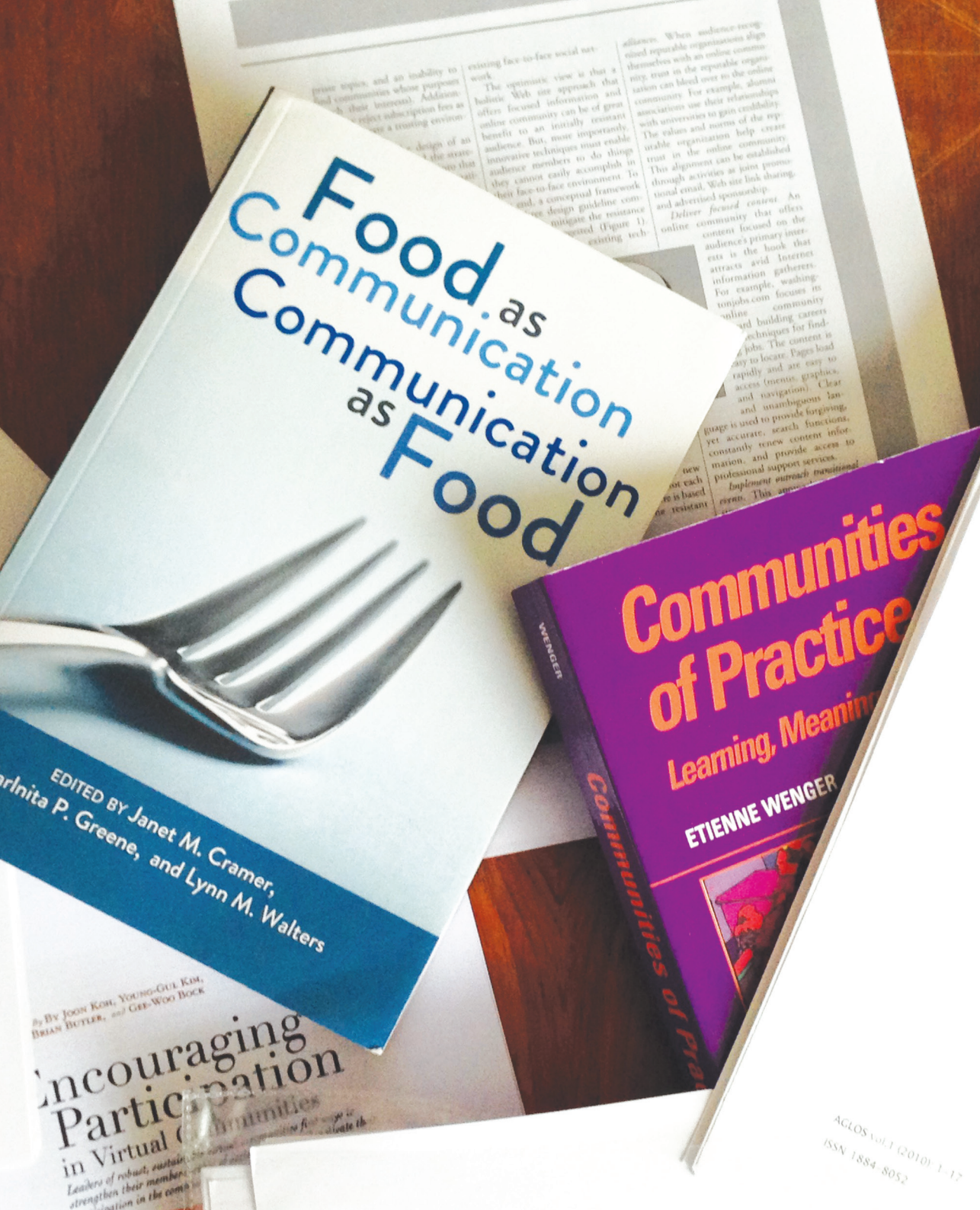
3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY

In order to be able to call what this thesis aims to explore as "community of practice", it is important to define what community means and what types of communities exist. It is seen that the concept of community can be described by several ways using different variables, that there are many different kinds of communities and that there are also differences within each of these communities. This chapter covers the concept of community with a special focus on communities of practice, virtual communities and virtual communities of practice.

A community can generally be described as a group of people sharing particular characteristics in common. These can be geographical boundary, social values, interest, religion etc. A community of practice, therefore, is a group of people sharing a particular practice in common. In the history of community studies, sharing the same physical place has been one of the major characteristics that defined community. However, with the advances in technology, communities today are free from physical and geographical boundaries and people can also

form online groups through the use of Internet. A group of people gathering around a common characteristic and using technology as the basic communication tool, makes a virtual community. When these same people share a particular practice, they constitute a virtual community of practice.

The content of this chapter provides a deeper understanding of these definitions.

Defining community

The list of definitions given by different scholars throughout the history is long and diverse. Each discipline defines community referring to how it is experienced in that discipline's own point of view and its purpose (Patrick and Wickizer 1995).

By a basic approach, in his book "Pragmatics of Community Organization" in 1992, Bill Lee defines community as simple "as a group of people who have something in common" (cited in Aggarwal n.d., p. 68). By a similar but more focused approach, Rifkin et al. (1988) defines community as a group of people living in the same defined area, sharing the same basic values, organization and interests (cited in Brieger 2006, p. 5). Out of these common elements, Zakus and Lysack focus on "locale" and "sense of belonging" in their community definition and they also state that members of the community share interests, values and identity (Zakus and Lysack, 1998, pp. 1-12). These two definitions emphasize the common physical space for community interactions to take place.

A literature review study by Hillery in 1995, which discussed 94 definitions of community by different scholars, showed that a majority of community definitions is based on three elements, which are social interaction, geographic area and common ties (cited in MacQueen et. al. 2001, p. 1933). In their research where they asked a diverse group of people the question, "What does community mean to you?", MacQueen et al. (2001) ended up with a similar list of core elements defining a community.

These elements were: "locus" (a sense of place), "sharing" (common interests and perspectives), "joint action" (a source of cohesion and identity), "social ties" (interpersonal relationships) and "diversity" (social complexity in communities) (MacQueen et. al. 2001, p. 1930).

Defining a community by place frames it as an entity that exists physically in a defined area (MacQueen et. al. 2001, p. 1931). Community by place is also one of the three main points of Patrick and Wickizer (1995) in their study to group community definitions. However, they further state that the place of the community need not be a localized geography anymore (Patrick and Wickizer 1995, p 49). Today, advances in the Internet and related infrastructure are also effective in formation of communities free from geographical boundaries.

Another important element is sharing common interests and perspectives. According to this, members of the community share values, norms, passions, opinions etc. and these contribute to a sense of community creating comfort, familiarity and an identity (MacQueen et. al. 2001, p. 1931). These shared interests and perspectives result in the socialization of the members Zers and joint actions, while activities emerge within the community as social interactions (MacQueen et. al. 2001, p. 1931).

Based on a slightly different approach than the previous ones, from community psychology point of view, Roberts describes community in his book Community Development: Learning and Action in 1979, as:

> a collection of people who have become aware of some problem or some broad goal, who have gone through a process of learning about themselves and about their environment, and have formulated a group objective (cited in Aggarwal n.d., p. 68).

This definition indicates the motivations behind building a community. According to this, it is understood that a common interest in a problem can bring a group of people together, resulting in a shared learning process and a joint action.

TYPES OF COMMUNITIES

Generally speaking and based on the variety of definitions, as well as the elements used in these definitions, it is possible to state that there are various types of communities. As each person has several interests and identities, he or she belongs to many communities at a time. As these interests and identities can change, every person can also move between different types of communities throughout their lifetime.

The different types of communities can be investigated in two major groups: non-virtual and virtual communities. Non-virtual communities have face-to-face interactions whereas virtual communities have interactions via the use of Internet and several tools provided by the Internet. Since the studies on communities have a long history starting from before the use of the Internet, the major definitions given on community types are based on people who have face-to-face interactions. In recent studies, each of these community types have also virtual versions. In the following sections, I will explore the types of communities first in general with a focus on non-virtual community definitions, and then I will move towards virtual types.

Communities of Place

Defining a community by place frames it as an entity that exists physically in a defined area (MacQueen et. al. 2001, p. 1931). The same framing is also one of the three main points of Patrick and Wickizer (1995) in their study to group community definitions.

Communities of place have physical boundaries. They can be defined by a specific area such as a neighbourhood or a street, by a specific setting or by a general location. Patrick and Wickizer (1995, p.49) further state that the place of community needs not be a localized geography anymore since modern community organizations expand from within the expanding cities and since "ecological boundaries are enlarged by transportation and communication". Within the geography that is home to a community of place, also other types of communities, such as a community of interest, can be found (Aggarwal n.d., p. 69).

Even though the traditional notion of community is based mostly on the location, creating "communities of place", there has been a shift in modern understanding of communities. This shift has been towards a notion of community as a "symbolic structure" (Akama and Ivanka 2010, p. 13). According to this, instead of a located community and the social interactions taking place within that, an "imagined" community, which is "shaped by cognitive and symbolic structures with emphasis on shared cultural concerns and 'meaning'" is defined (Akama and Ivanka 2010, p. 13). However, this notion of community which is based on "cognitive, symbolic" and "cultural structures" does not work in site-specific cases, therefore sometimes community of place needs to be defined even in modern understanding of communities.

Communities of Interest

A community of interest can be defined as:

> a group of people connected to each other by a need to solve common problems, develop skills and share common practices (Law et. al 2005, p. 319).

A community of interest can also be defined as a group of people who share a common identity, or who share a common

experience (Markwell 2009). While site-specific case studies require the definition of a community from location-based point of view, in some other cases a community definition based only on a physical area may not be enough and meaningful for the study (ibid). In these cases, an understanding of community through the members' interests is used to provide a richer engagement and participation (ibid).

Communities of Interest are also defined within design communities. Fischer (2001) describes communities of interest as "heterogeneous design communities" because they involve a variety of stakeholders coming from different backgrounds and communities of practice. These stakeholders come together temporarily in order to solve a particular design problem, with their "interest" being the solution of the problem; for instance, "a group of citizens and experts interested in urban planning who are concerned with implementing new transportation systems" can be an example of community of interest (Fischer 2001, p. 4).

The "fundamental challenge" in this type of community is the foundation of shared understanding since its members come from diverse backgrounds and they may not have knowledge about each other's expertise nor about each other's vocabulary. Therefore, first they have to learn how to communicate with each other (Fischer 2001, p. 4).

Communities of interest are independent from a "specific geographical area", since the main element of these communities is a common interest (Poland and Maré 2005, p. 1). Hence, the members of community of interest may be connected locally or globally.

Communities of Practice
A community of practice is a network of "practitioners who interact socially to become more effective in their practice individually and collectively" (Kilner and Hoadley, 2005, p. 272). The term itself is generally connected with Lave and Wenger's book Situated learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation, published in 1991. In the book, Lave and Wenger define the community of practice as follows:

> A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage. Thus, participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning. The social structure of this practice, its power relations, and its condition for legitimacy define possibilities for learning (i.e., legitimate peripheral participation) (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 98).

A community of practice is necessary for the existence and flow of knowledge through its nature of social interactions and therefore it has significant importance in studies related to learning. At this point, I find it helpful to use Hoadley's method for defining communities of practice: as feature-based and as a process (Hoadley 2012, pp. 287-300).

At first, Hoadley gives a feature-based definition for a community of practice, which simply is "a community that shares practices" (Hoadley 2012, p. 288). Contrary to the cognitive view on learning, which actually states that learning is a personal property with a representation in an individual's head, Hoadley (2012) discusses that learning happens between the individuals in interaction with each other and sharing their practices within a certain context, and this is called the situated

learning. Wegner and Snyder state that these communities are usually most successful when they are created organically and spontaneously (cited in Estephan 2008, p. 112). This means that the community is created with the passion and commitment of the members, "who personally wish to build and exchange knowledge" (ibid.).

The second method that Hoadley (2012) uses to define a community of practice is to state it as a process.

Wenger, in his later studies, established communities of practice on three key elements: "1. mutual engagement, 2. joint enterprise, 3. shared repertoire" (Wenger 1998).

Mutual engagement is about how members of the community "interact with each other" (Zhang, and Watts 2008, p. 56). Wenger (1998) explains that through engagement, members feel a sense of belonging to the practice and to the community. Membership in a community of practice is not a matter of, for instance, social category or geographical proximity, but of a network of diverse and complex relationships, which arises thanks to the engagement in the practice.

Joint enterprise includes the shared interest of the community and it shows "what the community is about" (Zhang, and Watts 2008, p. 56). As Wenger (1998) discusses, the complexity and diversity of mutual engagements within a community of practice makes the joint enterprise complex as well. Hence, agreement is not the only kind of enterprise that occurs within a community of practice and the disagreements actually make the enterprise richer.

The third element of community of practice, which is shared repertoire, is the collection of tools, stories, symbols, actions, concepts etc. that the community produces throughout the history of its existence and this "reification" of past engagement provides knowledge for the community members to engage further in the future (Zhang, and Watts 2008, p. 56).

Virtual Communities

In the recent definitions of community, in today's society and its increasing use of technology, community is not related to a physical place anymore, but instead it is defined as a "set of relationships where people interact socially for mutual benefit" (Andrews 2002, p. 64). As Koh et al. (2007, p. 69) states, "the Internet revolution has led to the proliferation of virtual communities". A virtual community is therefore a set of social relationships where members use the Internet as the main communication channel instead of face-to-face contacts (Andrews 2002, p. 64). This set of social relationships can be "shared purpose, interest or goal" and members' interactions occur predominantly through the use of Internet with occasional offline meetings in some cases, if not all (Koh et al. 2007, p. 70).

Building of successful virtual community starts with "focused content" which can easily be understood by all members and followers, by "building alliances with trusted organizations" or "other trusted online communities" and by "organizing events" occasionally where face-to-face interaction happens, to gain more trust from people (Andrews 2002, p. 65). Besides, the members should be provided with various related visual contents so that the whole communication is not based on only textual communication (Koh et al. 2007, p. 70).

Even though the nature of the online communities is mostly virtual, studies emphasize the importance of offline activities to strengthen the online community. These offline activities help the members of an online community to understand and trust one another, increase solidarity and intimacy between them and help them find their identity within the community, which eventually result in stronger online presence and participation in return (Koh et al. 2007, p. 71).

Participation in online communities can sometimes be a difficult issue to tackle with. Andrews states that in certain

virtual community case studies, several groups of people acted reluctantly against online interaction with people that they did not personally meet (Andrews 2002, p. 64). The reasons for this reluctance were "feelings of distrust, concerns about privacy and question[ing] the appropriateness of the Internet as a medium to establish community relationships" as well as the structure of the community (ibid.). Besides, many virtual communities use tools such as "moderation, security and confidentiality rules, codes of conducts" etc. since the virtual environment differs to a great extent from face-to-face interactions and individuals can easily change their actual identities without paying much attention to the real-life "norms" on behaviors in a society (Andrews 2007, pp. 64-65).

Virtual Communities of Practice

One of the most important motivations of a virtual community of practice is that through the use of Internet which can be accessed from anywhere in the world, a virtual community of practice provides knowledge and resources that would otherwise "be extremely difficult to find" - because of being new or because of geographical isolation (Estephan 2008, p. 117).

While setting up a virtual community of practice, the first things to consider are what the "focus of the community of practice" will be, who will be the participants or people interested and what level of technology will be used, since the complexity of the technological tool has a significant "influence on the level of participation" (Byington 2011, p. 286). As a blog is easy to use or is easy to learn how to use, it is a good candidate for reaching a larger level of participation (Byington 2011, pp. 280-91).

One type of virtual communities of practice is the hybrid version. In this one, there are both online and face-to-face meetings in the community; technology use in between face-to-face interactions keeps the community vibrant (Byington 2011, p. 287).

A successful virtual community of practice needs a leader or a leadership team made up of one or more key participants, who can keep the community stay focused, make the relationships between members rich, initiate good amount of practices and make sure that the information within the community is up-to-date (Byington 2011, p. 289).

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Gunawardena et al. (2009, p. 4) define social networking as "the practice of expanding knowledge by making connections with individuals of similar interests". Through these sites and their services, people can communicate with each other anywhere, at any time, using interfaces that can be customized according to their personal preferences to a large extent (ibid.). Examples of these websites are Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn where each user have a profile that make their identity on that particular website.

Since learning theories were developed mainly at a time when these social networking sites did not exist yet, a new theoretical framework should be set up today. Gunawardena et al. (2009, p. 6) states that the three structural elements of communities of practice (domain, community and practice) described by Wenger can apply to social networking environments besides face-to-face communities.

First of all, social networking sites can create a forum for discussion, interaction and provide "a common ground to share ideas, knowledge and stories" (Gunawardena et al. 2009, p. 6). Second, social networking tools like blogs build a community using "dialogue and conversation, selectively making sense of past and present experiences" (Gunawardena et al. 2009, p. 7). Finally, members of social networking sites collaborate by either their own cultural values or by creating new cultural

norms and this provides a way for social networking tools to shape how people think, learn and interact (ibid.).

KNOWLEDGE SHARING WITHIN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Knowledge is "a human, highly personal asset and represents the pooled expertise and efforts of networks and alliances" (Smith 2001, p. 312). Wah (1999b) states that "99 percent of the work that humans do or create is based on knowledge" (cited in Smith 2001, p. 312). The general discussion in knowledge management is on explicit and tacit knowledge (Estephan 2008, pp. 112-20).

Explicit knowledge, or sometimes referred to as "know-what", is the type of knowledge which can be formalized and codified, and is "easy to identify, store and retrieve" (Frost 2013). Most of this knowledge is either technical or academic data and can be transferred in a formal language, through "print, electronic methods and other formal means" (Smith 2001, p. 315). Explicit knowledge is reusable and is valid in a "predictable" and "relatively stable environment" (ibid.).

On the other hand, tacit knowledge is referred to as "know-how" and it is generally "intuitive, hard to define" and for the most part, "experience-based" (Frost 2013). More generally, tacit knowledge can be described as "knowledge for which we do not have words"; it is highly personal and it is easier to remember within context than explicit knowledge (Smith 2001, p. 314). Tacit knowledge is transferred by stories, metaphors, analogies and demonstrations (ibid.).

Based on the definitions of explicit and tacit knowledge above, we can discuss the type of knowledge transferred in communities of practice. Roberts (2006) states that the key elements of communities of practice described by Wenger are "a combination of explicit and tacit knowledge, with a strong emphasis on the latter" (cited in Estephan 2008, p. 113). The characteristics such as "knowing what other know, what they can do, a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world" show the high emphasis on tacit knowledge (ibid). The nature of the knowledge transferred in general in communities of practice makes it a challenging task to generate it within online communities and thus, it implies the benefits of occasional offline interactions between the members one more time from knowledge sharing point of view.

3.2. UNDERSTANDING LEARNING

Learning shapes and modifies an individual's identity. It is a social process and it is an essential part of our lives. During the course of the case study, it was seen that a learning network formed between the community members. This chapter covers social theory of learning in general and within communities of practice, in order to have a deeper understanding on learning and to define the kind of learning networks which occurred eventually.

A SOCIAL THEORY OF LEARNING

In our daily lives, learning is not only limited to classrooms or to educational institutions. Whenever we engage in an activity that modifies the meaning we attribute to a life experience, we learn something. As humans are essentially social creatures by nature, this engagement in activities occur in the way of interactions with others. By participating in social settings, we interact with other people and create, change or modify meanings of experiences. This thinking is part of the social theory of learning.

Participation

Dictionary of Oxford University Press states the meaning of the word participation in general as "the action of taking part in something". Wenger (1998) explains that participation is both "personal and social" and it is actually a process that involves many actions within, such as "doing, talking, thinking, feeling and belonging". In some definitions, participation in social context is refined to "activities" that a person takes part which involves being present in a setting physically. However, it is the mutual recognition of one another that gives meaning to an activity and hence leads to the real aim of participation.

For participation to take place, each individual at present should acknowledge the others and engage in a mutual understanding. However, understanding does not necessarily mean a consensus that leads to collaboration, participation also involve conflicts (Wenger 1998).

Participation changes the meanings we associate to our experiences, and within social communities, it also shapes the communities; "the ability of shaping the practices of a community" is indeed a very important aspect of participation (Wenger 1998). By being active participants in the practices of social communities, we construct identities and give new meanings, which then shapes the practice with our modified identity and so on.

LEARNING AS SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Wenger (1998) states four assumptions attributed to learning and the nature of knowledge.

First assumption states that all humans are social beings and this fact is at the center of learning. Second assumption states that knowledge is a matter of competence, such as singing in tune, fixing machines etc. Third assumption states that knowing is a matter of active engagement in the world. Final assumption states that the ultimate product of learning is to create meaningful experiences.

From these assumptions, Wenger's theory of learning focuses on learning as social participation, where participation has a deeper meaning than mere activities with certain people, as stated above.

As a result of participation, people produce artifacts that symbolize the meaning that they attribute to their experiences. These artifacts can be physical, like an object, or conceptual, like stories, concepts, methods and so on. This is called reification, which literally means "making into an object".

Participation and reification exist together in a dynamic form in learning and over time they create a history of learning. This history, which combines both individual and collective aspects, helps creation of a community where participants define "a "regime of competence," a set of criteria and expectations by which they recognize membership" (Wenger 1998). Participation and reification are one of the four dualities that Wenger describes within a community of practice.

LEARNING IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

In their study in 1991, Lave and Wenger define a community of practice as a reference to "participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities" (cited in Fitzpatrick 2013, p. 2). This model indicates a learning process, which does not happen through a direct instruction, but through a process called legitimate peripheral participation.

In later years, in his own work, Wenger left this learning model with legitimate peripheral participation and focused on a duality model, however, it is still used in relation to situated learning.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

According to Lave and Wenger's (1991) study, the members of a community of practice start learning with legitimate peripheral participation. This means that when a person first enters the community as a newcomer, he/she is treated as an apprentice. By engaging in the actions, behaviors and decisions, these members in the apprentice status move on to full participation. This process clearly focuses on social learning as knowledge and meaning is established from the members' interactions with each other (Fitzpatrick 2013).

At the beginning of this learning process, the newcomer performs very simple and low risk tasks at the "periphery" of the community in question. These tasks, however simple and low risk they may be, are still productive.

As a newcomer gains experience and starts forming his/her own identity, they get more familiar with the practice and their level of participation increases gradually (Lave and Wenger 1991).

Duality Model

Abandoning the concept of legitimate peripheral participation, in his own study in 1998, Wenger used the concept of duality, which can be perceived as "Yin and Yang", in order to explain the dynamics of a community of practice. These dualities are not in contrast to each other as a conflicting situation but they balance each other in a continuous dynamics. Hence, Wenger defines a duality as:

> (...) a single conceptual unit that is formed by two inseparable and mutually constitutive elements whose inherent tensions and complementarity give the concept richness and dynamism (Wenger 1998, p.66).

The four dualities that Wenger (1998) describes within a community of practice are: participation-reification, designed-emergent, identification-negotiability and local-global. As participation and reification are explained individually and in relation to each other above, I will continue with the other three dualities.

Designed vs Emergent

One of the main challenges of building a community of practice is the balance between the designed and the emergent. On one side, Wenger (1998) claims that a community cannot be designed; on another he sets up a framework to facilitate the development of a community of practice.

Communities are emergent; they self-organize from the "need" of the community members and "local" conditions (Barab et al. 2003, 242). According to Wenger (1998), the real challenge is to accomplish a "minimalist design". This means creating a platform and related tools to facilitate the community's growth while allowing it to "emerge from the needs and agendas of its members" (Barab et al. 2003, 242). This is made possible by providing support and trust with a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach.

Local vs Global

According to Wenger (1998, p. 234), "due to the inherently limited scope of our engagement, now practice is itself global". Within the small nuances of each practice, however, lies the delicate balance of local vs global.

This means that one of the challenges in the design of a community is to create relationship between local and global in a way that any particular local context can have global significance whereas any global agenda can carry relevance and value for the local context (Barab et al. 2003, p. 246).

Identification vs Negotiability

Wenger (1998) states that a member's participation within a community is related to the extent that he/she can identify with "the mutual enterprise, culture and history of a community" (cited in Barab et al. 2003, p. 247). On the other hand, a member's contribution to the community is added to mutual enterprise and practice and thus shapes the community. Negotiability, in that case, "determines the extent to which we [members] develop ownership over the community's mutual enterprise and practice" (ibid).

Identification and negotiability have significant effects on a member's participation. They can support participation as well as cause non-participation.

Virtual vs Face-to-Face

As the number of virtual communities increases, it becomes a necessity to think about one additional duality that is not examined in Wenger's work, which is virtual vs face-to-face interaction. This duality actually carries parts of all the previous tensions (Barab et al. 2003, p. 249).

It is possible to think that a virtual community is completely different than face-to-face communities. Barab et al. (2003, p. 249) believe that those two types of communities are not fundamentally different than each other, but instead, a virtual community is indeed continuation of a real one; hence, there is an inevitable connection between two communities. By stating this, the studies made on face-to-face communities and the knowledge gained from them can be applied to the virtual communities as well.

One of the most important challenges of virtual communities is the building of trust. The issue of trust or distrust affects the participation of community members to a great extent (this was discussed in the previous section, under Virtual Communities).

On the other hand, virtual communities, with the potential of reaching more people, have the advantage of increasing collaborations. This extends the support needed for certain situations, hence, you may find the solution or the information in a virtual community easier than in a real community.

Establishing virtual communities as a continuation of real communities, we can continue the understanding of learning in virtual communities from a participatory point of view, applying the existing social learning theory to them.

LEARNING AS PARTICIPATION IN VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES

Virtual communities stand on the three principles of social learning theory stated by Wenger.

First principle states that all human beings are "intrinsically social", life consists of a series of social experiences in various communities and hence everyone takes part in one or more communities naturally, making a community a reality rather than an ideal (cited in Henri and Pudelko 2003, p. 475). Second principle states that all learning is a social process, therefore the people participating in any community learn (ibid). Final principle is about giving meaning to life experience, which consists of both social participation and reification, i.e. turning negotiation into "thingness" (Henri and Pudelko 2003, p. 476).

Based on these three principles from social learning theory, virtual communities can be considered as a reality, as the first principle of theory suggests. When the reality of virtual communities is established, they can be stated as learning communities since their members participate in their activity and all that participation leads to a level learning within the community (Henri and Pudelko 2003, p. 476).

Legitimate peripheral participation process is also applied to learning in virtual communities. Preece and Shneiderman

(2009) explain this process being applied to virtual communities in terms of the roles that each participant assumes during their learning process within the community.

According to this, the process starts with all or any user on the Internet. As they become aware of social media by the help of an online advertising, through friends or by online tools such as blogs, they become readers. In time, some of these readers start contributing, first in small tasks, such as entering a correction in a wiki post, or writing a short comment on a blog post. A contributor's confidence grows as his/her contributions increase and they slowly move from legitimate peripheral participation to a more advanced level of participation.

While some members may stay as contributors, some move one step further and start collaborations with other contributors. This means that an interaction between two or more contributors starts to occur on certain tasks related to practice.

At the end of the process, leaders emerge from the members. The leaders are not always the most visible part of the virtual community, however they are the ones that set the goals, define and enlarge the audience and create or maintain the norms and *explicit policies* that are essential for the community to survive in long term. Leaders typically have the largest amount of comments in the virtual community and they are the most active members; they are generally very passionate about what they are doing. Most of the leaders do not use the anonymity option in a virtual community since revealing their true identity creates trust and encourages the other members for more participation. The leaders are responsible from the correctness of the information shared in the community, from moderating discussions and conflicts between contributors and from protecting the community by dealing with threats of certain troubling members or in some cases, with threats of Internet users that are outside the community.

Preece and Shneiderman (2009) suggest that each virtual community should be designed in a way so that legitimate peripheral participation can take place. As social participation in virtual communities of practice have huge promises, designing the community to support the readers to gradually assume the contributor role becomes crucial.

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Did I ever tell you how much I love cooking?

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22 APR 2014

Carrot Bread – From My German Sister Anja

posted in Bakery, Friends' Recipes

3.3. UNDERSTANDING BLOGGING

The main tool used in the case study was a blog. This is why it is important to have a deeper understanding of blogs and blogging and this chapter focuses on these. A social learning takes place in blogging process and a blog can be used to create and maintain virtual communities, and, in relation to this particular case study, virtual communities of practice.

WHAT IS A BLOG?

The word "blog" derives from the term web log, which refers to an Internet website containing eclectic content (Chang and Yeh 2008, p. 2).

In Blogging for Dummies, Brad Hill (2006) defines a blog as a website that helps generation of content which is "similar to an online journal" (cited in Byington 2011, p. 283). Herring et al. (2004) state that a blog contains "regular or daily posts, reverse chronological presentation, and dominant use of the first person" (cited. in Wei 2009, p. 536). The writer of a blog

is called a blogger. Since the major common characteristic of the blogs are the posting format with entries in reverse chronological order, bloggers usually tend to define what a blog means via this property.

Blogging as it is known and used today initiated in February 1997 by an American software developer, entrepreneur and writer, named Dave Winer; with the name "Scripting News", which was (and still is) "an online record of Winer's reflections on a wide range of topics" (Nardi et al. 2004, p. 222). Since mid-1999, the amount of bloggers and blogging as an online and social activity has increased exponentially (Herring et al. 2004, p. 1). As of 2010, according to a tracking system by BlogPulse, there were 152 million existing blogs on the Internet (Internet 2010 in numbers 2011). According to another tracking system in 2012, free and open source blogging tool WordPress was in use by Top 100 blogs on the Internet, and altogether they had 48% share among existing blogs (Internet 2012 in numbers 2013). The same year, another free and open source short-form blogging tool (with posts made up of photos or other multimedia), Tumblr, had 87.8 million users (ibid).

Blogs use a simple and ready interface and this interface can generally be customized to a certain extent, according to the blogger's wishes. Since they are easy to construct without the need of an advanced understanding of how HTML or web scripting works, anyone with a basic knowledge of technology use can create a blog and keep it, or within just a few easy steps, can respond to other's works by commenting (Yang 2009, p. 13). A blog post usually consists of a text, however, it is possible to add photos and other visual or multimedia content, as well as hyperlinks to other websites.

For bloggers, the act of blogging is also defined as a social interaction and community; since blogs are linked to each other, they create a network and since (most of the) blogs are open

to comments by readers, they create a *conversational* exchange (Herring et al. 2004, p. 3). For instance, during the case study, My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki blog was mentioned in a post by a Turkish blogger in her blog named "One Life Be Fit", which focuses on healthy lifestyle and healthy nutrition. The post mentioned was a recipe on using black beans to bake a brownie instead of using white flour. The latter blog gave the link to this blog post while explaining ways to substitute certain ingredients with healthier ones for baking, such as substituting butter with avocado or substituting sugar with apple sauce. With this way of linking, a traffic between two blogs started.

The research done on the classification of blogs is based on two approaches: motivation based and content based (Chang, and Yeh 2008). A study by Herring et al. (2004) explains that there are three primary types of blogs based on the subject matter: "personal journals, filters" (which generate their content by selecting information from other websites) and "knowledge-logs" (cited in Nardi et al. 2004, p. 222). Among these, the majority of the existing blogs belong to personal journal type and the diversity in existing blogs' contents is extremely high.

WHY DO PEOPLE BLOG? MOTIVATIONS BEHIND BLOGGING

Blogs are claimed to be the new, "alternative form of journalism" since bloggers select "newsworthy and interesting topics" along with their "analysis, insights and commentary" and with their personal report on an event or a trend (Wei 2009, p. 536). As the cost of blogging is cheap and generally even free, and since there is no special requirement for a license or a similar necessity, it has broken the walls between journalism and the public (ibid).

A majority of bloggers state that the reason why they blog is to "share their expertise and receive personal satisfaction"

(Byington 2011, p. 283). By posting a blog article in a verbal, visual or any other format, a blogger can spread a message and receive comments from other people in return (ibid). Besides that, by connecting with each other using hyperlinks, blogs can connect to each other and therefore there is an opportunity to develop "a sense of community" (Wei 2009, p. 537).

As stated above, most of the blogs are personal, however there is an increasing number of blogs used for educational purposes, as blogs motivate people for reading and encourage writing back, which creates a "reflective thinking environment" necessary for learning (Yang 2009).

Nardi et al. (2004) define the five major motivations behind blogging as follows:

1. Bloggers find that blogging is an efficient way to keep in touch with other people, such as their friends and family, who are often physically far from the blogger.

2. Bloggers want to express and share their opinions on various subjects and they also want to give advices.

3. Bloggers want to hear other people's opinions and get feedback on what they write about.

4. Some bloggers write to enhance their reflective thinking, which they call "Thinking by Writing".

5. A number of the bloggers write about things that they feel "passionate" or even "obsessive" about, which in return makes them release some of "emotional tension" that they feel.

Thus, bloggers write for several social reasons and it is safe to say that blogging is a social activity. It becomes interactive with the readers' participation in the blog posts and readers can both create a blog or shape an existing one.

THE READERS' EFFECT ON BLOGS

Readers generally find:

> (...) blogs through other blogs they were reading, through friends or colleagues telling them about their blogs or those of others, or through inclusion of the blog URL in an instant message profile or a homepage (Nardi et al. 2004, p. 224).

Readers can create a new blog or shape an existing blog in several ways. For instance, some people urge their friends to start blogging on a certain topic that they feel their friend is good at or is knowledgeable. This helps the creation of a new blog. In the context of an existing blog, readers may let the bloggers know what kind of posts they expect by sending messages or commenting on existing posts. In a similar context, the blogger can also keep in mind the blog's audience and shape his/her blog posts accordingly. The latter two helps to shape existing blogs. As bloggers become aware of the fact that more and more people are reading their posts, their motivation increase and they start posting more frequently (ibid). In time, blogs become "a form of social communication in which blogger and audience are intimately related through the writing and reading of blogs" (ibid).

LEARNING IN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE WITH A BLOG

Since blogs involve both personal thinking and social interaction, they offer two ways of learning in general. The development of technology and the extended use of tools such as those blogs transformed Internet users who used to be more of a "content consumer" into a "content producer" or "knowledge producer" (Wei 2009, p. 533).

As stated above, one of the major motivations behind blogging

is that it enhances thinking with writing and through that, it helps the blogger to engage in a reflective thinking process. This constitutes the first way of learning with a blog and it is a personal process by its own. The reflective thinking process is also valid for the readers that engage in writing by commenting to the blog posts. One other advantage of blogs within this kind of learning process is that each participant learns at his/her "own pace" by discussing, posting messages and writing comments about other people's messages (Byington 2011, p. 283).

As it opens up to be a discussion forum with interactions happening between blogger who writes the blog post and the reader who reads and comments and so on, a blog brings together a group of like-minded people with similar interests and experiences, forming "a small learning community" (ibid). A blogger and his/her readers together create an understanding through their interactions using the blog as their domain which is the "social dimension of learning" (Fitzpatrick 2013, p. 2). Hence, "a well-developed web-based social software such as weblogs (blogs) can serve to effectively facilitate and mediate interactions among members of a community of practice" (ibid).

Within their nature, blogs collect most "recommended pedagogies from learning theories", such as "scaffolding, incorporation of multiple perspectives and the use of learning communities" (Yang 2009, p. 14).

A blog contains the necessary tools for scaffolding; actually scaffolding is an issue that can be considered while using a blog as a learning tool. Bransford et al. (1999) explain scaffolding as "the temporary support framework provided to learners to support them in the process of extending competencies" (cited in Fitzpatrick 2013, p. 4). Within the blog posts, the blogger who has more advanced knowledge on a certain topic can give "hints and recommendations", ask questions or provide additional

online or multimedia tools to support the learning of the readers as a means of scaffolding (Fitzpatrick 2013, p. 4).

Therefore, a blog can act like a virtual classroom. In that case, one important thing to consider while using blogs as a learning environment is that the accuracy of information within the community is "self-governed" as each participant's own responsibility; if information posted in the blog is incorrect then all the members of the community are "misinformed" (Yang 2009, p. 14). Just as a successful virtual community of practice has one or more leading practitioners, a blog with the most correct information input needs a leadership position.

3.4. UNDERSTANDING FOOD

"Tell me what kind of food you eat, and I will tell you what kind of man you are." Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

In "The Republic", Plato wrote, "Now the first and greatest of necessities is food, which is the condition of life and existence". Food is as essential as Plato expressed, however, its place in our everyday life may often be taken for granted. Food does not only have the function of helping us survive Đ thinking of the context it is cooked, prepared, served and eaten, it serves as a means to identify oneself, to share cultural, social and political values, and thus, it serves a tool for communication.

FOOD IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

Eating in any context is firstly about the need for survival, however, with its rich symbolism and meaning, our complex relationship with food go "beyond time" and space and beyond "the mere act of consumption" (Spurlock 2009, p. 5). Through acts related to food, such as sharing it, we make social links and thus, food becomes a "social vehicle" (Rozin 2005, p. 108). Apart from the function of food as a material for physical growth and health, while eating together or giving or receiving food, it acts as "social glue", making social relations richer (Quandt

et al. 2001, p. 145).

The complex relationships of humans with food received attention in academic discourse in recent years and the issues related to food started a discussion among various fields of social sciences. Deutsch and Miller (2009) state that food studies is not the study of the food itself; it is actually:

> (...) the interdisciplinary field of study of food and culture, investigating the relationships between food and the human experience from a range of humanities and social science perspectives, often times in combination (cited in Siewicz 2011, p. 144).

As food has an essential part in human life, "food cultures have been growing and changing along with the development of humanity" (Siewicz 2011, p. 143). Siewicz (2011) further discusses that existing in the relations of "power and gender" and being connected to "kinship and social structure", food cultures and food related issues are essential topics of anthropology.

While "anthropology studied food and eating habits of people", psychology studied the relationship between food and eating disorders, some scholars within the field of sociology associated food with leisure and culture and considered it "frivolous", and many other sociologists indicated that "food, cuisine and eating" took great part in the "making and remaking of social identities" (Ceccarini 2010, p. 2).

As Cramer et al. (2011, p. ix) discuss, food is "a key factor in how we view ourselves and others and it is at the center of social and political issues". Today, there is a much better understanding in the society about the significance of food in our daily lives and in relation to cultural and social values. Therefore, there is also a need to explore it further (ibid).

From another point of view, especially a more recent one, food has also become the topic of ethics. Mead (2013) indicates that how well the nations are capable of feeding their people and how across-nations food interactions occur, how the rich "harden themselves turning their eyes away while the poor is starving" and how food is produced today are all questions of ethics.

FOOD AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL

The topic of food is discussed and studied in a variety of fields such as anthropology, sociology and cultural history, however it is not discussed effectively in the field of communication (Cramer et al. 2011, p. x). In her essay dated 1970, Henderson stated that, drawing results from her case study on food habits in America, food is a form of communication and that there is a lack of substantial study in this area.

In order to discuss food in the field of communication, it is important to first understand what communication means.

American Speech - Language - Hearing Association (ASHA) defines communication as;

> (...) any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person's needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or effective states. Communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or nonlinguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes" (Guidelines for Meeting the Communication Needs 1992).

This definition should immediately take us forward to an understanding of food as a means of communication since through food there is a (non-verbal) exchange of meaning, knowledge, desire etc. between people. In that sense, food can be defined as not only a product that is used for nutrition and thus

for nutritional studies, but it is also "a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior" (Barthes 2013, pp. 23-30).

Communication is also defined as "a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed" (Carey 1992, p. 23). Food is used in everyday life to exchange certain values with others, to show personal identity or to reveal one's socioeconomic class in the society; therefore food has a symbolic function of a communication tool that people use to "create, manage, and share meanings with others" (Cramer et al. 2011, p. xi).

As a form of communication, Douglas compares food with a general understanding of language and discusses that as a code with messages found "in the pattern of social relations being expressed", food has same characteristics as language (Douglas 1997, p. 36). What food encodes are social events, "since the taking of food has a social component" besides a biological component (ibid).

Another reason why food should be considered as a form of communication is its links to ritual and culture. Food is always at the center of the most important events of people's lives, such as birthdays or weddings, and within these events, it acts as a representation of emotional expressions, like love, happiness or grief (Cramer, Greene, and Walters ix-xix). Being at the center of such rituals, "food carries cultural values within and across cultures", which shows that it is used as a tool for communication (Cramer, Greene, and Walters ix-xix).

To a great extent, food is linked to the means we create and reveal our personal identities. The quote used at the beginning of this chapter by Brillat-Savarin,

Tell me what kind of food you eat, and I will tell you what kind of man you are.

shows how closely related personal identities are with food. Cramer et al. (2011) explain this with examples of defining oneself as a "vegan", a "foodie" or a "carnivore", showing either what we eat or what we choose not to eat. As a code, food is also used to identify the people we are connected with. Similar to approaching to people speaking the same language with oneself, it is also possible to say that one approaches to people having the same eating habits or food consumption, such as "vegetarians" associating mostly with other vegetarians etc. (ibid).

Through acts of food, such as preparing meals or eating together, people are connected to each other and they share cultural, social, political and many other values. Since it acts as a conveyor of such values, meanings and identities, food is certainly a communication tool.

FOOD IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT – EVENTS IN HELSINKI

Being situated in Helsinki myself, the offline events within the scope of this thesis took place in Helsinki. It is important to introduce the city from the point of food.

There is an increasing number of events and movements associated with food or based on food in Helsinki. Starting from 2011, first as a way of getting ready for World Design Capital 2012, Helsinki has seen a boom in food related activities. These events and movements taking place in the city generally focus on bringing a richer variety of restaurants and tastes. This does not necessarily happen with the conventional idea of a restaurant, such as Restaurant Day - Ravintolapäivä where anyone can open a one-day restaurant or as Streat Helsinki Festival where international cuisines in street food format are introduced by smaller enterprises. There is also a certain number of organizations or events that focus primarily on food itself to increase the awareness on what we eat or on how to produce food. All these events declare the city itself as "an

enabler of food culture" and the shared goal is to increase the city's taste (Helsinki Foodism n.d.).

As stated in the Helsinki Culinary Culture Strategy (part of the strategy programme of Helsinki for 2009-2012), the city of Helsinki has been working on making Helsinki "a top-quality European culinary" city by promoting high quality food; it also aims for a "decrease in the ecological footprint of public food services" and prevention of climate change by promoting sustainable food production and services (City of Helsinki Culinary Culture Strategy n.d.).

Turntable by Dodo

Turntable is an urban gardening center, initiated by the non-governmental organization Dodo ry.

Dodo works on environmental issues within urban context, organizing public events, discussion groups, projects and more; it connects people from different backgrounds, expertise and experiences. Dodo deals with issues both in discussion and in practice by organizing workshops or any other type of hands-on events (Dodo in English 2010).

Turntable ("Kääntöpöytä" in Finnish) started as a guerilla garden project in 2009. Since then, there has been an increase in urban gardening in Helsinki. The aim is to demonstrate that urban space is suitable for growing food. In 2012 Turntable was transformed into a test lab and a learning center for urban farming (Kääntöpöytä Turntable n.d.).

Streat Helsinki by The City of Helsinki

Based on "Food Culture Strategy, The City of Helsinki", started a threefold set of events in 2014 with the name "Streat Helsinki", related to everything about street food in Helsinki. The three parts of the event are called "Talks", "Eats" and "Parties".

Streat Helsinki event aims to show the potential of street

Streat Helsinki poster, retrieved from the event website (Streat Helsinki 2014).

foodycle

Poikkitieteellinen ruokafestivaali • Transdisciplinary food festival

• soil • kasvu • preparation • kutulus • waste
nourishment • transformation • generosity • osallistua • intimacy
cultural heritage • the sacred • celebration • togetherness • open source
• patents • open s... ... food dependency •
design • distribution • alt... ...ernment • kestävyys
... ruoka ...

12•13 Sept. 2013

VIIKKI CAMPUS / SUVILAHTI

Vapaa pääsy • free entrance

12.09 VIIKKI : Farmers' market, farm visit, outdoor workshops
13.09 SUVILAHTI : Panel discussions, indoor workshops

Organised by **Ruoan Tulevaisuus** and **PI∴:ELACHE**
Partners & supporters : Ministry of Education and Culture

A⁹⁹ Aalto University Media Factory   HIAP   Austrian Embassy Helsinki

Helsingin kulttuurikeskus

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www.foodycle.info
www.facebook.com/foodycle

Foodycle festival poster, retrieved from the event website (Foodycle 12-13 September 2013 n.d.).

food in Helsinki. It is a joint action by the City of Helsinki, several local and international partners, as well as food activists, hobbyists, entrepreneurs and various communities (What is Streat Helsinki 2014).

Streat Helsinki also emphasizes the importance of food in our lives and the importance of preparing, enjoying and celebrating food together, which shows the idea of food bringing people together (ibid).

Foodycle by Pixelache Helsinki and Ruoan Tulevaisuus ry (Future of Food)

Foodycle is two-day event which was organized for the first time in September 2013 as a collaboration between Pixelache Helsinki and Rouan Tulevaisuus (Future of Food), along with several other partners. It is a participatory food festival that brings together people from different backgrounds such as artists, designers, non-governmental organizations, students, scientists and consumers.

The festival aims to act as a bridge between art, design and science and discuss and share ideas for sustainable food in the current and future Finland (Foodycle 12-13 September 2013 n.d.). The topics that initiated such an action in the first festival were "pollution in the Baltic Sea, the horse meat scandal and animal welfare issues" (ibid).

One of the two main organizers of Foodycle festival, Pixelache Helsinki, is multidisciplinary platform, which brings together people from fields such as environmental art, design, research and activism (Pixelache Helsinki n.d.). Pixelache focuses on:

(...) experimental interaction and electronics; renewable energy production/use; bioarts and art-science culture; grassroot organising and networks; politics and economics of media/technology; alternative economic cultures; VJ culture

Photo by Anssi
Kumpula.
Restaurant
Day, 17.11.2012.
Retrieved from
Restaurant Day
Flickr page.

Photo by
Heidi Utela.
Restaurant
Day, 4.2.2012.
Retrieved from
Restaurant Day
Flickr page.

and audiovisual performances; media literacy and engaging environmental issues (ibid).

The other main partner organization, Ruoan Tulevaisuus ry (Future of Food) is an association whose aim is "to increase the cross-disciplinary dialogue in the food system", by promoting sustainable and equitable food system implementation (Tietoa yhdistyksestä n.d.).

International Restaurant Day (Ravintolapäivä) by Ravintolapäivä ry

Restaurant Day is an event which takes place for times a year. Started in Finland, it is a "food carnival when anyone can set up a restaurant, café or a bar for a day" (Restaurant Day n.d.). The location can be anywhere from your own apartment to a public place in the city.

Restaurant Day started in 21 May 2011 in Finland with 45 restaurants in 13 cities as a concept to challenge "the bureaucracy involving in running a restaurant" (Nelimarkka n.d.). The event quickly spread to other countries, reaching its peak number in diversity on 18 August 2013 with 1683 restaurants in 220 cities, 35 countries (Restaurant Day n.d.).

Within the three years that it has been operating, Restaurant Day has become more than an event or a festival, it has become a movement. Timo Santala, the founder of the concept, explains that Restaurant Day changes the face of the city by turning it into a carnival for a day where "people see things in different ways" and a sense of community emerges as people from different backgrounds work for making the event possible (ibid).

Restaurant Day brings a new understanding to how people can come together around food, together with a new concept of restaurant as a business. It does not only create a vibrant community, but it also helps the existing restaurants to try new

ways of reaching customers, as well as new restaurants testing their market (Nelimarkka n.d.).

Restaurant Day received multiple awards within Finland, including Finland Prize 2011, an award given by Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland; Cultural Event of the Year in 2011, an award given by Helsinki City Library and Cultural Committee and Finnish Travel Award, an award given by Finnish Fair Foundation. The Minister of Education and Culture, Paavo Arhinmäki, in his award speech for Finland Prize, stated that Restaurant Day "has probably affected Finnish restaurant culture more than anything else since the new alcohol legislation of 1969 when beer was allowed to be sold in supermarkets" (Restaurant Day n.d.).

Let's Eat Together Helsinki by Timo Santala

Let's Eat Together Helsinki is a facebook group initiated by Timo Santala on 22 March 2013. The idea of the group is to create any kind of eating event on Facebook, to spread it through the group's members and to eat together with people you may or may not know, with the motto: "Food always tastes better with company!"

The examples of eating events that might take place in the group are as follows:

- You can organize and cook dinner, lunch, brunch and invite people to your own apartment.
- You can make more specific events such as cheese and wine tasting.
- You can organize a picnic in a park, you can book a table at a restaurant or you can order take away food and invite people.
- You can cook with your guests, ask people bring some food or drinks to create the table collectively, or you can ask them to contribute to the costs (Santala 2013).

Photo by Anja-Lisa Hirscher. An example of a "Let's Eat Together, Helsinki" brunch, 30.6.2013.

In the group page, there are guidelines both in Finnish and English, and the guidelines show how a member can create an eating together event. According to this, after the decision of what kind of event it would be, you create a regular Facebook event page, give a name to your event, write a description and clearly state the number of participants and how it would be possible to sign up to the event. For instance, in some events the host member chooses to receive private Facebook messages from people who are interested to come to the event as a clear indication of signing up. In these private messages, the exact address of the event and other contact information are also shared. This kind of signing up is more common when the host is organizing the event in his/her own apartment and does not want to publish the address with everyone. When an event reaches its maximum amount of participants, the host is expected to change the name of the event and add "Täynnä - Full" at the beginning of it to avoid any confusion.

The people who are interested in the group send a request

to be added and one of the admins of the group approves their membership. When a new member is added, he/she has just a regular member status in the group. With this status, it is possible to join an event created by another member as a participant before the event reaches its full capacity. When a regular member decides to create his/her own eating event, he / she has to ask to be given the admin status so that he/ she can invite all the members in the group to the event. This change of membership status can be seen as an apprentice promoting to a professional in communities of practice. Once a member's status becomes an admin, he/she also becomes responsible from the maintenance of the group, such as the approval of new members or giving away the rights of admin to a new member etc.

Let's Eat Together Helsinki group aims to create a vibrant community around food by eating (and sometimes also cooking) together. It is a type of community which promotes the social side of food and eating rather than the food itself. Groups like this have been functioning in many other world cities already, however it is quite new and unknown for Helsinki community. There are many underground food clubs, secret tea parties, guerilla dining events and many other food communities around the world and Finland is slowly getting into this trend as well (Pallaste 2013).

Photo by the author, invitation design by Anja-Lisa Hirscher. My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki blog participated in Restaurant Day, 16.11.2013, in cooperation with Make{able}.

Make{able}
Valuable clothes designed together.

Sat. 16. November
11.00 - 15.00

@ Ompelu Ravintola
Arkadiankatu 12A, 26

MY DEAR KITCHEN IN HELSINKI
mydearkitcheninhelsinki.wordpress.com

4 THE CASE: MY DEAR KITCHEN IN HELSINKI

My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki is the name of the case that I created for my research study and worked on, from March 2013 onwards. It started as a personal food blog and eventually resulted in the emergence of a food related virtual community of practice, supported by face-to-face (offline) interactions.

The case consisted of;

a. A blog with same name, in which I shared recipes mostly from various cuisines such as Turkish, Finnish and French, with easy steps to encourage everyone to try them without fear. These cuisines were chosen from my personal background within these cultures - I grew up with Turkish cuisine, I lived in 2003-2004 in France and learned many aspects of French cuisine and I have been living in Finland for your years, being exposed to Finnish cuisine daily. Therefore, it is possible to say that living in a particular culture influenced my culinary

Photo on the previous page, by Hesam Pakbeen.

interests and provided personal knowledge. In later stages, the content of the blog extended according to the feedback from readers, which will be explained and discussed later in this chapter. The blog constituted the shared repertoire of the community. Other virtual community tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, also supported it.

b. A series of offline local food events, which were linked to the recipes in the blog, where people cooked or baked the recipes that were published in a chosen period of time and got together to taste these recipes and to discuss about food.

c. A series of co-cooking and co-baking sessions together with interviews, made with both foreign and Finnish residents of Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The name of this part of the case is "Kitchen Talks" and besides the social interactions that occurred within these sessions, it also explores using food as a communication tool.

sausage

onion

yellow pepper

green pepper

red pepper

olive oil

eggs

& salt!!

I started "My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki" blog (the link of the blog: http://mydearkitcheninhelsinki.wordpress.com) in March 2013. This is a food blog where I share recipes from different cuisines openly under various categories. Besides recipes, there is also information about facts of cooking and baking, which would enhance the knowledge of amateur cooks and bakers.

The blog started with close friends urging me to share the recipes of food I cooked for them. We usually gathered together around a table where I served them food from particularly Turkish cuisine.

Aim of The Blog

The main aim of the blog is to share recipes openly. In detailed documentation with photos, by showing that cooking and baking are both processes, the blog aims to take the fear of cooking and baking away from people. In my personal understanding, everyone could cook as long as they follow simply designed, but detailed instructions.

The secondary aim of the blog is to show that there is always a story behind the food we cook, bake or eat. By starting the blog posts with a story specific to the recipe that followed, I share my personal relationship with that dish.

Content of The Blog

In "My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki" blog, the main content is a collection of recipes. I learn each recipe by reading from other blogs, or by asking family members (in the case that it is a family recipe) and then by practice of cooking. Each step is documented using photography. An accompanying personal story about the dish or about a specific ingredient used in the dish is shared along with the recipe as food, in many studies, provided meaning through stories.

The blog also has also informational posts on basic facts of cooking and baking, as well as food related events organized in relation to the blog or by others in Helsinki. This part of the content emerged in later stages from the comments and feedback from readers.

When a new blog post is completed and published, it is shared in the blog's Facebook and Twitter pages so that the followers on Facebook are notified. Besides Facebook, the subscribers see the notification of the new blog post in their reading lists and the email subscribers are notified by email.

Design of the Blog page and Evolution of the Blog

My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki blog uses the open source blogging tool Wordpress. Wordpress has both free and paid themes that you can use as a template while designing the blog's interface, content and structure.

For the interface of My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki, I first used the theme "Minimalizine" (free). As the content of the blog got richer and various new categories were introduced, the theme Minimalizine proved not simple and efficient enough. Therefore at this point I switched to another theme, which is still the theme of the blog, named "Adelle".

"Adelle" is also a free theme and has good amount of options to customize the design. The main design choice of switching to this theme is that the theme covers each browser page better and each element is more visible.

The new design of the blog was published in 9 October 2013 and it was announced on the blog's Facebook page the same day asking the followers to give feedback about the new design. The readers found the new design easier to browse as intended and they also liked the colours and general visual presentation.

At the same time as the overall interface design of the blog was changed, the style of the several elements were changed. For instance, in order to create a more personal interaction with the reader, some sentences or words were added in some of the photos. These texts were added to trigger a feeling in the reader, such as:

"A taste of home..." (For Turkish Crescent-Buns recipe)

As the blog's page design went through changes, its content evolved as well. The recipes were divided into categories of traditional ideas of cooking (such as bakery, main dishes etc.). Since the theory on creating successful virtual communities emphasizes the importance of one clear focus of the blog or any other online tool used (see theory on virtual communities), I chose this traditional way of categorizing so that anyone can easily familiarize himself or herself with the content and browse within the pages.

The Structure of Recipe Posts

Each recipe post consists of;

Sample instruction photos from blog: (above) ingredients for a dish, (below) rolling dough.

a) A story related to that recipe

b) List of ingredients

c) Verbal instructions, with each step numbered

d) Detailed photos of each step, as well as several photos of serving the finalized recipe

e) Music suggestion to accompany the cooking process

The recipe posts starts with a story about the food to be prepared by that recipe, such as a memory from childhood or a more recent story. An example of a story with a recent background was given in Karelian Pie - Karjalanpiirakka recipe, starting with:

"It was about 2 weeks before I came to Helsinki in 2010. I realised that I had absolutely no idea on how Finnish cuisine was. I made so much research about many aspects of my new home, but forgot the food part! I guess I thought that food ought not be a hard topic, that I could find something to eat after all. Of course I had in my mind the regular stereotypes, like, "oh, they eat reindeer there..". But then, I checked wikipedia."

The recipe continues with list of ingredients. I write down the Finnish of certain ingredients that may be hard to find for foreign readers in Finland and I also give an example of where this ingredient can be found.

After the list of ingredients, the instructions are numbered and written step by step. In each step, detailed photos of the process are attached after the verbal instruction. By sharing each step visually in details, misunderstandings that might occur in the verbal language are prevented. The reader may or may not be proficient in English, therefore he/she might understand a step incorrectly or not at all.

As the blog developed in time, to make cooking a recipe from the blog even more pleasant for the reader, music suggestion for

each recipe was added. This is the music that I listen to while preparing the recipe (or in the case of cooking with a friend, the music that we listened together). By adding music, the blog suggests that there are many dimensions of cooking process, and it appeals to all senses, including hearing. It also creates an additional input to the overall story behind the practice of cooking.

SURVEY

A blog is not only about the blogger. It is shaped and sometimes even created by its readers. My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki blog is one example of such a blog that was created by readers.

The shaping of the blog by readers usually happens through the readers' comments and feedbacks on blog posts. In these posts they can tell about what they like or do not like about the blog or that certain blog post. They request changes or developments in the content.

Throughout 1-20 December 2013, a survey was conducted in relation to blog. The survey was announced on the blog and on Facebook page. 47 members replied to the survey. The number of official subscribers of the blog was 30 at the time.

General Characteristics of The Community Members

The first three questions focused on collecting general information on the community members.

According to the results, the majority of the community members, with 72.34% share, were between 25-34 years old. This was followed by 35-44 years age, with 17.02% share, 18-24 years age with 8.51% and 45-54 years age with 2.13%. Gender-wise, there was a clear majority of female members, with 72.34% share.

More than half of the members that replied to the survey, with 68.09% share lived in Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Most of the rest lived in Turkey, in cities of Istanbul and Ankara. There were also members from other cities and municipalities in Finland, such as Joensuu, Sotkamo, Tuusula and Kotka.

This result shows that even though this blog is a virtual community with no geographical boundaries, the majority of the members still belong to the local community (of Finland).

The next 8 questions asked about the member's cooking routines in general and about their engagement with the blog.

According to the results, 40.43% of the members that replied to the survey cooked or baked every day and 34.04% cooked or baked at least twice a week. These two groups together show that preparing food is a somewhat regular action for them. 17.02% of the members cooked once a week. Three members cooked once a month and one member never cooked.

To the question about how often they visited the blog, the majority of the members (38.64%) replied as *"When a new recipe is published and shared on facebook (it appears on my facebook newsfeed)"*. This shows how effective other social networking tool Facebook is on the blog. 5 of the members were direct subscribers of the blog, so they are immediately notified when a new recipe is published. There were also regular monthly readers, with a share of 15.91%.

Majority of the respondent community members cooked or baked at least one of the recipes, with a number of 34 out of 44 people. 17 of these provided information about what they cooked or baked. According to this, the recipes for different kinds of soups and the recipe for Iranian Spinach pastry were the most popular ones.

When asked about how satisfied they were on:

a) overall [elements of the blog], b) verbal instructions, c) list of ingredients and measurements, d) photos of the process, e) story of the recipe,

the respondent members mostly replied as "very satisfied".

The most successful among these elements were photos of the process, with 82.35% of the respondents replying giving 5 out of 5. On the other hand, the weakest element was the verbal instructions.

All the respondent members who cooked or baked a recipe from the blog also read the stories before the instructions. This may show that the story was something they could relate to and hence it helped them choose to cook the recipe. They may have also decided to cook the recipe already before reading the story, however, they were curious about what it meant for me and wanted to know more about the background of that particular recipe.

Out of the 16 respondents who replied to the question of how exactly they followed the instructions, the majority replied *"fully"* whereas 3 respondents explained the changes they made. Two of these three members had also commented like so in the related blog post and this showed that when a community member engaged with the shared repertoire in a different way, he/she wanted to share this with the rest of the community. This provided a valuable addition to the shared repertoire.

Most of the respondents who accepted that they never used any recipe in the blog informed that they had bookmarked a few recipes and they were planning to cook those recipes in the future.

The rest of the questions aimed to help the development of the blog's content.

The community members were mostly looking for recipes that were either from a different cuisine than their own culture or that they could cook using local ingredients. The search for different cuisines shows that food is an important and attractive part of another culture. On the other hand, the search for recipes with local ingredients can be interpreted as a shift to a more sustainable lifestyle. Some members also wrote specifically that they looked for easy and practical recipes. 76.92% of the members liked organizing gatherings around a table and inviting their friends or family to their homes. Therefore, it is possible to say that the members are open to social interactions.

Many of the respondents did not know about the local food events or food movements happening in their cities. Among the ones that were known, the most popular one was Restaurant Day / Ravintolapäivä.

When asked about what other kind of recipes they wanted to see in the blog, there was a variety of replies, with some minor focus on *"traditional Turkish or Finnish"*, *"cooking rather baking"*, and *"quick-easy-fast and made with local or organic ingredients"*. A majority of the respondents also requested to see more posts on local food events and culture, eating out, typical Finnish cuisine etc. This shaped the blog to a great extent and after the survey, posts on traditional Finnish food or local food events were added.

Finally, the majority of the respondents were interested in participation in an offline cooking or baking related workshop, with 75.68% share. This again shows the level of enthusiasm towards social interactions between community members and a possible need for more face-to-face engagements.

The complete list of questions and replies are provided as appendix at the end of this thesis.

DISCUSSION

The online part of the case, My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki blog is the shared repertoire of the virtual community of practice. The community was created and evolved within one year of blogging and although the community members and other followers were from diverse cultures and physical locations, it was a small community of practice in number (with 45 official subscribers by April 2014 and about 20 more regular visitors).

After the change of the blog's interface, comments and other virtual engagements of readers with the blog increased. I realized that the simplicity of the blog's interface, the easiness of browsing and the richness in content contributed to a higher participation by the community members. This was a learning outcome of the blog's design process that was coherent with theories stated by Koh et al. (2007) on the importance of visual contents and by Andrews (2002) on the importance of simple, focused content.

Even though the interactions in the community continued in a face-to-face level as well, I believe that we cannot call this community of practice as a hybrid community, which is a type of community of practice that was theorized by Byington (2011). On the other hand, the members of the community that engage virtually or socially are not entirely different from each other either; therefore I can still call this as one community of practice.

The most important personal realization of this stage of the case was seeing how a community emerged from a personal blog. As the readers started engaging with the blog through their comments, I realized that readers were learning from the blog by the practice of cooking my recipes and they were responding back by providing comments and feedback on the blog posts. Even though there was not a visible and physical participation, and even though I did not actually witness any of the practice, there was still a significant amount of valuable information provided by the community members. This showed me that readers went through a similar learning process like me - first reading and learning a recipe from an existing blog, then learning it deeper by the actual practice. Finally the outcome of the process, be it a full blog post in my personal learning case, or a comment on an existing blog post in the other members' learning cases, reification occurred and new knowledge was added.

PART II: RECIPES EVENINGS

Participation in virtual communities can be a difficult issue to tackle with. A virtual community generally strengthens through face-to-face meetings. In order to strengthen the virtual community of practice around My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki blog, I designed a series of face-to-face events called "My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki Recipes Evening", starting from October 2013.

Basically, how these events functioned was as follows:

A Facebook public event was created and spread in the social network of My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki Facebook page. Because of practicalities, only those that reside in Finland were invited. In the event description there were clear instructions of how to sign up to the event.

For each event, about 4-5 recipes from the blog were chosen according to their types and publication time (they were all published within the same month or two). These recipes varied from main dishes to desserts. Those who were interested in cooking or baking one of those recipes were expected to make their choice and write that on the event wall, which also meant

as an official signing-up. Whenever a recipe was chosen by a community member and declared openly on the event wall, this recipe was marked as taken and the remaining people were expected to choose from the remaining recipes. Within the context of the event, these people were named "cooks".

The second type of participants was called "tasters". These people were in charge of providing drinks to the event. As they could see the complete ingredient list of the food to be cooked, they could determine what kind of drink would suit best to the event. The same signing up process applied for the tasters as cooks; they were expected to write their participation as "tasters" on the event wall.

This kind of open signing up provided an equal environment. By seeing this, people were convinced that the event was not a party of my close network. Everyone had the equal chance of participation, however, they had to act fast to be able to sign up before the event's cook and taster positions were all filled.

In the event description, it was also clearly stated that any kind of personal support during the actual practice cooking would be provided for the cooks and that each cook had the chance to modify the recipe according to their wishes. In the actual event process, no one needed any extra support and this showed that the information and the instructions provided in the recipes were clear enough.

The last role belonged to me, as the host of the event as well as an extra cook. For each event, I cooked a new recipe, which was not yet published anywhere, and the event's participants were the first ones to taste and evaluate it.

On the Event Day
The cooks and tasters were expected to come to the event on time, as this was essentially a dinner gathering. Except for just a few cases, this happened according to the plan.

Participants of the Recipes Evening, organized on 22.2.2014. Photo by Anja-Lisa Hirscher.

The cooks brought the food they cooked and tasters brought their choice of drinks. When everyone was present, the event officially started. During the event, each cook was in charge of serving their dish to the guests.

After The Event
After each Recipes Evening, within three days, I wrote a blog post about the event, providing information on the evening in general and the significant moments of the event.

Each event attracted more members and the positions were filled quickly. This was a clear indication that the social, face-to-face interaction and sharing of this interaction with other members increased mutual engagement of members.

Facts on The Event
There were a total of 3 Recipes Evening between October 2013 - February 2014. In these evenings, 26 people tasted a total of 12 recipes. Out of these 26 people, 10 were cooks (including me).

The recipes that were chosen by each cook was different from their own culture's cuisine, which made them learn something new about another culture through the practice of cooking and eventually through the event and the blog.

DISCUSSION

With these evenings, first of all I could see how food united people. Even though the participants were mostly related to me through social networking, they did not necessarily know each other in person before. However, on the event day, they joyfully shared an experience of a dinner table and rich discussions occurred.

The discussion on food around the table generally continued during the whole eating period of the event. These discussions mostly started by telling the cooks' experiences of cooking the recipes. They explained why they chose to participate as a cook and why they chose that recipe. Then they continued to explain further about the process. Afterwards, as the group was eating, the conversation continued on the taste of that food.

When the food was tasted, this physical interaction with it generally triggered the memories embedded in the participants and they started sharing stories - these stories were about a similar dish that they had in their childhood or in their home countries, about the social and cultural values that the dish reminded them of and the traditions of not only eating but also anything in general. Through their personal stories and interpretations, each participant got to learn more about one or more different culture.

The discussions generally ended with comparisons of the different cultures around the dinner table with the local Finnish culture.

PART III: KITCHEN TALKS

In September 2013, I started a side project that provided more content to the blog but did not necessarily emerge from it. This project was called "Kitchen Talks" and it was a face-to-face interaction using food as a means of communication.

Until that point, my experience with food through sharing recipes on the blog showed me a genuine interest of people to the subject. I saw that conversations started easier while there was food at the same place or when it was about food. Therefore, I decided to experiment more using food as a tool to see if and how it would flourish communication with other people and what kind of interactions I could start with that.

Background for the case

During my studies in Finland, I worked in several cases, which had direct relation to social challenges in the context of Finnish society. Although the issues were different than each other, the one thing in common was the need for communication with target communities.

One of these cases had special significance. This was a case

study about reviving a suburban neighbourhood of Helsinki named Kannelmäki, located about 10 kilometers away from the city center, towards northwest. I worked in this case between September - December 2011 with my classmate Malin Bäckman.

During the four months time we worked in Kannelmäki, we made the initial contact with the community in Kannelmäki, pointing out the key people and key issues to be dealt with, as well as getting to know the physical characteristics of the neighbourhood and mapping both people and services. In order to do these, we made interviews with the key people that were already active within community; on streets all around the neighbourhood we put papers with questions about the life in Kannelmäki to activate people and to make them think; we organized an event in coordination with the café inside Kanneltalo (Kannelmäki Culture Center) using Restaurant Day to interview people and we asked questions related to the meaning of neighbourhood together with the idea of a dream neighbourhood.

The short work we made in Kannelmäki showed various results. One of them was the experience we gained about working with a community. In that case study, we were working with the community, but not in the community. Therefore, the key people within the community were crucial for us in building trust.

Another result was the invisibility of immigrants in the neighbourhood during our study, while Kannelmäki is actually one of the neighbourhoods in Helsinki with the highest number of foreigners. These foreigners are both immigrants who have been living in Finland for a long time with permanent residence and/or Finnish passport, as well as foreign students living in HOAS (Foundation for Student Housing in the Helsinki Region) buildings. The immigrants had their own associations, groups, meetings etc. that we could not reach during our work in

Autumn 2011. This situation got me thinking about the situation of foreigners and their integration to the Finnish society in general. Coming from another culture myself, I had my own experiences on what it means to be a foreigner in Finland.

Finland is a rather new country of immigrants compared to many other European countries. Before that traditionally Finland was a country of emigration, a large number of Finnish citizens moved to another country especially during 1960s and 1970s (Sagne et al. 2005). However, starting from the end of 1980s, especially with the immigration of those who are returning back to their country Finland from Russia, there have been large numbers of immigration movements.

The country report for Finland, which was prepared for the European research project POLITIS by Sagne et al. (2005), shows that the participation of immigrants in social life in Finland is still low, however, promisingly, it is on the rise. The report also points out that there are around 600 associations of immigrants in total with different natures (cultural, religious, multicultural etc.) and these associations help their members most for integration to the society while still protecting their own culture, thus helping the integration of immigrants without cultural assimilation.

Even though there is an established integration policy for immigrants in Finland, the practice shows that this policy does not give full potential outcome. The approach that does not build empathy with the immigrants' real issues keeps a certain distance with the system. Therefore, there are groups of people, associations, culture centers and personal initiatives trying to find alternative ways to reach foreigners and to create a vibrant multicultural society in Finland.

One of these people was Melis Ari, project coordinator in Kassandra Culture Center in Helsinki in 2011-2013. Kassandra Culture Center focuses especially on foreign artists and creative people living in Finland and uses especially performance arts during their workshops. Ari was the project coordinator of Koivu ja Tähti (The Birch and The Star) project in Kassandra Culture Center in 2011-2012. This was a project for women with immigrant backgrounds and without literacy skills which offered an opportunity to develop new ways of learning while encouraging the use of Finnish language (Birch and star n.d.). I made an interview with her on 15.1.2013 about the results gained from this project. Ari commented that language was a significant barrier for the immigrant women they worked with during the project, however the creative methods that did not need the use of advanced verbal skills as well as the friendly and trustful environment that the culture center offered made them open up and even start learning a little bit of Finnish language for everyday use.

The studies and the increasing number of creative initiatives such as Kassandra showed that the integration of foreigners and immigrants, and the exploration of cultural diversity in Finland became a hot topic in recent years. Based on the experiences that I gained from the blog, which attracted people from diverse backgrounds, I decided to use food to reach people and to communicate with them in order to investigate the topic of cultural diversity in Helsinki Metropolitan Area. I designed co-cooking/co-baking sessions and made interviews during those sessions, the results of which can be used in other studies related to integration.

A Series of Co-cooking and Co-Baking Sessions

Kitchen Talks was fundamentally a series of sessions that involved cooking or baking together with a host participant in his/her own kitchen. The host taught a recipe while cooking with me. I documented the whole process with photos, voice recording and personal notes.

The people involved in the project were residents of Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Within the participants, there were both Finnish people and foreigners. The hosts were asked to teach any recipe that they wanted, regardless of their culture. It could surely be a traditional recipe from their culture, however it was also acceptable if it was just a random dish that they enjoyed making and that they wanted to share with blog community.

The only limitation on the recipe was that the ingredients of the recipe would be found easily anywhere in Finland. Therefore, if it were a traditional recipe from another cuisine, it would be acceptable only if substitute ingredients found in Finland were used.

The Sessions

In the session day, I went to the home of the host participant. We usually had a short chat to break the ice and then moved on to cooking. The host first introduced me to the ingredients and their measurements. He/she also introduced me to the tools that we were to use while cooking. In some cases, there was a general introduction to the kitchen as well. After that, we started cooking.

Interviews

While cooking together, I interviewed the host participant. As the topic of our interaction was food, we first started talking about food, however through food we also moved on to other discussions.

The interviews were roughly divided in three parts.

In the first part, we talked about the host's cooking and baking habits such as how often he/she cooked or how he/she started cooking, his/her story related to the dish and the food culture in general in the host's country. Through the replies to these questions, some information about the host's cultural values

Four of "Kitchen Talks" hosts: (left, above) Ashkan Shabnavard (Iran), (right, above) Jemima Repo (Finland), (left, below) Aylin Erman Sahin (Turkey), (right, below) Vahid Mortezaei (Iran).

were also discussed as food itself was an important cultural value and revealed a lot about society in general.

The second part of the interview was about the relationship of the host with Finland, in the case where he/she was a foreigner. Food was again at the center of this part. I asked questions like the host's views on Finnish cuisine, why he/she came to Finland, what he/she thought of food diversity in Helsinki considering eating out, if he/she knew and participated any local food movements or if even heard about them and where he/she did the grocery shopping. If the host was Finnish, surely there was no question of why the host "came to Finland" however the rest of the questions were same as they were mostly related to an understanding of Helsinki residents' relationships with their urban settings.

The third and final part of the interview focused more on the cultural diversity in Finland, more precisely, in Helsinki. The first two parts of the interview with food at the center provided a base for a shift towards a conversation on culture. I asked the host first what s/he thought about cultural diversity in Helsinki. Then, if the host was a foreigner, I asked him/her what it meant for them to be a foreigner in Helsinki. If, on the other hand, the host was Finnish, I asked him/her how they felt about living in a society that is getting more culturally diverse each day. Finally, I asked the host what he/she liked best about Helsinki and Finnish culture and what he/she did not like at all and I asked him/her to give tips and recommendations for the newcomers (by newcomers, I did not mean tourists, but those who would come here to live at least for a few months).

DISCUSSION

During the period between September 2013 - February 2014, I conducted 14 co-cooking/co-baking sessions in Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Out of these 14 sessions, 4 of them were made with Finnish hosts, 4 of them were made with Turkish hosts, 2 of them were made with Iranian hosts, and the rest were Russian, German, Romanian and Portuguese, with 1 host from each country.

The case started as an experiment. Since I did not have much experience in making an interview together with a practice, in the first two sessions, I mostly observed the host cook and let the interview flow like a conversation. I asked questions as the conversation continued and with that I figured out a pattern for the interview.

I realized that starting by talking about food and people's personal stories broke the barriers since we were also cooking that food and engaging in a practice together. It was then easier to talk about other topics (being a foreigner, multicultural society, advantages/disadvantages of living in Finland etc.) and to gain a deeper knowledge of personal experiences of those people related to those topics. In the end, the interviews evolved to consist of three consecutive parts.

The first part of the interviews

Questions: How often do you bake or cook? What are your cooking habits at home? How long have you been cooking or baking? What is the story of this dish? What is the food culture in general in your country? What do you miss from home?

Most of the hosts were genuinely interested in cooking or baking, and food related activities. Some of them would have liked to cook more frequently, however, because of their working hours or other businesses, they could not always find time. In some cases, the wife/husband/boyfriend/girlfriend of the host cooked more at home or they enjoyed cooking together. They described this practice of cooking together as *"quality time spent at home"*. This showed that couples enjoyed this interaction and it helped them to connect to each other.

While answering questions, some of the hosts also talked about their past cooking/baking habits. One host from Swedish - Finnish descendant (Malin) said that she used to be part of a "Cake Club", and through that she baked more than she did now (Personal interview, November 26, 2013). The idea of the club was to bake a chocolate cake and the only rule was to exaggerate the amount of chocolate used in the recipe, by adding much more chocolate than what the recipe called for. This was an example of another kind of community that came together with an interest and shared practice, related to food.

Most of the hosts started cooking at an early age with their mothers or grandmothers. For instance, one of the hosts, a woman of Romanian origin (Bianca), living in Helsinki with her husband of Swedish-Finnish descendant, replied to the question of "How long have you been baking?" as:

> *"I started baking quite young with my mother. My mother used to bake a lot and she was very good at it. My mother is good at everything. Then I had my own projects in the kitchen next to her."* (Personal interview, December 2, 2013).

To the same question, another host, an Iranian man (Vahid) living in Helsinki for three years, replied as:

> *"Even when I was a kid, I liked spending time in the kitchen with my mother instead of playing football. But now she is disappointed, maybe I should have played football! Even then I experimented with ingredients."* (Personal interview, November 27, 2013).

According to these replies, cooking, and fundamentally, food were means to identify childhood and relationships with family. These memories of cooking/baking together with mother, grandmother and so on, resulted in the stories to be shared later on, which gave information about the host's identity. Hence, we can see that people shared mostly personal stories with a level of relation to the food culture where that individual grew up in.

This characteristic of "personal" also affected their choice of which dish to cook. As most of the hosts' relationships with their families involved cooking together to a large extent, when they were asked to teach me a dish by cooking together in these co-cooking sessions, they chose the dish either from the list of dishes that they cooked with their mother or grandmother, or they asked their families' opinion on what to cook with me. For instance, a man of Portuguese origin (Hugo), living in Helsinki for about 4 years with his Finnish girlfriend said that the dish he prepared with me was his great grandmother's recipe and it stayed within the family for a long time, changing a little through generations (Personal interview, December 28, 2013).

According to this, the hosts did not choose just any dish. Instead, they wanted to share something that had a deeper meaning for them and through that, they shared their personal stories, which gave information (Person about their identities. This made their participation deeper.

Through the question of the food culture in the host's own culture, I got to learn about different cuisines in general. For instance, in Iran, there are many diverse cuisines, as there is diversity in ethnicity throughout the country. Each ethnic group had their own food culture, differing from each other in one-way or another. In many countries, food had a ritualistic meaning as it was always at the center of important events. In Portugal, people always ate together, and for instance dinner was a means for family to come together and exchange their daily experiences. This was actually the thing that hosts most missed about their home culture, more than the food and tastes themselves. They expressed genuine disappointment about the

lack of view on food as a socializing and communicative tool. One German host (Anja) said:

> "*I think eating is a social thing. I rarely eat alone. I usually cook with my roommates. I organize dinner for friends. I think in Finland food is seen more as a functional thing.*" (Personal interview, February 27, 2014).

From this comment and other similar ones, I realized that there was a need for socializing with food in Finland, particularly in Helsinki. This might be also one of the reasons why there was so much blog readership in Finland, as people search for different means of meeting that need. It also explains the roots for Helsinki becoming a vibrant food community.

Second part of the interview

Questions: What do you think about Finnish cuisine? Why did you come to Finland? What do you think of the food diversity in Helsinki? Do you know any local food movements; are you interested in organic and local ingredients? Where do you mostly do your grocery shopping?

Most of the foreign hosts were living in Helsinki for at least 3 years, with exception of one Turkish female student (Erin) that came to Finland in August 2013. Majority of the hosts came as students and stayed. Some of them chose to study or to work in Finland because they were in a relationship with or married to a Finnish person. Most of the Finnish hosts, on the other hand, came to Helsinki from different parts of the country, such as Joensuu, Raisio or Kotka.

About Finnish cuisine, the foreign hosts did not know so much of the traditional dishes as they thought that it was not presented enough, apart from some touristic restaurants, which were mostly out of their budgets. One host (Vahid) said:

Examples of food co-cooked with hosts: (left, above) Gambas Pil Pil - Deep-fried prawns with Panu Kontkanen, (right, above) Melcisori - Little Snails dessert with Bianca Byggmästar, (left, below) Risalamande - Danish rice porridge with Lilli Maaria Mäkelä, (right, below) Icli Köfte - Bulgur balls stuffed with ground beef with Sebnem Terzioglu Järventaus.

"What is Finnish cuisine, that is the real question! I like riisipiirakka. I hate Salmiakki, it tastes like medicine. I know rye bread is healthy, but honestly I like white bread. The rest, I do not know. None of my Finnish friends cook anything traditional for me!" (Personal interview, November 27, 2013).

It is clear that Finnish cuisine is not introduced to a full extent in daily lives. Therefore foreigners continue with their eating habits by making some kind of adjustments because of the ingredients they could get. The Finnish people are not very open to invite people over for dinner or similar gatherings. The Swedish-Finnish host (Malin) explained this as:

"When I feel relaxed enough to call someone any time to do something out, it means we have passed barriers. When I feel relaxed enough to invite someone over to my place for coffee or tea, it means I started trusting this person to open my life. When I feel relaxed enough to invite someone over to my place for dinner and I cook for them, it means we became friends and that is something that will continue forever (unless she makes a really bad move and ruins my trust!!)." (Personal interview, November 26, 2013).

Hence, Finnish people give importance to their privacy, however once you are invited to a Finnish home, you can be confident that you gained a friend that you can trust always.

The hosts, in general, were not satisfied with food diversity in Helsinki. Majority of them thought that there was a significant amount of variety, however they were too generic and they mostly tasted like each other. The quality within the food diversity was not high.

"There is a lot of variety in Helsinki, yes, but among those there is not much variety. I mean, for instance, you do not see the different Asian cuisines, they are just Asian." (Malin) (Personal interview, November 26, 2013).

Furthermore, it was generally too expensive to benefit from this diversity:

"Major problem is price. The cheapest food is pizza and kebab and they are generally horrible. If I want to try something different it is very expensive. The only chance to try something different is Ravintolapäivä. I once went to Ravintola Perho and only main course was 30." (Vahid) (Personal interview, November 27, 2013). [A personal note: This person was Iranian who has been living here for 4 years and he did not speak any Finnish. However, he had the perfect pronunciation with the word "Ravintolapäivä". When I told this comment to him, he said that it was because this word settled in his life deeply thanks to the event.]

The majority of the hosts did not know local movements, except for Restaurant Day. This result of the interviews was consistent with blog's survey results. 3 of the hosts also heard about Dodo ry, but they did not know specifically much about their projects. The hosts were not particularly interested in local or organic ingredients, except for one Turkish host who had recently decided to buy as many organic products as possible for her son's nutrition, and one Finnish host that said she chose organic ingredients every now and then, if they were not too expensive.

Third part of the interview
Questions: What do you think of the cultural diversity in Helsinki? What does it mean for you to be a foreigner in Helsinki? How do you feel about living in a society that is getting more culturally diverse each day? What do you like best or hate most about Helsinki and/

or about Finland? What are your tips and recommendation for newcomers?

When asked about the cultural diversity in Helsinki, the majority of the Finnish hosts said that they did not see it much except for their immediate surroundings that involved mostly European foreigners. However, they did not know anything about African, Middle Eastern or Asian groups living mostly in Eastern Helsinki or in other parts of the city that were away from the center. Some Finnish hosts said that the cultural diversity made them review their traditions and culture in a new light. One Swedish-Finnish host (Malin) said:

"It [cultural diversity] brings richness. You start reevaluating Finnish traditions. But sometimes it is exaggerated like a side effect. As a Finn, I am disappointed against those who are not so welcoming." (Personal interview, November 26, 2013).

The foreigners, on the other hand, expressed difficulties in integrating the culture, even if they came with a high motivation. They believed that Finnish people were not ready to live together and they wanted to keep foreigners at a distance. The Romanian host (Bianca) explained this as:

"I speak Finnish and Swedish. I feel like this is my home. But sometimes I have very difficult experiences. I feel like Finns don't want foreigners to feel at home. They label you as outsider. I find it annoying when asked, "Where are you from?" When you answer, they immediately put you in a box." (Personal interview, December 2, 2013).

What people liked most about Helsinki was its physical location, surrounded by sea;

"It is close to the sea. It is the capital, there are many things to do." (Lilli - Finnish) (Personal interview, December 8, 2013).

Or, they liked traditional architecture, but they did not like new architecture:

"Wooden architecture. I dislike the new architecture. My heart is broken when I see the old things destroyed." (Bianca) (Personal interview, December 2, 2013).

Or, the life style and the proximity of things in general:

"Tiny city, I walk everywhere. It's a huge contrast to both cities I lived in [New York and Istanbul]. There's always something to do. I am surprised with crowds in the events. And sauna is great!". (Erin) (Personal interview, December 11, 2013).

According to the interviews, the relationship between the urban space of Helsinki and the hosts were quite good and they were happy to live in.

In the end, I finished the interviews with asking for tips and recommendations for newcomers. They were free to give tips about culture in general, about the physical space of Helsinki or some tips like "do this - do not do that".

All the foreign hosts talked about the problem of language and they advised the newcomers to learn the language as soon as possible if they wanted to stay in Finland for a long period:

"Learn the language. Then you will feel part of the place. Then you can relate to people. That's when they start accepting you. I noticed the difference myself. When you speak the language, you are in their group and they respect you. And they are surprised." (Bianca) (Personal interview, December 2, 2013).

"I really tried to learn the language but then I got frustrated. But do learn the language." (Anja) (Personal interview, February 27, 2014).

Another tip that was common between foreign hosts was about being patient and eager to learn Finnish culture and to connect to locals.

"Contact with locals. Try Finnish things: sauna, icehole swimming, skiing, and food of course. Make connections, do not stick to the foreigners." (Anja) (Personal interview, February 27, 2014).

"It's ok and healthy to compare things and attitudes. I still do sometimes. But at some point you need to get over it and try to understand and appreciate for what it is. Try to make friends, meet people that can support you while going through the changes." (Bianca) (Personal interview, December 2, 2013).

From the replies by foreign hosts, it was indeed clear that social interactions with locals were essential if you wanted to feel like part of the culture. They mostly identified food (in the form of salmiakki and karelian pie), sauna and skiing as "Finnish things" and they recommended that people tried those and more.

The most common practical recommendation from foreign hosts were about bureaucracy, for example, the importance of registering to the population system, getting an ID number and bank account as fast as possible.

"I could not do anything until I got my cell phone and bank account. Get a cell phone." (Ashkan - Iranian host) (Personal interview, December 11, 2013).

Finnish hosts, on the other hand, focused more on practical tips, such as *"try sauna"*, *"remember that shops are not open 24/7 here"*, *"bicycling is good"*, and *"be prepared to be organized if you are not living in the center"*.

There was, on the other hand, one common thing between Finnish hosts. This was the feeling of loneliness:

"It's easy to be lonely in Finland. Use public services, eat out, go to libraries, meet new people. Pick up new hobbies to meet new people with same interests." (Lilli - Finnish host) (Personal interview, December 8, 2013).

"You can easily feel lonely in Finland. Try every chance to meet new people, even though it is not easy I know." (Jemima - Finnish host) (Personal interview, December 22, 2013).

During these sessions, I realized that engaging in a practice as common as cooking and doing this in their own personal space, the hosts really felt comfortable with talking about these issues. Some of them, especially foreigners, said that they were normally not so easy topics as they did not know what the other person's reaction would be - if it was a Finnish person, you might hurt their feelings or they might get offended. Therefore, I can say that the decision on the location was the most suitable choice for the sessions and food was a comforting and yet very familiar common ground for communication.

My aim while conducting these interviews were to explore the use of food in a communicative way to bring out views on some issues that people were dealing with. In a way, food was a tool that brought us together; in another way food was a tool that helped us think deeper and through certain actions of cooking or certain ingredients, helped us remember things from our past. This gave a new meaning to our mutual engagement as

we shared them with each other at that moment.

Even if the cooked dish was a traditional food from the host's own culture, we could not say that it was exactly the same as it was in the host's home country since the ingredients were foreign and the location was different. However, the practice of cooking was the same, the food went through the same processes. In the end, we cooked a dish that looked the same as it originally was, that tasted as similar as possible as the original, but had a new, shared meaning between two people coming from different cultures, or two people coming from same culture but living simultaneously in a different one. Therefore, according to social theory of learning, we learned from each other: we engaged in an activity that fostered new social interactions and through these interactions, we created, changed and modified meanings of our cooking and food-related experiences.

Photos of three dishes from the blog, belonging to three different cuisines: (left, above) Tahini Roll from Turkish cuisine, (right, above) Macarons from French cuisine, Laskiaispulla - Semla from Finnish cuisine.

SPINACH PASTRY
by VAHID MORTEZAI

Ingredients:
For dough:
3 eggs
1 egg white
250 gr butter (melted)
1/2 cup spinach, pureed
800 gr flour
3 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
White sesame seed
For the filling:
1 kg potato
2 onions
Aleppo or chilli pepper
1.5 tsp salt
1 tbsp oil

1. Boil and mash the potatoes.
2. Grate onions. Add to potatoes with aleppo pepper. Season with salt.
3. Add oil to the potato filling. Mix until well combined. Filling is ready, put aside.
4. Crack eggs in a bowl, add melted butter and whisk.
5. Add spinach puree and whisk until fully incorporated.
6. Sift the flour, add to spinach mixture in batches of 1/2 cup together with baking powder and salt. Knead the dough.
7. When you have a soft and non sticky dough, cover with a stretch film and chill in the fridge for about 30 minutes.
8. Preheat the oven to 180C.
9. Take the dough out of the fridge and start rolling until you have about 5 mm thickness.
10. Take a circular tool like a glass or a cup and cut circles from the rolled dough. Roll each circular piece one more time to 2-3 mm thickness.
11. Put 1 tbsp filling in the middle of each piece and fold. Put the ready pieces on an oven tray with baking sheet, brush with egg white. Sprinkle some sesame seeds.
12. Bake for about 30 minutes, take them out before they get browny.
kitchen!

"Even when I was a kid, I liked spending time in the kitchen with my mother instead of playing football. But now she is disappointed, maybe I should have played football! Even then I experimented with ingredients."

- What is the story of this dish?
"One time I cooked breakfast for designers in Design Museum. I was looking for a salty recipe. I called my mother. She had recently found this recipe. I tried it and I liked. But the original filling was feta. Feta was too salty for me. So I took the filling from your recipe. The combination was great."

- What do you think about food diversity in Helsinki?
"Major problem is price. The cheapest food is pizza and kebab and they are generally horrible. If I want to try something different, it is very expensive. The only chance (to try something different) is Ravintolapäivä."

- What are your thoughts about Finnish culture?
"Still I struggle to understand, what is Finnish culture? It is difficult to communicate with Finns. It is difficult to get close. After 2 years, still I do not have serious Finnish friends, I do not know why? In 2 years, I have only been invited twice to a Finn's home."

- What are your tips / recommendations for newcomers?
"At first Helsinki looks boring. Gradually you realize that there is something in this city, there are many places and many events. Be patient. Start to learn the language early, if you really want to penetrate to the city."

"What is Finnish cuisine, that is the question! I like riisipiirakka. I hate Salmiakki, it tastes like medicine. I know rye bread is healthy, but honestly I like white bread."

RISALAMANDE
by LILLI MAARIA MÄKELÄ

Instructions:
For rice porridge:
1/2 cup / 1 dl rice for porridge (Puuroriisi)
1 2/3 cups / 4 dl whole milk (Täysmaito)
1/2 cup / 1 dl heavy cream (kuohukerma)
For cranberry sauce:
100 gr. cranberry
1 cup / 2.4 dl water
1 tbsp / 15 ml starch (Perunajauho)
1/4 cup / 1/2 dl dry sherry
1/2 cup / 1 dl brown sugar

1. First prepare the porridge. In a casserole, put rice and milk. By continuously stirring, boil milk and rice. Gradually heat down while stirring every once in a while. Cook for about 35 minutes. In the last 5 min, turn down the heat, put a lid on the casserole and leave like that.
2. Put heavy cream in a bowl and whip until you have a nice, stiff cream.
3. Take pieces from the cream, about 1 spoon at a time and mix it with porridge. When all are mixed, the porridge part is done.

4. Now comes the sauce. Put cranberries and water in a pan and boil them on medium high heat until they get mushy.
5. Put sherry and starch, cook a bit more while continuously stirring.
6. Add sugar, continue stirring and cooking, until sugar is dissolved and all the ingredients are incorporated. Starch will make it harden a bit so you should get quite a dense sauce in the end.
7. Put some porridge in a small bowl to serve. On it, add a spoonful of sauce. The porridge should be in room temperature (or cooler), sauce should be warm.

- What do you think about the cultural diversity in Helsinki?
"I have been living in Finland for 10 years. Now in university I meet a lot of foreigners. When I lived in Copenhagen I knew many foreigners because I was a foreigner myself. For instance, I met a Chinese lab assistant there, we were both working in laundry. She was an older woman than me, like an older sister to me. It was nice to work with her."

- What do you not like about Helsinki?
"Sundays are too quiet. I used to go to Sunday clubs to chill out in Copenhagen. Culture of just hanging around could be better in Helsinki. There could be more public spaces just for leisure. Here, every time you go somewhere, you have to buy something, you have to pay, like cafes or bars etc. It differs a lot according to the neighbourhood, in Kallio for example, it is easier to know people, like neighbours. But here in Lauttasaari I don't know many people, or we just say hello-hello to each other. People are super shy."

"I learned baking with my grandmother. When I moved back to Finland (from Denmark), my roommate was cooking a lot and so I cooked more."

"I enjoy diversity. Since preschool I've been with different cultures. In my neighbourhood there are many Swedish-Finns. There are also more and more Indians & Pakistanis living in this neighbourhood who study in Otaniemi, since it is close.

- What are your tips / recommendations for newcomers?
"It's easy to be lonely in Finland. Use public services, eat out, go to libraries, meet new people. Pick up new hobbies to meet new people with same interests. Helsinki is also a new place for some Finns, they come from other parts of the country. Bicycling is good, try that. You can also do different kinds of sports."

5 DISCUSSION

This study was made to understand how food could be used as a means of communication while exploring the learning process within a virtual community of practice that is created around a food blog.

The cooking and eating together with friends in my personal life lead to a group of friends from my personal network asking me to share these experiences and mostly recipes by a blog.

The same and more readers were the first members of an emerging community of practice. Together with them, through their contributions by comments and messages in the virtual environment, the blog shaped more and changed for better, In that sense, I can say that we have created and designed the blog together, even though most of us never had face-to-face interactions.

During the course of the study, I realized that the theory about participation in virtual communities being a challenge in some cases was correct to a certain extent. Face-to-face interactions are still very important for community, however, we cannot

underestimate the power of reaching many more people in a virtual community, thanks to the Internet.

In order to keep the community dynamic, I had to work on each blog post carefully and I also had to post frequently. In a blog study like this where there is only one blogger, i.e. leader, one person has quite big responsibilities and is the person who cannot leave the community, whereas other members can come and go. If the blog had multiple leaders, the responsibility would be shared, however, there would be also a risk of content getting unfocused.

My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki became a community of practice in time, as a community that *emerged* from the need of sharing recipes. The designed part of the blog was meant to provide information and to facilitate participation from its readers. It would be correct to say that there was a balance between the duality of designed and emergent.

On the other hand, it is very important to acknowledge the power of offline interactions and what they bring to the community. The offline interactions of blog's community indeed helped with the strengthening of the trust, as well as enriching the blog's content. Besides, contrary to some of the theories that state virtual communities being a continuation of offline communities where such virtual / face-to-face duality exists, in this study it was the offline part that was the continuation of virtual one.

The community of practice emerging around the blog of this study had all the three elements of communities of practice that are based on Wenger's theory on the subject: the blogger and the readers of the blog were in a mutual engagement; there was a joint enterprise within the community, which was created through the mutual engagement of the members; finally, there was clearly a shared repertoire: the blog posts, together with

the Facebook page, the comments and messages that readers contribute to.

LEARNING IN MY DEAR KITCHEN IN HELSINKI COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
Figure 1. shows the complex network of learning happened in the community of this case study. There were several steps of learning within the study and people assumed different roles. This framework of roles can be seen in **Figure 2.**

The Blogger and Start of Learning
The first learning process was what I personally engaged in while starting the blog. I had the tacit knowledge of cooking and baking, however it was a limited knowledge as I was not the expert of the field. Therefore, I started browsing through the network of other food blogs. Through that engagement, I assumed the role of *reader* for those blogs. As I also commented and gave feedback on those blog posts, I assumed the role of contributor for those blogs.

After reading and learning from other blogs, I started cooking and baking and I started learning by practice. Even though I was alone while the practice occurred, since I was documenting each step and thinking of the ways of sharing this knowledge with others, I was also in a social engagement.

The results of this learning turned to reification by reflective thinking while writing the blog post, documenting with photos and storytelling. The blog posts eventually became the shared repertoire of the community.

The Readers and Contributions
For a while, the readers engaged with the blog only in the form of reading and occasional commenting by not from the actual learning by practice; however, they still shared personal stories
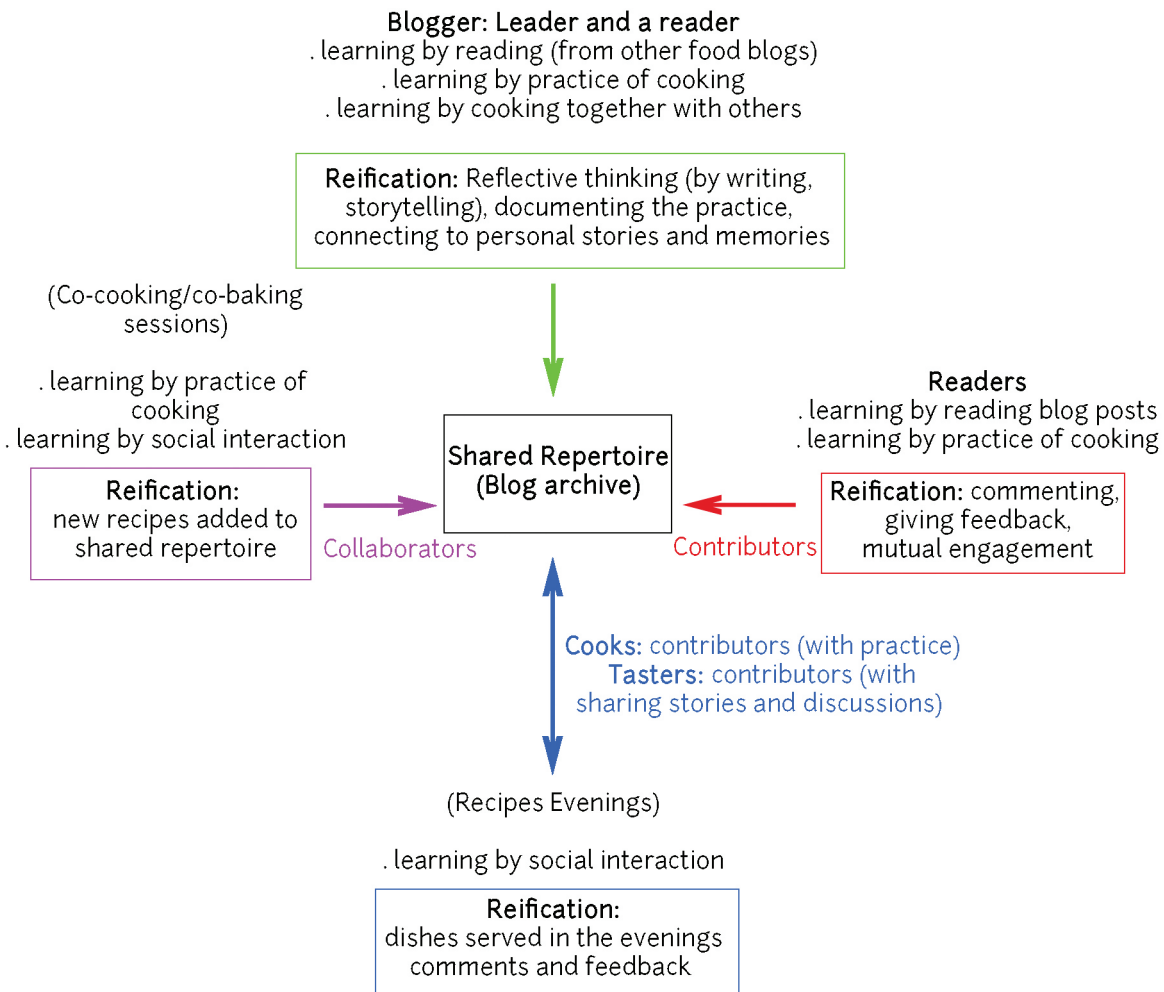
Blogger: Leader and a reader
. learning by reading (from other food blogs)
. learning by practice of cooking
. learning by cooking together with others

Reification: Reflective thinking (by writing, storytelling), documenting the practice, connecting to personal stories and memories

(Co-cooking/co-baking sessions)

. learning by practice of cooking
. learning by social interaction

Reification:
new recipes added to shared repertoire

Collaborators

Shared Repertoire
(Blog archive)

Readers
. learning by reading blog posts
. learning by practice of cooking

Contributors

Reification: commenting, giving feedback, mutual engagement

Cooks: contributors (with practice)
Tasters: contributors (with sharing stories and discussions)

(Recipes Evenings)

. learning by social interaction

Reification:
dishes served in the evenings
comments and feedback

Figure 1. The complex network of learning that happened during the case study and the distribution of roles.

through commenting. In time, some readers started learning by practice of cooking. They returned back to the blog and turned their knowledge into reification by adding their comments and feedbacks into the shared repertoire, which showed that they completed the practice. Those readers assumed the role of contributors and they gained more confidence.

Recipes Evenings and Learning by Social Interactions

After the first few months of online activity, a need for offline interactions emerged and "Recipes Evenings" started.

In the Recipes Evenings, participants rose to a new level within the community, they provided new knowledge and they assumed the role of contributors. After the events, some of the participants returned back to the shared repertoire and added feedback and comments.

Co-cooking and Co-Baking Sessions and Learning Together

The co-cooking and co-baking sessions only provided input to the shared repertoire so they may be considered slightly different than others. Those interactions added to the overall mutual engagement of the whole community, however they did not directly benefit from the existing knowledge that blog provided.

The members engaged in co-cooking and co-baking sessions assumed the role of collaborators as at least one of them was already a contributor and this interaction added to their level of engagement. In these sessions, by telling their stories, memories, and information about their culture's traditions and cuisine, people transferred cultural values to each other. In the end, new mutual values were created in the form of cooked or baked food and through a mutual memory.

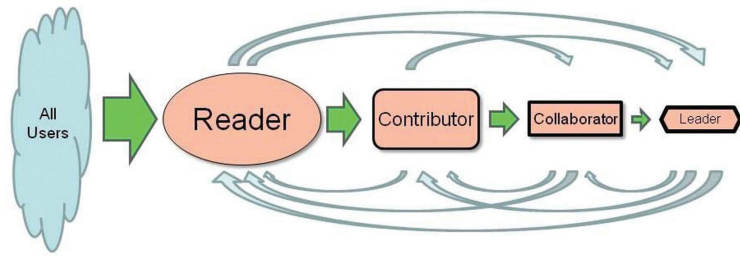Since these co-cooking and co-baking sessions were also

Figure 2. "The Reader-to-Leader Framework"
(Preece and Shneiderman 2009, p. 16).

documented, they turned into reification as new recipes added to the shared repertoire. By engaging with the shared repertoire, the virtual community benefited from the social interaction of members that carried out the mutual cooking practice.

As seen from these explorations, several levels and means of learning happened throughout the course of the case study. By participating in online and offline interactions, members engaged with each other and created, changed or modified meaning of experiences. As Wenger stated, participation had a deeper meaning than mere "being at present"; the members actually shaped the practices of the community. Participation and reification happened hand-in-hand as each interaction resulted in a comment, a feedback or a new blog post added to the shared repertoire.

The use of food as means of communication

The offline interactions that happened in relation to the blog's virtual community had one main tool in common: food. If social learning process is about establishing meaning by social

interactions, then food can be seen as the best communication tool for such a case study. This is because using food as a communication tool, people create and share meanings with each other.

Indeed, during the offline interactions of co-cooking and co-baking sessions, food was not only present for the development of community's practice and its shared repertoire, but it was also present nourishing mutual understanding and general interaction between the participants.

While cooking together, through the food that was being prepared, the host participant transferred his/her cultural and social values through personal stories. The talks on food in the teaching participant's own culture and own past, opened up other discussions.

EVALUATING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study I explored findings for several research questions.

The main research question was about how community formed around a blog and what type of community would that be. I searched for the elements in community definitions in my own case study and found out that the community that emerged around the blog was "virtual community of practice".

In order to understand the learning process that happened between the community members, I observed the community members' interactions in different settings. During these observations, I was always part of the community and my learning and interactions changed, modified and developed during the course of the study. In the end, I observed that a complex network of social learning was happening within the community.

In order to evaluate the side research questions on social and cultural aspects of food and its use for communication, I carried out offline experiments. I observed how food helped us

communicate, together with verbal communication. I evaluated how values of each culture were transferred to each other through discussions around food.

But how much did I contribute to a social challenge by doing this study and what can I say about working on such cases in general?

As Björgvinsson et al. (2010) states, social innovations do not necessarily need to be products or services, "but they can also be a principle, an idea, a piece of legislation, a social movement, an intervention, or some combination of them". In this study, I experimented with a community, a practice and food. In the end, there was not a designed product or a service but information received from people that can be used as a base for another study, a service design, or another design intervention etc. I also gained some skills on communicating with people and helped people gain or develop some skills on a practice - I encouraged them to cook or bake their own food more.

Working with communities is a delicate issue. When I was working in cases related to communities before, it took me longer to create the trust between the community and me. However, when I was *part of the community*", it was an easier process. Even though I also had to act like a facilitator, a host, a leader etc. in different stages of the case, I was also practicing cooking myself and learning about cooking along the way; or I also had a foreigner identity myself and I was being affected by the integration level of foreigners and immigrants in my daily life in Finland.

Hence there are several points I can highlight drawing from this study.

First of all, while working with a community, it is very important to be as close as possible to the community. This helps the building of trust easier as mentioned earlier.

Second, you need different skills than traditional design skills. One of the most important of these skills is communication. You need to improve your communication skills and coming from a creative background you can find alternative ways for communication. You may use something you are personally interested in or good at. In my case, it was cooking, baking as a practice and the realization of social and cultural aspects of food.

Third, it is not the best idea to make all the decisions from the beginning and it is important to leave space for what emerges during the course of the study. This also leaves space for experimenting. You can have a "brief" at the moment, however it is important to make it as flexible so that it can change according to the needs occurring in the course of the study.

What is most important is to be able to recognize what is *emerging*. In this case study, since the whole process of the case progress was free and experimental, every decision for the next step was the result of something emerging. This aspect of communities should not be underestimated; it is important to remember that significant and sustainable changes are made in accordance with that "emerging" need.

THE FUTURE OF THE STUDY

My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki blog will continue functioning even after this study. Receiving feedback about the content all the time, it will continue evolving.

My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki blog and its community may observe other food related issues in the future. It may have a physical permanent base in Helsinki and can be turned into a food hub where any topic regarding food could be discussed and projects could be carried out.

The Kitchen Talks will also continue. An informal integration book in the form of a cookbook, resulting from people's own

experiences, may be a designed outcome.

In such a case, new discussions and earning outcomes of new projects can still be turned into reification as blog posts and the virtual community can benefit from these social interactions.

A FINAL PERSONAL NOTE

This study was a very important journey in my life. I did not only conduct an academic research, but it became my life and I learned many things about myself.

I also learned a lot about cooking and baking and throughout the course of the study I cooked and especially baked a lot. I feel like I baked a thesis.

I will continue baking mostly; the journey does not end here. On the contrary, with the new meanings I found in my life, the journey has just begun now.

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APPENDIX

Survey pages.

Page 1

Dear cooking / baking / eating enthusiast,
This survey is prepared to develop "My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki" blog and the extended cooking / baking related project under the same name. Your input will be very valuable, particularly in creating future events related to the blog and food culture, particularly in Finland.
For any extra comment, you can contact me by email: mydearkitcheninhelsinki@gmail.com
If you have never seen the blog, you can still participate in the survey, but first visit the blog once:
http://mydearkitcheninhelsinki.wordpress.com
Thank you!

Page 2

Age *

○
○ 18-24
○ 25-34
○ 35-44
○ 45-54
○ >54

Gender *

○ Female
○ Male

Where do you live? *

○ Helsinki
○ Espoo
○ Vantaa
○ Other (indicating both city and country) [   ]

Page 3

How often do you cook / bake? *

○ Every day
○ Once a week
○ At least twice a week
○ Once a month
○ Never

Page 4

How often do you visit "My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki" blog? *

○ Every day
○ Once a week
○ At least twice a week
○ Once a month
○ When a new recipe is published (I am subscribed to the blog)
○ When a new recipe is published and shared on facebook (it appears on my facebook newsfeed)
○ Not regularly, but whenever I want to cook something
○ Never

Page 5

Have you ever used a recipe published in the blog? *

○ yes
○ no

Page 6

What did you cook / bake? (If you used more than one recipe, please try to list all or as many recipes as you can remember). *

[   ]

How satisfied were you with the following items? Please rate. *

	unsatisfied				very satisfied
Overall	○	○	○	○	○
Verbal instructions related to the process	○	○	○	○	○
List of ingredients and their measurements	○	○	○	○	○
Photos of the process	○	○	○	○	○
Story of the recipe	○	○	○	○	○

Did you read the story of the recipe before the instructions? *

○ yes
○ no

Did you follow all the steps exactly as instructed in the recipe? *

○ Yes
○ No, I changed: [   ]

Page 7

If you never used a recipe in the blog, why not? *

○ They are too advanced for me, I do not have the courage to try.

○ I have not yet found a recipe that I want to try.

○ I just like the stories to read but I do not like cooking / baking.

○ I have not yet had time but I bookmarked a few recipes to try in the future.

○ I only like looking at the photos.

What do you look for, when you are searching for a recipe (in any food blog)? You can choose more than one option. *

☐ I like trying recipes from cuisines other than my own culture.

☐ I try to learn traditional recipes from my own culture.

☐ I look for healthy recipes.

☐ I check if the author used organic ingredients.

☐ I try to find recipes that I can cook / bake using local ingredients.

☐ Other [_____]

Page 8

Do you like organizing dinner, lunch, brunch etc. for your friends, family, colleagues etc.? *

○ yes

○ no

Page 9

Who do you mostly organize these events for? *

○ Family (including extended family)

○ Friends

○ Colleagues

○ Other [_____]

Page 10

Do you know any local food movements in your city? *

○ No

○ Yes, such as: [_____]

Have you ever heard about "Restaurant Day"? *

○ No

○ Yes but I never participated

○ Yes, but I only visited the restaurants

○ Yes, I opened my own restaurant (at least once)

Page 11

In the following page, please fill in the blanks. You do not have to answer all of them, but it would be very helpful if you could fill as many as possible.

Page 12

I like cooking / baking, because...

[_____]

Cooking / baking is fun, if...

[_____]

I like eating out, because...

[_____]

My favourite tool in my kitchen is...

[_____]

In "My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki" blog, I'd like to see more recipes that are...

[_____]

In "My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki" blog, I'd like to see more posts about ...

[_____]

While cooking / baking, I hate using some ingredients, such as ...

[_____]

While cooking / baking, I love using some ingredients, such as...

[_____]

Page 13

Would you be interested in cooking or baking related workshops organized by "My Dear Kitchen in Helsinki" blogger? *

○ yes

○ no

Page 14

To participate in workshops, my contact information (email or phone, your preference):

[_____]

I am interested in workshops about (e.g. bread making, desserts, soups etc..):

[_____]

I cannot come to Helsinki, but I can help organizing workshop in (please indicate city):

Page 15

Anything else you would like to share with me? (comments, recommendations, complaints...)

Thank you for your participation! Happy baking!

MY DEAR KITCHEN IN HELSINKI

*EXPLORATIONS ON A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
USING FOOD, COOKING AND BLOGGING*

This study focuses on explorations on working with a community
of practice, to gain a better understanding of interactions that
result in learning between members of the community. The
designer is a part of that community; therefore, explorations on
the designer's role are also investigated. Since the designer's
personal interest and skill is on food and cooking / baking,
the community gathers around a food blog, which primarily
aims to encourage people cooking more. Food is used and
investigated as a communication tool enriching the interactions
between members. Apart from the blog, offline eating together,
cooking together events were organized; each cooking session is
documented by photographs, personal notes and voice recording
and reported on the blog. A survey is conducted through the
blog to learn more about the members and to receive feedback
from them about blog activities and content; interviews were
conducted during offline cooking together sessions.