Getting to know the island: Artistic experiments in rural community development

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ABSTRACT

This paper makes an original contribution to our understandings of the relational role of artistic practice as part of rural community development. Art-led initiatives are now commonplace in rural development strategies. However, the effects of art in rural community, particularly beyond economic development, have received little attention. In this paper we seek to address this omission by exploring artistic experiments as part of community development processes. Theoretically, we draw on relational understandings of art from art studies. Empirically, the paper utilises data collected through a one-year experimental study involving ethnography and artistic interventions in the community of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne in the north east of England. By directing our consideration of art via Liepins' framework (2000a) for 'reading' the community, we reveal artistic practice itself as a way to 'read relationships'. Rather than a tool for solving community problems, we conceptualise artistic practice as a 'diagnostic'.

1. Art practice amidst rural community development

This paper contributes to our understanding of the relational nature of the art experience via exploring the role for artistic interventions within rural community development. Following John Dewey, we understand 'art' as spanning music, visual, performance and literary work (1934, p. 77); and 'artistic' as a term to describe activity that utilises art's processes for making work as a mode of exploration. Drawing on a one-year experimental study combining ethnography and artistic fieldwork in a tidal island in northern England, we propose that the art experience reveals the complexity of rural community relationships. In particular we focus on the role of art as a way of 'reading' between human relationships as well as between humans and nature. Community is not simply enacted by people in isolation, but by people with and in the natural environment. Rather than nature as a background context to community relationships, our fieldwork demonstrates nature as being central to community meanings, practices and spaces. On these relational terms, instead of a deterministic, and inherently positive, community impact, we explore the role of art as a community 'diagnostic'.

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Community-led initiatives are commonplace in rural development practice, well discussed in the literature as neo-endogenous rural development (Lowe et al., 1998; Shucksmith, 2000). Similarly, the role of art and creativity is now frequently discussed in rural development strategies. Usually this refers to the potential of art as an instrument for economic development (Balfour and Alter, 2015). For example, in rural policy discourse, art is frequently promoted as a tool for creating jobs, attracting visitors and supporting rural businesses (e.g. Arts Council England, 2005; Collins, 2004). A recent policy report suggested rural areas demonstrate greater engagement with art, although funding for creative practices remains more limited compared to urban areas (Arts Council England, 2015). Gibson (2010a: 8) however has argued that deeper and more nuanced studies of creativity may reveal 'the communitarian purposes to which creativity can be put' beyond a profit-maximising activity for economic growth. Recent academic literature has explored community transformations resulting from art-led practices, such as creating a sense of belonging (Waitt and Gibson, 2013) providing opportunities for social interaction critical for the wellbeing of rural communities (Anwar McHenry, 2011), and solving community problems (Marksusen, 2006). Despite these contributions there is very little work in the rural context on *what art does in practice*, how art actually achieves such (or other) goals.

The research presented in this paper was part of a knowledge exchange project ('Northumbrian Exchanges') between Newcastle

University and partners across Northumberland, a rural region in the north east of England, that aimed to support a series of art-led initiatives in collaboration with local stakeholders. The fieldwork took place on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, commonly known as Holy Island, a tidal island off the Northumberland coast with a population of 150 residents (Holy Island Partnership, 2011). The island is connected with the mainland by a causeway which is covered by the North Sea twice daily, meaning access to the island is possible only during two 5–6 h periods. It constitutes a place of environmental, religious and historic significance, attracting around half a million tourists every year, famous for its priory, a castle and a National Nature Reserve. Its importance is reflected by the number of strategic agencies with governance responsibilities locally. In 2009, the Holy Island Partnership (HIP) was formed to involve local stakeholders in island development, constituting the following agencies: Natural England, English Heritage, National Trust, Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership, Northumberland County Council, Holy Island Parish Council and the Holy Island Community Development Trust. The partnership aims to coordinate the management of the island with specific interest in: 'visitor management'; 'landscape'; and 'community and cohesion' (Holy Island Partnership, 2011, p. 4).

This paper is the product of a cross-disciplinary collaboration within the fields of art studies and rural studies through ethnographic research. To explore the role of art amidst the community context of Holy Island, we first consider relational understandings of art practice alongside the literature of rural community development, observing in both cases a 'relational shift'. Then, we discuss our methodology as an experimental anthropological approach. In support of our cross-disciplinary partnership, as a point of mutual departure, we draw on Liepins' (2000a, 2000b) model for 'reading' community as a conceptual framework. Rather than understanding community as static, we utilise Liepins' framework to read community *in production* 'as a social collective of great diversity' (2000a, p. 27). We close with a discussion regarding the role of art in rural community development as well as its limitations.

2. Relational perspectives: art and rural development

In comparison to urban studies (e.g. Miles and Paddison, 2005; Garcia, 2004; Mooney, 2004; Grodach, 2011), there is little, but growing, work on the role of culture and art in rural studies (e.g. Bell and Jayne, 2010; Woods, forthcoming). Other than a few examples of studies undertaken by art practitioners (e.g. Crawshaw and Bowman, 2007), academic research highlights opportunities for regional economies from artists and wider creative industries (e.g. Herslund, 2012; Gibson, 2010b). Nonetheless, Argent et al. (2013) argue that although creative workers are attracted to rural scenic locations (see also Markusen, 2006), their contribution to local employment and local business is of little influence. Ray (2001) refers to a 'cultural economy' to emphasise local distinctive markets (inclusive of visual arts, drama and crafts) as key resources to territorial development. Recent work for example has demonstrated the role of culture in rebranding rural places in support of local development (Vik and Villa, 2010). Roberts and Townsend (2015) interview rural creatives (inclusive of artists) and argue that their formal and informal practices are associated with a series of effects including capacity building, economic diversification, demographic revival, improved sense of place and community identity; and also draw attention to community tension.

While research in rural studies challenges the 'creative class' thesis drawing on the works of Florida (2002) and Landry (2001) (e.g. Argent et al., 2013; Waitt and Gibson, 2013), there is very

little connection with the field of art studies. We argue that such interdisciplinary approaches are critical in understanding the role of art. For example, according to Anwar McHenry (2011), there is need for more research around art's role in fostering social and civic participation. In a case study in Australia, the author demonstrates that the arts were associated with a better sense of place and community meaning, while offering opportunities for social interaction. In this context, our paper sets out to articulate the experience of art in a development context, making an original contribution to understanding the relational nature of art practice.

To account for the experience of art, we take inspiration from the pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey (1859–1952). Dewey proposes the product is *not* 'the work of art'. Rather, the work takes place 'when a human being cooperates with the product so that the outcome is an experience' (1934, p. 223). We draw on Dewey's understanding of art as a process of doing or making. 'Every art does something with some physical material, the body or something outside the body, with or without the use of intervening tools […]' (Dewey, 1934, p. 48). We recognise that it is common to understand that physical materials are changed through the experience of art, but not commonly understood that our 'inner' human selves are also changed (1934, p. 77). Our paper takes account of the relational alterations mobilised by the art experience.

The relational experience of art is well discussed in art studies. The institutional theories of sociology (e.g. Danto, 1964; Becker, 2008 (1982)) suggest art is bestowed 'art-ness' via the conventions of an 'art world'. Beyond the relationships of artist, curators and museum professionals Becker proposes that the way choices are made during the realisation processes of making artworks and exhibitions, are not only embodied in people, but also in 'equipment, materials […] and other things (Becker, 2008 (1982), p. 63). Gell's anthropological theory of the art 'index', proposes art as a domain where objects merge with people: 'by virtue of the existence of social relations between persons and things, and persons and persons via things' (Gell, 1998, p. 9). Focused around notions of agency and transformation, the art 'index' is 'action-centred'. As relational networks, art 'mediates between domains of existence' (Morphy, 2009, p. 8). As mediators they become part of everyday processes 'that socialize people into ways of seeing things' (Morphy, 2009, p. 15). Rather than set apart from the everyday, art is understood as *part of* the social-relational matrix in which it is embedded.

Contemporary art practices more specifically focused on engaging people than making 'physical' work, are variously termed 'new genre' (Lacy, 1995), 'participatory' or 'socially-engaged'. In understanding art as a process of engaging multiple relationships, the curator and critic Bourriaud uses the term 'relational art'. He suggests that artistic practice resides as 'a bundle of relations in the world' (Bourriaud, 2002 (1998), p. 14). In this context, artists and curators often discuss their work as being 'dialogic' or 'conversational' (see Bowman, 2013). Contemporary art historians propose participatory art as having the capacity to support discourse that enables us to imagine our world anew (Bishop, 2012; Meskimmon, 2011). Rather than art being understood as an object, art is understood as a relational process or discourse between humans and non-humans.

Our study is situated within a rural development context. Similarly perhaps to art, the discourse of community governance has moved from an idea of power rooted in a particular government-led institution, to a 'more dispersed notion of power and authority based on pluralism' (Taylor, 2000, p. 1022). This shift, characterised by multi-level governance systems and community participation, has been central to the participatory ideologies that widely inform rural development processes (Jones and Little, 2000; Shucksmith, 2009; Shortall and Shucksmith, 2001; OECD, 2006).

Community participation and collaborative development practices are exemplified, in policy making, by the European Commission's 'LEADER approach', and, in academic debates, by the (ideal) models of endogenous and neo-endogenous rural development.

LEADER is a local development approach, allowing local actors to develop an area by using its endogenous development potential and resources. The model of endogenous rural development was promoted as a response to urban-led and urban-biased policies that were applied to rural contexts with minimal community input (a top down model discussed in academic literature also as exogenous rural development, see Lowe et al., 1998). The key point of endogenous rural development is to implement a local area approach inclusive of: a territorial and integrated focus; the use of local resources; and local contextualization through active public participation (see also Moseley, 1997; Ray, 1997).

While endogenous models have been widely embraced across Europe (Ray, 2000), a number of studies have recognized problems of participation, exclusion and elitism (e.g. Barke and Newton, 1997; Shucksmith, 2000; Shortall and Shucksmith, 2001; Thuesen, 2010). Shortall (2004) suggests emphasis should be given not only to achieving economic development, but also civic and social inclusion, as these remain more ambiguous objectives in rural development policy. Responding to criticisms regarding the role of endogenous and exogenous forces in shaping rural futures, Ray suggested a hybrid, neo-endogenous model that goes "beyond endogenous and exogenous modes', by focussing on the dynamic interactions between local areas and their wider political and other institutional, trading and natural environments' (Ray, 2001, p. 3—4). Without undermining the interests of local communities, neo-endogenous development brings attention to the role of extra-local factors in shaping the future of local areas. The key challenge here is the ability of local areas to mobilise networks of both local and non-local actors for their own benefit (see also Gkartzios and Scott, 2014).

Related to literature of rural development, 'community' has been a challenging research theme, referring to both communities of interest and geography, on issues of representativeness ('who is' the community?'), and, increasingly, discussing heterogeneity within communities (Buller and Wright, 1990; Day, 1998; Panelli and Welch, 2005). Liepins' approach to communities has been heavily influential in rural studies (Woods, 2011). Liepins' contribution lies in analysing community as 'a social collective of great diversity' (2000a, p. 27), a social phenomenon that entails four elements: people, meanings, practices and spaces.

People constitute a central notion of community, reflecting tendencies of people to form groups, which have both discursive meanings and social functions. Liepins places people at the centre of the community; she also, however, draws attention to other external actors and social groups having power to exert influence on understandings of community. In that regard, research has explored actors or agents and marginalised others, who interact within groups, classes or networks in a given community. According to Liepins 'people's participation in, or challenge to' community can be studied along the lines of meanings, practices, and spaces and structures which provide objects and processes 'from which we can create readings of 'community'' (2000a, 31). In this paper we draw on these distinctions. *Meanings* refer to explorations 'into the ways people discursively create sets of shared (and/or contested) meanings about their connections and identities (2000a, p. 31). A key point here is that these meanings are diverse and not universally held by all members of a community. These meanings are usually discussed within contested representations of lay, policy and political ruralities, as constructed across different community stakeholders (from local residents, to lobby groups and policy makers). *Practices* refer to the material manifestations in which

members of a community participate. This includes formal and informal ways that people interact. Liepins' examples include social exchanges, such as the exchange of goods and services at a local store, the operation of a local government board, the creation of a social group, etc. *Spaces* and *structures* refer to the sites where community can be exercised and enacted. These can be both physical sites, such as (schools, libraries, the town hall, meeting places of community), but also metaphoric spaces (such as newspapers and the internet). Liepins' (2000a) model is understood to provide a useful vocabulary for exploring the dynamics of rural restructuring and change.

3. Research design: ethnography and artistic experiments

Stemming from 'Northumbrian Exchanges', via residential periods, the primary author undertook ethnographic and artistic fieldwork on Holy Island. In support of interdisciplinary working, to evoke her fieldwork experience, the researcher shared autoethnographic short stories of her engagement with academic colleagues during a workshop-style session. At the workshop, the second author suggested reviewing this material through the lens of Liepins' framework as a way of understanding the role of art in community development and facilitating the interdisciplinary dialogue. The two authors continued meeting to develop this paper by discussing the autoethnographic material, making use of the researcher's personal experience to create 'a reciprocal relationship with audiences in order to compel a response' (Denzin, 2014, p. 20). The writing collaboration presented here, is the result of story-reading workshops. In this paper the two authors consider the empirical material together through a common lens: to support our collaboration we have adopted Liepins' framework for 'reading community'.

The 'Northumbrian Exchanges' partner on Holy Island was the Holy Island Partnership (HIP). The primary research relationship was with the coordinator of HIP whose post was co-funded by LEADER with the aim of delivering HIP's Action Plan. One of HIPs primary concerns is to involve the island communities in development activities. At the time, the coordinator's role included engaging professionals and local communities in decision-making. Amongst others, HIP's activities had rested with supporting the development and submission of a Heritage Lottery Fund bid. The bid included a range of development projects such as producing visitor information materials and widening the fishing harbour. The bid development process had received mixed levels of engagement and support from residents. HIP was concerned that community interest would lapse during the long assessment process. In line with common understandings of art as a way to engage community participation (Anwar McHenry, 2011; Marksusen, 2006), HIP and the coordinator saw the 'Northumbrian Exchanges' research as an innovative opportunity to explore arts activities with the view to engaging residents with island development.

As a *conduit* to community engagement in island development, the primary author's starting point was to participate as part of island life. In the mode of collaborative anthropology (Holmes and Marcus, 2008), she set out to participate in the day-to-day relationships of the island community to explore the role of art. The researcher's approach was to develop any art interventions in collaboration with people she met who were interested in exploring artistic practice. During 2013 she made monthly residential visits to the island of between five to seven nights. She stayed in a B&B and in a holiday cottage. As a participant-observer of island activity, the researcher engaged with the coordinator as well as the resident community. Through the work of the coordinator, she was introduced to residents. During her visits she met residents interested in art. The fieldwork combined ethnography

and artistic workshops. Her autoethnographic diary traced both her engagement with the day-to-day practices of island life and her own participation in the artistic interventions she developed with community members.

Informed by the community's interest in exploring art through workshop style interventions, she invited five artists from different visual and performing disciplines to produce artistic workshops to 'map the island from the island's perspective'. Artists undertook visits to discuss ideas and locations with residents. Twenty three-hour photography, dance, performance, sonic mapping, and drawing and painting workshops took place during July to August 2013. The schedule of workshops was informed and restricted by the tidal crossings. All workshops were promoted to residents by email, posted to homes by hand and notices in the Post Office, Heritage Centre and the local pub. One of the artists was island-based. One had a second family home on the island. Three were based elsewhere across Northern England and Scotland. Four were recognised as leading practitioners in their field. The fifth had recently graduated from art school. At workshops the artists employed a range of methods of improvisation.

Workshop attendance ranged from one to ten. Of 150 island residents, twenty-five participated in the workshops. The HIP coordinator and a Natural England officer attended one sonic mapping workshop. There were two sonic workshops when no one attended. Despite low participation at the workshops, over two hundred residents, official officers and island visitors attended the *Island Perspectives*, a collective exhibition of drawings and paintings, a soundscape, photographs and documentation of the performance and dance workshops (18–22 September 2013). There was an opening reception held for participants and island residents. Feedback sheets collected on the day stated that residents would like artistic activities to continue. Conversations with island residents who attended the exhibition but had not participated in the workshops, revealed that not knowing the exact nature of the workshops in advance had stopped them from coming, but now that they could see what they could expect they would like to take part the next time opportunities arose. Due to this interest, after this research project, a second programme of photography workshops was funded by a local scheme.

At a University-led seminar (11 June 2013), the primary author and HIP coordinator collaborated on a presentation. The author presented a personal account of her arrival on the island, and working with community members in collaboration with HIP. The coordinator then shared his reflections about the research process in relation to the work of HIP. In discussion with attending interdisciplinary academics, the researcher and coordinator considered how the research had generated reflection on approaches to community engagement and in particular the importance of 'getting to know' the island from the beginning. In this paper, through the lens of Liepins, we discuss how the fieldwork impelled this reflection and how artistic work can support community development practitioners to 'get to know the island more'.

As an interdisciplinary paper drawing from rural studies and art studies literature, the writing strategy is shaped by our collaboration. Our writing has developed in service of two purposes: firstly, to engage the reader in the story of the research; and secondly to explore our collaborative readings of the material through the lens of Liepins. We acknowledge that there are many other approaches of 'community' in rural contexts (see reviews in Woods, 2011). As an approach that acknowledges the relational nature of community, Liepins' model provided a fruitful tool for collaborative discussion.

The fieldwork was guided by the pragmatist philosophy of Dewey. To emphasise the experimental nature of the workshop sessions (Dewey, 1934, p. 48) instead of 'art', the term 'artistic' is utilised. Understanding *the work* of art as taking place 'when a human being cooperates with the product so that the outcome is an experience' (Dewey, 1934, p. 223), the narrative takes close account of the experience of the workshop interventions as both an alteration of 'outer' physical materials and 'inner' human selves (Dewey, 1934, p. 77). The ethnographic field diary accounts trace 'outer' and 'inner' exchange.

The analysis section follows Liepins' framework. As such it is structured as exploring: people, meanings, practice, and spaces and structures. We selected particular passages through Liepins community framework. Each section adopts some of the original titles for the stories which emerged in the story-reading workshop, and starts with an ethnographic narrative from a field diary. Here 'I' refers to the primary author. Each narrative is followed by a reading of the material through the lens of Liepins. In these passages 'we' refers to both authors.

4. To cross the tide: fieldwork

4.1. The weight of water

4.1.1. Field diary

The first time I met the coordinator was with academic colleagues at the university. As culturally and environmentally significant, he explained that visitors flood the tidal island during holiday seasons. There is parking space for cars and coaches, but vehicles still make their way in to the village. Residents get annoyed by this. What I take from our conversation is that those who rely on tourism for their business, to a certain extent, welcome visitors. They don't want the island over-run. But they don't want to discourage people coming either. They want a balance. These residents are interested in developing ways to signpost visitors, to disburse them around the island. A few, however, would be happy to be left 'in peace'. I become aware of a personal concern. Am I being positioned as a way to solve these long-born island tensions? Is art being understood as a way to solve them?

'How should I get started?' The coordinator suggests that I meet a colleague who coordinates an island community group, and see if it would be possible to attend the next meeting. We meet with his colleague. She agrees to put me on the next agenda.

On the day of the meeting, I pull off the main road to drive down the curving path to the causeway. The tide is out. Pools of water sit on the sand either side of a Tarmac strip. Driving across the causeway I notice a large car park to my left. The coordinator had told me to continue straight and turn left in to the village. I find a spot to park near the school. With others living off the island, I return before the tide closes a few hours later.

The first time I come to stay over, I consult the tide timetable to figure out when I can cross. I on to the island, turn left past the Post Office and park in the space next to the school. I am a little early for checking in the B&B. However, I had had an email exchange with the owner who explained, 'in reality', it depends on the tide. So I presume it will be ok. The owner is there to welcome me.

That evening I go to the pub for dinner. The barman tells me that tourists ask how they cope when the tide comes in and they can't get off. Laughing, he says: 'we tell them that they are looking at it the wrong way round. When the tide comes in, you can't get on. We are left in peace, the way we like it'.

At breakfast the B&B owners suggests I go for a walk. Past the school, I turn left. I pass the Post Office. Further down the road towards the castle, I notice a craft shop. I go in and mention to the owner that I like the post cards and buy a couple. She says they cater for all customers, 'we get high heels and walking boots here'. I introduced myself as working with the Holy Island Partnership. Her face turned to being concerned: 'I don't want this island to be spoilt

by signs. I don't think people should be told what to do. People should have their own experience. Just because *they've* got the money, we don't want to change things'.

She tells me of a pyramid on the headland and a little shack on the beach. She says I should walk there. She continues, 'I haven't been, but I would like to go. Actually, why don't you go, and come back with a photograph?! I decide to do as she asks. It takes me just short of three hours to walk to the castle, and trace the edge of the island along the North Shore, before turning back. I pop back in to the shop with the photographs. She is delighted to see the pictures of my journey. Walking back, I realised I had got sun burnt. Smiling, 'you've been marked' said the owner of the B&B.

During the week as part of a LEADER exchange visit, environmental practitioners from Latvia and Greece are visiting the island. Before breaking for lunch, they join island residents and HIP representatives in the office behind the school building. They have spent some time exploring the island and neighbouring coastal areas. The visitors suggest that the 'islanders' need to decide what tourism they want. 'You need to find a logo'. A resident retorts in a tone of disgust, 'a brand?!!!' One of the visitors suggests 'the problem' is 'everyone has a different agenda'.

As a regular visitor I refer to the tide timetable. At first, I use a paper copy from the Post Office. After losing that one I look at a website. Island residents explain that there is a bit of 'slack' in what is published. When planning to leave one day, I tell a member of the community group that I am worried about missing the tide. She tells me to look out of the window at a stone in the sea. When the water is at a certain level, she explains that I will have ten minutes left. 'The stone will tell you', she says.

4.1.2. People

To weave this opening narrative we have considered some of the 'people' of Holy Island. Liepins notes that for 'simplicity's sake' (2000b, p. 327) people are located in a 'central location'; however, it is important to recall that they may be located in positions *beyond* 'the community' in question. By presenting these passages, we introduce people as both 'centrally located' and beyond the 'immediate community'. In doing so, we also notice the influence of the natural environment and especially the tide.

'Centrally located' people can be understood as residents. Residents have varying occupations: some in relation to tourism, and also other work such as fishing and farming, although tourism has become increasingly important in the economy of the island (HIP, 2009). Those 'beyond' the immediate resident community might include people who come to the island to run a business, such as the gift shop owner. Other people in this category of 'beyond' would include visitors and 'official representatives', as the HIP coordinator. In acknowledging power relations, Liepins situates community amidst 'terrains of power and socio-cultural discourses' (2000a, p. 29). In sharing both the thoughts of the coordinator and immediate response of the gift shop owner, we are introduced to some of the tensions surrounding the power positions of island development. For example, the gift shop owner suggests that just because the HIP 'have money', it doesn't mean that *they* should the make decisions. As Liepins suggests (2000b, p. 327), these HIP officials have powerful roles in 'constructing (and constraining)' understandings of the island.

As well as people, this material introduces nature as part of the terrain of power. Liepins' model understands community as a collective interaction and enactment of 'community' *by people* (2000a). Here, however, we cannot avoid the tide. The island is tidal. The tide has control. You can only get on and off when the water lets you. The tide can physically stop you. The force of water effects all operations. Nature influences how people act: residents, visitors and those travelling to work. The force of tide is so

apparent, that nature itself is glorified. When speaking, nature must be considered.

4.2. To come here

4.2.1. Field diary

Walking from my parking spot near the school building, I see the coordinator. He takes me in to the meeting room in the school where HIP meetings are held. We have a cup of tea as others start to arrive. Members of the group are introduced as people who live on the island, who work there and who have been invited to join because of their special interest and knowledge of the local area.

I introduce myself as being a *conduit* to a university project exploring the role of art within community contexts across rural Northumberland. I explain that I have come along to this meeting to see if the group would be interested in taking part. A resident suggests that rather than importing skills from elsewhere, they would be interested in developing workshops as an opportunity to investigate the creative skills of the island. There was a lively discussion about the traditional skills of the island: making lobster pots, dry stone walling, needlecraft and flower arranging. In developing the workshop programme, it was agreed that whatever happens, we shouldn't introduce the workshops as being anything to do with 'art', because people will be 'put off' by that. We should rather use 'creativity'. The attendees also emphasised that it would be important to be inclusive: for everyone to know that whatever they do or make, 'they can take part'.

Afterwards, one of the group members invited me for an additional conversation They tell me the island is tired of 'outsiders' coming to tell them what to do. There was an outcry after one of the HIP development documents had suggested 'pop up artworks'. She continues, 'I mean, what do you think we thought of that?! This place is wild, and we want to keep it that way'. To get to know the island she says, 'you need to *come here*'.

4.2.2. Meanings

Liepins suggests people 'develop shared meanings about their connectedness in 'community' via local discourses and activities' (2000b, p. 327). In exploring meanings of community through Liepins' lens of 'connectedness' we can make the following observations. Firstly, that there are tensions surrounding tourism: many island residents are involved in tourist activities, but there is dissatisfaction with branding the island as a tourist destination. Furthermore, the resident-community has a strong connection to nature: understanding themselves as living within 'the wild'. As evidenced also in the previous section, the tide protects them from an outer world that seeks perhaps to spoil their serenity. The residents appear to construct a collective identity around insularity inextricably interlinked with the tide.

Secondly, there is an appreciation for valuing and promoting local cultural capital and artistic activities, but tensions were observed sounding the term 'art'. Art is widely viewed in negative terms, as being elitist and exogenous. However, traditional making skills of the island are valued as part of the practices of the community. Residents don't want artworks to 'pop up'; rather they would like to explore their creativity through art. They are interested in exploring the way artworks as a way to explore creativity, but not necessarily through conventions discussed *as* 'art'.

4.3. Getting to know in practice

4.3.1. Field diary

During my monthly residential visits I take part in HIP meetings and also engage with day-to-day village life. Much of the HIP meetings focused on issues surrounding car parking and the

development of visitor information and signage. HIP partners were keen for me to look for ways for the artistic research to support the development of tourist information materials. In my daily engagement I note the informal operations of island life: that the village store opens and closes with the tide; that you can order 'special items' from the shopkeeper; how the post is delivered on a little trolley; and how HIP meetings are timed with the tide time-table. Through buying my daily provisions and eating at the local pub, I become a familiar face and my car recognised. At an HIP meeting the owner of the village store opens by announcing 'a silver car parked outside has been driven into'. 'Mine?, I ask. He smiles. It hasn't.

In discussion with the HIP coordinator and residents, we discuss whether the role of the workshops was to develop visual material for the visitor signage and information materials, or to do something else. Residents wanted to do something else. Rather than presenting the island as a visitor destination 'postcard', they wanted to utilise the workshops as a way to explore the island on their own terms. As a way to communicate the experience of the workshops in support of the visitor information, we agree to present documentation and artworks produced in the workshops in an exhibition for HIP officers and other residents to attend. To emphasise that the workshops were for residents rather than visitors, it was agreed that the exhibition would be called 'Island Perspectives'.

The brief for artists was to develop artistic workshops to 'map the island from the island's perspective'. Of the five artists selected two were already familiar with the island: one was a full-time resident, another had a family holiday home. A further three artists were invited to make trips to familiarise themselves before developing their workshops. During July and August 2013 twenty photography, dance, performance, sonic mapping and drawing and painting sessions took place in various locations.

The photography workshops started the programme. In the first sessions participants were introduced to using a camera and the basics of photography. In later sessions we moved out to photograph the landscape and also undertook some portrait photography, taking pictures of each other. A teenage girl attended these sessions. As we hovered by the waterside she commented, 'you see things differently when you look through the camera.'

The dance and movement workshops were next. If the weather was good, we had agreed to hold the sessions on the North Shore. Only one participant came for the first workshop: the community group member who had been specifically interested in dance. We got in the car to drive to the beach. She laughed. She doesn't think we can drive there, 'the tide will have shut the road'. She is right. We went to a pebble beach instead. The dance artist asked us to stand on the shore and look to the headland, then handed us large bamboo poles. As in Fig. 1 we were asked to hold these at each end and develop movements in rhythm with the water. We were then asked to hold them out straight and trace the headland with the stick. We worked together like this for three hours.

In the second session the teenage girl from the photography session took part. This time we got to the North Shore. The tide was right out. Instead of large poles we were given slim bamboo. Between two of us, then all three. Closing our eyes, we stretched out our arms. We each put a single finger on the end of a bamboo stick. We were connected to each other by the stick. She then asked us to move keeping connected with our eyes closed (as in Fig. 2). We connected directly to each other with our fingertips and palms. We moved amidst the landscape together, slowly.

On the second day (Fig. 3), we returned to the North Shore. Both participants from the day before took part. We repeated the slim bamboo exercise. Four of us connected in the environment. By closing my eyes, I could feel my senses heightened. I felt connected to the people *as part of* the environment.

At the end of the session (Fig. 4) the artist asked us to draw the landscape with a stick and ink. Each of the drawings used flowing lines. They describe movement. How we had moved together as *part of* the landscape.

The next day the teenage girl came back for a performance workshop. We were asked by the performance artist to wear ear-plugs and not speak. Without planning where we were going, we started walking. In silence the three of us walked through the village to the beach. In the second session we discussed our experience of the walk. Sitting around the table at the schoolhouse, we talked of how we sensed ourselves together. We described how we were more conscious of our breathing, of our movements and where we were in the landscape. We decided to do the walk again. We re-traced our steps from the first walk. The beach looked differently now. We were met by water. We stood facing it together, uncertain what to do. Our path had been closed by the tide. Slowly we turned to walk back towards where we had come from. When we returned to the school, we discussed how intense the moment by the shore was. How we were stuck there, waiting for one of us to make a tiny movement in support of a decision to move. The girl said that she had lived on the island all her life, but she had never seen it 'like that'.

Further workshop sessions were facilitated by a sonic artist and painter. On each occasion I note how through my experience of the workshops, my senses are enlivened to my environment. Not just a visual awareness, but how I feel more and hear more. As a participant of the workshops I felt myself in dialogue with the landscape. I became more aware of my relationship with my natural surroundings. In drawing on my own experience, I had conversations with other participants about their experience. The teenager expressed a new sense of her relationship with the land.

4.3.2. Practice

In following Liepins' framework in the last section we have presented our reading of practice. In reading the ethnographic texts via Liepins, we come to what might be regarded as an awakening in our writing collaboration. In setting out to 'read' community through the lens of Liepins, we are reminded we can also 'read' with artistic practice. In order to 'read' practice, we came to realise that the nature of this fieldwork is such that the text both introduces the day-to-day practice of the island as well as the practice interventions of the artistic workshops. Through what Schneider (2006, p. 50) might term a methodological 'dialogue' between ethnography and artistic practice, the fieldwork both traces and reveals continuity. Firstly, we note that the artistic interventions are born out of a relational collaboration with the island; and, secondly, we notice the way the workshop practices support deepening levels of apprehension in regard to the fluid nature of human-−nature relations. Both how the primary author notes herself 'in dialogue' with the landscape and how the teenage participant states that she had lived on the island all her life, but had never seen it 'like that'.

To read people through Liepins' framework, our narrative began with arriving on the island. Rather than people being at the centre, in relation to what Liepins' calls 'the terrain of power', the ethnography suggests that the tide is equally, if not more, in control. Rather than observe people as separate from their surroundings 'as-prison' (Latour, 2004), our arrival more so traced the community as an association between: residents, 'official' voices, the tide, beaches, nature. Drawing on personal experience, we suggested that it is not just people that enact community, but people with and in the natural environment.

Liepins suggests that people will enact 'community' relations via a range of processes or practices that connect people with key

Fig. 1. Still from video documentation, dance workshop 1. (Author 1, 2013).

Fig. 2. Still from video documentation, dance workshop 2. (Author 1, 2013).

Fig. 3. Still from video documentation, dance workshop 3. (Author 1, 2013).

activities, institutions and spaces (2000b, p. 328). In reading the ethnographic accounts via Liepins, as she suggests, we can trace island practice in relation to local institutions such as the general store and the post office. Directed to read connections between

Fig. 4. Drawings with ink and stick, dance workshop 3. (Author 1, 2013).

people, we trace their dialogue, or what Bruner (1986, p. 6) calls 'expression' — the experience of life *as told*; as for example, the earlier exchanges with the man at the pub and the woman in the gift shop.

Earlier in the paper we recall how a community member told the primary author, 'to get to know the island you need to *come here'*. In collaboration with HIP, residents and artists, to *get to know* the island her fieldwork combined autoethnography and artistic interventions. As knowledge exchange, the research was in service of action in support of community development. We also tell of how at a university seminar, the author and coordinator of HIP reflect on the importance of 'getting to know the island more from the beginning'. As an environmental planner, how had the field-work influenced the HIP coordinator's thoughts about community development? The primary author and the coordinator worked together over several months. The collaboration was fruitful and supportive, as producing the foundations for the experimental fieldwork. The argument of our paper: that artistic practice was a way of getting to know the island.

In the ethnography, we read of the primary author's experience of 'getting to know', as one of engaging with the practice of autoethnography and artistic practice. We also read of the teenage girl's experiential interpretation: of her changing perceptions of herself amidst the landscape. But how was the HIP coordinator introduced to the possibilities of getting to know more? As Bruner (1986, p. 5) states: 'The difficulty with experience […] is that we can only experience our own life […]. We can never know completely another's experiences, even through we have many clues and make inferences all the time'. Our inference is that as a partner-participant of the research process the coordinator felt the shifts in knowing as experienced by the primary author and island participants in their expressions. We propose the coordinator's understanding of the possibilities of knowing the island more was introduced to him through his own participation in the sonic mapping workshop; the way participants described their experience to him; and how the workshops were later presented in an exhibition.

For the coordinator, we propose that the research acted as a 'diagnostic' of island relationships. Stengers suggest that a true diagnosis, 'must have the power of a performative': 'It cannot be commentary, exteriority, but must risk assuming an inventive

position that brings into existence, and makes perceptible, the passions and actions associated with the becomings it evokes' (2010, p. 12). Through the practice of ethnography, the primary researcher reflected, in Turner's (1986, p. 39) terms, on the 'social drama' of village life. In reading her interactions, through the lens of Liepins we reflect on the power of nature, and especially the tide, as enmeshed in the island's dramatics. When tracing the experience of the artistic workshops, we read of her senses becoming enlivened; how she becomes connected with the environment though taking part in the artistic processes. In Dewey's terms (1934), the artistic experience produced associations between 'inner' human and 'outer' physical material. In Stengers' terms, as an inventive and speculative operation, we propose that the artistic interventions performed a relational 'diagnostic' of island life experience. As a relational diagnostic, artistic practice is not simply concerned with 'community expression', but revealing life as experienced: as a network of human−nature relations.

4.4. Island Perspectives

4.4.1. Field diary

In collaboration with the artists and participants, an exhibition of work produced for the workshops was exhibited at the St Cuthbert's Centre, the United Reformed Church on the island (Fig. 5). We carefully framed photographs, tested sound levels for the audio recordings and made feedback forms and a comments book. I made a map out of foam board. To illustrate where the workshops had taken place, I stuck small flags in different positions saying 'dance', 'performance', 'drawing', 'sonic mapping' and 'photography'. Blank flags were left for visitors to suggest new locations and activities for future research projects.

4.4.2. Spaces and structures

The images and documentation of the workshops have been assembled and presented in the St Cuthbert's Centre. Liepins suggests that the people, meanings and practices which construct a given 'community' 'will take on material and political shape in the form of key sites and organisational spaces' (2000b, p. 328). Through reading the ethnography with Liepins, key sites and organisational spaces have been introduced, such as the pub, the village store and the post office, and now the church. From Liepins'

Fig. 5. 'Island Perspectives' exhibition. (Author 1, 2013).

perspective, these sites and organisational spaces are key places for interaction in community life. If we now choose to read community through the performative 'diagnostic' of the artistic workshops we are introduced to beaches as additional sites and organisational spaces. In addition to introducing the natural sites themselves as spaces of community production, we can also be taken to a deeper reading of the experience of 'community' as one of a performance of human–nature relations. Indeed as already discussed people and nature are intertwined (e.g. Latour, 2004). Community is not only exercised in natural settings, but is part of the natural environment. Nature appears central in meanings and structures of the community, perhaps much more than the peripheral and discursive influence suggested in Liepins' model.

5. Conclusion

Beyond the creation of new local art products and markets of economic significance, we argue that art has much to offer to rural community development. In particular, we argue that art 'reads' community. The artistic interventions are particularly valuable, as they provide a series of relational practices that act as 'diagnostic' experience.

In our Liepins-driven analytical framework we observe that art reveals community as part of the environment. Art offers a 'reading' of the community of Holy Island as being enacted through observed day-to-day activities and discussions as taking place in spaces such as pubs, shops and the post office. Furthermore, this reading presents the community as connected to the natural environment, with nature being central to meanings of community and contributing to a more nuanced understanding of 'places and spaces' than offered by Liepins. As a network of multiple exchange between 'inner' (human) and 'outer' physical materials (Dewey, 1934), art practice mediates associations amidst people as *part of* the terrain.

Although the discourse of 'art' appears to alienate the residents, through performing artistic acts, participants become connected, with themselves, between themselves and also with the natural environment. Rather than positioning people at the 'centre', the

fieldwork demonstrates the inter-relationships of residents, professionals and visitors amidst the tide, the land, and natural elements. We have traced meanings as constructed through day-to-day practices. By tracing the human and non-human associations in practice, the spaces and structures of performance can be expanded from Liepin's examples of pubs and community centres to tracks, beaches, seascapes and beyond. Through the inter-flow of relational associations, participants form collective 'spaces' for reflection. In our study 'diagnostic' reflections include: how the tide influences the thoughts and movements of people; the micro relationships between people as illuminated in their environment; and the discussion between the researcher and coordinator about the importance of 'getting to know' the island.

As a relational practice, art therefore has the 'diagnostic' capacity to induce processes of reflexivity, revealing community relationships and more so, as evidenced in our fieldwork data, nature–human relationships. On a community level such processes are particularly valuable because they are associated with a realisation of the constant transformation of rural communities, ultimately pointing to the need for constant transformation of rural governance itself, a process inherently embedded with ideal frames of neo-endogenous rural development (Shucksmith, 2009). Neo-endogenous descriptions of community development are evidenced in this research, such as the creation of combined local and extra-local art networks in co-producing community artistic workshops, and in the way that local cultural capital is valued by the community. As such, we argue that art can be central in participatory models of rural development, as a process of reading the micro-dynamics of communities, as a way to read community relationships. As a relational practice, rather than reading overt relationships by *looking at* a community, we suggest art mediates participants to read micro-relationships *within* communities. Participants become part of a network of relationships amidst other people, nature and their political context. As such they reveal undetermined 'diagnostics' of the complexity of what constitutes community. Furthermore, it is interesting to observe that while the network of artists involved was both local and extra-local, the community wishes to value indigenous cultural resources through

activities not branded as art. Paradoxically perhaps, this would suggest that the relational qualities of art are best practiced when art is itself disguised.

Finally, we observe the limitations of art in rural development practices. Our fieldwork data demonstrate the role of artistic practice, *inter alia*, in realising and voicing such disconnects and embedded fractures. Can art, however, remove conflict? Should that even be the role of art as part of art-led community interventions? We observe that research tends to have an inherently positive expectation on the role of arts in community and economic development. In our research we note that the researcher was invited to develop the research within the context of island tensions surrounding tourism. These tensions were expressed during the fieldwork, for example, by the barman who talks of his preference for when the tide has closed and tourists have left and the craft shop owner who doesn't want the island to be spoiled by signs. We don't see art as a panacea to community tension (see also Duxbury and Campbell, 2011). Instead, we argue that art has the capacity to reveal community relations (see also Deutsche, 1996). Drawing on this exploratory research project, highlighting original explorations between art and experimental anthropology, we call for more research beyond positivist research designs and positive research expectations, to discuss the role of art in rural community development, and wider in planning and development practices.

Acknowledgements

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