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READING THE IMAGE: RE-THINKING THE DESIGN OF LEARNING PEDAGOGIES THROUGH IMAGE-BASED LEARNING INITIATIVES

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Abstract

Education attainment for youths between 15 and 16 years of age in Malta, has been a main concern in the past and recent years. In Malta, this priority culminates at a final stage when a student aims to progress from secondary to post-secondary education. As a focal point, this paper puts at the centre how students' education attainment at this age in Malta is determined by an educational system based on a series of learning requirements that students need to meet but imposed by a 'one-size fits all' approach.

In response to this circumstance, this paper reports on how effective use of visual literacy in a learning intervention could engage students with classical reading texts that in conventional learning circumstances might be seen by students as inaccessible to learn. The outcome of this paper is intended to present the process and the results of a specific qualitative research study to help encourage teachers and learning stakeholders to see visual literacy as a responsive educational tool in formal learning settings.

Keywords: Communication, Visual Literacy, Collaborative Learning, Connective Learning.

1   INTRODUCTION

Presently, in most educational settings, one meets with a diversified range of learning abilities and potentials in a classroom. Instructive and 'one size fits all' learning frameworks are the current main dominant learning styles in Malta. Such a learning approach increases the probability to derail [1,2,3,4] the students' abilities to critically think about their learning. In light of such circumstances this report sets out to **test the validity of a methodological framework that puts communication at its heart to better address the learning needs of a group of students with a range of learning abilities.** This review is written from the perspective of a media practitioner-lecturer, also a Doctorate student in education, who in the past years introduced various media-based initiatives to facilitate learning of Higher Education (HE) students in Malta during their studies.

2 WHY A QUALITATIVE STUDY?

In aiming to achieve an interpretation of reasons behind pupils' poor examination performances amidst developments in education policies that should be bringing change, I find myself dealing with a system of subjective experiences that surround this matter. Subjective experiences can consist of competing views and various interpretations constructed by individuals, groups of people, events and political objectives. Moreover, views can also evolve vis-a-vis the wider scopes and the socio/economic developments within a society. Therefore, that is why I consider that the 'reality' within the context of this study as subjective, with no singular truth, observation or pre-determined meaning of such a reality. Thus I argue that a constructivist approach is required because constructivism is an ideal epistemological position to engage with the main problem that is set at the core of this report in order to provide an interpretation of the realities that are at the outset of this problem whilst being aware

of any presuppositions. As Vygotsky [5] deliberately distinguishes the complexities found in education, one should not forego the relevance and importance to include both spontaneous and everyday concepts of learning and the constructivism involves the human condition as an essential component in an educational research.

3   VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY, 'READING THE IMAGE'

This report recognises Media as a constructive learning tool, the implications of Media used as a learning tool and to induce knowledge dialogue between peers. Sarah Pink, an international interdisciplinary scholar in visual methodologies, argues that Media can be seen not only as a means of communication but also should be evaluated on the merits of literacy through its potential to facilitate learning by encouraging reading, writing, interpreting a means of communication that help maximising learning potentials. Media can be considered as a 'modern language' in traditional education discourse. Thus, 'Reading the Image' sets out to explore the dynamics of how learners can make use of their own senses and experiences in learning. Particularly how the Media can help students reinvigorate knowledge through one's own sense of identity and place in the world; 'The theory of place and place-making, and outline the significance of memory and imagination in the ethnographic process.' [6]

It is very important to point out how 'Reading the Image' can contribute towards helping a learner in his/her education by initially outlining what challenges are taking place in a worldwide education scenario. Creativity is a tool that impacts the educational world at large, as Ken Robinson's *Ted Talk*, entitled 'Bring on the Learning Revolution' argues how creativity is a key factor to engage students with mixed abilities to learn and to make this world a more dynamic place. He states that the "… world is suffering from a crisis of human resources." [7]. If creativity is key to improve education and human resources, to better facilitate our learning environments, how can we make sure we formulate a sustainable creative teaching route that combats such a crisis? Robinson stresses the importance of how education should empower students to understand the world around them, by making more effective use of the world they exist in. This educational empowerment can be achieved by embracing more effectively a learner's own experiential resources such as memory, talent and emotion. "… they can become fulfilled individuals and active, compassionate citizens." [7] Furthermore, Robinson encourages as well that every learning contributor, i.e. educator, parent, administrator and policymaker, can impact such a change in three steps "… critique of the way things are… a vision of how they should be… a theory of change…" [7].

Education has an important role in helping society towards a sustainable future. In order to achieve sustainability, it is important to promote learning by first examining current educational parameters and secondly to search for creative solutions that can facilitate life-long learning for the benefit of not only the present but also for a longer term in a learner's life experience. Moreover, in searching to establish unique creative methods to engage students with learning, one needs to consider the relationship between Media, Society and Education.

So, can Visual Ethnography qualify as a methodology that enhances better learning opportunities? My personal experience working as a Media lecturer in HE has granted me many opportunities to experiment with Creative Media production and its abilities to allow learners to express knowledge through a long-term type of a reflexive process. This process allows students to explore learning outcomes using creative media tools to express knowledge in a language that is they are familiar with. Pink explains that 'Ethnographic practice tends to include participant observation, ethnographic interviewing and a range of other participatory research techniques that are often developed and adopted in context and as appropriate to the needs and possibilities offered by specific research projects.' [8]

In 2014, I designed 'Reading the Image' promoting the idea of creative media practical exercises as learning cases. The brief was set to promote Maltese literacy amongst secondary school students in preparation for their secondary school terminal examinations. In one such learning case, entitled 'Il-Barri' (The Bull, 2014). HE students were briefed to create an audio-visual production based on their own interpretation of a classical Maltese poem. Students were asked to primarily engage with a poem's context then to apply Creative Media tools and techniques and refer to the socio and cultural aspects of the classical written text of the particular poem and to translate it into a 'present' visual form of text. Students had to explore a classical text through a self-reflexive process in order to understand and express knowledge through a work of art. The project aimed to take a step forward in addressing level three (year 10-11) Maltese language learning outcomes such as linguistics, comprehension and expression.

Here are some examples of how media tools allowed the student to express her own version and interpretation of the classical text. Different from the original text, the student deliberately chose to represent the bull as a helpless human being, as shown in figure one.
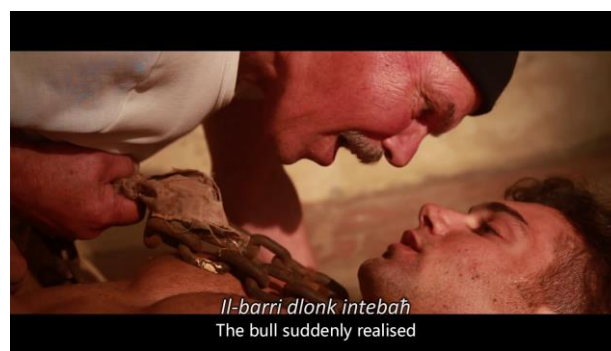
Fig. 1: In the original poem by George Pisani, 'Il-Barri' (the bull) is presented as a symbol of human atrocities.

Figure 2: The student chose the colour red to capture the emotion of the poem's introduction, 'Il-Barri'. This colour was never mentioned in the original text. Through reflection the student chose to use red as a colour as a response to the original text.

Pink states that 'Ethnography is a reflexive and experiential process through which understanding, knowing and academic knowledge are produced… Exploration of and reflection on new routes to knowledge.' [9]. In accordance with this statement, can such uses of media qualify as a hands-on alternative learning route to further enhance learning expression and knowledge? Pink asserts that it can; '…innovative methods have been developed by ethnographers to provide routes into

understanding other people's lives, experiences, values, social worlds and more to go beyond the classic observation approach.' [10].

Visual Ethnography works in tandem with participatory methods, and it involves visual ethnographers (in this project's case, the learner) to participate in learning how human beings interact with knowledge on a personal level. Conversely, initial thoughts about such learning initiatives might sound as structure-less and without a determined bearing as Pasi Sahlberg, a school reform and educational practices expert, critically argues. Sahlberg poses a question whether non-written work should be considered as academic, and of high standards as the more traditional forms of expression. He states that although public opinion is a necessity in one's academic work, it needs to be structured and to follow a critical pathology. He asserts that if students' work needs to be taken seriously by the public, words need to be spoken out assertively. [11]

The traditional model of standards in education raises a discussion on 'parity of esteem' between traditional and alternative forms of education. Particularly, about which type of direction fits best learning and assessment methods that clearly speak out the idea of 'good education'. However, should such argument just boil down to the distinguishing factors between inclusive practices/pedagogies and academic principles? In order to arrive to such conclusions on education standards, it is imperative to find a good balance between the quality of a student's learning product and the learner's ability to deliver it.

4   POLICY

Policy in education is a reality and should be seen as a prominent overarching factor that drives the idea of what is 'good education' in a particular education context. Policy overviews can help to establish the education parameters of a particular education context and how alternative education initiative can integrate within these parameters. 'Reading the Image' can be seen as a alternative learning initiative to traditional forms of education practice, that moves away from conventional classroom-based learning practices and seeks to establish new ways to help students express knowledge using the media as a catalyst of their own identities. So how is the idea of 'good education' shaped by current educational policies in Malta? It is important to establish compatibility of this emphasis of learning with the educational structure that surrounds it. As a pedagogical concept 'Reading the Image' can be defined as an initiative that works towards widening participation in education that does not use selective measures of participation.

This approach is aligned with O'Neill and Bhagat's views. They describe that educational projects that promote such an approach have been welcomed in the UK social and political landscapes as these attract learning methods that give the students opportunities to participate on projects that promote an inclusive approach and blurs prejudiced detachments of students with social, class, gender, sexuality and other issues that could involve students to work on projects without any personal frontiers. [12] In the case of the project 'Il-Barri', students from a HE Institution in Malta, were asked to evaluate classical texts (Maltese poetry) that have been part of the secondary school Maltese language curriculum for years. Since the project has been re-adapted in the moving image by the same HE students, the project has shed new light on the meaning of the classical poem through original use of Creative Media application and personal involvement with the text. Consequently, referring to Sahlberg's perspectives given earlier in this report, in which student's work should effectively draw on critical-thinking, speaking, writing, and reading skills, it becomes evident, in the case of 'Reading the Image', that a learner can utilise alternative formats to express knowledge besides the conventional written method.

Fig. 3: In this exercise the student was presented with complex contextual challenges. In the learning case 'Il-Barri' the student managed to describe abstract notions of society and culture through sound and vision.

However, can this work qualify as academic? If 'Reading the Image' is calling for a cultural change/alternative *modi operandi* in the Education system of Malta, one need to evaluate how widening partnership projects can effect learning and assessment in secondary schools, particularly in education settings that are dominated by a policy that is greatly determined by the socio-economic and political aspects of the Nation. In a bold statement Bourdieu draws attention towards the role of a student within an Education system and argues that a student is a product of a cultural policy that is exercised by an Educational Institution. He organizes students in accordance to the category of cultural code at both conscious and sub-conscious levels. [13]

Defining how and who can benefit from widening partnerships in education, necessitates further studies to ask whether the 'one-time' examination type of assessment encourages learners to maximise their full learning potentials. Young stipulates factors of the selection of knowledge and assessment in education institution. Factors that need to be explored include as well Government policies pressures, such as whether the current Maltese education system is well appointed to fill in the gaps to supply candidates for the required labour market. According to Young, '…pupils in secondary schools are 'swinging on science' [14]. Young reiterates on how it is unfair on a student to design a learning pedagogy that fits exactly the needs of the market. So choosing the right educational pathway for a student is challenging in its own right since society and the economy are major key players in dictating what is 'good education'. 'What 'does' and 'does not' count as science depends on the social meaning given to science, which will vary not only historically and cross-culturally but within societies…' [15]

Another institutional implication that seems to be influential in the measures that qualify what is 'good education' is the school's commitment towards raising the school-leaving age. Young implies that; 'The implications of this change stem from the obvious if neglected fact that length of educational career is probably the single most important determinant of pupils' curricular experience.' [16]. So what and who decides how a curriculum should be shaped and implemented is important and is to be taken in diligent consideration? These are some of the issues that affect the course content and contribute towards a students' lack of ability to define correctly 'good education'. In the case of written one-time examinations, these issues funnel a student into a point of no return that unfortunately might result in a student's inability to demonstrate his/her own learning, since this notion is frequently determined by what the society assumes as 'good education'.

In response to the above observations, the learning case adopted, 'Reading the Image', sets out to stimulate various educational objectives. One of the main aims is to enable learners to re-create 'knowledge' in a medium that is contemporary to them, the creative media. More specifically in the case of the project 'il-Barri' the student did not only seek to master the discipline of media making, but also the project helped the student to engage with a classical text by positioning it within the

framework of an educational ideology that is continuously shaped by the external factors such as the ones that have been exemplified above. The project 'Il-Barri' shows how the student successfully managed to portray classical poetry in the visual form, through the use of various Media language elements including colour, casting, cinematography, symbolism, costume, sound, editing and all other visual aspects that the mise en scène can offer. Every element was effectively utilised by the student to engage within the curriculum critically using the media tools at her disposal.

Figure 4: In the project 'Il-Barri' society is represented as one antagonist. Media gave the student the flexibility to go beyond the conceptual realm of the original text and express knowledge by carefully choosing her cast, costume, location, camera language and lighting.

O'Neill and Bhagat discuss how a practical-based body of work can have all the potential outcomes for a student to succeed in education. The so-called 'non-traditional' method of re-calling knowledge, like a reflective journal or a portfolio, could be considered not only capable to allow students to project their own technical knowledge but it gives a student the opportunity to demonstrate his/her learning based on his/her own 'cultural capital' [17]. i.e. identity, experience and personality. [18]

5   TRANSVERSAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

During the project 'Il-Barri', the student managed to achieve a confident tone of voice, her learning progress spread on the duration of a semester (sixteen weeks). The lecturing and learning activities helped the student to process and rationalise her own sense of the given text by using creative media of her choice to communicate her own understanding of a curricular-led poem. The results from the students' own project evaluation show how such an initiative helped her blur barriers of notions about who is the 'prestigious learner'. [19] A characteristic that is commonly found in education contexts that promotes conventional type of isolated subject learning.

Figure 5: Student in action, working on set of her production.

Creative Media can also offer an array of different areas where a student's learning opportunities can expand in terms of skills and knowledge. In the final part of this review it is important to state how

Creative Media can have a direct impact on the traditional notion of 'westernized education', in which teaching may even become more global. According to Hallinen, 'School is surrounded by the word of change.' [20] As already outlined, the notion of being good at one specific subject (Westernised concept of 'good education') is simply not enough in the changing world and students must be able to apply their skills and knowledge to a multitude of contexts that allow them to achieve a learning experience based on transversal skills and competences. 'We need to make sense of the world around us… to feel valued and as important members of our society.' [20]

Teaching can become more global, according to Hallinen, by going away from conventional isolated subject learning and prepare students, even from a young age, to contextualise their learning in real-life events. How can Media be a tool to help such type of learning convergence? Can Media be an asset tool to break down the dominance of traditional subjects such as languages and sciences and bring in a more phenomenological approach in classrooms? Can the learning case 'Reading the Image' offer a possibility to promote such a paradigm shift in education? [21] Sarah Pink shares a common believe to that of Hallinen in seeing the everyday life as a 'site' of learning opportunities for learners to explore their identities by being active researchers of life. [21] Media can join these two educational aspects, social activism and practical knowledge and these two aspects were addressed in the making of the project 'Il-Barri' (2014).

Differently from dominant isolated one-subject learning processes, 'Reading the Image', gave students the opportunity to work in teams and critically explore the implied messages of a classical Maltese text from their own point of view. Students were requested to problem solve a linguistic barrier from the original text to the present using contemporary experiences and screen-based media. Students also developed a unique sense of style and a visual language based on the process of seeking meaning from contemporary real-life oriented contexts. In the case of 'Il-Barri' the student saw a potential in a classical Maltese poem and responded by interpreting the subject matter in a way she understood it to be and how she intended to communicate it to the world. As Pink puts it, '…a world of social and environmental realities and imaginings…' [21] Such a learning strategy found in the project 'Il-Barri' can be seen as in line with Pink and Hallinen's views. 'Reading the Image' takes into account many aspects from the project 'Il-Barri' and aims to give secondary school students the opportunity to converse with knowledge through their own life experiences. As Pink puts it, learning projects with such aim '… invites us to consider place on two levels. First to understand these technologies and representations as potential constituents of mediated elements of place and second, to contemplate how they engage users in the making of places that put the human subject in the centre.' [21]

6 CONCLUSION

As reported, 'Reading the Image' is an initiative to propose new pedagogies for learners to experiment with Media and to explore new ways of how to express knowledge by acquiring transversal competences that are relevant to today's way of life. In-line with the visual project 'Il-Barri' being used as the selected case study, 'Reading the Image' can build on theoretical resources and academic discussions, in order to propose an alternative learning pedagogy for secondary school students in preparation towards qualifying for HE.

This report gave an insight on how media can be considered as an alternative tool that helps a learner engage with knowledge using tools of communication that are contemporary to him/her. From the above, one can also see how learning initiatives, such as 'Reading the Image' can help developing teaching methods to diminish internal and external challenges that might hinder students from developing an interactive experience with knowledge.

The above report that emanate from the areas of study discussed, informs this educational reader with a responsive-type of learning strategy that can eventually be proposed as an effective learning methodology, alternative to examination-based conventional practices. 'Reading the Image' will further develop the learning strategies that are fit for contemporary secondary school students.

You can watch the short learning film 'Il-Barri' and other similar projects by following this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INyOCztUmz0&list=PLwb0FamE9-z-2HyMQaFTo48Osh4f8ni7n&index=33

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SUSTAINABILITY IN HEALTH PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper emerges from a qualitative case study analysis undertaken to explore the concept of pre-registration interprofessional education (IPE) as a possible model of practice at the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Malta. IPE, which is defined as "occasions when two or more professions *learn with, from and about each* other to improve collaboration and the quality of care*" [1] does not form part of undergraduate professional health education curricula at the Faculty of Health Sciences. A qualitative case study approach underpinned by a social constructionist and interpretative perspective was employed so as to to explore stakeholders' perspectives of IPE and to encourage debate around such a pedagogical approach. The purposive sample totaled sixty-four participants and these included academics at the Faculty of Health Sciences, key informants from the education and health sectors and newly qualified health professionals. Data was gathered through a combination of focus group discussions, one-to-one interviews and a systematic documentary search, and analysed using Ritchie and Spencer's (1994) 'Framework' analysis [2] supported by NVivo software. Findings yielded rich insights into participants' perceptions of IPE; while they lauded the notion in principle, they identified a multiplicity of factors that would pose barriers to its enactment in practice. The many barriers identified were relational as well as rooted in the practical and organisational domain. Others related to the broader cultural landscape. These findings were interpreted through various theoretical perspectives so as to provide understandings and insights into these barriers as well as to portray the story of the case. This paper touches on some salient points from this study and underscores how qualitative inquiry can further the sustainability agenda; in this case improving health professional education for a sustainable health workforce. It questions the rhetoric and complexity of interdisciplinarity and provides insights regarding the challenges of innovation. Addressing them might support positive changes at deeper levels, possibly leading to research-based initiatives.

Keywords: Interprofessional education; qualitative case study research; innovation

1 INTRODUCTION

In today's diverse, complex and rapidly changing healthcare environment, interprofessional education (IPE) is increasingly being recognised for the development of a sustainable health workforce [3]. IPE, defined as "occasions when two or more professions *learn with, from and about each* other to improve collaboration and the quality of care" [1], can help students develop knowledge and skills for collaborative working, thus making them more responsive to changing health needs [4]. However, despite the policy drivers and the increase in evidence base for IPE, it has never been mainstreamed worldwide, and its implementation remains patchy [5]. The challenges of developing, implementing and sustaining interprofessional education are often underestimated or overlooked. Achieving an interprofessional agenda calls for a "paradigm shift, since interprofesessional practice has unique characteristics in terms of values, codes of conduct, and ways of working" [6,p.9].

The key determinants for the successful development, delivery and sustainment of IPE have been frequently identified in the literature [7,8,9] and these are many times classified at micro (socialisation processes), meso (administrative, processes including leadership) and at macro (political and institutional support and processes) levels [10].

At the University of Malta, although the concept of IPE has at times been addressed at a policy level, there are as yet no formal under-graduate IPE initiatives. Professional health education is carried out in a uni-professional manner interspersed with a few modules of multidisciplinary learning. This was the impetus of this study in which I used qualitative case study analysis to a) explore understandings and perceptions about the concept of under-graduate IPE and b) to explore perceptions on the development, implementation and sustainability of possible under-graduate IPE initiatives at the University of Malta.

2 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The study was located at the Faculty of Health Sciences which consists of twelve departments each offering a degree programme leading to a health care profession. These are the department of Applied Biomedical Science, Food Sciences and Nutrition, Health Services Management, Midwifery, Nursing, Mental Health Nursing, Medical Physics, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Podiatry, Radiography and Speech Language Pathology. The average student population in this faculty is about 13,000 students.

2.1 Methods

A qualitative case study approach was employed to address the research questions. The epistemological position was one of social constructionism located within an interpretive paradigm. Case study research offered me the methodological approach to understand and deconstruct IPE from the point of view of participants set within the culture of the faculty and beyond. Its emphasis on understanding both the complexity and uniqueness of a bounded system encompassing contextual determinants was compatible with the purpose and questions of the study [11,12]. Moreover, Stake's notion of the qualitative case study researcher as being an interpreter and presenting constructions of participants' constructed reality, reflected my epistemological stance [12].

The unit of analysis was 'IPE at the Faculty of Health Sciences positioned with the Maltese context'. Thomas's viewpoint on case study research as portraying a rich picture with various insights coming from different angles and from different sources of information seemed to embrace the story of this case [13].

2.2 Data Collection

This study, in keeping with case study methodology, made use of multiple data sources so as to gain a holistic view of the phenomenon [12, 14]. Data was gathered through a combination of: 10 focus groups with academics across 10 departments [1], one focus group with newly qualified health professionals, five one-to-one interviews with key informants and a documentary search. Data collection and analyses processes were carried out in various phases so to allow an inductive approach to the research process. All focus groups and key informant interviews were facilitated by the primary researcher (author of this paper).

Focus groups are used for generating information on collective views and the meanings that lie behind those views [15]. Because of their synergistic potential, focus groups often produce data that is seldomly produced through individual interviewing and can "result in powerful interpretative insights" allowing the "proliferation of multiple meanings and perspectives" [16,p.903,904]. The first phase of the study consisted of 10 focus groups with Faculty of Health Sciences academics from each department across the ten departments outlined above. The total number of participants who accepted to participate within these focus groups was 54 participants across the various health professions; this represented a very high percentage of the Faculty's academic staff. An open-ended,

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[1] Two departments from the Faculty of Health Sciences were excluded as they only offered postgraduate programmes; and the focus of this study was undergraduate IPE.

non-leading questioning route based on the research questions and pertinent literature guided each focus group.

The next stage of this study consisted of a focus group with newly qualified health professionals so as to explore and understand their perceptions of what it meant to be a newly qualified health professional working in 'real' life practice, the degree of collaborative practices in their current practice settings and their perceived preparedness for collaborative practices. Participants were selected using purposive sampling from all cohorts of the various health professions mentioned above and who had qualified in the last two years at the time of data collection. Development of the questioning route was carried out in a similar fashion as to the previous phase.

The following phase in data collection consisted of one-to-one interviews with 5 key informants. Key informants are a select group of people knowledgeable about certain issues and are often considered critical to the success of a case study due to their invaluable insights [14].They are also able to provide an overall view of the organisation, its activities, policies and future directions [17]. Purposive sampling was again employed to select a number of key informants who were in key positions should any IPE initiative ever being considered within the Faculty of Health Sciences and at the University of Malta. This number was eventually condensed to five key informants from the health and higher education sectors (including policy, practice and management); the two sectors of paramount importance for any potential IPE initiative [18]. The development of the interview guide for these key informants was based on pertinent literature, a core set of questions (similar to other phases), themes emanating from previous phases and topics 'exploiting' each key informant's unique position. The five interview guides were developed successively so that each guide built on the preceding one seeking clarification of the broader issues, building on information that was previously addressed and exploring new directions.

Another data collection method was a systematic documentary search and this was carried out throughout all phases and continued well after the completion of the key informant interviews. Rather than being a primary data collection tool, the main objective of using documentary sources was to provide the historical and contemporary contexts so as to understand the story of the case. Documents were also used to supplement information, compensate for any limitations and cross validate information such as primary data [19].This documentary search was carried out iteratively over many months so as to uncover and revisit relevant information. I also engaged in continuous reflexive analysis which is defined as "thoughtful, conscious self-awareness" and "encompasses the continual evaluation of subjective responses, intersubjective dynamics and the research itself" [20,p.532] This was central to this work most especially since I was a researcher researching my own institution. At a basic level, engaging in reflexive analysis meant being aware of my subjectivities, at another level it meant examining the dynamics of the relationship between myself and my participants, and at yet another level, exploring how my position would influence data collection and analysis [20].

2.3 Data Analysis

Focus group interviews (approximately 90-120 minutes) and one-to-one interviews (approximately 60-90 minutes) were audio-recorded and transcribed. The data was then analysed using the 'Framework' approach [2] supported by QSR NVivo 10. 'Framework' analysis approach employs a hierarchical thematic framework that is used to classify and organise data according to key themes, concepts and emergent categories. It identifies a series of main themes subdivided by a succession of related subtopics and, once deemed to be comprehensive, each main theme is charted by completing a matrix or table where each case, respondent or participant has its own row while the columns represent the subtopics [2]. QSR NVivo (Version 9 & 10) software were used to support this analysis by driving the data through a complex, systematic and iterative data interrogation process such as interpretation and naming of categories, using comparison and pattern analysis to refine and relate categories or themes,

using divergent views and negative cases to challenge generalisations, returning to substantive, and theoretical literature and creating figures, displays and models [21].

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was granted from the Faculty Research Ethics and Governance Committee at the University of Brighton and from the University of Malta's Research Ethics Committee. All participants signed an informed consent form.
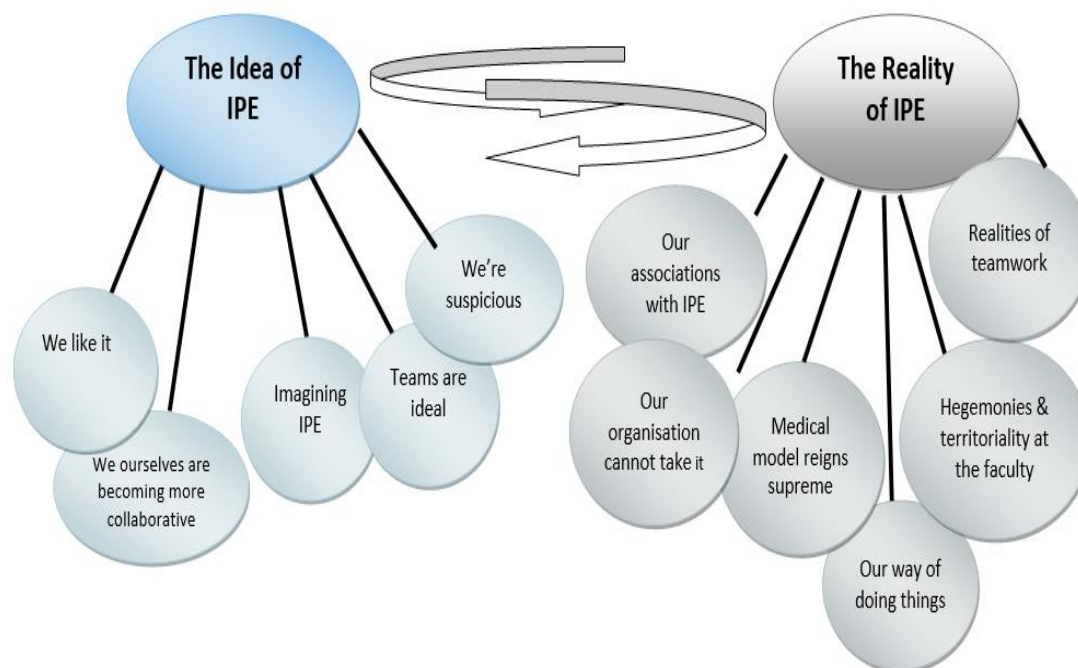
3 FINDINGS

A number of themes encapsulated the dominant issues and concerns voiced by the study participants. This paper will discuss the two overarching master themes: 'The Idea of IPE' which represented participants' discourses expressing perceptions and understandings of IPE as an idea and 'The Reality of IPE' also representing participants' discourses on IPE but this time contextualised to their world, in other words, imagining IPE in reality or in practice. The first master theme: 'The Idea of IPE' represented participants' discourses expressing perceptions and understandings of IPE *as an idea*. Participants imagined IPE through constructing largely optimistic discourses that affirmed IPE as a good way forward. There were instances where they spoke of IPE as truly something to aspire for as it seemed to have the potential to offer many benefits to health professionals, such as improving day-to-day working relationships, making better use of scarce resources and ultimately improving patient care. Participants also spoke about how the faculty was slowly becoming a more collaborative environment, a factor that might help in accommodating IPE. Yet, although participants pointed to many potential benefits, discussions of IPE as an idea also elicited responses that might be said to be indicative of a certain sense of doubt and mistrust of it.

The second master theme: 'The Reality of IPE,' represented participants' discourses on IPE but this time contextualised to their world, in other words, imagining IPE *in reality* or in practice. They identified seemingly insurmountable barriers to IPE that included organisational and logistical constraints, strong medical dominance and territorial behaviours that work against the principle of collaboration. There was also the general perception that IPE would demand a profound cultural change, a huge departure from "the way we do things". They discussed such traits and behaviours, both at the level of the individual and of the established systems and structures, concluding, as summarised by a participant "there needs to be a big culture change needed in order for IPE to work."

The relationship between the two master themes might be described as constituting two sides of the same coin, with a degree of overlap at times and tension at other times. Some of the concepts in these themes were multifaceted, having both positive and negative aspects and therefore belonging to more than one theme or subtheme. Figure 1 is a diagrammatical representation of the two master themes with their sub-themes, the titles of which reflect participants' own words. Sub-themes stem from the central concept of the broader master theme but with an in-depth focus on a particular element.

Fig. 1   Master themes and sub-themes

My intention in presenting the findings under these two master themes highlights this relationship and at the same time, still present the notion of a continuum between 'The Idea of IPE' and 'The Reality of IPE.' This was a complex picture which was captured through the richness, breadth and interrelatedness of the themes and their sub-themes. The left-hand side of the figure represents 'The Idea of IPE' consisting of five sub-themes, and the right-hand side represents 'The Reality of IPE' consisting of six sub-themes. For the interested reader, the content of these sub-themes with verbatim quotes can be found elsewhere [22].

4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Having identified the key themes and issues of concern to the participants, my next task then lay in identifying an appropriate conceptual framework within which I might explore the significance of my findings. At this stage, I engaged in what Simons refers to as "dancing with the data" [23, p.140] which is one way that data analysis and interpretation would culminate into the case study story. This was a creative process and entailed not only reading and re-reading the data and placing it in context but seeing it from different angles adding on another sense of 'knowing' of what is embedded in the data. Simons [23] sees this process as an "interpretative form of thematic analysis that gains depth, insight, and holistic understanding" (p. 140). I wanted to unearth, understand and theorise possible reasons for the dissonance between the 'ideal' and the 'real' and the extent to which this may reflect participants' ideas and beliefs; this was congruent with my interpretative theoretical perspective in providing deep insights into "the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" [24]. Schwandt's thinking supported my analysis by raising my awareness to the various contexts from which participants' discourses emerged and the need to untangle them and look at different layers of meanings and nuances. The process of generating theoretical abstractions so as to anchor and provide a wider conceptual framework for my findings was akin to "the analytic equivalent of putting mortar in between the building blocks" [25,p.48]. It was also the process of making connections, looking beyond and transcending the tangible facts emanating from the findings so as to engage in higher order reconceptualisation.

From the outset, I realised that utilising one theoretical perspective or one system of thought to understand the social constructions of my participants' worlds was impossible and so I drew on a wider pool of literature than the IPE literature. Theories with a social dimension seemed to resonate and offer insights into my findings, however, even within this field, I was still looking at diverse bodies of knowledge, namely Sociology, Social Psychology and Anthropological Literature. These various analytical 'tools' provided me with diverse insights into my findings and encouraged me to engage in "second order reflection" during which common and familiar practices were viewed from unfamiliar perspectives and eventually re-examined [26,p.466]. And through this process, I developed the conceptual framework (Fig.2) made up from a tapestry of findings (through my themes and sub-themes) interpreted through various theoretical perspectives/lenses I deemed most suitable for critically exploring, examining and perhaps finding explanations for these findings.

Fig.2 Conceptual framework providing into the findings and the complexity of IPE
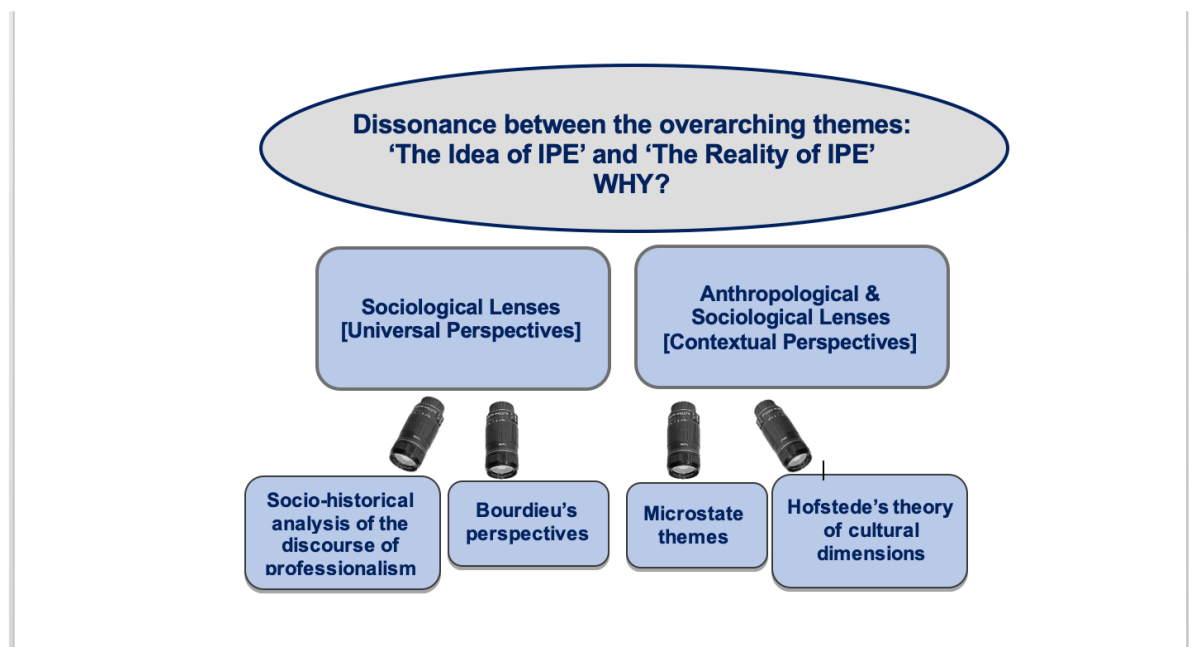
Whilst developing this conceptual framework, the various theoretical perspectives helped me recognise how the "bigger picture" [27,p.173] issues emanating from this case study, that is the major issues and concerns raised by the study participants, resonate with the wider literature; what is *universal* or common to all (or almost all) IPE contexts, and what is *contextual* (particular) to the Maltese context.

The left-hand side of Figure represents socio-historical perspectives influencing IPE and these are *universal*. The right-hand side focuses on *contextual* socio-cultural concerns which, although particular to Malta, may also resonate with other countries that share similar contextual features. There is interdependency and overlapping between these universal and contextual lenses, supporting Burr's thinking on social constructionism that the ways in which we commonly understand the world are historically and culturally situated [28].

This interdisciplinary conceptual framework drew on the socio-historical discourse of professionalism and Bourdieu's sociological concepts of *field*, *habitus*, *capital* and *doxa,* as a means of illuminating the social exclusivity that professionals aim for, and the dynamics of interprofessional relationships [29,30,31]. The framework also drew on concepts rooted in anthropological and sociological

discourses, focusing in particular on Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions [32,33] and local microstate themes [34] as a means of teasing out and understanding the role of culture in shaping perceptions and behaviours. The application of these theories are abstract and fall outside the scope of this paper; however the interested reader can refer to these publications [35,36].

5 CONCLUSION

This study has initiated debate on the concept of IPE further supporting the credibility of qualitative research in shaping the sustainability agenda; in this case generating new understandings for a collaborative future health workforce. It explored perceptions of IPE from higher education and health stakeholders when this philosophy had not yet been considered thus addressing curriculum innovation concerns *a priori* to a change being implemented; this could empower rather than impose change. It has also highlighted how institutional, professional, cultural and individual determinants are critical determinants in the development and delivery of IPE again emphasising the centrality of understanding the context at the planning phase. Although integrating undergraduate IPE in local professional health curricula seems difficult at the moment, this study provides knowledge which could inform modest IPE initiatives should the will be there.

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DRAW THE CURTAINS!

ANTHROPOLOGICAL PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION IN UNDERGRADUATE TRAINEESHIP: A DIFFERENT ROUTE TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Abstract

In this paper, I present a teaching pilot project in a Dutch undergraduate hotel management program. We integrated participant observation with management traineeship in our on-campus commercial hotel with the aim to develop students' practitioner inquiry capability [1]. This capability is intended to achieve professional competence. The combined traineeship-anthropological field work created an educational condition that challenged the students to become attentive and consciously responsive to what happened around them, to draw the curtain and to look behind the obvious and self-evident. Despite the struggle to combine work responsibility and field work in a space of liminality, students started to think qualitatively, critically, and reflexively. What was even more important: they enjoyed doing Anthropological Participant Observation.

The pilot project was inspired by the work of social anthropologist Tim Ingold [2] [3], especially his book Anthropology and/as Education [2]. He argues that anthropology and education follow the same propositions having the same purpose: enabling young people to study and to leading life with others. Moreover, a close connection between anthropology and education could transform the world. In this sense, the project was a critical though constructive response to mainstream positivist hospitality management research guided by a 'tyranny of relevance' for business improvement only [4][5].

Keywords: anthropological participant observation, practitioner inquiry, professional development.

1   PRELUDE: ENCOUNTERING THE WORLD

Doing research is a continuous questioning the world and oneself. It is travelling through the world; it is encountering others and otherness; it is listening to what the world has to tell; it is being in search of knowing and making sense. My [PhD] research illuminated the importance to me, a teaching pedagogue, to integrate a questioning attitude into my day-to-day activities [6:221]

Several years ago, I started to teach research in a large undergraduate hotel management school in the Netherlands. I was expected to teach in a course historically rooted in the deductive analytic (positivist) paradigm. It had created a one-sided research culture in which doing research means writing a literature review, collecting data, doing statistics, presenting an objectified world out there. Reporting research projects follows the criteria of a five-chapter paper based on APA standards for publishing quantitative research. Unfortunately, space for other research paradigms was rejected and

led to the marginalised position of qualitative research as tool for data collection. This approach is supported with references to mainstream hospitality management research for business needs, supposed to be reached through quantitative correlational and cause-effect research designs only. Moreover, it is claimed that important hospitality management journals only publish quantitative studies.

Do not get me wrong—I think there are good reasons for doing QUAN research or to mix QUAN and QUAL. A one-sided approach, however, limits our perspective of the colourful world of hospitality, and—even more problematic—it does not appreciate opportunities for student learning that come from doing research embedded in other paradigms. Secondly, it contradicts the school's social constructivist vision on education. And, thirdly, it does not acknowledge the different viewpoints in the hospitality research community where hospitality management research is complemented with qualitative hospitality studies and critical hospitality management research—studies published in respected research journals as well [4][5].

My background in arts and humanities—especially doing my PhD with anthropological participant observation on ideology and utopian thinking in school innovation [6]—motivated me to challenge the status quo, to 'unchain' myself from the mainstream and largely unquestioned constraints. Therefore, I introduced the opportunities for doing research and learning with anthropological participant observation to my research supervisor colleagues and suggested a pilot project. To my surprise the idea was welcomed—it turned out that many of us shared the feelings of being constrained by the long-held positivist orientation. Regrettably, the initiative was not appreciated by the 'founding fathers' of the research program. One of them formulated his irreconcilable opinion in an e-mail writing that

> *Qualitative research in not mainstream but a minority approach and seems more suited for advanced than for beginning researchers. … The lobby for qualitative research and its growing impact on the curriculum is motivated by the desire to obtain a status which is not warranted by its scientific status.*

At this point, I understood that the institute's research culture was affected by a high level of ideological thinking aiming at preservation of a commonly held status to maintain one's privileges [7] [6]. This often "collective-unconscious" way of thinking and perception of social reality leads to consider current situations as appropriate and valuable. It is a problematic standpoint because of its devitalising, petrifying character: it does not allow for dialogue, for exploration of alternatives, for imagination for what could also be—it hinders "transformational strength of human beings" [6:183]. I think it is the role and responsibility of teaching pedagogues feeling oppressed or constrained to contest and engage in utopian thinking that challenges ideological thinking for the sake of students' learning because,

> *[t]he complete disappearance of the utopian element from human thought and action would mean that human nature and human development would take on a totally new character. The disappearance of utopia would bring about a static state of affairs in which man [sic] himself becomes no more than a thing. … with the relinquishment of utopias, man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it* [7: 263]

Where initially the suggested pilot project aimed at understanding the opportunities of Anthropological Participant Observation (APO) for learning it also became instrumental in the dialogue for changes in the research and teaching culture.

2   TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH THE WORLD

2.1   Ethnography or Anthropology

Qualitative hospitality researchers have pleaded to integrate ethnography in education because of its possibilities for students to become a reflective practitioner and to do research *of* and *for* hospitality [4][5]. But, so Tim Ingold provocatively argues, ethnography aims at distanced describing of people and is not anthropology: anthropology is "practice of education" [3:62]. APO is a way

> *to notice what people are saying and doing, to watch and listen, and to respond in your own practice. That is to say, observation is a way of participating attentively, and for reason a way of learning. … We do so in order that we may grow in wisdom and maturity, in our powers of observation, reason, and critical thinking, in the hope and expectation that we can bring these answers to bear on whatever problems we may tackle in the future.* [3:23]

APO is transformational because it is "generous, open-ended, comparative, and yet critical inquiry into the conditions and possibilities of human life in the one world we all inhabit" [3:22]. Its main characteristics are attitude of attentiveness and correspondence, emergence, multiplicity and without acceptance of commonly hold beliefs / practices to explore the human conditions.

Several years before Ingold unfolded his thoughts on anthropology and/as education, he explored 'how to do' anthropology from the perspective of the craftsman. One takes a material, observes and responds while working with it. The piece resulting from the work includes a transformation process [PhD]. Likewise, when doing APO is a craft to be learned from the inside [6]. We followed this vision on doing participant observation

2.2   The Pilot Project

2.2.1   Content

Our 4-year international undergraduate program in hospitality management offers a problem based real-world learning curriculum. Each year, students have to complete a 5 – 10 weeks traineeship within our student led commercial 4* on campus hotel on operational (1st year), supervisory (2nd year) and managerial (3rd year) level. Experienced hospitality industry practitioners act as practical instructors to coach the students. In year 4, students complete a 10-month internship in a hospitality company somewhere around the world. In this year, they conduct a research project in the company and write a bachelor dissertation. A 168 hours prepatory research course (Understanding Research) is offered by a team of research lecturers and supervisors in year 3.

We—a research lecturer and a research supervisor—integrated two curriculum components namely practical traineeship and a preparatory research course. Therefore, the students became ''practitioner inquirers" for whom the "boundaries between inquiry and the professional blur when the practitioner is the researcher and when the professional context is a site for the study of practice" [1:19].

Over the course of 3 semesters, 150 students participated in the project. As expected, we faced some limiting conditions. The pilot project ran parallel to the regular research course and two regular subject modules (table 1); we had to guarantee that all set learning outcomes of both courses were achieved. The given research course structure still needed to be followed; and students could not participate voluntarily – the scheduling office decided who participated in the pilot instead of the core module.

Before the actual field work, we introduced APO methodological principles. After the supervised fieldwork, observation field notes were turned into stories, and reflections and findings were connected with related theory. The students worked in groups of four and decided on a topic of their own choice based on their experiences in previous years. Since the students acted as managers in different departments, the theme was looked into from different angles.

Subject module 12EC (4 + 4/5 weeks)	Management training on campus hotel (4/5 weeks)	Subject module 12 EC (8 weeks)
Pilot Project part 1 Preparation APO field work: decide topic, principles APO workshops/ lectures/ consultation in sub groups	Interweaving APO & practice training Writing Field notes & reflection on research and learning Consultation Proposal submission	Pilot Project part 2: Field notes analysis, theme identification & story writing, Writing theoretical framework; Workshops, lectures, consultation Oral defence in sub-groups Paper submission.
Regular course *Understanding Research (6EC)* Part 1 proposal (chapter 1 & 2)		Regular course *Understanding Research* Part 2 Data collection & - analysis (chapter 3-4)
Longitudinal Research		

Table 1: structure pilot project & longitudinal research

2.2.2   Longitudinal Research

The research was done among 75 students—25 students per semester. I made recordings of (bi)weekly consultation meetings, student focus groups, and oral defences; I wrote own field notes and reflections on experiences with my students; I used 17 submitted research papers including students' fieldnotes and reflections. The collection was narratively and with thematic analysis interpreted and discussed. Students gave their informed consent; the campus hotel management and staff were informed.

3   WONDER—WAIT—WANDER

3.1   Tightrope Dancing: Leading Life—Leading Out

Often, a participant observer looks into an unfamiliar context for study. My students, however, entered the field as practitioner inquirers, knowing the field though unfamiliar with their roles as manager and as researcher. As managers, they were responsible for successfully leading assigned departments according to the following assessment requirement:

> *In the Practice-unit the focus will be on translating the strategic plan of the Real World Learning hotel from the business unit level to the departmental level. That implies that strategic objectives are transferred to departmental CSFs and KPIs which have to be measured, monitored and managed by the 3rd- year students in their role as managers.* [8:4]

In addition, they were assessed on using their soft skills (especially in the field of communicating, motivating, leading and changing own behaviour) within this context. The responsibility weighed heavily on my students' shoulders. Unforeseen, the role blurring created tension for individual students: like a tightrope dancer balancing on a wire with the risk of falling down, they had to balance the two roles with the risk of failing their traineeship and/or the research course. In this context, they understood the managerial and observation inquiry tasks as two disconnected entities. This actually inhibited the possibility of making use of the APO opportunities for learning to become a manager.

The dialogues with students in consultancy meetings gave me the insight that they were (implicitly) expected to prioritize running the business over an individual learning process—over attentiveness, emergence, critical inquiry. I was surprised that in the on-campus Real World Learning hotel, students

were primarily trained to act and produce which seems to go at the expense of meaningful learning. The meetings became a space for joined reflective withdrawal from the Real World Learning scene; and writing field notes was creating space for reflexivity. I was happy to see that many of our participating students were able to see the benefits of APO at some point:

> *During practice, I experienced it was quite hard to combine doing research with a role as being a manager. This was mainly because I was quite involved in the practical activities and my main priority was to maintain a clear overview of the department. … Overall, during the five weeks in practice, I learnt how to combine my role both as a researcher and manager and how to make useful field notes. … During the research, I felt it extremely interesting to get insight into the incidents of the department and to really take part of the situation itself as researcher. Due to the research, I put my focus on CSR implementations, mainly health and safety, in the department and I found out that this had influence on the whole team performance and ambience. It was exciting to see how my attitude and behaviour as a manager could have an impact on the whole team. This observation made me feel more responsible and more aware of my important position [Mary]*

> *Dwelling on a situation in practice and observe what was going on really gave me an opportunity to see what is going on at the work floor. While observing I see, hear, feel more details, which I would never have regarded without taking time to observe. After 3 weeks, I found out what the colours of the Canteen are – I started focusing on details. I learned that by observing, I started to see more than I would do normally at work – when you do not see, you do not know. [Mandy]*

> *I think especially in the first week [doing PO] I was sometimes really shocked how I fell into habits and stereotyping which I honestly did not thought I would. I realized that even though I am already really open-minded and support feminism and especially women at work, I still realised a few times that my leading styles changed depending on gender. … It made me question myself what kind of manager or even leader I want to be when working with other people [Charly]*

> *Although I did not completely feel at ease to share all my observations with the PIs, I did share some of them – it created opportunity for improvement. …. Moreover, sharing with my fellow managers created support for finding solutions for problems. … And observing also made me aware of how I can improve my communication with staff [Ella]*

3.2   Liminality: Unlearning—Learning

> *All in all, I was happy with the chance, which was given to us to try this new method of doing research. In the beginning, I was a little bit suspicious because I was used to another way of doing research. But with the guidelines that are given to us and the feedback from our supervisor, I am satisfied with the outcomes so far. [Lotte]*

Liminality occurs when people have separated themselves from the sphere of understanding, certainty and knowing how to act when entering the unknown. Over a period of time of ambivalence and paradox, leavers transfer into newcomers and have to familiarise with the unknown till they create a new comfort zone, a new period of stability and rest. Liminality exists in between departure and arrival, in a period of being 'betwixt and between' [10].

The students in the pilot project faced the unknown in APO. Every 10 weeks, they enter a new module and have to familiarise time and again—so, there were no initial worries. The concerns, however, started as they found out that they had to walk a path by themselves—a path without the common signposts they would normally rely on: no detailed manuals; no knowledgeable peers; not applicable prior knowledge.

In the consultancy meetings during which we engaged in dialogical reflections students became aware of the incongruency of their strong quantitative mindset with the new conditions. I noticed that students had to unlearn, and this—initially—resulted in forms of freezing and growing dependence.

These conversations, however, created then zones for proximal development within the space of liminality. They enhanced aggregation, growing congruent behaviour, and learning.

> *The positive part of these observations is that I have stepped out of my personal comfort zone to approach students and actually ask them when I hear / feel something. When looking in a positive way I can say I have started to look in a more critical way when making field notes. [Choo]*

4   DRAW THE CURTAINS!

In the pilot project, the students learned with and from their peers, the practical instructors, the guests and myself; I learned with and from them. We learned that doing research and engaging in learning is challenging when standardised prescribed routes are abandoned, and new directions are to be explored. In the current conditions, learning to do APO implied becoming conscious of the possibilities the world offers and understanding that education can also limit one's scope.

At the end of the project we could tell that in doing APO students created spaces for thinking and conscious learning within running the business. It complemented reflection on soft skills and daily operations. Therefore, with APO students went beyond the focus of the reflective practitioner while connecting their thinking with and in the world shared with others. Thus, the conducted research was not a research *of* or *for* hospitality but *with* and *from* all that provide hospitality. It might enable them to avoid a purely pragmatist production focus, to question commonly accepted practices, processes and procedures to enhance innovation.

The starting point for learning in practice enabled students a sensemaking integration of practical and theoretical knowledge. The experiences in the real world supported a focused and less mechanical search and reading of relevant literature for further study and understanding of the Real-World cases. Moreover, they understood that theory emerges from engagement with the world.

Finally, the pilot project gave me the enriching experience of becoming a participant in student learning. Students and I lead a life in the same world though we have different roles and responsibilities. Normally, I would teach, read work, give feedback and grade at a relative distance. Now, the students involved me in their school life with their fieldnotes and stories, their questions and concerns, their experiences. I learned how they experienced the traineeship, about their mindset, about their way of learning, about how they keep all their balls in the air. I am ever so grateful that our students joined me in my explorations. If it was not because of them, I could never have figured out that it is indeed about time to draw the curtains and let a different light come in.

5   EPILOGUE

> *Forget the perfect ordering….*
>
> *There are cracks in everything.*
>
> *That's how the light comes in.*

Leonard Cohen's musical poem reflects an important understanding that the pilot project reinforced: Learning is a process in which one person is attentive and responding to emerging encounters with others and / or things enabling transformation. It is about opening up to or finding cracks in oneself, finding *cracks* in a teaching or research culture. Appropriate education is not about learning outcomes achieved via pre-structured routes. Education is about creating space for emerging learning to lead

students out, so they can lead their lives. It is about aiming at practitioner inquiry capability and the development of an inquisitive attitude.

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THINKING AND WALKING WITH THEORY: A DIALOGIC ENCOUNTER BETWEEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND POSTHUMAN THEORIST

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Abstract

Approximately 250 third bachelor students of the KU Leuven (University in Belgium) took up the challenge of reading a book of either Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, Rosi Braidotti or Judith Butler and translating these complex posthuman theories into a 3-dimensional design. This assignment combines insights from Jackson and Mazzei's 'thinking with theory' and Sara Scott Shield's 'walking through theory' concept. The course component was meant to increase students' sensitivity for posthuman philosophical approaches that focus on the relationship between human and matter, and by extension, the non-sense of the distinction between both. Part of the course objective was to encourage students to challenge academic conventions in disseminating research findings by materializing theoretical concepts through creative practice. By observing groups of students in their journey to work through the books our understanding of the process they go through when reading and condensing complex theories into an accessible design can be increased. We present a theoretical framework explaining why design methods can help to understand theory, a research design and some results of first exploratory observations.

Keywords: New Materialism, Design, Education

1   PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH INTENT

1.1   Problem statement

Developing a scholarly 'feel' has little to do with acquiring knowledge and skills. It has more to do with 'knowing one's way around' in scholarly practice. An important part of developing a scholarly attitude is engaging with the theories and philosophies developed by distinguished scholars. They offer comprehensive frameworks to increase our understanding of complex social realities and/or imaginary possibilities ahead of us. However, within current social science teaching practices, students are rarely challenged and awarded time to truly dive into theoretical works. Although theoretical viewpoints and philosophical strands can be explained to students in linear fashion, we argue, getting someone acquainted with new theoretical ideas should rather be a dialogic encounter. The latter approach would enable students to find their own theoretical voice and challenge them to take up their agency within an ongoing stream of theory formation. The formation of such a theoretical assemblage goes hand in hand with a reflexive attitude encouraging students to think about the wider implications of certain research choices. We are currently experiencing growing concerns about complex and global

problems and a call for equality and justice for both humans and non-humans. This in combination with new epistemological perspectives such as New Materialism and movements pushing the democratization of science urges us to think about an academic climate that calls a reflexive attitude and social responsibility in students.

To create such a climate, we believe inspiration can be found in art and design. Research has shown that artistic and design related techniques within social scientific research are often accompanied by activist attitudes that emphasize social responsibility and aim to 'change' rather than just to record. The use of creative or artistic methods in university education is also known to encourage students in identity exploration (Goodyear, 2018), beneficial to their personal development and wellbeing. Creative methods in education are reported to "create psychological settings for whole-person learning (...) helping people transition from their outside worlds into a mental and emotional place that allows them to be open for learning" (Yorks & Kasl, 2006, p.51), and give agency to students, making them "creators of meanings, not receivers of knowledge" (Shields, 2018, p.289).

However, it remains difficult to incorporate creative modules within university tracks. The neo-liberal logic behind universities gears students with skills towards employability and competitiveness, and the ideal of education as a 'practice of freedom' (Meißner, 2015, p.123) seems lost. While education should empower people by offering them critical skills to rethink the actual and enable them to deploy their own strengths in shaping the future, highly institutionalized education makes students conform to rules and memorize "a set body of knowledge without necessarily learning or understanding" (Gauntlet, 2011, p.163). This observation has been confirmed by scholar Donald Schön (1990), who was amongst the first to note that when students are asked to reflect on some-thing, or a situation, they usually report on what they already know. Their reflections represent what and how they do or have done things. They are seldom used as a means to shift existing habits of mind or activity patterns. However, with the right questions asked, teachers can stimulate deep reflection. Instead of asking students what they have learned, or whether and how their learning content is relevant to their discipline, it might be more valuable asking who or what they will reflect with, hereby moving the focus from reflection about action to reflection in dialogue, in the sense of being in conversations with 'a situation' (Biesta, 2019).

Shifting the focus from what to reflect on to who or what to reflect with implies the creation of a different type of mental space for students; one that encourages mutual dialogue and a presence of joined writing and creation spaces. These enable students to find, practice and sharpen their critical voice and exchange it with others.

1.2   Research Intent

By building upon an existing course taught at KU Leuven to 3th year bachelor students, the empirical study we conducted sought to develop a theoretical argumentation and educational tactic to further encourage reflexivity in students. It supports the integration of creative research conduct and dissemination as a training component in social and behavioural science curricula. Through reading New Materialist theories in an active non-linear way and enable a dialogue by linking the readings to a creative assignment, students are challenged to appropriate and incorporate these theories. Reading non-linear refers to reading a book through key concepts in the index rather than from beginning to end. By reading in this manner the chronology of the text is determined by the growing comprehension of each individual student rather than it being a fixed frame.

2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The course 'Reflexivity and the practice of reflection in social sciences' takes as its primary lead the 'Thinking with theory' concept of Jackson and Mazzei (2012) and 'walking through theory' of Sara Scott Shields (2018). These concepts explain the function of theory in interpreting reality and support the use of creative assignments to understand one's own theoretical position. To further develop how theory and creative practice can work together, we rely on a two-folded theoretical framework which will serve as the basis for future observations. The framework is based on Material Engagement Theory (Malafouris, 2013) and metaphoric thinking and aims to:

- explain the potential of material engagement and creation to understand and appropriate theory

- propose metaphoric thinking as a tool to grapple with abstract concepts.

2.1   Thinking With Theory

Through 'thinking with theory', Alecia Jackson and Lisa Mazzei disrupt 'the theory/practice binary by decentering each and instead showing how they constitute or make another' (2012, p.ix). They explain this can be achieved by plugging philosophical concepts into data or vice versa. Rather than reducing data to themes through coding procedures and aiming to end up with transparent narratives, Jackson and Mazzei urge for the acceptance that 'data are partial, incomplete, and always in a process of a re-telling and re-membering' (ibid, p.ix). The same data can offer multiple views on reality depending on which theory is plugged into it. Only by acknowledging this multiplicity, the complexities of social life can be critiqued.

2.2   Walking Through Theory

In *Walking Through Theory, An Exploration of Theoretical Frameworks in Miniature*, Sara Scott Shields (2018) explores the idea of theory as a home. Since theory can be seen as the soul or center of research practice it is important to know where to situate oneself and to 'feel at home' within a theoretical framework. In her educational practice, Shields invites undergraduate art students to build a three-dimensional miniature space of the theory they felt themselves aligned to by using creative techniques. "This art-making activity served two purposes: communication of a complex theoretical construct and critical thinking to shrink complex ideas into a metaphorical miniature space" (Scott Shields, 2018). Her study showed that the use of visual analogies helps students to develop a deeper understanding of their own theoretical foundations. The assignment encouraged undergraduate art students to find their way within a complex multitude of theoretical strands and offered tools to tackle the struggle of figuring out how they could position themselves within it.

We believe 3th year social science students are confronted with the same quest; having reached a stage in their academic career where they have learned about many different theories and methodologies but hardly have been challenged to relate these different stances to each other and figure out how they want to position themselves as future researchers.

2.3   Material engagement

In *How Things Shape the Mind, A Theory of Material Engagement* (2013), Lambros Malafouris explains the theory of material engagement. It concerns a recent theory within cognitive science emphasizing the fluid boundaries between people and things. Material Engagement Theory (MET) states that humans do not just make objects, but that these objects and the skills we develop in making them also have a recursive effect on human becoming (Malafouris, 2013). This not only for the more obvious cases such as tools or technology, but also creations that might not seem to have an immediate practical function such as drawings have an effect on our thinking. Such a "creative kind of thinking through things seeks to elucidate the fact that the novel meanings humans come to entertain involve more than mere observation of the world as it is presented to us" (Iliopoulos, 2019, p.55). Malafouris explains this by going back to the first cave paintings of bisons, contradicting the idea that these drawings are representations of real bisons. Though we might perceive them as such now, following MET and the process of 'enactive discovery', the meaning of these drawings and what they could represent only came into being after they were made. According to MET, meaning emerges through material engagement, guided by a logic of improvisation rather than based on preconceived images or concepts. As such, it is through a creation process in which form and meaning emerge simultaneously that Paleolithic humans were able to extend their thinking and their thinking about thinking:

> The Paleolithic image maker constructed an external scaffold that made it possible to see and experience the world in ways that the physiology of the naked eye by itself did not allow (…) [it] offered the Paleolithic person the opportunity to become, in some sense, maybe for the first time, the engineer of his or her own perception (Malafouris, 2013, p.204).

The act of creating an object, is one of objectifying a perception that becomes susceptible for contemplation and even manipulation. This can be aligned with the concept of design thinking. Zimmerman, Forlizzi & Evenson describe design researchers as "engaged in critical design and creating artifacts intended to be carefully crafted questions. These artifacts stimulate discourse around a topic by challenging the status quo and by placing the design researcher in the role of a critic" (2007, p.496).

By linking the notion of material engagement to theory, we envision to disrupt the assumption of students that theory is a finished product, merely 'out there' to consume, and challenges them to interpret, work with and eventually maybe even critique the theory, instead.

2.4   Metaphoric thinking

As the study of Shields shows, visual analogies and metaphors can enhance understanding of abstract theories and bridge understanding between the known and the unknown (Root-Bernstein & Root-Bernstein, 2001 in Shields, 2018, p.293). While an analogy can serve to clarify a concept because of similarity, metaphors function by transferring certain characteristics of one concept to another seemingly unrelated concept. As opposed to metonymy, the function of a metaphor is not merely referential (e.g. 'the white house' for the president of the united states or 'wheels' for a car) but is aimed at better *forming* an *understanding* knowledge. Metaphors are not necessarily linguistic, "also artworks provide new ways of structuring our experience (...), works of art provide new experiential gestalts and, therefore, new coherences" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.235).

As Tilley explains, "Many scholars agree that metaphors arise because of inherent problems in the precise relationship between a world of words and a world of things, events and actions" (1999, p.6). Metaphors fill in certain gaps we experience when trying to explain something we cannot grasp in

mere words. Tilley (1999) posits that metaphors link subjective and objective experience, and that by relying on memory, everyday bodily experience and imagination, they can evoke new understanding and interpretation. Through metaphors, we use what is most familiar to us to create an understanding of abstract or new concepts. Often these refer to direct bodily experiences with objects or materials, and "once we can identify our experiences as entities or substance, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them– and, by this means, reason about them" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.25). "Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experience, moral practices, and spiritual awareness" (ibid, p.193).

Trough the dichotomous split between objectivity and subjectivity, however, metaphors are likely to be linked to the latter and for that reason often regarded as non-scientific. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain that "the fear of metaphor and rhetoric in the empiricist tradition is a fear of subjectivism – a fear of emotions and the imagination" (p.191). They argue for a position that unites objectivity and subjectivity and see metaphor as a way to bridge reason and imagination. Also Corradi Fiumara (1995) states there is a lack of metaphors in scientific language and education. Literal language use prevails in science because it is least susceptible to misinterpretation and ambiguity. However, literal language cuts the discourse loose from experience and leaves no room for interpretation *and* modification. Strengthening creative skills of students and encouraging them to think metaphorically, can offer a counterbalance. By re-integrating metaphors into scientific language life-experience can be connected to mental operations (Corradi Fiumara, 2002). Knowledge then becomes not so much about objective truth but rather about "developing linguistic habits for coping with whatever reality-in-the-making we may have to confront" (Corradi Fiumara, 1995, p.72).

3   RESEARCH SETTING

In 2015, a course entitled 'Reflexivity and the practice of reflexive thinking in social sciences' was launched at the faculty of social sciences of the KU Leuven, bringing together students of sociology, communication science and political sciences. The course has been set up to:

- Stimulate insight into the implicit premises and assumptions of social scientists in the way in which they shape their social (research) reality.
- Deepen and sharpen students' critical attitude, to allow them to position themselves within both the social scientific research tradition and the social policy and practical context.
- Encourage students to reflect upon conducting and presenting research within the social sciences by challenging existing conventions.

As part of this course, students are instructed to read one of the following books: *The posthuman* of Rosi Braidotti (2013), *Vibrant Matter* of Jane Bennett (2010), *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of assembly* by Judith Butler (2015) or *Meeting the Universe Halfway* of Karen Barad (2007). These books outline a theoretical framework meant to challenge our understanding of the way we organize ourselves in a complex ecological ecosystem of humans, non-humans and other-than-humans that they could discuss in small scale, self-organized reading groups. Reading an original work of a distinguished scholar offered an excellent opportunity for students to set-up a dialogue with an absent other through the reading.   Parallel to their reading, they work in groups of three to five students to creatively engage with the theory offered by the book. By working in groups, students are invited to engage in discussion moments during which they can test new ideas and explore a shared (metaphorical) vocabulary. In working out their creative assignment, students are free to fill in the dimensions and media, and to choose whether they aim to capture some core elements of the theory

or offer a critique. They are offered an introductory class in 'thinking materially', in order to help them explore and link materiality, spatiality and performativity to abstract concepts. Guiding questions for this exercise were developed by Sara Scott-Shields (2018) for her 'walking with theory' course module:

- What would happen if our theory was a miniature space we could walk inside?
- What if our theoretical frameworks were 'houses' we could walk in?
- What if our theory would become a physical place?

For each of the books we offered students a concept map and some content related guiding questions to spark their imagination. Box 1 outlines a series of questions for Rosi Braidotti's theory on the post-human, for which we offered index terms (e.g. nomadic, zoe, affirmative politics, subjectivity) to start the reading assignment.

Box 1: Supporting questions for the design component-worked example Braidotti

•How can we escape the dominant system of binary representation that Braidotti critiques in our design?

•Can we think our design of posthuman theory into existence as a process rather than a concept?

•What does a new social nexus or social connection with (techno-) others look like, if we develop it with Braidotti's notion of ethics in mind?

•How can the idea of 'panhumanity', with its focus on inter-connection of human and non-human in their socio-political, technically mediated environment, this web of intricate inter-dependences best be visualized?

•Is there a way to 'illustrate' affirmativity, or flows, in the processes we put central to our argumentation? •How can we understand the modus of 'becoming' (the not yet (or no longer)) from a design perspective?

•How can linearity (in time and space) be broken in your specific design?

At the end of term, photographs of the designs are published in a booklet accompanied by a brief explanatory text and credits, see e.g. example below (Fig. 1). The booklet allows for an archive of ideas over time and is being used to present the outcomes to fellow students and teachers.
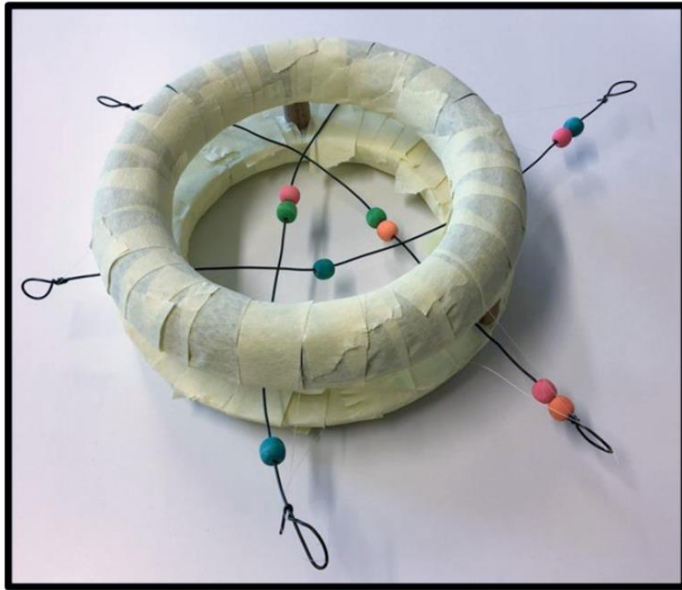
Fig. 1: *Rosi Braidotti: The Posthuman* (2019) by group 4D, class 2019; A response to *The Posthuman* by Rosi Braidotti (2013).

Box 2: explanatory text by the students accompanying the artwork (own translation)

" our design represents 'life', according to the theory of Braidotti. The circle we use refers to 'eternal life', a life without beginning or end. In this universe there are people (pink pearls), animals (orange pearls), machines (blue pearls) and nature (green pearls). When people look at the world, they always do so from their own perspective and position themselves on a higher level than the rest (humanism). This is represented in our design by the space outside of the circle. The different pearls are present, but there is no interaction. Inside of the circle, the pearls come in contact with one another and are equal. Humans are no longer central, but stand on equal foot with nature, machine and animal (posthuman). The process whereby the pearls move from outside of the circle to the inside is labeled 'becoming' and is central to our design."

4 PILOT STUDY

Some trial observations were run in the academic year 2018-2019 during which 2 groups of 4 and 5 students were followed during two group meetings. One group worked on *The Posthuman* of Braidotti (2013) and one on *Meeting the Universe Halfway* by Barad (2007). These observations gave us a first impression of how material engagement and metaphorical thinking influence a thinking process.

4.1 Material engagement guiding agential realism

During a first meeting, the group reading *Meeting the Universe Halfway* decided to use a Möbius ring as a symbol for the theory of Barad (see Fig. 2). One of the central concepts in Barad's (2007) theory is agential realism. Agential realism acknowledges the impact of the individual and of discourse on reality, but as opposed to constructivist approaches which would label one's knowledge of the world as mere construct, Barad (2007) asserts that there is a reality out there on which this knowledge is based. This reality is not fixed, but fluid because of a constant 'intra-action' between agents, human or non-human. Following this, knowledge is not a consequence of observing reality, but of being part of it and *acting* within it. Important to note is that within agential realism, agents are no fixed beings either; they are entangled and equally in constant becoming through intra-action with each other. Therefore, strict boundaries between different entities are non-existent. During the reading of Barad, one student had to think about a circle, but because Barad denies strict boundaries, they looked for a circular shape that has no clear in- or outside. Another student had the idea to knit the circle to include the idea of entanglement. During the creation process, questions were raised on the impact of this

process on the final result and how everything that somehow influenced this process was also part of the artwork:

> S1: "I think our own process is also important, and part of the end result. Knitting is very relaxing, that is the effect the material has on me. Everything is connected to the theory.
>
> S2: "We actually shouldn't call ourselves the authors, because we are not the only authors of this work, maybe we shouldn't mention our names? But this won't be allowed…"

Box 3: explanatory text by the students accompanying the artwork (own translation)

"This artwork is inspired by the theory of 'agential realism' of Karen Barad. The Möbius ring and the used material present the phenomenon of circular economy, which has as its core the reuse of raw material and products. We link this aspect to the concept of 'mattering' and 'becoming' from Barad's theory. The confinement of the wool is temporary and is in this case justified by its function as artwork. When holding the artwork against the light, the light diffracts in patterns. Diffraction plays a central role in Barad's theory and refers to the entanglement. There is an entanglement between the material, the natural light and the public that becomes part of the art work [by being asked to hold the wool against the light] by which human and non-human entities become connected. This non-anthropocentric vision on the world is also present in circular economy.''

Fig. 2: Entangled Wool (2019), group 7B, class 2019; a reflection upon *Meeting the Universe Halfway* of Karen Barad (2007).

The students materially engaged with the wool, and by having to actualize a specific result, they experienced certain limitations, eg: the impossibility to not mention themselves as authors. This shows how they were able to connect the theory of Barad to their own experience with the assignment. The abstract theory became something they could grasp and refer to in terms of actual events. By further unraveling this while diving deeper and deeper into Barad's book, the students found more links between their design in progress and the theory:

> *S1: "And what about the ethical aspects? Where is this wool coming from? I didn't check that when buying it… Maybe the sheep got hurt during the shaving, that happens… "*
>
> *(…)*
>
> *S1: "Why the wool is bought in a certain shop are also boundaries that shift."*
>
> *S2: "That refers to the concept of Accountability*, you have to be able to justify the choice of the shop."

As stated by Barad (2007), "ethics is about accounting for our part of the entangled webs we weave" (p.384), and "cannot be about responding to the other as if the other is the radical outside to the self" (ibid, p.178). Using their own design as a case study, the students were able to further unravel these concepts and link them to wider societal phenomenon such as circular economy (see Box 3). Though they started their assignment with looking for rather symbolic representations of certain concepts such as the Möbius ring, the further execution of the idea and all practical steps they had to undertake such as going shopping and knitting, and the struggles they experienced with making sure no elements of their design contradicted the theory (such as the question on authorship) allowed them to reach a far deeper understanding of the theory.

4.2 Metaphorically understanding Braidotti

During their first working sessions, the group working on *The Posthuman* by Rosi Braidotti (2013) decided to work with a baby doll to illustrate the concept of 'Becoming'. Within the theory of Braidotti (2013), 'becoming' refers to transformative entities and goes against the idea of determinism. The students started their creation process with a rather straightforward idea, using a new born baby - which is still to become mature- as a symbol for the concept. After realizing that this is an anthropocentric interpretation and might be contradictory to Braidotti's plea to equalize humans and non-humans, the group started brainstorming about how they could transform the doll in order to make it less human. Based on materials they brought or had at home, the group reflected on what these changes would mean when related to Braidotti's theory:

> *S3: "Oh!... We could give the baby helicopter wings. I still have a toy helicopter at home."*
>
> *S2: "We can also give it a playstation remote control"*
>
> *S4: "But then what is the idea behind it?"*
>
> *S2: "We destroy the remote control to show how we have lost control"*
>
> *S1: "Or maybe we should give control? Zoe is a self-regulating something right?"*

Fig. 3: Materials gathered for a design related to *The posthuman* of Braidotti (2013).

For Braidotti (2013), *Zoe* is the all encompassing life force, both generative and threatening (p.112). By thinking about the theory through a seemingly unrelated object such as a remote control, students were able to test and expand their understanding of the concept Zoe by tracing the (dis)similarities between the object and concept.

5   FUTURE COURSE EVALUATION

By going through the process of materializing abstract concepts, students were able to reach a deep understanding of the theory at hand. The pilot study shows there is ground to further research the impact of material engagement and metaphoric thinking on understanding theory. In our future observations, we will follow the entire creation process from beginning to end in order to better trace dialectical changes in theoretical understanding and design. Follow-up interviews with participating students in combination with questioning certain decisions they make during the creative sessions can give more insight into either conscious or unconscious impact of the design process on the students' learning process.

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USING COLOURS AND STONES TO CONNECT WITH OUR FEELINGS AND ENHANCE INSIGHT

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Abstract

At times we might find it hard to connect with our feelings and reflect on our relationships using only words. Creative, multi-sensorial therapeutic interventions can allow us to gain insight into aspects of ourselves and our relationships that might not be visible when we just 'talk about' something. Feelings associated with trauma might be tough to express verbally, while other non-verbal means of expressing oneself can be more effective therapeutically.[1] Although a creative way of working is usually associated with children,[2,3] adults, including professionals, can equally benefit from this more 'right brain' [1,4] way of working. Taking a self-reflexive position, I situate creative interventions in the context of personal/professional experiences and theoretical ideas that inform my practice. Verbatim extracts are used to illustrate how being intuitively drawn to a particular 'colour' or 'stone' can be developed into therapeutic interventions that enhance both self and relational insight. This article aims to support the practitioners' personal and professional growth by addressing their need to connect with their creativity.[5]

Keywords: feelings, connect, creative, colours, stones, right-brain.

1 INTRODUCTION

"I very rarely think in words at all. A thought comes, and I may try to express in words afterwards."[6] - Albert Einstein

I aim to illustrate how multi-sensorial self-reflections, inspired by the use of colours and stones, can be transformed into words and, in the process gaining insight into self and relationships. Taking a social-constructionist position,[7] I acknowledge the people with whom I am managing the therapeutic conversation as experts in their own lives. For this reason and to ease the writing flow, I will be referring to the children, families and practitioners participating in the creative interventions as 'explorers'. In therapeutic journeys, I experience my role as the one of a secure-base[8] guide who after having explored the territory herself, supports the explorers to mindfully and creatively forge their path. Awareness of the context and the resources in our backpack is crucial for mindful exploration.

1.1 Looking into my Backpack: Inspiring Personal, Family and Professional Experiences

Around twenty years ago towards the end of my master's training in systemic therapy at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, we were asked to reflect on the most influential therapeutic ideas we would be taking home with us. I could see how our family stories, personal and work experiences, training, supervision, community, and cultural contexts influenced our resonance with particular theoretical ideas or ways of working. My previous gestalt psychotherapy training and my training in systemic constellation[9] work were also tucked into this luggage. I embarked on this journey aiming to integrate different aspects of who I am both personally and professionally.

1.1.1 Inspirational Life Experiences

Where do I come from? I grew up in a rural village in the south of Malta, a village that took its name from the colour blue of its sea: Żurrieq. Creativity has been part of my life as far as I can remember. I have fond childhood memories of myself playing with stones and colours in my grandmother's

beautiful garden. I remember the vibrant energizing orange of the sweet-scented oranges, the comforting brown texture of the dry or wet soil, the soothing green of the foliage and the powerful red of the sturdy wooden bench. I remember playing the squiggle[2] with my father, who was a very creative craftsman, and cutting colourful shapes out of felt in his workshop. Since I can remember, I was drawn and reached out to practice anything which felt creative and explorative, such as drawing, painting, fairytales and poetry. At home, I would design and sew dolls' clothes, cook and bake with my grandma. As I grew older, I picked up acting, dancing and singing. Furthermore, with maturing age, I started exploring nature, meditation, and spirituality. Looking back, I see how these creative outlets proved to be highly therapeutic and enhanced my resilience. To inspire myself, prevent burnout and renew myself as a clinician,[10] I regularly engage in various creative activities. Lately, I have taken up painting, experimenting with essential oils and spontaneous creative writing.

1.1.2 Inspirational Authors and Theoretical Ideas that inform my practice

Gestalt ideas on the contact cycle[11, 12] equip me with the tool of staying in the here and now, and in the process notice any challenges in the explorer's ability to proceed through the contact, such as finding it hard to look at, express or assimilate the experience. An Attachment framework[13] helps me to make sense of the explorers' strengths and areas of growth through reflecting on how their significant attachment experiences over the years with caregivers might be influencing their way of making contact in their current relationships, including during therapeutic conversations. Since attachment studies have focused mainly on dyadic relationships, bridging them with systemic theory[14] helps me build an interpersonal, multi-layered understanding of the challenges and solutions within and in between multiple systems, including individuals, couples, families, groups, teams, organizations and other larger systems. I hold significant people and contexts in the explorers' lives in mind no matter whether they are in the room or not. Therefore, I introduce their voices in our conversation by asking reflexive questions that support the introduction of new feedback.[15]

I find Attachment-Narrative ideas on life scripts as very empowering as they provide a context of hope for those explorers who need to be creative by rewriting their own life scripts.[8] The therapeutic space can act as a temporary secure-base supporting the explorers to improvise new ways of being, relating and working.[8] During the process of integrating my gestalt and systemic ideas, Violet Oaklander[2] and Jim Wilson's[3] inspirational books provided me with a containing framework while widely opening the doors to creativity in the contexts of my work. My ongoing engagement as an explorer and also as a facilitator in systemic constellations[9] has helped me to embody[16] a systemic way of working. Are there particular authors who have inspired you and that you find their work relates to your personal and professional life experiences? You might keep their books in your working space.

1.2 Insight into a Creative Therapeutic Space and Bag

1.2.1 A creative environment

When people come into our 'space/s' they can see and get a sense of who we are. Therefore, when we are in a position to be involved in the creation of the space we work in, the actual choice of colours, objects in the room, use of space, furniture, pictures, scents and textures, can become a communicative act in itself. When explorers come into my working space, they can smell the essential oils diffused in the air; they notice the sky-blue textured wall and the colourful painting of balloons hanging on the waiting room wall. They are welcome to taste one of the herbal teas displayed in the open dresser in the corridor that leads to the clinic room. As they step in the reflection space (clinic), I invite them to take their time to look around, to take it in. I find that different people notice or comment on different aspects. Some point out the visual, such as the calming effect of the sky blue, or get curious about the smell; others reach out to touch the different stones that I keep in a large plate on the coffee table in the middle of the room. People who feel at home in my space are those who love to be in a more colourful space and who find it helpful to express themselves using various senses. This resonance or therapeutic fit supports the therapeutic relationship.

When explorers step into the therapeutic space, I encourage them to notice what attracts them. I show them around and let them know that they can touch anything they are interested in. Many children and adults tend to get very curious about exploring the colourful stones displayed. Besides the colours and stones that we will be focusing on in this paper, there is a limitless variety of creative therapeutic activities we can embark on. Attention to colours and the use of stones can at times be combined with other creative interventions.

These can include working with soft toys, pictures, metaphors, story-writing or story enactment, fairytales, sound and rhythm, movement, enactment and role reversals, guided visualization, inner child work, and dreamwork. I invite the explorers to use their senses, the different tools of contact,[2] by looking, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, moving and sensing. My background in mindfulness[17] informs this process. By using the senses as tools of contact, the therapeutic aim is to strengthen the contact functions,[2] support the ability to connect with one's feelings by slowing down, making contact with one's inner and outer experience and in the process enhance one's ability to express these feelings using a form of external expression. Being attuned[4] to the explorers' needs is crucial, and any intervention can only be helpful within the context of sensitivity to process.[2]

1.2.2 The 'Mary-Poppins' Bag.

As professionals working in different contexts, our ability to influence the creation of our physical spaces varies. When I worked in white and grey institutional settings, I found it helpful to carry what I now refer to as my Mary Poppins Bag. Bits and bobs are continuously being added or changed, however some items that will inevitably pop up include: different coloured papers; crayons; coloured markers; a multi-coloured table cover; coloured feathers; essential oils room spray; a scented candle, a couple of soft toys, and a box full of various types of stones. This bag allows me to carry my colourful self in various settings. Necessity is the mother of invention. With some imagination, we can transform any space we find ourselves in into a creative space. While the Mary-Poppins bag can be useful, anything in the space around you can spark the explorer's imagination, including the colours and nature of objects or furniture in the room or outside the windows, the clothes we have on or things we carry in our everyday bag.

1.3 Using colours and stones to support my self-reflexivity and my therapeutic work

Most of the exercises I will be describing here are adaptations of exercises initially developed by inspiring practitioner-authors. The aim is to encourage other practitioners to find their ways of applying them and creating their versions. These exercises can be used in various contexts including self-reflection; therapeutic conversations with children, adults and families; group therapy or training workshops; supervision and team building.

1.3.1 Feeling drawn to a particular colour or stone: The right brain choice.

Interventions which encourage projection can be helpful for explorers who find it hard to talk but equally for those who need to go beyond just words.[2] Practitioners I mentor, reflected how this type of work "helps us to bypass the mind", "unblock blockages we might not be aware of" and "penetrate our core, rediscovering ourselves in deep ways". Colours or stones can speak for us, helping us gain insight into aspects of ourselves and our relationships.

I have started some of my training workshops by spreading coloured papers in the room and inviting participants to move towards the colour they were drawn to. On other occasions, I have asked participants to choose a stone that attracts them and then find a place in the room where they would like to stand while holding the stone in their hand. The following are some of the verbal prompts I use in my practice to develop the exercise:

T (Therapist): "I would like to invite you to follow your intuition, to see which colour/ stone is catching your attention. No need to think about it …" Choices based on thoughts and feelings are different.[9] Intuition in this type of work is crucial.[2,9] "Ok so I see you chose your colour/stone. We are now going to give this colour/stone a voice.[2] Like in a magical movie, colours or stones can speak. I would like you to describe yourself as this colour/stone using the I: I am…" Novice explorers to this kind of work might need some encouraging prompts to elaborate on this type of projective exercise. Keeping in mind the different senses I can ask: "What colour/stone are you drawn to today? Imagine that colour/stone can speak, what would it say? Imagine that colour/stone can move, allow your body to move like that colour/stone? What does your colour/stone sound like? What does it taste like? What is the temperature? What does it smell like? I am (colour/stone) and I feel (…) my temperature is (…) my size is (…) my texture is (…) I move (…) I taste (…) I smell (…) I sound (…) I would say (…). In what way is this colour/stone similar to how you feel today or how you would like to feel?"

Imagine the context of a workshop I mentioned above; the work can be developed further by creating conversations between different colours or stones which can represent different aspects within oneself or in relationships with significant others. For instance, I can invite group participants or family members to pair up with a different colour/stone they are drawn to and invite the colours or stones to have a conversation with each other. T: "What would the colours/stones say to each other?"

The exercise can be built up further by asking the explorer to draw the first thing that comes to mind: it could be a shape, a squiggle or an object[2]. There are endless possibilities on how to develop therapeutic activities inspired by colours. I encourage you to read Oaklander's book,[2] which has been a fountain of inspiration. The following are a few of her exercises which I adapted and used in my practice.

T: "Think about someone important to you, can you visualize them as a colour? What would your colour say to their colour? How does the conversation evolve?" "What colour are you feeling today? Can you give that colour a feeling? I am (name of colour), and I feel (…). I want to invite you to do this exercise daily and bring your journal with you in our next conversation". I have found this exercise helpful when encouraging young children to name feelings that struggle to identify and express. When working with families or teams: "I invite each of you to draw/paint on this big paper using a colour.[2] (…) We can now develop a story. I invite you to be the colour and take it in turns to develop a conversation between colours. We can also give life to each of the colours you drew on the paper and I can invite you to move around the room and each other as these colours would."

Honouring my interest in the mind-body connection,[18] I developed different versions of the following exercise inspired by training on chakras therapy.[19,20] T: "Notice where you are feeling pain or discomfort in your body, what colour do you visualize there, imagine you are this colour and sensation in your body, give it a voice. Now visualize a colour that makes you feel good and imagine you are breathing in this colour, as you breathe it in, this colour starts to become part of every cell in that part of your body. Can you give a voice to this colour now, what are the colours saying to each other?".

1.3.2 Working therapeutically with colour through the clothes

The clothes we wear can represent our persona:[21] personal and professional aspects of ourselves that we are ready to present to the outside world. Can you think of the various outfits that you wear in your personal and professional life? The colours we wear can also be understood as a communicative act. Perhaps many times we might intuitively pick up colours that either express how we are feeling at the moment or the feelings we yearn for. T: "Imagine you are stepping into your wardrobe today; what colours do we see? Is there a predominant colour that pops out? Imagine you are that colour, can you give that colour a voice, what would that colour say to you? What would that colour say to significant people in your life? Is there a colour which is missing? What would that colour say to you or your father/mother/daughter/child/partner/colleague/friend? What would these two colours say to each other? Imagine we are travelling back in time and looking at your wardrobe when you were 5, 15, 25 or travelling into your future wardrobe…how old are you? What colours do you notice?"

1.3.3 An inner-child visualization with a focus on colours

John Bradshaw[22] sparked my interest in inner-child work. In this exercise, I use colour as the focal point of this visualization. T: "We are going to go through a journey…We are stepping on a flying carpet which will transport us back in time. Where is the carpet landing? How old are you in this memory? What are you wearing? Where are you? What colours do you visualize?" Imagine you are one of these colours, give this colour a voice, describe yourself as that colour: I am…" E (Explorer): "I am brown, I am earthy, I am strong, rough, and heavy." T: "Now, can you pick another colour you see and imagine you are that colour." E: "Orange…I am fresh, bright, light, sweet, energized." T: "Can you pick another colour?" E: Green: "I am soothing, comforting, nurturing." T: "Imagine these colours are having a conversation, which one would speak first? What would it say? (…) Which colour would answer? (…) What happens next? (…)" E: "The red would speak: I see you orange, I see you brown and I see you green." T: "Are there any other colours we have not mentioned? Can you see them?" E: "Yes. There is black…that mould on the fountain stone, there is also the white of the linen hanging on the rope. Black would say I am dark and white says I am radiant, look at me." You might have noticed that once we get a feel for the prompts that help us explore further, these exercises outlined here can also be used for self-reflexivity. One can combine this exercise with drawing and facilitate the dialogue between parts by including speech bubbles.

1.3.4 Using stones to gain insight on relationships

The ways I developed my use of stones to represent relationships and systems has been mainly inspired by Jim Wilson's use of mini-sculpting[3] and Bert Hellinger's systemic constellation work[9]. Ongoing training and person constellation work help me to continue developing my work. Besides bringing various people and relationships in context and representing them spatially,[3] the stones can also display split parts of me or feelings that need to be more integrated or different positions in a dilemma I am experiencing.

T: "You are experiencing a lot of confusing feelings towards your partner, you mentioned love, anger, fear. You said you need to understand more what is going on. I am going to invite you to intuitively choose a stone for yourself, one for your partner, one for anger, one for love, one for fear and one for what we need to understand. We are going to place them one by one in the space. I suggest you close your eyes as you place them, to support your intuition…move slowly and when you feel it is the right place put the stone down (explorer places stones on a table or in the room or space we are working in and opens her eyes) What do you notice? We are going to give a voice to each stone. The stones are going to speak to each other."

T: "You mentioned you are thorn, not sure which job you should apply for. I am going to invite you to choose a stone for each job and one for yourself. Notice where the stones are: notice distance, closeness, who is looking at who, let us give a voice to each stone, what are they saying to each other, how do you feel as you look at each stone from where you are? If your stone had to follow a movement, can you show me where would it go?".

Systemic constellation work[9] is vast and complex. This paper aims to give a taster. Practitioners who would like to develop it more fully are encouraged to seek ongoing personal and professional contexts where they can develop these skills further.

1.3.5 How do these creative interventions work?

To enhance contact, the explorer is invited to become the colour or stone and speak in the "I".[11] Projective work has a therapeutic end in itself and can stand by itself. The dialogue between the parts supports communication and integration between internal parts of selves and with other significant people in our lives[2]. At times, giving voice to the missing parts is crucial.[2] These missing parts can include colours that are more in the background or not mentioned or stones that are silent or hidden. Self-regulation[4] is supported by integrating parts within a whole.

While therapeutic interpretations are best avoided, when it is in the best interest of the explorers, we can support them to identify[2] with the colours or stones by asking them whether what is being said feels familiar or reminds them something they wish for in their lives. While verbalization of the insight is not always needed,[2] at times explorers spontaneously identify and make connections between the colours and stones to their life story and relationships. They might say something like "This is how I feel. I could not find the words before…yes! That's it!". "This sounds like my mother" or "This is something my father would say to me". After using stones to represent his family, a child explorer said to me "The stones help me to *show* how I feel, where I want to go". He managed to show his parents what helps him feel at home with them. He used the space in the room, moving the stones in different directions until he found the right space for each stone.

1.4 Expressing our true colours

There is a soothing comfort that comes from feeling secure enough to show our true colours. I will always be grateful to all the significant mentors in my life who acted as my secure base, encouraging me to improvise and find my colourful voice. Integrating creative interventions such as using colours and stones in my therapeutic work with families and practitioners has been a journey of self-discovery of my true colours. I see a parallel process between my personal and professional growth. Over the years, I was exploring ways of integrating into my professional life aspects of who I am, of what makes me "me". When we intervene, we are bringing in the therapeutic space various aspects of our personal and professional selves. Aspects of who we are become weaved into our practices. Thus, I encourage practitioners to find their ways of regenerating and being creative. Ongoing personal and professional development is crucial. Training, clinical supervision and personal therapy are some of the contexts that can support creative development. I hope that this paper acts like a springboard that launches or reboots your own creative therapeutic development, supporting you to find regenerative spaces that inspire your practice.

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WOR(L)D TRAVELLING INTO THE EXPERIENCE STREAM OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR VIA NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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Abstract

This narrative inquiry focuses on Greek environmental educators' lived and storied experience. Our research puzzle relates to how the educators' "stream of experience" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006) has shaped their identity and practice. Teachers' narratives allow us to "wor(l)d travel" into the continuum of their experience, while keeping in mind that engaging with Environmental Education (EE) is one part of their teaching life and their teaching life is one part of their personal life. In this paper we attempt to shed light into the collaborative and interactive process of composing the narrative account of Alex, a Greek primary education teacher systematically involved with EE. The constraints of subjectivity in exploring lived and storied experience are discussed. We also construe how we "wor(l)d-travelled" into his "stream of experience" and how summing over multiple, lived and storied, narratives, not only of his own ones but also ours too, allows us to approach him and compose his story while keeping the complexity of the explored lived and storied experience evident.

Keywords: environmental education, narrative inquiry, teachers, boundary crossing theory, reflection, empowerment

1 INTRODUCTION

The narrative inquiry presented here has been designed out of our interest in digging deeper into Greek environmental educators' lived and storied experiences [1]. Naya's story as a primary education teacher, actively involved in Environmental Education (EE), bumped into Maria's story as a University researcher and teacher trainer in EE and led to the shared idea of engaging into a study of Greek environmental educators' experience. We opted for narrative inquiry as our research methodology, and more particularly in the way described by D.J. Clandinin & F.M. Connelly [4, p. 50] in their publication '*Why narrative? Because experience*'. Deriving mainly from the Deweyan theory of experience [1], we identified narrative inquiry as being closer to our view of conducting educational research focusing on teachers' experience. We were inspired by both its pragmatic ontology [4] and the windows it opens to educational research through its "creative" and "emancipatory" [2] components. Our intention was to look into EE practice, by focusing on the educators' identities and lives and by getting an eyeful of their experience through the stories they have lived until today [4]. The epicenter of our inquiry is thus teachers' everyday lived experience as expressed and storied '*both in the living and the telling*' [1, p. 18].

A web of multiple questionings was transformed into our research puzzle, which revolves around the exploration of how environmental educators' "stream of experience" [3] has shaped their identity and practice. Several stories twist together and add up to let us know who these people are and how they practice EE in school. Stories from their childhood, stories from their school-years, stories from their youth, family stories and stories from the schools they have worked as teachers. Stories which are all part of a continuum of experiences, of an ever going 'experience stream' we need to inquire into if we wish to acquire a more profound understanding about EE practice. Clandinin & Connelly [4, p. xxiv] point out that '*we learn about education from thinking about life*'. Inquiring into EE could never be

seen apart from inquiring into environmental educators' lived and storied experiences as a whole, since their engagement with EE is only a part of their teaching life and their teaching life is part of their personal life.

Moreover, our view is that conducting research is in itself 'an experience of the experience' [1] being carried in the stories lived and told. There are various paths to follow so as to draw on such wealth of experience as a way to understand but also to help research participants and us, researchers, to develop. In this paper we unveil the collaborative and interactive, still ongoing, process that led to the creation of the narrative account of Alex, a Greek primary education teacher, systematically involved with EE. We discuss the constraints of subjectivity in exploring lived and storied experience and we describe how we "wor(l)d-travelled" into his "stream of experience" to approach him as an environmental educator through summing over multiple, lived and storied, narratives, not only of his own ones but ours too. We also draw attention to the complexity of exploring experience and the difficulty of constructing narrative accounts based on summing over various narratives while keeping the complexity of the explored experience evident.

1.1 Wor(l)d travelling into the experience continuum via narratives

Huber [5] in her narrative inquiry doctoral research, while recalling an autobiographical story invoked out of her experience continuum, refers to Lugones' [6, p.14] idea and suggestion of people '*inhabiting different "worlds" and travel across them and keep all the memories*' as they move on into life. She further elaborates on this by saying that: '*… Lugones showed that as we "world-travel" across "worlds" we construct images of who we are and what we are about as well as images of who others are and what they are about. Carrying forward these images from across worlds, we gain understanding of ourselves, of others and of the contexts we live in*' [5, p. 6].

Narrative inquiry could be described as 'a quest for the other(s)' and 'a quest for us through the other(s)'. It could be also described as a journey we take along with our participants through their narratives into the continuum of their experience; a journey into the participants' "worlds" with their stories as the means to know and understand 'lives being lived' [1, p.30]. In such a quest, objectivity is a chimera: '*we are not objective inquirers*', as Clandinin [1, p.24] clearly denotes about the role of inquirers in a narrative inquiry. In narrative inquiry we inquire into a web of relations. We live, inquire into and story this experience relationally [1], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10]. Our figurative field of inquiry is the space where the participants' and the inquirers' subjectivities come across in a meeting of lives, "worlds" and stories. Clandinin [1, p.24] underlines this 'relational' quality of narrative inquiry by bringing the focus on the researchers: '*We are relational inquirers, attentive to the intersubjective, relational, embedded spaces in which lives are lived out. We do not stand metaphorically outside the inquiry but are part of the phenomenon under study*'.

In narrative inquiry we inquire *relationally* and of course *narratively* [4]. *Inquiring relationally* implies that we become engaged with our participants and through such relation we get the opportunity to travel into the continuum of their experiences, into their "experience stream", and get a glimpse of the "worlds" they have inhabited in as their lives moved on [1]. *Inquiring narratively* implies that this "world-travelling" is taking place through narratives, thus through "words", a word-travelling".

Participants in their narrations use "words" as the building blocks to create, reconstruct and depict the various "worlds" they have lived in and/or still inhabit. During such narrating process they have to choose certain "words", either consciously or unconsciously, depending on the context, to describe their "worlds". From the inquirers' side, in their own narrations, in their field texts, the interim and final texts, they also choose and use "words" to talk about the participants' experiences. So, "words" become, for both the participants and the inquirers, the vehicle to "world-travel" and to '*enable silenced knowledge to be articulated*' [2, p. 153]. "Words" spoken, "words" used literally or metaphorically, "words" rejected and changed during the narrating process, even silenced "words",

work as a tool to portray, approach and identify with each other in the narrative inquirers' constant effort to: "*understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes*", as Lugones puts it [11, p. 432].

This is how "wor(l)d-travelling" has come up as an idea and is coined by us as a term, to depict the interconnection between the 'relational' and 'narrative' that form the essence of narrative inquiry as a research practice and methodology. To paraphrase Lugones [11, p.432] '*only when we have "word-travelled" to each other's "worlds" are we fully subjects to each other*'.

1.2 Travelling and reflecting on narratives: subjective, intersubjective and transubjective journeys

Nevertheless, to explore the lived and storied experience of others through "wor(l)d-travelling" cannot be but a strenuous and complex process. In a narrative inquiry relationship and in "wor(l)d-travelling" especially, we as researchers are actually 'playing with' the constraint of subjectivity in the various ways the "worlds" and narratives of the participants and inquirers meet up in ongoing and reflective intersubjective and transubjective journeys (Fig.1).

Subjectivity is more than evident and ever present when we think of all the different narratives sprouting during the inquiry process. Narratives come out of the transcribed conversations with the participants; narratives emerge from the inquirers' field texts and the interim texts exchanged among them; and as the process proceeds, narratives make up the narrative accounts which are edited and rewritten after the participants' reflective touch until we end up with the inquirers' final narrative accounts [1]. While this interactive narrative flow takes place in the inquiry's relational spaces and with the focus always in the experience lived and storied [2] as expressed through these different kinds of narratives, the narratives transferred are viewed as "*experiential*" and "*intersubjective*" texts [1, p.46].

The participants, who have experienced different "worlds" as their lives went on, share this lived experience by telling it. The inquirers conceive this experience through the participants' stories as told in the particular context. Certain words, moves, expressions and even silences, which may imply unspoken stories, convey the participants' lived experience. Then, the researchers/ inquirers create new narratives, the interim research texts, as a result of negotiation among them, which bring them back to the participants for a reflective look. The participants' lived and storied experience lies somewhere between these 'lived', 'told', 'conceived', 'unspoken' narratives and the participants' and inquirers' subjective, intersubjective and transubjective journeys with them. The construction of the final narratives, the narrative accounts, takes place based on a kind of interweaving of all these different narratives in a new synthesis. Within this 'narrative circle' narrative accounts are a construction deliberately cooperative, an '*intentional co-composition*' [1, p. 24], which designates the inquirers' effort to keep the complexity of the explored lived and storied experience evident.
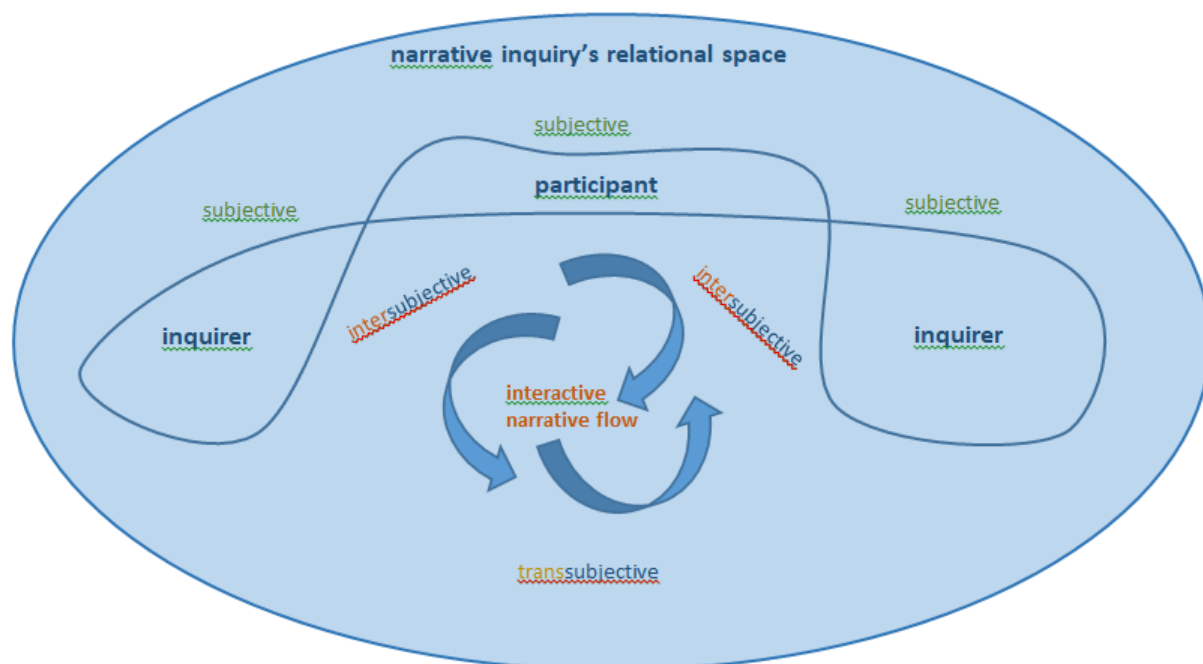
Figure 1. The ongoing and reflective 'intersubjective' and 'transubjective' journeys taking place as 'subjective' "worlds" and the narratives of both participants and inquirers meet up.

2 NARRATIVELY INQUIRING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS LIVED AND STORIED EXPERIENCE

In this paper we present only a small part of an ongoing narrative inquiry study focusing on the experience of Greek primary education teachers who are actively involved in EE. The study is carried out in the context of the first author's doctoral research while the second author is the supervisor of the research and a fellow inquirer actively involved in all phases of the design and analysis of the narrative inquiry. The two authors have jointly adopted a narrative view of experience [6]. We think narratively about experience, as a phenomenon which is '*extended over time, shaped by personal and social conditions and situated in a multiplicity of places*' [1]*.* Inquiring into a narrative inquiry space with these three dimensions: *sociality*, *temporality* and *place* [4], [1] we aim and aspire to experience "*a study of experience*" as a "*story*" [1]. Following the "experience stream" of each of the four participant teachers we worked *back and forth in time*, *inward and outward between the personal and the social,* and *in different places* [1] and were always attentive to the various "worlds" they have inhabited as expressed through their "words".

We gathered field texts (data) from more than one face-to-face conversations the first author had with each of the participants separately in a period of over six months. The first author also filled in the annals with the field texts, exchanged short reflective texts via emails with the participants just after the conversations, and kept field notes. She also immersed into the field texts in quest for resonant narrative threads [12], which brought them for several rounds of discussions and negotiations with her supervisor and co-inquirer (second author in this paper), who had also performed her own readings of the field texts. The aim behind our joint efforts to identify the narrative threads was to co-decide on the aspects of Alex' experience our 'relationship' with him could release. These threads were pulled out from different field texts and became the axes of Alex' narrative account which is still under

construction. The first and current version of this account is the outcome of negotiation between the two co-inquirers (and authors) written in the form of an interim text. However, it is a sine-qua-non text that will give pace and ground for a reflective look by Alex to take place, on the way his experience has been re-told and represented by the inquirers.

3 WOR(L)D-TRAVELLING INTO THE EXPERIENCE STREAM OF ALEX

In this section we unfold aspects of the ongoing collaborative process between the two authors to compose the narrative account of Alex. First, we present the narrative threads that were pulled out from Alex' "experience stream" and which we uncurled to re-construct his story. We introduce him by sharing part of the introduction of this narrative account. Then we show how delving into different pieces of the field texts led us to unfold one of the narrative threads and compose part of Alex' narrative account. The text presented here is still in a draft and interim form, as it was only negotiated among the two researchers/ authors as proposed by Downey & Clandinin [13, p.391] in their 'shattered mirror' metaphor where the shattered bits can be seen as stories lived and told by a person: '*In narrative inquiry we do not intend to reassemble the bits but rather to enter the strewn bits of a person's life in the midst and in relational ways, attending to what is possible in understanding the temporal, social, and place dimensions within an ongoing life. Attending to the multiplicity of what becomes visible in the unfolding life, the narrative inquirer attends to the particularities of each "bit" or shard in order to compose multiple possible story retellings or ways to move forward in imaginative and narratively coherent ways.*'

3.1 Introducing Alex

Alex is a primary education teacher with a genuine and declared interest in EE. The suggestion to contact him to participate in the inquiry came to me (first author) from Dimitris G., who is Coordinator of EE in one of Athens administrative districts. As with all other participants, conversations were carried out between Alex and the first author (Naya). What follows come from Naya's personal notes:"… *Our first meeting took place on a Sunday afternoon in October 2018 in a park near his house and then we walked together to a nearby café. We had talked a few days before over the phone to arrange the meeting. I remember I felt quite nervous and tired, because Alex was the fourth and last participant I was to meet during that weekend, and a bit uncertain about how the whole encounter would go on. "…." We talked that first time a lot, for many different things and exchanged views and opinions. Four more meetings with conversations followed. Each of them lasted for one hour more or less. They all took place at the same café.*

Alex was around 45. His looks were very youthful and I would have never guessed this man was a teacher. "…." Even though Alex accepted to participate he said from the very beginning that he was thoughtful about whether he was the right person for the inquiry. I was very concerned about the reason that made him feel like this and how he sees himself, since he is a teacher who is evidently engaged in EE in a systematic way. But as our conversations progressed I started to realize why he felt like this as I discerned characteristics of his personality and I was step by step becoming acquainted with his philosophy as a teacher and how this philosophy unfolded into his everyday practice…"

3.2 A narrative account in progress: pulling out the threads

Delving into the field texts and working with them within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, we identified thirteen narrative threads (Table 1) in Alex' "experience stream". Always conscious to the interwovenness and complexity of the explored lived and storied experience [1] we tried to unfold Alex' story while designating the multiple aspects, the different "worlds" and the

interconnected meanings of his various parts of experience through uncurling the identified narrative threads. In this paper, we focus on only one of these threads, and more particularly on "what it means to be a teacher".

Table 1. The narrative threads on which Alex' narrative account was based

Thread 1	*I always wanted to become a teacher*
Thread 2	*No memories*
Thread 3	*Joining a theatrical troupe*
Thread 4	*What it means to be a teacher*
Thread 5	*Being a member of the school's teaching staff*
Thread 6	*Coming to know environmental education*
Thread 7	*Practicing environmental education with students*
Thread 8	*Leading children artfully in self-motivation*
Thread 9	*Doing environmental education with ICTs*
Thread 10	*Environmental education is only a pretext*
Thread 11	*Looking in the mirror*
Thread 12	*In the family*
Thread 13	*My challenge*

3.3 What it means to be a teacher

As conversations with Alex went on and through the stories he shared we began to discern which aspects of his job touched him and what makes him feel that teaching carries a special meaning for him. Talking about past professional activity he mentioned that one of his first jobs in the educational field was working as special educator at the "Celebral palcy Greece Society". That was a quite difficult job due to the special difficulties of the children he was responsible of; but, as he mentioned, one he remembers with warmth. He said: '*Amazing, very nice… Perfect… One of the best jobs I have ever had. I have lived my best times there. I mean, times of completeness, times I am very proud of.*'

After probing to learn more about why that job meant so much for him, Alex shared a story. He said that once he had the idea to propose a day trip to Mycenae and Nafplio for his students. It would be the first time something like that would occur, because of the inconveniences of transporting children with such difficulties. But both the children and their parents were so excited of this prospect. When they arrived at the archaeological site, Alex remembers the following story: '*All the children except one were in a wheelchair and… we could not take them further to the archaeological site. Then, a little girl, who saw the others going up, told me: "Ooh, look… It's a shame we can't go up there and visit the site too!"…"Who says you can't go up? You and we will go up there too!" I said. And I asked the driver to help me carrying all the wheelchairs up to the top of the hill. I actually told him: "Can you take it? I can't oblige you…"… And we carried all the children on the wheelchairs up to the highest part of the site. This was staggering… for me and for the children too… That was a moment I felt the real meaning of giving. It was born out of the joy I saw depicted on the children's faces… It was something amazing! I haven't*

lived anything like this before… and I don't think I ever will.' This is a story that helped us understand how Alex experiences what "being a teacher" is or should be, by attributing special importance to specific acts of "giving" and the sense of fulfillment he retains from offering to someone in need.

During the second conversation, in which Alex started unraveling his life course in EE, he recited another story about one of his first students, George, now in his twenties, with whom they met again recently after several years. Alex asked him what he does in his life and George surprised him by saying that he works with an environmental organization and that he owes this to his teacher/Alex. Alex remembered and shared from their dialogue: "*Why do you owe this to me George?" And George said "After I went to the army, I didn't know what to do… And so I gathered all certificates I had from participating in every environmental education program during the two years we had you as our teacher in the primary school. Then, I went to an environmental organization and I said, "Look 'I am certified' in working on environmental issues and this dates back from primary school…" And with all the courage he brought from his youth and because he liked what we did … he convinced them that he is the most suitable candidate for the job!'.* Alex was so touched by that story that on the fourth conversation he came back to it commenting how intense the feeling of satisfaction was: *'This made me feel more than ten centimeters taller'.* Both stories he selects to tell provide a view of what it means for him to be a teacher, which is not restricted to what a teacher does in the class but goes to the impact s/he may have on their students in the long run. He elaborates on this by using the following metaphor: '*Look… as a teacher you throw a seed, and you never know when or how it will blossom'.*

3.3.1 Reflecting on co-composing "what it means for Alex to be a teacher"

Reading and re-reading the transcribed conversations with Alex, with all our notes on them (Fig.2) and the field notes from the meetings, a thread was traced with particular significance in his "experience stream". The two stories shared by Alex, diverse as they may be, have a hidden connection to how they explain 'meaning' in relation to 'being a teacher'. The "words" Alex used, such as*: amazing, perfect, completeness, proud, giving, ten centimeters taller, throw a seed, blossom*, allowed us, the inquirers, to travel to Alex' "worlds" through these two stories and take a look at what they look like and how he positions himself in them. The fact that a teacher who was so careful and modest with every word he used in all conversations and who always kept a low profile, selects and uses some powerful words, such as 'amazing' and 'perfect' or 'proud', signifies that these stories carry some really deep and strong meanings for him. Telling and retelling Alex' story between us, the two inquirers, allowed us to travel into and across these "worlds" and to add some new "words": *fulfilling, future prospect*, building up in this way some more, intersubjective and transubjective, journeys.
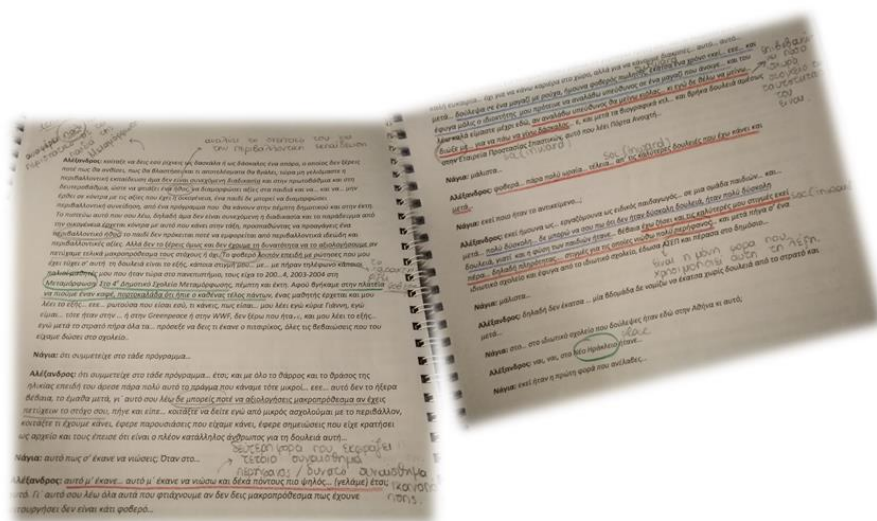
Figure 2. Notes taken by the inquirer (first author) on the transcribed conversations.

4 CLOSING REMARKS

Working towards sustainability brings forward a vision for teachers as plausible agents of change in environmental, social and educational issues [14], [15], [16], [17], [18]. Educational research has a key role to play in this direction by dredging our understanding of EE teachers' identity and practice and by attending to the need for engaging teachers in reflective research processes with the ultimate goal of supporting them to be competent in meaningful EE practices [16], [19], [20]. In the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: *Transforming our world* [21] the need is stressed for qualified teachers to work in this prospect. This is also explicitly denoted in Goal 4 *'Ensuring inclusive and equitable equality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all'*. In our view, having "qualified teachers" means a lot more than teachers with pedagogical and scientific knowledge and skills; it implies teachers being able to dive into their own experiences and develop a reflective stance towards their identity and practice [22]. Creating "narrative spaces" for teachers to look into their "experience streams" by sharing stories of *what it means to be a teacher*, is a professional development experience per se, that can help build practical and theoretical knowledge about teaching and learning in EE. Narrative inquiry can provide such professional development spaces. Engaging in research methodologies like narrative inquiry is thus more than a fresh way of doing educational research and an opportunity to open new windows and paths towards a better understanding of teachers' experiential knowledge [1]. It's a new epistemological and educational paradigm that places the emphasis in creating *relationships* and in inquiring *with* teachers on their lived and told experience.

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BEING HUMAN: OR HOW TO BALANCE RESEARCH AND FRIENDSHIP IN FIELDWORK

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Abstract

During the preliminary stage of my project, when I applied for approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), their primary ethical concern were regarding the school children involved in the project. After commencing fieldwork, I soon realised that my research involved an even greater implications for some of the adults who teach in these educational program. In particular, with regards to one of my informants.

Here an important ethical dilemma presents itself; of how to be a human, friend, and researcher when conducting ethnographic fieldwork. There is ethnographic and anthropological literature that explores the ties of friendship that develop during fieldwork. However, little, if any, has been written on how pre-existing relationships are affected during fieldwork and how these may influence the fieldwork itself. What are the possible consequences (advantages/disadvantages) of my personal relations with some of my informants? And, not the least: What can this study say about fieldwork and pre-existing relationships? A preliminary conclusions, could be that researcher reflexivity is inevitable.

Keywords: Ethics, Researcher relations, Reflexivity, Ethnographic fieldwork

1 INTRODUCTION

In this presentation, I wish to talk about the issues regarding research ethics that may present themselves when you choose to conduct fieldwork in your own society or culture. My point of departure; the fieldwork that I currently am carrying out, in which I am looking into the implementation process of a new local curriculum on industrial World Heritage in a small post-industrial town in Norway. As an anthropologist my primary concern, initially, was how can I make sure that I conduct a 'proper' ethnographic fieldwork as I was about to do fieldwork in my own society. To complicate the issue of doing fieldwork in my own society or culture, I am in fact, doing fieldwork in an area close to where I grew up. Because, after 25 years I moved back home, and this small post-industrial town, which is also a World Heritage site is a mere 26 km away from my hometown, so my field site is literary my backyard. In this presentation, I therefore wish to shed some light on the challenges that might arise at the point where research ethics and anthropological participant observation at home intersect.

2 FIELDWORK IN MY OWN BACKYARD[2]

In classic anthropological method, an important point of departure has been to attempt to understanding that which is unknown and unfamiliar in order to better grasp that which is known and familiar [2], [3]. However, in the past 30 to 40 years it has become more and more common to conduct

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[2] The title of this section plays on the titel of an article wirtten by Signe Howell in 2001: «Feltarbeid i vår egen bakgård: noen refleksjoner rundt nyere tendenser i norsk antropologi» (translated to: Fieldwork in our own backyard: Some reflection on some recent tendencies in Norwegian anthropology)[1].

fieldwork in one's own society or culture. In doing fieldwork at home or one's own backyard, [1] it is the opposite relation that goes; one attempts to grasp the familiar and known with classic anthropological theory and methodology [3] p. 12. According to two Norwegian anthropologists, Rugkåsa and Thorsen [3], there is a debate spanning between two opposing positions in the Norwegian anthropological field. On one hand, you have those who believe that the study of one's own culture can give valuable insight and new perspectives on one's own society, which in turn can help develop the anthropological methodology and theory. On the other hand, there are those who believe that it is almost impossible to carry out classical anthropological research in societies close to home, as the experiences and perspectives of one's informants are too close to the researcher's perspectives [3] p. 12.

I might just as well admit that I am much closer to the latter perspective, than the former. This position is due to of my theoretical and methodological conviction; I chose to do my M.Phil.-research in India, even though I had a family with a young child, and, thus, it would have been easier to conduct fieldwork at home. Though this was my theoretical conviction as a budding anthropologist; it was also an acknowledgement of my own shortcomings; that I did not possess the anthropological methodological tools and experience [4] that I had detected in other anthropologist who had done very successful fieldworks in their own societies [5], [6], [7].

The question thus arise; what is my current position on this issue? My most immediately thought is that I have to conduct fieldwork in order to collect data for my PhD-research, as this is the qualitative methodology that I know and feel most comfortable with. In a way, the anthropological method is a bit like a safety blanket in a new field of research. The anthropological method provides me with both inspiration and identity as a researcher, particularly as I now am involved in the very much interdisciplinary field of teachers' education. The implication, however, is that I will be carrying out fieldwork in, my own back yard [1].

So, what is different between then, M.Phil.-fieldwork carried out in India, and now, conducting PhD.-fieldwork, more or less, where I live? For one, I am older, but I have also been through a long term fieldwork, I have written a thesis, lived more than 12 years overseas, and I have at times thought that I have had my fair share of being an alien needing to relearn social codes and behaviour in forever new social and cultural contexts. In anthropology at home, it is a known fact that the more the cultural categories of the informants overlaps with that of the researcher, the more the anthropologist needs to go out of her way to see beyond that which is taken for granted. She needs to apply the more naïve observation skills so that she during her fieldwork and later, in her ethnography, she can thus apply ways of seeing the familiar as an outsider [8] p. 51-53, [9] (p. 79-85).

3 FRIENDSHIP AND ETHICS

3.1 A Fine Balance

During the preliminary months of my PhD research, several ethical issues surfaced. I now wish to address these ethical issues.

In participant observation anthropologist create a "unique point of departure for knowledge production" [3] (p. 28). My field takes place in an actual place, a local society, in which I, as a social actor, also interact on par with my informants. I am not in Notodden for a defined period as an anthropologist conducting fieldwork, rather Notodden is my place of work, of yoga, where my girls went to pre-school and where my eldest now study.

Rugkåsa & Thorsen [3], argue that when anthropologist do fieldwork in their own society, it is important for the anthropological method that the anthropologist position herself as both a participant and informant (p. 28). However, it is my firm belief that we anthropologist who do fieldwork in our own backyard need to walk the whole mile and do some important ethical reflections

concerning the relations we make when we conduct fieldwork. I will do some of that walking now with you.

3.2 On having pre-existing relationships in doing fieldwork

Rugkåsa & Thorsen [3] argue that; "anthropological studies of one's own society is not necessarily any qualitatively different from anthropological societies other places. The same theories and methods are utilised, though both need to adjust to the present social context." (p. 17) In other words, as an anthropologist doing research in one's own backyard, one faces several challenges adjusting to a new social or cultural context, just like anthropologists doing fieldwork in societies far from home.

As several Norwegian anthropologists have pointed out, it may be challenging to discover the unfamiliar or exotic in the familiar [1], [3]. However, in my experience, the challenge is not to catch a glimpse of the unfamiliar in the familiar, rather the challenging aspect is the ethical dimension of already having a familiar or an already existing relationship with some of my informants. I, personally, find that it is a different kind of challenge to ask those funny, a bit naïve questions, to constantly take notes, being forever vague when it comes to answer questions about what I am actually researching, or what kind of data I am collecting, when the people I ask those naïve questions or they ask me what I am actually researching, are people I already know. With some of the informants in my current fieldwork I already have an established relation; many are not complete strangers to me, which was the case when I carried out my first fieldwork in India.

One of my informants went to the same high school as me. Another one, I know from a previous work placement, this informant is also, incidentally, the author of the local curriculum that I am looking into in my research. A third, is a parent I know from my children's pre-school. A fourth is one of the other applicants to 'my' PhD-fellowship, and so the list goes on. Many of my informants are people that have been introduced to me or they have been referred to me by people I know or by colleagues. Hence, I have strings of both new and pre-existing social relations that pulls me in several directions socially.

Next, I will present an empirical case that took place autumn 2018, when I did my pilot fieldwork in order to figure out the outlines of my field.

3.3 You! Here!

In the article *Om bare ikke informantene leser avhandlingen …* (translated: If only our informants don't read our thesis…) Åse Røthing [10] describes the unease that social scientists sometimes might experience, that of whether our informants should read one's thesis or not. According to Røthing [10] that unease might be an expression of the failure to comply with existing ethical guidelines [10] (p. 383). This kind of unease was not on my mind when I, on the 22nd of August 2018, participated in a seminar that officially presented the new local curriculum on how to teach World Heritage to children and youths in the schools and pre-school, and on which I was about to initiate research. I was a bit nervous, but also very much ready to commence the journey of my PhD.

I was also very much filled with anticipation; It was the day I might meet my informants to be; amongst the teachers, politicians, co-ordinators and others that were present. My anticipation soon turned a pleasant surprise, as I spotted an old acquaintance from school, registering the participants for the seminar.

My old acquaintance notices me and says: "You! Here? What are you up to these days?" This old acquaintance and I have known each other since school, we are from the same area and had several friends in common when we went to school. But, we had not seen each other since we left school many years ago. So, during lunch, we have a pleasant catch up on what has happened in our lives in the past decades, and hence, when I leave the seminar that day, I had an appointment with my old acquaintance to visit and have a tour of her workplace; the town's newly established World Heritage Centre.

3.4 Researcher or Friend?

There is a team of several museum communicators and coordinators working at the newly established World Heritage Centre (WHC), who all are involved in developing, acting and presenting pedagogic educational programs. These educational programs relate the various aspects of the World Heritage history and narrative. The history and narrative of the World Heritage cover the area's rural pre-industrial history, its industrial fairy-tale about its success in producing mineral fertilizer, which was shipped worldwide. However, the World Heritage narrative also includes the post-industrial history of a proud industrial town's downfall, which took place in the 1980ies.

For the past 1.5 years, I have observed the team of museum communicators and coordinators on several of the educational programs that they are involved in. One of the educational programs that the team at the WHC has developed, is called the industrial fairy tale and aims at the local kindergartens. In this program the pre-school children are invited to the WHC's art gallery. During this program, the children are told, as a fairy tale, the story of how their town was industrialised. This story is accompanied by a series of five water colours, which were painted by a famous Norwegian painter known for his illustrations of the traditional Norwegian fairy-tales. The town's local Kindergartens participates on separate days. On my second visit to this particular program, my old acquaintance tells me that he/she has observed me; that he/she has noticed that I very conscientiously take my notes. During the initial meetings I had with the team, we discussed my project at lengths. However, we did not really talk about how I would collect my data. At the time of this encounter, I interpret my acquaintance's comment as curiosity. However, to disarm the situation I read aloud to him/her the last two or three sentences that I had written in my notebook. I do this partly to make clear that the aim of my observation and data collection is to write down, as simple as possible, what I have observed during the visit of the kindergartners, but also because I want him/her to know that I am not evaluating the work he/she and the rest of the team do as a museum communicators and coordinators. I want to emphasise, that I am interested in how the children respond to the World Heritage narrative to *the industrial fairy tale,* per se.

In an attempt to lighten the mood between us, I praise the program and that I have observed; I say something about how the children seem to enjoy the water colours and the fairy tale. I do not think more of this episode until, I, a couple of weeks later, am back at the World Heritage Centre. This time I am joining my children's pre-school. I had not informed the team of museum communicators and coordinators in advance that I was coming, but I am early, hoping to I have a quick chat with them, so that I can to tell them why I am there, with the pre-school. I want to tell them, that my children's Kindergarten teacher heard about my project and invited me to come along. Almost immediately, I bump into my old acquaintance, and he/she mentions again how eagerly I jotted down notes in my journal during my previous visit. Now, finally, it dawns on me that the team of museum communicators and coordinators might have felt some insecurity in relation to me taking notes; that they were unsure of what I was actually writing about them. Thus, I tell him/her, in as great detail as possible, what I observe –if possible: everything – that these are my actual data as I do not intend to rely on qualitative interviews. Furthermore, I emphasise that I am not evaluating any of the team members performance as a museum communicator or coordinator, but at the same time I also try to praise them; that I as a former museum guide, who worked mainly with guiding school children, think they are doing a wonderful job and that the education program seems both engaging and interesting to the kindergartners.

The penny has not yet dropped; it is not until I have to write up my essay on research ethics that I realised that what took place between me and my old acquaintance is in fact an important ethical issue to address; that of how to think ethically about one's researcher – informant relation, when somebody who used to be one's acquaintance or friend, has transgressed to the role of an informant.

As an important part of my fieldwork I do participant observation with kindergartners and schoolchildren, and in seeking the approval for my project with the Norwegian Ethics Committee (NSD)

they were mostly concerned about the risks my research might pose to the children, not at all with the risks my data collection might pose to my friends and acquaintances.

Furthermore, because, I feel comfortable in my role as a researcher, I had forgotten to pay attention to the well-being of my old acquaintance and failed to give him/her enough information about what I was actually going to do; like writing notes in my journal. I believe that this neglect is partly to do with doing anthropological fieldwork, where, particularly in the first phase of the fieldwork, one has a wide scope in collecting data. Another aspect is the when our friendship occurred. Friendships between anthropologists and informants is not a new phenomenon; we often form close and lasting ties with our informants. During my M.Phil.-fieldwork, I became friends with two women my own age, but also a middle-age woman, that I still am in touch with, 15 years after I left the field [11]. However, by doing fieldwork in my own back yard, this situation was turned up side down, so that already existing relations of friends and acquaintances became informants.

4 CONCLUDING REMARKS: HOW TO BALANCE RELATIONAL ETHICS AND FRIENDSHIPS

To some this might seem like an obvious trap to trip me as a researcher. However, as I already had quite established roles with some of my informants, it was quite easy to forget that my role as a researcher was not part of our relationship, as it was a role that came into play at a later stage in our relationship. We already had established our roles, and me being a researcher was not part of that equation.

The question thus remains: How can I possible complete fieldwork in my own backyard with friends as informants? In *Qualitative Quality: Eight «Big-Tent» Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research* Sarah J. Tracy [12] proposes the notion of relational ethics, in which she encourages the researcher to let herself be guided by an ethical consciousness. By this she means that the researcher must be aware of her own personal qualities, reactions, actions and how these might have an impact on her informants; "Relational ethical investigators engage in reciprocity with participants and do not co-opt others just to get a 'great story'" [12] (p. 847). Furthermore, Tracy emphasises the importance of mutual respect and integrity particularly when it comes to the relation researcher – informant; where the researcher in particular has a responsibility to look after her informants' well-being, because of the relationship that develops between the researcher and her informant [12] (p. 847).

So, what is the relation between my analytical freedom as a researcher and my ethical responsibility for my informants' best interest? Is it wise to ignore the feeling of unease concerning whether one's informants may read one's thesis or not? [10] (p. 383) The experiences that I have shared in this presentation suggest that the before mention unease, might in fact be a red flag urging us to reconsider some important ethical dimensions when it comes to the relationships we establish during ethnographic fieldwork, which in turn may prove to better balance research and friendship during and after ethnographic field work.

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EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF PSYCHOTHERAPISTS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE BREXIT VOTE: AN IPA STUDY

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Abstract

Background: The referendum which took place on the 23rd of June, 2016 in the United Kingdom constituted a major political upheaval within the country. *Aims:* This study's purpose was to examine the impact of this upheaval on the personal experiences of psychotherapists. Focusing on their testimonies, internal issues and tensions within psychotherapy were explored. *Method:* Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five psychotherapists who were U.K citizens. Questions and answers mostly revolved around the participants' personal experiences, their understating of the relation between politics and psychotherapy and the state of their practice in the aftermath of the referendum. *Findings:* The most significant themes to emerge from this engagement were the deep personal impact of the referendum on the processes of therapy, the therapists' feelings of alienation from their respective communities, and the profoundly ambivalent relationship of politics and psychotherapy. It was found that the referendum affected significantly both the professional (psychotherapist-self) and the political (citizen-self) side of the participants. *Originality:* Brexit's Political upheaval was studied in a unique fashion by using IPA. *Conclusion:* Political upheavals challenge the therapist to rethink crucial aspects of their profession, most significantly the role of the client.

Keywords: Qualitative Research, Psychotherapy Research, Politics, Brexit, Europe, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the major turmoils of Europe during the period 2009-2016, was the referendum that took place the 23rd of June 2016 in the United Kingdom. Choosing to vote at the referendum, was centralised around the economy, immigration and the question of "sovereignty" (Curtice 2016). Differences in voting intentions were also noticed between the ethnically diverse London who wished a "Bremain" and the rest of England together with Wales who voted for Britain to Leave (Curtice 2016). As the E.U. referendum was attended by 72.2% of the citizens, higher than the attendance for the elections in 2015 (Henderson 2016), it is interesting, if not essential, to examine how are therapists affected by the constant-changing politics, how this political issue makes its way to the therapeutic room and consequently, what effects do they have, in the psychotherapeutic enterprise of our current times.

Most therapeutic approaches although foregrounding different aspects of the therapeutic relationship, all assume that psychological distress is caused by the individual's' emotional life and for that reason, they focus on individual attention to alleviate symptoms (Milton and Legg 2000) leaving little room for the societal impact in the psyche. For Hopper (2003) not accounting the social influences in therapy, will make a professional less capable of providing the space needed for clients to contemplate about how their identities have been formed at particular historical and political crossroads and how this affected their lives. This is in parallel with Avissar (2016) who argues that to gain a personal identity, it is essential for the individual to preserve the distinction between inside and outside. More recently, Willoughby (2016) also described that due to the failure of acknowledging social determinants as the source of client anguish, counselling and psychotherapy lack moral responsibility, which according to Miller (2004) is an intrinsic part of the therapeutic encounters. Examining this shortfall, consideration arises whether providence of psychotherapy should include

moral development at its discourse, as the means to approach the client in a manner that would not neglect the "common good" of the community (Loewenthal 2016). Loewenthal acquires this logic, as he experiences the Brexit upheaval mentioned above, and goes further on to point out that the present neoliberal world promotes consumerism which creates an individualistic society (Loewenthal 2016). The ideologies of everyday life, are embedded in the mind of each group member, including the therapist (Semyonova 1993). In these lines, one could say that therapy might be able to become more integral, if it includes in its discourse the present status of society and its needs. For Schmid (2014), including the influences of social forces; thus politics, is not irrelevant, since both psychotherapy and politics are about understanding and change. According to Samuels (2006) the pace of the political change in the world appeared to have quickened since the mid-1980s. By conducting an unofficial worldwide survey referring to analysts and therapists, he noticed that political themes come up more frequently in sessions worldwide (Samuels 1993). Although professionals would normally interpret such themes in a metaphorical fashion, 76% of them sensed that the theme reflected a part of the clients' external reality.

Previous information regarding politics in psychotherapy was offered through personal narratives in the form of vignettes (Samuels 2006; Eldad Iddan 2014). Although the narratives may provide a good source of the therapist's experience regarding their clinical practice with respect to the political theme, vignettes have been criticized as they neglect the interaction and feedback that is a necessary part of social life (Hughes 1998). Consequently, it will be more appropriate for research to attend to other means of inquiry, towards a qualitative approach for studying the subject of politics in psychotherapy.

2 METHOD

University ethical approval was granted to recruit participants through various establishments which contain people who get involved with the practice of psychotherapy such as institutes, private offices and universities. All were asked to sign a consent form and informed of their right to withdraw. All data were kept confidential and participants were given pseudonyms.

2.1 Participants

In order to achieve an in-depth data, IPA favours smaller sizes, thus the sample size did not exceed 5 participants (Smith et al 2009). Moreover, the researcher chose a purposive sampling instead of random sampling, as one of the main principles of qualitative inquiry is to recognize that participants' knowledge/experience varies and therefore choosing random sampling would violate such principle (Morse 1991). As a result, the participants were chosen to specific characteristics as shown below (Paly's 2008).

2.2 Data Collection

In order to stay with the participants' experience and adhere to IPAs' principles, the data was collected by implementing semi-structured interviews. According to Smith (2004) by following the above, the subject became more intense as the participant was more involved in the process, therefore the time needed for the interview was an hour to an hour and a half.

2.3 Analysis

IPA was used to examine the experiential accounts of the participants. It is the method by which phenomenology and hermeneutics fuse together as according to Smith and Osborn (2008): "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world." By quoting Hermans, Warnock (1987) points that deepening the examination of the particular, also takes us closer to the universal, because it touches on what it is to be human at its most essential. Accordingly, If, to be human, is to be inherently political (ζωον πολιτικων - [zoon politikon]), as Aristoteles phrased (Schmid 2014), by using IPA, the researcher

will also explore the nature of the social-political (universal) through the experience of the individual participants (particular) as this of method of inquiry is idiographic, that is, studying the individual as an individual (Howit 2010). Heidegger, whose thinking is one of the main foundations which IPA stands, was familiar with the above insight, who stated that relatedness-to-the-world is a fundamental part of our constitution (Smith et al 2009). Last but not least, IPA is the most suited method of inquiry for this subject, as its' findings can be used to develop psychotherapeutic interventions, due to the similarity of the psychotherapeutic process (Clarke 2008).

Stage 1: Transcription of audio recordings, reading and taking notes:

Audio was transcribed and then the researcher read it multiple times by taking notes, for example: Symbols, repetitions, pauses e.t.c.The researcher listened to the audio a number of times as well in order to help him immerse the data and bring back the interviews' setting and atmosphere (Pietkiewicz and Smith 2014).

Stage 2: Discrimination of naturally occuring meaning units:

According to Leowenthal and Winter (2006), after attending multiple times to the transcription and the audio recording, the researcher attempted to find a unit of meaning, by distinguishing between one meaning and another with a specific focus on the sentences that can contain plethora of meanings.

Stage 3: Defining the major elements of meaning and transforming them into themes:

The researcher focused on understanding his/her notes and text by attending to the meaning of them in a psychological language (Giorgi 1985). Next, these elements were transformed into major themes and at this stage the researcher was influenced by the procedure, which according to Pietwiewicz and Smith (2014) was a good sign that the hermeneutic circle occurs. The intention was to highlight the backbone of the study for each participant individually (Leowenthal and Winter 2006).

Stage 4: Seeking relationships and Clustering themes:

Themes that were highlighted in the earlier stage, were grouped according to their similarities by creating clusters and labelling them descriptively. Other themes that related to a low evidential base, were excluded as they didn't fit the emerging portrait of the study (Pietwiewicz and Smith 2014). In the end, a list was created, with several superordinate themes and subthemes.

3 RESULTS

The current interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of the five semi-structured interviews revealed three main themes that incorporate the backbone of the participants' experience. In turn, each main theme produced a number of sub-themes which focus on details of the broader topic, in order to form an appropriate framework for the researcher to expand his interpretations. Hence the findings include specific moments of the participants' experience as well as the therapist's interpretations of them. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, they will be henceforward referred to in the text with codes (e.g P1, P2 e.t.c). Some Information on the subjects has been changed or purposively removed as well.

3.1 The ambivalent relationship of politics and psychotherapy

As mentioned in the title, this theme will highlight the ambivalent relationship of politics and psychotherapy which means that the two subjects can be antagonistic as well as complementary to each other.

3.1.1 Citizen or Psychotherapist?

This sub theme concerns the antagonistic element of the "equation", as it portrays an antithesis with regards to how the participants approach the referendum and, therefore, politics. In the next section, Participant 4 (P4) is imitating how he would answer, after the outcome, to a "leave" voter:

"ah!! you know what? the fifteen million isn't going to go to the NHS every week, ohhhhh did you think we did because we put it on the side of our battle bus?, ohhh shame..."[...] and then there is the "ohh we are regaining our sovereignty" completely misunderstanding the nature of international trade[...] and it is that kind of lack of thinking (raising his hands in desperation) which drives me crazy [...] this feels to me ummmm so much an agenda of small minded people, I think. [...]

(Participant 4)

At first, P4 seems to be experiencing the outcome as a citizen, which means that he has a lot of anger towards other citizens, those who belong to the opposite side of the debate. It also seems that the impact of polarisation is in effect here, forcing the participant to view the opposite side as comprised of heartless people, who have no respect for basic human values. However, later on the participant was asked how would he feel if he shares his views about the state with the client which in turn, made P4 to contemplate on his stance as a psychotherapist, and at that point, it seems that he returned to the subject discussed above and approached it from a different angle:

I am really uncomfortable with what I said earlier about the small mindedness of leavers, I am uncomfortable I said that. It may could be taken outside of this. I don't feel comfortable with that anymore, clearly it is something I have said but I don't think that helps the debate, [...]it is criticism of the person, rather than a criticism of the argument.

(Participant 4)

So, it seems that P4 might feel that he has a dual role when approaching the issue. In the beginning he approaches the issue as a citizen, but later on, as he dives deeper into his thoughts and feelings, one can see that the psychotherapist, a more tender and affectionate personality, comes to the surface.

3.1.2 Therapy is Political?

This sub-theme will concern the reconciliatory aspect of the dichotomy, showing how politics and therapy cannot exclude one another in the broad sense.

This sub-theme will concern the reconciliatory aspect of the dichotomy, showing how politics and therapy cannot exclude one another in the broad sense.

Participant 2 (P2) is grateful for being independent from factors which would prove to be in dissonance with his values:

I am very very grateful that I don't work for corporate companies, I had been working for a day and a half every week for a health insurance company for some time and I hated it, the way they treated the

human being was so poor, I mean it wasn't all bad but, I feel lucky to be in a position in the world where I can be a self for a client to not be abandoned.

(Participant 2)

Although he explicitly states that his own practice of psychotherapy accords with his values, it also seems that he feels lucky to be in the profession he is in, since he perceives it as a shelter for his morality and authenticity. Living in a world which is ruled by deceit-based politics and feigned caring, he must think himself lucky to work in a field where human freedom, authenticity and empathy are genuinely revered.

3.2 Personal experience of feeling different

From the participants' accounts, it becomes evident that their emotional responses to the referendum varied. As this study aims to explore the impact of the referendum on the psychotherapeutic enterprise, it obviously should involve an overview of how psychotherapists personally felt in the aftermath of this political event.

3.2.1 Exposure and discrimination

This sub-theme will concern itself with how said outcome affected some participants personally, and specifically on how this felt sudden change changed the way they perceived themselves and their communities

When I woke up on the 24th, it was like somebody has hit me in the face, and I've never felt foreign or alien,[...] and I 've walked into the high district, and I felt like I was sort of like (covering face with hands), I need to cover myself with something, I felt like I have lost my footing, so, but I knew it impacted me personally, it did. There was a cognitive dissonance between what I knew as a fact: I wasn't an immigrant, who have just come to work here, six months earlier,…. but it did affect me, and it continues to affect me.

(Participant 3)

In a similar fashion, Participant 5 (P5) describes:

Well, my association with the outcome was that, England as a, voted predominantly for migration issues, and being a migrant in this community as I said, it was quite difficult to stomach the outcome, it was exposing, I felt that I was much more of a target, if you like, of unconcealed hostility, I would imagine, that's how I perceived it so that was as I said the immediate association of the outcome, and having been in this country for the last 20 years, it felt really difficult.

(Participant 5)

Interestingly, both participants' primer nationality is non-British but both have lived in the U.K. for several years. Their fates and emotional experiences thus seemingly converge at many points, with P3 feeling alien to her surroundings to the point of needing to hide from public sight and with P5 feeling socially excluded and unwanted by her proximate community.

3.2.2 British in nationality, European at heart

This theme highlights that after Brexit, two British citizens realised that their inner identity is in opposition to their official nationality. Hence the researcher found it essential to produce an overview of their personal experience, by connecting it with possible effects that it might have on the process of psychotherapy.

Whilst discussing the implications of Brexit, P2 mentioned a similar occasion from the past, which is linked with the incidents leading up to WWII:

There is a slight……. they are getting themselves powers, to make new laws after Brexit, which don't go through our parliament, which is a bit worry, because the same happened to Italy in 1933, now… people are not the same but it's…..

(Participant 2)

This sort of parallel is interesting because it was also brought up by P4:

I think it is the worst decision. I could not see good things coming out of this, I also see kinds of, a lot of the stuff that was happening in the 30s, you know the whole raison d'etre for the getting together of the european community.

(Participant 4)

Although both their nationalities are English, and although the history around WWII is of global concern, they seem to focus specifically on Europe's history, thus giving off a sense of their European-ness. Thus, it also seems that P4 and P2 have also felt that they are somehow different from the rest of their communities, in the sense that although their nationality is British, they both feel more European at heart. To conclude, it also interesting to find that this sense of differentness brought some participants to mention Yanis Varoufakis, the former Greek financial minister who is known for trying to promote the idea of a unified and transparent Europe (Diem25 2016). This doesn't seem random, as most of them expressed in one form or another that they want their differentness to be welcomed and to be able to integrate into a community which will promote the common values of the European nations.

3.3 The effects of the referendum on the profession and therapists.

The following section provides a description of one of the many ways that the referendum impacted these psychotherapists and their profession, as well as the researcher's interpretations on how their personal experience of it subtly affected the psychotherapeutic process. While some sub-themes contain some commonalities between participants, some others, as noted below, are unique for the case.

3.3.1 The need for each other

The following sub-theme concerns one of the overarching issues which stood out with major force, that is, of how political upheavals can bring to the surface vulnerable emotions for both client and therapist. Such circumstances of vulnerability bring out a need for human emotional solidarity in order to experience mutuality, protection, to lessen friction and difference and make one feel at home again in the social body.

Participant 5 (P5), during her analytic group sessions, she sensed a type of transferential solidarity from her clients, and upon asking her what was her experience of it, she answered:

Hmm,well, it was moving I suppose, emotionally moving experience, and I felt quite proud hehe, of my patients, that they are able to bring those things up in a session, and also I felt at that point, there was some validity of value in the therapeutic relationship we have.
[…]
It felt personal. That's what made it so powerful and I suppose , it said something about what, what sometimes the therapist needs to do is to experience the personal aspect of things to be able to help the group move towards more mature appreciation or conversation about not really been so different after all, we all had our traumas in life and this is a trauma that we are thinking about, it is a collective trauma

(Participant 5)

Keeping this in mind, it is probable that at first her clients' concern acted as a counterweight to P5's feelings of hostility, thus softening her feelings of anger, creating a safe environment for the clients as much as for her.

In the following example, the issue of a therapist having in need a client seems much more straightforward for P4:

Now I did have a client who was very politically aware around that time, so we did discuss this but I think that was less, the pair of us in some respect allowing the political situation to take over the therapeutic process so we both stepped up to our heads rather engaged in our process with what was going on therapeutically

(Participant 4)

Here P4 thinks that he engaged in something that wasn't very therapeutic for the client. It sounds like their discussion revolved around politics rather than focusing on the psychological issues at hand. However, if one examines the interview closely, it is doubtful whether the therapeutic element was wholly absent:

Interviewer: Actually, maybe we can start by asking you who brought it up (the referendum) first?
Participant [004]: He did.
Interviewer: And how did you feel when he brought it up?
Participant [004]: ummm, given that I was within a state of feeling gutted myself, I felt I was in a very good place to be with him

(Participant 4)

When one is greatly affected by political upheavals such as the referendum, to the point of losing trust on the judgement of one's community and to the point that one feels that he is entering a profoundly unpleasant reality, a dystopia, we can expect some signifier of hope to be strongly desired to ameliorate the despair. Being with this client represents a "E.U.topia", a place where one can abolish the "byproducts" of the upheaval for a moment, take a breath and come back to reality with greater composure and ability to aid others in dealing with reality soberly and diligently. Several parallels can be drawn from the last example which involves P2 below, but it also shows how a therapist needs a client in more general terms rather than solely in times of turmoil. P2 describes his experience with a client, an African woman, who after the Brexit outcome, felt alien and insecure:

Participant [002]: She was so sad, I ve felt her anxiety and pain. I can't reveal her personal history, but it was a history not being wanted, and here it was a place that she felt she had a home, and now feeling an alien again
Interviewer: I wonder, when she brought it out, when she said that she was feeling alienated, what sort of feelings did you have, how did you experience the client?
Participant [002]: Such a sorrow, I think, and If I could say, if it was all her sorrow, I didn't think so. You know. Her reaction was that touched my own sorrow. In a systematic way, the child is decided to leave the family, and the family is worse without it. Almost in the same way, the Belgian person who took the letter (he meant Tusk), saying I am sorry you are leaving, and I think he meant it.

(Participant 2)

P2 expresses that his experience of sorrow very much resonated with hers. Correspondingly he also experienced the E.U as said parents, who seem to have felt sorry for not being able live up the child's expectations. However, when the child leaves home he/she doesn't escape the need for another, and

consequently finds other people to connect and be with. In the same motif, P2 has connected with his client mainly by experiencing a mutual sorrow.

4 DISCUSSION

The present study illustrates that in the aftermath of the referendum the majority of participants, especially those of non-British backgrounds, experienced social exposure, discrimination and a sense of hostility in a way which broadly reflected the attitude of the general public towards immigrants. Taking into account the increase in hate crime incidents primarily targeting migrant groups (Dodd 2016), together with the rise of a new nationalist populism evident in Donald Trump's election (Gusterson 2017), it is fair to say that the participants' experiences constitute an understandable outcome in the presence of social disintegration on a transnational scale.

The study's findings highlighted that two participants had already come to the conclusion that therapy is indeed political, while some others tended to keep politics and therapy separate. In any case, all of them took it upon themselves to examine the issue and revise their thinking towards the convergence of these two subjects. When talking about their decision to involve themselves with psychotherapy, almost every participant talked about their personal values such as transparency, independence, wellbeing and assisting those in need. By mentioning their values in such an effortless way, participants seem to be "political creatures" as well, and because of that, it is essential to include political discourse in the process of therapy as according to Avissar (2016, p.164) including such discourse is a notable effort to touch the deepest core of the client's' soul, assisting them to remove themselves from the helpless position of the ever changing world towards a position "marked by initiative and choice". Interestingly, in his theory about the actualising tendency, Rogers' (1977) regarded the nature of the human being as political, and alienation from this inherent nature would be a reason for suffering. Thus, if psychotherapy promotes self-realisation, or to know thyself, and if politics is the creation of an order that serves that goal, we might proceed by saying that therapy is inherently political.

The majority of the participants admitted that the referendum wasn't frequently mentioned in their sessions. One could say that these findings may present the referendum as entering the process of therapy in a subtle way, not easily perceptible by psychotherapists or clients unless they contemplate deeply on the matter. To further explain this segregation and hence the psychotherapist-citizen motif, we might consider Schmid's (2014) notion that there is a widespread classical understanding of politics derived from older political theories (Machiavelli, Hobes and Webber) which reduces politics to derivatives of power (gain, maintenance, distribution).Therefore it would seem pertinent for psychotherapy to integrate several insights from the postmodern discourse, according to which "the public and the private sphere are not fixed but fluid" (Chundler and Munday, 2011)

Similarly, Samuels (2006) suggests that as Brecht replaced involvement with "ex-volvement", therapists can try something similar to connect the internal with the external without worrying that this could be a transgression of the therapeutic framework. In similar thinking, Parker (2016) states that both politics and psychotherapy are about an en-counter, which he interprets as a way of being together and being counter. He explains: "to understand certainly does not mean to agree, and to change does not mean to devalue or belittle the other's position."

Looking at the narratives produced by the participants, one can appreciate the way in which therapists themselves feel a need for the presence of their clients, a need which has seemingly increased in the aftermath of the referendum: the need to feel legitimized as both citizens and helpful psychotherapists. Surprisingly, some participants did get what they want, which according to Samuels (2016) is to be expected, since some clients are engaged in a process of personal and political inquiry (especially after a political upheaval), and therefore can act as potential 'healers' for others, particularly for the therapist and, in a sense, for the world (Samuels 2016).

Regardless of the literature support that the current findings have, it is always important to stress several limitations of the current study for purposes of further improvement. First of all, this research had limited data regarding the social class of the participants which might have an impact to the results. Second, therapeutic backgrounds weren't explored as much in relation to the lived experiences of the participants. Third, the present study, although intending to examine how psychotherapists handle the political in the consulting room, found little evidence, and it would therefore also be important to further research this theme. Fourth, this study focused on the personal experience of psychotherapists, leaving little room for an accurately capturing the experience of the client, the other "half" of the therapeutic dyad, which is of utmost importance. Fifth, the interviews for the purposes of this study took place one year after the outcome of the referendum, thus the participants might had a limited access in their initial reactions to it. To conclude the present study found that political upheavals such as the United Kingdom referendum impacted psychotherapists in a complicated matter. For some, clients had a healing effect in helping the therapist feel less alien and thus fostering a congruence between society and the therapist's 'inner world.'

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SPEAKING THE UNSPOKEN AND UNSPEAKABLE: LIVING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF SIBLING ABORTION UNDER CHINA'S ONE-CHILD POLICY

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Abstract

This is an autoethnographical paper on the experience of living with the aftermath of an abortion in my family due to China's One-Child Policy. My paper shows how the loss of a younger sibling has affected my personal life and how it is like to bring the unconscious grief into awareness. Moving between theories and personal experience, I seek to understand my experience of being a sibling abortion survivor under China's One-Child Policy through the psychodynamic concept of melancholia, drawing particularly on conceptual resources offered by Freud, Leader and Kristeva. Links are made between the experience of losing an unborn sibling and melancholia which involves loss and grief that are unspeakable and unknowable. By presenting this paper, I seek to give voice to the Chinese generation that is affected by the One-Child Policy and whose voice is seldom heard.

Keywords: China's One-Child Policy, Sibling Abortion, Loss, Melancholia.

1 CHINA'S ONE-CHILD POLICY

1.1 The Introduction, Abolition and Effect of China's One-Child Policy

China's One-Child Policy was introduced in 1979 to limit China's population growth especially in urban areas [1][2]. It was introduced in the context of economic reform following the economic stagnation after the Cultural Revolution and intention to improve living standard [3][4]. Prior to the launch of the One-Child Policy, a family planning campaign began in China in 1971 which encouraged later marriage and fewer pregnancies [3]. Though having some coercive elements, the family planning campaign was technically voluntary [3]. In comparison, China's One-Child Policy that followed was more radical and coercive [3]. As suggested by its name, the One-Child Policy restricts the number of children per family can have to one. It was applied throughout the whole China, however, there were exceptions. For instance, people of ethnic minority, families with a severely disabled first child and families living in some rural areas were allowed to have more children [1][3][4]. In comparison, the policy was stricter for urban residents and government employees [4]. The policy was operated through a reward and penalty system [2][4]. Couples who complied with the policy would be rewarded with financial benefits while couples who broke the rules would face substantial fine and the possibility of dismissal from work especially for those who worked for the government and state-owned institutions or enterprises [3][4].

Sterilisation and abortion campaigns were carried in order to enforce the birth control planning [5][6]. The number of birth control operations including abortions, sterilisation, intrauterine device insertions (IUD insertions) rose nearly 50 percent from 21.72 million in 1978 to 30.58 million in 1979 [6]. The most drastic raise happened in 1983. There were 14.4 million abortions, 20.7 million sterilisations and 17.8 million IUD insertions in that year alone in China [6]. Under the One-Child Policy, pregnancies after the birth of the first child were usually classified as 'unplanned pregnancies' which were not

eligible to receive some welfare benefits such as prenatal care and postnatal care from the government [7]. The consequences of giving birth to the 'unplanned' baby such as job loss, high amount of fine and ineligibility to welfare benefits [2][4][8] were unaffordable to many families, which had led to abortions of a second child in some Chinese families. The penalty for unplanned pregnancies had also led parents to hide their children from the government, causing China to have an unknown number of children who were not registered with the household registration system and thus unable to receive public education and welfare benefits [2]. Due to the traditional preference for a son that was ingrained in many Chinese families especially in rural areas, the One-Child Policy had caused families to choose sex selective abortion after ultrasonography in order for the family's only child to be a son [4]. Acknowledging this, in 1980s, the Chinese government relaxed the policy in some rural areas to allow families in these areas to give birth to a second child if their first child was a girl, after which they should stop, even if the second child was also a girl [6].

There had been reduction in fertility rate in recent decades following the introduction of the One-Child Policy, though whether it was directly led to by the policy was questioned [3][4]. Statistics show that there was significant and persistent reduction of fertility rate from the year of 1971 to the late 1970s; after the introduction of the One-Child Policy, the reduction continued, however, the fertility rate stabilised after around 1990s [3]. A rapid decline of fertility rate was realised before the launch of the One-Child Policy under the less strict family planning campaign [5]. These lead researchers to question the effectiveness and necessity of the One-Child Policy [3][5].

The One-Child Policy had led to various unintended and unwanted effects. Among the most discussed negative effects were the imbalance of sex ratio and the imbalance between the working-age population and elderly populations [3][4][5]. The negative effects of the policy had been recognised by scholars and from the beginning of the 21st century, based on their studies on China's demographic reality, some scholars had been calling for a change of the policy from the government [5]. Comparing to the 'rushed launch' of the One-Child Policy [5], the relaxation and final abolition of the policy was a gradual process. In 2013, Chinese government announced that couples were allowed to have a second child if one of them was an only child [5][8]. From 2016 onwards, every Chinese family is allowed to have a second child, which marks the end of the One-Child Policy [5][8].

1.2 The Lack of Research on Family Abortions related to China's One-Child Policy

China's One-Child Policy has attracted research interests from scholars in various areas. In the field of mental health and wellbeing, studies have been conducted on the topics such as the interpersonal relationship [9][2], socialisation [10], behaviour patterns [1][11], academic performance and personality traits [12] and the general mental health wellbeing [13] of the only-child. The theme of bereavement and loss has been researched in relation to the context of the One-Child Policy. Valuable attention has been paid to the wellbeing of Chinese parents who have lost their only-child [14][15]. However, little attention has been given to the impact of the loss of an unborn child on individuals and families due to the One-Child Policy. As mentioned above, the One-Child Policy had contributed to a drastic increase on the number of induced abortion, some of which involuntary. How did those parents who had lost their unborn children to abortion due to the policy experience their losses? How were these losses mourned or were they mourned? Were they even recognised as significant losses?

Though had been aware of the abortion in my family due to China's One-Child Policy, I never considered its psychological impact on me until the second year of my counselling and psychotherapy training when the theme of family myths and secretes was discussed. I was unexpectedly and deeply upset when I spoke about the abortion. It was only by then, more than twenty years after the abortion of my unborn sibling, that I started to identify myself as a sibling abortion survivor, as Ney and colleagues suggest [16][17]. Here, I adopt the definition of 'survivor' by Ney *et al* – it indicates 'those who remain alive after some force over which they had no control prematurely ended the life of somebody near and dear to them, namely a preborn sibling' [18]. In the past four years, without conscious intention, the impact of being a sibling abortion survivor revealed itself to me in various

areas of my life, such as my research, my personal therapy, my clinical practice, my sandplay, my reading and writing. Acknowledging its impact on me and yet still not knowing how it has impact on my parents' and many other parents and sibling abortion survivor's emotional lives, I recognise that this is what needs to be spoken about and to be heard. There lacks existing research on this matter. Therefore, the resources in which I can gain understanding of this topic is to delve into my own experience. Through understanding and speaking about my own experience, I hope the often unspoken grief over a unborn family member under China's One-Child Policy in the last three decades can be shed light on.

This paper does not intend to comment on the One-Child Policy itself. The political, social or ecological impacts or outcomes of the policy are beyond this paper's scope and intention. Instead, this paper focuses on the emotional, often unconscious, unrecognised and unspeakable experience of loss.

2 A PERSONAL STORY

2.1 Enfranchising the Disenfranchised

May, 2019

'It felt like as if it understood you. When you felt sad, it became quiet; when it was kicking and you were tired, just put your hand on your belly and told it to give you some rest, it would stop the kick; if you were happy and excited, it sometimes seemed to jump inside with you. It just seemed to understand you.'

We were walking home through the meadows. My mother was telling me about her experience of pregnancy, under my request. She told me this intimacy she shared with her baby during the pregnancy. Listening to her talking, all I could think about was that she did not use 'you' to refer to this baby. She used 'it' or 's/he' (there was no difference in spoken Mandarin between it and s/he).

Maybe it was not me that she was speaking about. Was she talking about another baby, the baby who was with her for eight months and whom she had lost?

Nov. 2015

It was halfway through my counselling and psychotherapy training. Week seven into the psychodynamic part of the training. The weekly theme was 'ghost, myths and secrets'. Without knowing what it was going to bring up for me, I started to share in the community group what I considered as most related the theme of 'ghost' in my family – the abortion of a younger sibling

It was never a secret. I grew up knowing that I was supposed to have a younger brother, who, according to a fortune teller, was going to be an intelligent and successful man, if only he had a chance to live. About a year after my birth, my mother was pregnant again. It was a boy, they later found out. Under China's One-Child Policy at that time, it was an 'unplanned' pregnancy. Giving birth to this second child would have caused a fine and my dad's job both of which my family could not afford. My parents waited for eight months before making the final decision to abort their second child, their first son.

This was a story that I had always known. I thought nothing was hidden. Therefore, my unstoppable tears took me by surprise when sharing this story in the community group. I had always been a relatively quiet group member, but on that day my sudden yet intense grief took most of the space. And I finally realised, the lost life of an unborn baby in my family has been talked about as a fact, however, it had never been registered as a significant loss. I thought nothing was hidden about it, that there were no myths nor secrets. However, it turned out that something was hidden all along. The grief over the loss of a life, a family member and its effect on us had been hidden all along, from my and my family's consciousness, disenfranchised [19]. It revealed itself in that Tuesday afternoon in

November 2015, two months before the official abolition of China's One-Child Policy on the 1st of January 2016.

2.2 The Unspeakable Melancholia

I have always struggled with telling my stories. Many hours of my personal therapy were pervaded with my general sense of sadness that I could not talk about nor give reasons to. I had the space and time every week to tell my stories and yet I struggled with finding one of my own to tell. That sense of permeating sadness has been an unwanted yet familiar companion throughout my life. It occupies a good amount of my emotional life and yet it only represented itself as a void when given space in my personal therapy. I not only could not give it reasons or tell a story about it, but also could not describe it satisfactorily. Nothing could be shared. Everything was locked inside.

With the frustration and puzzlement, I settled the topic of my doctorate thesis on narrative in/coherence, delving into the experience of incoherence and that which cannot be spoken. Writing as an inquiry was used as my methodology. I wrote into my experience of not being able to speak what was felt inwardly. The theme of loss repeatedly appeared in my writing. Whatever I wrote down, it felt inadequate in speaking about my experience. Something always slipped away through my fingers.

During and after the process of my research project, when I came across writings on the subject of melancholia and its symbolic impasses, by writers such as Sigmund Freud [20], Darian Leader [21] and Julia Kristeva [22], I found a language to talk and think about what was, perhaps is still, locked inside me. I started to recognise that something was indeed unspeakable. Instead of inadequacy, I started to understand the unspeakable as a characteristic of the pervading melancholia that I have been living with and to connect it to that implicitly experienced yet never truly spoken grief of a lost could-have-been family member.

In his classic essay *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud suggests that mourning and melancholia are both related to grief [20]. However, melancholia strikes people as pathological because it could not be explained; for melancholia, comparing to mourning, the loss is more notional in nature. The grieved person does not know what has been lost or what has been lost in losing the loved one. Melancholia, according to Freud, is a refuse to let go of the lost loved one. The melancholic identifies with the lost object to perpetuate its existence in their own psyche. As Quinodoz writes, 'loving the object becomes 'being' the object [23]. Therefore, the hatred directed to the external loved object is now directed to oneself, since a part of the ego identifies with the loved object is developed [20], which generates self-reproach. As Freud's famous statement suggests, 'in mourning, the world has become poor and empty, in melancholia it is the ego that has become so' [24]. Based on Freud's theory, Leader writes that a choice of identification with the dead or the lost object for the melancholic is to die, physically or psychically, with them [21]. Therefore, the melancholic situates in an impossible position of in-between two words: the world of the dead and the living [21]. Finding words to articulate this duel existence becomes impossible for no words describes this impossible experience of being in two worlds simultaneously [21].

'Because of me, my broth did not get a chance to live. I feel I have been living for both of us.' I said this in tears in that November afternoon when I recognised the disenfranchised grief for the first time. Three years later, in another context, talking about being a sibling abortion survivor still took me to the same place. The belief, however irrational it might be, that my existence took away my younger brother's life was deeply rooted in me. I talked about the abortion in therapy, in groups, with friends and I wrote letters to my unborn brother. However, nothing lightens that existential guilt - as Ney and colleagues identify in other sibling abortion survivors [17] - that my life almost develops upon. My younger brother did not get a chance to see this world and to breathe, because I took his chance. My life was the sole reason that he died.

Therefore, I carry his life for him within me. I live for him too. I strive to fulfil the fortune teller's prophecy for him and for my parents. I studied hard since I was a pupil for I deeply fear to be a

disappointing child for my parents when they have given up another child. I also carry his death within me. A death that my family have not properly mourned but also cannot let go. A part of me becomes him. So that my melancholia keeps him and his death alive, for my family and for the potential attachment [16] I could have developed with him if he was allowed to be born. I live in the indescribable in-between of the two worlds [21]. Part of me has died. In a letter I wrote to my unborn brother, I wrote 'if you were here, I would not be the same person I am now'. Along with the sense of irrevocable guilt [21] and obligation is a sense of resentment. I yield for a life of my own, a life for myself. Freedom becomes something of significant importance to me, preconsciously knowing that something is inhibiting me from my development into being [16]. It has driven me to move far away from home – I moved from the very south of China to the north and then to Europe, striving for that life of my own. And yet, I do not know how to loss, that loss of him entails also the loss of my being [22]. The refusal to let go of the lost life of my younger brother declares the death of a part of me. My lost brother's life and mine intertwine, bringing a mixture of love and hatred, guilt and resentment. I hate myself for taking my brother's life and I hate him for taking mine too. I 'live a living death … absorbed into sorrow' [25]. That hatred and resentment towards my unborn brother perhaps turn back to myself to form my self-reproach and deepen my guilt, as Freud suggests about the melancholic's ambivalent love and hatred towards the lost object [20].

Like the depressed narcissist Kristeva writes about, I mourn not only the object, but also the Thing from which the object is separated from, something unpresentable [22]. That sorrow itself becomes a substitute object that I become attached to [25]. Throughout my life, I have been afraid of loss. I have broken emerging attachment due to this fear. I have found it hard to imagine, tolerate and recover from separation with others and yet I indulge myself in the pain of losses, paradoxically finding familiar comfort in it. The paradox of fear for losses and the comfort I find in the pain of losses cases its shadow on me, contributing to the sadness, the sorrow that I cannot reason thus cannot talk about in the language of logic and consciousness.

In that early summer day when my mother was talking about carrying a baby inside her, I started to wonder how my life was in that eight months of pregnancy and the months followed the abortion. Listening to her describing her experience with the baby, I felt as if I was an excluded third in the mother-baby dyad. I imagined her in the state of heightened sensitivity, being preoccupied with the baby inside to the exclusion of other interest, as Winnicott describes in the state of primary maternal preoccupation [26]. At the same time, how was it like for her to carry a baby inside that she knew would be taken away from her. How was it like to be preoccupied not only by love and care but also by sorrow and pain? How was it like for me in the exclusion of the intimacy my unborn brother and my mother shared. If a baby sees himself/herself in the mother's eyes when s/he gazes at the mother [27], what did I see in my gaze at my mother's face? And what did I internalise as my sense of self? Was it that permeating sorrow that I have been so familiar with in my everyday life and was it what has been bringing me frightening yet familiar and somehow comforting pain? What did my mother see when she gazed at me? Was it similar to what Kristeva writes: 'Conscious of our being doomed to lose our loves, we grieve perhaps even more when we glimpse in our lover the shadow of a long lost former loved one' [28]? Did my mum see the lost child when she looked at me? Perhaps these are the questions that I will never have answers to.

While struggling with articulating the loss, the meaning of the loss and the permeating sadness and sorrow, as Leader says about the melancholic, I have realised that strong need to be heard and to be known while words fail to touch my referent [21]. A symbolic impasse presents for me [21]. Throughout the past few years, in the process of writing, sandplaying and doodling, I have relinquished the desire to tell an organised, coherent and consistent story and let go of the shame of being inarticulate, because organisation, coherence, consistency and articulation are exactly what lacks in my experience of being a sibling abortion survivor. The solution for the impossibility of expression in melancholia suggested by Leader is to find expression to say how words or symbolisation fails [21]. This is what I have been doing in my research, my therapy, daily life and now. I have wanted to tell a story and what

I have drawn you into so far is perhaps wondering without answers, pieces of memories and not so organised telling. A part of my is apologetic for a false promise of a story and yet another part of me thinks perhaps this is the best way to show how it is like to be me, as a sibling abortion survivor in the time of the One-Child Policy, living in the midst of the unspeakable loss and grief.

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ARTISTS, AUDIENCE AND MANAGEMENT IN THEATRE SPACE. CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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Abstract

In researching theatre, there are various research methods, but significance of sociocultural aspects of theatre that includes deep and hidden structures of the institution and connections between the actors shows that qualitative and mixed research methods are adequate while researching theatre's past and present. The paper presents the new model for research theatre space that has been reached through the case study of Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb. The strength of case study approach is its ability to give rich data about the theatre as unique social phenomena and to explain actions and actors hidden behind the curtain (artists and management) and in the darkness of auditorium (audience). The article finds that certain social groups (artist, audience and management) have been explored using mixed methods: participant observation, depth interviews (artists and management), survey (audience) and content analyses (for historical and present documents and theatre strategies and laws). Those social groups represent the key for exploring the social form of latent communication of theatre as a sustainable and relevant social space.

Keywords: theatre, case study, artists, audience, management

1 NEW MODEL FOR RESEARCH THEATRE SPACE - CASE STUDY APPROACH AND THE HOLISTIC ANALYSES OF THE THEATRE AS A CERTAIN SOCIAL PHENOMENA

According to Ragin every case study is an analysis of certain social phenomena, which is defined in specific time and space. [1] Theatre is precisely that kind of social phenomena, which acts in confines of its historical context, which also implies that its actions are determined by historical and political circumstances. Theatre itself is a social space, which is manifested on two levels: physical, which implies the object, the building itself, and a symbolical level which implies artistical production. In sociological context however, it also implies a representation of social reality and different social actors. Research of the theatre has up until now used the case study approach very rarely, mostly including only one segment of theatrical reality or connecting two different elements. For example, Martorella connects artistical and business element: her case study includes opera art with theatre box offices. [2] Significant amount of research in USA deals with theatre audiences from a marketing perspective [3], while European research focuses on opera audience [4], motivation and preferences of the audience [5] as well as those who do not attend theatres [6]. Authors of this research, independent of their methodology, emphasize that the research as well as the data can be limited only to a local area. Glogner-Pilz uses examples of research of these authors to give a short description of quantitative and qualitative methods. [7]

This article concisely describes a new model for research and use of case study approach on the example of research of Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb. Modelling has been inspired by Stake, who states that "case study research is not a methodology but a choice of what is to be studied." [8] Also, development of the new model started from an assumption that theatre space is polysemic, just like paintings analysed by Barthes [9]. Therefore, crushed debris of theatrical reality, individual cases

and specific problems and situations create an analytical framework for the case study approach, in accordance with Lincoln's thesis [10] that answers how quest for great narrations can be substituted by such small local theories.

Although case study approach mostly is used for research of organisations and institutions which are not linked to culture, it is observed that using that approach we can develop the model that is not directed on one or two different subjects linked to the theatre or to only one social group (e.g. theatre audience), but it can also include research of several different subjects and a triad of key actors in the theatre: artists, audience and management. Also, case study approach enables expiration of specificities of the theatre on a local level, its actors and its overall (local) theatre reality. Understanding also sustainability of the theatre in the local community. Also, with regards to the methods that are used in the case study approach, it is possible to involve the historical context of the theatre, which is in European theatres unavoidable to understand the development of national art and cultural identity, as well as historical and modern political context, which primarily implies analysis of cultural politics. Case study of a single phenomenon (e.g. theatre) enables the researcher to involve social action in the broadest sense. [11]

The significance of sociocultural aspects of theatre that includes deep and hidden structures of the institution and connections between the actors shows that qualitative and mixed research methods are adequate while researching theatre's past and present.

1.1 Case study of Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb

According to Stake, "historical context is almost always of interest, but so are cultural and physical contexts. Other contexts often of interest are the social, economic, political, ethical, and aesthetic." [12]

Case study of Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb has twofold role and several goals:

1. to study, recognize and segregate important historical sources on Croatian National Theatre, which can be used to explain the social role of the theatre as an institution and other processes, especially those concerning the representation of identity at the time of erecting the new theatre building in the centre of Zagreb by using content analyses as a research method

and

2. to explain the modern social role of theatre by using methods of participant observation, interviews and survey

The study is divided in two main parts. First part takes into account historical era that finishes at the end of the 19th century, when the new building has been erected. This was the first time in Croatian history that the theatre had its own manager, who took over the artistical and business management of the theatre. Study of artists, audience and management in that time was conducted throw the use of historical sources (e.g. archive documents). Second part of the study involves the modern historical era. The study uses theatres strategical documents, conducts research of modern political and cultural context, and researches all three social groups.

2 RESEARCH METHODS AND A TRIADE OF THE KEY SOCIAL GROUPS

The strength of case study approach is its ability to give rich data about the theatre as unique social phenomena and to explain actions and actors hidden behind the curtain (artists and management) and in the darkness of auditorium (audience). Certain social groups (artist, audience and management) have been explored using mixed methods: participant observation, depth interviews (artists and management), survey (audience) and content analyses (for historical and present documents and theatre strategies and laws). Those social groups represent the key for exploring the social form of latent communication of theatre as a sustainable and relevant social space.

2.1 Participant observation

The author was at the time she conducted the research employed at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb. Therefore she had an insider position which enabled her to use the method of observation with participation. This method involved monitoring processes in the theatre, studying official documents and theatre publications, reading official e-mails and press clippings, participating in meetings and official sessions, formal and informal conversations with employees, heads of different state institutions, journalists, photographers, representatives of the Ministry of Culture and other institutions. With respect to the fact that the research was conducted during several theatre seasons, notes were not conducted every day, but more in the manner of minutes and analytical commentaries. This method was very important for the study because of its insider's research position, which made it easy to access documents and participants. More detailed insight and analysis of relations and actions of actors "behind the scenes".

2.2 Content analyses

Data was acquired from 10 different Croatian institutions (e.g. Archive of Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, Croatian State Archive, Theatre Archive of Croatian Academy of Science and Art etc.). Important part of the corpus is archival data from 36 different sources: letters, stamps, photos, minutes, contracts, newspaper articles, polemics, accounting data, theatre publications, official governmental documents.

Nature of these sources as individual units required different techniques: most were processed through qualitative and quantitative approach. Some documents were described, and some were transcribed. This approach was used to analyse three different publications of theatre's annual publication, in order to reconstruct the characteristics of theatre public. Description analysis of letters, minutes and other documents was used to extract data on the management of the theatre. Polemics, letters and similar documents obtained data concerning artists. Other documents were used to describe the atmosphere of the theatre, political context and to explain the role of the theatre in creating the national identity.

2.3 Survey

The research used surveys for theatre audience as basic research method. Research sample was sought among different social strata of the city of Zagreb. Basic group were the annual subscribers, but the sample also included other groups. Basic framework of the sample included theatre audience that attended to Croatian National Theatre's performance at least once in the previous year. Non-probability convenience samples were used because the research was aimed at relatively small part of general population, defined by unique behaviour – attending the theatre.

Audience was surveyed through the use of combined technique of field survey and internet survey. Field survey involved subsample of subscribers out of 201 examinees. The examination was conducted in (and in front of) the building of Croatian National Theatre during the process of subscription. During examination of nonsubscribers, we used an online survey with the sample of 101 examinees, while the field survey included 6 examinees (mostly invalids and individuals who do not use internet).

We used several measuring instruments, such as written questionnaire, which was used during the field survey in direct contact with the examinee. Surveyors were noting answers in a previously prepared protocol. Survey questionnaire for the group of non-subscribers included 32 structured questions, 5 of those were open type, and 27 were closed type. For the group of subscribers we prepared the survey questionnaire structured with 33 questions, 6 were open type, 27 were closed type.

The analysis gave us the data about frequency of theatre attendance, audience's motivation, preferences of the audience with regards to three artistically fields (drama theatre, opera, ballet). Also,

data on preferences of the public towards artists, management of the CNT, models of informing on events in the theatre, monitoring of theatre critique and media, as well as information on use of digital media was obtained.

2.4 Interview

Interviews with the management and artists were conducted in person, in the building of Croatian National Theatre. Two out of five board members (higher management) accepted to be interviewed. Ten interviews was conducted with artists.

Semi-structured interviews were constructed for both of these groups, with questions of open type, in order (and with accordance to Yin's recommendations) to have the role of the examinee cross towards the role of the reporter. [14] Members of management answered to 20 questions, but during the interview several new questions appeared. Artists answered 37 questions in total.

In accordance with mixed methodology we obtained new data on the object of research. Data was analysed and in the end triangulation of data was done, which obtained new knowledge on social roles of Croatian National Theatre, but also latent relations between different actors were discovered, which bring us to conclusion that the theatre space symbolizes field of power struggle between political and cultural elite.

3 CONCLUSIONS ON FEATURES AND APPLICATION OF THE NEW MODEL

The features of qualitative research were created according to Lamnek and Krell [15] who establish six principles that can be understood as a program of qualitative social research. We used three principles and adjusted them for the new model of research in order to open examination of extension of application of new model and the use of results of research in theatre practice.

3.1 Openness and flexibility

Not taking into account geographical space, size and formal status of theatre (whether it is national, municipal, regional…) owner (public or private) or status of art (opera, ballet, drama theatre) theatre always involves activities of triad: artists, audience and management. New model is therefore applicable to research of any theatre, at any personal initiative or research interest in humanities. However, the model could be applied within the framework of a long-term research project of a group of researchers. Linking it to international research projects it could involve several different theatre institutions (e.g. European national theatres), which in turn would create a database with theatres as research units, with structured view of research outcomes.

3.2 Research as a communication

If we treat research as a way of communication, that feature would purport multiple forms of communication in the new model. First level of communication of researchers is achieved through qualitative methods: participant observation or through interviews with different actors. Second level of communication is achieved through use of the study and its representation in public. Third level considers all potential receptions and reactions of audience and theatre itself. This could bring to change in relation between the actors. If we take into account that marketing service in theatres can better present theatre programs to targeted audience if habits, behaviour, and socioeconomic structure are known, then these changes that result from the research can be seen as extremely useful to the theatre management.

With respect to dynamics of social change, change in habits, audience behaviour changes in repertoire and artistic trends, research was conducted in a short period which alluding that or was not possible to cover theatre reality in its entirety. However qualitative methodology framework through the

proposed model of research contributes to sustainability of theatre on local level describing its social polysemy of key actors: artists, audience and management.

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CONDUCTING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ABOUT URBAN PLANNING IN THE CONTEXT OF ILLIBERAL HUNGARY

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Abstract

Our ongoing research project analyses the impact of available EU funds and the growing importance of private investors in urban development in the period between 2002 and 2020 in Hungary. The research team wanted to examine how these changes typical of neoliberal urban planning affected the profession and status of urban planners. Interviews with planners, entrepreneurs, and residents were an important part of the research design. However gaining and interpreting qualitative data was proven difficult in the context of illiberal Hungary. The political environment strongly affects how interviews with stakeholders can be used. The findings could imply to consider theoretical approaches beyond the universal political economy framework. These challenges also show how qualitative data is useful to look behind the scene, even if political power is keen on silencing in depth social research.

Keywords: qualitative research, post-socialist, urban, illiberal, neo-patrimonial

1 INTRODUCTION

> "Oh yes, there was a lot of participative planning. So much participation it gave me a headache [rolls eyes and laughs]."

Although it happened almost a decade ago I vividly remember the above comment of an architect working around Budapest on urban planning tasks. I was an interviewer in a quantitative inquiry about the practice of urban planning, and the questionnaire had a segment about participative practices. By then I observed several residents forums as the sole manifestation of participation in urban interventions, and although the comment of the respondent was arrogantly cynical, at the same time it was understandable. The EU directives about participative planning and the Hungarian everyday reality of urban planning stood in stark contrast.

Concentrating on the effects of EU directives and the (assumed) increasingly neoliberal urban governance echoed the theoretical considerations used earlier in Western contexts (see the critique of this practice at [1]). In the quantitative research design, discrepancies between empirical experiences and the imported theory only appeared indirectly (such as the sarcastic comments of respondents). While other mechanisms influencing these urban processes remained unexplored. Our ongoing mixed methods research about urban planning in Hungary suggests an even wider gap between the assumed importance of neoliberal governance and EU directives and the lived experience of planners. These and other similar research experiences motivated me to explore debates about universally applied political economic theories and the theoretical relevance of different empirical experiences in different contexts (with distinguished attention to the post-socialist context). I suggest these debates are also relevant from the aspect of qualitative research methodology.

When I refer to the importance of the post-socialist (or any other) context of course I do not claim that this is an exceptional social environment, where research methods do not apply and social processes

are unique. Rather I point out certain difficulties and problems our research group encountered that can have relevance in other contexts but they are maybe less frequently experienced and less spectacular elsewhere.

In this paper I argue that the peculiar economic and power relations of post-socialist Hungary under an illiberal regime have an effect on how qualitative research in the topic of urban planning and governance can be conducted. Meanwhile I also claim that despite difficulties of data collection detailed qualitative inquiry is necessary for this research and for the revision of taken for granted theoretical assumptions.

To do this, first I argue for the importance of qualitative research in urban studies. Next I explain what I mean under the post-socialist and illiberal context of Hungary and how this appeared in our research experience. Then I present and explain our hardships in gaining meaningful data about actual urban processes in the framework of Western theoretical assumptions. In the conclusions I argue for more careful and reflexive thinking about how research questions can be transferred between contexts.

2 INTRODUCTION URBAN STUDIES IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Scholars of urban political economy assume and search for the effects and manifestations of global neoliberal capitalism in cities [2], claim that neoliberalism appears "most saliently" on the urban level [3: 454] and that the democratic state (on the national level) is being increasingly displaced from urban governance [4]. Their theoretical approach aims for grasping the "nature" of cities determined by urban land markets all around the world even if there are certain local modifying features in these markets [5: 8-10].

The critique of the universal urban political economy in urban studies notes that the assumption about cities determined by neoliberal market capitalism takes the nature of the "whole" for granted but ignores that it "does not exist independent of its parts" [6: 8]. The universal approach understands local empirical differences as the results of local modifying features that do not decrease the validity of the universal theory [7: 8]. This is well illustrated by the notion of variegated neoliberalism [8] that explains empirical differences between different places with the mechanisms and effects of global neoliberalisation. The consequence of this approach is that certain empirical experiences have no theoretical relevance [9: 13]Robinson, 2016: 13). Instead of explaining everything with the root cause of capitalist mode of production they suggest that "the diversity of actual historical influences" should be explored [9: 12].

If we aim for taking seriously the empirical results of any context, the traditional approaches to compare cities should be revised. Relational comparison [10] and genetic and generative comparative tactics are suggested [9]. Robinson [9: 21] advocates "that perhaps the most useful comparative tactic in urban studies is the case study, brought into creative conversation with a wider literature". The detailed, interpretative, qualitative understanding of the cases can lead to new theoretical insights.

Qualitative research in urban planning was also suggested earlier for dealing with phenomena under research less known for theorists and planners [11] [12]. Just like in the case of different contexts, thinking outside the box is the strength of qualitative research. The problem of generalisation can be addressed by creative comparative tactics and surprising comparisons that reveal weaknesses of theories and concepts: for example highlighting the "porousness" of the state instead of simply observing instances of informal practices [13]. Securing the trustworthiness of the respondents is however especially problematic in contexts such as illiberal Hungary.

3 THE EFFECTS OF THE POST-SOCIALIST CONTEXT ON CONDUCTING QUALITATIVE URBAN POLICY RESEARCH

3.1 Post-socialism, neo-patrimonialism and illiberalism

3.1.1 Neoliberal shock-therapy or…?

Champions of the universal political-economic explanations argue against the concept of post-socialism and suggest that dependency and the position in the world system explain social processes and empirical differences compared to Western cases [14]. They caricaturise the research of institutional differences as exceptionalism and self-orientalisation [15] and see countries after the regime changes in 1989/1991 even more neoliberal than Western ones [16]. Scholars taking more seriously historical differences and empirical exploration of social mechanisms argue for an ongoing relevance of the process of post-socialist transformation [17]. Instead of seeing the post-socialist context as a different "totality" they highlight that effects of the transformation process have significant consequences in particular social phenomena [18: 140-142]. And they call the attention on the great variation among the transformation processes that produced substantial differences between cities of the same semi-peripheral region [19].

Instead of the taken for granted track towards the ideals of liberal market economy and liberal democracy (and the "end of history") the process of the post-socialist transformation shows signs of "drifting away" from these ideas [20]. A crucial element of the post-socialist transformation process was the establishment of private property and the owners' class. This was carried out in a neo-patrimonial manner [20: 26] during the privatisation process often referred as neo-liberal shock therapy in the 1990s. In this context the term neo-patrimonial refers first to the lord-vassal relationships between political power [21: 12-14] and the new economic elite. The latter was often directly appointed or supported with "tailored" legislation by the former. These connections between political and economic power are still empirically detectable today with network analysis [22].

Neo-patrimonial relations also mean that mechanisms of traditional authority coexist with legal rational (or liberal) forms of authority. This means that power is also exercised by personal obedience besides the rule of law [21: 12-14] and at the same time there is a high level arbitrariness and lack of expertise in governance instead of rational (economic or other type of) calculation [21: 10].

3.1.2 Guidelines for Figures and Tables The rise of illiberalism

In this historical context the 2/3 supermajority win of the right wing FIDESZ in 2010 in Hungary created the opportunity of dismantling the checks and balances and separation of the branches of power. MPs of the extremely centralised party ruled by a single person (Viktor Orbán the PM of Hungary), as "voting machines", legitimise any goals of the executive branch. The state attorney is an appointee of the PM and the struggle of the government and the party against judicial independence is ongoing [20: 24]. Meanwhile authorities overseeing elections are not independent from the ruling party and the PM and extremely large part of the media and advertisement is now owned by the business circles of the party elite[3]. Since this basic feature of liberal authority (the separation of the branches of power) is violated and institutions overseeing elections are not independent, the term "managed illiberal democracy" is suggested to describe the Hungarian political context [20: 22].

This illiberal concentration of power in Hungary after 2010 (and in Russia after 2000) meant a step towards neo-prebendal[4] relations where already established property rights can be overruled by

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[3] To make it clear, it was not „oligarchs" who owned these companies and put pressure on the political class (as in the 1990s in Russia). Rather the other way around: targeted changes of legislation made it possible for Fidesz cadres to gain ownership in media firms.

[4] While in feudalism or patrimonailism the fief of the vassal is inalienable and inheritable, in prebendalism these benefits can be retracted by the lord in case of disloyalty [20: 14-15].

political will [20: 29]. The traditional features of neo-patrimonial (or feudal) governance typical of the post-socialist transformation are further exacerbated in the illiberal system. For example corruption is not the weakness of the system and exception to the rule but "control deactivation on the inter-organisational level" [23: 546-547] is observed by experts[5].

Traditional elements of governance introduced above meet with large international companies and international organisations such as the European Union. The result is a world of simulacrums, where winners of extremely complicated public procurements are appointed in party offices before the application process starts and urban development documents are just lip-service in already decided government founded interventions. Pretending that EU rules are applied, market capitalism works, and Hungary is a legal state makes interviewing a difficult task.

3.2 Liberal democracy, EU directives and neoliberal planning

3.2.1 Telling the truth in an illiberal context

(1) "I cannot answer this question. And I would not like to answer this question in this form, because…, because my answer also wouldn't be precise. I'd rather highlight again the fact that the EU is thinking in seven years long planning periods, it is very important to keep this in mind…"

(2) "Of course, we ask the opinion of everyone [about the urban rehabilitation]. Such as [enumerates a handful of municipality firms]. Really everybody. And we are always looking for a consensus!"

(3) "Well there are always people who are just looking for a chance to criticise the municipality, but most residents were satisfied with our work, because we were always open for their requests [smiles jovially]."

After many tries and different research questions, our research group concluded that interviewing officials employed by the municipality about the practice of urban planning and urban rehabilitation in Hungary can give only indirect results. According to senior researchers of our research group the situation got much worse after the illiberal turn, and in informal situations it became clear that fear is a major issue. We know many cases when employees of municipalities or other public workers were removed from their positon for the slightest critique against the government or the local leadership. As we outlined above, among traditional power relations being openly critical about political decisions could mean serious disadvantages.

Example (1) is quoted from a municipality worker who agreed to make the interview with him. Although he knew exactly that my colleague and I travelled three hours to meet him (and we need another three hours to get home) after we greeted each other he asked if 10-15 minutes would be enough for me. However even during this short time it became clear that he is very nervous about the situation. His plan was to tell me well known facts about the EU.

Example (2) and (3) show the attitudes towards the involvement of the residents living in a rehabilitation area in a middle-sized Hungarian town. In case of example (2) I repeatedly asked who else are involved in the process of planning and implementation of the rehabilitation besides municipality owned public service companies but residents of the area were not mentioned. Our interviewees personally involved in the process (as residents and social workers) told us that they could not communicate with the leaders of the rehabilitation project or the mayor of the city at all. Another interviewee working at a local NGO told us: "We realised that we can consider the mayor and the leaders of the city as non-existent". The implementation of the rehabilitation project meant further marginalisation for the residents and they tried to protest against that[6]. However the rehabilitation project continued without any changes. Therefore we considered example (3) as not trustworthy data.

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[5] As we highlighted elsewhere to avoid charges of naivety [24], it is not the phenomenon of corruption, but the methods, the extent and its embeddeness into governance needs particular attention.

[6] The case of their racially segregated school (that is against the Hungarian law) got national level media attention earlier.

Of course I do not imply that public servants always tell only the truth and the whole truth everywhere outside our illiberal context. But for example if these interviewees were relativizing a socially unjust decision it would tell us a lot about the situation and the mechanisms behind it. However these officials are true afraid to explain themselves and aware of the fact that they can surely get away with not taking researchers seriously and not communicating with the residents of their city at all[7].

3.2.2 Looking for the EU in Hungary

(1) "And we fall for it again, and believe that what we write down [in the planning document] will be realised. And then we get disappointed again, as always before."

(2) "The strange thing is that if you ask about it you will find strategic planning cabinets and urban development groups. Pro-forma they are everywhere."

(3) "They know very well already that there is no time for these public procurements. So what will they do? They are going to do them without open tenders. And then what will the EU do? Quite probably the country will have to pay back the money. The Hungarian taxpayers!"

The EU made it compulsory for cities to produce integrated urban development documents. The document is a necessary criterion to apply for EU funds. In theory municipalities can apply for funding programmes that are in line with these strategic documents[8]. So in theory these documents should be quite important as they would determine the development of the settlement for a seven year long planning period. Therefore these documents are usually made by planning experts with experience in EU applications, programme implementation and the general jargon of the European bureaucracy. Scholars of the universal political economy tradition (see above) also highlight how much these documents lack democratic legitimation (since they are made by "experts" and not by "representatives of the people"). Because the central concern of these documents (and the distribution of EU funds) is often economic growth they are considered as examples of the neoliberal governance of cities arching over the national level.

Therefore our interview guideline contained extremely detailed questions about who makes these documents and how these companies are selected by the municipalities, what methodologies they follow, and if their contents are determined by international best practices and expert knowledge, or by political will. Only to find out short after the beginning of the research that in the Hungarian context the relevance and importance of these documents is very close to zero.

The examples of this section are gained from interviews that were useful because of a very lucky coincidence and a special situation. On the one hand the first interviewee, and owner of private planning company, was in a not very close but apparently very reliable personal tie with a member of the research group. Then he suggested other interviewees who talked to us in a similar manner after we referred to him. On the other hand these people were strongly offended by the leadership of the municipalities they worked with, either because of neglecting their work, or because the implementation of their plans was shameful for them. As researchers we had to think quickly in these situations and realise that the script in our head about the process of urban planning and development, based on Western research and theory has minimal relevance. So we quickly threw away our guideline and just facilitated the interviewees to rant freely. The credibility of the data provided by them is supported by the fact that they were speaking against their own interests and reputation. They were ashamed and nervous and ventilated their anger for almost 2 hours each with high internal consistency.

Example (1) is a quote by a planner who worked with development strategies already in the age of PHARE programmes in the 1990s. Back then their expert knowledge was necessary to gain funding. Today he is shocked how futile his work is, and how much the national level political decisions decide

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[7] The Fidesz member mayor of the town was re-elected in 2019.

[8] However the money is actually distributed by the government of Hungary and the EU just monitors the process.

about urban development (see below). Example (2) was a sobering comment about our approach to map planning procedures and planning institutions. They are there but they often have no real meaning as decisions are made on the national level in closed party meetings. Democratic deficit is not a consequence of de-politicised technocratic neoliberalism but rather the centralised power within the ruling party. Example (3) described the establishment of a two level extremely complicated consortium for small projects that combined applications for funding and made up a much bigger scale project. The motivation behind that was the notorious corruption in public procurements: if 30% of the funding is embezzled by default the bigger the project is the better. However this made it virtually impossible to conduct the project according to EU rules.

3.2.3 Is it post-national?

(1) "As far as we can see the mayor always knows what to do, he knows how to get the money with who knows what kind of tricks and political connections and lobbying … and everything else is just a technicality."

(2) "… So yes we did not win the funding for the third step of the project because of these formal mistakes … But then a year later out of the blue they told us that we should apply for funding [for the rehabilitation project]. And the call was obviously made for [the name of three municipalities]. And all three got the funding."

(3) "The lack of talent. It comes from megalomania. The biggest problem is that their colleagues should be smarter than they are."

(4) "So his excellence the Minister Without Portfolio suggested a glass bridge in [name of the town] … Yes! Just like in China. And they put it in the application. Thank God he somehow lost the trust of the Prime Minister, because it would have benne realised!"

In this last section I just highlight what was not part of our research question and our interview guideline. We were concentrating on methods of planning and production of planning documents, but not on the type of power relations that actually determine how public money for urban development is spent. The neo-patrimonial (traditional) power relations and the effects of the party hierarchy were only addressed indirectly when our luckily helpful interviewees told their experiences honestly. The allocation of funding is strongly controlled by the government. Party officials of the given region have often much more leverage in urban development than technically sovereign mayors.

The national level is not excluded from the process as the post-national framework (Jessop, 2002: 459) suggests, but plays a definitive role after the centralisation of power in the illiberal regime. We were looking for the post-national, neoliberal, technocratic framework although we were aware that some modifying factors should be there. However after a year of research we revised our standpoint. It's not merely a modifying feature but rather a central element in opposition with the Western theory.

Example (1) and (2) illustrate that to a large extent the national level of power and the connections within the party hierarchy determine the fate of cities. Example (3) and (4) illustrate that elected politicians with actual democratic legitimacy decide in questions of planning and not technocrats. In case of example (4) the local strong man of the party (the Fidesz member MP of the constituency) dictated and not mayors. Many locals are aware that in the current power structure of Hungary, they have to vote for this strong man if they want to secure funding. This makes electoral wins for the opposition even more difficult even if locals are repeatedly offended by politicians.

4 CONCLUSIONS

We found that the assumptions of neo-liberal planning policies and the strong effect of EU directives and regulations only partially grasp the mechanisms behind urban processes in Hungary. There are many other effects of the post-socialist transformation that do not fit to this framework. As I highlighted in the introduction, I do not claim that these features of the Hungarian planning context

are unique. Rather I argue that theoretical assumptions about neoliberalisation as the root cause of everything else should be revised in every context.

To explore the whole range of mechanisms behind urban planning and urban development needs more empirical work. However those who are formally responsible for these policies, the leaders and officials of cities, are under close political control and the trustworthiness of their accounts is highly questionable. Of course this is somewhat true in every context, but the logic of the illiberal political context suggests that this problem is more central in our case. We were lucky enough to meet professionals who were more independent, who trusted us because of personal connections and who were engaged in helping our research work exactly because of their grievances in this system. They gave us extremely valuable insights even if that meant strong self-criticism and jeopardizing their future public commissions. In this context, local knowledge and connections to informants are even more important than usual.

In this paper I gave examples of why it is difficult to conduct qualitative or actually any other type social science research in Hungary. At the same time I argued for the usefulness of qualitative methods because they gave us a chance to revise the imported theoretical framework. I claim that the research work of "indigenous" scholars should be taken more seriously than mere empirical noise that does not affect parochial social theory conceived in Western contexts. The struggle about the political control over the Hungarian Academy of Sciences is to a large extent about the "opposition" role of social sciences. In the see of misinformation and in the post-truth age systematic investigation in social questions is against the interests of power. If we just keep on echoing the assumptions of universal political economy we simply assist the anti-liberal rhetoric of the nationalist autocratic regime. Rather we should continue engaged, detailed and thorough empirical research work that explores the nature of domination in a more detailed manner and dares to criticise powerful Western theorists even if it is more difficult work that is harder to publish than just jumping on their bandwagon.

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ECO/TECHNO/DATA/PHILOSOPHICAL WORKSHOP WITH WOOD AS/AND KNOWLEDGE/CONSTRUCTIONS

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Abstract

Recycling and circular policies do not necessarily contribute to increased mental mobility, knowledge constructions, newness and learning, what we call moving minds or *mindmoving for sustainability.* In our workshop, we explore autoethnographic approaches as both method and means for creating emancipatory mindmoving spaces for producing constant reassessing processes or flux for sustainability and knowledge. We seek to situate a rich and complex view of sustainability constantly in the making or emergent eschewing simplistic notions to particular forms of economies, educational provision and models.

Keywords: Mindmoving, autoethnography, dataphilosophy

1 ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY AND HAVING A HUNCH OF SOMETHING BEING WRONG…

For it is through writing that you become animal, it is through color that you become imperceptible, it is through music that you become hard and memoryless, simultaneously animal and imperceptible: In love." (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004 p. 208)

With a growing focus on recycling and circular economies, pluri- or post factual but polarized public discourse, the concept of sustainability is vital for the educational field to conquer. Conquering both the subject and object of sustainability that is. Circularity and subsequent policies are aimed at reducing waste and securing the continual use of resources. The backcloth being awareness of our precarious ecological situation, the climate crisis and change. This is all good, but in our opinion, such policies does not necessarily contribute to increased mental mobility, knowledge constructions, newness and learning; or what we here try to call moving minds or *mindmoving for sustainability.* If Donna Haraway is right and "It matters what thoughts think thoughts." (2016, p. 35), then enabling new thoughts to think new thoughts with, might be a way to move minds beyond the circular thinkings of circularity.

To conquer is thinking and storying other, to perspective and balance through differentiated spaces and affects repeatedly to escape the tyrannies of perceived opinions, to avoid nudging becoming shoving (Reinertsen, 2020). There are ghosts in the/our/my machineries: Difference in situations always already categorized, classed, gendered and ethnicised… Post factuality refers to a situation in which people are more likely to accept an argument based on their emotions and beliefs, rather than one based on facts www.dictionary.cambridge.org (retrieved January 13th. 2020). Ultimately requiring from us the ability of onto-epistemological criticality, iterative not algorithmic thinking. It is vital to remind ourselves constantly that evidence might equally work to exclude therefore unjust as inclusive

and just. Clarity, definitions, strategies and goal orientation might work to hide, not reveal. Categories might exclude and the betweens might disappear.

We explore autoethnographic approaches as both method and means for creating emancipatory mindmoving spaces for producing constant reassessing processes or flux for sustainability and knowledge. Processes through evocative provocations, "thought-beatings", data dreaming and dataphilosophy (Reinertsen, 2020). We explore and experiment with technological artefacts or objects – old telephones and what not… and wood/tree/s … to think *with…*: "Purely actual objects do not exist. Every actual surrounds itself with a cloud of virtual images" (Deleuze, in Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 148). What clouds might surround the wood/tree/s participating in this workshop, and might these clouds crash with other clouds surrounding human or nonhuman others in the situated space of the workshop? What clouds might surround a/the-technological artefacts, becoming, thinking with?

> *…. I am preparing for a/the workshop. Collecting technological artefacts. Searching online. Trawling second-hand-shops. Conversing with. Stories and memories… innovations … and/there, in a/the second-hand-shop –affecting me. Calling up on me. This old phone, similar to the one from the house of my grandparents - there in the second hand shop. I am touching the rotary dial on the grey old phone[9], standing in a box on the top of different other (old) stuff. The shop is overloaded. It is a mess. The phone, whispering, telling stories. I left the shop without the phone, but affecting me, [sill] calling me …*
>
> *… A/the grey telephone with a hand set and a/the rotary dial at the front part – and my grandmother speeding towards the ringing signal from the phone. Her steady look, her fast-moving arms with her crooked gout-suffering fingers, fast-gripping, moving together with the wheels of her wheelchair … "hallo". Thinking with a/the old phone with a/the rotary dial at the front, calling me.*

It is an interiology, an opening up of the sustainable action or *event* itself for new and more visions of natural and social realities, and to position knowledges as "located" in experience, in nature, in culture and in life, as collective knowledge – and learning practices.

Mindmovings provoked by a being of the sensible, a "dark precursor" (Deleuze, 1994, p. 124), a sense of – and thinking with something intolerable perhaps (Culp, 2017, p. 68). Ecological things like tree/s and humans, together with artefacts are what makes realities, not always in harmony, not always in pleasant coexistence. What knowledges might emerge in allowing for darker clouds into our events? Getting out of post positivist thinking and unbridled optimisms of connections. Rather thinking with what working with sustainability and knowledge creation must not become. We have seen what fear can do before.

2 EXPLORATIONS OF/FOR WORKSHOP METHODOLOGIES AND THE NECESSITY OF SUBJECTIVITY

There is no subject of desire, any more than there is an object. There is no subject of enunciation. Fluxes are the only objectivity of desire itself. Desire is the system of a-signifying signs with which fluxes of the unconscious are produced in a social field. There is no blossoming of desire, wherever it happens- in an unremarkable family or a local school - which does not call established structures into question. Desire is revolutionary because it always wants more connections and assemblages (Gilles Deleuze in Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 78-79).

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[9] https://digitaltmuseum.no/011015233389/elektrisk-bureau-telefon

…. thinking with a/the grey telephone with a/the rotary dial, singing while moving, moving with - while ringing. Exploring and experimenting with connections and assemblages … emancipatory mindmoving – not fear, not unbridled optimisms of connections – but/and iterative thinkings. Where did you come from? Where did you go? I don`t remember your sounds, but I can feel the movements you, the grey telephone with the rotary dial at the front, created. My strong grandmother with a/the clear gaze. Mild and severe at the same time while looking at the young me; (are you) differentiating right from wrong? Where do you want to go? What are your life-goals? My beloved grandfather; I miss your warm and caring smile and your big lovely hart. Long-time no see. Ring-ring. "Hallo". "Hallo, this is Anita calling. How are you doing? I miss your voice and I miss talking with you".

Scientifically speaking, we perform autoethnographic explorations with the Deleuzian concept of *desire* in philosophy. Our hypothesis is that autoethnography as "theorymethod" is enabling us to attend to innovation and change differently than other methods might, creating different spaces and dialogues in pedagogical praxis and research for sustainability.

We ask what a *raw moment* (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 355) or a liminal deleuzeoguattarian moment in a sustainability perspective can do? These are moments in which hierarchies may be reversed or temporarily dissolved; creating a fluid, malleable situation that enables new thoughts, insights, knowing, institutions and customs to become established. We ask what the dissolution of order can teach us about what kind of qualities and abilities teachers or professionals need to be equipped with?...

…. thinking with an old telephone and iterative process thinkings. Dataphilosophing and/as actualizing virtual intensities… and/for sustainability. Technology and sustainability and (STEM) education (Crisostomo & Reinertsen, forthcoming)…? UN/DESA (2018, p. xvii) proclaims that frontier technologies may present immense potential for achieving the Agenda 2030 goals – a UN (2015) strategy where education is both a goal in itself while also being highlighted as a solvent to all of the other sustainability goals within the Agenda. What kind of subject positions does this require for a/the professionals working within the context of education? What kind of subject position does this focus on technological solutions as the salvation for sustainability issues, affect learning processes teachers facilitates and expect as learning outcomes from the children? I do not know, and/but speculating. Children and what they know, how they use their knowledge, as a/the change agents for a sustainable future? … an absurd stance, according to Alaimo (2016, p. 173), "as the unintentional effects of human activity, and its interactions with other forces, outpace even the best laid plans". And what if, how to respond to what Schwab (2015) states as the technological revolution we are standing in the front of – a transformation unlike anything humankind has experienced before? A transformation where Xu, David, and Kim (2018, p. 93) advocates that people with the ability to create new ideas and innovation are "the scarcest and most valuable resource" for the [sustainable?] future. I do not know and/but speculating, embrace and critique technology and technological solutions within and towards the context of education and education for sustainability.

We seek to situate a rich and complex view of sustainability constantly in the making or emergent eschewing simplistic notions to particular forms of economies, educational provision and models. It is a move from centred views of sustainability focussed on identity and individuality, to a decentred view with focus on collective becomings. *Becoming tree, becoming green, red, yellow – moving with the wind, slow walking with the sun…. running, dancing with the rain… dripping, heavy rainfall, running, dancing. "Ring, ring". Becoming technology, becoming technological me. "I haven`t been to the dentist for several years. I don`t remember the last time I searched the word "dentist" online. After you told me, during our online telephone conversation that you had ben to the dentist, suddenly a dentist commercial appeared on my Facebook account…." …? Who is listening? Who is telling whom what, making me, learning me? Knowing me – knowing me more than me myself?*

We place ourselves in the world as if that is the meaning of life and drift (Fr. dérive) along. Every step we take remains in the body as a map to which we are the scale, with consistencies and smells, colours

and noises, and the patterns that are formed gradually embrace more and more of the globe. Drifting along. Thinking with trees, thinking with a/the grey old telephone with a/the rotary dial. My body and/as my map. I place my forefinger in the rotary dial. My body knows the movement. It is difficult, and maybe even impossible, to explain by words. The forefinger, the arm, the body – telling the movements of calling, dialling my childhood telephone number. Calling my parents, calling from my grandparents grey telephone with a/the rotary dial. Singing, moving with the song, the song of dialling a/the telephone number – calling my parents. My body is moving with the song, thinking with trees and …. my grandparents' garden. Childhood memories and thinking with trees, big trees, small trees, berry bushes. Playing with my friends. Climbing in a/the big tree in the garden of my grandparents. Piking berries. Eating the berries while sitting on one of the big branches of the tree. Playing with my friends and concentrating, eating, trying not to fall down while sitting in the tree. Looking on/as part of life, sensing, touching (Crisostomo, 2016, p. 6) becoming with trees.

Our aim is to affirm the existence of different ontologies and the exigence of learning how to think, an affirmation and a passion for difference. Difference conceptualized as democratic ontologies of knowledge simultaneously opening and closing, stopping and forwarding. Flattening conceptualized hierarchies, collapsing criteria, structure, tradition, categories, and definitions. Leaving us with preliminary knowledges, which we through autoethnographic writing can continue to reveal and explore further as a constant activist interrogation of our subjective judgements and ethical onto-epistemic conduct. However, never leaving us to it: always urging us to rethink, think repeatedly and again, and loving it even if it is exhausting sometimes and unpleasant. This is the stuff of collective reciprocity and responsibility in sustainability and education for sustainability: a constant de-authorized energy of doubtful rethinking. In this way, democratic ontologies activate the ethical task in education, which demands that we/I approach other stories, the other stories, stories about the other and me and sustainability … riddles of being, voicing and not, because we must.

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A MIXED METHOD APPROACH TO DEVELOP PROPOSALS FOR MALTA'S URBAN OPEN SPACES TO ACT AS GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

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Abstract

Achieving sustainable development is increasingly at the forefront when planning and managing urban concentrations. Urban design is a key player and open space is one area within the dimensions of urban form which is increasingly recognised for its importance in improving the sustainability of built environments. In fact, if urban open spaces function as urban green infrastructure they have the potential to addresses a broad range of urban challenges. The poor quality of urban open spaces in Malta suggests that a 'gap' exists in relation to their planning and design. Additionally, various trends such as: Malta´s particular scale; development pressures; policy orientation; governance; climatic conditions; and mobility challenges, support the need to research the planning and design of urban open spaces in Malta. The research therefore aims to develop proposals, to improve the contribution of urban open spaces to sustainable development. A ´Mixed Method Exploratory Sequential Approach' using Malta's urban conurbation as a case study is adopted. The methodology is developed in two phases. The first utilises: physical survey; online survey; interviews; project reviews; and policy review to gather the data. The second develops proposals in response to the results and explores potential barriers to implementation using focus groups. The methodology illustrates how the synthesis of a qualitative approach with mixed methods results in a strong evidence base for the development of proposals. The results show that urban open spaces in Malta are not acting as green infrastructure. A comparison with literature on the planning of urban open spaces suggests that adopting an urban green infrastructure planning approach could provide a framework for focusing the results and developing proposals. The methodology has therefore also resulted in the formulation of an urban open space policy framework which could facilitate the potential for urban open spaces to act as urban green infrastructure.

Keywords: Exploratory Mixed Methods, Green Infrastructure, Urban Open Space, Sustainable Development, Integrated Planning

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Urban concentrations of population, if not appropriately managed, result in a number of problems [1]. Challenges engendered by the need to address trends such as: increasing mobility while decreasing dependence on private vehicles; reducing sprawl and land take up; improving micro-climates and the increasing need for effective water management in urban areas are all topics relating to the development and management of the urban environment. Such issues have a direct impact on the quality and sustainability of urban environments [2].

Although numerous nations and cities have embraced the concept of sustainable urbanization, we have yet "to successfully design and plan cities that will accommodate our economic and demographic needs while uplifting and elevating us, and…the planet and its natural systems" [3]. Policy at all levels, from the European Union to municipal governments are setting guidelines for the development of urban neighbourhoods that provide a greater quality of life in a sustainable way.

1.2 Sustainable Development and the Importance of Urban Open Spaces

The planning and design of urban open spaces is one area within the dimensions of urban form. Various authors [4][5][6][7] clearly establish the importance of open spaces in improving the sustainability and quality of the built environment. Open spaces have a direct influence on how local people and visitors perceive urban areas and how well social life functions. They also influence economic prosperity through increase in real estate value, increasing attractiveness and hence competitiveness of cities. Their environmental importance is underlined by their potential to mitigate adverse effects of climate change [8]. In fact, if urban open spaces function as urban green infrastructure they are "capable of addressing a broad range of urban challenges such as conserving biodiversity, adapting to climate change, supporting the green economy and improving social cohesion. To capture this potential, local governments need to plan carefully and holistically". [9]

The term open space can refer to various types. This research is concerned with open spaces relating to the urban or built environment, hence referred to as ´urban open spaces´. The important role which they play as part of the built environment is evident through the wide range of policies which incorporate the role of urban open spaces [8]. They are likely to become more, rather than less, important over the coming years and decades. The impact of climate change and the effects of demographic trends are two phenomena which reinforce this [8].

2 URBAN OPEN SPACES IN MALTA: RESEARCH OVERVIEW

In Malta, both the National Environmental Policy (NEP) [10] and the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (SPED) [11] identify the need to move towards sustainable development. The SPED states that increased density has "had a number of negative effects manifested to different degrees in certain localities with impacts on the quality of streetscapes and public open spaces". [11] Additionally, the low provision of urban green spaces does not encourage healthy lifestyles. Factors such as congestion, pedestrian safety, air and noise pollution, have reduced the amenity and quality of life. This has led to the gradual erosion of the degree of social integration within communities [11].

2.1 Research Aim and Objectives

Various publications have therefore identified the poor quality of open spaces in Malta [10][11][12][13] in relation to the sustainability agenda. This led to the research problem which suggests that: a 'gap' exists in relation to the planning and design of urban open spaces in Malta. As a result, the research aims to investigate planning policy and the design of urban open spaces in Malta and use the outcomes to develop proposals for improving their contribution to sustainable development. Following this, the objectives are to:

- Identify design principles/themes relevant and specific to the design of urban open spaces in Malta and their potential to contribute to sustainable development
- Understand existing urban open space policies and identify gaps
- Develop proposals for urban open space policy in Malta including understanding the process for its development
- Identify barriers/implications for its implementation

2.2 Mixed Method Exploratory Sequential Approach using a Single 'City' Case Study

This research adopts a mixed method exploratory sequential approach [14] using a single city case study, that of the main urban conurbation in Malta. This is outlined in Figure 1. The flow chart in Figure 2 illustrates the various stages of the research in more detail. The five methods identified for phase one are: physical surveys of existing open spaces; in depth qualitative review of three case study open space projects; interviews with local councils; an online social survey; and a review of existing strategies and policies. The second stage then uses interviews and focus groups with the authorities to test and further refine the proposals.
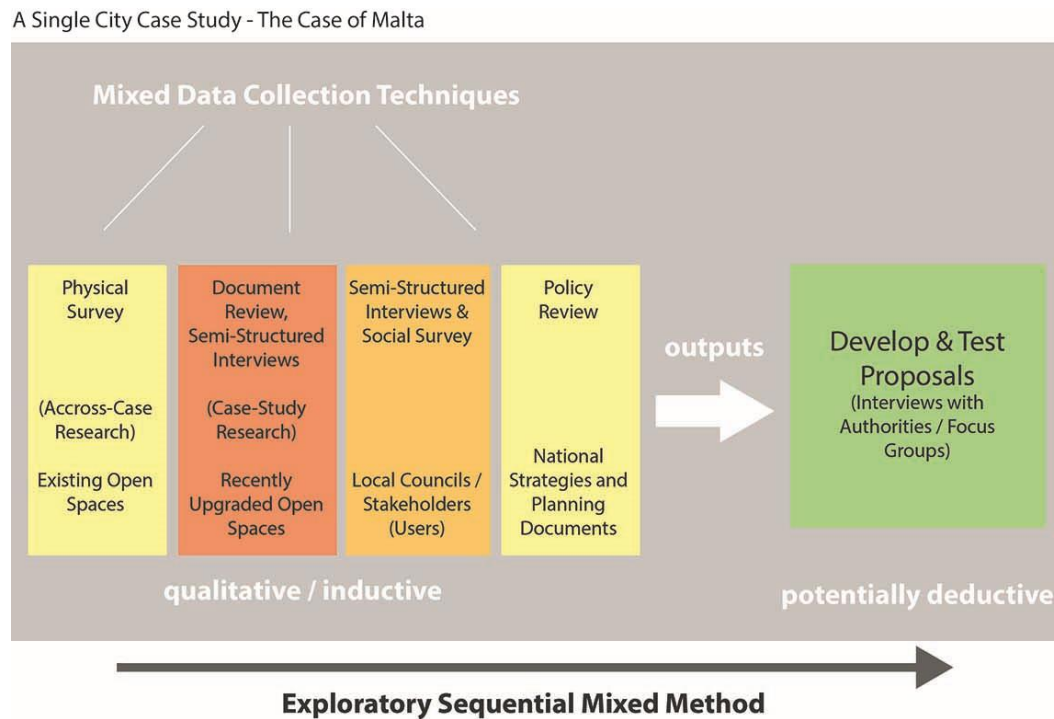

Figure 1: Research methodology adopting a two phased ´Exploratory Sequential Mixed Method´ approach (Source: Author)
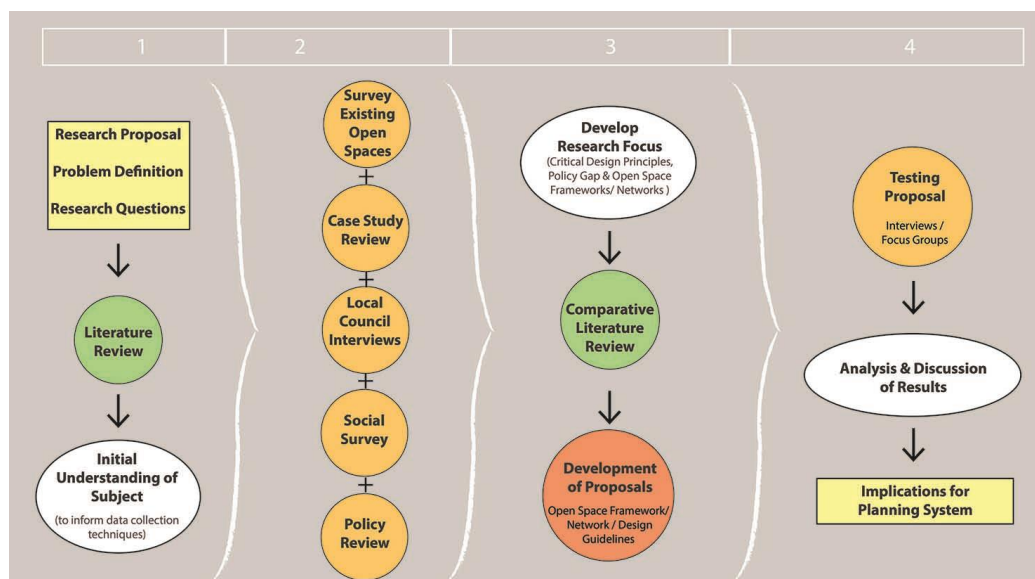

Figure 2: Research overview illustrating main stages of the research (Source: Author)

2.3 Choice of Methodology

The primary purpose of the research is to resolve a practical problem. That is, to develop proposals to improve the contribution of urban open spaces to sustainable development. Additionally, the main audience is active practitioners and the relevance of the proposed solutions is therefore of importance. The research therefore leans towards the applied orientation [15]. Having said this, the research is autonomous and it is not intended to sacrifice scientific rigour to obtain fast and usable results. The scientific audience is therefore also considered an important target. The research orientation therefore lies beyond the traditional basic – applied definitions.

The main purpose of the research is not to test or develop a theory; rather it looks to develop proposals about a subject, which for the Maltese context, little research exists. The objectives are to explore and understand the current situation in order to develop and test proposals. The questions are therefore ´How´ and ´What´ questions. The main purpose of the research is therefore ´exploratory´ [15]. In parallel, the research is also ´descriptive´. This is due to the first step which is to investigate spatial planning policies and the design of urban open spaces. This will present a descriptive picture of the situation at hand. The purpose of the research is therefore both exploratory and descriptive.

Since the departure point of the research is the observation and understanding of a situation in order to develop proposals rather than the development of a hypothesis or theory which is to be tested, an inductive approach was deemed suitable. This inductive emphasis, as well as the exploratory nature, suggested the use of open ended-questions. This together with the intent to research a specific context in depth led to the conclusion that qualitative and case study research strategies would be appropriate [14][16].

A case study approach is generally used when research is intended to understand a specific issue or process within a specific context. While research which traditionally uses experiments, seeks to use the results to generalise, when using a case study approach generalisation is not necessarily the purpose. In studying a case study discovering the uniqueness of the case is the main purpose [17]. Since the purpose of this research is to specifically study the planning and design of urban open spaces in Malta, a single city case study approach was chosen, in this case that of the main urban conurbation in Malta.

Having said this, the pragmatic nature of the research suggested that a mixed method strategy could also be appropriate. This is because when considering pragmatic orientations the idea is to use whichever research type might be suitable to understanding the problem at hand [14], hence the mixed method strategy. Following on from this, using Creswell's [14] definition of Exploratory Sequential Mixed Method Strategy the research strategy was developed to test and elaborate on the proposals. The Exploratory Sequential Mixed Method Strategy is particularly applicable as this approach begins with a qualitative phase and the information which emerges is then used to develop a second phase [14]. A combined strategy / mixed methods approach was therefore adopted starting with the inductive qualitative phase. This is then followed by a second phase employing the most suitable research strategy. This is chosen depending on the nature of the proposals / outcomes of the inductive phase.

3 METHODOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

The principle of mixed methods is also adopted at the data collection level. The idea is that choosing methods which work is more important than the ´purity' of the approach. In this sense researchers should *"pick and mix methods depending on the phenomenon to be studied."* [18]

3.1 Selecting the Methods according to the Objectives

The first objective, to identify design principles or themes relevant and specific to the design of urban open spaces in Malta and their potential to contribute to sustainable development was achieved by

carrying out physical surveys of a sample of existing urban open spaces. This made it possible to really grasp what the situation in Malta is. This may be seen as across-case research and thus may be considered as quantitative data [15]. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with local councils provide further insight into some of the themes which could not be investigated on site. Additionally, an online survey was carried out to gather data on the user perspective.

The second objective, to understand urban open space design policies and identify gaps, was achieved by carrying out a policy review of national strategies, policies and spatial planning documents and guidelines. Additionally, three case studies of recently designed and implemented urban open spaces, where chosen and studied in detail. Here, the focus is on qualitative data. This is seen as suitable, as it allowed the linking of the micro-level (the design of urban open spaces) to the macro level (the planning of urban open spaces) [15]. It also made it possible to understand how spatial planning policy is failing to support the design of urban open spaces with the potential to contribute to sustainable development.

Once the initial data set was collected, the results were analysed and a further literature review was carried out focusing on the themes which emerged particularly relating to planning and governance issues. Comparing the data in hand with the literature reviewed, proposals were developed for the planning and governance of urban open spaces in Malta. The third objective was thus achieved that is to develop an urban open space policy framework for Malta.

Finally, focus groups were selected as a means of completing the third objective (understanding the process for its development) and undertaking the fourth objective. That is to identify barriers/implications for its implementation.

3.2 Theoretical Underpinning

Sustainable development implies two main principles. The first, it is concerned with both present and future generations. The second, it assumes a holistic approach to economic, social and environmental factors. While both principles can be seen as ´Motherhood and Apple Pie´ objectives, the real concern is how we put this into practice and also the balance which is created between each pillar. This research therefore deals with the operationalization of ´Sustainability´ in the context of designing and planning urban open spaces. The framework adopted is based on, the Brundtland report´s [19] three dimensions of sustainable development that should be considered in an integrated way: society, environment and economy.

There are various discussions defining how urban open spaces should be designed [20][21][22][23][24]. Some focus in particular on the design of urban open space in relation to achieving sustainable development [25][26][27]. The ASPIS project [28] for example proposes a list of sustainability criteria under nine themes for auditing the sustainability of public spaces. These are: Variety of users; Security/Safety; Maintenance; Accessibility; Organic relationship of the open space to the city; Design and Functionality; Environmental Sustainability; Governance of public open spaces; and Carrying Capacity. Another project, UrbSpace [8] identified the design principles required in relation to the quality and attractiveness of urban open spaces according to three main categories: Environmental and Ecological Functions; Social and Societal Functions; and Structural and Symbolic Functions. Through these and other literature reviewed, a number of design principles were identified through which urban open spaces can add social, environmental and economic value and hence contribute towards sustainable development. They have been grouped into twelve main categories and sub-categories as listed in Figure 3.

Design Categories	Sub-categories
Spatial & Structuring Qualities	open space as structuring element, connectivity
Contextual Relationships	physical, functional, socio-cultural
Character & Form	typology, visual interest, spatial proportion & enclosure, responding to site & identity
Activities & Functionality	recreational facilities & functionality, user preferences, diversity, multi-functionality & flexibility, supplementary equipment
Accessibility	vicinity & availability, legibility, movement
Climatic Response	responding to seasonality, micro-climatic comfort
Water Management & Use	surface water drainage, ground coverage & storage areas, use of water
Use of Vegetation	presence, location, form & type
Lighting	N/A
Resources Management	locally sourced & recyclability, durability
Maintenance & Management	N/A
Community Involvement	N/A

Figure 3: Overview of Design Categories

3.3 Description of Methods

3.3.1 The Physical Survey

For each sub-category listed in section 3.2, the most critical design principles were identified based on frequent citations in the literature. Questions were then developed to represent each principle. For most, a likert scale was developed. In some cases the question required a descriptive answer. For all questions a reason for the scoring was also included.

Two areas within the urban conurbation were chosen. The existing open spaces were mapped out and classified (Figure 4) as follows: Gardens / Parks; Children´s Playgrounds; Civic Squares / Pjazzas; Coastal Promenades; Natural / Semi-natural Areas; Main Streets; Surface Car Parks; Amenity Green Space / Urban Green Space connected to Grey Infrastructure (UGSGI); and Water bodies. Forty two spaces representing 45% of each typology were analysed. The data was analysed thematically and statistically. Where possible the descriptive data was categorised to allow for statistical analysis. The spaces were thus analysed according to the design categories and principles identified so as to understand their contribution to sustainable development. For each design theme the main statistics were gathered and the relationship between these findings and the typology of open space was tested.
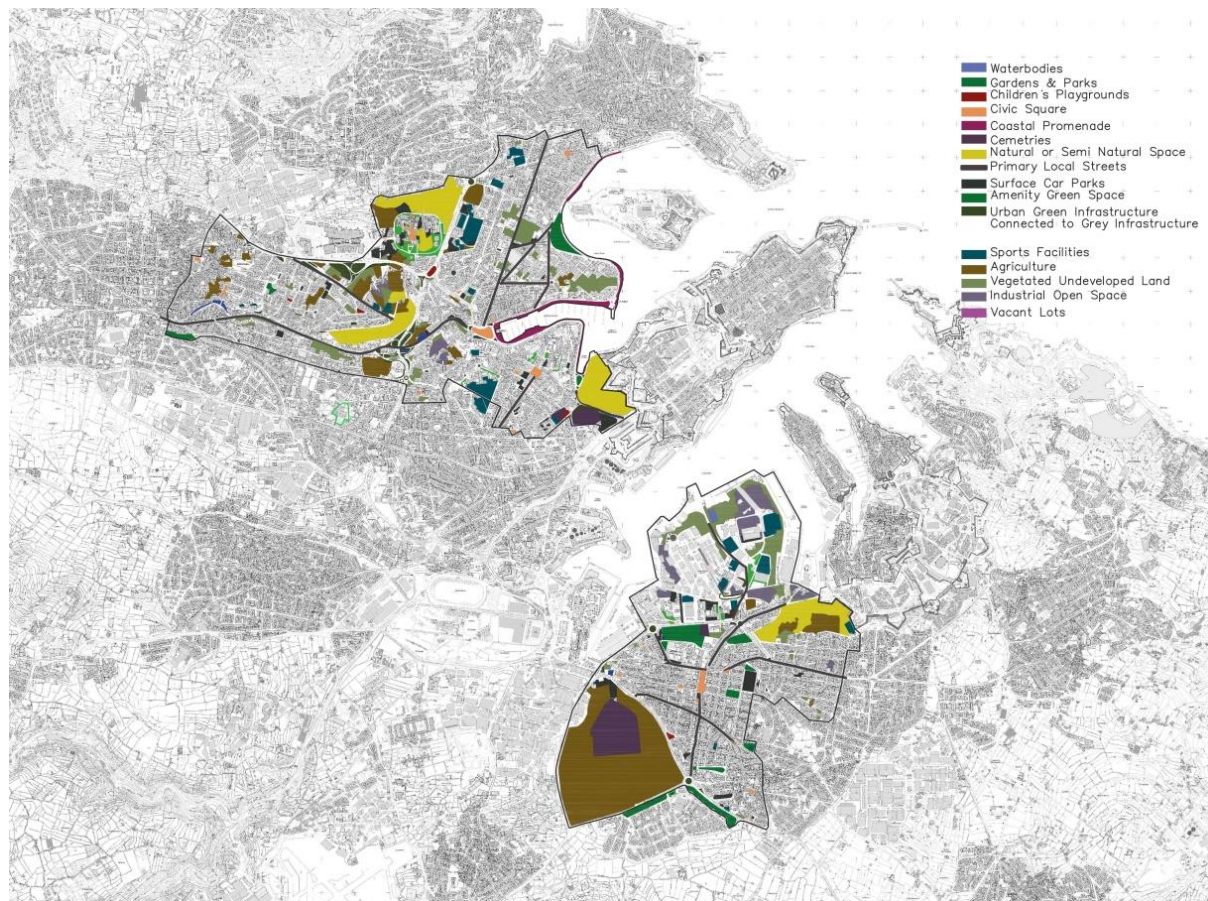
Figure 4: The two areas selected for analysis with the classification of open spaces (Source: Author)

3.3.2 The Local Council Interviews

With respect to the last four categories, the information which could be gathered through surveying the spaces was quite limited. Interviews with local councils were therefore carried out at a later stage to fill in these gaps. The interviews were semi-structured. A number of questions were developed to guide the discussions. The interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically using coding with NVIVO. This provided data relating to: social context and use; water management and use; maintenance and management; community involvement; experience with the planning process; and difficulties when embarking on projects in public spaces.

3.3.3 The Social Survey

A survey was also carried out to understand the user perspective with regard to themes which could not be judged using the onsite survey. These are: availability and use of recreational open spaces; character and identity; and functionality. The survey was distributed online via social media platforms and email networks. In total 127 responses were collected and analysed statistically.

3.3.4 Project Case Study Reviews

To understand the planning process and policies used when designing and reviewing projects for open spaces in urban areas, three case study projects were studied in depth. The cases consisted of: a civic square in Paola, a waterfront regeneration of an industrial dock in Bormla; and a public garden in Pembroke. The data collection consisted of a review of the planning case files and semi-structured

interviews with the architect, client and planning officers. A database for each case was compiled containing an overview of each case, planning documentation and the transcripts for each interview.

A number of questions were developed and the data gathered from the interviews and documentation per case study was summarised in relation to these. This was done using coding and the questions were the basis for each coding them. The coding was organised as follows: project objectives; design principles at concept stage; policies consulted during the design process; policies consulted during the planning review; stakeholders input during the design process; stakeholders input during the planning review; reference to design principles during design process; reference to design principles during planning process; governance issues; and planning process issues. The questions for each were then compared and the findings summarised. The final date set covers: the design themes during the design process; stakeholder participation during the design process; observations regarding the planning process; stakeholder involvement during the planning process; the design themes during the planning process; governance and funding; maintenance and management.

3.3.5 The Policy Review

In order to really understand whether there is a gap in relation to policy for urban open spaces and review of existing national strategies and policies was necessary. This was carried out in the form of a literature review. Each document was reviewed to understand whether the various design principles were represented in national strategies and policies.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Integrating and Consolidating Results to Provide a Strong Evidence Base

The data from the different methods was compared and consolidated to provide an integrated data set responding to the initial objectives set. The findings relate to three main categories. The first being the design principles identified through the theory. The results identify how these principles feature in the design of urban open spaces in Malta and how/if they are addressed when reviewing projects during the planning process. The principles or themes specific to the Maltese context and which policy makers should be focusing on were therefore identified.

An open approach was maintained for the case study and local council interviews, such that any additional issues not directly related to the design principles, but also the process, may be identified. As a result the two other categories emerged these being: Gaps in the Planning Process and Governance Issues. In this way, the results provide a strong evidence base leading to the identification of the design principles specific to the Maltese context, gaps in planning policy and process and governance issues.

4.2 Overview of Key Findings

As previously stated urban open spaces have the potential to tackle urban challenges and contribute to sustainable development if they function as green infrastructure. The literature review identified that this could be done be adopting an urban green infrastructure (UGI) planning approach [9]. This is a "strategic planning approach that aims to develop networks of green and blue spaces in urban areas, designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and other benefits at all spatial scales." [9]. The approach is based on four principles:

- Green-grey integration – combing green and grey infrastructures
- Connectivity – creating green space networks
- Multifunctionality – delivering and enhancing multiple functions and services
- Social inclusion – collaborative and participatory planning

The research results have identified the design principles specific to the Maltese context and clear similarities exist between these and the UGI planning principles. Figure 5 provides an overview of the key findings in relation to the principles. Organising the results according to this framework clearly illustrates that urban open spaces in Malta are not acting as green infrastructure (GI). The need to explore and develop proposals for urban open spaces to act as GI was therefore identified.

UGI Principle	Research Category	Key Findings
Grey - Green Integration	Use of Vegetation	Lack of feedback on vegetation use i.r.t. benefits during planning review Potential to improve awareness/design approach i.r.t. vegetation use for potential benefits Lack of knowledge on how to design and manage green space Lack of vegetation in open spaces
Grey - Green Integration	Water Management	Lack of storm water management / SUDS in open spaces Lack of irrigation systems & use of reservoirs Lack / inconsistency of requests for reservoirs during planning review No guidelines/standards/policies for appropriate sizes / capacity reservoir, storm water management or provision of irrigation systems Lack of awareness/expertise during planning review & not clear who is responsible for reviewing
Connectivity	Accessibility	Poor quality pedestrian infrastructure / circulation paths (widths, seating, vegetation provision) Potential to improve entrance locations i.r.t. circulation paths & connecting to surroundings In newer projects "Access for All" was an important focus but many existing spaces are lacking Lack of cyclist provision & scope to improve public transport access in the evenings Lack of traffic management measures to reduce vehicular impact and dominance on open spaces Planning review focuses on vehicular access/parking provision - not restricting vehicular access. Providing good pedestrian access not given importance. "Access for All" - important focus Potential to improve the use of materials in street design to improve traffic calming & aesthetics
Connectivity	Spatial & Structuring	Lack of network of open spaces and green infrastructure system Lack of spaces which provide spatial structure / sense of orientation Spaces not designed as places to walk through Lack of planning review discussion i.r.t. connectivity of vegetation, biodiversity/habitat creation
Connectivity	Contextual Relationships	Design of physical boundaries needs attention - softer edges and transitions Lack of good relationships between buildings and open spaces due to vehicular carriageways
Multifunctionality	Contextual Relationships	Planning review discussions did not focus on use of space i.r.t. functional context
Multifunctionality	Character & Form	Lack of different characters e.g. being in touch with nature, quite refuge areas, green space Lack of guidance on the creation of green spaces – inconsistency in interpretation of policies Provision of uses/activities or character is not guided by wider/holistic planning objectives
Multifunctionality	Activities & Functionality	Potential for more varied activities & to bring different activities /demographics together Potential to improve flexibility/adaptability of playgrounds, natural/semi-natural areas & street Planning review of use value (user needs, multi-functionality, adaptability, supplementary equipment, use and allocation of space, seating, provision of facilities) is non-existent
Multifunctionality	Accessibility	Lack of larger spaces > 3000 sqm / lack of access to open spaces in urban areas Planning review: No consideration for how proposal is important for locality / at which scale
Multifunctionality	Climatic Response	Lack of attention given to climatic comfort during design process and planning review
Multifunctionality	Water Management	Potential to increase the use of water as a recreational or natural feature No discussions on the suitability of proposed water features during the review process
Multifunctionality	Use of Vegetation	Potential to improve the design approach / knowledge for providing ´green space´ Potential to improve vegetation use for benefits e.g. shading, safety, noise/pollution mitigation Planning review discussions didn't go into vegetation design. Provision of vegetation was seen as sufficient. Requests limited to species type. Not clear who is responsible for reviewing design. Requirements for maintenance of vegetation varied from project to project
Social Inclusion	Contextual Relationships	Lack of attention given to socio-cultural context during design process and planning review Demand exists for open spaces in urban areas - society & local councils actively seek & use them
Social Inclusion	Activities & Functionality	Potential to target specific user groups through the activities and functionality provided Potential to mix compatible user groups through the activities provided
Social Inclusion	Public Participation	Public consultation during planning process is limited & community participation is non-existent Potential to encourage/facilitate stakeholder/community participation during design process
Social Inclusion	Community Involvement	Lack of voluntary community schemes

Figure 5: Overview of Key Findings according to UGI Principles

The principles, however, need to be understood as part of a holistic approach adapted to suit the local context. Besides the four principles, the success of the UGI planning approach is therefore also dependent on the planning process together with the engagement of stakeholders and implementation. The governance aspect is therefore also a crucial part of the equation [9]. The results of the research concerning planning aspects and governance issues are therefore also an important

contribution in informing such an approach. An overview of these key findings is presented in Figure 6.

UGI Principle	Research Category	Key Findings
Governance	Central / Regional Authorities	Lack of governance structure to support local governance and grass route initiatives Lack of clarity regarding the role and authority of Ambjent Malta No entity or process at national level to manage and facilitate the transformation of public areas Scope to provide a national or regional platform to assist the transformation of urban open spaces and implementation of green infrastructure
	Local Councils	Lack of resources & expertise at Local Council level especially i.r.t. use of vegetation, water management and ability to act on local plans It would be inefficient to provided certain expertise and staff availability at local council level due to small economies of scale Lack of schemes which would allow them to act on initiatives / project for open spaces Potential for development of best practice guidance to assist local councils in the design of open spaces Local plan polices do not address communities needs Local councils sometimes do not know how to engage with the planning authority
	Stakeholder / Utilities	Difficulties are often encountered when consulting with and working with utility companies
	Funding	Locality funding is insufficient to carry out maintenance and projects for open space - there is the need to tap into National or EU funding. Additional funds required to ensure appropriate management & maintenance levels - scope to explore community involvement
	Maintenance & Management	General lack of maintenance & cleanliness Better system needed to source contractors for small jobs
Planning	General Policies	Lack of plans & policies guiding the design / transformation of urban open spaces Existing policies tend to be strategic or generic and no guidelines exist on how to apply them Lacuna and vagueness of guidelines / policies does not facilitate / encourage projects for open spaces - lacuna not necessarily to be addressed by policy but rather guidelines, awareness / knowledge building or building standards Inconsistency in planning approach when reviewing open spaces
	Character & Form	Where policies are specific to an open space in local plans there is still variation in interpretation
	Water Management	Lack of awareness from case officers on how to apply existing policies e.g. DC2015 & SPED
	Resource Management	Lack of awareness from case officers on how to apply existing policies relating to provision of energy efficient proposals
	Spatial & Structuring	Lack of strategic planning of urban open spaces to provide spatial structure / GI system / network of open spaces Lack of awareness from case officers on how to apply existing policies in SPED relating to provision of green / biodiversity corridors
	Process	Planning process lacks a proactive approach to the planning of open spaces Planning process lacks a creative process Planning process lacks the opportunity for design discussions with the architect Planning board provides adhoc last minute feedback The role of the strategy groups is not clear Environment Resources Authority involvement as part of the reviewing process is not clear Lack of clarity on who is reviewing water and energy aspects and which guidelines are being adhered to

Figure 6: Overview of Key Findings i.r.t. Planning and Governance

4.3 Overview of Initial Key Proposals

Finally, it is suggested that adopting an urban green infrastructure planning approach could provide a framework for consolidating the results and developing proposals. A set of initial key proposals were therefore developed in response to this framework as the first step to achieving the third objective of the research. That is to develop proposals for an urban open space policy framework in Malta including understanding the process for its development. Figure 7Figure 8 & 9 provide an overview of these proposals.

Typology of Space	Proposals / Design Categories Concerned	UGI Principle
Network	Identify network of open spaces Identify sustainable water drainage network & connection to storm water management network Improve pedestrian crossing points between spaces Create a hierarchy of typology of spaces (sizes, characters and functionality) Create a legible network Create a walking / jogging route to promote active lifestyles	grey-green integration; connectivity; multi-functionality
Local Parks / Gardens	Identify the potential for larger open spaces > 5,000 sqm	multi-functionality
Small Spaces Playgrounds Civic Squares	Link open spaces to buildings or other open spaces Explore potential for small open spaces / green areas to flood during storms Maximise use of vegetation Link compatible activities and users Add informal recreation linked to natural environments Create open spaces with more natural character Create more adaptable / flexible spaces Introduce more varied activities / new uses based on social survey Identify which spaces should have public transport access in the evenings Introduce water as a recreational or natural feature	grey-green integration; connectivity; multi-functionality; social inclusion
Streets	Introduce trees, vegetation and seating according to street typologies Introduce rain gardens, permeable paving & swales Introduce reservoirs under open spaces, government buildings & parking Connect water run off to reservoirs Widen footpaths Introduce peripheral parking and remove on-street parking Create tree canopies with creepers in narrow streets Green connections between open spaces / promote connectivity of habitats Pedestrian friendly streets / shared spaces Create a walking / running trail through urban neighbourhoods Introduce permeable paving / gratings for existing trees instead of concrete Narrow carriageways on over dimensioned streets to create space Create a movement hierarchy to promote sustainable mobility Identify and reduce speed limits through street alignments Change carriageway materials around open spaces & to identify walking trail	grey-green integration; connectivity; multi-functionality;
Surface Car Parks	Remove surface parking and introduce underground parking to create green open spaces	grey-green integration; multi-functionality;

*(Row group label: **Spatial Implications**)*

Figure 7: Overview of Key Proposals i.r.t. Spatial Implications

	Typology of Action	Proposals / Design Categories Concerned	UGI Principle
Governance	**Knowledge Building / Expertise**	Develop training sessions covering: qualities of different types of ´green space´ / open spaces; vegetation management; pedestrian design & movement hierarchies; vegetation connectivity; designing for climatic comfort; and successful and quality urban open spaces. Also, more specialised sessions aimed at developing expertise on SUDS, construction and maintenance of wells, and sustainable water features.	grey-green integration; connectivity; multi-functionality
	Pilot Projects	Pilot projects could be used as a means to address resistance to change and to illustrate the success and benefits. Aspects to test include: integration of vegetation in grey infrastructure / streets; use of SUDS; community involvement in the design, development and then upkeep and maintenance of urban open spaces; new materials for traffic calming / permeable paving; natural water features which mitigate the presence of mosquitos; centralised parking strategies aimed at and removing on street parking; the inclusion of renewable energy sources in public spaces.	All
	Funding Schemes	Spatial plans and policies need to be accompanied by implementation programs providing funds and assistance for local councils to tap into. In particular funding schemes should be set up to improve: "Access for All"; cyclist provision; traffic management to reduce vehicular impact; spatial audits at locality level; restore, maintain & use existing wells; use of SUDS; and waste separation facilities.	grey-green integration; connectivity; multi-functionality
	National Platform / Entity	Set up a mechanism for the implementation of GI / open space networks identified through the spatial planning process especially at regional level across local council boundaries. This needs to integrate the actions of all authorities which should be involved in the transformation of open spaces. Create a national platform / entity to drive this. Role would be to: assist in the transformation of urban open spaces; have direct access to central government; provide expertise to local councils / act as a one stop shop; facilitate discussions between stakeholders & authorities / entities; develop and run funding schemes; develop and run training sessions; work together with relevant entities to develop guidelines / standards.	All
	Maintenance	Identify maintenance funds at project inception / design stage Explore potential for maintenance through community voluntary schemes Explore potential to organise contracts for certain maintenance at regional level due to economies of scale and lack of expertise	grey-green integration; social inclusion
	Community & Stakeholder Involvement	Develop a program / framework to assist local councils / authorities in stakeholder participation when designing open spaces Explore the potential for social media platforms Explore potential for transferring responsibilities and power to grass roots initiatives for management and maintenance of urban open spaces Develop participatory budgets / community planning – allocation of funds	social inclusion

Figure 8: Overview of Key Proposals i.r.t. Governance

Typology of Action		Proposals / Design Categories Concerned	UGI Principle
Planning	Guidance & Policy	The data has identified which design principles need attention in Malta. The detailed proposals determine which areas require guidance and which require more specific policy.	All
	Building Regulations / Standards	Some of the design principles can also be targeted through standards / regulations. These could include: minimum vegetation requirements; provision of storm water management & reservoirs; minimum permeable surfaces; type of surface materials; pedestrian infrastructure requirements (footpath widths, materials to avoid slip, trip hazards etc.) ; and lighting requirements i.r.t. energy efficiency.	grey-green integration; connectivity;
	Permit Application Process	Clarify authorities responsible for reviewing: vegetation design; water & waste management and energy efficiency Formalise opportunity for discussions relating to design objectives / concepts Specific team responsible for reviewing of public urban open space projects Develop a more interactive process for public participation feedback Establish a clearer framework for which entities / stakeholders should be contacted in relation to which aspects specifically for open spaces	All
	Spatial Planning	Carry out spatial audits of open spaces at locality level Develop a structured integrated approach for the planning of GI / open space spatial plans which includes various authorities and stakeholders Develop a GI strategic plan at a national level setting out a vision, priorities, strategies and objectives for the different aspects of GI at a regional level Develop a spatial plan for a network of urban open spaces which adopts an urban green infrastructure planning approach potentially at the scale of the Primary Urban Area with the setting out of actions at a locality level in relation to objectives determined at the national / regional scale	All

Figure 9: Overview of Key Proposals i.r.t. Planning

5 CONCLUSION

As urban challenges increase, the need to work towards sustainable development and mitigate and adapt to climate change is a priority. The potential role which urban open spaces can play in doing this is evident. This research illustrates that Malta needs to step up its game. The mixed method approach provides a strong evidence base as a means to understanding what the real issues are. This is an important first step for the development of solutions and proposals needed to address the situation.

A comparison of the results with literature on the planning of urban open spaces suggests that adopting a UGI planning approach could provide a framework for focusing the results and developing the proposals. The methodology has therefore also allowed the development of an urban open space policy framework which would facilitate the potential for urban open spaces to act as urban green infrastructure. Finally, the last step of the methodology will explore the potential barriers to implementation using focus groups.

6 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ETHICS IN AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT OF PARTICIPANT DISTRUST AND SOCIALLY DESIRABLE RESPONSE PATTERNS

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Abstract

In this presentation we reflect on some of the ethical challenges encountered while conducting ethnographic fieldwork on the subject of (perceived) "fracture lines" in multicultural society in Flanders/Belgium, among the "Muslim" population in two former mining cities in Flemish Limburg.

The increasingly stern and "bureaucratic" scheme of ethical approval processes within academic instances has raised concerns in many fieldworkers. Social and behavioral scientists in particular have struggled with the question of consent forms, which remains both delicate and difficult to pursue, as it often inhibits the spontaneity of interactions that is so essential to fieldwork, and can even possibly jeopardise collaborations with people who do not want to disclose their personal information on paper under any circumstances.

The key issue examined in this paper is the difficulty of pursuing data-quality on a politicised/sensitive research topic and/or among participants generally considered difficult to reach: how do we obtain sincere, honest fieldwork impressions and testimonies in a context of considerable distrust and perceived social desirability? What is good ethical practice here, and which foundations and/or procedures allow us to truly ensure it?

Keywords: Reflexivity, Ethical practice, Ethnographic Fieldwork, Participant Distrust, Social Desirability.

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper reflects on the methodological process of an ethnographic research on a subject considered rather sensitive and politicised, and the resulting practical and ethical challenges. The ethnographic fieldwork covered a total time period of 27 months and focused on (perceived) "fracture lines" in multicultural society in Flanders/Belgium among the "Muslim" population in two former mining cities with a rich migration history and culturally diverse demography in Flemish Limburg. The fieldwork specifically dealt with the question of religion in society, which in the context of the multicultural debate has been referred to as "the question of Islam", or "the Muslim Question" ([1], [2]). The target population consisted of individual members and organisations within the local Muslim communities. This reflection offers an overview of what novice researchers might expect in terms of fieldwork challenges in such circumstances. The two sources of fieldwork challenge that I discuss appear to be inherent to ethnographic fieldwork, regardless of the context. In my study, these challenges were exacerbated by the target group and research subject. In this reflection, I also point out the ambiguities in ethical procedures and practices that I experienced.

2 PARTICIPANT DEPENDENCY

The first main source of fieldwork challenge that I experienced simply comes down to the fact that as a researcher, you are dependent on your participants. Without their (sufficient) cooperation, no research is possible, or it is at least very difficult to trust in the credibility and reliability of your research, while you receive substantial financial and other structural means as a PhD candidate in order to fulfil your research. This challenge is inherent to empirical research in the humanities at large, but it is experienced more intensively in an ethnographic study.

2.1 Participant reachability

A first concrete aspect of this dependency is participant reachability. During the phase of entering the fieldwork, it rapidly becomes clear that people usually do not need or expect research. Some people also struggle with fathoming what research consists of and what its implications are, no matter how repeatedly and simply you try to explain this. Within my target group, I was often confronted with a low educational level, but besides that research simply is quite remote from people's daily world, just like there are plenty of professional domains that remain far from my line of work. For the persons you engage with, this means that they are asked to make time and to devote themselves to something that remains abstract and unclear to them. On top of that, there is a certain degree of distrust at play, also after complete explanation of the research procedure and objectives. This was particularly the case in this study, although gatekeepers and potential participants often reacted positively to the research initiative, for instance by indicating that they regretted the lack of interest in the world and religious perception of the target group at the level of society at large. Significant obstacles were: the fact that gatekeepers often indicate they have to ask permission from the figures responsible in an association and that in some cases it takes months to receive an answer, even with repeated requests and using several contacts; the fact that most associations do not have a web or Facebook page that is up-to-date or that provides an effective overview or clear information about the persons responsible and how they may be contacted; the fact that the persons indicated as the responsible contact points, often state they are not responsible for giving permission for participatory observation and refer the researcher to a different contact; the fact that these associations work in a spontaneous, ad hoc manner and do not meet at fixed times, which also complicates personal contact; the fact that when an attempt is made to make contact and participate in activities in the absence of any answer from gatekeepers and responsible figures, participants claim that permission is needed; the fact that when an appointment can be made for a (informal) discussion, gatekeepers and potential informants request the researcher's topics of discussion and questions be sent in advance by e-mail and be made specific, which forms a significant obstacle for making spontaneous and open contact; participants from different associations have also repeatedly indicated they are suspicious about me and think – at worst – that I am a "spy" from the Belgian government, or – at best – an undercover journalist. I also had expectations at the beginning in terms of reachability that did not match the reality of the field, like participation to activities with men in a context wherein interactions between men and women are substantially limited and regulated, even among Belgian men of young or middle age of the second and third generation. The only way to somewhat address these thresholds, was to keep making contact attempts, not in an intrusive but in a repeated fashion, via as many different channels as possible. The patience and familiarisation resulting from fieldwork, whereby potential participants see you regularly and get to know you from a distance, play a significant role. It gives them the possibility to form a certain perception of you. People also talk with each other and therefore know who you are, even if they do not make this apparent to you. Successful attempts were often obtained informally. For instance: I had repeatedly attempted to reach several contact persons within an association and asked them to participate to the women's activities. Approximately a year later, I coincidentally made contact with a women who was a "member" of the association in question, during a monthly women's breakfast of another religious association. This woman showed much enthusiasm and interest in me

and immediately put me in contact with one of the persons responsible for the women's activities of the association.

2.2 Social desirability

A second concrete aspect of this dependency, is social desirability. It was genuinely striking to me to find out how much this is at play even in one on one conversations, both in the participant and in myself, regardless of the social position, age, and so on. To make known what you think, whether it concerns a sensitive or intimate subject or not, instantly triggers a fear of rejection of your individuality and of your own insights. The verbal and non-verbal reactions of the person in front of you have a tremendous influence on you. In my view, even an experienced researcher cannot possibly be immune to this: I cannot imagine that the pressure to fulfil research objectives and participant dependency have no influence whatsoever on your self-confidence and thus on your interactions with people. Sometimes I did not dare to ask in depth questions, to go through with questions I had, out of fear to "lose" the participant. On top of this, various additional factors are at play, such as: the fact that people explicitly make time for you when doing an in-depth interview – contrarily to observations – and that you do not want to waste their time by asking "bad" questions; your inexperience as a novice fieldworker; your mood on a given day; your (dis)comfort towards the personality of a participant… This does not mean that a conversation or interaction does not go smoothly on the whole. But this is something to be aware of and that cannot be underestimated.

Moreover, the sensitivity of the conversation themes was undeniably an important factor in this study. Informal conversations and non-verbal reactions often indicated that participants had a few specific impressions regarding the topics of discussion. But many participants did not explicit these during interviews. They rather adopted a more self-conscious, cautious posture. The link between the actual questions and the answers they gave remained vague and indeterminate, seemingly in an attempt to postpone or avoid sharing their genuine convictions or experiences. Participants who were asked to share insights and information on the basis their professional position, due to which they had much knowledge and experience on the research themes, sometimes rather tried to avoid speaking from their own position and experience as much as possible, or used euphemistic language when raising a problem. This social desirability among participants was also perceptible during observation moments. In some of the participating persons or representatives of associations, the combination of verbal and non-verbal interaction indicated an intentional, well-aware social desirability. For instance: an association to which I wanted to give a voice – as a civil society actor in their own community – by conducting an in-depth interview, eventually agreed, but the board member who would conduct the conversation with me would speak in a personal capacity and not in the name of the association; conditions were set to communicate delineated questions on paper beforehand – which is very antagonistic to the nature of an in-depth interview – and to limit the conversation to maximally one hour; the participant arrived late and indicated that the conversation would have to be shortened in order to follow the initially agreed time frame, due to time constraint, although after closing the conversation there no longer appeared to be concerns regarding time constraint, which allowed for a substantial informal interaction; answers did not relate to the actual questions; in some answers, there were noticeable inaccuracies or omissions; participants sometimes abstained themselves from answering or even reacting to questions without indicating a reason.

Ethnographic fieldwork is considered an effective approach to neutralise this social desirability, and this is largely the case. I obtained the most genuine data when people felt *safe*. This could be due to the mere environment in which the interaction took place (in one's "own territory", in one's own familiar group where you, as a researcher, are in a "minority position"). It could result from pursuing long and detailed conversations whereby much valuable information is obtained from questions that participants do not directly associate with the research theme… In all cases, the creating of a safe environment would have been impossible without the certain degree of familiarity resulting from fieldwork. Due to the lasting presence of the participant observer as such and to the investment in the

relationship with participants, a certain banality sets in and you eventually start to more or less belong to the world of people in the field. Kindness also played a crucial role in my perception: genuinely trying to convey empathy, sincere interest and gentleness in the interaction. It is actually a literal fieldwork objective.

2.3 Boundlessness

A third concrete aspect of this dependency is the boundlessness in the interaction with participants. Put simply, this means that you cannot really distance yourself from your participants, at least not to the degree you would in other (professional) circumstances. This is inherent to the empathy objective of participant observation, but it was enhanced in my fieldwork context due to the reachability and social desirability challenges. Therefore, I really did not want to put people off in any way. For me, the considerable absence of boundaries was the most difficult challenge to deal with, both personally and methodologically. As a result, fieldwork is not always enjoyable, sometimes far from it. For instance: participation to cult-like practices, to group conversations where hate towards certain population groups is expressed, very derogatory gazes from men in some situations or locations… Such interactions were truly emotionally difficult, due to the following reasons: a quite literal feeling of insecurity; the fact that practices that can be described as self-destructive truly frighten me, especially because in these situations, everyone around you engages in these practices and that you are the only person who does not want to go along with it (on the inside); the considerable social pressure resulting from what, in Dutch, is called "the power of the number", which approximately translates as "power-of-the-group-dynamics" in these situations, and which could lead to a more or less vehement proselytising pressure towards me; the pain and fear resulting from the feeling of wrongdoing when I experienced rejection, for instance in the case of hate towards certain groups of people. You have to remain constantly calm and kind in these circumstances, while you "shiver on the inside" and struggle to remain focused.

In the light of these considerations, this boundlessness has four potential consequences: first, an over-identification with your participants and their perspective, whereby you can no longer maintain sufficient emotional and observational neutrality. I find that this pitfall is and remains very preponderant, because as a fieldworker you are indeed expected to adopt an empathic attitude, and because as a researcher in the current era, you are more fearful than ever before to misrepresent your participants (see 3.3). A second potential consequence is the opposite of this over-identification tendency, namely a possible resentment for your participants, especially in difficult fieldwork circumstances. A third potential – in my understanding quite unavoidable – consequence is the exhaustion resulting from investing yourself in the relationship with your participants. You try to give a lot of genuine attention to people, which means: constantly taking others into account which unavoidably leads to a degree of self-effacement. A fourth potential consequence is that participants may forget that you have a professional relationship with them, and not an intimate relationship. This is very understandable in the light of the previously described blurriness, and it unavoidably leads to misunderstandings. Some participants strongly reproached me that I interacted with other members of their community, albeit for personal, political or other ideological reasons. In a way, they felt betrayed. This confusion increases due to the fact that as a fieldworker, you sometimes place yourself in a vulnerable position by sharing information about yourself, experiences or impressions that you would not share in other circumstances. When participants choose to collaborate to your research, this does not automatically imply that they will share experiences or answer questions that feel as "exposing" oneself. For me, however, such information is highly valuable as it allows me to better understand their manner of reasoning and acting. I find it difficult to deal with this as correctly as possible. My current insight is that as a researcher, you can only do your best to sense where pursuing such information is possible and even beneficial, and where it is not. As a consequence, I have sometimes also "exposed" myself in order to neutralise the perceived power balance in the relationship with a participant.

3 RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RESEARCH OUTCOMES

The second main source of fieldwork challenge encompasses what I perceive as the specific "ethical" dimension of research, which is inseparable from the fact that you are dependent on your participants. Even when you do not feel affinity or sympathy for someone, you nevertheless remain thankful for their cooperation, which contributed to your research outcome. Therefore, you want to treat your participants and the information they gave you as respectfully as possible. This is inherent to dealing with people in good faith in a research context. For me, this constitutes a strong enough incentive to deal with participants and data as correctly as possible. But I did experience three sources of confusion and doubt that eventually largely relate to the question of what informed consent does or does not imply, and may or may not be.

3.1 Ambiguities of ethical procedures and practices

Firstly, there is not sufficient generally shared consensus, clarity and transparency in existing ethical procedures on informed consent. In ethnographic research, it is by definition difficult to provide targeted information on the implications of participation, due to the fact that as a researcher, you yourself do not know where the research will lead. On top of that, as a novice fieldworker, you cannot burden your participants with the fact that you are completely seeking, and often doubting. All you can do, is to provide clear information on the current aim of your research objective; on what anonymity concretely means and how it is applied to protect the participant; and on the participant's possibility and right to react to your representation of them. The fact that you have to submit a specific ethical permission request to the competent ethical commission at the start of your research, in which the operationalisation of your informed consent procedure is set out, gives the impression that the ethical procedures are well-logged, which is the case to a certain extent. The Social and Societal Ethics Committee (SMEC) of the KU Leuven thus asks researchers to devise a consent form for potential participants. So this is a requirement. In my request, while providing the requested consent form, I nevertheless emphasised – in following the standard practice in my research unit – that the use of consent forms in the context of this research design would be avoided as much as possible, as they are considered to be an expectation that is delicate and difficult to pursue within the anthropological discipline. The Ethical Code of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), a reference for fieldworkers, states that consent needs to be explicit but that it does not need to be cast in a consent form. The Code acutely acknowledges how much informed consent is or needs to be attuned to the context-specific circumstances encountered in the different fields (see Chapter III Research, Section A, § 4). This concern seems to be shared by fieldworkers across the social and behavioural sciences (see [3]). Some researchers have argued against the use of such instruments (see [4]). Consent forms are seen as a serious undermining for the spontaneity of interactions and thus for the limitation of social desirability, as creating suspicion or even jeopardising collaboration with people who do not want to disclose their personal information on paper under any circumstances. They make interactions more "formal" by definition. In my case, I can only confirm that I would never have obtained the information that I was able to collect if the use of consent forms had been mandatory to my fieldwork.

At the same time, many qualitative researchers seem to adopt an opposite view, and consider the requirement of a signed consent form to be mandatory to carry out ethical research. I was confronted with this observation when I transferred from the anthropological to the sociological unit at my faculty. I was soon asked why I did not work with consent forms. Some of my colleagues reacted concernedly to this: they knew people whose papers had been rejected by journals because they could not provide consent forms. It suddenly seemed like I had been falling short this whole time, ethically speaking, and that this situation was quite worrisome. I realised there seems to be considerable disagreement on this question, depending on which research unit or discipline you belong to, which ethical commission is competent to assess your research and which specific choices it makes (see [5], [6]). While this may seem quite expectable, it also seems to have implications for the acceptance of your work – particularly in a context of increased valuing of interdisciplinary approaches.

3.2 Reality of the field

Secondly, the reality of fieldwork is simply not entirely predictable. Not all risks can be calculated. This is inherent to research, but the concrete impact hereof is greater in ethnographic research. I truly did not know beforehand that the circumstances in which I would interact with people in my target group, would be those I eventually experienced. I think it would be a real added value if these challenges were shared more openly by researchers (see [7]). Not all fieldworkers write reflexive pieces, and the methodological section of dissertations and papers often reads as a more or less flawless outcome of an all-encompassing calculation. Especially for a novice researcher, this creates a perception and expectations based on a description that is not entirely complete and representative. Moreover, I think that the acknowledgement of these challenges helps you to pursue a more truthful description and understanding of your field: if you are aware of the fact that you feel dependent on your participants, if you are aware which consequences this has on your thoughts and behaviour, you can identify and address the relating challenges, and your subjective positioning in the light thereof, in a much more self-aware manner.

3.3 Current academic times and ethics

Thirdly, in the current academic context, I feel a certain contraction in dealing with ethics. In my understanding, this encompasses what some researches have described as an increasingly stern and "bureaucratic" scheme of ethical approval processes within academic instances (see [3], [5], [7], [8]). With respect to ethnographic fieldwork, I trace this cramped perspective to the 1970s – 1980s. In the context of open downfall of Western colonialism, imperialism and scientific objectivism, the publications of Malinowski's diary (see [9]) and the increasing exposure of the "politics of ethnography" ([10]) were hard blows for anthropology. These developments heavily contributed to a serious awareness of the ethical implications of ethnographic fieldwork. This awareness was extensively transmitted during my anthropological education, which I perceived as an added value. But the cogent manner in which this has been pursued, also feels very paralysing to me, so that you end up questioning literally every aspect of your motivations, interactions and insights. The contraction means that this questioning is not the product of a genuine curiosity and desire to become truthful insight and discernment, but of a suspicion and imputation towards yourself. I personally experience this as an untenable and unhealthy position. It has a considerable influence on your self-esteem, which in turn impacts your capacity to react adequately and correctly in a fieldwork context. To me, one of the important sources of anxiety in this regard concerns the question: what if your participants do not approve of your research? Around the start of my PhD, I attended a lecture by Paul Stalker on what anthropology and fieldwork ought to be, which did influence me. As many anthropologists, he emphasised that the fieldworker should consider himself as the messenger who gives – or rather renders – a voice from participants in the field. In this context, we increasingly speak of "giving back", which seems to be considered as a form of fairness. But as a scientist, you are also there to do an analysis. All introductions to the anthropological fieldwork methodology that I read, explain that departing from the emic-dimension of empathy and locality, you aim to acquire an etic-perspective. I personally feel much affinity with this aim, and therefore consider that my primary task is to answer my research questions as truthfully as possible on the basis of my data and of the scientific knowledge that may allow me to fathom it. This task is difficult enough in the light of the limitations inherent to qualitative research whereby the researcher is indeed the main research instrument, in the light of participant dependency, and accountability for research outcomes. The present context of imputation makes this pursuit even more difficult as it increases participant dependency. To me, the equation of on the one hand gratitude towards and respect for the cooperation, and on the other hand loyalty, as if the relation between you and your participants is inherently based on an unfair and unequal power relation as a result of which you are inherently liable to them, is a considerable pitfall (see [11]). I have come to realise that this is not the case. Participants share responsibility for the good collaboration in the fieldwork context. Neither are they immaculate, nor powerless. They have their own motivations and interests which influence the cooperation and which sometimes lead them to consciously or

unconsciously manipulate you. This may range from very much wanting to portray a beautiful image of themselves, to various forms of mild blackmail or intimidation. This is inherent to human behaviour and interaction, and it therefore seems unreal to presume such manifestations would not to be existent in the context of fieldwork collaboration between researcher and participants.

4 CONCLUSION

In the light of this reflection, the question as to what "good ethical practice" is, seems to remain partly open for discussion. In my case, the question of consent forms remains difficult. I do not truly perceive them as a guarantee for more ethical practice, but this perception could very well be misguided. Therefore, I leave the interrogation as to whether or not we should be allowed to have access to certain information entirely open. It is nevertheless quite certain that I would not have come to my current insights if consent forms had been mandatory to my fieldwork. The question as to what "giving back" is, seems to remain open for discussion as well, and I find it challenging in the light of the contemporary academic context. It seems to me that my research – as most research – is not of immediate or obvious use to most of my participants. Therefore, to me, "giving back" does not mean "pleasing" people. It does mean that I pay genuine attention and that I listen to them, out of my professional motivations. As far as I can see, the best way for me to "give back" is to pursue "good" research, in other words, to aspire to handle observations and insights as correctly and truthfully as I can, out of a desire to contribute to the common interest in providing more information and perspective. In my eyes, this is the most respectful return I can pursue.

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COOPÉRATION ONG, RECHERCHES ACADÉMIQUES ET MEDIA ET DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE EN RDC

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Abstract

This contribution reflects on stimulating collaboration between the world of qualitative research and development organizations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It raises the question how the results of social science research can be translated into sustainable development actions as answers to the difficulties of the daily life of the population.e

There is indeed a huge production of qualitative knowledge about Congo, but this knowledge is not mobilized in development programs. And yet, with today, the unprecedented proliferation in the history of the Congo of what is called the "NGOization" of Congolese society, collaboration is necessary. The results of research on the Congo are often processed in international fora, far from the places where knowledge has been produced. Although indigenous researchers are regularly invited to take up positions in international organizations, the fact remains that, locally, collaboration is marginal.

We want to examine the factors that underlie this scarcity of collaboration and how to address it. Exchanges between NGOs and social science research can contribute to positive progress in development. Access to data based on qualitative methods is an "eye-opening" for the consolidation of development programs. Qualitative methods can facilitate the formalization of issues in a more global vision.

Keywords: Congo, local, research, collaboration, NGO, ONG, media

1 INTRODUCTION

En septembre 2000, la revue de l'Institut universitaire d'études sur le développement, les *NOUVEAUX CAHIERS DE L'IUED*, publiait un numéro qui avait comme thème: *Sciences Sociales et Coopération en Afrique, les rendez-vous manqués.* Partant des exemples pratiques, les 15 contributions rassemblées dans la revue étaient unanimes: il y a un manque de collaboration entre les organisations de développement en Afrique sub-saharienne et le secteur des recherches en sociales. La contribution de Mahaman Tidjani Alou engageait une analyse encore plus profonde sur ce sujet (57-67). L'auteur montrait qu'il y avait une immense production du savoir empirique qualitatif sur l'Afrique, mais ce savoir n'était pas mobilisé dans les programmes de développement.

L'argument de Mahaman Tidjani, comme il apparait dans le titre de la revue est une lecture bien applicable au fonctionnement des secteurs de la recherche et des ONG en République démocratique du Congo. Dans ce pays, caractérisé depuis des décennies d'une part par ce qu'il importe d'appeler l'ONGISATION de la société (Giovannoni et alii 2004 : 120) et d'autre part par le foisonnement des institutions où les recherches qualitatives sont faites par des *insiders,* partageant la réalité qu'ils vivent, la collaboration entre les académiciens et les praticiens de terrain est marginale. Et pourtant, les organismes de développement des sociétés dites modernes ont compris que pour la maitrise des questions qu'ils entendent résoudre, la connaissance du contexte culturel est nécessaire. Ils utilisent à cette fin la production scientifique faite par des générations des chercheurs externes au Congo afin de définir leurs objectifs, d'élaborer des programmes et socialiser leurs partenaires congolais aux actions à entreprendre aux problèmes de leur pays. Et même si les mentalités ont changé, dans l'idée qu'il ne peut plus être question d'exporter vers les pays dits pauvres des schémas d'intervention conçus à l'extérieur, l'élaboration des programmes pour le développement du Congo est basée sur les

productions scientifiques de plusieurs générations des chercheurs de l'atlantique du nord. Elles fournissent le savoir sur le Congo dans des fora internationales, loin des lieux où la connaissance a été produite. Et c'est leur avis en tant qu'expert qui est mis en valeur.

Cette contribution a pour but de montrer la nécessité de la collaboration entre ces trois secteurs est utile. La question centrale est comment arriver à une collaboration entre les ONG, le monde académique et les média et construire ensemble un savoir utilisable dans les actions de développement durables, comme réponse aux besoins présents et à venir des populations. Les données pour le faire proviennent de nos lectures, de nos observations, de notre pratique comme consultante et responsable d'ONG, comme ethnographe chez soi, professeure des techniques de recherches sur terrain au département d'Anthropologie de l'Université de Kinshasa, comme transmission aux générations futures du savoir local et chargée des Conférences. Au dire des participants de ces conférences, qui réunissent chaque année les chercheurs, les praticiens représentants des différentes organisations de développement, des professionnels de la santé, de la justice, des médias, des acteurs politiques et surtout des étudiants, il y a beaucoup d'enjeux et des avantages à stimuler le coopération entre les ONG, le monde de la recherche et les médias.

Notre thèse est qu'une telle coopération locale durable peut donner une impulsion au développement, par un regard critique appuyé par des recherches actions, citoyennes comme réappropriation du savoir sur le Congo par les Congolais.

2 CONTEXTE

La DRC Congo est un des pays de la région des Grands Lacs en Afrique centrale. C'est un pays géant. Sa population est estimée à 79 375 136, avec une moyenne de vie qui se situe à 56,93 ans. 60 **%** de la population est constituée de la jeunesse. La situation socio économique de la RdCongo est globalement connue : le paradoxe de la dépendance de l'externe d'un pays potentiellement riche, une histoire caractérisée par les conflits pour son sous - sol, par les conditions de vie précaire de la majorité des Congolais. Elle ne s'est jamais améliorée malgré son sol et son sous-sol riches. Pays souffrant de plusieurs maux dont la corruption, les inégalité des revenus, le mauvais état de l'infrastructure, irrégularité des l'eau et de l'électricité, des services, la mauvaise qualités de l'enseignement qui n'est pas en concordance avec la réalité locale, les salaires payés irrégulièrement par rapport au coût de la vie, la pauvreté, le manque d'emploi, le désœuvrement de la jeunesse, la délinquance, l'emprise croissante des nouveaux mouvements religieux, le déversement sur les marchés des produits tant alimentaire que manufacturé asiatiques, la surcharge des femmes avec des activités du secteurs informels dans une condition féminine déplorable, l'opportunisme, le manque de confiance aux propres initiatives, la précarité de tout et surtout l'attente d'un messie qui se chargera de résoudre toutes les misères.

Mais que recouvrent ces mots? La connaissance qu'on a des termes n'est-elle pas parfois faussée du fait que, dans l'esprit de celui qui l'utilise, elle peut représenter une autre réalité, celle de son propre environnement? Là, dans les pays de l'Atlantique du nord, existe un dispositif privé et public, structuré, mis en place collectivement et de longue date pour lutter contre la pauvreté. Et malgré ses imperfections, même s'il est aussi en déclin et n'a pas réussi à éliminer les problèmes de la population, il a au moins eu le mérite d'en modifier fondamentalement les conditions. Et au delà de ce dispositif, se développait aussi une infrastructure collective qui permet aux pauvres de se nourrir: de se laver, de se déplacer, de trouver un emploi même si c'est de façon marginale. Ainsi les exclus et les chômeurs par exemple peuvent agir sur leurs problèmes. En DRC, la lutte contre la pauvreté repose quasi exclusivement sur une initiative privée, improvisée, dépourvue des moyens les plus élémentaires. Le contexte n'a mis en place aucune infrastructure ni excèdent qui permettrait aux pauvres d'agir sur sa situation. Chacun se débrouille, comme l'exprimait docteur Mukiesse, responsable d'une ONG de formation aux métiers des jeunes filles victimes des violences sexuelles lors d'un entretien en 2017 :

On se débrouille, en acceptant de vendre sa personne pour quelque chose (corruption) ou son corps contre l'argent et d'autres biens (prostitution), on mendie partout, tout le monde mendie, pour tout, on trompe et parfois on ment pour être assisté, on vole, on magouille, les jeunes filles se prostituent à cause de l'incapacité de leurs familles de payer les études, le mode de vie général s'éloigne de la solidarité, nous sommes devenus comme des gens entrain de se noyer, cherchant à se sauver individuellement. La parenté s'affaiblit, la sorcellerie et toutes les sortes de superstitions gagnent du terrain ». C'est dans ce contexte général qu'il importe de placer le foisonnement des organisations non gouvernementales, en abrégé ONG en DRC.

2.1 Les organisations non gouvernementales en DRC

C'est depuis les années nonante que la DRC connait une explosion des organisations non gouvernementales. Il est difficile de déterminer avec précision leur nombre. En 2002, Elikia Mbokolo avançait le chiffre de 1 322 (2002: 10) mais ce chiffre est largement dépassé. Dans la capitale du Congo, Kinshasa, à part les grandes organisations internationales logées dans les quartiers chics de la capitale, dans les quartiers populaires on peut lire sur les façades des petites constructions les différents types d'ONG: il y a des ONG qui exercent dans le domaine de la santé, des ONG de type agricole, du développement du monde rural, qui exercent dans le domaine de la sécurité alimentaire, de l'éducation., la réhabilitation des femmes victimes des violences sexuelles, l'encadrement des enfants de la rue, la promotion sociale et actions éducatives, formation à la génération des revenus, sans compter les multiples associations d'entraide qui n'ont pas encore être érigée en ONG. L'intensification de ce phénomène a coïncidé avec l'arrêt brutal de la coopération bilatérale avec le zaïre de l'époque, conséquence de la rupture définitive du soutien des organisations internationales d'aide au régime de Mobutu. Et pour pouvoir continuer leurs activités au Zaïre et pourvoir les personnes ayant prioritairement et de manière urgente besoin de cette aide, elles ont créé des ONG, avec des responsables locaux. Ce qui a aussi donné lieu à la naissance des fédérations, parfois sous l'initiative des bailleurs, des ONG afin d'harmoniser leurs activités et de défendre leurs intérêts. C'est le cas du CNONGD (Conseil National des ONG de Développement), mandaté pour représenter ses membres auprès des bailleurs et auprès des autorités de Kinshasa, ainsi que des réseaux suivant les domaines d'intervention comme le Raukin (réseau pour l'agriculture urbaine de Kinshasa), Le Foleco (Fédérations des ONG Laïques à but économique), de l'agence allemande de coopération (GTZ) et le ROSAL (Réseau des ONG pour la sécurité alimentaire) de la coopération belge.

Ceci a eu pour effet de renforcer la motivation des Congolais à l'égard de la création de ce type d'organisation. Etant donné qu'avoir une ONG permet de bénéficier des fonds venant de l'étranger. La plupart des ONG au Congo sont créées et gérées par un seul individu dont les tâches primordiales sont la gestion de projets et la collecte des fonds. Ces responsables sont continuellement occupés à élaborer des projets, épousant les desiderata d'un donneur. Avec la multiplication du nombre des donateurs et des domaines provoque une complexification du paysage qui accentue la faiblesse de structures institutionnelles nationales. Il révèle l'affaiblissement de l'état incapable d'assurer des fonctions de coordination et de régulation. Les contextes dans lesquels ces ONG interviennent ainsi que les problématiques sur lesquelles elles travaillent sont souvent complexes, et dans certains cas tellement complexes qu'elles sont vues comme des 'causes délaissées ' par les acteurs économiques ou politiques. C'est face à ces problématiques et au délaissement des responsables locaux, que l'action des ONG, acteurs de terrain, se justifie. Leurs objectifs en général est de résoudre aux demandes spécifiques en matières de développement et les financements disparaissent quand le bailleur a émis des autres priorités. Les ONG sont parfois considérées comme la prolongation de la colonisation. Pareilles infrastructures sont d'autant remarquables que leurs conditions d'existence les rendent précaires. Certaines actions ont pu atteindre leurs objectifs, tout en cherchant continuellement d'autres moyens d'action. Quelques-unes stagnent. Une grande partie n'a pu émerger probablement par manque d'une technique appropriée de travail au mieux, soit à cause de l'insuffisance de moyens matériels et financiers soit à cause de l'isolement. Les Congolais en parlent comme s'il s'agissait d'une forme nouvelle d'organisation sociale. Elles sont aussi perçues comme une nouvelle forme de

dépendance culturelle et matérielle à l'égard de l'Occident, vu le rôle que jouent ces ONG comme prolongation des idées et des modèles prédominants dans les thèmes internationaux en vogue. Mais elles sont pour les Congolais une des multiples stratégies de survie pour pallier à un état déficient, dans les domaines de la vie publique et privée.

Etant donné la crise de l'emploi que connaît le pays, la perspective d'obtenir un travail rémunéré au sein d'une association ou d'une ONG offre l'espoir de dépasser le stade de travail bénévole à visée communautaire.

2.2 La recherche en science sociale sur le Congo

Il y a au Congo le développement de plus en plus croissant des institutions de recherches. Beaucoup de recherches sont faites par des autochtones congolais. Ce qui arrive très souvent, ce que ces travaux sont faites pour la promotion des chercheurs ou sont financés par une organisation occidentale. Le Congo a en effet été et est encore aujourd'hui un terrain privilégié des recherches en sciences sociales. Une partie importante de la production scientifique sur ce pays profite aux chercheurs externes au pays. Ils ont développé de théories pour la maitrise des questions qu'ils entendent poser sur la réalité congolaise. Les résultats des études servent d'abord aux débats entre les chercheurs faisant carrière dans les pays riches où elle est capitalisée, avec peu de possibilité et de situation de transfert vers les pays dans lesquels elle a été produite. Leur but est la production d'un savoir, se traduisant très souvent par des publications pour leur promotion et pour l'alimentation des débats thématiques dans des fora, loin des lieux où la connaissance a été produite.

Plusieurs générations des chercheurs, appartenant à des Universités, des institutions des recherches, des laboratoires au nord de l'atlantique ont parfois la mission de fournir de l'expertise et le savoir sur le Congo aux organisations de développement internationales afin de définir leurs objectifs, leurs programmes et actions de développement pour enfin socialiser leurs partenaire du Sud. Les ONG internationales ont compris que l'unique action de la mise en œuvre de projets de solidarités internationales ne peut pas être suffisante. Ils recourent aux résultats des recherches et ceci doit aussi être le cas pour les ONG localement. Et même si les mentalités ont changé, dans l'idée qu'il ne peut plus être question d'exporter vers les pays dits pauvres de schémas d'intervention tout faits, une partie importante des programmes pour le développement du Congo se fait dans les instances internationales, possédant leur culture propre et la maitrise des questions qu'elles posent sur la réalité congolaise.

3 UNE COLLABORATION LOCALEMENT TIMIDE

La coopération la recherche en sciences sociales et les ONG au Congo reste marginale. Des multiples facteurs ne favorisent pas les échanges. C'est le cas des cultures professionnelles très différentes. Les enjeux liés à l'identité de chacun et les fonctionnements divergents. Les ONG mettent en œuvre des programmes répondant aux besoins d'une population sur un territoire donné. Ces projets sont entrepris dans des contextes d'urgence avec une finalité opérationnelle et concrète. Et parler des ONG, c'est surtout parler des agents de terrain et on ne mesure pas toujours les problèmes auxquels ils ont eux-mêmes à faire face tous les jours. Le premier problème est que, s'ils ne sont pas mandatés, s'ils ne sont pas la prolongation d'un bailleur externe, leur action est orientée vers une aide générale, avec peu de contour de la situation et une formulation continue des objectifs qui cadrent avec les thèmes changeant des bailleurs, ils sont continuellement occupés à ajuster leurs objectifs aux thèmes du moment: démocratie, genre, enfant, développement rural etc… Les praticiens ne sont armés que de leur bonne volonté. Les motivations sont là. Mais comment canaliser les effets pour organiser la continuité des connaissances acquises dans un monde de dépendance aux financements externes, avec des objectifs changeants? Ainsi il est pris à répondre aux jeux et aux tendances, cumulant des différents objectifs pour maximaliser l'acquisition des fonds.

Il y a en outre la question de la subsistance des agents de développement locaux eux- mêmes, dans un contexte générale de pénurie ou le travail et les salaires sont soit inexistants, soit ne couvrent pas les dépenses. On imagine aisément le dilemme dans lequel on se trouve, pour chercher de quoi assurer sa propre subsistance et celle de la famille élargie. Ceci fait que les responsables des ONG sont contraints à être eux mêmes assistés autant qu'ils assistent leur public cible

Un responsable d'une ONG l'a exprimé ainsi:

Les gens qui travaillent dans les ONG sont des gens qui luttent contre la pauvreté. Leur travail est d'arriver à l'autonomie de leurs clients. Mais lorsque nous tenons compte de la réalité et du contexte existant, dans lequel le responsable de l'ONG évolue, nous avons l'impression qu'il est lui - même demandeur d'aide pour son développement.

La continuité des projets des ONG est dépendante des objectifs des acteurs de la solidarité internationale. Ce qui, de plus, installe les agents, dans des nouvelles dépendances, en les déresponsabilisant de telle sorte qu'ils sont souvent empêchés de puiser dans leurs propres réserves les solutions les plus appropriées.

De l'autre côté, pour les chercheurs, notamment les chercheurs en sciences sociales, leur but est la production d'un savoir, se traduisant très souvent par des publications pour leur promotion. Lorsque les recherches sont monnayées par les bailleurs externes, les thématiques, les sujets et les théories à tester dépendent souvent des bailleurs de la recherche. Les deux secteurs sont dissociés et ne dépendent pas des mêmes bailleurs. Il existe peu de lignes budgétaires communes. Les résultats venant valider leur théorie et alimenter des débats et des discours négatifs sur le Congo loin du quotidien des ceux qui vivent cette réalité de l'intérieur. Les résultats des recherches faites dans ces conditions ne sont pas toujours exploitables par les ONG localement puisqu'ils ne répondent pas toujours à des problématiques opérationnelles pour leur mise en œuvre sur terrain. La reconnaissance du travail effectué passe quasiment uniquement par la reconnaissance des pairs occidentaux. Les chercheurs ne sont pas évalués sur l'utilité sociale locale de leurs travaux. Le système des recherches n'est pas toujours compatible avec le travail de recherche action. Le manque des moyens financiers des chercheurs, de la même manière que pour les ONG, ne favorise pas le développement des recherches nouvelles intéressantes les ONG. Les thématiques et sujets de recherche dépendant souvent des bailleurs de la recherche. Ce cercle vicieux ne peut être rompu tant qu'on n'adopte pas la capacité d'avoir une vue globale du phénomène et d'y impliquer toutes les parties prenantes.

De plus, ni les institutions des recherches, ni les ONG, n'ont pas toujours des systèmes, comme dans les sociétés modernes, de capitalisation et de valorisation de leurs résultats performants. Ce qui ne facilite pas l'accès à l'information et l'utilisation des résultats et expériences réciproques. Travailler avec des ONG semble alors ne pas apporter réellement d'atout pour une carrière de chercheur dont la promotion est liée à l'appréciation de ses pairs. Il est difficile pour chaque partenaire de dépasser sa sphère de reconnaissance pour produire un savoir conjoint. Les espaces de dialogues sont rarement interprofessionnels. Ils ne permettent pas des échanges sur les expériences des recherches ou des projets de terrains développés par les praticiens. Se pose aussi la question de la temporalité différente. La notion du temps dans la recherche est très différente de celle des acteurs de terrain. En effet, pour ces derniers, la réalisation de projets est soumise à un chronogramme précis suite aux objectifs, on ne cessera jamais de le dire, changeant des bailleurs. Ce fonctionnement laisse peu de place aux allers retours nécessaires aux chercheurs pour expérimenter ses hypothèses, phases indispensables des travaux de recherche.

Aussi, les intérêts des deux milieux qui ne convergent pas toujours. L'activisme des ONG ne se retrouve pas forcément chez les chercheurs pour qui l'objectivité est de mise pour la validité de leur travail. La spécialisation des chercheurs sur des domaines très spécifiques est aussi difficilement compatible avec le caractère « généraliste » et pluridisciplinaire des ONG. Il y a un risque que les chercheurs se focalisent donc sur les études demandées par les bailleurs sans s'ouvrir à des demandes des acteurs (sauf si ces derniers financent ces recherches).

4 ENJEUX ET AVANTAGES DE LA COLLABORATION

La coopération entre les secteurs de la recherche en sciences sociales, des ONG et des media est un levier d'influence et de l'enrichissement mutuel. Elle contribue à l'ouverture du monde académique à la réalité sociale de terrain et à la visibilité des actions de développement au public. Il y a plusieurs avantages qui peuvent en être tirés. C'est le cas de l'innovation et de la construction commune de connaissances. Elles peuvent participer aux avancées positives pour le développement en améliorant les interventions du terrain. Ensuite l'ouverture au monde universitaire par la transmission aux générations futures des questions de leur environnement social. Le travail des praticiens ne se résume pas seulement à écrire des projets pour demander de l'aide, mais c'est aussi tout un travail de formalisation des problématiques, de les lier aux contextes globaux, au lieu que l'action soit compartimentée. Ces échanges peuvent unir, dans une réflexion, à une action transversale et faciliter la compréhension des problématiques par une vision plus globale, en partant d'un domaine particulier. Tout ceci permet la compréhension des processus de changement dans le pays, grâce aux résultats de recherches qualitatives, empiriques, de l'histoire immédiate. Mais aussi pour la science, il a la nécessité d'une critique qui conteste les idées dominantes. Les institutions de recherche au Congo doivent se renforcer afin de réaliser des recherches rigoureuses qui favorisent la réappropriation citoyenne et démocratique de la science, afin de la mettre au service du bien commun. Il est important que la recherche académique intensifie des recherches qualitatives sur les questions de la vie quotidienne et non pour nourrir des débats négatifs sur le Congo, sur des questions dont les gens simples n'ont pas prise sur la vie quotidienne.

Pour la reforme ou une évolution du monde notamment de la recherche anthropologique 'classique' n'étant pas souvent orientées vers de tels objectifs, mais plutôt enclin à la production de savoir et au débat la collaboration avec les ONG participe au Développement d'une méthodologie commune de la recherche action. Les travaux de recherche s'effectuent directement sur le terrain en « testant » les innovations en cours initiées par des projets de solidarité mis en œuvre. Une telle méthodologie aide à mieux comprendre le contexte avec ses contraintes et ses opportunités, à tisser des liens, y compris avec les médias, pour diffuser les résultats des travaux et influer sur la politique.

Un autre enjeux est la facilitation de la mobilité des (étudiants) chercheurs. Pour eux, travailler avec les ONG rend possible l'accès aux zones géographiques difficiles. Ils peuvent profiter de la logistique et des connaissances des ONG. Ceci est nécessaire dans cette période de décentralisation où il y a la montée de l'ethnicisme et la diminution des contacts entre les ressortissants des différentes régions. Les chercheurs peuvent profiter de l'expérience des ONG sur le contexte local.

Pour les ONG, les travaux de recherche peuvent constituer des sources d'information. Travailler avec un ethnographe permet une prise de recul utile pour l'analyse de la pertinence des actions entreprises. Il permet l'accès à des connaissances basées sur des méthodes et des résultats méconnus. Les résultats des recherches peuvent renforcer l'efficacité des interventions et l'encrage de terrain, ainsi que le renforcement des plaidoyers. Il y a des facteurs interconnectés qui demandent le recours aux résultats de la recherche même le recours aux méthodes parfois méconnues des ONG. Et quant aux médias, ils peuvent faciliter la vulgarisation et la diffusion des résultats de la recherche mais aussi les travaux des ONG. Les interactions entre ONG et le grand public sont trop peu présentes au Congo. Elles doivent devenir plus fréquentes. La coopération avec les médias permet une meilleure visibilité des praticiens et des travaux de recherche en rendant accessible leurs résultats auprès du grand public. Une des conséquences peut être une plus grande reconnaissance du grand public, qui met alors en valeur le travail effectué.

5 CONCLUSION

Nous avons voulu dans cet article montré ce qui entrave cette coopération, ses avantages, ses formes et les lieux de collaboration. En somme, la collaboration entre ces différentes institutions participe à l'innovation de la recherche, la durabilité et l'ancrage des projets de développement à la réalité locale

mouvante. Les ONG sont des sources d'innovation des éclaireurs d'avenir. Elles sont souvent amenées à rechercher des nouvelles stratégies pour répondre aux besoins émergents dans les différents secteurs de la vie sociale. Souvent, les problématiques qu'elles rencontrent et dans lesquelles elles s'engagent sont inédites. De cette manière, elles ouvrent aux chercheures des nouveaux champs de recherche qualitatives et approfondies. Ce type de relations facilite également l'obtention d'un retour quant à l'utilisation des résultats de la recherche. Les mécanismes et cadre d'échanges réguliers doivent être structurels.

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TEACHING QUALITATIVE INQUIRY IN VARIOUS CONTEXTS: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY TRAINING FOR TRAINERS

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Abstract

In this presentation, various concrete training methods are highlighted from the perspective of the evaluation of participants in doctoral training seminars. Participants were doctoral candidates with an interest in qualitative research and all seminars were subject to an evaluation procedure. Seminars took place in the frame of the Flanders interuniversity FLAMES initiative (2017-2018) and during a first interuniversity doctoral training exchange program (VLIR-IUC-UO) at the University of Santiago de Cuba.

As these seminars were organized in various ways with teaching methods that were most appropriate to the qualitative methodology and methods being trained, feedback from the participants was key to refine these training seminars. Different types of research material were used (visual data; interview data; stories), and a variety of qualitative research methods (thematic analysis, narrative analysis; focus groups) and methodologies (grounded theory; ethnography) and the related epistemological questions were reviewed.

Based on experiences with an interuniversity training in qualitative research methods and methodologies, in this presentation we learn what teaching elements are most appreciated by trainees. Recommendations on training strategies for qualitative research trainers are illustrated with examples drawn from methodological reflections completed by the participants that took qualitative training seminars over the last 3 years.

Keywords: teaching, recommendations, methodology, evaluation, doctoral training

1 INTRODUCTION

The parameters of ontology and epistemology, and its methodical consequences are key in the quality and integrity of any qualitative study and for that researchers are urged to locate their inquiry approaches within identifiable research paradigms [1, 2, 4]. The experiential knowledge on how to handle these parameters not only applies to conducting a qualitatively oriented scientific study but is also key in evaluating pieces of qualitative research publications [3, 5].

However, despite a growing commitment to strengthen proficiency of both students and professionals with regard to qualitative research methodologies and methods [2], training the required knowledge, insights and competencies is not self-evident. As Ponterotto and Grieger (2007) state, often "developing competence in qualitative inquiry methods literally constitutes an extracurricular activity" (p 405).

Within the framework of the Flanders interuniversity FLAMES (Flanders Interuniversity Network on Methodology and Statistics) initiative, several methodological training programs are offered to

doctoral students on basic level as well as intermediate and experienced level. Since 2017 doctoral students can subscribe for a series of seminars on qualitative research methodologies. In fall 2019 a tailor made 2-week training seminar on qualitative research was offered at the Universidad Oriente in Santiago de Cuba.

In the subsequent section this paper discusses both the feedback of the participants of these seminars as well as the experiences of the trainer.

2 DATA FROM THE LOCAL COURSES

Participants were doctoral students from the 5 different Flemish universities. The participated in various courses on qualitative research methods that were organized in the academic year 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel as part of the local courses within the FLAMES interuniversity network. Participants were asked to fill out an evaluation form at the end of each training day. The evaluation form consists of a detailed evaluation of various aspects of the training and a qualitative evaluation of the training. Table 1 provides an overview of the number of participants in each training course.

Table 1. general quality scores for the qualitative research training courses during the academic year 2017-2018 (October 2017 – May 2018) and the academic year 2018-2019 (October 2018 – January 2019)

Time	Course	N
October 2017	Qualitative Research Design	16
January 2018	Data Collection Methods	23
May 2018	Data Analysis: Narrative Analysis	14
May 2018	Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis	14
May 2018	Writing up your Findings	14
October 2018	Qualitative Research Design	23
October 2018	Data Collection and Analysis: doing interviews and using Thematic Analysis	26
November 2018	Data Collection and Analysis: doing interviews and using Narrative Analysis	28
December 2018	Data Collection and Analysis: Focus Groups and analyzing the data	19
January 2019	Writing up your findings: the principles of getting your work published	20

N= number of participants

Based on the general quality scores for the qualitative research training courses it was clear that the courses were evaluated positively albeit the results were mixed. In order to refine and improve the

courses that were planned for the next academic year, qualitative evaluative data was gathered using both the evaluation form as well as via face to face contacts with the participants throughout the training days. All this feedback was subject to a thematic analysis using a simple text format document for each training course separately. Next, the various themes from the different courses were subject to a second thematic analysis that included all the extracted and constructed themes.

In the subsequent paragraph an extended synthesis of the analysis of the qualitative feedback and suggestions for improvement that was received from the participants of the various courses is presented.

3 THEMATIC OVERVIEW OF FEEDBACK FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

3.1 Organization

3.1.1 announcement of the course, and expectations

Participants were very explicit in their feedback with regard to the communication on the courses. In the announcement of the courses it was not always clear what level of experience was expected in order to be able to participate in the course. This resulted in a very mixed level of participants. Consequently, some negative evaluations followed the experience that either the level of the course was too basic or too high. Also, some participants experienced that the limited skills of English amongst some participants slowed down the learning process throughout the course.

3.1.2 Context, time and space

In the first year of the seminars on qualitative research, the series of courses was spread over the academic year. Participants suggested to organize the courses in a shorter term in order to keep the learning process ongoing. The pace of the course was suggested to be levelled-up.

The number of participants was initially limited to a maximum of 20 participants. However, given the high demand for courses in qualitative research, we allowed up to 30 participants. For some participants, the group was too big and limited the opportunities for interaction with the teacher.

The rooms where the courses took place varied for each training day, depending on the availability of teaching rooms at the university campus. Not all rooms were suitable for an interactive approach. Participants commented on this very explicitly and suggested to provide an active learning environment and to always provide drinks, e.g. water, coffee and tea, and snacks. For some courses, two separate rooms may be helpful to enhance small group discussions without disturbing other participants. Some participants suggested to organize at least some of the courses additionally in an online module, e.g. via webinars.

3.2 Materials

Participants appreciate relevant and concrete literature on the topic being discussed, either as an incentive for interactive discussion or as take-home material for further self-study. However, some materials may be provided in advance so to be studied before coming to the training. In that case it may be necessary to explicitly mention what preparational work is expected from the participants.

3.3 Content

3.3.1 Output

Although participants do value the philosophical framework of the qualitative methodology and theoretical framework of the concrete method being discussed, having a concrete draft of a how-to approach at the end of the day is highly appreciated by the participants.

For the training regarding writing up your findings and getting your work published, participants appreciated the one-day writing seminar were students could come for writing and asking some concrete advice. Yet, no teaching was planned that day. Participants suggested to organize this kind of 'writing days' on a regularly basis.

3.3.2 Topics

Suggestions for further, concrete topics to be covered by the series on qualitative research include visual data analysis, discourse analysis, ethnography, action research, social network analysis, variety in specific methods for narrative analysis, qualitative analysis of performance arts, focus group management, and a hands-on training in doing interviews.

Besides the concrete and specific methods and methodologies, participants acknowledge the key role of aspects of ethics and integrity in qualitative research.

3.4 Didactics

3.4.1 Teaching didactics, approaching qualitative methodologies and methods

A key element that appears repeatedly in the evaluations is the time provided for and the structured way of interaction, discussion and group dialogues. This teaching didactic truly involves participants not only with each other's experiences but also with both the theoretical and practical contents of the qualitative research subject of the day.

A didactic where theoretical frameworks and practical exercises are balanced with one another is highly appreciated. Hands-on practical exercises with concrete data are valued as upmost inspiring, albeit that sufficient time must be provided for feedback both from the group members as well as from the teacher.

Participants mention that, besides the interesting contents of the day, spending time to learn from each other's research also helps to build a professional social network that may be helpful in the future as to be consulted when in need for reflection with fellow researchers. This suggestion includes to pay more attention to the individual project of the participants. One participant suggested that it may be helpful if participants were asked to bring a 200-word summary of their research in order to share experiences.

3.4.2 Attitude of the teacher

Participants note that the calm way of teaching makes a long training day more enjoyable. A teacher who testifies about his/her own research experience – both in terms of good and bad practices - seems to be a necessity. At the same time, it seems to helpful to have the teacher available for questions and discussions on one's own doctoral research project for it is clear that not all supervisors are experienced in qualitative research themselves.

4 FOLLOW UP ON THIS FEEDBACK

Based on the thematic analysis of the available feedback from two academic years that included two cycles of qualitative research seminars, the current FLAMES doctoral training in qualitative research has been refined on several aspects. In order to meet the requirement of keeping the learning process ongoing, all trainings are organized in one-day seminars and bundled in one semester (October till January). It is explicitly mentioned that the course is organized with regard to a basic level interest from non-experienced qualitative researchers. An interactive approach is the basis for all the trainings, and learning-by-doing is balanced with a sufficient level of theoretical frameworks. A variety in learning materials is being developed and constantly refined, and all teaching and text materials are digitally delivered to the participants.

5 EXPERIENCES FROM TEACHING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS ABROAD: THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING IS IN THE EATING

From November 17, 2019 till December 1, 2019 a two-weeks training program was organized at the Universidad Oriente in Santiago de Cuba. Three experienced qualitative researchers from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and the Universiteit Antwerpen took on the training. All the feedback from the past seminars on qualitative research was incorporated in outlining the training. A concrete, hands-on training balanced both theoretical framework and practical exercises in various qualitative research methodologies and methods.

The common thread throughout the training was the mission for each participant to work on a small scaled qualitative study, starting from design a small-scaled study at the beginning of the training up to presenting the first experiences and preliminary findings at the end of the two-weeks training period. The purpose of this 2-week training was to introduce the participants to qualitative research. The training aimed to guide the participants through the entire process of qualitative research, from developing a qualitative research design to collecting and analysing data and presenting findings. We combined more theoretical classes and workshops with a practical exercise in small groups that ran throughout the training and which involved designing, conducting and presenting a small-scale qualitative research. Each day started with a discussion on the theoretical framework of a qualitative methodology or method. Subsequently each of the groups of participants was challenged to continue to work on their small-scaled research.

During week 1 the participants were introduced to the basic principles of qualitative research, as well as to different methodologies (narrative research, ethnography) and methods to collect data (interviews, observations). For the practical exercise, participants formed 5 groups of up to 6 people to conduct a small qualitative research over the course of the training, and worked on their research design (day 1-3) and collected their data (data 5, 6)

In week 2 participants learned about different data analysis techniques (listening guide, thematic analysis, visual analysis) and the writing up and presenting of findings, which they could subsequently apply to their own small research projects (day 6, 7). Participants were also introduced to participatory action research as an alternative qualitative research approach. Group exercises furthermore stimulated them to think about their small research projects, whether it fit all the criteria of 'good qualitative research', what they could have done differently and how they could apply the participatory action research approach to it (day 8, 9). The number of participants fluctuated both between as well as within the different days of the training (see also further), but overall 20 people participated on a regular basis and were awarded a certificate (prepared by the local VLIR-IU-OS team) at the end of training.

The final day (day 10) was organized as a seminar where each of the 5 groups of participants presented their study. They were asked to present three elements: (1) what was your research question, your research design, your final population and what are your first results so far?, (2) what have you learned from this experience as a researcher in terms of practicing qualitative research?, and (3) what may you change in this study design to make your study a community based action research? As the trainers were aware of the fact that doing this in only two-weeks' time is not self-evident, sufficient time was provided to stay available for the students for any question or concern that may arise during this period of time.

5.1 Evaluation from the participants

The focus group session at the end of the final day (day 10) was the vantage point for an extensive evaluation of the 2-weeks training program and therefore was structured around 3 main questions. Each question was announced on a separate A3-sized paper on which the participants could write freely their thoughts and suggestions.

5.1.1 Question 1: How did I think about research before this course?

Initially, before this training course participants approached research mostly from a quantitative and positivistic point of view and were largely unfamiliar with the value but also the complexity of qualitative research. However, the training helped them to take new perspectives on scientific research, cq. were able to take a qualitative perspective as a new vantage point for scientific research in their field of expertise.

> "I almost always thought about research in terms of numbers, it was pretty hard for me to see research in a different perspective. So this course has changed my ideas about doing research a lot."

> "I work more with quantitative research. Now I think different thanks to this course. I realized the importance of qualitative research."

5.1.2 Question 2: what did you learn about qualitative research?

The training changed the participants by offering them new ways, methods and tools to conduct research, new research perspectives and paradigms, news ways of collecting, analysing and interpreting data, and new approaches to conduct research for social change to improve the quality of life of participants and communities.

> "This training has changed my point of view about how I can develop investigations with high impact in my community and in my patients in order to improve their quality of life. It has provided me with new investigation tools and a new perspective. Thank you!"

5.1.3 Question 3: What are the most important things I learned and take with me?

The participants appreciated the various ways to approach a social problem and how to change it through qualitative research. The lectures brought new perspectives of data collection, new teaching techniques, and provided them with new tools to teach research methods and to apply those methods.

> "I take with me all the knowledge of qualitative research I didn't know, to apply it forward"

> "The most important thing I learned in the training is the way to change our reality and how we can grow as researchers"

> " I got impressed by the way of teaching, I will try to copy that"

5.2 What we learned from the feedback of the participants

Throughout the 2-weeks training, the seminars were built around the concept of developing a small-scaled qualitative study in groups of up to 6 participants. Apparently, the participants appreciated this approach of the training.

The participants mention that it was an advantage for them to be able to apply the more theoretically oriented classes immediately in the context of their small-scaled research project. This allowed for a more grounded experience of what qualitative research involves, in the local context, rather than having to rely solely on theoretical insights and examples provided by us. Moreover, it was a strong incentive for the participants to participate in an interactive way. In the end, it supported the intended

outcome of the training to gain a deeper understanding of various approaches in qualitative methodologies and methods.

6 CONCLUSION

This paper illustrated how the qualitative feedback from participants in the Flemish interuniversity FLAMES doctoral training on qualitative research methodologies and methods inspired the refinement of the training program and was at the same time the common thread in the development of an international interuniversity training program on qualitative research in Cuba.

A thematic analysis of the data led to 4 main points for attention in teaching on qualitative research methodologies and methods. The elements of the organisation of the course include both the communication with regard to the course as well as organising the course in terms of time and space. Taking care of the teaching materials provided to the participants is noted as an important element of a positive evaluation in the experience of the participants. The output of a training and the topics being covered by the training was mentioned as elements of the content of a training. Finally, the element of the didactics of teaching qualitative research covers both the teaching skills as well as the attitude of the trainer.

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WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT ART-BASED RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

Art-based research (ABR) in education, based on artistic research practices, remains challenged in academic contexts (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2018; Pimentel, 2015). Art and its various poetic expressions, when related to ways of investigating, expressing and presenting questions continues to be questioned as formal academic research. This is complicated as ABR's troubling questions do not refer properly to the general paradigm of qualitative research – already generally accepted as academic research – but instead pose questions about alternative methodologies and the definition of valid knowledge. The history of science documents how new models and techniques for producing knowledge appear and ultimately change hegemonic concepts of validity (Kuhn, 1970). These discussions generate turbulence in universities as they bring into debate terms like "knowledge production" that systematically produce the hierarchy of certain knowledge and the invisibility of others (Rancière, 2010). It is not our intention, as advocates of creative modes of inquiry and representation, to promote the devaluation of tradition, nor to erase the history of systematized knowledge. We suggest that the past enables us to reconfigure and transform a more expansive present. By reviewing and questioning frames and hegemonic ways of producing knowledge.

Keywords: Art-based research in education, methodology of investigation, knowledge.

Over the past twenty years art-based research (ABR) has grown in popularity as a methodological approach within the field of educational research, which had previously been dominated by quantitative research [1], [2]. Even with the growing acceptance of qualitative research methods that began in the 1980's, ABR methods, based on artistic research practices, were immediately challenged, and continue to be challenged, as a valid form of research [3], [4] for its research methods: how it presents problem discovery, data collection processes, and analysis. The legitimacy of using art and its various poetic expression continues to be questioned as lacking rigor for a formal a method that can identify questions, investigate empirical situations, and express findings.

1.1 Origins of ABR in Education

While it is important to note that the arts have always had their own form of research (methods for the development, presentation, and refinements of works of fine arts), this is not what we refer to when talking about ABR in education. Curriculum theorist Elliot Eisner [5] is frequently cited as introducing the concept of arts-based research to the discipline of educational research. Eisner, a leader in the qualitative research revolution in the 1980s, argued for artistically crafted research [6]. By this, he meant fined-grained attention to qualitative differences that made significant differences in the quality of educational outcomes. Eisner argued against a reductive quantitative science for studying education. He saw the project of education as immensely multifarious, and he argued for a

new methodology that would honour our understanding of complexity. Eisner's original contribution to this endeavour was a methodology called *educational criticism* that employed the skill of connoisseurship for making judgments of quality [6]. Through judgments of quality, research would draw attention to small and significant nuances of education that rendered robust forms of learning.

Rather than thinking of education as an effort in mass production, where the task of research was to identify the single critical factor that would render the maximum amount of a designated outcome as cheaply as possible, Eisner saw education as a project that was not only multifaceted, but potentially contradictory. There was no right method. Eisner saw education as an intricate palette of decisions making [7] dependent on differing contexts.

ABR methods keep art's keen eye for the micro, for the particular, at the forefront. In the general field of educational research, we still have "too many generalizations, too many certainties, too many commonplaces." These new studies often hide the return to the same [8]. Art, by probing the particular of different contexts, has the possibility of challenging the known, the accepted. It presents narratives that we are not used to hearing or seeing, and that seemingly do not fit into our predefined research procedures that are approved for achieving institutionally authorized valid investigations.

1.2 ABR and the Paradigm of Qualitative Research

During the 1980s, the qualitative gathering, interpretation, and reporting of data gained prominence [9]. Seemingly radical at the time, qualitative researchers insisted that narrative rather than number was critical to the conduct of research, Nevertheless, the first generation of qualitative research remained rooted in the scientific paradigm of quantitative epistemology [10]. This model held that there were single best answers and that the purpose of research was to produce new knowledge of best practices.

When Eisner launched his project of ABR, he expressed his desire to fit within the dominate qualitative research paradigm of his time. Tom Barone, Eisner's frequent co-author, in his acceptance

remarks on receiving the American Educational Research Association's award for contributions to ABR in education, said: "our purpose is not to replace an old orthodoxy with a new one. It is instead to foster a dissonance and discomfort with that which has been taken for granted, and to suggest the possibility of enhanced, more expansive, arrangements for living and learning in the future" [11]. He continued, "we choose to use the expressive qualities of an artistic medium to convey meanings that are otherwise unavailable. Or more carefully, in order to avoid a false dichotomy, I suggest that only to the degree that we are successful in doing so, may we be called artists and/or arts-based researchers."

In short, at its beginning ABR in education did not seek to overturn the paradigm of educational research, it merely sought, as Barone states "a dissonance and discomfort with that which has been taken for granted."

1.3 The Dissonance and Discomfort with Knowledge Production

As mentioned previously, throughout the twentieth century the dominant paradigm of educational research was to produce true and certain knowledge that would produce educational efficiencies [12]. However, once ABR methods introduce dissonance and discomfort into this paradigm, new questions begin to arise around the role and value of the traditional outcome of knowledge production. ABR in education begins to pose questions about alternative methodologies and the definition of valid knowledge.

Some have suggested that a solution to this problem is to retain the word *research* for projects that respect the traditional epistemological limits of knowledge; *inquiry* should be used for new adventurous projects that are more exploratory and oriented to problem finding rather than problem solving [3]. Even the name of this conference, the European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, embraces this more open concept of inquiry. Nevertheless, this leaves practitioners of inquiry vulnerable to exclusion in more tightly circumscribed circles of research definitions.

The history of science documents how new models and techniques for producing knowledge appear and ultimately change hegemonic concepts of validity [13]. The lesson from this history is that ultimately the defences for more confined definitions of concepts of knowledge ultimately do not stand the test of time. Concepts expand. However, these expansions are never easy. They create turbulence. These discussions are difficult because terms like "knowledge production" systematically produce the hierarchy of certain knowledge and the invisibility of others [14]. Knowledge production itself can be a colonializing project that does more than simply suppresses but eradicates other voices [15]. Here, Spivak suggests aesthetics—the intervention of ABR in education—is a last line of defence to protect authentically multiple paths to understanding and being within the world. Specific knowledge, when promoted for its validity to the detriment of others, fosters deafness to other voices and assigns absolute power to a tightly constrained spectrum of knowledge [16]. In these cases, knowledge production simply serves to reinforce and maintain existing "comfort zones." ABR in education provides a mechanism to review and question our comfort zones.

Two examples of student work demonstrate ABR in education can open thinking and dialogue. Fig. 1 shows a work done by undergraduate students of the Visual Art Education. From some "uncomfortable" images that formed circles – resembling the shape of the earth – the colleagues made their cocoons, pasting around the images, in order to provoke discussions about the comfort zones in which we remain to avoid discussions about what happens near and far from them.

Fig. 1 – Why do we stay in cocoons?

Work made in the first semester of 2019 by a group of Visual Art Education degree's students of the UNESPAR/FAP to discuss lethargy and close the eyes from what happens around and bothers us.

In the second example (Fig. 2), a group of students in same university program set a table with several common treats that we consume at parties in Brazil and that carry in their brand names vestiges of prejudice and racism. The class project title, "Decolonial Coffee," alludes to the commercial Colonial Coffee brand that we have in several cities of Brazil that promotes a full range of delicacies referencing an older time of plantation farming. The students organized this classroom event as a treat for their classmates. During the snack there were several critical discussions centring on student reflections of situations involving the students and their families. The group that carried out this action continued in other contexts to conduct ABR on everyday intolerance.

Fig. 2 – Decolonial Coffee

Work made in the first semester of 2019 by a group of Visual Art Education degree's students

of the UNESPAR/FAP to discuss the persistence of racism and prejudice in our daily lives

1.4 A Paradigm of Wisdom

It is not our intention as advocates of creative modes of inquiry and representation, to promote the devaluation of tradition, nor to erase the history of systematized knowledge. We suggest that the past enables us to reconfigure and transform a more expansive present. By reviewing and questioning frames and hegemonic ways of producing knowledge. A new paradigm of wisdom, that incorporates knowledge, would hold that there is value to multiple ways of inquiry into the world—knowledge being one. The task of wisdom would be to balance these competing demands and recognize that one does not always have precedence over another.

This paradigm shift is captured in part by what is currently called the ontological turn— a shift from thinking about research as ways of knowing (epistemology) to ways of being (ontology). Ontology would privilege the building and sustaining of human and non-human networks. Epistemology privileges specific forms of action that can effect change. Therefore with epistemology, knowledge itself has a colonial aspect—an imposition of a "better" way on indigenous forms of community. In contrast, an ontological inquiry, is about strengthening bonds that are either already in place or recognizing imperceptible bonds that are not fully appreciated. It is much more focused on pattern finding than problem solving. Ontological approaches do not seek "improvement" as much as

appreciation of networks that sustain us. An appreciative approach to research is more aesthetic in its orientation.

Certain ties are rooted, subtly impregnated, in the way we receive and acknowledge facts. Various ways of speaking and presenting points of view are silenced in the face of a built "place" of affirmation of knowledge. In a plural, multifaceted and unequal world such as ours, unilateral discourses and narratives impoverish the perception of the complexity of human existence. Although a way of seeing is always a way of not seeing, because choosing a path inhibits other possibilities, the question is to bring out and critically examine what we have selected as the "best way". A path taken also marks a path not taken. What does our "best way" abandon or leave unexplored?

Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 show a work that invites the viewer to seal the eyes of the small ceramic heads by continuing to wrap the twine, or to unwrap the twine and discover them. What can we think about us as we make this decision? During the exposition, other small ceramic heads were added at the work to continue inviting people to interact with them.

Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 – Seal me, 2019

Work by Sonia Vasconcellos, who questions the premise that "what I don't see doesn't exist"

ABR, as well as other modes of investigation, has provided conditions to problematize and expose contexts, voices, narratives and knowledge. The still prevailing stance of how "scientific" this may be masking a violent colonial order and discourse [16] that keeps these "alternative" investigations on the ground of too subjective, emotional, and personal to be considered serious and valid knowledge.

1.5 The Contributions of Arts-Based Research

The aesthetic imagination is a critical part to how we come to make sense of the world. As Spanish art educator Fernando Hernández-Hernández [17] further elaborates, subtle ABR criteria also provide insight into the skilful conduct of science: embodying the subjects within our texts; transmitting the singular moment of our encounter; establishing relationships; incorporating attention to qualitative nuance (visual and literary); and revealing that which up until now had remained unseen.

The practices and modes of performing artistic processes "involve experiencing times, spaces, materials, thoughts and events" and their processes contain elements and paths that make it possible to "take it as a plausible index of research methodology creation" [2].

While ABR methods are not conceptually a part of traditional epistemological methods, they are both epistemological and ontological ways of inquiry.

The subject, when investigating, interferes and transforms world readings, the "constructed objectivity". But which representations have been constructed and accepted and which remain subjugated, invisible? We need to recognize the "Ecology of Knowledge", the "Southern Epistemologies" [18], highlighting diverse social and artistic practices and knowledge, deconstructing the vision and power that distinguishes the main from the peripheral, the formal knowledge of alternative knowledge. We are/were all indigenous after all.

The acceptance and openness to other ways of investigating is, above all, an act of courage and review of what is established and remains as a standard and reference of knowledge. In the field of art education, the hegemony of discourse remains a barrier that allows only a tolerable amount of other information to pass through it [16]. Indian Day (April 19) and Black Consciousness Day (November 20) in Brazil, provides an example. Images and stories are presented, but nothing changes in the curriculum, which is defined as knowledge to be studied and transposed. In contrast, art-based research in education can provide a means to deepen these issues. Student can engage in authentic reflection. By presenting situations, paths and experiences that are fully capable of being structured as knowledge, ABR expands and revises notions of art, education, history and memory.

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TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING OF PARTICIPATION IN URBAN PLANNING IN TERTIARY EDUCATION - THE ROLE OF VISUAL METHODS

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Abstract

Participation has become a buzzword in urban development projects. While it is generally accepted as a cornerstone of inclusive development, it often remains a hollow concept: no more than a box ticked in a directive approach, limited to project level informing or consultation instead of actual citizen engagement and empowerment. At the same time, visual methods are considered crucial in participatory urban planning. However, limited research is done on the crucial competencies in participatory and visual methods in urban planning to ensure inclusion of harder-to-reach voices. Therefor this study investigates the role of visual methods in transformative tertiary learning in participatory urban planning. We study how students performing a 3-month urban planning fieldwork in India build competency in participation through visual methods as part of the master program in Urban Ecological Planning at NTNU. Drawing on the perspectives of thoughts, feelings and behavior, we perform a meta-reflection based on students' reflections and final reports. Building on previous research on this educational fieldwork, we present a worked example of the use of visual methods to study three different neighborhoods in the city of Panaji, India. Our findings indicate that visual methods are a powerful tool in conducting educational urban fieldwork with the objective to enhance a transformation in students. Empirical evidence illustrates that the visual methods do not only result in richer data collection and a deeper engagement with participants, but they also prove to be a valuable tool for reflection and stepping stones for the transformative learning process. The findings can inform teaching and facilitate further fieldwork.

Keywords: Participatory research, visual methods, transformative learning.

1 INTRODUCTION

Participation takes again an increasing role in addressing urban challenges and urban development [1]. However, often the projects receive a lot of critique and score low on Arnstein's participatory ladder as they are limited to projects already largely planned and decided for[2, 3]. A thorough citizen engagement in urban development requires transparency and accountability in the decision-making process [4] as well as a necessary skillset, a sense of social responsibility and an appropriate mindset to engage and include citizens. In traditional urban planning education, these skills, mindset and social responsibility seem insufficiently addressed to build the capacity in urban planners to truly be able to work with citizens in the development of their environment. The master program Urban Ecological Planning (UEP) at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) tries to address this educational gap through the first semester fieldwork. Students are challenged to take up a range of participatory methods to conduct a situational analysis and plan a strategic action proposal in a given neighbourhood while putting the most vulnerable groups central. Visual methods play an important role within this participatory research and aid students' learning. This writing presents a worked

example on the role of visual methods in the transformative learning process students undergo during the 2019 fieldwork in Panaji, India, building on transformative learning and threshold concepts. It starts off by discussing the learning objective and process the fieldwork tries to initiate among students using the concept of transformative learning to analyse. This is followed by a description of the fieldwork methodology, including an introduction of the role of visuals in the fieldwork process which are then used to guide a reflection on specific examples from the field.

2 "FROM A SOCIALIZED-MIND TO A SELF-AUTHORING MIND» OF NEIGHBORHOODS. LEARNING TO ENGAGE CITIZENS

2.1 The objective of the transformative learning process

Through the master's in Urban Ecological Planning (UEP) at NTNU students build skills and knowledge to address complex and fast changing urban environments. The first semester intensive fieldwork forms the core of the practice-based program, where students are immersed in a real-life challenging urban context [5]. The program tries to facilitate what Kegan describes as the *shift from socialized minds to self-authoring minds* [6] in this case the shift from a traditional 'expert' urban professional who plans for people, to a transformed urban 'facilitator' who works in partnership with citizens. This professional moves the planning process towards a higher level of citizen power on Arnstein's ladder of participation [2]. The shift goes from the planning of an end-state to the design of strategic interventions for value-based organic and contingent urban development processes. This planner translates and brings different perspectives together into a qualitative and inclusive design within a 'bottom-top' approach, that puts stakeholders at all levels in a horizontal partnership [7]. The first semester fieldwork plays a critical role in this transformative learning process, as it ignites reflection through the immersion in a challenging urban context.

2.2 Towards a transformative learning process

Being able to integrate participation in a planning process, requires an epistemological shift. *A threshold concept [...] is akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something* [8]. Integrating a truly participatory approach into a professional planning practice can therefore be considered a transformative learning process where the learner reaches new threshold concepts. Mezirow defined transformative learning as the critical dimension of learning in adulthood that enables us to recognize and reassess the structure of assumptions and expectations which frame our *thinking, feeling and acting* [9]. We use these three interrelated perspectives of thinking, feeling and acting to investigate the transformative learning process by studying students' reflective insights as an indicator for transformation.

Firstly, the UEP fieldwork aims to induce a transformation in how students **think** and understand the world. It aims to build an increased self-reflection among students, as well as turning them into more independent critical thinkers. This cognitive change also translates into a deeper insight and reflection in one's own frame of reference, thereby opening the ability to see different perspectives and asses them against that frame of reference. This shift results in an open mind, the ability to go beyond assumptions to open questions and to be adaptable. It also means students start looking for increased understanding, not simplifying but embracing nuances and complexity instead.

Second, the transformation regards emotions. The cognitive ability to see different perspectives and nuances leads to a higher appreciation for citizens and other stakeholder as valuable contributors in the process. Becoming comfortable with different stories and perspectives is linked to the way students **feel** as it evokes increased empathy towards citizens and humbleness which will reflect on behaviour as well. This can help to alter the emotional reaction towards uncertainty and complexity, as through cognitive reflection students' emotional response shifts from anxiety to being comfortable

and using it as a motivator. Students become comfortable with not having every piece of information and letting go of controlling every step of the process.

Finally, the idea of transformation aspires a shift in **action** and behaviour, which goes hand in hand with a change in thoughts and emotions. The increased empathy and the reflective attitude aim to allow the students to use critical reflection for decision-making, take an ethical stance, while staying open and manoeuvring different perspectives. The desired behaviour of a transformed student is to listen and engage with various stakeholders while facilitating and mediating a democratic decision-making process. Students let go of control over the process and outcomes by handing this over to citizens.

3 METHODOLOGY - THE FIELDWORK AS PART OF THE MASTER PROGRAM IN URBAN ECOLOGICAL PLANNING

3.1 The fieldwork assignment

During this fieldwork, student teams perform a contextual analysis to understand the urban complexities of a small area and develop strategic and tactical interventions to identify and address urban problems in a human-centred and inclusive approach. The combination of daily stakeholder interaction, the focus on a limited number of key urban theories, methods and reflection, interlinked in three courses (project, theory and methods) aims to facilitate the learning process. The project course focusses on urban informality from an integrative point of view. Informality is considered not in opposition to but in a continuum with formality, in both a complementary and supplementary form [10]. Starting with an intense classroom-based introduction, students quickly depart to the field, where through intense engagement with communities and relevant stakeholders they attempt to develop the mindset, self-realization and practice to address urban problems by engaging meaningfully with citizens.

While the main objective of an educational urban planning fieldwork can be to create a direct physical improvement in the build environment or indirectly influence systems, processes or empower communities in the local ecosystem, the focus of this fieldwork is mainly on the self-reflective attitude among students, while where possible leaving a positive transformation on the ground.

Transformation in participatory planning processes can be looked at from different stakeholder perspectives. On a primary level, the impact on the physical environment and the community and its stakeholders can be looked at. Often the purpose of participatory processes is to create more inclusive build environments and neighbourhoods while simultaneously empowering community members and other stakeholders [2].In this example, we focus on a secondary level of transformation, where the transformative learning process within the students through the participatory work with primary stakeholders is central. On a tertiary level, meta-reflection can inform the transformation of the teaching of the learning process. The students indicated that the learning process is challenging, and that acquiring a threshold concept such as participation can, indeed by troublesome as indicated by Meyer et al [8]. Better understanding the process and the barriers can therefore help teaching staff facilitate the process to overcome these barriers and adopt the principles, and in this case, we look at the role of visual methods.

3.2 Sample and setting

The fall 2019 fieldwork took a group of 19 students to Panaji, the capital city of the state of Goa in India. The highly diverse group represents 14 nationalities with academic backgrounds in (landscape) architecture, urban planning, project management, engineering and food science, and varying levels of professional experience. The area-based exercise took place in 1) the old colonial neighbourhood Fontainhas, today protected as a conservation area; 2) the commercial business district, where

students focussed on the municipal fish market and a garden, and 3) two informal settlements along the polluted St Inez Creek, one at the catchment area of the creek and the other one closer to the mouth of the Creek.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The methods of data collection and analysis are three layered: on a primarily level is the participatory exercise that the students undertook, where the focus lays on the community data collection and stakeholder interactions. The secondary level looks at the methods in the learning process of the students. The tertiary level looks at the meta-analysis of this process by the educational team. Finally, the theoretical frame for the role of visual methods within the overall process is given. This will then be used for analysis to show that visual methods serve on a primary level as a steppingstone for students to get through the process while simultaneously serving as a catalyst for reflection on a secondary level.

3.3.1 Methods used in the participatory exercise (primary level)

In their respective areas with residents, students undertook a design thinking process, choosing a variety of participatory methods to actively engage citizens and other local stakeholders. Students go beyond interviews to overcome some of the cultural and language barriers linked to the immersion in a foreign context, collect and analyse rich data and reach hard-to-reach stakeholders. In this process they use an array of existing visual participatory methods as can be found in various toolboxes around human-centred design and participatory planning e.g.[11, 12] and are shown in Figure 1.
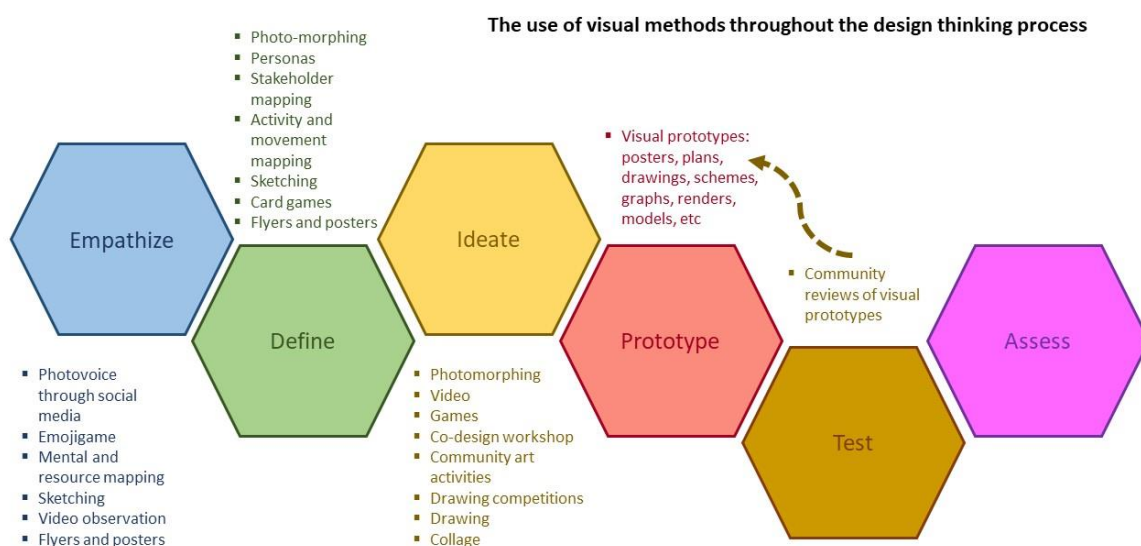

Figure 10: Visual methods as stepping stones in the design thinking process. (figure based on [12] adapted by author)

3.3.2 Methods for self-reflection (secondary level)

The transformation within the students was facilitated through a combination of hands-on practice, theory and methods workshops and not least through self-reflection. These thematic reflections were produced by students throughout the fieldwork. The themes were provided by the teaching staff with a few guiding questions (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). While many students used

traditional writing for the reflections, some used visual storytelling in the form of videos, photos, hand or computer drawings etc. Students were moreover encouraged to use visual methods to present and make sense of their findings and design process. An example of this is the use of personas (see figure 2).
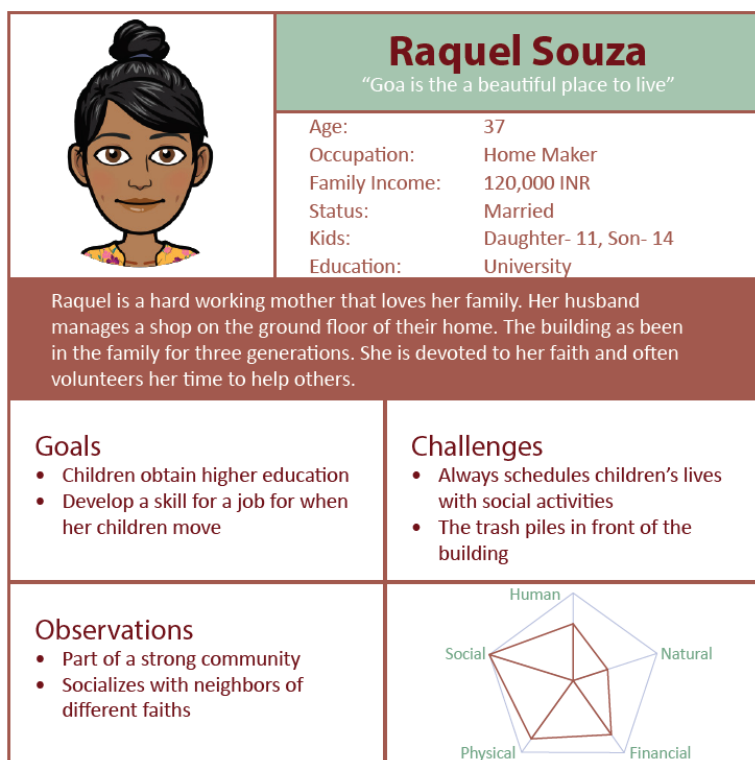

Raquel Souza
"Goa is the a beautiful place to live"

Age:	37
Occupation:	Home Maker
Family Income:	120,000 INR
Status:	Married
Kids:	Daughter- 11, Son- 14
Education:	University

Raquel is a hard working mother that loves her family. Her husband manages a shop on the ground floor of their home. The building as been in the family for three generations. She is devoted to her faith and often volunteers her time to help others.

Goals
- Children obtain higher education
- Develop a skill for a job for when her children move

Challenges
- Always schedules children's lives with social activities
- The trash piles in front of the building

Observations
- Part of a strong community
- Socializes with neighbors of different faiths

Figure 11 - A fictive persona is used as sense making (Flores, Kiahtipes and Moran, 2019)

Throughout the exercise, students were asked to reflect upon what they saw in the city, their interactions with peers, citizens and other stakeholders and their learning experience. There was no predetermined format for this reflection and students were invited to deliver this reflection as an illustration (visually, a drawing, video or a model) or as a 1-2-page text. To facilitate the process, we proposed a theme for each reflection with a set of guiding question of which students had to answer at least 2.

Vision and objective	1. What types of skills and abilities do you want to develop during this semester?
	2. Professional, personal and educational visions. How do these go together?
	3. What do you see as the main obstacles to achieving your visions?
	4. How do you see the relationship between the way you work in the team and the insights you will gain?
Entering a community and building trust	1. How do you approach people? What where their responses?
	2. What new questions arose from these first encounters?
	3. What did you learn about the methods you used to get to know the community? What challenges did you meet and how did you adapt to them? What was the results of these adaptions?
	4. Which assumptions or preconceived ideas you had, have been challenged?
	5. How do you feel you are perceived by the community or other stakeholders? How do you deal with that? Who did you manage to connect with and who not? Why is that? How could you engage the harder-to-reach voices as well?
Participatory methods	1. What are your personal and group objectives with your community? What do you hope to find out?
	2. Reflect on the methods you have used, which were/weren't successful and why?

	3.	What methods worked/didn't work at which stage in the process and with whom? What is the relationship between the methods and your stakeholders?
	4.	What methods were useful to gain the trust necessary to dig deeper into a topic?
	5.	For the Goa group: What did you learn from the collaboration with SPA?
	6.	For the Trondheim Group: Did you learn anything unexpected from the collaboration with the design students and the municipality?
Group dynamics	1.	How has the way you are working in a group implicated your project work? How do you evaluate your role within the group?
	2.	Are you able to use the methods for collaborative learning, and if not, what is stopping you?
	3.	Reflect on the feedback and communication process within the group and as a group towards other groups and stakeholders.
	4.	How do you deal as a group with conflict and disagreement on the project? What methods and tools do you use to help the group dynamics?
	5.	What is the relationship between the group vision, your skills and the dynamics in the group?
Professional role	1.	Reflect on the fieldwork process and your personal and professional evolution.
	2.	Reflect on the way you communicated with the community and other stakeholders. How did you manage expectations? Were there any ethical concerns you faced? What were the implications of your work with the different stakeholders?
	3.	Reflect on the way you anchored your project.
	4.	How do you relate now to your initial vision setting? What are the skills you developed, what skills did you use?
	5.	How do you see your role as a professional different now compared to when you started this semester in August?
	6.	What are you most proud about from this fieldwork? What is something you learned from?

Table 1: Guidance questions for thematic reflections (Vrebos, Nielsen and Marklund-Nagy)

3.3.3 Methods of meta-reflection

Building on previous research on the fieldwork [13, 14], this worked example looks on a meta-level at what the students learn: we reflect on both the use of visual methods on a primary and a secondary level to see how they impact the students' learning process with the idea to improve its facilitation. The reflections by the students has been the primary data source, complemented by reflective observation of the process and the visuals produced by the students for their interaction with stakeholders, for their own learning, for presentations and the final report[15-17]. Further data collection happened through active involvement and ongoing interaction with students individually and in groups, as well as from discussion sessions facilitated by the teaching staff. We reflected on the collected data using the transformative categories of thinking, feeling and acting in combination with theoretical frameworks on visual methods and external representation.

3.3.4 Visual methods, what can they do?

Mezirow identified critical self-reflection as essential in the transformative learning process. He moreover pointed to the importance of full and free participation in discussion with others (in our case peers, other actors and staff) to test and validate these reflective judgements [9]. While visual methods as externals representations are an inextricably fundament of participatory methods, they can also play a key role in this reflective process.

Visual methods as participatory methods, thus beyond traditional visual presentation and spatial analysis, are more than only a data collection method, but have the potential to 'do something with the researchers'[14], they can facilitate this reflective spark in a transformative learning process. As the literature review of Pain (2012) showed, the two broad reasons researchers use visual methods, is richer data collection and presentation, and relationship mediation. The reasons to use visual methods for data enhancement are categorised by Pain as follows: *rapport building, communication facilitation, facilitating expression of subconscious and tacit knowledge, accessing the difficult-to-reach and encouraging reflection.* On the other hand, Pain identifies the facilitating purpose as *Participants as experts, issues of power, collaboration and effecting change* [18]. In addition, Meo (2010) compared photo-elicitation interviews with normal interviews and concluded that the photo-elicitation functioned as a bridge with participants and helped her to make sense of data [19]. This

potential of visual methods makes them suitable for both the use in participatory process around urban development on the primary level of transformation, as on the secondary level of the learning process of the students.

To analyse the role of visual methods in the learning process, we build upon Kirsh's analysis of the role of external representation and the cognitive power this can enhance [20]. First, external representations become shareable and identifiable objects of though, facilitating communication between multiple frames of reference. Next, external representations allow for physical rearrangement, thus facilitation the discovery of semantically relevant relations. A third potential is the physically persistence and independence compared to mental representations, allowing more reliable and shareable consistent reference frames independent of the parties' own perception. Further, through reformulation content can be made more explicit. The fourth and fifth potential Kirsh identified, refer to natural encoding and the use of multiple representations. Finally, the construction and tools of external representations hold a power in itself, as there are certain cognitive functions we can do outside our heads but not inside [20] and can thus act as a reflective medium.

4 META ANALYSIS OF STUDENT REFLECTIONS TO REFLECT ON THE TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESS

4.1 Transformation in thinking – gaining insight in one's own frame of reference

The visual representations the students used, helped to **expose language and cultural assumptions**. In line with Kirsh's first argument, representation becomes a shared reference that is understood by all parties [20]. Visuals as such shared references helped students to discover their own cultural biases, for example by exposing their hidden assumptions in the issues prioritized by them in contrast to the real issues identified by the citizens in card games. Realizing this also challenged them to dig deeper than the common discourse or the expected issues touched upon in interviews. An example of this was when one student group felt interviews were not going anywhere as research participants got stuck on the issue of the floating casinos. While this was a big issue in the city, it was out of the scope of the focus area. By starting from a series of photos and asking input through photos, more local issues were exposed. The use of photo-morphing exposed for example accessibility and a safe place for children as an important need. In this activity, participants illustrated their utopian views of the scene through manipulating photo of the environment. This was a method that enabled students to identify new insights that would be out-of-reach without these methods. The physical persistence and independence of the visuals moreover helped students see different perspectives and nuance, capture increased complexity and **challenge their own reference frame** and biases.

In line with findings on the role of video in previous research [14], students indicated the power of construction as well as the possibilities of reformulation [20]. A student reflected: *The stakeholder mapping exercise made me see how limited our perspective has been before.* The act of the visualizing helped to connect the dots of the complex reality and enabled them to deal with an at the start insurmountable level of complexity. Participatory and observational mapping of movements, interaction, liked and dislikes places also exposed patterns, trends and relationships that were otherwise missed. Thus, visualization on itself becomes a tool of reflection, providing a stepping stone to navigate complexity before completely mastering the skills.

Transformation in feeling – developing empathy and confidence

At the start of the fieldwork, students felt this complexity and uncertainty as they were unsure about what they were looking for and not confident about approaching community stakeholders. The fear for the unknown made them uncomfortable as they got in a situation where using their previous knowledge, skills and methods proved insufficient for the exercise. In this case, visual methods offered a valuable stepping stone to get out of this uncertainty, as this provided structure for both data

collection and engagement on a primary level as well as for their own reflection. Through visuals, students build **confidence** and developed a common understanding through what Kirsh calls a sharable frame of reference [20].

Moreover, the interactive visual methods were indicated by one student to help **develop empathy** towards citizens. By inviting them to rearrange, draw or give feedback on visual representations such as photos and maps, the student realized the complex understanding and potential citizens hold in their own environments, while learning to see the community through their eyes. The joint activity allowed students to embrace the role the community can play in the design of solutions. Another example of the role of visuals for emotional transformation can be found in the emoji game students used. The emotions expressed on a playful way by the participants, affected the relationship between participants and students and this affected the way students engaged with participants, in the form of increased empathy.

A final example of empathy building was related to the advancement of some of the visual representations: while they can facilitate the interaction with stakeholders, for example to quickly test prototype, they can also become a roadblock. Students indicated that community members where visually overwhelmed when they showed several architectural visual representations in the form of photomontages and renders of a strategic design proposal of a redevelopment of banks of the creek. This build up such an expectation, that the visuals on itself obstructed their original objective of a participatory review of the proposal. This made students reflect on the appropriateness of the visuals, and how they adapt their practice in the way they connect to different stakeholders and their own place in the participatory process.

4.2 Transformation in acting – changing practice

That reflection about their professional place was part of a behavioural transformation that was further facilitated by quick visual experimentation. The visuals allowed them a safe space to make mistakes and change direction, it motivated them to **let go of control** in the process, answers and outcomes and to learn to **adapt to the situation**. One student reflected on *learning along the way, with each challenge revealing new perspectives and learnings, rather than coming with a pre-set plan and understanding and a rigid structure of work.* Another student indicated at the end of the fieldwork: *Now I know how much I don't know.* Three examples related to the roles of visuals herein can be giving in this regard. One group of students had set up a social media hashtag *#MyFontainhas* to collect digital input of residents through photovoice. With flyers and the price of cake and coffee in a hip youth hostel in the area, the objective was to collect local views on this gentrifying colonial neighbourhood. The few responses they got, where from tourists sharing their Instagram posts in the colourful streets of Fontainhas. Reflecting on this visual experiment, students changed the way they connected to the community, by adapting more locally accepted references and methods. Through drawing and collage exercises, photo elicitation and emoji games, students would transfer a certain level of control to citizens.

In the second example, when one of the groups exposed a strict informal hierarchical governance system in the municipal market they were studying, they were surprised by the complex structures they found. During interviews, they strongly connected with a specific vendor who exposed problems with the informal leadership. Through this, the students formed an idea about the structure and avoided these leaders. A sketching exercise of body language during a focus group discussion brought forward new dynamics. Students indicated that it was the use of different visual methods that corrected them to take a neutral stand to see all sides, listen and engage with all stakeholders. They adapted their approach and attitude and changed the way they asked questions, steering away from assumptions towards open questions.

By reflection on the use of the visual methods, students saw the need to and potential of **adapting** to pass over power to the citizens. A final example comes from a resource mapping exercise. Insecure or

shy about their drawing skills, some older citizens asked the students to draw based on their indications. When the students (intentionally) positioned a landmark wrong, the citizens, more confident about their own expertise, often took over control by taking over the pencil.

5 CONCLUSION

Visual methods are a powerful medium in an educative context, and especially in conducting educational fieldwork on participatory urban planning with the objective to enhance a transformation in students. While the transformative process the students undergo cannot be measured in the limited time of the fieldwork, this worked example illustrates the role of visual methods in the learning process by analysis the reflection the methods sparked among students. The visual methods have, in line with Pain's previous findings, allowed the students on a primary level to collect richer data and to mediate relationships between them and research participants [18]. On the secondary level, visuals have proven a powerful tool for reflection. Visual methods can expose students' assumptions, facilitate the establishment of deeper connections and serve as a reference frame to see new patterns and relations. Most students have also indicated that visual methods are a stepping stone through the research process, helping to challenge their reference frame, build empathy and confidence and let go of control. The appropriateness of visual representations depends on the timing in the process and the audience and are crucial in relation to community expectations. Their conscious integration can therefor facilitate this kind of educational fieldwork.

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THE VISUAL EXPOSURE DILEMMA AS AN ETHICAL CONCERN IN PARTICIPATORY FIELDWORK RESEARCH: TURNING RISKS INTO OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract

Photovoice is a participative research approach in which participants are invited to identify, represent, and enhance their community via the collection of images or video fragments that represent their life circumstances and experiences. While most researchers are well trained in the ethics of research, research participants often are not. We therefore cannot automatically assume that they develop an internal ethical compass to decide whether a certain picture can be taken, used, or disseminated in a research context. Also, the trend of using arts-based research methodologies asks for the negotiation about issues of authorship and ownership. In this paper, we discuss what the impact was of the ethical briefing sessions we organized for international students involved in photovoice research on their behaviour as co-researchers in the field, how it was justified, and how this sparked our thinking about how to best do justice, not only to objects and environmental cues on display in participants' photos but also to people portrayed in their pictures. We might be able to turn potential ethical risks related to 'exposure' into opportunities for a deeper level of participation.

Key words: visual research, ethics, acculturation, international students, photovoice

1 BACKGROUND

In the late 1980's, Mitchell [1] introduced the notion of a visual turn, hereby questioning the dominant power of linguistics in qualitative research and emphasizing the role of visual imagery in science communication. This turn sparked a general interest in qualitative researchers to start using images as a method for data-collection and interpretation. Since then, visual research has known a considerable uptake in social sciences, particularly in the context of participatory research. Apart from narratives provided through interview and observation transcripts we now collect a whole range of different types of data resulting from our sensory interaction with our environment, with still and moving images amongst the more popular ones.

The digitalization of society had a large impact on the further development of the visual research area. The move from analogue to digital cameras created new opportunities for the inclusion of a visual component in that data collection and dissemination processes of participatory research. Once the dissemination phase is initiated, these images often become part of the public domain and will start to live their own live. They are easily used and re-used by others. It is therefore important to raise ethical awareness in those creating the images, particularly in times of experimental behaviour by stakeholders linked to e.g. the use of video blog and go-pro cameras to track people's behaviour and action.

Visual research has also gained impact as part of a broader methodological movement called arts-based research (ABR). Projects involving artists or artistically inspired data collection, analysis and dissemination methods are blurring boundaries around what is research, which rules apply to the use and sharing of artistically inspired research data and more importantly who owns the data. At the

intersection between art and science, negotiation processes about issues of authorship and ownership are inevitable. If the intention is to sustain respectful relationships with participants who have contributed visual data, seeking permission and input whenever the material is disseminated or distributed is advisable [2].

Both the digitalization and ABR trend highlight a changing visual culture that inevitable sparks new debates on how to deal with issues such as privacy and confidentiality in what is exposed to a broader public. The focus in this study is on the changing role of the researcher in visual research projects of a participatory nature, how this change moves the responsibility for ethical sensitivity related to fieldwork from the researcher to research participants and what can be done to better prepare participants for this type of fieldwork. Central to participatory research is the recognition that the researcher is a facilitator of the process. He or she does not control, nor direct. Data are mainly gathered by participants and shared with the researcher for further discussion, analysis and political action. Consequently, the responsibility to conduct ethically sensitive fieldwork is transferred from the researcher to the research participant. Very often, the participants are not explicitly trained in how to maintain integrity in visual research and what potential good or bad practices are. In addition, there is a tension between what participants may want to collect or what 'speaks' to them, and ethical issues related to protecting the identity of people displayed in the photos or on video, which may justify a training in ethics for participants [3]. It seems appropriate then, to discuss ethics on the level of the research participants and transfer this 'good practice' from the level of the researcher to the level of the research participants. With this contribution we intend to increase the understanding of how ethical issues might be introduced to participants in participatory visual research practice. We build on our experiences in a series of photovoice projects on adjustment processes of Asian [4], African [5] and South American [6] students in a European higher education context. In what follows we present a worked example that provides readers insight into the content and form of the ethics sessions we organized for study participants.

2 A WORKED EXAMPLE

2.1 Situating the photovoice research projects

Photovoice is a participative research approach in which participants are invited to identify, represent, and enhance their community via the collection of images or video fragments that represent their life circumstances and experiences. It was first described by Wang and Burris, who assigned three major goals to this type of projects: (1) enabling people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns; (2) promoting critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group [or individual] discussion of photographs, and (3) reaching policymakers in order to change things [7].

In the timespan between 2011 and 2015 three master thesis research projects were launched, focusing on the following questions: 'How do international students try to blend in into a Belgian (Flemish) social-cultural and educational context?' and 'What are the challenges and opportunities they experience in trying to adjust to a foreign study environment?' One master thesis student addressed challenges and obstacles of Asian students (n= 5), one other student sampled African students (n=7) and one student focused on South American students (n=5). We adopted the two first goals of photovoice in order to achieve an understanding of the challenges experienced: facilitating the recording and reflection on concerns raised in the community of foreign students and promoting critical dialogue between participants. The projects consisted of two rounds of photo taking by each research participant, followed by either a focus group discussion of the photographs, guided by the master thesis students (the African and Asian students), or an in-depth interview with the participants (the South American students), followed by a focus group. The research participants used their own devices to shoot the photos and send them in about two weeks before the conversation took place. The discussions were transcribed verbatim and used as the basis for reporting on the findings.

2.2 Ethics sessions

In most photovoice research projects, participants receive a status of co-researcher. We invited all those who expressed an interest to participate in the project on cultural adjustment of international students to an ethics session contained in a general information session that took place about a month after the initial contacts. Most of the interested international students agreed to continue as a research participant. Those that were keen to become involved but could not attend the meeting received a personal briefing from the master thesis students afterwards. The ethics sessions focused on activities related to the photographic exercise embedded in the projects. They consisted of three main parts: (1) a detailed reading of the informed consent forms for the research participants and, (2) introduction to ethical pitfalls in visual research, and (3) discussion on potential alternatives to avoid them. In the following sections, we will present each of the three parts.

2.2.1 Informed Consent Forms for Photovoice Research Participants

The very idea of informed consent has been described as early as 1947 in the Nuremberg code [8] and later on in the Belmont agreement [9]. The Belmont agreement particularly indicates that for an informed consent one should not only provide information about the research, but also check whether the information is accurately understood by the receiver. These two aspects then may lead to a decision to voluntarily engage with the research process.

We adopted the outline of an informed consent information sheet developed by Mitchell [10], adapted it for our particular research project and added a written informed consent form previously developed by Thompson [11]. The informed consent forms outlined the following items regarding ethics:

1), The potential harmful effects from being involved in visual research, including the fact that people might get angry or upset if their pictures are taken without getting permission.

2), Ownership of the photos. The photos taken would remain the property of the participants and these would only be used in public documents or situations for which they had given consent. Research participants were also offered a choice to have their names printed with their photos or not. They were further allowed to distinguish between photos that could be disseminated by the research team and photos that they would rather keep in a private domain.

3), Obtaining informed consent from people being photographed. This is a level of informed consent that specifically applies to participatory research projects, because the decision to photograph and therefore also the responsibility to gain informed consent lies with the research participants and not so much with the coordinator or researcher. We used an adapted version of the informed consent slips developed by Mitchell [10]. The compact form of the slips allowed research participants to fit them into their briefcases or wallets and to pull them out where and when necessary. We discussed some alternative options, such as verbal informed consent that could be audio recorded on e.g. the cell phones many research participants intended to use to shoot their pictures. We explained that one of the major rules that applies to photovoice research is that in situations where people do not expect to be photographed, it would be polite and good practice to seek consent. This would include pictures taken in organizations such as hospitals, schools and likewise public spaces. It would be different though if one would engage in photographing people on marketplaces or during manifestations, where cameras are always present. We stressed the fact that people should be carefully explained the purposes of the research and whether they would allow us to use their pictures for public, before being asked whether they agree to have their pictures taken. We further explained that informed consent mainly, but not exclusively, applies to situations in which persons are displayed in images.

2.2.2 Ethical Pitfalls in Visual Research

We used a presentation with a series of photos to illustrate three ethical pitfalls in visual research context. The photos used in the presentation were retained from an open access source on the World Wide Web or had been subject to an informed consent from those in the picture or in case of children,

a parent. We acknowledged all photographers. The presentation was meant to stimulate debate and reflection in research participants on two different levels: What is perceived as ethical and unethical in this research context? How can we respond to ethical challenges as a participant conducting fieldwork for this project? It was anticipated that this briefing would increase participant's awareness of potential ethical conflicts in shooting, collection and sharing pictures when doing fieldwork.

Fig. 1 allowed us to address the important aspect of respect for the autonomous person, which becomes more pertinent when working with vulnerable populations such as children, elderly, poor people, people with little or no literacy. A general rule of thumb when photographing children or persons with a reduced level of autonomy would be to actively ask for consent from them but also from their guardians such as their parents or supervisors. This might protect them from being misused in favour of some of the goals a researcher may pursue [11]. This also raised the question about how people may potentially benefit from being displayed and the need to try and achieve a good balance between advantages and disadvantages for the people versus the other actors in the research process. We stressed the fact that in asking for consent to publish photos in which people can be identified, and even more in making them public for research or other purposes, one should be carefully considering the potential short and long term risks that displaying photos may have for the participants, even more so for pictures that portray problematic behaviour, serious physical or psychological disease characteristics or other personal aspects that may have an impact on e.g. the chance of being hired for a particular job or the access to certain events or organizations. The use of people's pictures could threaten their integrity in ways that we or them might be unaware of.

Fig. 1 Identifiable persons.

Source: Griet Decoster

Fig. 2 provoked the research participants' thinking of environmental ques that may present a threat to anonymization. Here, in the absence of a face that is visible in the picture, the bullet shells on the floor would enable people to limit the amount of potential geographical regions where this picture could have been taken. In addition, some characteristics of the building may link the person in the image to a smaller community from which he or she is easily identifiable. Some people would not want to be associated with certain themes like violence. A second threat relates to the fact that people might be unhappy about the way their neighbourhood has been photographed, which again raises the question whether there are any advantages for the population being photographed as opposed to the benefits for the researchers involved. Both arguments are rooted into the idea that research should address the concerns of society and the public rather than be the product of individual academic interest.

Fig. 2 Environmental ques revealing a person's identity.

Source: Yuri Cortéz

A photo is just a snapshot of reality but may have serious consequences if it would be used outside the context of research, particularly in terms of disclosure of embarrassing facts about individuals, such as Fig. 3. Situations of shame and embarrassment may also result from revealing sensitive background or contextual information on a particular person, such as a large amount of empty bottles of liquor on a shelf or on the table, a messy kitchen or an embarrassing amount of fast food boxes near the garbage bin or any other form of intrusion into one's private space [12]. Participants were advised to choose their pictures with care and consider whether certain images should be used in the report at all, even when there is an informed consent from the person being visually exposed to others. Some people would not want to have a particular picture taken in a personal environment, because of the potential stigma related to e.g. single parenthood and the often related mental or financially problematic situation. Here, the risk of misusing the content of the picture for malicious purposes is real, for example in the context of persons seeking proof for juridical activities or persons that have not paid enough attention to the potential consequences of being displayed in a later phase of their life.

Fig. 3 Issues of shame and embarrassment.

Source: Jay Dee

2.2.3 Potential Alternatives to Be Considered

The three pictures described above stimulate discussion on what alternatives could be used in case informed consent could not be obtained, in order to limit the potential harmful effects of putting pictures at public display. While potential alternatives were many, mainly five options were discussed: (1) blocking or blurring, (2) turning pictures into cartoons, (3) using parts of bodies, (4) photographing the back instead of the front, and (5) using metaphors to illustrate a particular theme. The choice to opt for one or the other alternative is not a straight forward one and highly depends on the situation as well as on the persons that will be displayed. The first two options can be described as post-hoc options. They can be used after an image has been created. They are actual manipulations of an existing picture. The last three are ideas that already should be taken into account while out in the field. They require a particular framing of the picture. Consequently, the decision to shoot a picture in these forms is an a priori decision of the participant. Each option has advantages and disadvantages by means of an exemplary illustration (Table 1).

Table 1: Potential solutions in the absence of informed consent.

Solution	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Blocking or blurring	It allows for a quick shot when an interesting event is happening, without the hassle of having to ask for informed consent.	There is little opportunity to read the emotion, or psychological aspects of the person through his/her facial expressions. This may alter the initial message of

 Source: Griet Decoster		the picture or what it is able to reveal.
2. Cartoonizing Source: Julia Quenzler	It is more suitable for sensitive situations, such as illegal activities, and objects that can or may not be photographed.	This technique requires a set of artistic skills, although the use of particular software program might work for those capable of using it appropriately.
3. Photographing parts of bodies Source: Peiter Buick	It decreases the chance of identifying an individual.	The ideas that need to be captured may be limited if applying this technique. For example, facial expressions related to liking or disliking are lost. It prevents us from tapping into some of the emotional layers potentially transferred by the person displayed.
4. Photographing the back instead of the front Source: Karin Hannes	It may help to reveal the broader environment and settings.	This strategy might impact on the integrity of the data. It claims to objectify but does not fully prevent people from identifying the person, particularly when the context and background is taken into account. It may also entail large amounts of editing or photoshopping when there are a number of people visible in the photo.
5. Using metaphors Source: Peiter Buick	There are less privacy issues or harmful effects involved for people.	The message that the photographer tries to convey may lack clarity. These pictures are more likely in need of an additional explanation of the photographer. In this case the idea of 'chaos' created by the configuration of loose papers might only become clear when it is further explained.

3 DISCUSSION

The aim of presenting this worked example was to inspire others in considering and shaping ethical briefings in the context of their visual research projects, with a particular focus on how to position oneself into the field. The ethical concerns highlighted here were those considered relevant in the context of participatory research projects that focused on challenges experienced by international students. Due to the nature of the topic we expected a strong visual entanglement of persons, spaces and objects in the images contributed. Although we tackled the most important ethical challenges related to the type of fieldwork relevant to our case, there might be different ethical issues that may require attention when working with other populations or subject matters.

What we hoped to achieve with this pedagogical training of our participants is not only an increasing awareness of ethical issues related to visual research. We also anticipate that it will give the future generation of researchers a potential better negotiation position with members of the IRB boards in developing stronger argumentation for how, why, where and when the pictures will be collected and presented in their research protocols.

What we also learned from studying the experiences of participants involved in our photovoice projects is that researchers might need to preserve time to discuss how participants personally relate to approaching people and where potential alternatives suggested may conflict with cultural norms and values of the target group the researchers are potentially unaware of. This strengthens the argument that ethical issues are 'situated' and may require ongoing negotiation between researchers and participants about what is right or appropriate in their particular research context [13, 14].

"There are no universal ethics of right and wrong, nor are there easy power relationships and clear cooperative arrangements, nor are there simple truths. Ethical issues are contextualized, institutionally embedded, organizationally ruled and compounded by postmodern realities that pose paradoxes in the changing visual culture" [15].

We might also need to increase our awareness toward the needs of those displayed in our pictures. Often the subjects take a passive role in the research. In our photovoice projects, several persons appeared to be very interested in knowing how their pictures would be used in the context of the research project, how and where the images would be disseminated. We should develop strategies to pull the people exposed in the pictures into the photovoice trajectory and create tools that facilitate easy access to the pictures. These citizens can play an active role in promoting the study findings and disseminating them to a wider public. But more importantly, they can help us reflect on the potential risks of being exposed and how we could avoid negative connotations of the public on the way people are staged or portrayed. Involving secondary subjects may help us to shift from potential ethical risks to opportunities for dialogue. This creates a different sense of ownership and potentially introduces new chances for secondary subjects to become part of the collaborative and share their views.

In our personal search for specific guidelines on how to deal with the potential mid-term or long-term consequences of public exposure of images collected in the context of a participatory research program we found little guidance from official, institutionalized ethics boards in universities. Based on an ethnographic study using interviews as a technique for data collection, Wallis and Borgman demonstrate the need for further research into what it means to be responsible for research data and how this responsibility is delegated to members of a research team [16]. The important finding that the ownership and responsibility question regarding images disseminated through databases was surrounded by ambiguity stresses the need for the development of further guidance that includes an ethical reflection on what can and cannot be shared or displayed and who is accountable for this type of decisions, how they could or should be motivated or what we can do to increase ethical sensitivity.

However, in times of increased proliferation and accessibility of visual images on publicly available websites and an increasing number of software packages that allows us to alter them it is advisable not to overemphasize the risks involved in making images publicly available, nor should we solely focus

on the formalization of ethical rules for visual research. We should be able to illustrate that we are carefully controlling for harm, particularly when using pictures that we did not create ourselves. A fair amount of the pictures we use in the context of research is public property and has no proper ownership, neither particular nor universal. Many pictures currently distributed through scholarly resources and digital media are partly produced to educate our gaze. They offer us an experience without the imperative of rendering the picture readable through accompanying narratives. This is a valuable goal in itself. It opens up an interesting analytical space in which we can move beyond storylines and give the picture a more central place. It also provides a lens that embraces for example the idea of aesthetic language and social contextual dimensions. This might become achievable only through a different reading that challenges current notions of ethics.

4 CONCLUSION

In this paper, we reported on the ethical information sessions organized in the context of participatory photovoice research projects, focusing mainly on the collection of visual data. We outlined how participants can be introduced into the ethical aspects of visual research, what sort of issues are best discussed, what sort of strategies can be considered to avoid harm for those displayed in the pictures. The debate on what is considered appropriate in the context of doing visual research is ongoing and tends to move into the direction of 'situated' ethics, promoting a context sensitive conceptualization of ethical problems and solutions for these problems. So far, little discussion has gone into what we lose in terms of visual information when we focus primarily on the ethical issues related to displaying people. The idea that pictures might have an educational value apart from being used as a tool to understand a research phenomenon suggests the inclusion of an aesthetic dimension that addresses the act of looking beyond the technical layers in pictures in the assessment of ethical risks involved. This may provide a different, potentially less disturbing reading of a person's social identity exposed. Such an assessment could move the debate away from risks related to the actual exposure of people in images into risks related to a potential improper reading of the pictures. The discussion of ethics in photovoice opens up a space for rethinking analytical procedures in photovoice research that we are currently exploring in ongoing work [17].

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